under 15 years of age. This is due to low life expectancy, relatively high fertility and high population growth rates. In 2014, 27.4 per cent of SIDS’ total population was 15 years old or lower.

This is one of the highest fertility rates in the world. Between 1995 and 2010-2015, the total fertility rate of 4 children per woman or greater declined from 15 in 1990-1995 to 2.5 children per woman in 2010-2015. The number of countries or territories with total fertility of 4 children per woman or greater declined from 15 countries or territories in 1995 to 71.5 years in 2010-2015. During 2010-2015, only 13 countries or territories had total fertility of 4 children per woman or greater.

Total fertility rate.

Population growth rate. Annual population growth rates also vary over time and across countries, but, overall, the average annual population growth rate has declined from 1.6 per cent in 1950-1960 to 1.1 per cent in 2010-2015. In 2010-2015, 17 of the 26 SIDS have population growth rates higher than 1.2 per cent per year, the world average population growth rate. At the other extreme, four countries or territories (American Samoa, Cuba, Nauru and Puerto Rico) are currently experiencing negative growth rates.

Total fertility rate.

Population growth rate.

Net migration rate. The net migration rate (TFR minus the TFR of the world) has declined from 2.5 children per woman in 1995-1999 to 2.1 children per woman in 2010-2015. The number of countries or territories with total fertility of 4 children per woman or greater declined from 15 countries or territories in 1995-1999 to 6 countries in 2010-2015. Eleven countries had a TFR below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman in 1995-1999.

Migration is an important phenomenon in most SIDS. In the Caribbean and Pacific regions, the emigration from SIDS exceeded immigration. People from SIDS commonly migrate in search of better living conditions, such as higher wages, education or improved health facilities. While nationals from the Caribbean moved to Canada, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, while emigration can boost remittances and alleviate local labour market pressures, it can pose particular challenges because of the emigration of highly skilled workers.

The availability of fresh water is a major limiting factor for economic and social development in SIDS. Many of these countries relied entirely on a single source of water supply, making them highly vulnerable to climatic and other environmental changes. According to the Falkenmark Water Stress Indicator, a country or region is said to experience “water stress” when un-"normal” water supplies drop below 1,000 cubic metres per person per year. Eight out of 24 SIDS (33 per cent) have water stress. When water supplies drop below 1,000 cubic metres per person per year, the country is said to experience “water scarcity.” Seven out of 24 SIDS (29 per cent) have chronically limited fresh water resources (absolute water scarcity).

Net migration rate and personal remittances received in selected SIDS, 2010-2015

The top 20 recipients of net official development assistance received, 2005-2012

Top 20 recipients of net official development assistance received, 2005-2012

Proportion of the population using improved drinking-water sources. Access to safe drinking water is a critical development issue for SIDS, with profound implications for economic, growth, human rights, public health and the environment. In 2010, 40 per cent of SIDS used an improved drinking-water source. The Caribbean and the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea (MICS) regions had the highest percentage of population using improved drinking-water sources, while access was more limited in the Pacific and Caribbean regions. The Caribbean and the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea (MICS) regions also had the highest percentage of the population using improved drinking-water sources, while access was more limited in the Pacific and Caribbean regions.

Proportion of the population using improved sanitation facilities. In 2011, 67 per cent of SIDS population relied on improved sanitation facilities. The greatest progress had been made in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea (MICS) regions, where sanitation coverage had increased from 72 per cent in 1980 to 78 per cent in 2011. However, there was significant disparity among countries; in Haiti, Ghana, Papua New Guinea and Kiribati, less than a quarter of the population had access to improved sanitation facilities.

Population affected by natural disasters. Ninety per cent of SIDS are in the tropics. Due to their geographical location and the patterns of tropical circulation, precipitation varies greatly from one year to the next, leading to various forms of extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods. SIDS are also affected by seasonal weather events such as tropical storms, cyclones and hurricanes. Between 1990 and 2013, 154 natural disasters were registered in SIDS. Tropical storms were the most common natural disaster accounting for an estimated 47 per cent of all natural disasters in this period, which affected about 17 million people. The second most common natural disaster was floods, affecting 3 million people. The top five countries for the number of people affected by natural disasters during this period were Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Papua New Guinea and Jamaica.

Available fresh water is a major limiting factor for economic and social development in SIDS. Many of these countries relied entirely on a single source of water supply, making them highly vulnerable to climatic and other environmental changes. According to the Falkenmark Water Stress Indicator, a country or region is said to experience “water stress” when un-normal water supplies drop below 1,000 cubic metres per person per year. Eight out of 24 SIDS (33 per cent) have water stress. When water supplies drop below 1,000 cubic metres per person per year, the country is said to experience “water scarcity.” Seven out of 24 SIDS (29 per cent) have chronically limited fresh water resources (absolute water scarcity).

Environment Performance Index (EPI). The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) is a comprehensive index that rates the environmental and economic performance of 180 countries, tracking and comparing progress in two broad policy areas: protection of human health from environmental harm and protection of ecosystems. SIDS were among the top five global positions of this index, while Haiti had a very low score, ranking 176th at the world scale. Overall, SIDS ranked high on air quality but tended poorly on water resources (access to clean drinking water and access to improved sanitation) and on the climate and energy indicators (carbon dioxide emissions and access to electricity).