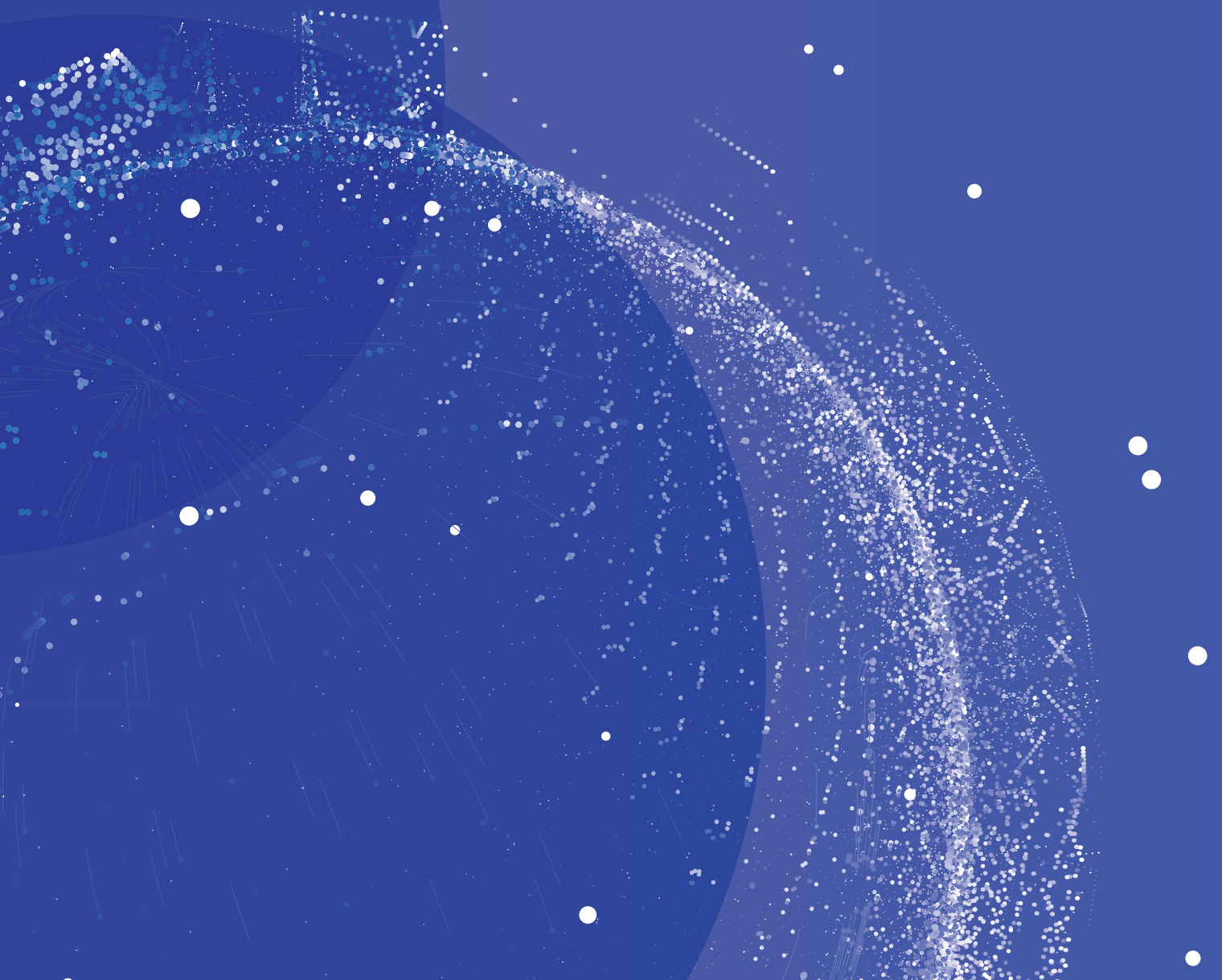


Advancing Pacific Priorities



Message by Head of Office



Josefa Maiava
Head, ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific

In 2021, amid the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) of ESCAP have re-affirmed their solid commitment to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway). Pacific member States also showed strong leadership in voicing the challenges and concerns affecting PSIDS that required concerted regional and global action at various platforms.

One such platform was the 8th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) held in March 2021 which was chaired by the Fiji Minister of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation. Participating member States welcomed contributions made to the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19 and called for increased collaboration around priority areas, taking into consideration the 2019 High-Level Mid-Term Review for the SAMOA Pathway. The Forum also noted that climate change remained the greatest threat to PSIDS and requested better access to climate finance and adaptive capacity building, referencing the 'Pacific 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent'.

At the 77th Session of the ESCAP Commission held in April 2021, PSIDS leaders including those of Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Fiji, stressed the importance of regional action for building back better from crises in the Asia Pacific region, and particularly for broadening social protection and strengthening connectivity for promoting recovery from COVID-19.

Last but not least, PSIDS participated in the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26) to urge the global community to step up efforts to achieve the Paris Agreement, as PSIDS, while least responsible for carbon emissions would bear the worst impacts of climate change. At the same time, the side event on climate mobility organized by ESCAP and PCCM-HS Partners made it clear that the Pacific would do everything possible collectively to survive sea-level rise and the climate emergency.

With 2030 rapidly approaching, progress on achieving the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs have been hampered by the triple crisis of COVID-19, natural disasters and fragile economies related to the inherent vulnerabilities of small island developing states.

This short publication is an important way of ESCAP's expressing its support to the efforts of the PSIDS to implement of the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway in the Pacific, and lists for the information of the readers the key projects and activities ESCAP has worked on in 2021 in close collaboration with our Pacific member States, Pacific regional organisations, and the UN family in the Pacific.

There will be regular updates on ESCAP's work in an effort to strengthen communication and build deeper and wider connections with member States in the Pacific and key stakeholders.

About the UNESCAP Pacific Office

The ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific (SOP – also commonly known as ESCAP Pacific Office (EPO)) covers Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, as well as American Samoa, the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, Niue and the Northern Mariana Islands as associate members.

Pacific Small Island Developing States at a Glance

GDP growth (2020)	-6.4
Weighted Average GDP per capita (2018 population and 2015 US dollars per capita)	4130.9
Population (2018)	11,734,970
Land Area (km ²)	551,341
Net ODA received (% of GNI), 2019	9.96%
Export of goods and services % of GDP	2019 – 41.8%, 2020- 27.6%
International tourism receipts (% of total exports, 2019)	44.3%

SOP serves as the gateway for ESCAP's work in the Pacific and focuses on supporting PSIDS to attain the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and implement the SAMOA Pathway).

Utilizing its comparative advantage and role as the development arm of the United Nations in Asia and the Pacific, and in response to the call by SIDS member States for UN entities to develop a SIDS-specific offer, SOP developed a Pacific Strategy 2020-2024 that responds to key challenges including climate and disaster vulnerability, geographical remoteness and smallness, increasing hardship and exclusion, and coordination challenges.

ESCAP's Pacific Strategy focuses on the following five areas to contribute to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

- Climate change and disaster risk reduction to enhance the capacity of Pacific SIDS to manage the dual risks of climate change and disasters and build resilience;
- Sustainable management and use of the oceans to unlock the potential of sustainable ocean-based economies in the Pacific;
- Regional integration and connectivity to take advantage of sustainable growth opportunities and synergies in ICT, trade, sustainable energy and sustainable maritime transport;
- Social inclusion, poverty alleviation and gender equality to realize the vision of social inclusion and equality of opportunities in the SAMOA Pathway;
- Partnership, data, monitoring and reporting to meet the unprecedented demand for authoritative data and statistics and genuine partnerships for transformative action.

To achieve these objectives, SOP (i) facilitates multilateral dialogue, knowledge sharing and networking at the national, subregional and regional levels, (ii) conducts research and develops analytical knowledge products for policy advice and technical assistance, (iii) provides capacity building support at the national, subregional and regional levels; and (iv) supports the subregional architecture in the Pacific including through cooperation with CROP agencies, UNDS and other mechanisms implemented through the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS).

I. Facilitating intergovernmental dialogue in the Pacific

" It is the smallest and the poorest among us who may face the greatest challenges in this pandemic, and in our pursuit to build back better we must remember that no island is left behind "

*H.E. David Kabua
President of the Republic of Marshall Islands
77th Session of ESCAP, 2021*

Fifth Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2021

The Fifth Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (PFSD) in 2021 was co-hosted with the Government of Fiji under the theme "Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the context of COVID-19 and the climate emergency" on 25-26 November 2021. PFSD was held in hybrid mode with more than 100 participants attending in person (Sigatoka, Fiji) and on-line. The PFSD provided an inclusive and unique platform for Pacific member States to share perspectives and learn from each other on their common priorities and approaches to address COVID-19 and the climate change crisis, and included discussions on progress in SDG implementation with a focus on SDGs 4 (Education), 5 (Gender), 14 (Oceans), 15 (Land) and 17 (Partnerships). The PFSD also incorporated a capacity building workshop to support follow-up actions highlighted through the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) of members on the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda.

The Fifth PFSD voiced the following key messages, among others:

- The Pacific priorities at COP 26 including the need for greater climate ambition, cooperation on climate finance and adaptation, dialogue on operationalizing Loss & Damage, protecting the oceans and capacity building;
- The need for urgent action and financing to address climate displacement and additional debt taken on as a result of COVID-19. PSIDS need more direct access to climate finance, innovative finance, and more flexibility in using different financing modalities. In this regard, ESCAP and PIFS will organize a Regional Ministerial Debt Conference in 2022 to discuss debt management issues and innovative solutions for PSIDS;
- Limitations in SDG data in PSIDS should be addressed through specific and sustained efforts;
- Social protection coverage still remained low in PSIDS with less than 2% of GDP spent on social protection and even less (0.5%) on disability and related measures. In this regard, ESCAP's Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific should be further contextualized for the Pacific region to take stronger cooperation initiatives;
- Stimulate the Pacific economic recovery strategy through leveraging trade priorities, while reaffirming the Pacific Aid for Trade Strategy with a focus on the Regional E-Commerce Strategy and Roadmap;
- Promote clean energy solutions in support of national SDG 7 roadmaps and utilize regional cooperation to facilitate energy transition.

II.

Situation analysis and challenges for achieving SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway: Priorities for accelerated action

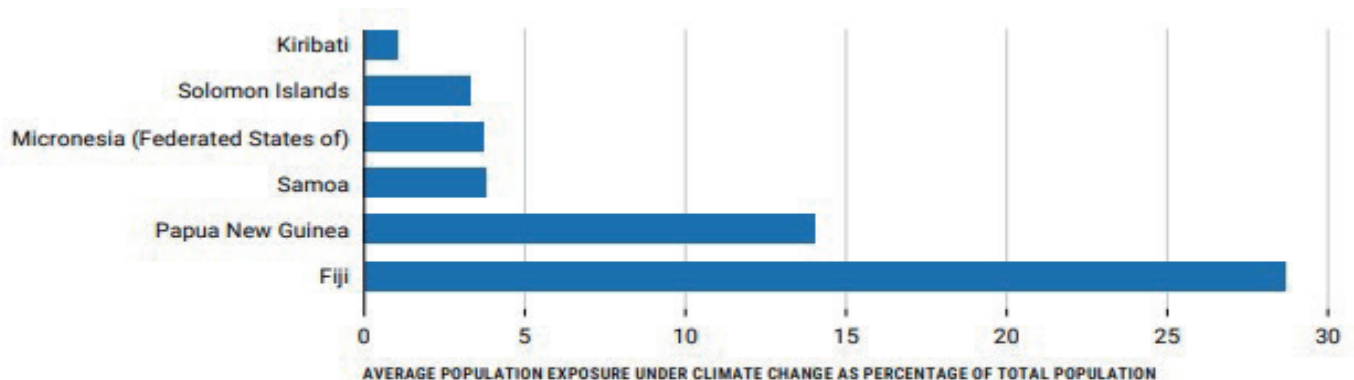
1. Climate change and disaster risk reduction

“ One of our most prominent issues is the adverse effects of climate change on our daily lives. I am thankful for the support we continue to receive from our partners which have assisted us in our tireless work to build resilience against climate change impacts and relieve pressure on our scarce and limited financial resources ”

*H.E. Taneti Maamau, President of Kiribati
77th Session of ESCAP, 2021*

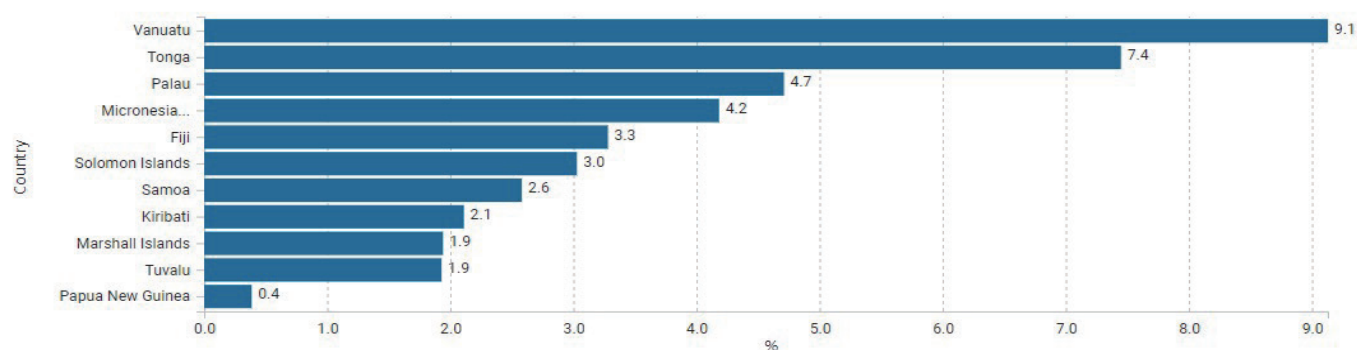
- In 2020 and 2021, PSIDS experienced the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic which were exacerbated by natural disasters including Cyclone Harold which caused extensive loss and damages in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.
- Under the worst-case climate change scenario, populations exposed to multiple hazards in PSIDS is expected to be between 1-30 per cent;
- Average annual losses (AAL) as a percentage of GDP in PSIDS are among the highest in the Asia Pacific region with AALs reaching close to 25 per cent of GDP in the case of Vanuatu.
- To address the extreme vulnerability to climate change and exposure to disaster risk of PSIDS, implementing effective climate change adaptation measures and building resilience against complex and cascading disasters are urgent priorities
- Adaptation costs are higher as a percentage of GDP in PSIDS but still only a fraction of AALs due to disasters

Average population exposure to multiple hazards under moderate and worst-case climate change scenarios, percentage



Source: ESCAP calculations, based on Climate Change Knowledge Portal, 2018; UN WPP-Adjusted Population Density 2020, v4.11; and Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) estimates 2000–2019.

Subregional adaptation costs for climate-related hazards and biological hazards, percentage of GDP



Highlights of ESCAP's work on supporting climate change adaptation and disaster resilience in the Pacific in 2021:

Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security (PCCMHS) Programme

This joint-UN agency programme is implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as the lead agency, ESCAP, International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD) and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS). The programme seeks to protect and empower communities adversely affected by climate change and disasters in the Pacific region, focusing specifically on climate change and disaster-related migration, displacement and planned relocation.

Continuing from the series of regional policy dialogues organized by ESCAP which discussed how climate change and disasters affect mobility trends in the Pacific Islands; the challenges and opportunities to enhance protection of people migrating owing to climate change; relevant initiatives at the global, regional and national levels and outline options for a Pacific regional approach, Joint Working Group was set up under the Co-Chairs, Fiji and Tuvalu, and with Member States, Regional Organisations and UN Agencies as members, to develop a regional framework for climate mobility.

Workshop on Innovative Climate Financing Instruments: Supporting Post COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery in Asia-Pacific Small Island Developing States, 23 June 2021

To support PSIDS on securing financial resources to implement priority adaptation measures and post COVID-19 recovery, ESCAP, as part of its programme on Financing for Development, organized a workshop in cooperation with PIFS with the aim to enhance the capacity of key stakeholders to understand the different types of innovative instruments of climate

finance and how to mobilize such resources.

The Workshop recognized that there was an annual average financing gap in PSIDS of around USD 220 million for climate change mitigation and adaptation in 2020, and discussed potential options for filling the financing gap including the issuance of sustainability bonds, debt-for-climate swaps, and through strengthened engagements with international financing institutions, private sector and creditor nations.

The key outcomes of the Workshop were shared at the Pacific Islands Forum Economic Ministers' Meeting in July 2021, and the Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in November 2021.

2. Sustainable management and use of the oceans

- Most Pacific Small Island Developing States are 'ocean-based economies' wholly dependent on fisheries, maritime transport, extractive industries and tourism.
- Yet progress on achieving SAMOA Pathway Priority Area (5) Oceans and Seas and SDG 14: Life below Water are not on track and lack of reliable data makes monitoring progress extremely challenging.
- The 75th session of ESCAP in 2019 with the proposal of the Chairman of the Pacific Islands Forum and President of the Republic of Nauru, decided that the theme for its 76th session would be "Promoting economic, social and environmental cooperation on oceans for sustainable development",
- Subsequently in 2020, at the 76th session of the Commission, member States adopted Resolution 76/1 "Strengthening cooperation to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific"

Action items

Enhance sustainable maritime shipping

Strengthen data and statistics for SDG 14

Promote sustainable fisheries

Curb marine plastic pollution

- Globally, 2021 marked the first year of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) and ESCAP supports its implementation in the Asia Pacific through the Regional Decade Programme launched on the Fourth Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean on 27 October 2021.

Highlights of ESCAP's work on supporting sustainable management and use of the oceans in the Pacific in 2021:

Second Global Dialogue on Ocean Accounting

The Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP) was launched by ESCAP and other stakeholders to develop a shared technical framework for ocean accounting and deliver capacity-building activities that support the development, maintenance and ongoing use of holistic ocean accounts in decision-making that link together social, environmental and economic statistics.

The Second Global Dialogue was hosted by the Government of Canada on April 20, 2021 and focused on progress on ocean accounting methodology; progress on pilot projects and updates from GOAP partners.

In addition, in 2022, ESCAP will assist PSIDS with measurement of specific ocean related indicators in the National Ocean Policy and related national and SDG initiatives with pilots in Fiji and Palau.

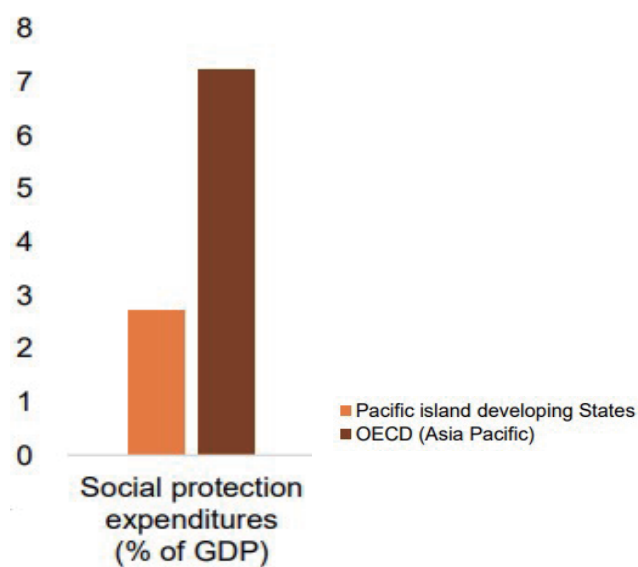
3. Social inclusion

Low social protection coverage, at a third of potential beneficiaries in the Pacific Islands, is an important indicator of vulnerability to pandemics and economic and climate-related shocks. Financing universal social protection coverage is smart investment and I recognize the need for the Pacific to look at how we can benefit from the 'Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific'

*Honourable Kausea Natano
Prime Minister of Tuvalu and Chairman of the PIF
77th Session of ESCAP*

- The unprecedented and prolonged nature of the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have a significant and longer-lasting impact on unemployment, inequality and poverty.
- In PSIDS where countries have limited capacity to respond to shocks of this magnitude, greater action will be needed to counter the negative outcomes of COVID-19 on social development.

Social expenditure spending in PSIDS



- Low rates of women's labour force participation also have left women more vulnerable to shocks, as women tend to work in informal sectors not protected by labour laws and excluded from social protection schemes.

Ratio of female to male labor force participation rate (%) (national estimate) - Pacific island small states (source: <https://data.worldbank.org/>)

Country	Most Recent Year	Most Recent Value
Fiji	2016	50.1
Kiribati	2015	63.0
Marshall Islands	2011	54.5
Micronesia, Fed. Sts.	2014	68.1
Nauru	2013	69.0
Palau	2014	75.8
Samoa	2017	57.2
Solomon Islands	2013	95.5
Tonga	2003	73.8
Tuvalu	2016	53.8
Vanuatu	2010	82.1

- Persons with disabilities in PSIDS are among the poorest and most marginalized members of society with limited access to jobs, education and social services.
- PSIDS leadership committed to upholding the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Highlights of ESCAP's work on promoting social inclusion in the Pacific in 2021:

Report on the Convention on the Rights of Persons

pathways toward CRPD compliance differ by countries, some common and noteworthy priorities for law reform included taking a gender inclusive approach and removing attitudinal and legal barriers for persons with disabilities (<https://www.unescap.org/kp/2021/inequality-discrimination-and-exclusion-assessing-crp-compliance-pacific-island-0>).

Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship

Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship programme aims to advance women entrepreneurship and market participation for poverty reduction, improved livelihoods and economic growth. The programme works to create an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs to

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