



United Nations

DESA
Statistics Division

Surveys in Small Island Developing States

Chapter 18 of the UN Handbook of Surveys on Individuals and Households

Subregional Capacity Building Workshop on the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States (ABAS) and its Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Framework

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Martina De Saverio
Associate Expert
UNDESA Statistics Division

Introduction

- SIDS: 39 States + 18 Associate Members across Caribbean, Pacific, AIS regions
- Recognized as special case since 1992
- Share compounded vulnerabilities: remoteness, demographic constraints, environmental challenges, limited capacity



Why is it important to discuss surveys in SIDS?

SIDS face unique vulnerabilities that extend across the entire data ecosystem and have implications for all statistical operations

Applying standard survey methods without adaptation in SIDS can lead to:

- **Non-representative data**
- **Interrupted fieldwork**
- **Excessive respondent burden**
- **Logistical delays and cost overruns**
- **Limited ability to disaggregate data...**

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS,
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STUDIES IN METHODS

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HANDBOOK OF HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS

(REVISED EDITION)



UNITED NATIONS
New York, 1984

UN Handbook on Household Surveys

The previous versions: United Nations Handbook on Household Surveys, 1984 and other handbooks covering different aspects of household surveys, 1982-2008

Revision guided by the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Household Surveys

Draft handbook to be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission March 2026

- Comprehensive update of 1984 Handbook
- Balances **principles, practical guidance, and emerging approaches**
- Covers **survey phases**: design → management → collection → processing → dissemination
- Includes **special topics**: gender, displaced persons, SIDS, child-centric surveys



Chapter 18: Surveys in Small Island Developing States

- Introduction
- Survey initiation
- Survey management
- Questionnaire design
- Sample design
- Data collection
- Data dissemination
- Conclusion

Survey initiation and management

Chronic under-resourcing and limited prioritization of statistics constrain national survey capacity and continuity

Narrow economic structures and high levels of migration require careful survey timing and adapted reference periods

High exposure to climate change and natural disasters demands operational flexibility and contingency planning

Strong coordination is required to ensure efficient implementation of activities, avoid duplication, manage resources more effectively, and reduce the burden on respondents

Questionnaire and sample design

Considerations on length and complexity of the questionnaire

Cultural and linguistical adaptation

Sampling must consider island geography and population size

Data collection and dissemination

- Geographical dispersion and limited transport infrastructure make fieldwork costly, slower and vulnerable to delays
- Environmental risks can disrupt operations, demanding contingency plans and equipment protection
- Small populations increase confidentiality challenges and limit the ability to publish disaggregated data without disclosure risk
- Outdated statistical legislation can restrict data access needed for decision-making
- Considerations on staff recruitment, training and deployment

THANKS!

Do you have any questions?

martina.desaverio@un.org