

Small Island Developing States Future Forum 2024

CALL FOR PAPERS

(Extended Deadline – December 1, 2023)

November 2023

Outline

The ODI Resilient and Sustainable Islands Initiative (RESI), in collaboration with UN-OHRLLS, UN-DESA and AOSIS, is issuing a call for up to 10 policy-focused research papers by academics and other experts to support the SIDS Future Forum being planned for mid-March 2023 (context of the forum discussed below). This is an unrivalled opportunity to engage with donors, SIDS governments and international organisations, feeding insights into the policy process in advance of the Fourth International Conference on SIDS in Antigua-Barbuda in late May 2024 (SIDS4).

We intend to commission two papers on each of the five themes (i.e. 10 papers in total) that have crystallised from the various SIDS4 preparatory meetings in mid-2023:

1. Revitalising our economies: new strategies for diversification and growth
2. Transformative action for climate resilience and environmental protection
3. Forging a path to empowerment, equity, inclusion, peaceful societies and safe communities
4. Strengthening institutional and statistical capacity
5. Means of implementation (generating a strong 'enabling environment')

We invite potential authors—whether individuals or small teams—to develop proposals that fit within one of these broad themes.

A detailed explanation of each and some indicative questions to consider can be found below. These questions are designed to stimulate ideas around possible analytical agendas, but we encourage proposals that pose other questions and range more widely, as long as they remain within the spirit of the given theme.

The commissioned papers must collectively make a meaningful contribution to advancing the objectives of the SIDS Future Forum. Their core purpose is to provide new ideas, evidence and insights in a digestible format for policymakers to help shape thinking on five agendas that have already begun to take thematic shape. On that basis, they will support the development of SIDS4 and the Antigua-Barbuda Accord for SIDS (ABAS) 2024-34.

Timeline

The timeline for this process is exceptionally tight, so prospective authors should only tender an application if they can meet the following deadlines and participate fully in all envisaged activities.

Running alongside the paper preparation process is a series of Expert Dialogues constructed around each of the five themes. These have a dual focus: (a) to provide a space where academics and other researchers in the RESI Affiliate network (and beyond) can engage with SIDS stakeholders to discuss the evolving SIDS4 policy agenda; and (b) to act as paper development workshops where authors can receive feedback from RESI Affiliates as they write them.

Monday December 1, 2023 (5pm UK time) – Deadline for proposals

Monday December 4th – Decisions communicated to applicants

Monday December 11th – Deadline to confirm participation and sign contract

Thursday December 14th (9pm UK time) – Virtual inception workshop (Dialogue One)

Monday January 22nd 2024 – Deadline for first drafts of papers

Thursday January 25th (9pm UK time) – Dialogue Two - Revitalising our economies: new strategies for diversification and growth

Thursday February 1st (9pm UK time) – Dialogue Three - Transformative action for climate resilience and environmental protection

Thursday February 8th (9pm UK time) – Dialogue Four - Forging a path to empowerment, equity, inclusion, peaceful societies and safe communities

Thursday February 15th (9pm UK time) – Dialogue Five - Strengthening institutional and statistical capacity

Thursday February 22nd (9pm UK time) – Dialogue Six - Means of implementation (generating a strong ‘enabling environment’)

Monday March 4th – Deadline for final papers

Late March (dates TBC) – SIDS Future Forum: presentation to policymakers

Monday March 25th – Deadline for submission of invoices and travel expenses

April-onwards – Publication and promotion of papers in advance of SIDS4

Application process

What kind of papers are we looking for?

The context in which the SIDS4 conference takes place is discussed further below, but a key point to note is that it occurs at a critical juncture: small islands are facing their most inauspicious development panorama since independence, with a series of climatic tipping points likely to be breached in the near future (1.5 degrees Celsius was temporarily breached for a record number of days in the summer of 2023). So, it is vital that the ABAS underpins genuinely transformative change—in terms of both domestic adaptation and demands made of the international community—paving the way for resilient prosperity. Consequently, the commissioned papers must be situated at the intellectual cutting edge.

We are looking for original, thoughtful, forward-looking and penetrating analyses of key policy problems that can offer a novel set of insights to help shape the pressing questions that will structure conversations at SIDS4 and, ultimately, the decade that follows. These will be aligned with the challenges outlined in the outcome documents of the SIDS regional preparatory meetings, but presented in a way that is radical in ambition and focused in extent.

Guidance on content:

- i. They can (and perhaps should) draw on an author's accumulated expertise and existing published work, but they cannot be a simple retread or literature review of things that are well known;
- ii. They generally need to engage with a wide range of scholarship and other literatures in order to distil the 'state of the art', but they must do so in way that is succinct, focused and digestible for an elite policy audience;
- iii. Although there is no expectation that authors will undertake extensive original primary research for these papers, they should nonetheless embody a degree of methodological sophistication, both in terms of sources of data deployed and existing work distilled;
- iv. They should make use of case studies demonstrating where progress has been made in overcoming obstacles, and where policy solutions under each of these themes have been effective in particular islands or contexts; and, finally
- v. They should suggest strategies for how these can be replicated and scaled across SIDS.

Guidance on length and structure:

- We anticipate that the papers will be relatively short: ideally 5,000—8,000 words long,¹ so somewhere between a lengthy policy brief and shorter research paper.
- They should be expansive, but focused, and full of analytical insight.
- They must be easily digestible for policy audiences who have limited time for deep reading.

Background reading:

Prospective authors may wish to look at our recent RESI publications to get a sense of tone, formatting and some of the interventions we have already made into these policy debates, all of which straddle the boundary between policy brief and research report:

- [A Global Bargain for Resilient Prosperity in SIDS](#);
- [A Fair Share of Resilience Finance in SIDS](#);
- [Enhancing Access to Climate Finance for SIDS](#).

We would also strongly encourage prospective authors to read our summary paper on the regional and interregional meetings that happened during the summer of 2023, and do so alongside the contextual information found in the later sections of this call:

- [Preparatory Meetings for the Fourth International Conference on SIDS](#).

How to submit your proposal

In order to apply, please send the following to c.lindsay@odi.org.uk by the deadline of 5pm UK time on Monday December 1, 2023:

1. A brief covering letter explaining your suitability for the role and experience.
2. A short proposal for your paper (max two pages) that outlines the central question, argument and structure; an initial synthesis of literature and key debates; broad methodological approach and datasets used; empirical examples; and outline recommendations, including consideration of recipients of those recommendations, ideas for scaling up, strategy for overcoming barriers to implementation etc.
3. A two-page CV for each author detailing main employments, relevant publications, grants, consultancies, fellowships etc.

Remuneration

Each author (or team, where papers are co-authored) will receive an honorarium of £3,500 for their participation and this will be paid on successful completion of the final version of the paper in late March 2024.

One author from each team will also be fully funded (flight, accommodation, subsistence) to attend and present their work at the SIDS Future Forum in person in March 2023. The

¹ The longer the paper, though, the more onus there is on authors to ensure that the structure is easily scannable. By the same token, the shorter the paper, the more onus there is to ensure the requisite depth of analysis. We will support authors to strike the right balance, given the specific agenda in their paper, and to ensure coherence of the collection as a whole.

Forum will be held in conjunction with UN-DESA, UN-OHRLLS, AOSIS and facilitated by Island Innovation. There will also be a hybrid element to ensure global participation.

Please contact Dr Matt Bishop (m.bishop@sheffield.ac.uk) and Dr Courtney Lindsay (c.lindsay@odi.org.uk) with any questions about the process or for informal guidance on a potential proposal.

Context

The Fourth International Conference on SIDS (SIDS4) takes place in Antigua and Barbuda from 27-30 May 2024. This crucial summit will shape the next decade of policy and advocacy by, and for, SIDS as they seek to respond to systemic threats such as climate change and geopolitical instability. It thus represents a critical fork in the road as the most important of the decennial conferences to have ever taken place. The 10-year agenda that emerges from it—the Antigua and Barbuda Accord for SIDS (ABAS)—will need to find solutions to a range of development challenges that could soon become intractable, including debt sustainability, decreasing productive capacity, increasingly devastating climatic events, and constraints in accessing climate finance needed to address these challenges.

Its predecessor agreement, the S.A.M.O.A Pathway 2014-2024, was appropriately ambitious, acknowledging SIDS' vulnerabilities and proposing a wide-ranging program of action on economic, environmental and social priorities. The Pathway devoted sections to, for example, climate change, oceans and seas, water and sanitation, and food security and nutrition. It recommended actions by governments and calls for assistance from development partners and investment from the private sector to build resilience.

However, the ambitions of the S.A.M.O.A Pathway have not been fully realised. This is because the global context has become more inauspicious for SIDS, inhibiting post-pandemic recovery and aggravating geopolitical tensions. SIDS have been unable to access sufficient affordable development finance or absorb amounts needed, limiting their ability to chart new, resilient and sustainable development paths.

The ABAS 2024-2034 will likely focus on critical domestic issues (including productive capacities; providing basic services and climate action) and push for appropriate levels of external assistance to achieve these outcomes. It is important these challenges are correctly understood – whether they are externally or domestically-driven; and if they are persistent and entrenched or emerging issues that SIDS have not faced before (or not to the same extent). It is equally as important that examples of 'what works' are recognised and shared so the next ten-year agenda can be built on the best available evidence and good practice.

Refining the SIDS agenda for 2024-34

The ABAS requires fresh thinking and should be informed by the latest evidence. To achieve this, RESI proposes to host a Future Forum for SIDS that will bring leading academics together with policy makers from international and regional organisations and SIDS governments, to nurture a new type of conversation, exchange ideas, and derive solutions that will help set an ambitious but focused agenda for achieving resilient prosperity by 2034.

Academics and other expert researchers from within the RESI network—comprising over 50 Affiliates from prominent universities and research institutes across Europe, Australia, the Caribbean and the Pacific—will be commissioned to prepare cutting-edge 'state of the art' papers that highlight old and new policy problems facing SIDS, and where examples and solutions have and/or could be found. These will be aligned with the challenges outlined in

the outcome documents of the SIDS regional preparatory meetings, but presented in a way that is radical in ambition and focused in extent.

Facilitated question and answer sessions during the Future Forum will allow SIDS policy-makers to discuss the applicability of proposed solutions from the working papers. The papers will then be finalised and packaged into **working documents** to be promoted at the SIDS4 Conference and used as supporting material/annexes to the ABAS. RESI will also put together a supplementary library of knowledge products and synthesis documents for SIDS, organised around the five core themes in the ABAS. This database will be made available to all SIDS4 Conference participants as background reading material, and subsequently provided as an open access resource (through the RESI webpage) so it can continue to be used by SIDS and their partners to inform implementation of the ABAS.

Thematic sessions and topics

The conference will be run over 1-2 days with five interactive sessions of 60-90 minutes each. Ten conference papers will be prepared and presented at the conference, two for each of the five thematic sessions described below. For each session, there will be a short presentation of key messages from each of the papers, followed by a 45-minute facilitated Q&A with in-person and virtual participants.

A. Revitalising our economies: new strategies for diversification and growth

Most SIDS have experienced progressively slow growth for the last three decades. Generally, they experience difficulty in generating development due to debt overhang, and limited access to affordable finance, along with expensive transport infrastructure, lack of affordable, reliable communicating infrastructure, over-dependence on tourism, among others. Their conditions have worsened since the 2008 financial crisis, further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. They are battling increasingly devastating climate events, coupled with de-globalisation, which affects their ability to take further advantage of, and develop new niche products and services for the global market, for example, offshore finance, out-migration, and sovereignty sales. However, there are much talked about opportunities in the blue economy and offshore work that are beginning to take shape. ***What is the potential for SIDS to leverage technologies and exploit new opportunities at scale in ways that deliver strong growth and broad-based development?***

B. Transformative action for climate and resilience and environmental protection

Climate change is accelerating, and the goal of 1.5 degrees was breached for a number of days in the summer of 2023. Yet, SIDS are unable to access adequate climate finance to build climate resilience to secure future social and economic development. They are increasingly being recognised as large ocean states with disproportionate amounts of global diversity compared to their size; the blue-economy is much touted as an opportunity for growth. Yet, they are struggling to protect this asset and to exploit it for social and economic gains. Furthermore, because they are ocean states, they are best placed to lead the preservation and restoration of this critical public good. ***What mechanisms can be devised that permit SIDS to generate new resources that allow them to exploit economic opportunities from their oceans, adapt to climate change, while supporting the preservation and restoration of this crucial global public good?***

C. Forging a path to empowerment, equity, inclusion, peaceful societies and safe communities

SIDS generally have strong democracies, relatively high levels of human development and decent health outcomes. However, these coexist with dominant executives, weak civil society and limited protection of minorities. Furthermore, threats to the social panorama in SIDS are multiplying, from rising non-communicable diseases to youth disempowerment and increasing levels of social conflict and violence. Gender inequality and violence toward women and girls remain vexing issues. ***How can SIDS strengthen social capital while leveraging new technologies and innovations—in both policy and practice—to ensure greater empowerment, equity, inclusion and peace?***

D. Strengthening institutional and statistical capacity

While efforts have been made to simplify and speed up application processes for climate finance, and to support SIDS in delivering projects and programmes, funding applications, project development, implementation and reporting requirements remain onerous and time-consuming for SIDS. Part of the problem is the severe data gaps that prevent them from demonstrating adaptation and development needs, and developing evidence-based policies to inform these priorities. ***How can severe capacity constraints in SIDS be overcome, including through the delivery of long-term capacity development, and development of data and knowledge sharing platforms?***

E. Means of implementation (or what we have called the enabling environment)

SIDS have an impressive record in generating plans of action at the decennial conferences, but, as these expand, they suffer from weak implementation and monitoring. Given the way the crises of the past decade have disproportionately affected SIDS, the international community is increasingly accepting of the reality of their vulnerability, but will need more convincing to unlock the financial resources and types of long-term support needed to generate resilient prosperity in SIDS. This in turn requires a set of demands that are focused but ambitious, and against which progress can easily be measured. ***How can SIDS achieve more widespread support from IOs and other UN member states, and ensure enhanced implementation of the next 10-year agenda?***

Each working paper will make use of case studies demonstrating where progress has been made in overcoming obstacles, and where policy solutions under each of these themes have been effective in particular islands or contexts. Authors will suggest strategies for how these can be replicated and scaled across SIDS.