# WORLD BANK GROUP
# SUPPORT TO SMALL STATES

SMALL STATES

WORLD BANK GROUP

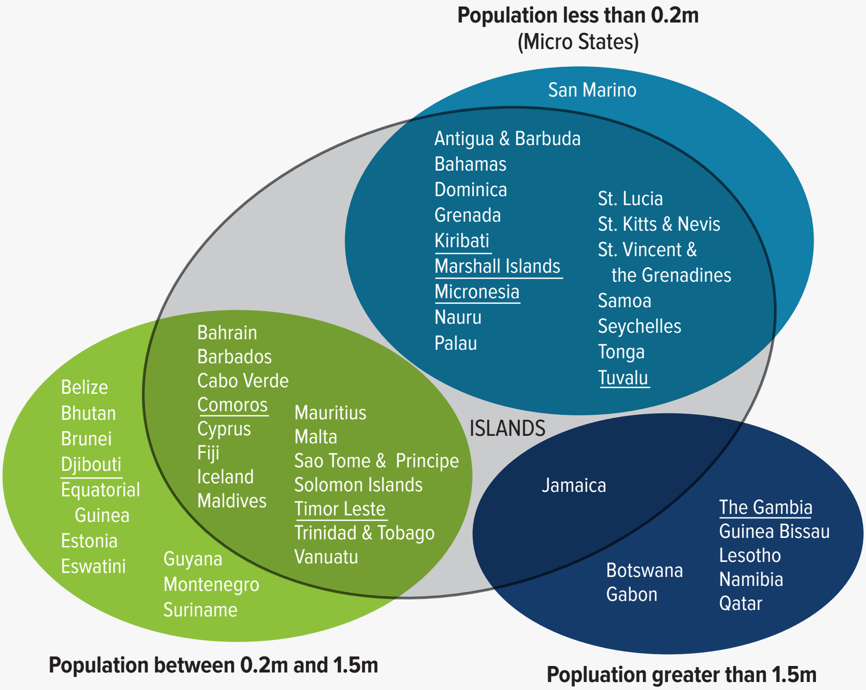
# **SMALL STATES:** KEY FEATURES OF A DIVERSE GROUP[1]

Small States face unique development challenges. Due to their small population and economic base, these countries are particularly vulnerable to exogenous shocks, such as natural disasters and climate change. With limited economic opportunities and significant migration, they often face capacity constraints.

1. Source: *Small States: Vulnerability and Concessional Finance, Technical Note, OPCS, July 2018.*

The Small States Forum (SSF) is an important platform for high-level dialogue on how the Bank Group is helping to address Small States' special development needs. The SSF comprises 50 members, including 42 countries classified as Small States according to the Bank Group definition (i.e., those with a population of 1.5 million or less) and eight other Small States Forum members with a population greater than 1.5 million that share similar challenges.[2]

FIGURE 1 • **SSF Members: Diverse in Population Size and Geography**




Note: Small States consist of Islands, land-locked states and coastal states. Those countries outside the inner circle for Islands are land-locked or coastal.
**Countries underlined indicate FCVs that are classified as fragile according to the Harmonized List of Fragile Situations

2. Botswana, Gabon, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Jamaica, Lesotho, Namibia and Qatar.

While sharing common challenges, the SSF is a very diverse group. There is high variation among members in terms of population size, income levels, geography and other features that result in a wide spectrum of development outcomes. A few examples are provided below.

**POPULATION** • Many SSF members are micro states (i.e., with a population of less than 200,000 people). Population size ranges from 11,000 people in Tuvalu to 2.9 million people in Jamaica.

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**GEOGRAPHY** • SSF countries are distributed across all regions and about two thirds are island states. The remaining one third includes five land-locked countries (Bhutan, Botswana, Eswatini,[3] Lesotho, and San Marino).

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**REMOTENESS** • Several SSF countries, particularly islands, are among the most remote in terms of distance to the nearest international markets (e.g., Pacific islands).

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**LAND AREA** • A number of island states have a very small land area (e.g., Nauru has 20 square kilometers), while non-island states such as Namibia and Botswana have 4.5 and 3.1 times the area of all small island states combined, respectively.

3. Formerly known as Swaziland.

**FRAGMENTATION AND DISPERSION** • Some countries are archipelagos dispersed over a broad ocean area (e.g., Kiribati has an area of 810 square kilometers distributed in 35 atolls/islands spread over 3.6 million square kilometers of ocean).

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**VULNERABILITY TO NATURAL DISASTERS AND CLIMATE CHANGE** • Many SSF countries are disproportionately vulnerable to a range of natural disasters, particularly those located in disaster-prone areas. About one third of Small States are highly vulnerable to climate change, including rising sea-level and droughts.

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**DEBT BURDEN** • Significant growth volatility, relatively slower growth and weak fiscal management have contributed to substantial debt accumulation in many SSF countries. Debt levels for these countries are on average higher than for other developing countries, although there is considerable diversity across individual countries.

# WORLD BANK GROUP SUPPORT: ADDRESSING SMALL STATES' VULNERABILITIES

The World Bank Group has a long-standing and growing commitment to supporting Small States' development efforts. Small States are a priority for the entire Bank Group, including the International Development Association (IDA), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA).

In recent years, World Bank Group support to Small States has been ramping up, particularly in four broad areas:

I. Enhancing development finance
II. Developing innovative disaster and climate financing mechanisms
III. Fostering private investment and diversification
IV. Strengthening client capacity

**IDA has been the lynchpin of Bank support to Small States. In recognition of their unique development challenges, IDA has extended special treatment to small states in terms of access, financing volumes, and concessionality.**

- IDA has been the leading multilateral provider of development assistance to small economies, accounting for 28 percent of multilateral official development assistance (ODA) to the SSF members in 2014-16.
- Small States have particularly benefited from the past four IDA replenishments primarily due to an increase in IDA's annual minimum base allocation from SDR 1.5 million in IDA15 to SDR 15 million in IDA18, resulting in a massive scale up in IDA18 to US$2.1 billion.
- With the recent re-classification of Fiji, there are 24 IDA-eligible SSF members of which 17 are Small Island Economies (SIEs) that receive IDA Credits on the most concessional lending terms that IDA offers, Small Economy Terms—at no interest, 40-year amortization, with a 10-year grace period. These countries will continue to receive Small Economy Terms in IDA19.
- In IDA18, Small Economy Terms were extended to Small States that are not islands. Four Small States benefitted (Bhutan, Djibouti, Guyana, Timor-Leste). These four countries will continue to receive IDA Credits on Small Economy Terms during IDA19.

# I. ENHANCING DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

## IDA FINANCING OF SSF COUNTRIES

IDA has been the lynchpin of Bank support to Small States. In recognition of their unique development challenges, IDA has extended special treatment to Small States in terms of access, financing volumes, and concessionality.

### *Access to IDA resources*

IDA provides concessional resources to the world's poorest countries–those with a per capita income of $1,175 or below. Countries are eligible for IDA resources based on relative poverty and lack of creditworthiness. Based on creditworthiness considerations and policies targeted to address Small States' special needs—such as the **Small Island Economies Exception** introduced in 1985—many Small States have access to IDA resources even though their per capita incomes are above the income threshold for receiving IDA support. In all, 24 SSF countries have access to IDA resources, including 21 who receive the most concessional terms that IDA offers. Seven of these countries have Blend Country status (i.e. are eligible to borrow from both IBRD and IDA).

### *Volume of IDA resources*

A ten-fold increase in IDA's minimum annual base allocation from SDR[4] 1.5 million in IDA15 to SDR 15 million in IDA18 has particularly benefitted small economies. In IDA18, aggregate country allocations to IDA-eligible SSF members reached $2.1 billion. Some have tripled their allocation between IDA17 and IDA18 (Dominica, Gre-

4. The SDR is an international reserve asset, created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves. The value of the SDR is based on a basket of five currencies—the U.S. dollar, the Euro, the Chinese renminbi, the Japanese yen, and the British pound sterling. (Source: IMF)

## WORLD BANK RECOGNITION OF SMALL ISLANDS' SPECIAL NEEDS SINCE 1985: THE "SMALL ISLAND ECONOMIES EXCEPTION"

**In 1985, the World Bank's Board approved the Small Island Economies Exception in recognition of small islands' special characteristics (of size, remoteness, etc.) resulting in similar challenges to those faced by low-income countries. At the time, six Small Island Economies (SIEs) that were due to graduate from IDA were granted the Exception.**

**Currently, 17 Small Island Economies with GNI per capita above the IDA operational cut off receive special treatment from IDA under the exception, including 11 SIEs with IDA-only status and six Blend SIEs.*[5]**

**In March 2019, the SIE Exception Policy was revised to include (a) criteria for considering requests from IBRD-only SIEs to be reclassified as IDA-eligible; and (b) criteria for calibrating the terms on which IDA concessional resources are provided to SIEs. Pursuant to the revised policy, Fiji was reclassified as an IDA-eligible country effective July 1, 2019.**

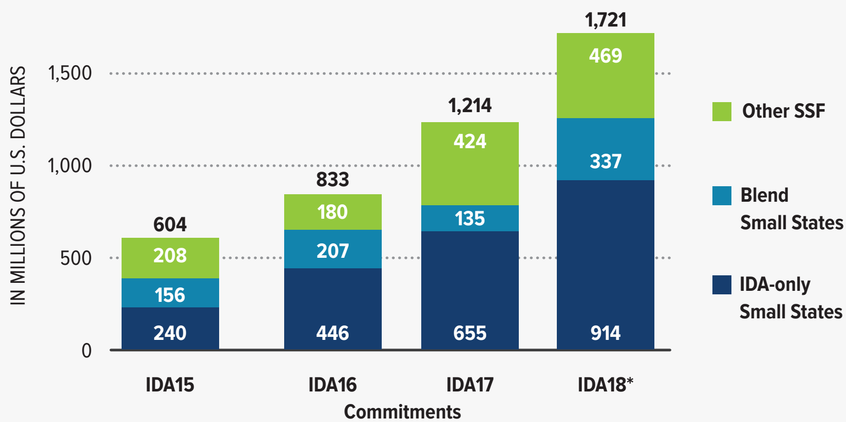
***IDA-only status (Kiribati, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Maldives, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu); Blends (Cabo Verde, Dominica, Fiji, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines)**

5. IDA offers concessional credits on "Regular Terms", "Blend Terms," and "Small Economy Terms." For definitions and details of IDA financial terms and conditions see Bank Policy: Financial Terms and Conditions of Bank Financing.

nada, Guyana, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu).

In terms of actual financing, total IDA commitments (including IDA financing windows) to the IDA-eligible SSF members increased from $604 million in IDA15 to about $1.2 billion in IDA17. As of August 31, 2019, actual IDA financing to SSF members stood at over $1.7 billion, including country allocations and other IDA financing windows.

FIGURE 2 • **Rising Financing Volumes and Massive IDA18 Scale Up to IDA-eligible SSF Countries**




Source: World Bank
*Actual as of August 31, 2019 including National PBA and other IDA financing windows

## *IDA concessional financing terms*

Most IDA-only SSF countries receive grants based on debt distress ratings determined under the World Bank/IMF Debt Sustainability Framework for low-income countries (LIC-DSF). A revised LIC-DSF, effective July 2018, expands the stress testing framework in order to more systematically capture the specific circumstances faced by Small States, such as vulnerability to natural disasters.

Credit terms for IDA eligible Small States are IDA's most concessional terms. In all, IDA Credits on Small Economy Terms in FY18 had a grant element of 61 percent, compared to a grant element of 53 percent for IDA Credits on IDA Regular Terms.

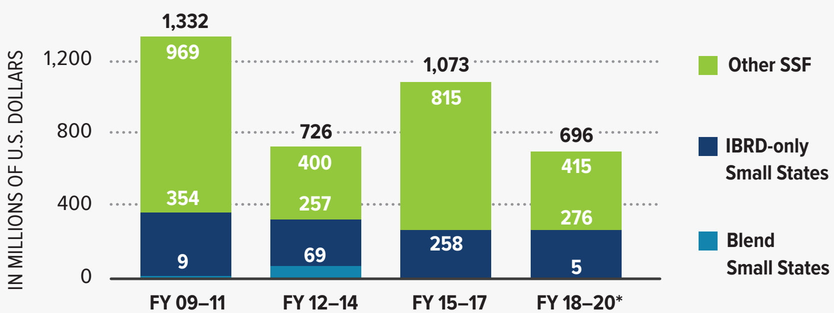
### *Additional opportunities for financing: IDA's Windows*

IDA-eligible SSF countries also have access to additional financing from various IDA windows, notably, the Crisis Response Window (CRW), the Regional Program, and the new Private Sector Window (PSW) introduced in IDA18.[6]

## IBRD FINANCING OF SSF COUNTRIES

Twenty-three SSF members have access to IBRD financing, of which 16 countries are IBRD-only SSF members and seven SSF members have access to both IBRD and IDA resources (Blend

FIGURE 3 • **IBRD Lending Commitments to IBRD SSF countries, FY09-20**




Source: World Bank
* FY20 is actual up to August 31, 2019

6. Other windows include the Scale-up Facility and the Regional Sub-Window for Refugee and Host Communities. Note that Blend and Gap countries are not eligible to access the PSW unless they are classified as fragile.


Countries). IBRD lending commitments to SSF between FY15-20 is $1.7 billion. In per-capita terms, Gabon has been the top IBRD borrower ($789), followed by Jamaica ($295) and Montenegro ($223). Some eligible Small States do not borrow from IBRD because they may require credit enhancements (Nauru), or have limited borrowing headroom.

Thanks to the Capital Increase policy package endorsed by IBRD shareholders in 2018, eligible Small States benefit from a doubling of their IBRD base allocation and a waiver from price increases.

## II. DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE DISASTER AND CLIMATE FINANCING MECHANISMS

The Bank Group is working with Small States to develop innovative financing mechanisms for climate and disaster response. Some of these mechanisms are particularly relevant for IBRD Small States that are not eligible for IDA financing.


### *Climate Finance: Turning vulnerability into opportunity*

The World Bank is supporting the mobilization of climate finance in small states through blue bonds, starting with a prototype of **the world's first blue bond** in the Seychelles. A $20 million World Bank package approved in September 2017—to improve the sustainability of the Seychelles' marine resources—includes an IBRD guarantee of EUR5 million that enabled the issuance of a $15 million blue bond (in 2018). The World Bank Treasury provided technical assistance for structuring of the blue bond. The proceeds of the bond will be used as grants for fisheries management activities as well as loans to encourage local public and private investment in sustainable fishing and the protection of ocean resources.

**Green bonds** provide another opportunity for small states to raise climate financing. On October 2017, Fiji, a small island state exposed to floods and tropical cyclones, became the **first emerging market to issue a sovereign green bond.** The 100 million Fijian dollar ($50 million) bond received overwhelming interest from domestic investors. The bond was structured with technical assistance from the World Bank Treasury and the IFC under a three-year Capital Markets Development Project, supported by the Australian Government. The proceeds of the bond will be used to fund projects promoting low carbon and climate resilient growth consistent with Fiji's Green Growth Framework.

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# DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT


**The World Bank has an extensive track record of supporting the development and implementation of innovative financing mechanisms.**

> **Since its introduction in IDA 15, the IDA Crisis Response Window (CRW) has provided additional resources totaling $354 million to help several SSF members respond to a range of severe natural disasters, including tropical storms, floods and droughts.**

In 2018, Dominica received $50 million in CRW resources to help the reconstruction following Hurricane Maria, which resulted in damages estimated at 226 percent of GDP. Tonga also received $20 million from the CRW following Tropical Cyclone Gita, which caused damages estimated at 38 percent of GDP.

The Disaster Risk Management Development Policy Financing with a **Catastrophe Drawdown Option (CAT-DDO)** is a Development Policy Financing instrument that can provide immediate liquidity to countries in the aftermath of a natural disaster and is part of the risk layering approach to providing financial protection from disasters. As a development policy instrument, it aims to support governments in making systemic and institutional improvements of climate and disaster risk management through a transformative policy reform agenda. The funds are preapproved based on a sound disaster risk management program and an adequate macroeconomic framework. The CAT-DDO has been available to IBRD countries and since IDA18, it has been also available to IDA eligible countries. CAT-DDOs have been approved in the Seychelles, the Maldives and Samoa; additional CAT-DDOs are under preparation in the Caribbean and Pacific.

The Bank has also supported the establishment of two successful regional risk insurance pools–the **Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF) and the Pacific Catastrophe Risk Assessment and Financing Initiative (PCRAFI)**. Since its launch in 2007, CCRIF has paid out US$150 million including the last pay out of approximately US$11 million for the Bahamas following Hurricane Dorian in 2019. The PCRAFI paid US$3.5 million to Tonga after Tropical Cyclone Gita in 2018.

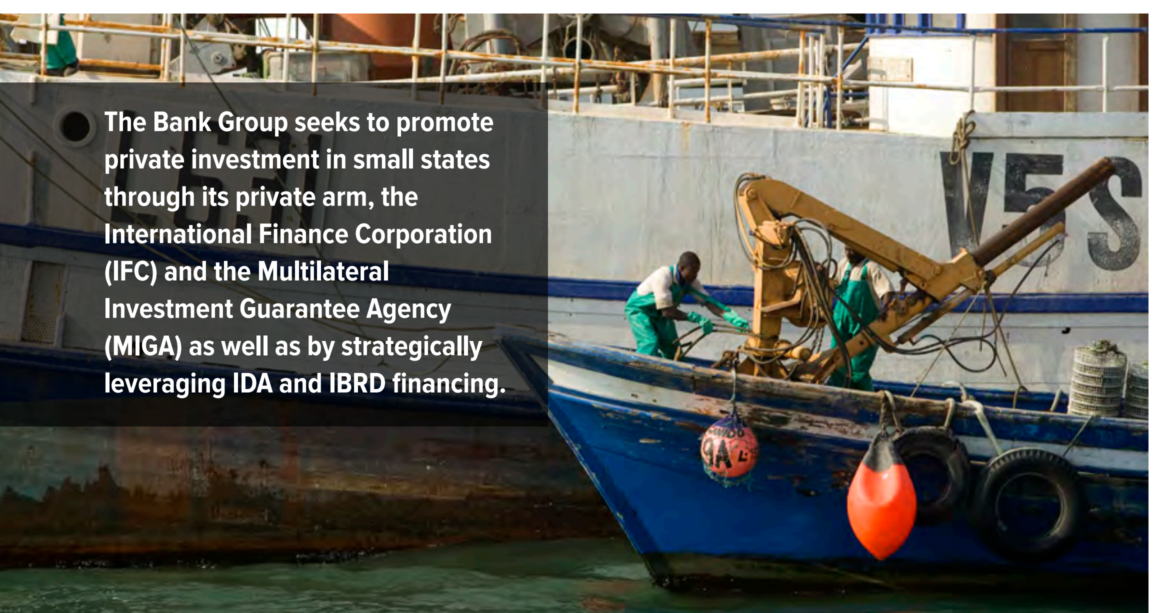
**Early warning systems** play a critical role in protecting lives, livelihoods and assets. The World Bank has supported the establishment of early warning systems in several Small States. When category 5 Cyclone Pam hit Vanuatu in 2015, the World Bank-supported National Warning Center was instrumental in limiting lives lost despite Pam's devastating impact. Currently, the IDA-supported Pacific Resilience Program (PREP) is helping to improve the quality of forecasting and warning services in Samoa, Tonga and Marshall Islands. The World Bank is also helping strengthen early warning systems in Caribbean states such as St. Lucia (flash floods guidance system) and Jamaica (hydrometeorological services). In 2016, the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery and the World Bank, launched the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) initiative. This initiative aims to strengthen multi-hazard early warning systems in least developed countries, including small island states.

# III. FOSTERING PRIVATE INVESTMENT AND DIVERSIFICATION

Private investment is a key driver of any country's economic development. However, Small States face challenges in attracting private investment due to their small market size, limited economic opportunities, and often remoteness. The Bank Group seeks to promote private investment in Small States through its private arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) as well as by strategically leveraging IDA and IBRD financing.

## IFC INVESTMENTS

IFC is supporting economic diversification and building resilience in sectors such as finance, infrastructure, agriculture, tourism and services. IFC also offers various de-risking and credit-enhancing tools, and MIGA provides political insurance, especially in fragile states. Under its Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Facility, IFC, in collaboration with the World Bank Treasury, has set up a risk-shar-



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ing facility in Sao Tome and Principe and plans to develop additional schemes for Cabo Verde and the Pacific Islands. Under the Agribusiness Facility, $16.7 million was invested in 2017 to support the Solomon Islands (tuna sector), Guinea-Bissau (fruits and vegetables), while in Bhutan, IFC has invested in a semi-green field company to produce hazelnuts for export. IFC is also providing advisory services on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to nine Small States on airports, power, water and sewerage.

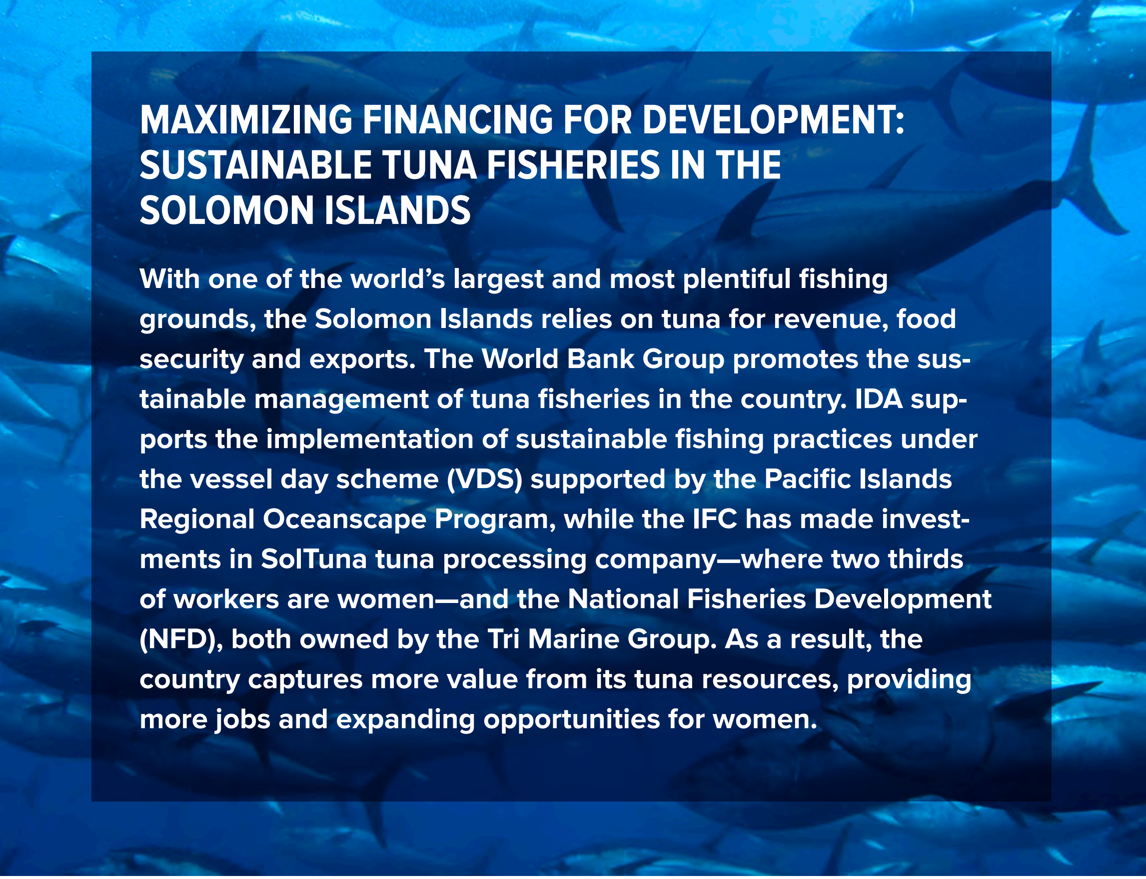
The IFC is also leveraging the IDA PSW, including to support housing finance in West Africa (benefitting Guinea-Bissau), risk-sharing in the Pacific, and a private sector telecom operator in Comoros[7]. MIGA promotes private foreign investment through the provision of political risk insurance. MIGA currently supports projects in Djibouti, Gabon, Jamaica and Namibia.

## DE-RISKING

De-risking is the phenomenon of financial institutions terminating or restricting correspondent banking relationships with clients

or categories of clients to avoid risk. The Bank Group is supporting Small States—which are particularly vulnerable to this trend—to help address some of the causes of de-risking. One of the reasons given by large banks for de-risking is a concern about implementation of anti-money laundering standards. The Bank Group supports countries to improve the legal frameworks and supervision of these obligations, including through National Risk Assessments (NRAs) of money laundering. The Bank is preparing country studies and National Risk Assessments to identify and quantify adverse effects of de-risking on financial systems in emerging markets (for example, in Jamaica, Samoa and Tonga). Twenty Small States have received technical assistance for NRAs.

7. Blend and Gap small states are not eligible for PSW resources, unless they are classified as fragile.



## MAXIMIZING FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT: SUSTAINABLE TUNA FISHERIES IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

**With one of the world's largest and most plentiful fishing grounds, the Solomon Islands relies on tuna for revenue, food security and exports. The World Bank Group promotes the sustainable management of tuna fisheries in the country. IDA supports the implementation of sustainable fishing practices under the vessel day scheme (VDS) supported by the Pacific Islands Regional Oceanscape Program, while the IFC has made investments in SolTuna tuna processing company—where two thirds of workers are women—and the National Fisheries Development (NFD), both owned by the Tri Marine Group. As a result, the country captures more value from its tuna resources, providing more jobs and expanding opportunities for women.**

In 2018, the Bank Group published a correspondent banking survey, investigating solutions to the decline in banking services in emerging markets, including Jamaica, Samoa and Tonga.

## ATTRACTING INVESTMENTS IN THE BLUE ECONOMY

The Bank Group is supporting the transition to a blue economy in Small States, including through a series of regional initiatives. In 2016, with Bank technical support, Grenada became the first eastern Caribbean state to develop a vision for protecting its "blue space" and to map its road toward blue growth. Under the World Bank-supported Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project, Grenada's model is being carried forward in Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Similarly, the Pacific Regional Oceanscape Program project is helping to strengthen the shared management of selected oceanic and coastal fisheries in the Solomon Islands, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Tonga and will expand to Kiribati. The West Africa Regional Fisheries Program and the South West Indian Ocean Fish program also support improved fisheries management in Cabo Verde, Guinea Bissau, Comoros, Maldives and Seychelles at the regional, national and community levels.

## ATTRACTING INVESTMENTS IN DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The World Bank is helping small states' efforts to develop connectivity infrastructure to drive Digital Dividends. Significant investments in broadband infrastructure are underway, in some cases in partnership with the private sector.

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For example, with Bank support submarine cable connections have been completed in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga (including outer islands) while work is on-going in Kiribati (including outer islands), Micronesia, and Tuvalu (pipeline). Accompanying these investments is substantial technical assistance to develop the legal and regulatory enabling environment to support market liberalization, foster new investment and upgrade of access networks (e.g. Fourth Generation Long-Term Evolution (4G/LTE)), and encourage better and cheaper services.

# IV. STRENGTHENING CLIENT CAPACITY

Given their small populations, many Small States face a shortage of skills and capacity constraints, including capacity to absorb development assistance in an effective and sustainable way. The World Bank supports the strengthening of Small States' capacity through technical assistance and training activities, the deployment of flexible operational policies and procedures to fit their specific circumstances, and implementation support on the ground.

### *Flexible Project Preparation and Design*

Preparations Advances (PAs) are available under the Bank's Project Preparation Facility (PPF). The funding and scope of the facility were increased in 2017 to allow for a programmatic approach to project preparation that can create economies of scale and reduce the administrative burden for clients. Currently, Micronesia is using a programmatic PA to prepare the IDA18 pipeline through a centralized implementation unit at the ministry of finance. PAs have also been approved for Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Samoa and Tonga.

In the Pacific, the World Bank has provided training to about 300 government officials in Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Van-


uatu on procurement, financial management, as well as the new Environmental and Social Framework. It is also limiting the number of operations per country and ensuring minimum size ($5million). The upcoming Integrated Capacity Building Program in the Pacific will aim to strengthen project management in island states.

In the Caribbean, the World Bank is collaborating with other bilateral and multilateral partners to reduce implementation transaction costs and capacity burden on countries (e.g., St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Port Modernization Project currently under preparation).

### *Fiduciary, Environmental, and Social standards*

The Bank is providing extensive training on a new procurement framework, effective in 2016, that allows the use of flexible arrangements for capacity-constrained clients. To date, the Bank has conducted 33 training events in Small States, attended by over 500 participants, to raise awareness on the environment and social framework. The Bank also conducted 13 trainings for borrowers on the use of flexible arrangements available under the new procurement framework.

With the roll-out of the new Environmental and Social Framework, the World Bank is currently delivering targeted training for Small States clients, including hands-on support. Training for 22 Small States was completed by the end of January 2019.

## STRENGTHENING NATIONAL PROCUREMENT CAPACITY IN THE CARIBBEAN

**The Bank has partnered with the Caribbean Development Bank to support the establishment of the Caribbean Regional Procurement Centre at the University of Technology, Jamaica. The center will support the professionalization of public procurement in the region. The center ran its first pilot course from November 2017 to May 2018 and produced its first batch of 23 students earning the International Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) Level 4 Diploma in Procurement and Supply. By establishing a strong cadre of professional public procurement officers, the center will contribute to the effective use of public funds and improved delivery of public services in the Caribbean.**

### *Supporting capacity to build climate and economic resilience*

**Climate resilience.** The World Bank is supporting Small States' efforts to mainstream climate smart planning and build climate resilience, including meeting their Nationally Determined Commitments (NDCs) targets and goals on climate adaptation under the COP21. It is assisting Small States to translate NDCs into policies and investments, with technical assistance ongoing in Antigua and Barbuda, Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Sao Tome and Principe.

**Climate Action Peer Exchange (CAPE)** is a forum for peer learning, knowledge sharing, and mutual advisory support. It brings together ministers and senior technical specialists from finance ministries across the world, as well as World Bank staff and other international experts, to discuss the fiscal challenges involved in implementing the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) established under the 2015 Paris Agreement. CAPE is a contribution of the WBG to the NDC Partnership. Activities in Small States include:

- The Climate Action Peer Exchange (CAPE), supported by NDC Support Facility (NDC-SF), and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB), and jointly with Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre (CARTAC) held a workshop on **"Fiscal Policy for Climate Action in the Caribbean" on Jan 21-23, 2019 in the St. Kitts and Nevis.** The workshop discussed fiscal reforms for a low carbon growth transition in the Caribbean, climate-informed budget processes, and debt and risk management instruments.
- CAPE provided financial and technical support to the joint **WB-IMF Climate Change Policy Assessment for St. Lucia (2018)** to help the country understand and manage the expected economic impact of climate change, while safeguarding long-run fiscal and external sustainability.
- CAPE provided financial support for the study of **Recommendtions for Strengthening Fiscal Policy for Resilient, Equitable**

**and Low-Carbon Development in Dominica (2018),** which identified fiscal and financial reforms to improve the public finances of Dominica to help stem the fiscal challenges of reconstruction after hurricane Maria.

**Debt sustainability.** Training on the revised Debt Sustainability Framework for LICs (LIC DSF), effective July 2018, was delivered in 2019. Twenty-five SSF members benefitted from seven two-day seminars for senior officials and eight five-day workshops for technical staff on the revised LIC DSF.[8]

The World Bank Treasury also provides on-demand training to clients to build capacity to engage with insurance and capital markets to increase financing resilience to disasters. Trainings are planned in 2020 for members of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank

8. The countries include: Bhutan, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Djibouti, Dominica, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Kiribati, Lesotho, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Namibia, Samoa, Sao Tome & Principe, Solomon Islands, The Gambia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

(ECCB). Additionally, joint World Bank-IMF assistance is planned to support the ECCB to explore options for state contingent debt instruments that would provide debt service relief to countries in the aftermath of a natural disaster to prevent short-term liquidity problems from transitioning into full debt crises.

### *Implementation support on the ground*

To maximize the development impact of available resources, particularly of the IDA18 scale up, the World Bank is increasing the number of staff and resources deployed in fragile countries and Small States. The number of field-based staff working in SSF member countries has increased by 41 percent in 2019 relative to 2016. For both fragile countries and Small States, having more staff on the ground provides client governments with enhanced support to implement Bank-financed operations.

# LOOKING AHEAD: THE SMALL STATES FORUM NOW AND GOING FORWARD

More than one fifth of World Bank members are countries with a population below 1.5 million. Despite their diversity, these countries share unique vulnerabilities associated with the small size of their economies and high exposure to natural disasters and climate change. The World Bank Group remains strongly committed to helping address Small States' development needs through innovative approaches that fit their specific circumstances. Convening every year on the sidelines of the World Bank Group/ IMF Annual Meetings, the Small States Forum will continue to provide a useful platform for dialogue and knowledge sharing on how the World Bank Group can best support Small States. Chaired on a rotating basis among the Caribbean, Africa, and the Pacific, Fiji is the current Chair.

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