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The United Nations Multidimensional Vulnerability Index

Why Should Pacific SIDS Lead the Call for Piloting?

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Abstract

This paper examines the limitations of gross national income (GNI) per capita as a sole criterion for determining eligibility for international development assistance and argues for the adoption of the United Nations Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) as a complementary measure. The MVI, endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2024, provides a comprehensive framework for assessing structural vulnerability and resilience across economic, environmental and social dimensions. Using comparative analysis of small island developing States (SIDS), with a focus on the Pacific region, the paper demonstrates that many Pacific SIDS exhibit higher structural vulnerability and lower resilience than other SIDS despite being classified as middle-income countries. This misalignment constrains access to concessional finance and exacerbates fiscal and climate-related risks. The study highlights the Pacific’s position of “double fragility”, high exposure to external shocks coupled with limited adaptive capacity and underscores the urgency of piloting MVI implementation in the region. Policy recommendations include coordinated regional advocacy, investment in statistical systems and innovative financing mechanisms such as debt-for-climate swaps and blended finance. By integrating vulnerability into development cooperation frameworks, the MVI offers a pathway to more equitable and effective resource allocation for resilience-building and sustainable development in Pacific SIDS.

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¹ United Nations System (2022). Principles for the ethical use of artificial intelligence in the United Nations system. Chief Executives Board (CEB) for Coordination, High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence, 20 September.

Introduction

Gross national income (GNI) per capita has long served as a primary metric for classifying countries by income and determining eligibility for international development assistance. While widely used, this measure fails to capture structural vulnerabilities and resilience gaps that significantly affect development trajectories, particularly for small island developing States (SIDS). Many SIDS, including those in the Pacific, are classified as middle-income countries despite facing acute exposure to economic, environmental and social shocks, which limit their access to concessional finance and other forms of support.

In response to these shortcomings, the United Nations adopted the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) in 2024 as a complementary tool to traditional income-based criteria. The MVI provides a comprehensive framework for assessing vulnerability and resilience across economic, environmental and social dimensions, offering a more equitable basis for resource allocation. This paper argues that Pacific SIDS, characterized by high structural vulnerability and limited resilience, should lead efforts to pilot MVI implementation. Doing so would strengthen advocacy for vulnerability-based financing and inform innovative approaches to resilience-building and sustainable development.

GNI per capita tells only a part of the story

Traditional indicators such as gross national income (GNI) per capita have long been employed to assess a country's level of economic development, its investment capacity and its eligibility for international assistance. GNI per capita remains a widely used and readily accessible metric, often showing strong correlations with non-monetary dimensions of well-being, including life expectancy at birth, child mortality rates and school enrolment ratios².

On this basis, the World Bank provides a widely recognized framework for comparing countries by income and classifying them into low-income (LIC), middle-income (MIC) and high-income (HIC) categories. This classification has played a pivotal role in shaping international development assistance and aid allocation policies. Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) determines eligibility for official development assistance (ODA) primarily using GNI per capita as a core criterion.

Despite its utility, GNI per capita has significant limitations. It does not capture income inequality, poverty or wealth distribution within countries, nor does it reflect non-monetary aspects of development such as access to healthcare, education, environmental risks and social vulnerabilities. As an aggregate measure, GNI per capita conceals disparities within countries, resulting in many of the world's poorest individuals living in economies classified as middle-income³. Furthermore, the metric overlooks differences in

² <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/378831-why-use-gni-per-capita-to-classify-economies-into>.

³ Bertha Rohenkohl and Pablo Arriagada (2025). "How does the World Bank classify countries by income?" Published online at OurWorldinData.org. Retrieved from: <https://ourworldindata.org/world-bank-income-groups-explained>.

purchasing power across countries and underestimates the importance of the informal sector as income generated outside formal structures is often excluded⁴.

Scholars have also questioned the appropriateness of income thresholds, which were originally established in 1989 and subsequently adjusted annually for international inflation. These thresholds are derived from internal World Bank operational cut-offs for lending and procurement, raising concerns about their relevance as a global classification standard⁵⁶. Moreover, GNI per capita does not account for income volatility or structural vulnerabilities that render economies highly susceptible to external shocks and stressors. As a result, it fails to reflect the realities faced by many countries, including SIDS and other developing economies, whose income levels and development trajectories are profoundly influenced by exposure to economic, environmental and climatic shocks.

Many SIDS, including those in the Pacific, are among the most vulnerable nations globally. Yet, they are frequently classified as middle-income or high-income countries, rendering them ineligible for international development assistance, including concessional financing such as grants and low-interest loans. In response, SIDS and other developing countries have consistently advocated for the systematic inclusion of vulnerability as a criterion for determining eligibility for development assistance. This advocacy has led to the creation of multidimensional vulnerability indexes designed to capture structural fragilities beyond income measures.

The United Nations Multidimensional Vulnerability Index

In August 2024, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the MVI, establishing a new global benchmark for assessing vulnerability and promoting more equitable access to international support. This milestone reflects decades of sustained advocacy by SIDS, which have long called for an index that captures their unique structural challenges.

Before the development of the MVI, several vulnerability indexes were introduced for SIDS and other country groupings, each incorporating different dimensions and methodologies. These include the Economic and Environmental Vulnerability Index (EVI) developed by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) for identifying least developed countries (LDCs), the OECD Fragility Framework for assessing fragile contexts and the Human Development Index (HDI) developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), among others⁷.

The MVI was conceived to address the absence of an international consensus on defining vulnerability and determining effective mechanisms for resilience-building. Its methodology draws on lessons from

⁴ The use of purchasing power parity (PPP) conversion factors is under consideration for use in World Bank country classifications in the future. <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/378831-why-use-gni-per-capita-to-classify-economies-into#:~:text=while%20the%20Atlas%20method%20uses,for%20use%20in%20World%20Bank>.

⁵ Kenny, C. (2011). What Does It Mean to Be Low Income? <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/what-does-it-mean-be-low-income>.

⁶ Kenny, C. (2023). Past Time for a More Rational Approach to Global Income Classifications. <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/past-time-more-rational-approach-global-income-classifications>.

⁷ OECD (2024). Using the new UN MVI to identify and fill in vulnerability financing gaps in SIDS. [https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD\(2024\)16/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD(2024)16/en/pdf).

earlier approaches while providing a comprehensive and universally applicable framework tailored to the needs of developing countries⁸.

By capturing vulnerabilities beyond income, the MVI seeks to enable more targeted, equitable and effective development assistance. It accounts for exposure to external shocks, such as economic downturns, climate-related disasters and health crises, alongside countries' capacity to respond and recover. In doing so, the MVI aims to break the cycle of debt and underinvestment in resilience, creating new opportunities for climate adaptation and sustainable development.

The MVI combines a quantitative assessment with vulnerability-resilience profiles

The structure of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) comprises two complementary levels⁹:

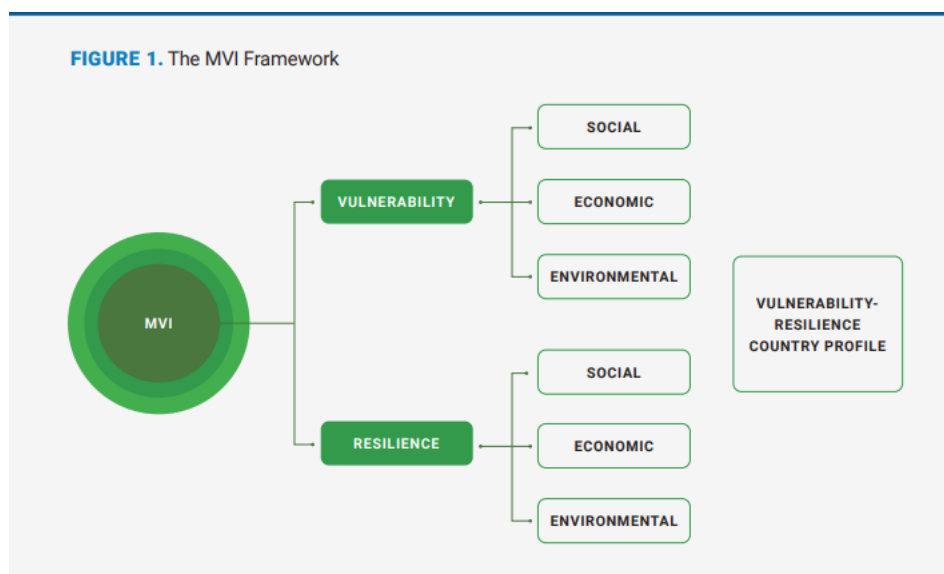
- **Universal quantitative assessment:** This level applies a common methodology across all developing countries to measure structural vulnerability and resilience. The assessment is organized around two core pillars, vulnerability and lack of resilience, each evaluated through three dimensions: economic, environmental and social.
- **Vulnerability–resilience country profiles (VRCs):** These profiles provide a more detailed, country-specific characterization of vulnerability and resilience, including non-structural aspects, developed through national processes. VRCs complement the quantitative assessment and support planning and cooperation by aligning with existing instruments such as national development plans (NDPs), integrated national financing frameworks (INFFs) and voluntary national reviews (VNRs).

The following figure 1 provides an overview of the MVI's structural framework.

⁸ For more details on the process description, including principles guiding the development of the MVI, the work of the High-level Panel and the consultative and outreach process, visit: <https://www.un.org/ohrls/mvi>.

⁹ United Nations (2024). High level panel on the development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index. Final Report.

FIGURE 1: THE MVI FRAMEWORK



Source: United Nations (2024). High level panel on the development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index. Final Report.

The MVI is underpinned by two core concepts: structural vulnerability and structural resilience¹⁰.

- Structural vulnerability refers to the risk that a country's sustainable development will be impeded by recurrent, adverse, exogenous shocks and stressors.
 - Economic vulnerability captures exposure to external economic shocks.
 - Environmental vulnerability reflects exposure to natural hazards.
 - Social vulnerability denotes exposure to social shocks.
- Structural (lack of) resilience represents the inherent characteristics or capacities of a country to withstand, absorb, recover from or mitigate the adverse effects of shocks and stressors.
 - Structural economic resilience relates to a country's economic capabilities and capital that strengthen its ability to withstand and recover from adverse events.
 - Structural environmental resilience focuses on ecological resources, infrastructure and systems that reduce vulnerability to environmental shocks.
 - Structural social resilience encompasses social capabilities and capital, including social cohesion, institutions, demographic structure and human capital, which enhance adaptive capacity.

Implementation of the MVI is voluntary and intended as a complementary tool for governments, international financial institutions and development partners to inform policies and resource allocation.

Empirical studies indicate that there is no significant correlation between the MVI and income levels measured by GNI per capita. Consequently, the MVI cannot serve as a standalone substitute for GNI per capita in determining eligibility for development assistance, just as GNI per capita does not adequately capture vulnerabilities reflected in the MVI. The two measures are therefore complementary¹¹.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ OECD (2024). Using the new UN MVI to identify and fill in vulnerability financing gaps in SIDS, [https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD\(2024\)16/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD(2024)16/en/pdf); United Nations (2024).

In line with this approach, the Sevilla Commitment, adopted by consensus at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in 2025, calls for strengthening international development cooperation under its third pillar on “International Development Cooperation and Development Effectiveness.” The Commitment urges improvements in aid effectiveness, the fostering of partnerships and the enhancement of development impact. It specifically invites international financial institutions (IFIs), multilateral development banks (MDBs) and international organizations to consider the use of the MVI in informing development cooperation policies and practices, particularly to facilitate developing countries’ access to concessional financing.

Why does the MVI matter for PSIDS?

Specific vulnerabilities of Pacific SIDS

The MVI provides an integrated framework for capturing the complex vulnerabilities faced by SIDS, consolidating economic, environmental and social dimensions into a single comprehensive assessment. Evidence shows that SIDS exhibit higher structural vulnerability than other developing country groupings, including LDCs, fragile contexts and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs)¹².

Globally, 14 of the 20 countries experiencing the highest average annual disaster losses relative to gross domestic product (GDP) are SIDS. Between 1970 and 2020, extreme weather events cost SIDS an estimated US\$153 billion, a staggering figure given their average GDP of only US\$13.7 billion¹³. Despite contributing less than 1 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, Pacific SIDS rank among the most climate-vulnerable nations, facing rising sea levels, frequent cyclones, droughts and other hazards that threaten their very existence. Yet, their classification as middle-income countries masks these vulnerabilities, constraining access to concessional finance and other forms of development assistance.

This challenge is compounded by declining development support. According to the Lowy Institute, official development finance (ODF) to the Pacific fell to US\$3.6 billion in 2023, a 16 per cent decline from 2022 and the second consecutive year of record contraction¹⁴. In 2022, ODF experienced its largest annual drop on record, driven by the withdrawal of COVID-19-related support and global aid cuts amid competing priorities such as the Ukraine crisis. Moreover, the composition of development finance has shifted towards non-concessional debt with higher interest rates and shorter repayment periods, increasing fiscal risks and straining budgets at a time when climate-related pressures are intensifying¹⁵.

Pacific SIDS also face structural constraints that distinguish them from other middle- and high-income countries. These include small populations and limited domestic markets that restrict economic diversification; geographic isolation and remoteness that undermine competitiveness and access to global markets; significant labour emigration and climate-induced displacement that erode human capital; high

¹² OECD (2024).

¹³ Bharadwaj, R, Karthikeyan, N and Kumar, BA (2024). Redefining credit ratings for Small Island Developing States: a pathway to climate resilience and economic stability. IIED, London. <https://www.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2024-07/22471IIED.pdf>.

¹⁴ Lowy Institute (2025). Pacific Aid Map: 2025 Key Findings. Available at <https://pacificaidmap.lowyinstitute.org/analysis/2025/key-findings/>.

¹⁵ Lowy Institute (2024). Pacific Aid Map: 2024 Key Findings. Available at <https://pacificaidmap.lowyinstitute.org/analysis/2024/key-findings/>.

dependency ratios that strain public resources; and heavy reliance on external flows such as remittances and tourism. These factors, combined with heightened exposure to climate shocks, place Pacific SIDS in a position of compounded vulnerability requiring urgent and tailored responses.

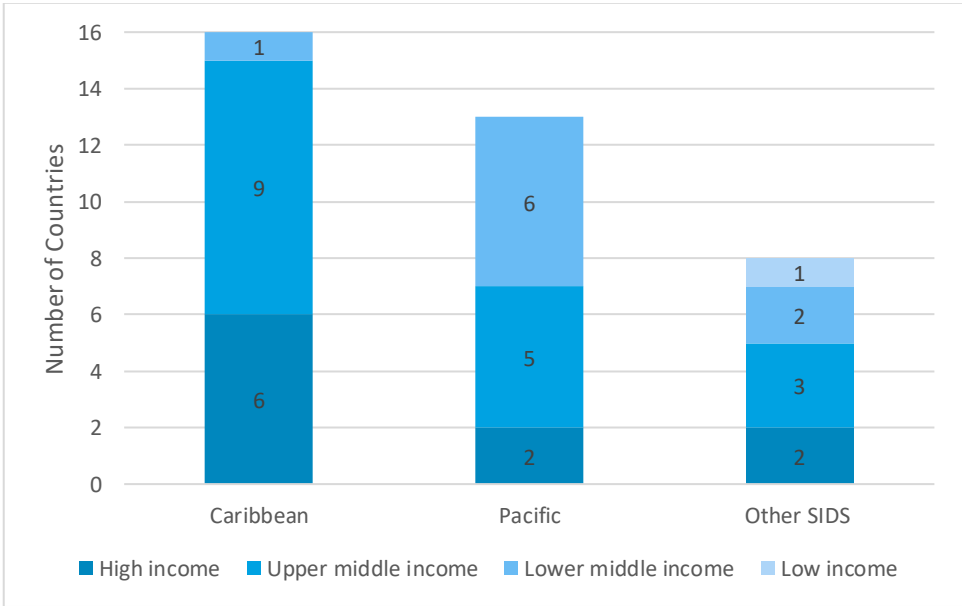
Pacific specificities: MVI-based regional analysis for SIDS

Pacific SIDS are predominantly classified as lower-middle-income countries.

As shown in figure 2, the Pacific region records the highest proportion of middle-income countries among SIDS, 77 per cent, compared with 62.5 per cent for Caribbean SIDS and 71 per cent for other SIDS. However, a closer examination of income categories reveals that most Pacific SIDS fall within the lower-middle-income group, whereas Caribbean SIDS are primarily upper-middle-income, with only one country classified as lower-middle-income.

This predominance of lower-middle-income status among Pacific SIDS suggests distinct development challenges, including more limited fiscal resources and constrained economic capacity relative to Caribbean SIDS, which generally benefit from stronger economic fundamentals. These structural differences underscore the need for tailored policy responses and financing mechanisms that reflect the unique vulnerabilities and resource limitations of Pacific SIDS.

FIGURE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF SIDS BY INCOME GROUP AND REGION



Sources: Author based on World Bank Group income classifications for fiscal 2026 and the United Nations list of SIDS.

Note: Countries include: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cabo Verde, Comoros*, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau*, Guyana, Haiti*, Jamaica, Kiribati*, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mauritius, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Singapore,

St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Solomon Islands*, Suriname, Timor-Leste*, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu*, Vanuatu. (*Also, the least developed countries).

Pacific SIDS are more vulnerable than Caribbean SIDS

Pacific SIDS exhibit higher levels of vulnerability compared with Caribbean SIDS as reflected in their MVI scores. The average MVI score for Pacific SIDS stands at 57.5, compared with 55.0 for Caribbean SIDS while the median values are 57.1 and 55.2, respectively (table 1). Furthermore, the average score for Pacific SIDS is nearly equivalent to that of other SIDS (58.0), and their median score surpasses that of other SIDS. These findings underscore the relatively greater structural fragility of Pacific SIDS, reinforcing the need for targeted policy interventions and enhanced access to vulnerability-based financing mechanisms.

TABLE 1: AVERAGE MVI BY SIDS' REGION

	Average	Median
Pacific SIDS	57.5	57.1
Caribbean SIDS	55.0	55.2
Other SIDS	58.0	56.6
Global score*	52.9	52.8

Source: Author's calculation based on MVI country scores at <https://www.un.org/ohrls/content/mvi-preliminary-country-scores>.

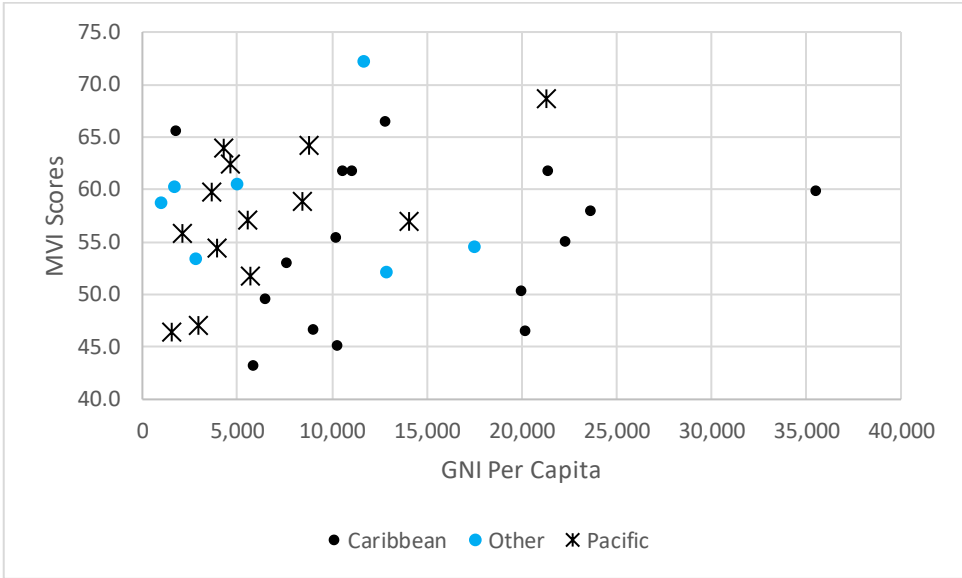
Note: *Global score or average MVI score across all countries with available data¹⁶.

Pacific SIDS record higher MVI scores and lower income levels compared with their SIDS counterparts

On average, Pacific SIDS have a GNI per capita of US\$6,671, significantly below the Caribbean average of US\$14,297 and the average for other SIDS of US\$15,891. As illustrated in figure 3, Pacific SIDS combine relatively high vulnerability with lower income levels, whereas Caribbean SIDS exhibit greater income dispersion and comparatively lower vulnerability.

¹⁶ United Nations (2024).

FIGURE 3: MVI SCORES AND GNI PER CAPITA FOR SIDS, BY REGION



Sources: Author based on the World Development Indicators and MVI for SIDS.

Note: Singapore is excluded from the chart to enhance readability.

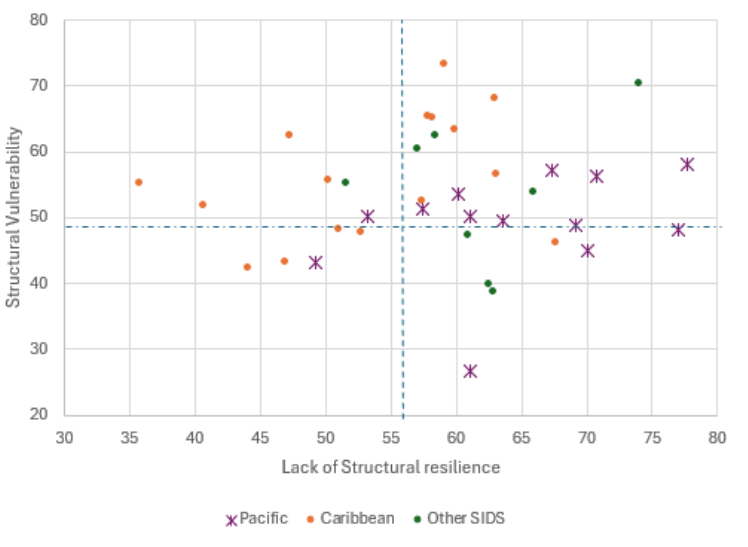
Importantly, there is no significant linear correlation between MVI scores and GNI per capita across SIDS. This indicates that income levels do not reliably predict vulnerability, confirming that the two measures capture distinct dimensions of development and should be considered complementary¹⁷.

Pacific SIDS are in a position of double vulnerability

Pacific SIDS occupy a position of double vulnerability, characterized by high structural fragility and limited resilience. As illustrated in figure 4, most SIDS, and particularly those in the Pacific, are situated above the global median for structural vulnerability and to the right of the median for lack of resilience. This indicates that Pacific SIDS not only face elevated exposure to external shocks but also possess weaker institutional, economic and social capacities to absorb and recover from such shocks.

¹⁷ OECD (2024); United Nations (2024).

FIGURE 4: STRUCTURAL VULNERABILITY AND LACK OF STRUCTURAL RESILIENCE PER SIDS REGIONAL



Source: Author based on MVI for SIDS.

Note: Dash lines indicate global medians for each axis (y= 48.9 and x=55.9).

Within the Pacific, vulnerability levels vary. Countries such as Nauru, Tuvalu, Kiribati and the Federated States of Micronesia exhibit both high vulnerability and pronounced lack of resilience, placing them in the most critical zone. Others, including Fiji and Vanuatu, display moderate vulnerability but remain above the global median for lack of resilience, suggesting persistent structural weaknesses. By contrast, Caribbean SIDS cluster closer to the centre of the distribution, combining relatively high vulnerability with stronger resilience, which affords them greater adaptive capacity.

The concentration of Pacific SIDS in the quadrant of high vulnerability and low resilience underscores their position of double fragility. This calls for urgent measures to strengthen structural adaptation capacities, invest in resilient infrastructure and diversify economic bases to reduce dependence on external flows and exposure to shocks. Without such interventions, Pacific SIDS risk remaining trapped in a cycle of vulnerability and constrained development.

Economic vulnerability and lack of economic resilience

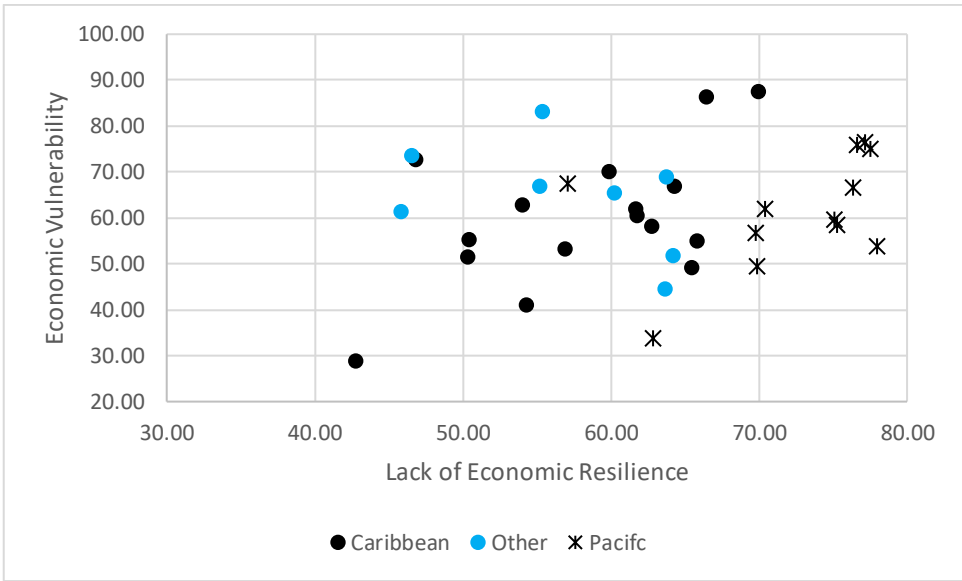
Pacific SIDS exhibit a pronounced economic fragility, characterized by both high vulnerability and a marked lack of resilience. As shown in table 2 and figure 5, Pacific SIDS record the highest levels of lack of economic resilience among all SIDS groupings, far exceeding those of Caribbean and other SIDS. They are also slightly more economically vulnerable than Caribbean SIDS. This dual challenge indicates that Pacific SIDS are not only more exposed to external economic shocks but also less equipped to recover and adapt, placing them in a position of double economic disadvantage.

TABLE 2: ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY AND LACK OF ECONOMIC RESILIENCE: REGIONAL AVERAGES AND MEDIANS

	Economic vulnerability		Lack of economic resilience	
	Average	Median	Average	Median
Pacific SIDS	61.65	62.08	73.59	75.22
Caribbean SIDS	60.06	59.29	58.32	60.75
Other SIDS	64.47	66.07	56.81	57.79
Global	49.82	50.52	50.76	49.48

Source: Author based on MVI for SIDS.

FIGURE 5: ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY AND LACK OF ECONOMIC RESILIENCE



Source: Author based on MVI for SIDS.

Within the Pacific region, Papua New Guinea presents a distinctive case. It registers a relatively low level of economic vulnerability (33.98), even below the global average of 49.82. However, its lack of economic resilience is significant (62.78 compared with the global average of 50.76). This suggests that while Papua New Guinea faces fewer external economic shocks, its capacity to absorb and recover from such shocks remains limited, underscoring the need for targeted resilience-building measures.

Given their compounded economic challenges, marked by high vulnerability to external shocks and limited capacity for recovery, Pacific SIDS should prioritize strategies to strengthen economic resilience. Key measures include diversifying economic structures, improving access to concessional finance and adopting adaptive governance frameworks that enhance flexibility and responsiveness to shocks. The case of Papua New Guinea, which exhibits low economic vulnerability but a high lack of resilience, underscores the importance of targeted investments in resilience-building even where exposure to shocks is relatively limited. Such interventions are critical to reducing systemic fragility and fostering sustainable development across the Pacific region.

Environmental vulnerability and lack of environmental resilience

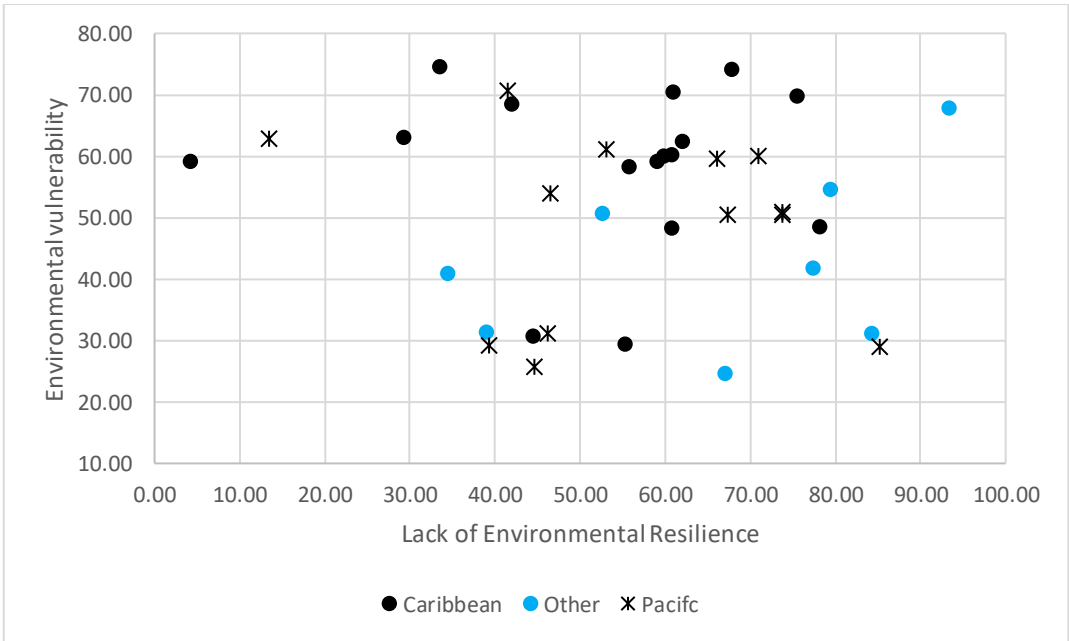
Pacific SIDS occupy an intermediate position among SIDS in terms of environmental vulnerability and lack of environmental resilience. Their average and median environmental vulnerability scores are lower than those of Caribbean SIDS but higher than those of other SIDS. Conversely, for lack of environmental resilience, Pacific SIDS record a higher average (though a lower median) compared with Caribbean SIDS, and both lower average and median compared with other SIDS (table 3 and figure 6). This profile indicates that Pacific SIDS face significant environmental pressures and resilience gaps though their situation is less difficult than that of Caribbean SIDS in terms of vulnerability and other SIDS in terms of resilience.

TABLE 3: ENVIRONMENTAL VULNERABILITY AND LACK OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE: REGIONAL AVERAGES AND MEDIANS

	Environmental Vulnerability		Lack of environmental resilience	
	Average	Median	Average	Median
Pacific SIDS	48.73	50.75	55.55	53.06
Caribbean SIDS	58.43	60.03	53.13	59.41
Other SIDS	42.79	41.33	65.99	72.23
Global	49.50	50.51	37.31	29.83

Source: Author based on MVI for SIDS.

FIGURE 6: ENVIRONMENTAL VULNERABILITY AND LACK OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE



Source: Author based on MVI for SIDS.

Persistent exposure to climate and environmental risks, combined with resilience deficits, amplifies the impact of disasters and environmental shocks in the Pacific. Tailored interventions are therefore essential to strengthen resilience. Vanuatu illustrates this complexity: despite a high environmental vulnerability score (62.7), its low lack-of-resilience score (13.43) suggests that the country has developed adaptive capacity, likely through traditional knowledge, disaster preparedness and targeted adaptation measures.

Nevertheless, continued and enhanced support is needed to safeguard development gains and protect communities.

By contrast, four Pacific SIDS, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea and Nauru, record low environmental vulnerability (below 31) but significant lack of resilience. This indicates that while these countries face relatively low direct exposure to environmental hazards, their ability to absorb, recover and adapt when shocks occur remains limited due to weak resilience structures.

Policy implications are clear: Pacific SIDS experience considerable environmental vulnerability and resilience gaps, requiring urgent investment in risk preparedness, sustainable infrastructure and climate adaptation. While Vanuatu demonstrates that resilience can mitigate vulnerability, countries with lower exposure but weak resilience demand targeted interventions to prevent severe development setbacks when shocks occur.

Environmental vulnerability and lack of environmental resilience

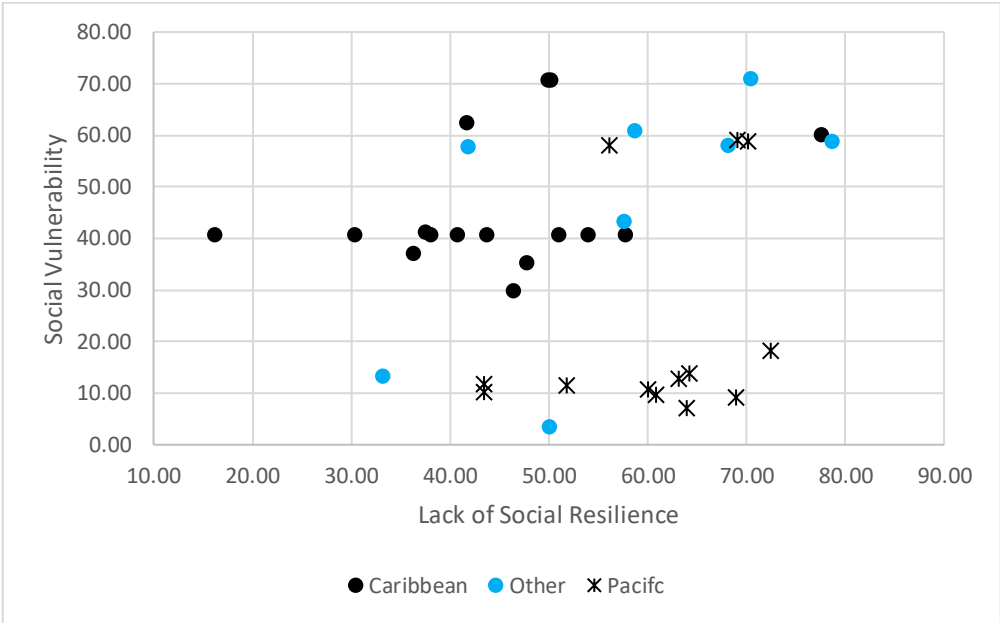
Pacific SIDS exhibit the lowest average and median social vulnerability scores among all SIDS, 22.43 and 11.84, respectively, indicating comparatively fewer social challenges than Caribbean and other SIDS, whose values are more than double (table 4 and figure 7). However, Pacific SIDS record higher average and median scores for lack of social resilience, surpassing Caribbean, other SIDS and global averages. This contrast suggests that while Pacific SIDS face fewer social vulnerabilities, they are significantly less resilient, with limited capacity to recover from social disruptions and shocks.

TABLE 4: SOCIAL VULNERABILITY AND LACK OF SOCIAL RESILIENCE: REGIONAL AVERAGES AND MEDIANS

	Social vulnerability		Lack of social resilience	
	Average	Median	Average	Median
Pacific SIDS	22.43	11.84	60.55	63.09
Caribbean SIDS	45.87	40.83	44.91	45.02
Other SIDS	45.81	57.89	57.27	58.12
Global	41.40	40.85	49.23	43.59

Source: Author based on MVI for SIDS.

FIGURE 7: SOCIAL VULNERABILITY AND LACK OF SOCIAL RESILIENCE



Source: Author based on MVI for SIDS.

Three Pacific SIDS, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Nauru, stand out for combining high social vulnerability with pronounced lack of resilience. These countries not only confront serious social risks but also lack the institutional and systemic capacity to manage or bounce back from crises. Targeted interventions are therefore essential to strengthen social protection systems, expand health and education infrastructure and develop inclusive, adaptive crisis response mechanisms.

Although Pacific SIDS generally experience lower social vulnerability than other SIDS, their weak resilience poses a critical constraint on sustainable development. Investments in robust social assistance programmes, health and education systems and adaptive governance are urgently needed. For countries where high vulnerability intersects with low resilience, such as Samoa, Solomon Islands and Nauru, comprehensive support is required to safeguard societal well-being and enhance long-term resilience.

Conclusions

The adoption of the MVI represents a strategic opportunity for SIDS to reshape the criteria governing access to international financing and ensure that their multiple vulnerabilities are adequately considered. By complementing traditional income-based metrics such as GNI per capita, the MVI offers a more comprehensive and evidence-based approach to assessing development needs, grounded in detailed and comparative diagnostics.

Despite growing calls from SIDS and other developing countries for vulnerability to be systematically integrated into eligibility criteria for development assistance, the application of the MVI remains voluntary. This paper argues that Pacific SIDS, given their structural fragility and limited resilience, should take the lead in piloting MVI implementation. This includes the development of vulnerability-resilience country profiles to provide tailored, country-specific assessments that inform resilience-building

strategies. The MVI should serve as a strategic instrument in negotiations and dialogue with development partners.

To unlock the full potential of the MVI in the Pacific, coordinated regional advocacy is essential to amplify the call for vulnerability-based financing and development support. Equally critical is investment in statistical capacity and regional coordination. Institutions such as the Pacific Islands Forum and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) can play a pivotal role in harmonizing advocacy efforts, pooling statistical resources and governing vulnerability data. Their engagement will be key to ensuring the quality, comparability and timely updating of MVI scores, as well as preparing member States for collective negotiations with development partners.

Finally, the regional agenda should prioritize innovation in financing. While advocacy for the adoption of the MVI must continue, this effort should be complemented by practical experimentation with flexible financial instruments tailored to multidimensional vulnerability. These may include debt-for-climate swaps, parametric insurance schemes, emergency funds and blended finance mechanisms that leverage private sector participation. Such approaches are vital to breaking the cycle of vulnerability and underinvestment, paving the way for resilience and sustainable development in Pacific SIDS.

Annex

Country	Region	Structural vulnerability				Lack of structural resilience			
		Index	Economic vulnerability	Environmental vulnerability	Social vulnerability	Index	Lack of economic resilience	Lack of environmental resilience	Lack of social resilience
Antigua and Barbuda	Caribbean	63.40	70.08	74.01	40.84	59.94	59.80	67.85	50.98
Bahamas	Caribbean	56.42	54.96	69.74	40.83	63.11	65.83	75.58	43.63
Belize	Caribbean	55.62	60.51	62.88	40.83	50.26	61.69	29.31	53.97
Barbados	Caribbean	46.23	49.07	48.35	40.82	67.64	65.41	78.25	57.67
Cuba	Caribbean	51.77	41.16	68.41	40.83	40.72	54.31	42.03	16.09
Dominica	Caribbean	62.42	66.90	74.47	40.82	47.28	64.25	33.58	38.08
Dominican Republic	Caribbean	43.11	28.71	29.23	62.42	47.01	42.75	55.37	41.67
Grenada	Caribbean	65.33	87.41	59.15	40.82	57.84	69.95	59.00	40.77
Guyana	Caribbean	55.06	62.88	58.95	40.83	35.82	53.96	4.20	30.35
Haiti	Caribbean	68.02	72.73	70.45	60.23	63.00	46.78	60.92	77.50
Jamaica	Caribbean	48.09	51.60	58.20	29.78	51.01	50.31	55.85	46.41
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Caribbean	52.37	58.08	60.11	35.23	57.47	62.74	60.76	47.75
Saint Lucia	Caribbean	73.18	86.46	59.94	70.71	59.08	66.39	59.81	49.88
Suriname	Caribbean	42.25	55.23	30.53	37.05	44.15	50.43	44.57	36.29
Trinidad and Tobago	Caribbean	47.74	53.18	48.11	41.19	52.72	56.87	60.84	37.44
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Caribbean	65.12	61.98	62.30	70.71	58.25	61.69	62.13	50.13
Comoros	Other	53.91	51.85	50.57	58.94	66.01	64.19	52.65	78.61
Cabo Verde	Other	62.49	73.61	54.39	57.79	58.39	46.49	79.50	41.81
Guinea-Bissau	Other	60.44	65.31	40.87	70.88	57.04	60.19	34.43	70.36
Maldives	Other	70.38	83.05	67.83	57.99	74.00	55.38	93.41	68.08
Mauritius	Other	38.60	44.57	24.61	43.33	62.87	63.59	67.05	57.61
Singapore	Other	39.82	61.51	31.01	3.46	62.49	45.79	84.36	50.00
Sao Tome and Principe	Other	55.20	66.83	31.24	60.83	51.65	55.12	39.07	58.63
Seychelles	Other	47.19	68.99	41.79	13.23	60.96	63.71	77.42	33.09
Kiribati	Pacific	48.77	66.66	50.27	12.79	69.14	76.28	67.39	63.09
Marshall Islands	Pacific	45.07	58.60	50.45	10.70	70.04	75.22	73.87	60.01
Nauru	Pacific	58.20	76.58	28.83	58.88	77.72	77.17	85.17	70.07
Palau	Pacific	53.70	75.02	53.78	11.45	60.17	77.52	46.51	51.84
Papua New Guinea	Pacific	26.58	33.68	25.54	18.26	61.05	62.78	44.71	72.39
Solomon Islands	Pacific	50.19	56.67	29.08	59.17	61.05	69.77	39.39	69.01
Tonga	Pacific	49.60	59.66	61.06	9.60	63.62	75.05	53.06	60.79
Tuvalu	Pacific	48.26	66.03	50.75	7.21	77.03	90.96	73.72	63.96
Vanuatu	Pacific	51.23	62.08	62.72	9.29	57.37	70.36	13.43	68.86
Samoa	Pacific	57.17	53.71	59.47	58.19	67.32	77.98	66.14	56.03
Fiji	Pacific	50.16	49.40	70.48	11.84	53.22	69.88	41.56	43.43
Micronesia (Federated States of)	Pacific	56.40	75.84	59.99	13.90	70.79	76.63	70.96	64.22
Timor-Leste	Pacific	43.28	67.46	31.03	10.31	49.27	57.09	46.27	43.39

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