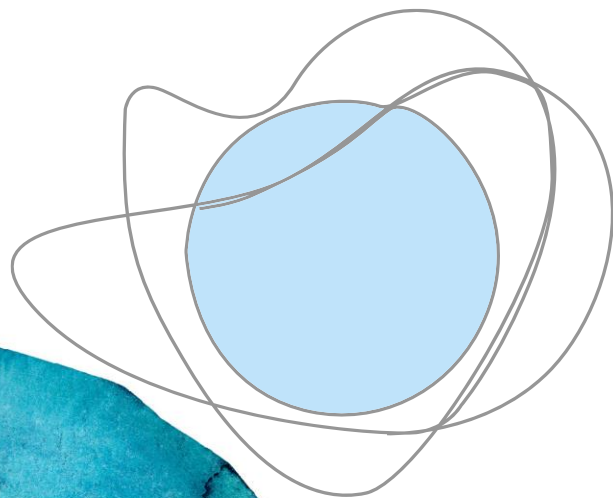


POLICY BRIEF

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# Enhancing data for development: policy imperatives for tracking the implementation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States in the Caribbean



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# Introduction

For small island developing States (SIDS), sustainable development is a delicate balance of pursuing economic growth, social development and environmental stewardship in the context of economic volatility, social challenges, climate change threats and global uncertainties while striving to build resilience. Recognized as a special case for development since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, SIDS remain highly vulnerable to external shocks due to their small economies, limited connectivity and reliance on external markets. Over the years, global frameworks such as the Barbados Programme of Action (1994), the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (2005) and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (2014–2024) have helped shape SIDS development priorities. However, traditional challenges remain, including those related to climate change, sea level rise and unsustainable levels of public debt, while new threats, such as pandemics and a new regime of protectionism in international trade and migration, continue to shape the development of SIDS.

Building on past efforts to promote sustainable development in SIDS, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States (ABAS) was adopted at the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States in May 2024 by the Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives of the United Nations Member States. This ten-year plan (2024–2034) prioritizes economic resilience, social wellbeing and equity, environmental sustainability and access to financing, while aligning with global frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2024). A core component of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda is the call to establish a systematic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework, which builds on the Samoa Pathway's monitoring system and aligns with SDG targets and indicators. This framework envisages biennial regional reviews and progress reports to support policymaking and strengthening of implementation accountability.

However, an assessment of the Samoa Pathway implementation by Caribbean SIDS (ECLAC, 2023a) found critical data gaps across all five thematic areas. No country reported data on climate change or sustainable transportation, with major gaps in disaster risk reduction, tourism and gender equality. These gaps hinder progress in monitoring and evidence-based policymaking. They reflect broader challenges, which point to limited statistical capacity, fragmented data systems, weak data governance frameworks, and inadequate funding for data generation, collection and coordination as underlying causes of persistent information gaps (DESA, 2023). These structural issues are compounded by inadequate inter-institutional and inter-agency coordination and financial constraints, further limiting comprehensive data collection, analysis and reporting.

For the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda M&E framework to serve its intended purposes, investment in statistical infrastructure, stronger institutional coordination and harmonized reporting frameworks will be essential. These investments will enhance the statistical capacity of member States to collect, process and report data on the progress in the implementation of the Agenda, thereby providing critical information to governments and stakeholders on the effectiveness of policy, finance and capacity building initiatives being implemented towards achieving the Agenda's outcomes. Therefore, given the state of data in the subregion, Caribbean SIDS must engage in early action to address data gaps that could delay implementation and undermine the desired outcome of the Agenda.

# Background

To understand why a renewed focus on managing and governing data is necessary, it is important to examine the evolution of global development frameworks that have shaped the SIDS agenda to date. The evolution of global development frameworks for SIDS reflects an increased understanding of their unique vulnerabilities. The Barbados Programme of Action, adopted in 1994, was the first to outline a comprehensive response to SIDS-specific challenges, identifying 14 priority areas such as climate change, natural disasters and capacity-building. The Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, adopted in 2005, reaffirmed these priorities while addressing gaps in means of implementation, with greater emphasis on financing, trade and climate resilience as well as disaster risk reduction. It also acknowledged ongoing constraints, including declining official development assistance and weak integration of sustainable development into national policy (United Nations, 2005). A decade later, the Samoa Pathway broadened the scope further by promoting inclusive economic development, strengthening partnerships and integrating climate action more centrally. It marked a shift from identifying challenges to implementing strategic actions and fostering partnerships, all aimed at enhancing the resilience and sustainable development of SIDS.

While these frameworks provided a foundation for addressing SIDS-specific priorities, persistent challenges, including limited access to concessional finance, weak institutional capacity and poorly integrated data systems, have hindered effective implementation and monitoring (ECLAC, 2023a). Recognizing the need for a more targeted and results-driven approach, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda was adopted to strengthen resilience, data governance and access to development financing. Unlike its predecessors, the Agenda places greater emphasis on building robust data ecosystems and institutional capacity, enabling SIDS to track progress, inform policy and improve access to financing and global support mechanisms (ESCAP, 2024; SIDS4, 2024).

## **The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda and the need for a strong monitoring and evaluation framework and reporting mechanisms**

To advance a more targeted and results-driven approach to the SIDS development agenda, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda framework places renewed emphasis on implementation, with particular focus on how progress will be monitored, evaluated and reported. Effective implementation of development frameworks depends on strong data governance, institutional and technical capacity and the establishment of a systematic monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework. Such systems are critical for ensuring accountability, guiding decision-making, and tracking progress. For Caribbean SIDS, this need is especially important given long-standing challenges related to fragmented data systems, capacity and technological constraints, and the misalignment between global indicators and the indicators used in measuring national development priorities.

With this in mind, SIDS have called for a dedicated M&E framework under the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda. This framework is being developed by an inter-agency task force led by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). The indicators for the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda are expected to align with SDG indicators while leveraging existing reporting mechanisms, including the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework

for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement and the multidimensional vulnerability index, to avoid overburdening national statistical systems<sup>1</sup> (NSSs) (SIDS<sub>4</sub>, 2024).

However, existing SDG monitoring tools may not fully capture the specific aspirations of SIDS as articulated in the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda. Although all actions under the Agenda align with one or more of the 17 SDGs at the goal level, only 31% of actions directly correspond to SDG targets, compared to 71% under the Samoa Pathway (ESCAP, 2024). This highlights the Agenda's tailored focus on the distinct challenges facing SIDS, including climate resilience, ocean governance and economic diversification, priorities not always addressed by global indicators. As such, existing SDG indicators will need to be complemented with customized Agenda indicators for countries to sufficiently monitor their progress in its implementation.

Furthermore, a strong M&E system will not only support evidence-based planning and policymaking but also enhance the ability of SIDS to access climate and development financing by presenting data clearly demonstrating progress, needs and impact in the different dimensions of sustainable development. To support this, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda establishes a multi-layered reporting process, including annual progress reviews through the high-level political forum on sustainable development, biennial regional assessments by United Nations regional commissions and a midterm review by the United Nations General Assembly. These mechanisms are designed to identify implementation gaps, propose course corrections, and enhance visibility and accountability on global platforms.

## Strengthening data governance and capacity-building

For SIDS, robust data management systems are not only foundational to effective policy but essential for monitoring and reporting progress across increasingly multidimensional and interconnected development agendas. However, longstanding institutional weaknesses and human resource, technical and technological constraints have undermined efforts to build data-driven governance structures in the Caribbean. In many countries, NSSs remain fragmented, under-resourced and constrained by outdated legal frameworks which do not reflect modern statistical standards and the principles of open data.

According to a comprehensive assessment of Caribbean statistical legislation, no country has fully incorporated the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in their statistics act or ordinance. While many national statistical offices (NSOs) apply good practices, their enabling legislation often fails to guarantee professional independence, clear mandates for coordination, or adequate authority for data sharing across agencies and sectors (ECLAC, 2020). These gaps are particularly problematic in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, by extension, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda, given its alignment with the SDGs and the need to measure progress against a vast set of indicators requiring high-quality, timely and disaggregated data.

The CARICOM Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics<sup>2</sup> identifies several systemic constraints that continue to hamper statistical capacity: limited human and financial resources; a lack of harmonized data frameworks; the digital divide; and weak institutional arrangements for inter-agency cooperation. The digital transformation

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<sup>1</sup> A national statistical system comprises all institutions and entities within a country that are responsible for the collection, processing, dissemination and use of official statistics. This includes the national statistical office as well as other government ministries, departments and agencies that produce data relevant for policy and planning (UNSD, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> The Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics is a strategic framework developed by CARICOM to modernize and strengthen statistical systems across the Caribbean Community. It was endorsed by CARICOM Heads of Government in 2018 and spans the period 2019–2030.

of data ecosystems has also been uneven across the region, further entrenching disparities in access to data and the technologies needed to generate, store and analyse it (CARICOM, 2018).

In the lead-up to the adoption of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda, stakeholders from across the Caribbean reaffirmed these concerns. During regional consultations, they emphasized that the effective implementation of the Agenda would require a new generation of statistical governance—one that includes modern legal frameworks, integrated NSSs, and adequate financing to enable regular production and dissemination of official statistics (DESA, 2023).

In recognition of these realities, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda places unprecedented emphasis on strengthening data governance, capacity-building and institutional coordination. Specifically, the agreement calls for capacity development in data collection, analysis and use, as well as the establishment of stronger systems for data protection, transparency and sharing (United Nations, 2024). A central pillar of this effort is the proposed SIDS Centre of Excellence, which includes a dedicated SIDS Global Data Hub to support regional data harmonization and innovation.

To further operationalize these commitments, DESA and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) were tasked with conducting capacity-building workshops to help national statistical offices improve data collection, analysis and reporting (United Nations, 2024). Strengthening national data infrastructure and investing in digital transformation are seen as critical enablers of high-quality, disaggregated and real-time data for policy and decision-making. Moreover, SIDS are increasingly advocating for the adoption of science-based and innovative approaches to data collection, including the responsible use of artificial intelligence, geospatial technologies<sup>3</sup> and digital public goods to enhance data accuracy, accessibility and inclusivity (United Nations, 2024).

In tandem with these efforts, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda highlights the vital role of partnerships in supporting implementation, particularly in the areas of data governance and monitoring. The SIDS Centre of Excellence is intended to serve as a regional platform for collaboration among governments, international organizations, academia, civil society and the private sector (United Nations, 2024). These partnerships are expected to mobilize technical expertise and financial resources, promote innovation and strengthen institutional capacity across NSSs. By facilitating the exchange of best practices and encouraging joint investments in digital infrastructure, both regional and global partnerships will play a critical role in enabling Caribbean SIDS to implement customized monitoring frameworks, generate high-quality and timely data, and align progress tracking with the Agenda, the SDGs and other global frameworks such as the Sendai Framework (United Nations, 2024).

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<sup>3</sup> Geospatial technologies can enable real-time data capture in remote and hazard-prone areas, support spatial trend analysis and pattern detection, and enhance the visual communication of statistical information for policymaking. Their use is particularly relevant in the Caribbean context, where terrain and island dispersion often pose logistical challenges to data collection and service delivery (United Nations, 2024).

# Understanding the data challenges: gaps and barriers

Despite the renewed commitments by member States, Caribbean SIDS continue to face longstanding data-related challenges that pose a serious risk to the effectiveness of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda monitoring process. While the need for robust data ecosystems is widely acknowledged and notable strides have been made to strengthen national capacities, progress has been uneven and critical gaps persist. Limited technical capacity, outdated digital infrastructure and fragmented institutional arrangements continue to constrain the production and use of high-quality, timely, and policy-relevant data. These challenges are compounded by outdated statistical legislation, weak coordination mechanisms and increasing international reporting obligations. Ultimately, these are not new issues but important structural constraints that must be addressed if Caribbean SIDS are to effectively monitor and report on the Agenda and other global frameworks in a timely and comprehensive manner.

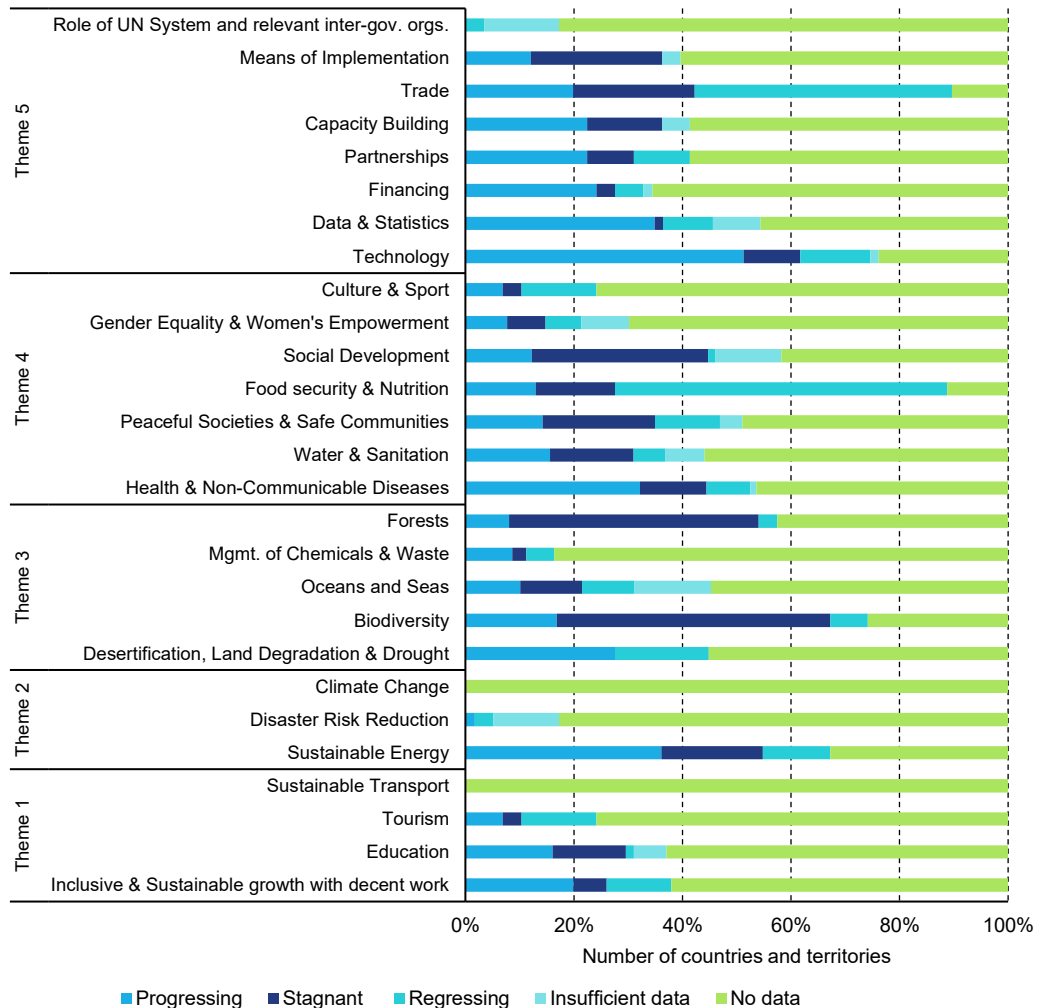
The implementation of the Samoa Pathway offers valuable lessons for the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda, particularly in understanding the depth and persistence of regional data and statistical challenges (ECLAC, 2023a). Figure 1 reveals that progress across the five thematic areas was generally fragmented and uneven. In many clusters, such as climate change (100%), sustainable transportation (100%), disaster risk reduction (95%) and gender equality and women's empowerment (79%), more than three quarters of the countries reported either insufficient data or no data at all, making it difficult to track progress and inform timely policy decisions in these areas. While some countries showed progress in areas such as technology (51%), data and statistics (35%), sustainable energy (36%) and health and non-communicable diseases (32%), even these were constrained by underlying data gaps. The absence of baseline information in key areas, coupled with high variation in country-level advancement, underscores the systemic nature of the subregion's M&E deficits and the need for targeted, context-specific support.

Insights from the voluntary national review (VNR) reports of Caribbean countries<sup>4</sup> presented to the high-level political forum on sustainable development support and further illustrate the scale and persistence of these challenges (figure 2). Countries frequently reported digitalization gaps, limited technical and human resources within national statistical offices, weak data governance, fragmented systems and a lack of real-time, disaggregated data. These issues are further compounded by financial sustainability concerns and delays in census and survey execution, often linked to shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These systemic challenges are further detailed in table 1 at the country level, where the Bahamas reported outdated statistical systems; Trinidad and Tobago emphasized delays in census and survey execution; Barbados grappled with persistent data fragmentation and Jamaica highlighted weak inter-agency coordination. While the nature and intensity of challenges vary across countries, they are deeply structural and require long-term investment, stronger institutional coordination, harmonized methodologies and dedicated regional support.

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://hlpf.un.org/countries>.

**Figure 1**  
**Caribbean subregion progress in the implementation of the Samoa Pathway**  
*(Percentages)*



Source: ECLAC based on data from ESCAP and originally sourced from UNSD and UNDRR - Samoa-Pathway-2023 (Version 3).

Note: The Caribbean comprises of 29 countries.

Note: The following are the themes descriptions for the Samoa Pathway:

Theme 1 – Promote sustained and sustainable inclusive and equitable economic growth with decent work for all, sustainable consumption and production and sustainable transport.

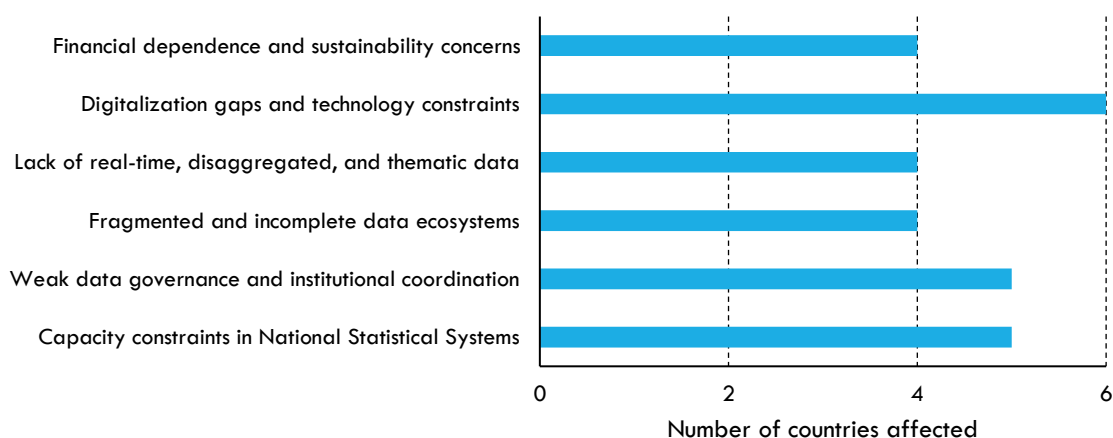
Theme 2 – Act to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts by implementing sustainable energy and disaster risk reduction programs.

Theme 3 – Protect the biodiversity of SIDS and care of environmental health by mitigating the impact of invasive species and animal species and by properly managing chemicals and water, including hazardous waste, as well as protecting oceans and seas.

Theme 4 – Improve human health and social development through food security and nutrition, improved water and sanitation, reducing the incidence of non-communicable disease and by promoting gender equity and women's empowerment.

Theme 5 – Fostering partnership among SIDS, United Nations Agencies, development partners and others to achieve these goals.

**Figure 2**  
Major statistical and data challenges reported across Caribbean SIDS



Source: ECLAC based on information contained in Voluntary National Review (VNR) reports of Caribbean SIDS submitted to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and available at <https://hlpf.un.org/countries>

**Table 1**  
Major statistical and data-related challenges to ABAS monitoring in Caribbean (based on VNRs)

Country	VNR year	Statistical and data challenges
<b>Antigua and Barbuda</b>	2021	Limited human and technical capacity in NSO; outdated poverty data; weak data-sharing mechanisms.
<b>The Bahamas</b>	2021	Outdated poverty and youth employment data; disrupted census due to Hurricane Dorian and COVID-19; limited data governance.
<b>Barbados</b>	2023	Fragmented data systems; inconsistent updates on key indicators; financial constraints in modernizing data collection.
<b>Belize</b>	2024	Funding constraints; limited rural and disaggregated data; climate shocks disrupted data collection cycles.
<b>Dominica</b>	2022	Inconsistent data collection; limited real-time and rural data; outdated survey methodologies; weak statistical capacity.
<b>Grenada</b>	2022	Limited technical capacity; fragmented sectoral data; insufficient gender-disaggregated and vulnerability data.
<b>Guyana</b>	2023	Data gaps in gender and informal labor; limited rural disaggregation; weak inter-agency data sharing.
<b>Jamaica</b>	2022	Insufficient disaggregated data; outdated survey cycles; weak institutional coordination among agencies.
<b>Saint Kitts and Nevis</b>	2023	Persistent economic and social data gaps; limited NSO capacity; fragmented data governance framework.
<b>Saint Lucia</b>	2019	Outdated statistical legislation; weak monitoring of poverty and social inequalities; limited gender data.
<b>Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</b>	2020	No central data system; outdated statistics; limited funding and staff capacity.
<b>Suriname</b>	2022	Gaps in employment and social data; fragmented environmental monitoring; limited survey capacity.
<b>Trinidad and Tobago</b>	2020	Infrequent labour force data; fragmented ministry-level data; delayed census operations due to COVID-19.

Source: ECLAC based on information contained in Voluntary National Review reports of Caribbean SIDS submitted to the United Nations high-level political forum and available at <https://hlpf.un.org/countries>.

These broader challenges are mirrored at the institutional level as NSSs across the Caribbean remain significantly constrained by limited human and technological capacity. Many NSOs continue to face staffing shortages, high turnover rates, and an insufficient pool of statisticians with expertise in data science, analytics or information technology (CARICOM, 2018). A recent regional assessment of statistical competencies reinforces the severity of technical skill gaps, finding that only 39.2% of NSO staff reported advanced statistical knowledge, while 26.8% indicated low or basic proficiency. Proficiency in advanced analytical tools critical for modern data science was also limited, with just 30.4% of staff skilled in R, 23.2% in SAS, 19.6% in STATA and only 5.4% in Python (ECLAC, 2023c). Such human resource constraints hinder the consistent production of reliable and high-quality statistics for decision-making, particularly in emerging priority areas such as climate resilience, disaster risk reduction and gender equality. The CARICOM Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics identifies these limitations as long-standing and systemic, underscoring the urgent need to strengthen institutional capacity at both technical and managerial levels. Such capacity gaps can limit the ability of NSOs to adopt innovative tools and methods, including digital data collection and advanced analytics, thereby slowing progress toward more agile, responsive and integrated statistical systems.

Technological limitations continue to affect the ability of NSOs in the Caribbean to modernize data generation, collection, management, and reporting processes. Several countries have reported digitalization gaps and outdated data systems that hinder efficient processing and integration of official statistics (CARICOM, 2018). For countries such as Barbados and Suriname, this has been a barrier to effective monitoring and reporting, particularly in areas that require integrated and frequent data updates (VNRs 2020–2024). These challenges impede the production of timely and disaggregated data—key requirements for the implementation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda, particularly in cross-cutting areas such as climate resilience, gender equality and sustainable development. Although digital transformation is widely acknowledged as a priority and some progress has been made, investments in technology infrastructure remain inconsistent, donor-driven and often misaligned with national statistical strategies, limiting the ability of countries to build resilient, forward-looking data systems aligned with the demands of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda monitoring framework (DESA, 2023).

Beyond the human and technological limitations, data continues to be collected and managed by ministries, departments and agencies, in parallel to national activities by NSOs. These efforts often serve not only for national planning needs but also reporting and compliance requirements under regional and multilateral agreements. However, these non-NSO-coordinated data collection activities employ inconsistent methodologies and classification systems. This lack of standardization not only undermines efforts to harmonize data but also leads to fragmentation and unnecessary duplication and missed opportunities to leverage existing data to inform national analysis and decision-making, while saving cost and time spent on generating new data that do not provide new information. For a cross-cutting framework like the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda, such inefficiencies pose a serious risk to the quality, comparability and relevance of progress assessments.

Weak governance frameworks and outdated statistical legislation continue to constrain the development of effective and coordinated national data systems in the Caribbean. In many countries, statistical laws have not been updated to reflect modern standards, leaving NSOs without the legal mandate or institutional authority to coordinate data production across government agencies. This limits their ability to enforce common methodologies, access administrative data, or promote data sharing across sectors. Few countries have legislation that guarantees the professional independence of the NSO or mandates integrated data governance, leaving institutional arrangements weak and coordination uneven. These legal

gaps undermine the reliability and consistency of official statistics and make it difficult to establish the kind of cross-sectoral reporting frameworks required under the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda. Without legislative reforms that clarify institutional roles, strengthen coordination mandates and support open data practices, countries will remain limited in their capacity to monitor complex, interrelated development goals.

Persistent funding constraints in NSSs continue to limit the ability of Caribbean SIDS to sustainably produce and use high-quality data. Many NSOs operate with limited budgetary allocations that are often insufficient to cover even core statistical activities, such as censuses, household surveys, and routine administrative data processing. This financial instability has led to an overreliance on donor-funded, project-based initiatives, which are typically short-term and narrowly focused. As a result, countries struggle to maintain statistical operations beyond the life of externally funded projects, undermining continuity and long-term planning. VNR submissions from several Caribbean countries, including Belize, Guyana and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines highlighted concerns about the sustainability of financing for data production and the need for greater national investment in statistics (VNRs 2020–2024). Without predictable and sustained funding, countries will remain ill-equipped to meet the ongoing data demands of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda, including regular monitoring across multiple sectors, development of new indicators and timely reporting to regional and global partners.

National statistical systems are not only constrained by technical and institutional gaps, but also by the scale of reporting demanded by international frameworks. Experiences from the Samoa Pathway revealed that, even where monitoring mechanisms exist, NSSs are often overwhelmed by the volume of indicators and the substantial institutional effort required for data collection, coordination and reporting. These challenges must be anticipated and addressed early to ensure that monitoring of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States remains feasible, streamlined and aligned with national capacities.

Together, these systemic and interlinked challenges highlight the scale of transformation required to build a resilient and responsive Caribbean data ecosystem capable of supporting the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda, but also national development and other internationally agreed development agendas. Addressing them will require a long-term, coordinated effort to modernize statistical infrastructure, strengthen institutional and legislative frameworks and embed sustainable financing into national planning processes. Without early and sustained investments in these foundational areas, national statistical systems will remain unable to generate the fit-for-purpose data needed to monitor commitments under the Agenda and inform evidence-based development strategies. Equally important is the need to communicate the value of these investments to a broad range of stakeholders, including the general public, to build support for data-informed decision-making and foster a culture of data use. Strengthening the region's capacity to produce and use statistics must therefore be treated not as a technical afterthought, but as a strategic enabler of the implementation of the Agenda and a core pillar of sustainable development for Caribbean SIDS.

# Strengthening the Caribbean data ecosystem: key policy recommendations for tracking progress of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States

Effective monitoring and evaluation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda demands a resilient, comprehensive and responsive Caribbean data ecosystem. Building on regional priorities and aligned with international best practices, the following policy recommendations offer a structured approach to addressing persistent gaps while enhancing institutional readiness and regional capabilities for the implementation of the Agenda.



## 1. Strengthen human resource capacity in national statistical systems

Caribbean governments should invest in long-term strategies to recruit, train and retain statistical professionals. This includes developing expertise in data science and geospatial technologies, expanding technical training in priority areas such as climate and disaster indicators and gender statistics, and strengthening managerial capacity for cross-sector coordination. Partnerships with regional institutions and peer learning mechanisms can reinforce these efforts.



## 2. Update legal and institutional frameworks for data governance

Outdated statistical laws should be revised to reflect modern standards and align with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Reforms should guarantee the professional independence of NSOs, enable data sharing across ministries and establish clear coordination mandates. Legal clarity is essential to ensure data can be used effectively across sectors with the necessary data protection ensured.



## 3. Improve coordination within and across national agencies

Effective coordination across national agencies requires clear mandates, shared standards and sustained inter-agency collaboration. Governments should establish whole-of-government data strategies to harmonize methodologies, reduce duplication and ensure coherent reporting. Designated coordination mechanisms or statistical governance bodies can clarify responsibilities, promote data sharing and improve the integration of administrative, survey and sectoral data.



## 4. Align digital infrastructure with national statistical priorities

Countries need to modernize data infrastructure by upgrading platforms that support real-time, disaggregated and geospatial data. Investments should align with national statistical strategies and be designed for long-term use. Open-source tools and regional standards can help improve interoperability and reduce fragmentation.



### 5. Prepare to support priority areas with longstanding data gaps

Countries need to begin strengthening NSSs in thematic areas where persistent data gaps have historically limited monitoring of progress. Based on lessons from the Samoa Pathway, particular attention should be given to climate change, disaster risk reduction, sustainable transportation, and gender equality. Strengthening baseline data, institutional coordination, and indicator development in these areas will be critical to ensuring that countries are prepared to support the ABAS M&E process from the outset.



### 6. Support the development of customized indicators for SIDS-specific priorities

Countries should be prepared to collect data on new indicators that may be required and that reflect the distinct focus areas of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda, but which are not fully addressed by existing global frameworks. While related agendas such as the SDGs and Sendai Framework provide a foundation, they do not always offer the level of specificity or alignment needed to monitor ABAS commitments, particularly in areas such as ocean governance, access to development finance, multidimensional vulnerability and statistical capacity building. Dedicated technical support will be needed to ensure that these indicators are developed and integrated into national systems.



### 7. Ensure sustainable financing for core statistical functions

Dedicated national budget lines should be established for censuses, surveys, and routine data production. Reducing dependence on short-term donor funding will help maintain continuity and enable countries to plan for emerging data needs related to the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda.



### 8. Promote the use of regional data platforms for shared learning and efficiency

Countries should actively participate in regional and subregional platforms to harmonize methodologies, reduce duplication, and facilitate peer learning. Shared tools can enhance comparability, reduce costs, and support joint monitoring efforts across countries in similar development contexts. The proposed SIDS Data Hub offers one such opportunity to consolidate efforts and accelerate innovation.



### 9. Strengthen partnerships for capacity-building and shared accountability

Caribbean countries should deepen engagement with regional institutions, international development partners, and multilateral agencies to support the implementation of ABAS monitoring. Partnerships can help mobilize technical assistance, align external support with national priorities, and foster joint approaches to indicator development, reporting, and evaluation. Strengthening collaboration through regional and international platforms, including the proposed SIDS Centre of Excellence, will be essential to ensure coherent support, reduce duplication, and improve the visibility of Caribbean priorities in global monitoring processes.

Strengthening the Caribbean's statistical capacity is not simply a technical undertaking. Instead, it is a strategic imperative for realizing the promise of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda. Without reliable, timely and disaggregated data, the challenge facing member States in demonstrating progress, accessing needed financing, or making informed policy choices will persist. Early and sustained investment in national data systems will empower Caribbean SIDS to sufficiently establish their baselines for the Agenda's indicators and generate adequate data to monitor progress towards attaining the commitments and actions outlined in the Agenda.

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