

Small Island Developing States

Small Island Developing States or SIDS are a group of countries that are said to be more vulnerable to climate change processes across the world. They are off late in the news often because of environmental issues and concerns. In this article, you can learn all about the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), their concerns, vulnerabilities, etc. for the [IAS exam](#).

Small Island Developing States

SIDS are a distinct group of developing countries that face specific economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities or challenges.

- Currently, there are 52 countries and territories recognised as SIDS by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS).
- SIDS countries were recognised as a special case for the first time at the [Rio Summit 1992](#) (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)).
- SIDS are located over three geographical regions. They are all island territories in anyone of the following three regions:
 - Caribbean
 - Pacific
 - Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS)
- These countries face specific challenges in terms of the environment and the economy owing to their unique geography and proximity to the sea.
- They generally have a small resource base, are highly dependent on imports, face high energy costs, have infrastructure and transportation problems, fragile natural environments and very less resilience to natural disasters, among others.
- Their highly disadvantaged position in developmental issues means the international community should support them in multiple ways.

Small Island Developing States List

There are 52 countries classified as SIDS out of which 38 are [United Nations](#) members while 14 are non-UN members or Associate Members of the Regional Commissions. The following table gives the list of SIDS as of 2020.

Caribbean	Pacific	AIMS
Anguilla	American Samoa	Bahrain
Antigua and Barbuda	Cook Islands	Cape Verde

Aruba	Federated States of Micronesia	Comoros
Bahamas	Fiji	Guinea-Bissau
Barbados	French Polynesia	Maldives
Belize	Guam	Mauritius
British Virgin Islands	Kiribati	São Tomé and Príncipe
Cuba	Marshall Islands	Seychelles
Dominica	Nauru	Singapore
Dominican Republic	New Caledonia	
Grenada	Niue	
Guyana	Northern Mariana Islands	
Haiti	Palau	
Jamaica	Papua New Guinea	
Montserrat	Samoa	
Netherlands Antilles	Solomon Islands	
Puerto Rico	Timor-Leste	
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Tonga	
Saint Lucia	Tuvalu	
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Vanuatu	
Suriname		
Trinidad and Tobago		
United States Virgin Islands		

Problems Faced by SIDS

Some of the major unique problems faced by the SIDS nations are discussed in this section.

1. Climate change and sea-level rise
 - a. An overwhelming majority of the population in the SIDS countries live along the coast. A highly concentrated infrastructure and agricultural land development makes the threats from sea-level rise grave.
 - b. Sea level rise will endanger the very survival of such islands.
 - c. Despite not contributing significantly to global climate change, these nations face larger risks owing to their fragile environments and sea proximity.
 - d. Climate change can damage coral reefs and other marine lives and ecosystems of these regions and endanger both subsistence and commercial fisheries as well as food crops.
 - e. Increased frequency and intensity of storm events due to climate change will also have profound effects on both the economies and environments of SIDS.
2. Biodiversity
 - a. Biodiversity in the SIDS islands are highly threatened.
 - b. The biological diversity in these regions are of great economic, cultural and environmental importance to the people there.
3. Coastal and marine resources
 - a. SIDS countries are heavily dependent on the oceans and the seas.
 - b. Population and economic development – both subsistence and cash – are concentrated in the coastal zone.
 - c. Sustainable utilisation of coastal and marine resources are essential for the continued survival of the islanders.
4. Natural disasters
 - a. SIDS are particularly vulnerable to the pervasive impact of natural disasters.
 - b. Not only are they facing these disasters more frequently, the economic, social and environmental costs of rehabilitation are also much higher.
 - c. The impact of oil spills can also be severe on the SIDS countries.
5. Renewable energy resources
 - a. SIDS heavily depend on imported petroleum products and indigenous biomass fuels.
 - b. They face financial constraints with respect to investment costs, technology developments and management capabilities for the commercial use of renewable energy sources.
6. Transport and communication
 - a. The SIDS countries' relative isolation and distance have caused high transport costs.
 - b. Devising innovative approaches to resolving transport and communications problems and improving community access to telephone, radio and related services are major challenges.
7. Trade and finances
 - a. Most SIDS nations are left out of the global economy due to their small sizes.
 - b. They are also underrepresented in international fora like the WTO.
 - c. They are also unable to meet WTO obligations owing to severe capacity constraints.
8. Waste management
 - a. Wastes, particularly those generated by urbanisation, is a huge problem for the SIDS countries.
 - b. Their limited land area makes the use of landfills unsustainable in the long run.

- c. They are also highly vulnerable to contamination by toxic and hazardous wastes and chemicals, and radioactive materials due to their isolated oceanic location.
9. Freshwater resources
 - a. SIDS face many health problems owing to the limited and poor quality of water.
 - b. Not enough action is being taken to safeguard the watershed areas and groundwater resources.
10. Land resources
 - a. Land is a limited resource in SIDS nations. Due to the limited availability of land, there is intense competition for land use.
 - b. Also, urban settlements, agriculture, mining, commercial forestry, tourism and other infrastructure are all limited.
 - c. Degradation of the limited land areas is a major cause for concern in SIDS.
11. Tourism
 - a. Tourism is a major livelihood source for the islanders.
 - b. If not properly developed and sustainably managed, tourism can adversely affect the environment on which it is dependent heavily.

Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

AOSIS is an intergovernmental organization of low-lying and coastal small island states. Established in 1990, the chief objective of the AOSIS is to consolidate the voices of the SIDS in response to the global threat of global warming. The body stresses on the inequity of climate impacts in that these nations have contributed to less than 1% of greenhouse gas emissions but are affected to a disproportionate extent by climate change. The issues raised by AOSIS are centred on climate change, sustainable development and ocean conservation.

Headquartered in New York, AOSIS currently has 39 members.

UN Programmes of Action in Support of SIDS

Owing to the specific and unique problems faced by SIDS and their limited capacities to address them, the international community should provide adequate support to these countries. The United Nations has taken several proactive steps in this regard. Some of them are as follows.

Barbados Programme of Action (1994)

- The Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) was established by the UNGA in 1994 to reaffirm the principles and commitments to sustainable development with respect to SIDS.
- The Conference adopted the Barbados Declaration, a statement of political will underpinning the commitments contained in the BPoA.

Mauritius Strategy (2005)

- The Mauritius Strategy was adopted in 2005 to address the gaps in the implementation of the BPoA.

SAMOA Pathway (2014)

- The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States was held in 2014 in Samoa to create a new pathway for the sustainable development of the SIDS countries.

UN-OHRLLS

Established in 2001, the UN-OHRLLS advocates for three vulnerable country groups, one of which is SIDS.

