

## Climate Finance Regional Briefing: Small Island Developing States

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Climate  
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Fundamentals **12**

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**T**he Small Island Developing States (SIDS) together bear next to no responsibility for climate change, but their geographical, socioeconomic and climate profiles make them particularly vulnerable to its impacts. Spread across three regions, the 40 SIDS nations have 437 projects approvals totalling USD 2.3 billion from multilateral climate funds between 2003 and 2021.<sup>1</sup> While approved funding for the SIDS has increased markedly in the past few years, it fulfils only a small part of actual needs. Since 2015, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) has been the largest contributor to SIDS. In 2021, USD 150 million was approved for projects in SIDS. Some 82% of this is programmed by the GCF, which also accounts for the 12 largest projects in SIDS. Further scaling up of both climate adaptation and mitigation finance to the SIDS is vital – both to address the vulnerability of SIDS inhabitants by making agriculture, biodiversity and infrastructure sectors more resilient to climate impacts, and to shift the energy mixes of SIDS away from fossil fuels.

### Introduction

The 38 United Nations (UN) member states classified as SIDS (which together constitute about 1% of the world's population) form a distinct group of developing countries. In addition, there are 20 non-UN members or associated members of regional commissions considered SIDS of which two (the Cook Islands and Niue) are members of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and thus eligible to receive climate finance in accordance with the climate convention.<sup>2</sup> SIDS tend to share a number of challenges, including limited capacity to raise domestic resources, high energy and transportation costs. While there is spatial and seasonal diversity of climate change impacts, high vulnerability to climate variability, storm events, ocean acidification and sea-level rise is common among all SIDS (IPCC, 2021). Adaptation measures are critical in most of the SIDS in agriculture and fisheries, coastal environments, biodiversity, water resources, human settlements and infrastructure, and health sectors (UNFCCC, 2005; UN-OHRLLS, 2017).

Spanning three regions – the Pacific; the Caribbean; and the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS) – the SIDS present a wide variety of contexts. Geographical differences and varying socioeconomic contexts influence the climate change vulnerability profiles of the SIDS. For example, only 1.8% of Papua New Guinea's terrestrial

land is below five metres above sea level, while 100% of the Maldives and Tuvalu lies below five metres, rendering these nations critically vulnerable to flooding and sea-level rise (UN-OHRLLS, 2013).

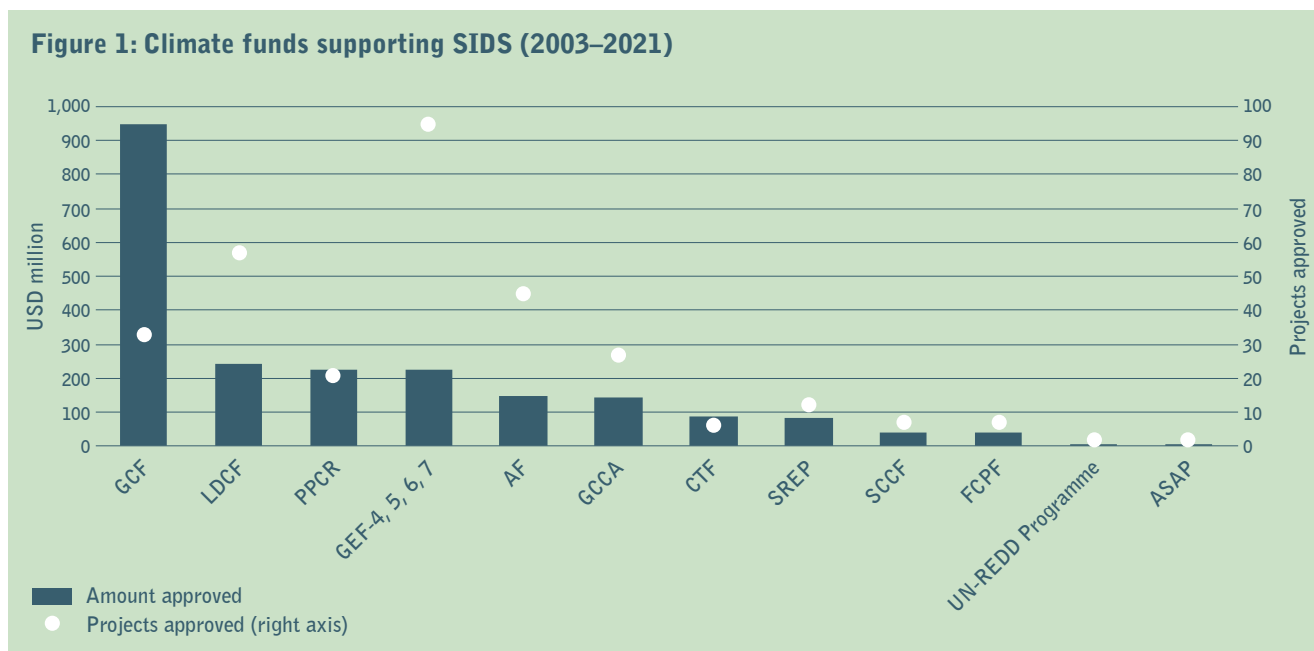
Most SIDS are middle-income countries, but their economies are often small and gross national income (GNI) varies widely. Nine of the SIDS are categorised as Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The profiles of emissions also vary between the SIDS, although most produce relatively low emissions. In 2012, the SIDS combined accounted for just 1% of global carbon dioxide emissions (USEIA, 2012). However, many SIDS rely heavily on fossil fuel imports for energy, and a transition to sustainable energy sources should continue to be a priority.

### Where does climate finance come from?

Twelve multilateral climate funds are active in the SIDS (Figure 1 and Table 1). A total of USD 2.3 billion was approved for 437 projects between 2003 and 2021. In 2021, the biggest contributor of finance was the GCF, which has cumulatively approved USD 950 million for SIDS since 2015. At quite a distance, as the second largest contributor, is the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), which has approved USD 242 million, followed by the Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR), which has approved USD 225 million in SIDS. The GCF's

**Table 1: Climate funds supporting SIDS (2003–2021, USD millions)**

Funds and initiatives	Amount approved	Projects approved
Green Climate Fund (GCF-IRM, GCF-1)	950.0	33
Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF)	242.0	57
Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR)	224.6	21
Global Environment Facility (GEF-4, 5, 6, 7)	223.0	95
Adaptation Fund (AF)	145.6	45
Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA)	144.4	27
Clean Technology Fund (CTF)	89.2	6
Scaling Up Renewable Energy Program in Low Income Countries (SREP)	82.2	12
Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF)	41.9	7
Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF)	40.9	7
UN-REDD Programme	6.9	2
Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP)	5.1	2



33 projects represent 42% of SIDS funding. In addition, the GCF is supporting 123 readiness programmes in SIDS amounting to USD 72 million. The GCF growing importance as the largest multilateral source of finance for the SIDS is solidifying thanks to an allocation framework that commits 50% of its resources to go to adaptation and at least half of this to support LDCs, SIDS and African states. This should secure disproportionate GCF funding support for SIDS for the foreseeable future.

Grants make up the majority of climate finance in the SIDS and will remain important, particularly for adaptation actions. To date, over three-quarters of SIDS climate finance from the multilateral climate funds is grant-based (87%), with concessional loans and guarantees a much smaller proportion of the total (13%).

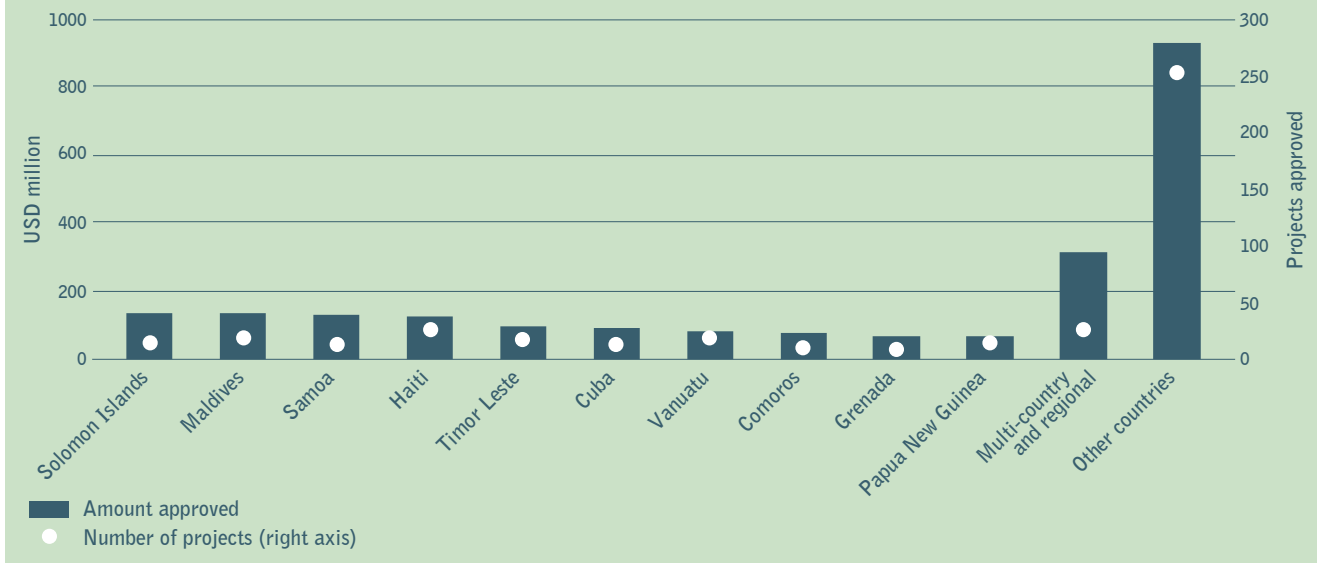
Bilateral climate finance also flows to the SIDS. Such climate finance complements the multilateral climate fund flows. This includes the bilateral climate funds of Germany, Norway and Australia, who are active in

the region.<sup>3</sup> Bilateral funds are not tracked by Climate Funds Update (CFU), however, given their relative lack of transparently available detailed information of current activities and spending.

### Who receives the money?

The Pacific region has the largest amount of approved climate finance from multilateral climate funds (USD 1 billion, or 44%). SIDS of the Caribbean have project approvals totalling USD 822 million (36%), while AIS SIDS have USD 439 million (19%) in project approvals. Approvals for the SIDS regions are dominated by adaptation finance. The Caribbean and Pacific SIDS also benefit from REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation plus the conservation and sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks) finance (with 3% and 4% for this objective, respectively).

**Figure 2: Top ten recipient countries by amount approved (2003–2021)**



Solomon Islands has received the most finance of any of the SIDS, with USD 138 million approved for project activities, followed closely by the Maldives with USD 137 million. Support for the Solomon Islands has come largely from GCF funding (with USD 87 million in approvals from the GCF). More than 50% of the contributions to the Maldives are from the GCF and the Scaling up Renewable Energy Program in Low Income Countries (SREP) with USD 49 million and USD 24 million, respectively.

**What is being funded?**

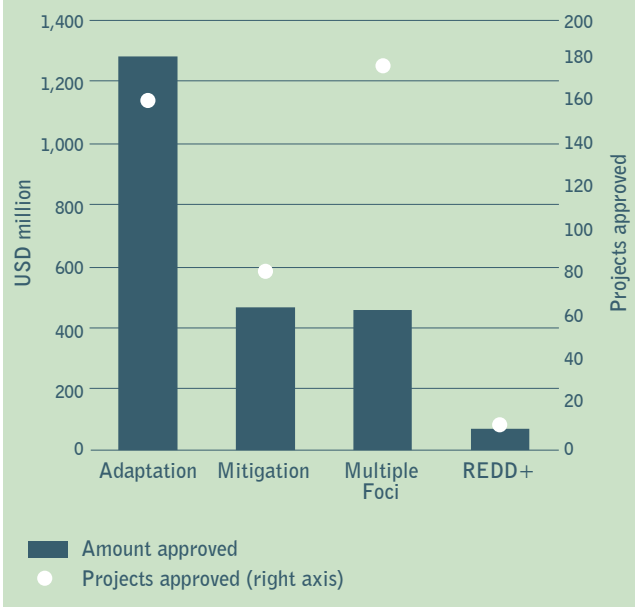
A total of USD 1,281 million or 57% of climate finance in the SIDS contributes towards adaptation efforts (Table 2 and Figure 3). Of the remaining funding, 20% contributes to projects with multiple foci, 20% to mitigation and 3% to REDD+ projects. The focus on adaptation finance is consistent with the SIDS’ high adaptation needs.

In 2021, 36 projects in SIDS were approved totalling USD 150 million. This includes projects from the Adaptation Fund (AF) (2), the Global Environment Facility (GEF-7) (5), GCF (6 projects and 18 readiness programmes), LDCF (2), PPCR (1), CTF (1) and SREP (1). The majority of full projects were adaptation-focused and funding is exclusively grant-based. The six projects approved by the GCF are the largest SIDS projects in 2021, including supporting coastal management in the Maldives (USD 25.1 million), promoting ecosystem-based adaptation in Cuba (USD 23.9 million), enhancing early warning systems in Timor-Leste (USD 21 million), and two programmes focused on improving local adaptive capacity and food and water security in Micronesia (for a total of USD 25.2 million). Other projects in 2021 saw the LDCF approve two programmes for strengthening resilience of water supply in Kiribati and the Solomon Islands (USD 4.6 million each) and a renewable energy project in Kiribati approved by the SREP (USD 3.7 million).

**Table 2: Approved funding across themes (2003–2021)**

Theme	Amount approved (USD millions)	Projects approved
Adaptation	1,280.6	163
Mitigation	463.3	83
Multiple foci	456.4	179
REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, forest conservation, sustainable forest management and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks)	67.5	12

**Figure 3: Approved funding across themes (2003–2021)**



## Box 1: Climate finance in the LDCs of the SIDS

Nine SIDS are LDCs: Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kiribati, São Tomé and Príncipe, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. To date, USD 753 million in climate finance from multilateral climate funds has been approved for project activities within these nations, representing 33% of total SIDS funding. Over a third of finance for LDC SIDS comes from the GCF (40%), with 28% from the LDCF. Grant financing, totalling USD 654 million (or 87%), is particularly important for LDCs as increasing debt can leave countries more exposed to macroeconomic shocks. Over half of climate finance in the LDC SIDS is dedicated to adaptation projects. Seven of the LDC SIDS also qualify as fragile or conflict-affected states, thereby aggravating their vulnerability to the social, economic and environmental effects of climate change.

### References and further reading

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### Endnotes

- 1) Antigua and Barbuda, 2) Bahamas, 3) Bahrain; 4) Barbados; 5) Belize; 6) Carbo Verde, 7) Comoros\*; 8) Cook Islands, 9) Cuba, 10) Dominica; 11) Dominican Republic, 12) Fiji, 13) Grenada, 14) Guinea-Bissau\* 15) Guyana; 16) Haiti\* 17) Jamaica; 18) Kiribati\*; 19) Maldives; 20) Marshall Islands; 21) Federated States of Micronesia, 22) Mauritius; 23) Nauru; 24) Niue; 25) Palau; 26) Papua New Guinea; 27) Samoa; 28) São Tomé and Príncipe\*; 29) Singapore; 30) St. Kitts and Nevis; 31) St. Lucia; 32) St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 33) Seychelles, 34) Solomon Islands\*; 35) Suriname; 36) Timor-Leste\*; 37) Tonga; 38) Trinidad and Tobago; 39) Tuvalu\*; 40) Vanuatu\*. LDCs are denoted by \*.
- 2) For the list of SIDS and their regional categorisation see both <https://www.un.org/ohrlls/content/list-sids> and <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sids/list>.
- 3) In 2014, the last year when CFU was able to track bilateral climate funds, cumulative bilateral flows to the SIDS since 2008 included USD 28 million from Germany's Internationale Klimaschutzinitiative (IKI, international climate initiative), USD 66 million from Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI) and USD 3 million from Australia's International Forest Carbon Initiative (IFCI).

The Climate Finance Fundamentals are based on Climate Funds Update data and available in English, French and Spanish at [www.climatefundsupdate.org](http://www.climatefundsupdate.org)

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