



How Small Island Developing States' (SIDS) adaptation priorities align with the UAE Framework on Global Climate Resilience

Mairi Dupar with Courtney Lindsay, ODI Global

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Guide to acronyms

AdComms	Adaptation Communications
BTRs	Biennial Transparency Reports
COP	Conference of the Parties
GGA	Global Goal on Adaptation
NAPs	National Adaptation Plans
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body for Science and Technology
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Understanding global adaptation progress



The Paris Agreement's global goal on adaptation

The global goal on adaptation (GGA) in the Paris Agreement calls for strengthened resilience, reduced vulnerability and enhanced adaptive capacity of people to climate change. Adaptation is incredibly important to small island developing states (SIDS).

SIDS are already suffering losses and damages from climate change. However, they have an adaptation gap: they know they could avoid some of these losses if they could take more robust measures to adapt and be resilient. In many cases, SIDS haven't fully assessed their adaptation potential. Virtually no SIDS has implemented all its adaptation plans, due to lack of human resources, finance and technology.

Photo: Ile a Vache, Haiti. Photo by Claudia Altamimi on Unsplash

The Paris Agreement was signed in 2015; Article 7 of the agreement contains the global goal on adaptation. However, it was only eight years later, at the United Arab Emirates (UAE) hosted COP28 in 2023, that Parties built upon the general language of the global goal, to formulate more distinct objectives. At COP28, Parties agreed the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience to further guide countries' efforts toward a more resilient world.



Parties hereby establish the global goal on adaptation of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, with a view to contributing to sustainable development and ensuring an adequate adaptation response in the context of the temperature goal referred to in Article 2.”

Paris Agreement on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2015)

The UAE Framework on Global Climate Resilience

The UAE Framework – which we subsequently refer to as the ‘GGA Framework’ in this paper – has seven thematic targets and four dimensional targets (see [Box 1](#)), as described in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the UAE decision (2/CMA.5).

The thematic targets in paragraph 9 refer to major development areas: water and food security, human health, ecosystem integrity, poverty elimination, and the resilience of infrastructure, livelihoods and cultural heritage. These themes demonstrate many substantive connections with the Sustainable Development Goals, Global Biodiversity Framework and Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction. The targets are intended to *both* guide adaptation efforts, and assist with the monitoring of adaptation progress.

The GGA Framework also contains dimensional targets in paragraph 10. These describe processes that actors undertake in the iterative adaptation cycle: i) climate risk and vulnerability assessments, ii) planning for adaptation, iii) implementation of adaptation, and iv) monitoring, evaluation and learning of adaptation efforts.

Box 1. United Arab Emirates COP28 decision on the global goal on adaptation (December 2023)

The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement...

- 6.** Adopts the framework for the global goal on adaptation;
- 7.** Decides that the purpose of the framework for the global goal on adaptation is to guide the achievement of the global goal on adaptation and the review of overall progress in achieving it with a view to reducing the increasing adverse impacts, risks and vulnerabilities associated with climate change, as well as to enhance adaptation action and support;
- 8.** Also decides that the framework for the global goal on adaptation should guide and strengthen efforts, including long-term transformational and incremental adaptation...
- 9.** Urges Parties and invites non-Party stakeholders to pursue the objectives outlined in paragraph 8 above and to increase ambition and enhance adaptation action and support, in order to accelerate swift action at scale and at all levels, from local to global, in alignment with other global frameworks, towards the achievement of, inter alia, the following targets by 2030, and progressively beyond:
 - (a)** Significantly reducing climate-induced water scarcity and enhancing climate resilience to water-related hazards towards a climate-resilient water supply, climate-resilient sanitation and towards access to safe and affordable potable water for all;
 - (b)** Attaining climate-resilient food and agricultural production and supply and distribution of food, as well as increasing sustainable and regenerative production and equitable access to adequate food and nutrition for all;
 - (c)** Attaining resilience against climate change related health impacts, promoting climate-resilient health services, and significantly reducing climate-related morbidity and mortality, particularly in the most vulnerable communities;
 - (d)** Reducing climate impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity, and accelerating the use of ecosystem-based adaptation and nature-based solutions, including through their management, enhancement, restoration and conservation and the protection of terrestrial, inland water, mountain, marine and coastal ecosystems;
 - (e)** Increasing the resilience of infrastructure and human settlements to climate change impacts to ensure basic and continuous essential services for all, and minimizing climate-related impacts on infrastructure and human settlements;

(f) Substantially reducing the adverse effects of climate change on poverty eradication and livelihoods, in particular by promoting the use of adaptive social protection measures for all;

(g) Protecting cultural heritage from the impacts of climate-related risks by developing adaptive strategies for preserving cultural practices and heritage sites and by designing climate-resilient infrastructure, guided by traditional knowledge, Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and local knowledge systems;

10. Decides that the framework for the global goal on adaptation includes the following targets in relation to the dimensions of the iterative adaptation cycle, recognizing the need to enhance adaptation action and support:

(a) Impact, vulnerability and risk assessment: by 2030 all Parties have conducted up-to-date assessments of climate hazards, climate change impacts and exposure to risks and vulnerabilities and have used the outcomes of these assessments to inform their formulation of national adaptation plans, policy instruments, and planning processes and/or strategies, and by 2027 all Parties have established multi-hazard early warning systems, climate information services for risk reduction and systematic observation to support improved climate-related data, information and services;

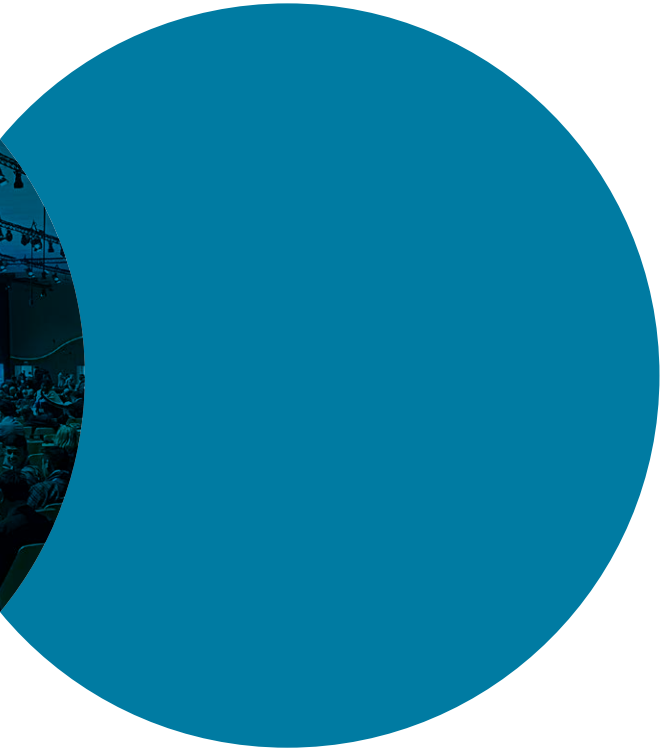
(b) Planning: by 2030 all Parties have in place country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent national adaptation plans, policy instruments, and planning processes and/or strategies, covering, as appropriate, ecosystems, sectors, people and vulnerable communities, and have mainstreamed adaptation in all relevant strategies and plans;

(c) Implementation: by 2030 all Parties have progressed in implementing their national adaptation plans, policies and strategies and, as a result, have reduced the social and economic impacts of the key climate hazards identified in the assessments referred to in paragraph 10(a) above;

(d) Monitoring, evaluation and learning: by 2030 all Parties have designed, established and operationalized a system for monitoring, evaluation and learning for their national adaptation efforts and have built the required institutional capacity to fully implement the system.

Source: UNFCCC, 2023, decision 2/CMA.5

In addition, Parties decided in UAE to apply important cross-cutting considerations to this framework for adaptation action and stocktaking. These include full inclusion and concern for the needs of women, children young people and communities, and use of Indigenous People's knowledge and local knowledge.



Indicators as part of a broader toolkit to take stock of adaptation progress

The GGA Framework is not only intended to guide adaptation action. It is also meant to help with taking stock of global progress on adaptation: to illuminate areas of achievement and where the key gaps are.

To bolster the evaluative role of the framework, a further work programme has been underway in 2024–25: the UAE-Belem Work Programme on indicators. The Chairs of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and Subsidiary Body for Science and Technology (SBSTA) appointed a group of 78 experts to come up with a package of indicators to measure progress of the thematic and dimensional targets.

An initial round of submissions to the UNFCCC yielded an incredible mapping of indicators that countries are already using, as well as more general ‘indicator ideas’ that could be further developed. The profusion of submissions totaled some 10,000 in number – with many duplicates. In November 2024 at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, Parties requested that experts would assess the global applicability and fit with the GGA Framework of potential indicators and come up with recommendations for around 100 indicators for Party consideration and adoption.

Small island perspectives



Making support for adaptation more visible in the climate negotiations

The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) has articulated the view that the indicator package should give a meaningful picture of global trends. In particular, global reporting should illuminate where the adaptation gaps are greatest, and why.¹

Although some parts of the UNFCCC machinery look at climate finance flows, and technology needs, and capacity assessments, these tracking efforts are scattered and piecemeal. Work under the GGA provides a perfect opportunity to pull together these disparate pieces and create a more coherent picture for adaptation specifically. This includes using results from any indicator package that is developed to monitor the GGA Framework targets, but also to augment with broader reporting by Party and non-Party stakeholders on the state of adaptation, and support for adaptation progress, that will contribute to the next Global Stocktake of progress on the Paris Agreement. The initial technical stages of the next Global Stocktake will begin in mid-2026 and the entire exercise, including the political conclusions, will wrap up by late 2028, before launching the next five year implementation and review cycle.

Photo: Grenada. Photo by Hugh Whyte on Unsplash

1 AOSIS in-session statements at COP28 and COP29.

Making SIDS special circumstances, challenges and achievements more visible

SIDS have special circumstances, in relation to their intense exposure to climate change itself (including climate extremes), and to their geographic features and structural economic make-up, which add further layers of vulnerability towards climate and other external shocks. These characteristics also complicate SIDS' recovery from shocks.

SIDS' special circumstances are acknowledged in the Paris Agreement and colour SIDS' positions in the UNFCCC. Meaningful monitoring of adaptation progress, from a SIDS' perspective, would use indicators under the UAE-Belem package, together with a range of other sources of data and information, to synthesise a global picture of adaptation progress. It would show how all countries are faring; and within that, amalgamated data would show how different *groups* of countries such as developed and developing countries, and SIDS and least developed countries were faring as sub-sets of the whole. The point is to amalgamate significantly beyond the national level: because individual countries are already submitting their national communications, in what is already a highly Party-centred process. However, beyond the global averages, there is also a distinct utility in amalgamating information for the specific clusters of countries for whom there are unique circumstances: SIDS count among these. Already the UNDRR's Sendai Framework Monitor (which has key areas of convergence and overlap with the GGA Framework) highlights specific *global* trends for SIDS and LDCs.²

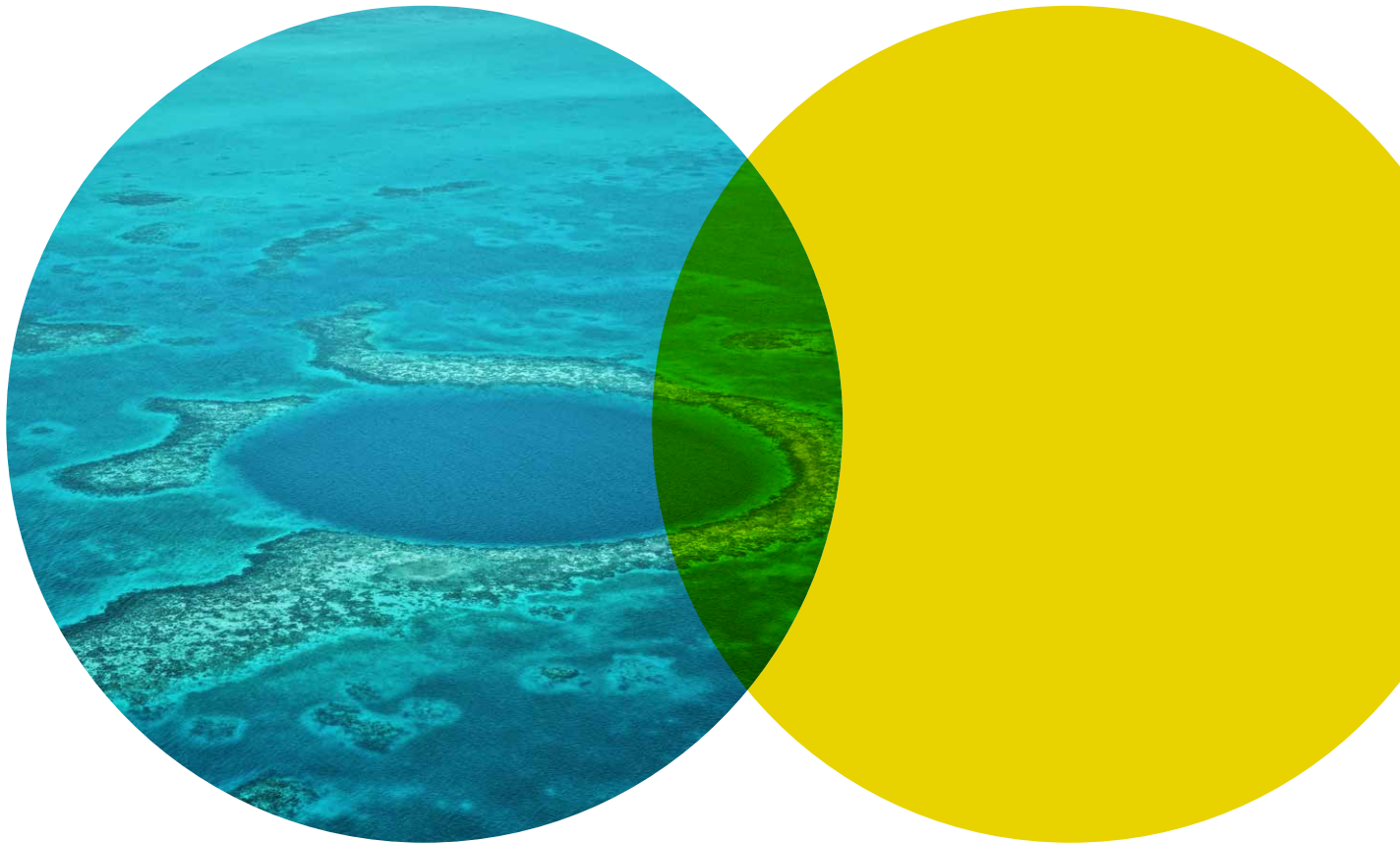


SIDS are inherently and uniquely vulnerable to exogenous shocks owing to, inter alia, their small size, geographical remoteness, highly dispersed populations, the limited scale and undiversified nature of their economies, high dependence on external markets, and extreme exposure to disasters and natural hazards, and the effects of climate change. Recognizing vulnerability does not mean that SIDS exhibit weakness or lack potential for development. Rather, it means recognizing that they are disproportionately impacted in terms of physical destruction and noneconomic and economic losses to a far greater scale than elsewhere”

The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS, 2024

2 See <https://sendaimonitor.undrr.org/>

Goal of the study



The GGA Framework's seven thematic targets are wide ranging and each of them contains several ideas. For example, the water security target talks about:

"Significantly reducing climate-induced water scarcity and enhancing climate resilience to water-related hazards towards a climate-resilient water supply, climate-resilient sanitation and towards access to safe and affordable potable water for all".

This can, in effect, be understood as several separate ideas to be actioned and monitored in relation to the effects of climate change on water:

- Reducing water climate-induced scarcity (e.g. using various water supply and demand efficiency measures to make 'less water' meet society's and nature's needs)
- Enhancing climate resilience to water-related hazards (e.g. where water-related hazards could constitute either a lack of water (drought, water stress, etc) or an excess of water (flooding) to be managed effectively)

- Towards a climate-resilient water supply (e.g. taking supply-side measures to deal with all water-related climate-induced risks)
- Towards climate-resilient sanitation (e.g. taking measures to ensure that sanitation provision is resiliently and reliably accessible in the face of all water-related climate-induced risks)
- Towards safe and affordable potable water for all (e.g. taking measures to ensure safe drinking water supply for the whole human population in the face of all water-related, climate-induced risks).

The present study was first undertaken to identify which indicators SIDS are using to measure their own adaptation progress, with a view to identifying any common indicators used which might be suitable for broader global use.

However, it quickly became clear that SIDS' communications to the UNFCCC contain *more general language* about their sectoral and cross-cutting adaptation priorities. The information in SIDS' communications is better described as being 'indicator areas' such as 'taking measures to ensure safe drinking water supply for the whole human population in the face of all water-related, climate-induced risks' rather than indicators per se, although sometimes there is a blurred line between the two. An indicator for climate-resilient drinking water provision would more likely be a measure of whether people had enough fresh water to meet their needs, accompanied by analysis of how adaptation measures are addressing climate impacts on water.

Given the constraints on information available, the purpose of the study then shifted to instead identify which *indicator areas* or sub-components of the GGA Framework targets the SIDS are most focused on. Some examples from SIDS' national communications are provided in quote marks in each thematic section. It is hoped that this information will be of use to SIDS and other Parties when the draft indicator package of the UAE-Belem work programme is available for review.

Identifying indicator areas that are aligned with SIDS' stated policy and action priorities is very different from saying that SIDS are ready to report on indicators under these specific subject areas. The process of data standardisation, data compilation methods, analysis and reporting needs to be defined by technical specialists for any indicator that is adopted. However, that technical work of developing a data standard, specifying who would compile the data, who would analyse it, and who would report it to the UNFCCC, is to be decided for each item in the final indicator package that is decided.

Methodology

The methodology for this study comprised a desk review of all the most up-to-date Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Adaptation Communications (AdComms) and Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs) published to the UNFCCC website by the 39 members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS, www.aosis.org) as of 31 March 2025.

There was insufficient time to review the full history of national communications by all SIDS parties to the UNFCCC, and so, there may be a slight underrepresentation of matters that SIDS are reporting, by excluding those further documents.

First, the NDCs and NAPs were reviewed and key priority action areas were noted that are associated with (are sub-topics within) the seven thematic areas described by the UAE Framework on Global Climate Resilience. These sub-topics were compiled in a spreadsheet. Then, a more detailed review of all NDCs, NAPs, Adcomms and BTRs published to date was undertaken, and each country was coded a '1' if it reported climate risk assessment, planning and/or action (as appropriate, see table headings below). By the cut-off date for this research, 31 March 2025, all 39 SIDS with AOSIS membership had published NDCs to the UNFCCC portal, 13 SIDS had published NAPs and 9 SIDS had published BTRs. There was significant overlap between the category 'Adcomms' and the NAPs category although any separate, standalone Adcomms were taken into account.

A further detailed review of SIDS' expressed needs for international support was undertaken. As described further below, it was not possible to generate a quantitative analysis of costed needs in USD figures, based on the disparate information that countries provided. Instead, a qualitative assessment of support needs was undertaken and is summarised here.



**Which adaptation action
areas are currently
prioritised by SIDS**

Global goal on adaptation (GGA) targets: In which thematic areas are SIDS concerned about climate risks and taking action?

Summary from SIDS' published NDCs, NAPs, AdComms and BTRs, as of 31 March 2025

9a. Water

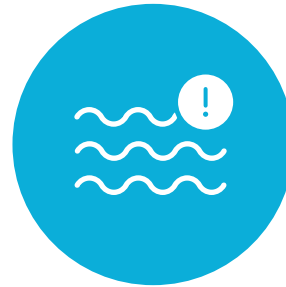


Concerned about water security

90%

Taking action on water security

90%



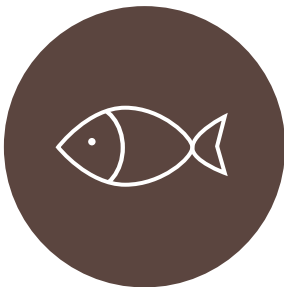
Concerned about threat of flooding, sea level rise and drought to water security

77%

Taking action to reduce risk of flooding, sea level rise and drought to water security

77%

9b. Food and agriculture



Concerned about food security*

77%

Taking action on food security

72%



Concerned about agricultural productivity**

85%

Taking action on agriculture

85%

9c. Health



Concerned about public health

85%

Taking action on public health

69%

9d. Ecosystems



Concerned about key ecosystems

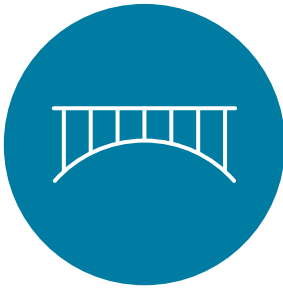
87%

Taking action to strengthen ecosystem resilience

87%

* Most SIDS reporting food security risks mention a mix of risks to fisheries, agriculture and/or forests; some mention the risks of relying on imports. ** Although the GGA target does not mention fisheries, almost every SIDS discussing climate risks to agriculture also mentions climate risks to offshore fisheries and/or inshore and coastal aquaculture as an economic/revenue issue.

9e. Infrastructure



Concerned about infrastructure

90%

Taking action on infrastructure

90%

9f. Poverty and livelihoods



Every SIDS that has published an NDC, NAP, AdComm or BTR reporting its climate risks and adaptation actions has highlighted the impacts of climate change on livelihoods and people's wellbeing.

9g. Cultural heritage



Concerned about cultural heritage

23%

Taking action on cultural heritage

21%

Note: Concerned about means a climate risk assessment has been undertaken. Taking action means an Adaptation plan exists.



GGA target 9a Water

A majority of SIDS report that they are taking integrated water resources management approaches to manage water wisely in the face of climate change-related pressures. Many are also looking at a range of water use efficiency measures to make this precious resource go further. Saline intrusion into groundwater supplies is a particular concern to atoll nations, as they often lack rivers and surface water.

Illustrative water-related actions in SIDS' NDCs include:

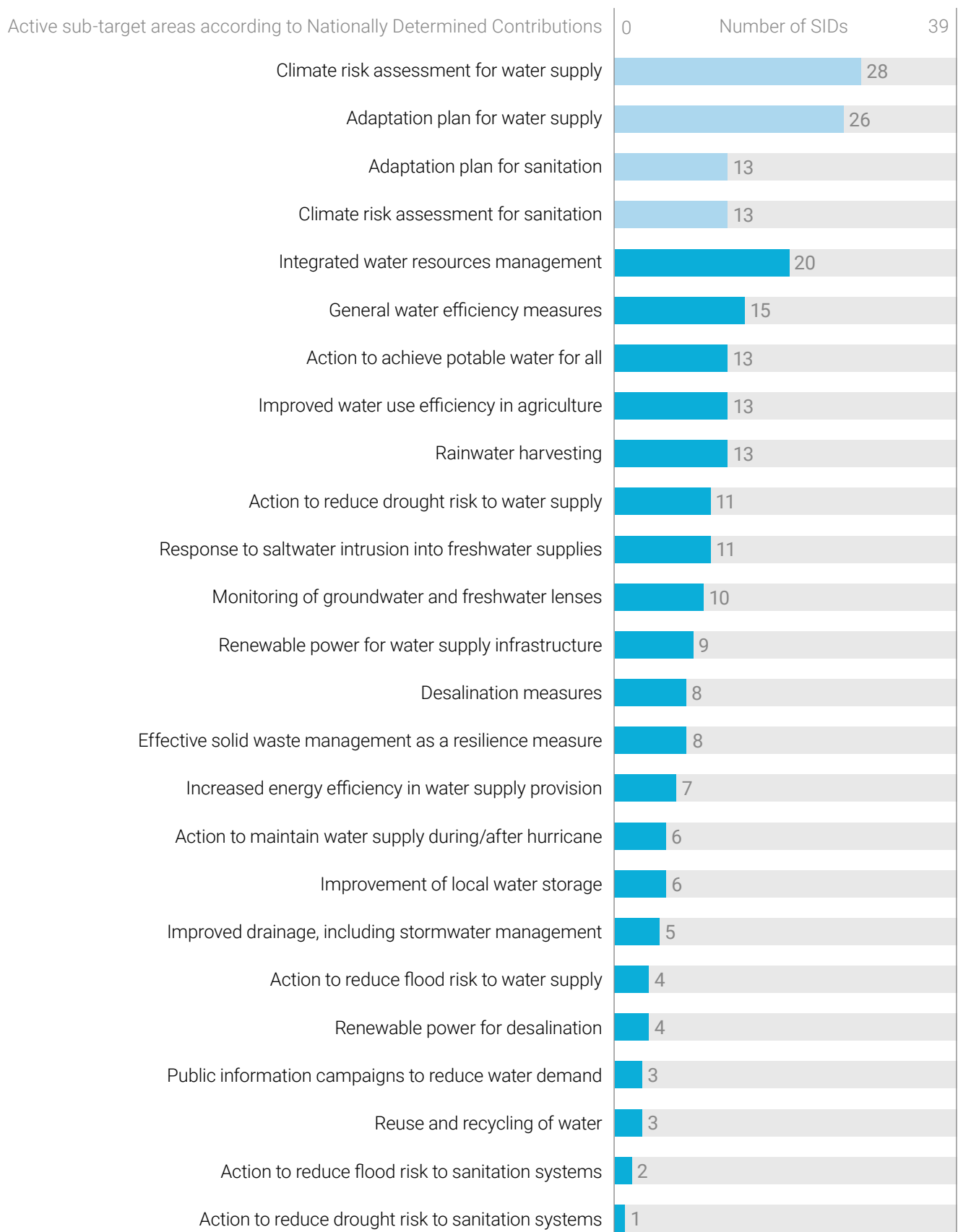


Design and implement an integrated water resources management (IWRM) program in watersheds to reduce the impacts of climate change, including the establishment of an IWRM agency... “Design and implement groundwater hydrological monitoring network to inform drought monitoring activity”

Belize, NDC, 2021

GGA target 9a Water

All listed water priorities and actions are addressing climate-related pressures



■ Counted if any reference, not on thoroughness ■ Planned or underway



GGA target 9b Food and agriculture

Food security and agriculture, aquaculture and wild fisheries productivity are overwhelming concerns for SIDS – mentioned as a risk area in all SIDS’ reporting to the UNFCCC, although the extent to which detailed risk assessments have been undertaken for food systems and agriculture production is not entirely clear from their reporting documents. The GGA target’s inclusion of food systems maps well to SIDS’ reliance on multiple sources of production across land and sea, and to the heavy reliance of many SIDS on food imports. The GGA target does not explicitly mention fisheries, which are of significant importance for people’s food security, livelihoods and (sometimes) licensing revenues, across SIDS, and also have connections to cultural heritage.

There is some overlap between this thematic target and the water and ecosystems ones: many SIDS are concerned to manage irrigation water more efficiently in food production; and many wish to invest and train personnel in more regenerative agriculture and agroforestry methods that will increase ecosystem health. Some SIDS NDCs even discuss the contribution of well-managed farm and agroforestry lands as ‘green infrastructure’ to improve water and topsoil retention and reduce erosion, landslides and flooding.

Illustrative food and agriculture-related actions in SIDS’ NDCs include:



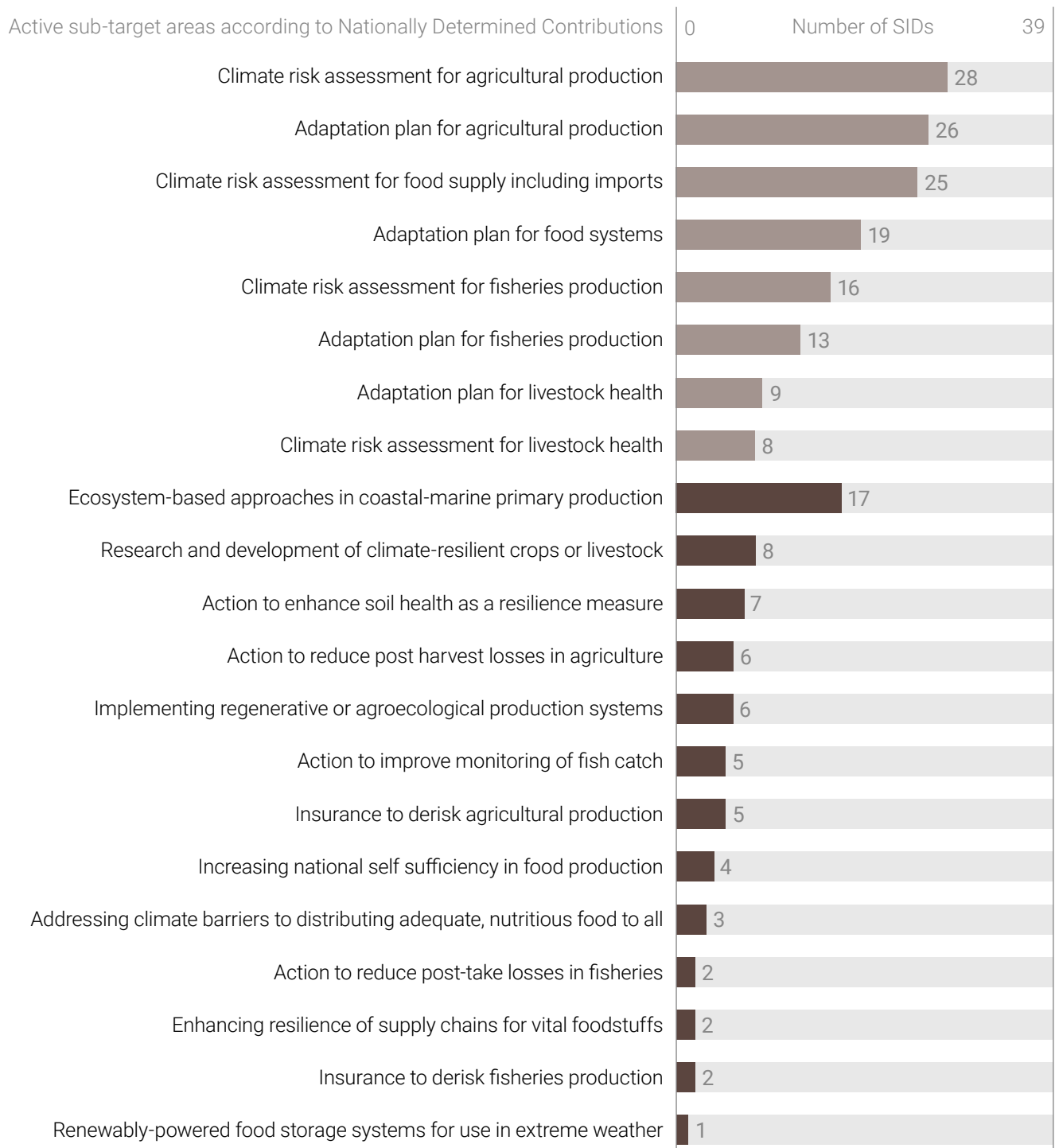
Develop, adopt and implement science and ecosystems based plans to rebuild depleted fisheries stocks, and ensure adaptive fisheries management to respond to climate change and uncertainties of shifting ocean ecosystems, based on the UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the FAO’s guidelines and in agreement with regional fisheries management organisations;

Protect local fish consumption and domestic small scale fisheries over international tourism industry supply, exportation and large scale international fisheries”

Cabo Verde, NDC, 2020

GGA target 9b Food and agriculture

All listed food and agriculture priorities and actions are addressing climate-related pressures



■ Counted if any reference, not on thoroughness ■ Planned or underway

*E.g. fisheries, seaweed



GGA target 9c Health

Most of the reported actions underway or contemplated by SIDS in the health sector are to do with undertaking better research and surveillance into climate-related health risks. These run the gamut of vector-borne and water-borne diseases, which may proliferate as a result of extreme weather events and their aftermath, and non-communicable diseases such as circulatory and respiratory conditions that may be exacerbated as a result of heatwaves and other extremes. Approaches to climate-related mental health issues including different forms of anxiety, depression and trauma – either generalised or resulting from a disaster event – are beginning to appear in country plans.

Illustrative health-related actions in SIDS' NDCs include:



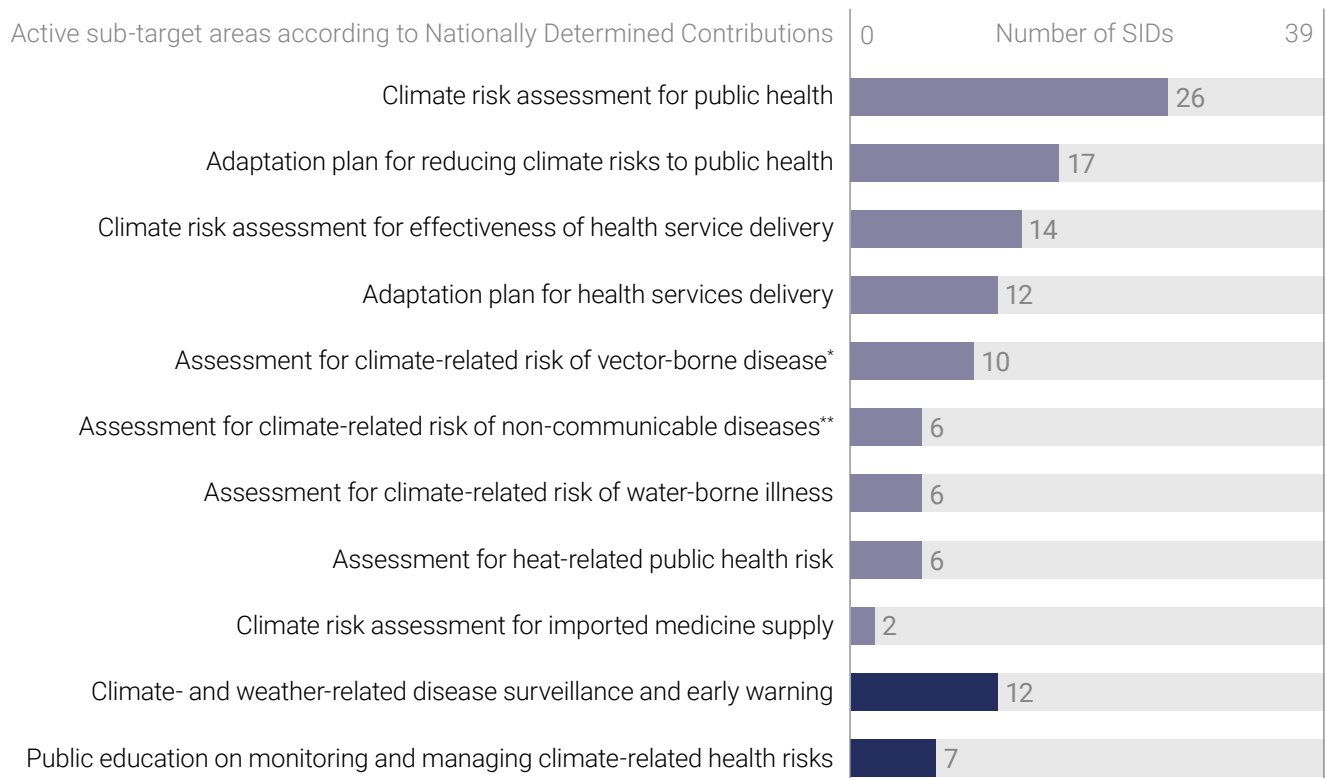
Build local capacity to plan for and address climate change adaptation in the health sector, including capacity for risk assessments and increasing institutional readiness.

- Improve health surveillance related to climate change.
- Undertake research to improve understanding of the links between climate change and health trends.
- Monitor, evaluate and coordinate climate related actions and research in the health sector.
- Work with international and local partners to support the implementation of the Seychelles Climate Change and Health Action Plan and build capacity in this area.”

Seychelles, NDC, 2021

GGA target 9c Health

All listed health priorities and actions are addressing climate-related pressures



■ Counted if any reference, not on thoroughness ■ Planned or underway

*E.g. dengue, malaria **E.g. circulatory, respiratory, mental illness



GGA target 9d Ecosystems

Ecosystem integrity is a towering theme of SIDS' NDCs. All countries mention ecosystem condition in some way in relation to human adaptation and resilience. Ecosystems are recognised as being the lifeblood of economies as well as of people's socio-cultural lives. Some of the sub-themes are shown here.

Many SIDS' communications also recognise the inherent existence values of biodiversity and the threat of climate change to biodiversity. Thus, not only do SIDS governments talk about the importance of enhancing ecosystem resilience because of the many economically-costed ways in which nature provides goods and services to people; but they also talk about the importance of protecting ecosystems and reversing biodiversity loss in their own right. There is an emergent trend in the more recent SIDS NDCs to mention how innovative financing mechanisms could be deployed for the purpose of nature conservation and restoration.

Illustrative ecosystems-related actions in SIDS NDCs include:



Establishment of payments for ecosystem services and other sustainable financing options to enhance protection of habitats for climate resilient communities (water purification, flood mitigation, carbon sequestration, etc.)”

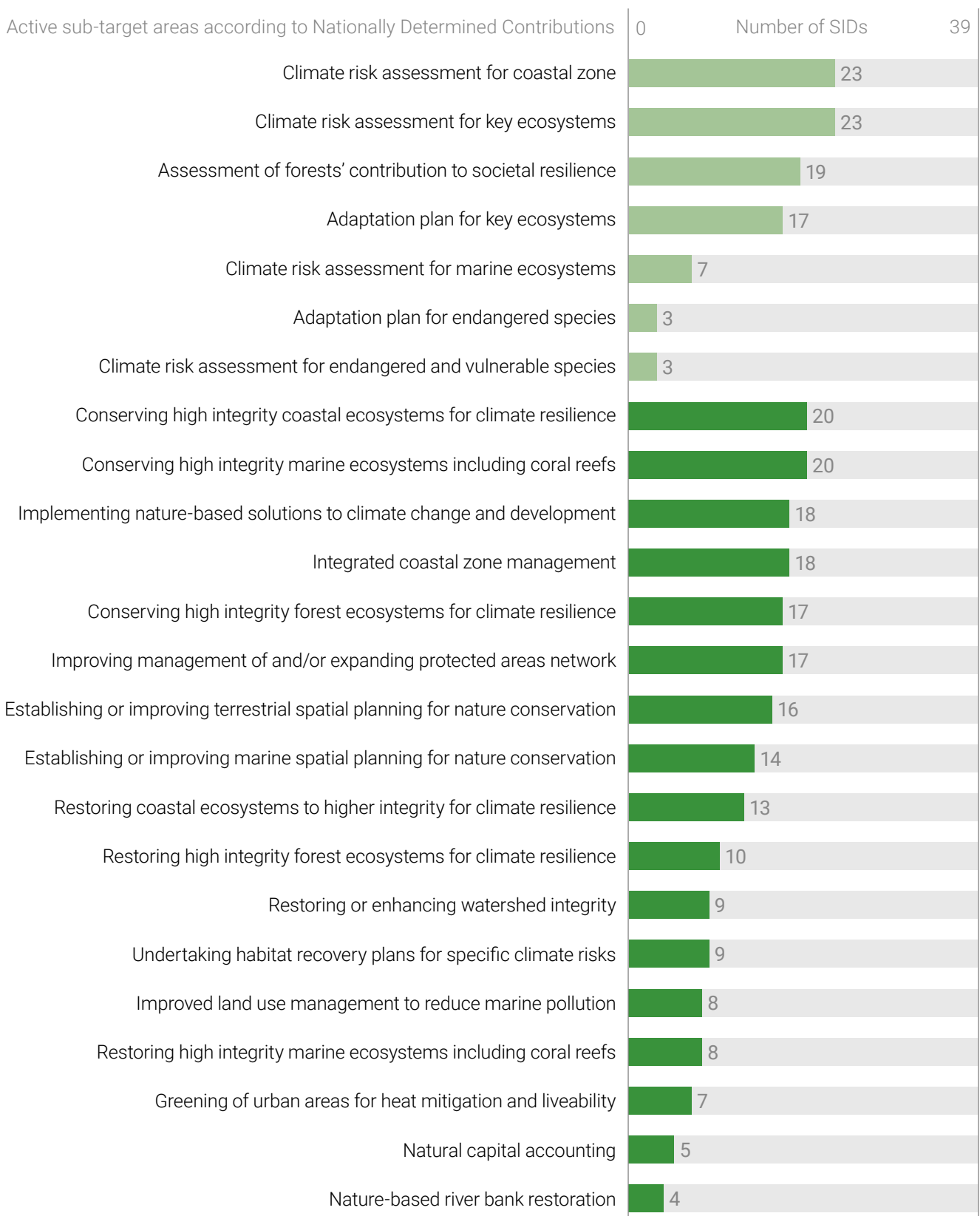
Bahamas, NDC, 2022

“Vanuatu commits to quantifying the value and benefit of ecosystem services for resilience and building this into planning and budgeting... including adding questions about ecosystem services in national surveys.”

Vanuatu, NDC, 2020









GGA target 9d Ecosystems

Priorities and actions are addressing the potential of ecosystems to reduce climate risks to society, and also, how to reduce climate risks for species and habitats



■ Counted if any reference, not on thoroughness ■ Planned or underway

GGA target 9d Ecosystems *Continued*

Active sub-target areas according to Nationally Determined Contributions	0	Number of SIDs	39
Undertaking species recovery plans for specific climate risks	 4		
Conserving high integrity freshwater ecosystems e.g. rivers and wetlands	 3		
Payments for ecosystem services	 3		
Addressing damaging influxes of sargassum	 2		
Assessment of future species movement and options for climate refugia*	 2		
Enhancing biodiversity on agricultural lands	 2		
Action to secure climate refugia for threatened species	 1		
Restoring high integrity freshwater ecosystems such as rivers and wetlands	 1		

 Counted if any reference, not on thoroughness  Planned or underway

*This topic is scientifically assessed by the IPCC in its Sixth Assessment Report, Working Group 2 Report, Small Islands Chapter (2022)



GGA target 9e Infrastructure

The climate resilience of infrastructure, including in some cases the need to retrofit existing infrastructure, are also towering concerns in SIDS reports to the UNFCCC. Actions proposed or underway include not only 'grey' (built, or engineered) infrastructure, but also nature-based green infrastructure, and hybrid grey-green approaches. For Pacific SIDS in particular, infrastructure planning and climate resilience is much concerned with the long distances between island territories.

Illustrative infrastructure-related actions in SIDS' NDCs/NAPs include:



Establish a Build Back Better Best Practice Guideline for rebuilding infrastructure to be more resilient if damaged during disasters (2024–26).

Identify, develop and implement training and education programmes for local people to improve their skills and capabilities to develop and maintain infrastructure and services across the RMI (Republic of the Marshall Islands) (2026–2040).

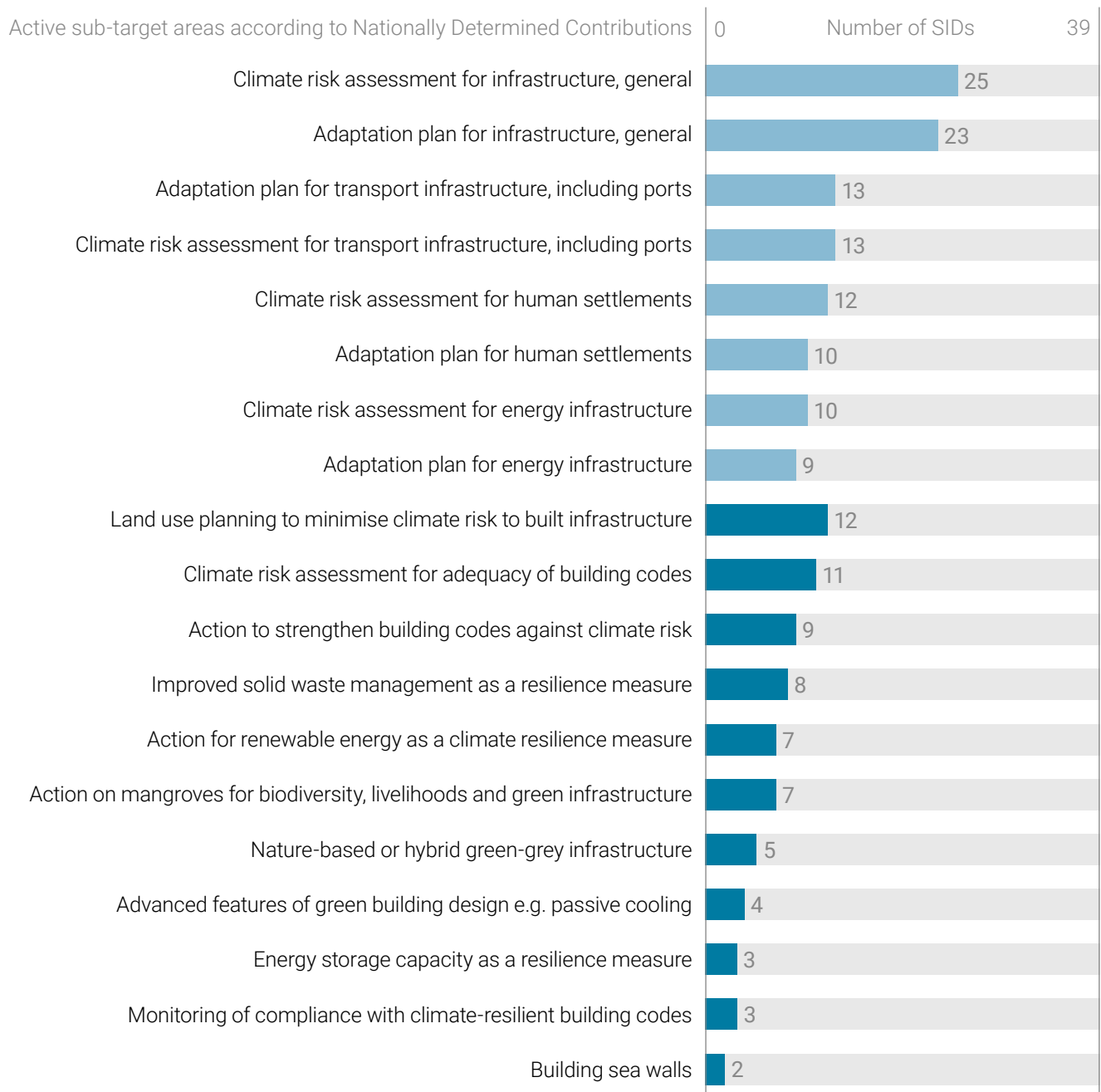
Launch a programme to improve the communication and transport within and between the outer atolls to reduce disruptions, provide for resilience and backup systems (2026–2040).

Provide input to planning for, and implement maintenance and investment per the long-term levels of infrastructure agreed as part of the long term adaptation pathways (2045–2070)."

Marshall Islands NAP, 2023

GGA target 9e Infrastructure

All listed infrastructure priorities and actions are addressing climate-related pressures



■ Counted if any reference, not on thoroughness ■ Planned or underway



GGA target 9f Poverty and livelihoods

Climate risks to poverty and livelihoods tended not to be expressed exactly in those terms, in SIDS' national communications to the UNFCCC. In general, NDCs, NAPs, BTRs and Adcomms talked about risks and adaptation actions at economy level. Many of them mention specific groups of workers, such as smallholder farmers and artisanal fisherfolk, working in natural-resource dependent sectors that are particularly exposed to climate change; or micro and small-scale enterprises lacking the capital and often, the insurance cover, to bounce back rapidly without support, from climate shocks. The analysis for this section zooms in on specific livelihood modes that were mentioned in these reports; but overall, the GGA target 9f on poverty and livelihoods is rather broadly and loosely framed to be able to align neatly to the current reporting by SIDS.

Illustrative poverty and livelihoods-related actions in SIDS' NDCs include:

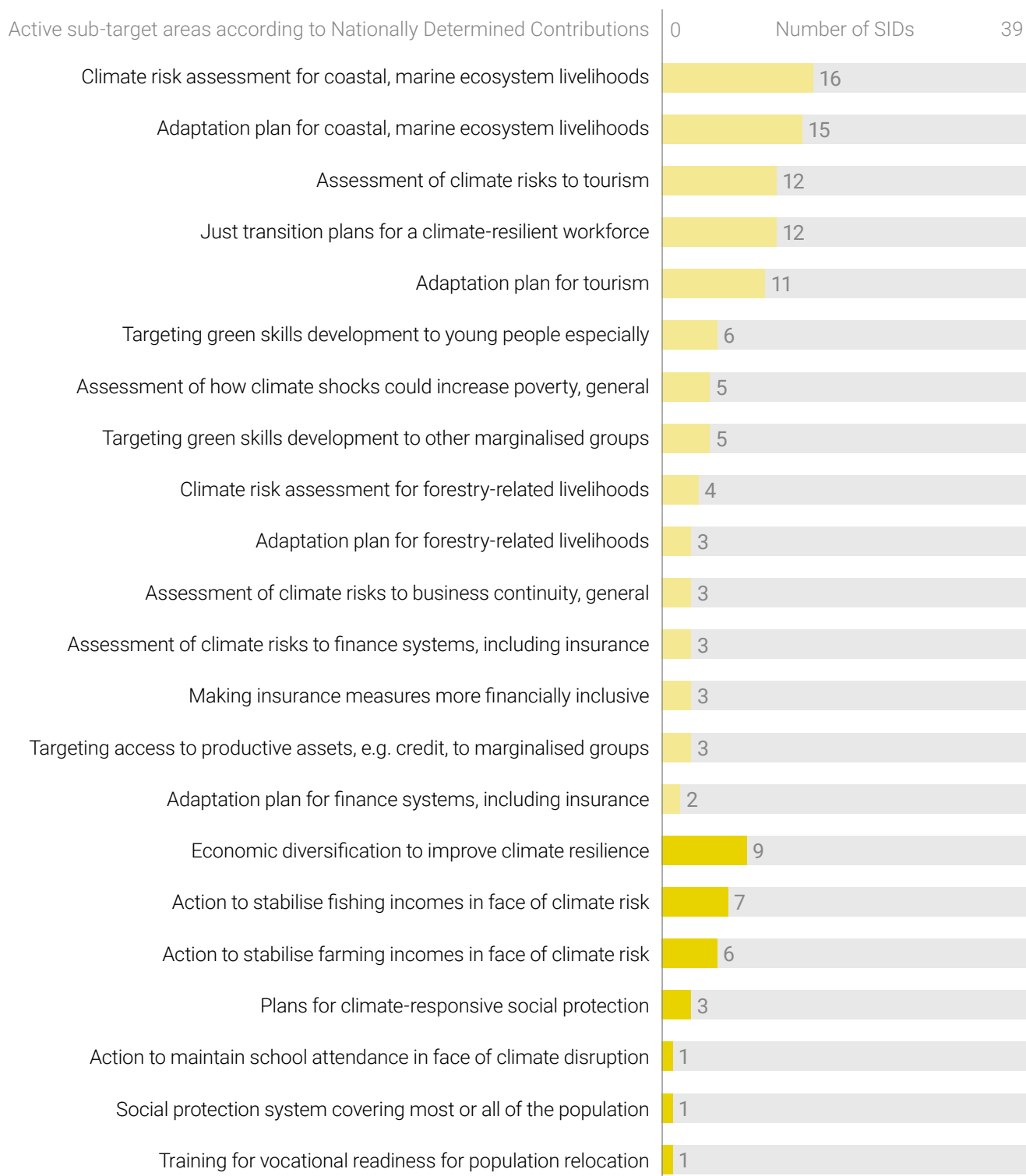


In 2017, Fiji completed its comprehensive Climate Vulnerability Assessment of the country and economy, on the basis of which it identified priority focus areas to be addressed through climate adaptation measures. The CVA projected that by 2050, over 6.5 per cent of Fiji's GDP could be lost due to tropical cyclones and floods, with the number of people being pushed into poverty every year increasing by 25 per cent."

Fiji, NDC, 2021

GGA target 9f Poverty and livelihoods

All listed socioeconomic development and livelihood priorities and actions are addressing climate-related pressures



■ Counted if any reference, not on thoroughness ■ Planned or underway



GGA target 9g Cultural heritage

Cultural heritage is the theme that is least reported on in SIDS' adaptation-related communications to the UNFCCC. This study did not, however, review SIDS' submissions on loss and damage, and it is well recognised that some of the most poignant losses to small islands have been in the cultural domain. A certain portion of these losses and damages may be averted or minimised, at least in the short term, by taking adaptation action, but this is a very sensitive issue area that has attracted much internal discussion in affected countries. Some SIDS express their fears of reaching hard limits to adaptation that could save cultural heritage assets.

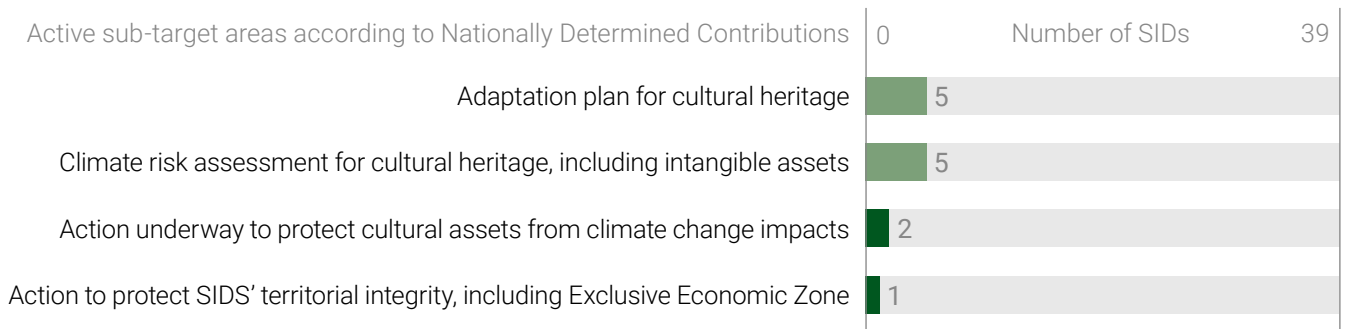
Illustrative cultural heritage-related actions in SIDS include:



A case study looking at loss and damage in the Maldives from a cultural perspective also found that various sites of historical and cultural significance are at risk due to coastal erosion. This includes the country's oldest cemetery, which is located near the eroding coastline of S. Meedhoo, featuring ancient carved coral gravestones and other elements of significant historical, cultural and communal value. Its location and the worsening erosion in the island have gradually exposed the cemetery to storm surges and tidal swells (MCCEE and SLYCAN Trust, 2023). The Government has enacted emergency coastal protection measures around the area, but it is observed that these are insufficient, and sustainable measures are required to safeguard the site."

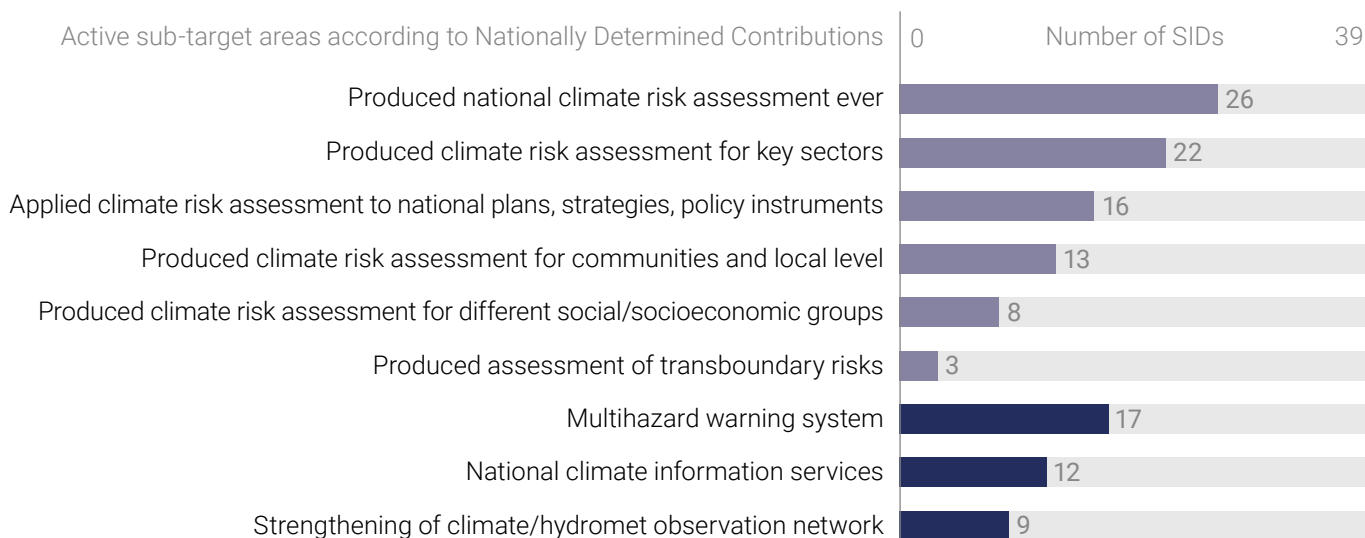
Maldives BTR, 2025

GGA target 9g Cultural heritage

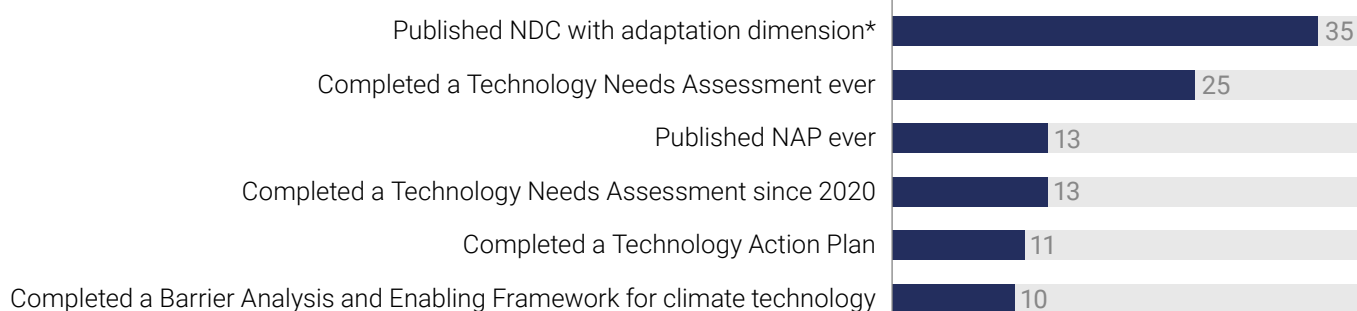


■ Counted if any reference, not on thoroughness ■ Planned or underway

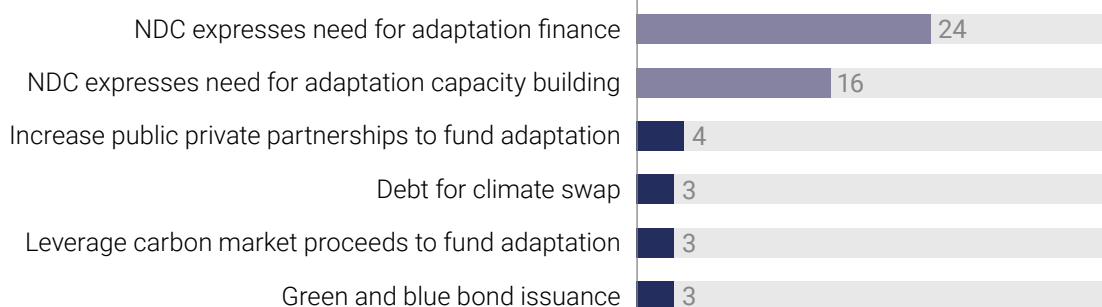
GGA target 10a Risk assessment dimensions



GGA target 10b Planning dimension



GGA target 10c Implementation dimension



GGA target 10d MEL dimension



■ Counted if any reference, not on thoroughness ■ Planned or underway

*Based on latest NDC published on UNFCCC NDC registry

GGA cross-cutting dimensions:* Priority action areas mentioned in SIDS' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

If issues are not included in a SIDS' NDC, it does not necessarily mean that the SIDS considers it an unimportant issue, simply that it is not highlighted in this communication to the UNFCCC. Most SIDS are highly capacity constrained, may affect their submission of reports and plans to the UNFCCC.

Rights



Securing and promoting human rights



Securing and promoting 'intergenerational justice'



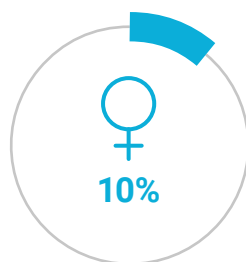
Securing and promoting children's rights



Securing and promoting the rights of people living with disability

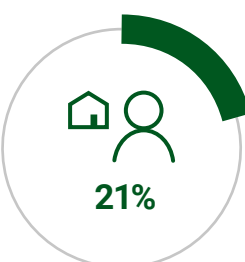


Securing and promoting the rights of Indigenous Peoples

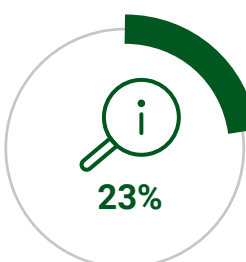


Securing and promoting the rights of women

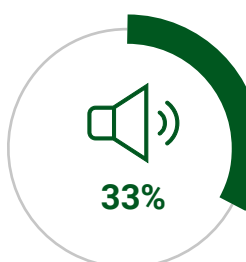
Knowledge systems



Capitalising on indigenous and local knowledge for climate resilience



Creating robust, transparent and accessible climate information management systems



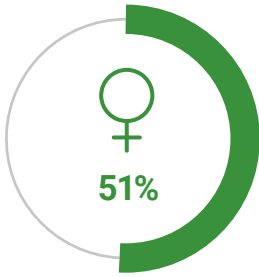
Prioritising public education and information campaigns on climate impacts, risks and actions



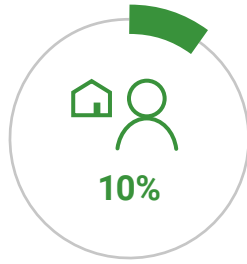
Recognising the need to better communicate and implement existing environmental laws

* These priority SIDS action areas are relevant to Paragraphs 13 and 14 of the UAE COP28 decision on the Global Goal on Adaptation.

Specific skills and needs



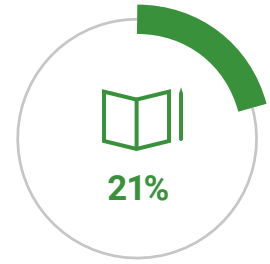
Targeting women's climate resilience skills and needs



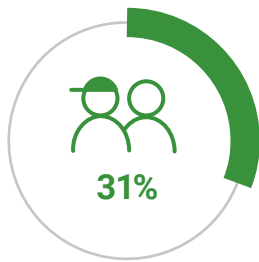
Targeting Indigenous People's climate resilience skills and needs



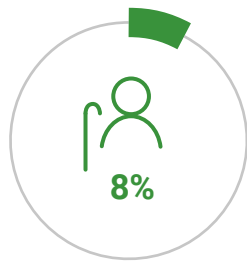
Targeting children's climate resilience support needs



Targeting children's climate education



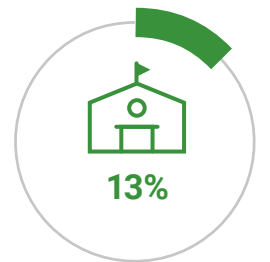
Targeting young people's climate resilience skills and needs



Targeting senior citizens' climate resilience skills and needs



Targeting the climate resilience of vulnerable micro and small enterprises



Increasing the climate resilience of schools

Transformation



Taking actions that government classifies as 'transformative' or 'transformational'

Needs for support



ODI Global undertook a further analysis of the needs for external support expressed by SIDS in their Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs). The BTR reporting template, as part of the Enhanced Transparency Framework for the Paris Agreement, specifically invites Parties to articulate their support needs for adaptation, if required. Support is typically broken down into the three ‘means of implementation’ categories: finance, capacity building, and technology transfer and access.

Parties were requested to submit their first BTRs, using the new reporting format, by end of 2024. However, given their special circumstances and limited capacities, this and other reporting deadlines are voluntary for SIDS. At the time this study was undertaken in April 2025, with a cut-off date for government documents of 31 March 2025, only nine BTRs had been uploaded by SIDS to the UNFCCC portal.

These documents were assessed, with the view to repeating the analysis in the future when more BTRs become available.

Photo: Malé, Maldives. Photo by Ishan @seefromthesky on Unsplash

The study looked at whether the new BTR reporting format lends itself to the understanding of SIDS' specific support needs according to the GGA thematic areas (9a–g) and/or the GGA dimensional targets (10a–d).

In brief, the answer is: SIDS are just beginning to provide insights into their specific needs for financing, capacity building, and technology across the GGA target areas. The reporting is generally broad and high level. They tend to lack precise quantification of needs and as such, do not currently provide a foundation for establishing measurable baselines in the aggregate. Additional data collection, standardisation, and guidance would be required to make the BTRs suitable for such a purpose. Key informant interviews with SIDS government representatives show a high degree of determination to achieve detailed costings and support needs in this way; but they recognise that even the work of achieving detailed and credible costings and scoping studies (e.g. for capacity building and technology) themselves require a certain degree of resource, which may be lacking.

Characteristics of the support needs described in the first SIDS BTRs are:

- Support needs are mainly implied rather than explicitly stated across most adaptation areas.
- Belize has provided detailed costings at sectoral level.
- Monitoring and Evaluation is referenced in approximately half of the BTRs. While Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) is widely included, it is primarily focused on mitigation rather than adaptation.
- There are divergences across countries, with Singapore declining to cite any needs for external support, and Cuba and Trinidad and Tobago omitting adaptation support needs, and focusing on mitigation support needs.
- Mention of specific financing mechanisms – such as blue bonds, carbon markets, and debt-for-nature swaps – varies by BTR, with only a few countries referencing some of these options.

The study then looked broader again, across the full suite of UNFCCC communications: NDCs, NAPs and AdComms, as well as BTRs, to establish whether SIDS' support needs could be synthesised from these, as a whole. Taking all types of communication into account, again we see that SIDS take highly individualised approaches to how they articulate their support needs.

As well as financial needs, these documents discuss needs for capacity-building and for access to and diffusion of appropriate technologies.³ The study looked at:

1. To what extent are the support needs in these broader communications aligned with the GGA Framework and its targets; and
2. To what extent are these support needs costed or uncosted?

On the first question, alignment with the GGA targets is not a given; sometimes there is a fit with the GGA thematic targets (as with the AdComms of Jamaica and Antigua and Barbuda). But, AdComms and NAPs state a profusion of further support needs. Some of these align to the 'cross cutting considerations' of the GGA Framework, or a combination of these and the GGA's dimensional targets, e.g. initiatives to enable ambitious gender mainstreaming or integrate climate-smart planning with community development needs.

Many priority support needs in these SIDS' documents are not captured by the GGA Framework's targets and cross-cutting issues. Instead, they call for resource mobilisation for: data collection, knowledge management, legislative, educational and public engagement efforts.

For example, Cabo Verde, St Vincent and Grenadines and Tonga are among the countries whose NAPs have costed for climate-aligned capacity building and education plans, research programmes on climate change impacts, pilot-testing of adaptation approaches, and communications.

On costings, the minority of all of these national communications provide detailed costings for adaptation activities, and costings tend to be for the kind of 'systems-wide strengthening' measures described in the two paragraphs above (education, legislation, etc) rather than for actions that align with GGA thematic or dimensional targets. Haiti's NAP is a notable exception: Haiti provides specific costings for priority adaptation actions (such as agroforestry, climate-smart agriculture, etc.) by government department, year by year, for the period of its NAP.

Some SIDS (such as Timor Leste, Marshall Islands, Fiji) published their NAP without detailed costings: stating their intention to either develop detailed costings or project pipelines as the next step. Such costings may be available from government departments in the years following NAP publication, but are not readily available on the UNFCCC portal.

The NDCs generally highlight priority areas for adaptation action and express the overall need for means of implementation, without delving into detail.

3 It should be noted that many SIDS have submitted Technology Needs Assessments to the UNFCCC (many before the Covid pandemic era); these were not included explicitly in the study, and are more focused on technological requirements than on costs.

In summary:

- Every SIDS has communicated a need for significant support for adaptation action across the board in its UNFCCC communications, but most SIDS have not expressly stated 'we need support specifically for climate resilient water management, or food systems...etc'.
- The way that SIDS are articulating support needs does not currently map neatly to what is in the GGA framework, although there is every potential for SIDS to begin aligning more with the GGA framework over time, if they have access to enough support for the foundational work that is necessary before they can fully articulate their support needs: support for climate risk assessments, and scoping and validating adaptation options.

Finally, and critically, the UAE-Belem Work Programme should look at how much data disaggregated for SIDS may be available through reports of the Standing Committee on Finance and how this can inform GGA negotiations and the stock-taking of adaptation progress.



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