Chapter 5

Tackling the poverty of opportunity in small island developing States

Most small island developing states are known to the world as idyllic holiday destinations. However, these States face a number of challenges that constrain economic and social development, with serious implications for their national youth populations. Although many of these States have an abundance of natural beauty, most have small formal labour markets and few resources suitable for industrial development. Business development is constrained by the small size of markets resulting from small population sizes, and from the fact that small island developing States are separated from one another and the rest of the world by vast distances. The Federated States of Micronesia, for example, consist of over 600 islands scattered over nearly 3 million square kilometres of ocean (Pacific Islands Trade and Investment Commission and Asian Development Bank, 2001). Cellular phone use, Internet access, and personal computer use are limited compared with developed countries, and science and technology transfer has occurred at a slow pace. Small island developing States are susceptible to natural disasters such as hurricanes and floods and are further threatened by the uncertainties of climate change and environmental degradation. These factors, combined with high population growth rates, have constrained economic and social development in many of the States.

Most small island developing States have traditionally relied on agricultural and mineral exports and tourism. The small size and openness of the States have made their economies vulnerable to fluctuations and developments within the global economy. In the Caribbean States, export crops such as sugar and bananas have declined as a result of the global trend towards trade liberalization. Similar problems are seen in other sectors, with the exception of tourism, which has thrived despite the vulnerability of the industry. The geographical characteristics of small island developing States, combined with the effects of globalization and a shift from a traditional to a modern lifestyle, have greatly affected the vulnerability of youth in these countries.

The present chapter analyses the challenges faced by young people living in small island developing States. It begins by reviewing population statistics and notes that youth make up a considerable share of the population living in these States. Young people therefore constitute an important force for development. However, their potential is seriously undermined by "poverty of opportunity" in the form of socio-economic obstacles, which are examined in the chapter. The educational and employment situation of youth in these States is reviewed, as is the incidence of poverty. The chapter examines internal and international migration as a coping mechanism. The disillusionment of youth in the light of changing societal values is also considered. Health issues and risky behaviour resulting from this situation are highlighted as well.

YOUTH: A CONSIDERABLE FORCE IN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

Youth make up a significant share of the population in all small island developing States. The proportion of youth aged 15-24 years in the total population ranges from about one eighth in the Netherlands Antilles to almost one fourth in the Maldives (see table 5.1). Some countries, notably those in the Caribbean, use an expanded definition of youth that includes individuals up to the age of 30; within this framework, the proportions regarded by Governments as "youth" are even greater than those reported in table 5.1. Population growth has been high in many of these States, and youth populations are expected to increase significantly between 1995 and 2015, particularly in the African, Asian and Pacific island States (see table 5.1).

Table 5.1
Youth as a percentage of the total population in selected small island developing States

Major area, region, country or area*	Youth as percentage of total population	Projected percentage change, 1995-2015
Africa	20.4	37.7
Cape Verde	22.5	37.5
Comoros[a]	20.3	37.9
Guinea-Bissau	18.8	46.2
Mauritius[b]	15.5	-0.5
Sao Tome and Principe	21.8	30.1
Asia	18.1	12.1
Bahrain	16.0	30.6
Maldives	24.5	32.3
Timor-Leste	19.8	46.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	18.1	11.6
Caribbean[c]	17.3	9.3
Aruba	12.7	23.0
Bahamas	17.2	12.6
Barbados	14.2	-24.9
Cuba	13.8	-23.9
Dominican Republic	18.1	17.7
Grenada	21.5	18.5
Haiti	21.5	32.0
Jamaica	18.8	10.5
Netherlands Antilles	12.1	-35.7
Puerto Rico	14.8	-6.1
Saint Lucia	19.7	2.9
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	20.7	-17.5
Trinidad and Tobago	20.3	-21.0
United States Virgin Islands	16.3	10.1
Central America	18.4	11.5
Belize	20.2	33.5
South America[d]	18.0	11.9
Guyana	15.9	-22.2
Suriname	18.7	2.0

(continued on following page)

Major area, region, country or area*	Youth as percentage of total population	Projected percentage change, 1995-2015
Oceania	15.0	17.5
Melanesia	19.5	34.6
Fiji	19.3	11.0
New Caledonia	16.9	19.8
Papua New Guinea	19.5	37.3
Solomon Islands	20.2	35.1
Vanuatu	20.7	42.6
Micronesia[e]	18.7	26.0
Guam	16.0	26.5
Micronesia, Federated States	22.8	15.3
Polynesia[f]	19.3	19.2
French Polynesia	19.2	17.4
Samoa	18.7	18.4
Tonga	21.6	15.9

Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision (New York: 2007). CD-ROM edition: extended dataset.

Notes: *Countries or areas listed individually are only those with 100,000 inhabitants or more in 2005; the remainder are included in the regional groups but are not listed separately.

[a] Including the island of Mayotte.

[b] Including Agalega, Rodrigues, and Saint Brandon.

[c] Including Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Turks and Caicos Islands.

[d] Including the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

[e] Including Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Northern Mariana Islands, and Palau.

[f] Including American Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue, Pitcairn, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Wallis and the Futuna Islands.

These large current and future youth generations can be a crucial force for development in small island developing States. Providing young people with access to a quality education and opportunities to obtain decent work will bring these countries closer to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Youth who are highly qualified and productive can contribute meaningfully to national development. At present, however, young people are confronted by major obstacles that hinder their effective participation in education, the economy, and society. In many cases, past and current population growth has outstripped the capabilities of these States to provide employment and education to young people, and poverty is widespread. Youth without opportunities can become disillusioned and resort to risky or antisocial behaviour as a coping mechanism. In the final analysis, large numbers of unemployed youth represent a tragic loss of opportunity for small island developing States. It is essential that Governments take urgent action to address this crisis.

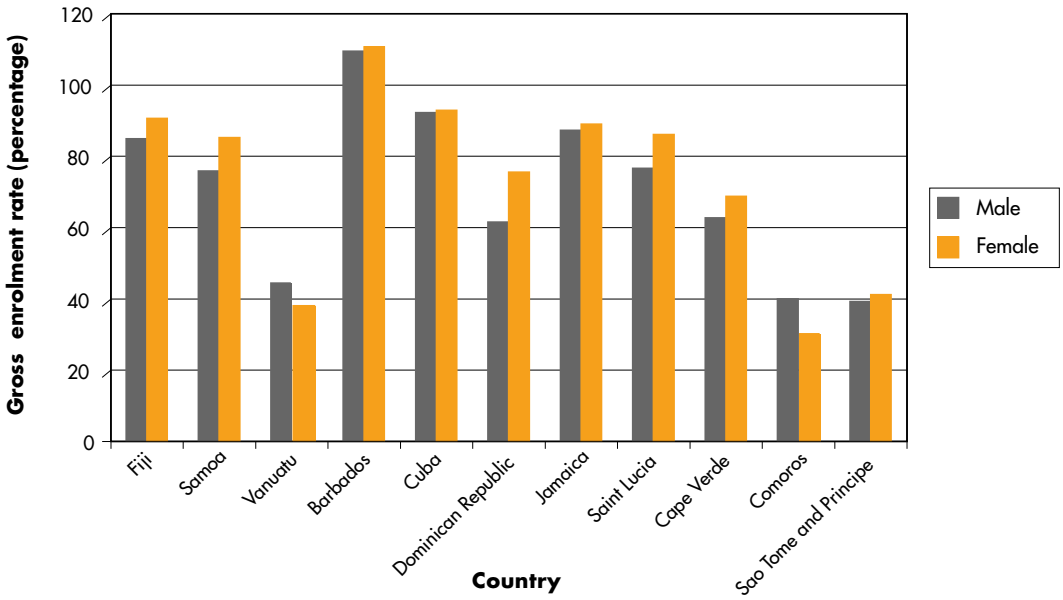
EDUCATION: HIGH ENROLMENT RATES BUT PERSISTENT PROBLEMS WITH QUALITY AND RETENTION

Small island developing States as a whole have a youth literacy rate of 85.3 per cent, and gender parity has been achieved in this area. Subregional disparities exist, however; in the Pacific Islands, 92 per cent of youth are literate, while in the Caribbean the corresponding rate is only 76 per cent. Almost one in four youth living in the Caribbean cannot read and write; statistics show that literacy rates for girls in this group of island States are slightly higher than those for boys (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2006b).

Most small island developing States are close to achieving universal primary education and have net primary enrolment rates of 92 per cent or higher. Sao Tome and Principe and Saint Lucia have the highest net enrolment rates (98 per cent). In some countries, however, more progress is needed if future generations of youth are to have the same opportunities as their peers in other countries. The Dominican Republic has a net primary enrolment rate of 86 per cent, and it is estimated that in the Solomon Islands only 63 per cent of children of primary age are attending school (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2007a).

High enrolment rates are important, but mere enrolment in school is not enough. Data on primary school completion rates in small island developing States are scarce, but available statistics suggest wide variation. In Comoros, only 55.9 per cent of children complete the primary cycle. In Sao Tome and Principe the rate is also quite low, at 60.3 per cent, but girls are more likely than boys to finish primary school (63.0 versus 57.7 per cent, respectively). At the other end of the spectrum is Barbados, where 99.5 per cent of girls and 95.7 per cent of boys complete primary school (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2007a). Many small island developing States have remote, isolated rural communities and outer-island populations and find it difficult to ensure universal access to primary education for children outside urban areas. Few rural children attend secondary school. Nevertheless, gross secondary enrolment has generally increased since the late 1990s, with wide variation in individual country rates (see figure 5.1). With the exception of Comoros and Vanuatu, all of the small island developing States for which data are available have achieved gender parity in secondary education or have even more girls than boys enrolled in secondary education (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2007a). Where differentials exist, the challenge is to rectify the disparity without undermining the gains of females.

Figure 5.1
Gross secondary enrolment rates in selected small island developing States, 2004



Source: Data obtained from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (available from www.uis.unesco.org; accessed on 2 April 2007).

Many young people completing their secondary education would like to pursue higher studies. However, they are frequently obliged to travel abroad to obtain a tertiary education, as many small island developing States, with their small populations and lack of suitably trained teaching staff, are unable to establish national universities. To respond to this challenge, some small island developing States have set up joint universities through subregional partnerships. For example, the University of the South Pacific is located in Fiji but is based on a partnership between the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The University of the West Indies is an autonomous regional institution supported by and serving 15 island States (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2006a).

Poverty keeps many young people from taking advantage of educational opportunities. In Jamaica, for example, the rate of enrolment in formal education is 85 per cent for all 15- to 16-year-olds, but enrolment among poor youth of the same age group is 68 per cent. The probability of obtaining a post-secondary education is even more dependent on economic status. At age 18, the wealthiest Jamaicans are three times more likely than the poorest residents to be enrolled in school, and the differential increases to eight times for those in the age group 19-24. Lack of money is given as the main reason for absences, with lack of interest in school and pregnancy listed as other major reasons (Government of Jamaica and United Nations Children's Fund, 2004).

Equipping those students who are able to attend school with skills that will enable them to participate meaningfully in a volatile labour market is a major challenge for the education sector in most small island developing States. The relatively poor quality of edu-

cation in the Pacific States is negatively influencing employment prospects and has forced these countries to rely on expatriates to fill high-skill positions. Some countries in the region are finding it difficult to keep pace with the rapid changes and technological developments resulting from globalization, and have stressed the need for curriculum reform (CARICOM Secretariat, 2004). In the Caribbean, some of the major concerns in the education sector include the poor performance of students, low levels of attendance (owing to child labour obligations and truancy during school hours), and unsatisfactory levels of achievement among certain vulnerable groups (including children of single parents and child guardians as well as rural students). High non-completion and repetition rates, poor examination performance, gender disparities in school performance (girls outperforming boys), unequal access to educational opportunities, insufficient access to early childhood education and secondary education, and issues related to special education also pose problems. Adequate regulatory frameworks are needed to address these concerns (CARICOM Secretariat, 2004).

Improving the quality and reach of education is critical to improving the socio-economic prospects of future generations of youth. Schooling has an important impact on the behaviour of youth. Feeling connected to school (through a teacher or by working hard) reduces the likelihood of risky behaviour, including using drugs and alcohol and engaging in violent activities or early sexual activity. Research indicates that among school-going adolescents, the probability of sexual activity is 30 per cent lower for boys and 60 per cent lower for girls who are connected to school. This is likely associated with positive home and community support as well (Cunningham and Correia, 2003). Conversely, the school system can have a devastating effect on young people with low academic achievement, making them feel out of place in an academic environment and, as a corollary, socially excluded and "worthless" (Cunningham and Correia, 2003).

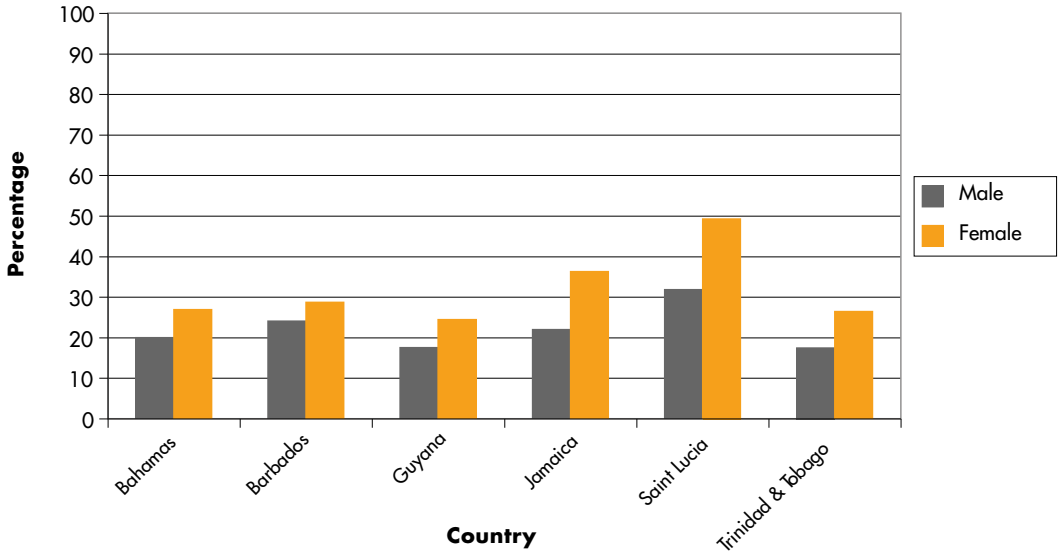
UNEMPLOYMENT

Quantifying youth unemployment

In small island developing States, as in other regions, the probability of unemployment is higher among youth than among adults. Youth-to-adult unemployment ratios in the Caribbean range from 2.0 to 3.6. Higher ratios are found in the Asian and African island States. In some countries, youth-to-adult unemployment ratios are exceedingly high. In the Maldives, for example, the ratio is 4, and in Mauritius, youth are almost five times more likely than adults to be unemployed; both figures are considerably higher than the global youth-to-adult unemployment ratio of 3 (International Labour Office, 2004).

In the Caribbean, youth unemployment declined from 23.8 per cent in 1995 to 20.7 per cent in 2004 (International Labour Office, 2006). Nevertheless, joblessness among young people continues to be a significant problem in the subregion (see figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2
Youth unemployment rates in selected Caribbean small island developing States, 2004 or most recent year



Source: International Labour Office, *Key Indicators of the Labour Market*, third edition (Geneva: 2004).

The figure clearly illustrates that unemployment is far more prevalent among young women than among young men in Caribbean countries. At the time the surveys were undertaken, 36.3 per cent of young women in Jamaica were unemployed, compared with 22 per cent of young men, and in Saint Lucia, the figures were 49.2 and 31.8 per cent respectively. The higher educational attainments of young women (relative to those of young men) do not appear to translate into improved employment prospects.

Deriving precise estimates of the extent of youth unemployment in Pacific small island developing States is difficult, as the quality of data tends to be poor, and definitions of economic activity vary from one country to another (McMurray, 2001). Table 5.2 presents youth unemployment rates for selected States within this subregion. "Unemployment" is not consistently defined in the Pacific States; it usually refers to the number of those in the labour force who do not have jobs in the formal sector, but in some countries it also includes the number of people without subsistence or informal work. The countries showing low youth unemployment rates in table 5.2 define employment as "formal, informal and subsistence work". The unemployment rate of almost 63 per cent for the Marshall Islands is extremely high by any standards. A serious shortage of employment opportunities for those of working age is evident in most Pacific countries, though unemployment rates are highest for 15- to 24-year-olds. Statistics indicate that in the year 2000, there were five people of working age available for every formal sector job in Fiji. In Solomon Islands, the corresponding ratio was 7.9, with 9.2 projected for 2010. It is estimated that in Samoa, around 4,500 students graduate from secondary school each year, but only about 1,000 of them find wage work in the formal sector or continue on to higher education (McMurray, 2001). In Papua New Guinea, it is projected that there will be almost 4 million available workers by 2015, but only 6 per cent will be able to find jobs in the formal sector (Gregory, 2006).

Table 5.2
Youth unemployment in selected Pacific small island developing States

Country	Unemployment among youth aged 15-24 years (percentage)
Fiji Islands	14.1[a]
Kiribati	2.2
Marshall Islands	62.6
Micronesia, Federated States	35.3
Papua New Guinea	3.7
Samoa	12.3
Solomon Islands	11.1[b]
Timor-Leste	5.3[b]
Tonga	13.0
Tuvalu	25.0
Vanuatu	36.0

Source: David Abbot and Steve Pollard, "Hardship and poverty in the Pacific: a summary" (Manila: Asian Development Bank, 2004).

Note: a Adult unemployment rate (for those aged 15 years and above) as per the 2002 urban household income and expenditure survey (HIES).

b Adult unemployment rate as per the national census.

Causes of youth unemployment

The high rates of youth unemployment in the small island developing States represent a significant waste of productive resources and are at the root of an array of socio-economic problems in these countries. Devising remedial solutions requires, first and foremost, that the sources of youth unemployment be identified. In the small island developing States, there are both structural and youth-specific problems that must be addressed within this context.

Small island developing States face a variety of structural problems that limit employment opportunities for all age groups. Most of these States have scarce resources and limited capital. Relatively high wage rates combine with low productivity to undermine the competitiveness of labour-intensive manufacturing. The small size and remoteness of the Pacific States has made it difficult for them to compete with world prices in any major industry, including tourism in some cases. Those small island developing States with natural resources mainly concentrate on the export of raw materials rather than on local manufacturing and services. Extraction is frequently undertaken by foreign firms, which repatriate profits and rarely invest in any local firms (McMurray, 2001).

The business sector is also relatively undeveloped, particularly in the small island developing States of the Pacific. Pacific islanders have generally been reluctant to engage in entrepreneurial activities, perhaps because there are inadequate systems to protect their earnings from family demands (McMurray, 2001). The lack of qualified employees is also an important constraint.

There are a number of other factors, including sustained population growth, that affect employment prospects for youth in particular. In many Pacific island countries, the annual increase in the labour force greatly exceeds the rate of job creation in the formal sector. Population growth and improved secondary enrolment, combined with limited job creation, have led to a situation in which large numbers of graduates are competing for a relatively small number of jobs in the formal sector. Adding to this are the high rates of urbanization in many of the small island developing States.

It has become increasingly apparent that education systems in many small island developing States are not adequately preparing youth for the existing job market. The quality of education is often poor, and young people who have completed secondary school frequently lack marketable skills. Despite the large number of graduates, expatriates dominate high-skill occupations.

Young people who are not able to obtain employment in the formal sector often experience a sense of failure. Any income-generating activities they might undertake in the informal or traditional sectors will always be seen as a second-best option (McMurray, 2001). This perception contributes to the high rates of international migration found in many small island developing States.

The limited opportunities available for youth to obtain work experience also help to explain the high unemployment rates among young people in small island developing States. In most countries, youth tend to gather experience by undertaking simple jobs that require a relatively low level of skill. Because of the general lack of employment opportunities in small island developing States, however, youth are competing with older, more experienced workers for the same kinds of jobs (McMurray, 2001). In addition, many formal sector jobs in these States are provided by the public sector, which values seniority. Entry level positions for youth are therefore limited (World Bank, 2006a). The last resort of self-employment is often not an option for youth in these countries owing to constraints such as financing limitations.

Vocational education offers small island developing States a chance to address some of the employment difficulties they are facing. However, facilities for vocational training are frequently insufficient. For example, vocational schools in Solomon Islands have only 1,200 places available for a youth population of over 90,000 (Chevalier, 2001). In addition, there is a need for more realistic career education that portrays different work options more equally (McMurray, 2001). In the absence of formal employment opportunities, participation in multiple small-scale activities in the informal sector can help youth to generate income, develop skills, and find an alternative to the disenchantment that frequently arises from idleness. It is critically important, however, for solutions to be found to increase formal employment options while keeping cultural specificities in mind.

POVERTY

Globally comparative country-level data on the prevalence of poverty, specifically among youth in small island developing States, are scant, but it is clear that poverty constitutes a major challenge across the region. In all of the Caribbean States, poverty is considered a critical social issue and a root cause of a wide spectrum of other socio-economic problems (CARICOM Secretariat, 2004). In Trinidad and Tobago, 39 per cent of the people live on

less than US$ 2 per day. In Haiti, the situation is particularly worrisome; almost 54 per cent struggle to survive on less than US$ 1 a day, and as many as 78 per cent live on less than US$ 2 a day (United Nations Development Programme, 2006).

The poverty landscape is also stark in the Pacific. One fifth of the people living in the Marshall Islands and Timor-Leste survive on less than US$ 1 per day, and the corresponding proportions are even higher in Kiribati (38 per cent) and Papua New Guinea (39.6 per cent) (Asian Development Bank, 2006). According to economic studies of the Pacific Islands, many people in these countries have difficulty sustaining a reasonable standard of living (Asian Development Bank, 2003). Table 5.3 provides estimates of the proportions of those living below the basic-needs poverty line in various Pacific small island developing States, based on national household income and expenditure surveys undertaken since 2001. The table indicates that in several of these States, large numbers of residents are unable to meet their basic needs.

Table 5.3
Poverty in selected Pacific small island developing States, in ascending order

Country	Percentage of population below the basic-needs poverty line		
	National	Urban	Rural
Cook Islands	12.0	..	..
Marshall Islands	20.0	..	..
Samoa	20.3	23.3	17.9
Tonga	22.3	23.6	22.8
Fiji	25.5	27.6	22.4
Micronesia, Federated States	27.9	29.5	32.9
Tuvalu	29.3	23.7	23.4
Papua New Guinea	37.5	..	..
Timor-Leste	39.7	25.0	44.0
Vanuatu	40.0	..	..
Kiribati	50.0	51.0	50.0

Source: David Abbot and Steve Pollard, "Hardship and poverty in the Pacific: a summary" (Manila: Asian Development Bank, 2004).

Note: Two dots (..) indicate that data are not available or are not separately reported.

The insularity and structural vulnerability of small island developing States affect their productivity and exacerbate their susceptibility to poverty in a variety of ways. It has been noted, for example, that frequent extreme weather events and the long-term rise in sea levels seriously affect agriculture, food security, and overall poverty reduction in these States. The working poor and the rural poor make up much of the population living in poverty, and poverty can quickly intensify in times of natural disaster.

Research carried out in the Caribbean found that young people in disadvantaged situations often have few options. Poor parents—particularly those who are single parents—are more likely to be absent from the household, leaving children and youth unattended and

unsupervised. Young girls in some countries, sometimes at the encouragement of their parents, sell sex to relieve poverty and to contribute to the household income. In countries such as Jamaica, childbearing is still used as a strategy to gain economic support (Cunningham and Correia, 2003).

The high unemployment rates in many small island developing States are certainly a factor contributing to widespread poverty. However, since many of the poor cannot afford to be unemployed, the phenomenon of the working poor is an even larger challenge in many countries. In St. Kitts and Nevis, the lack of decent work that pays a living wage is particularly evident. The country has an unemployment rate of only 5.3 per cent, suggesting that unemployment is not the main cause of poverty. The working poor appear to join the labour force at an earlier age than the non-poor, in part because those who are poor tend to spend fewer years in formal education than those who are not (Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis, 2004).

The data presented above are not youth-specific; however, it is clear that the high incidence of poverty crucially affects youth engagement in society. With job opportunities frequently available only in sectors that do not meet young people's expectations, the lack of income and scarcity of positive leisure activities drive some disillusioned and idle youth to migrate elsewhere or to engage in crime. The income inequality made obvious by the presence of foreign tourists and the media encourages youth to engage in "easy money" activities such as drug sales and prostitution (Cunningham and Correia, 2003).

MIGRATION

Internal migration

Many rural youth seek job opportunities and a more exciting life in urban areas. Urbanization is rising in all of the Pacific island States, with annual rates of growth ranging from 0.4 per cent in the Federated States of Micronesia to 6.2 per cent in Solomon Islands. Between 13 per cent (Solomon Islands) and 100 per cent (Nauru) of the total population of the Pacific Islands are now living in urban areas (Ware, 2004).

This movement of people is a response to real and perceived inequalities in socio-economic opportunities between rural and urban areas and increasing rural impoverishment in many countries (Connell, 2003; Monsell-Davis, 2000). Employment opportunities and services (especially education) are concentrated in the urban centres in most small island developing States. Along with improved prospects for work and schooling, cities offer better access to entertainment activities and consumer goods (Ware, 2004). In countries where people are forced to travel substantial distances (at great expense) for medical assistance and education, ready access to these services is also an important reason for moving.

The exodus of large numbers of people, especially youth, from rural to urban areas destabilizes village economies. It causes schools and other services to shut down, which affects the lives of other young people who may need these services. It also undermines the traditional social order in which the chiefs, the church, and families maintain law and order. Informal urban settlements, which do not have a stable social order, can be dangerous, and within these settlements, young people, particularly males, are at high risk of

becoming involved with gangs, crime, alcohol and drugs. In poor urban areas, young women are often at high risk of being sexually assaulted and exploited in the sex industry (HELP Resources and United Nations Children's Fund, 2005).

Young people who move to urban areas tend to reside with relatives, where accommodation is free, and relatives are traditionally obliged to look after them. In turn, however, youth are expected to abide by traditional family rules and practices, and there is great potential for family conflict when traditional and modern views clash. Such conflict often escalates into violence. Moving in with relatives in urban areas is not always safe for young females, as it exposes them to a high risk of (sexual) abuse by family members (United Nations Children's Fund, 2004a-c; 2005a-b; Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands and United Nations Children's Fund, 2003; Government of the Cook Islands and United Nations Children's Fund, 2004). In Fiji, a survey of female youth who were living with their extended families while attending secondary school revealed that, among the girls who dropped out of school, 26 per cent reported having been sexually abused by male relatives while living away from home (Save the Children, 2004). Sexual abuse can also lead female youth into prostitution, as those who have been abused often flee the home and, with no alternative means of support, survive by selling sex. There are even reports of girls who have remained at home being prostituted by a family member (HELP Resources and United Nations Children's Fund, 2005).

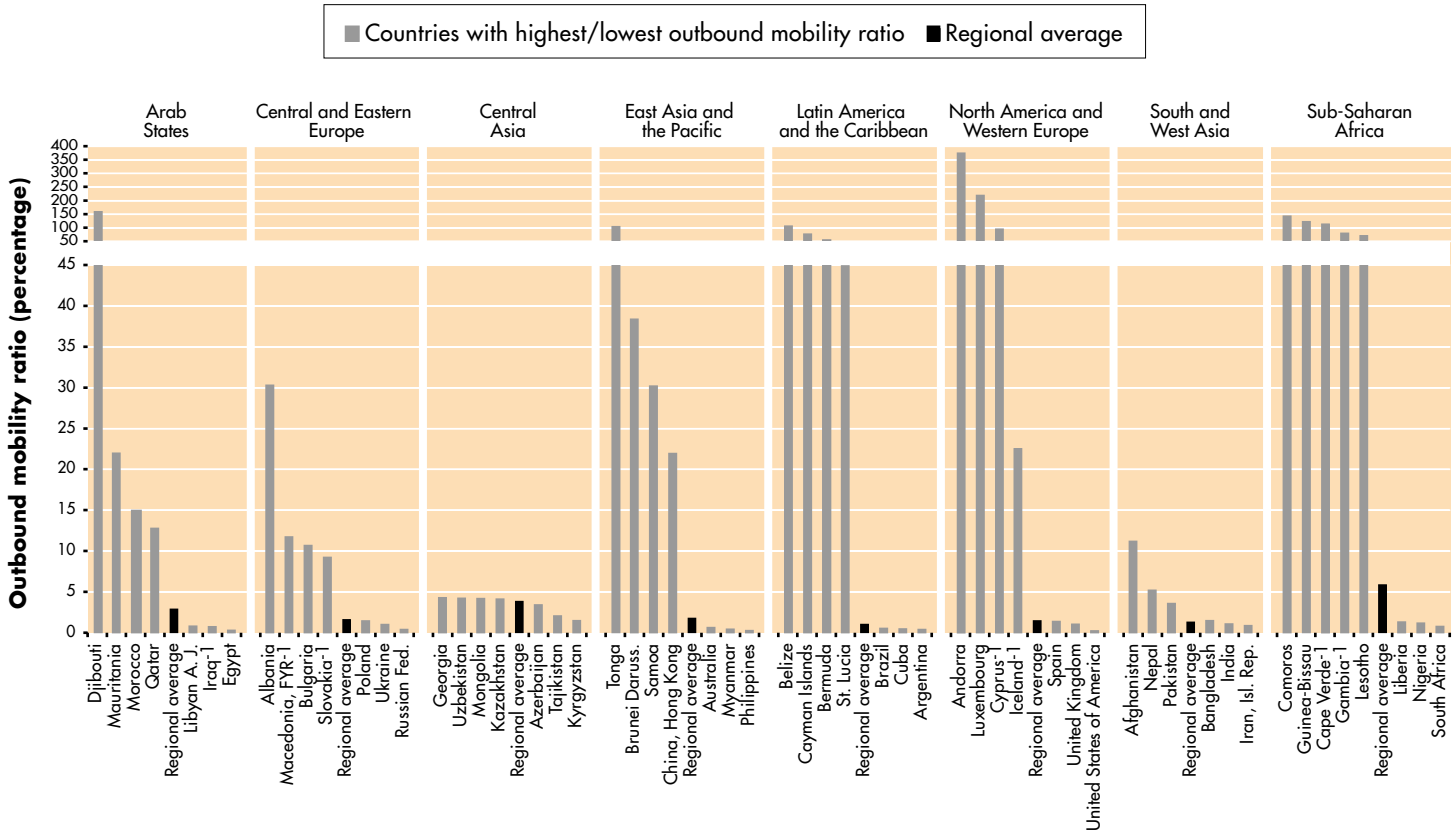
International migration

Migration rates for youth in small island developing States are among the highest in the world (World Bank, 2006a). Tourism and the expansion of modern information and communication technologies (ICT) have brought about a heightened awareness among youth from these States of better opportunities beyond their shores, and such exposure has increased their expectations for their own lives. The mismatch between their expectations and immediate situation may strengthen the desire in young people to pursue a new life abroad. For many youth from small island developing States, the possibility of a better social life is an important reason to migrate (World Bank, 2006a). At a more fundamental level, migration is inextricably tied to unemployment and the search for improved job prospects. The demand for skilled workers among the top labour-receiving countries in North America and Europe, combined with the economic vulnerabilities of most small island developing States, may trigger movement to countries or regions with more opportunities (United Nations, 2006). Inter-State agreements, such as the Compact of Free Association allowing Micronesians increased access to residency in the United States, have also encouraged youth to seek permanent residence abroad (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003).

Youth from small island developing States and other small countries are particularly likely to pursue a tertiary education abroad. Of the eight countries in the world that have more students studying abroad than at home, five (Belize, Cape Verde, , Guinea-Bissau and Tonga) are small island developing States. More than 33 per cent of the students from Mauritius are studying in other countries, and around 14 per cent of the tertiary-age population from Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica and Montserrat are attending university abroad. Figure 5.3 clearly illustrates the strong tendency among young

people from small island developing States to migrate for educational purposes. The high outbound mobility ratios shown in the figure reflect a strong interest in international studies and/or deficiencies in educational provision at home. Though youth are likely to value the experience of studying and living abroad, the main reason for migration among youth from small island developing States is the lack of opportunity to obtain a quality tertiary education at home. As noted previously, with the small size of the population in most of these countries, the costs of establishing national universities often cannot be justified, and there is a general lack of suitably trained nationals capable of teaching a full range of tertiary courses (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2006a).

Figure 5.3
The likelihood of studying abroad:
Which countries have the most or least students studying abroad?



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database, statistical table 10 (Montreal: 2007) (available from www.uis.unesco.org; accessed on 2 April 2007).

Notes: The outbound mobility ratio is defined as mobile students coming from a country as a percentage of all tertiary students in that country. Data on mobile students from a given country are compiled using data from multiple host countries. Therefore, data from different reference periods may be combined.

1 Data refer mainly to 2003.

Coverage: Countries reporting mobile students represent 77 per cent of global tertiary enrolment in 2004. The countries with high enrolment that are not covered are China (15 per cent of world tertiary enrolment), Egypt (1.7 per cent), Nigeria (1.0 per cent), Colombia (0.9 per cent) and Peru (0.7 per cent).

Among the Pacific small island developing States, rates of migration vary. The residents of Polynesia have been particularly mobile, with between 30 and 50 per cent of the population migrating internationally. New Zealand has been the major destination for Polynesians, but many have also migrated to the United States (Appleyard and Stahl, 1995). Between the 1950s and the 1970s, New Zealand sought migrants from its former territories and associated States in the Pacific to work in its expanding industry and service sectors. Until the 1990s, significant numbers of Polynesians migrated to New Zealand and now account for more than 5 per cent of the country's population (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). Over the past two decades, however, New Zealand has gradually imposed greater restrictions on immigration and has instituted quotas. Along with other popular destination countries such as Australia and the United States, New Zealand favours highly skilled, experienced workers. Many Pacific Islanders, especially young people, still hope to migrate to New Zealand or elsewhere, but it is becoming increasingly difficult. While not as migration-prone as Polynesia, Micronesia has also experienced significant migration, particularly in recent years. For the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, the Marshall Islands, the Northern Marianas and Palau, migration has been mainly to the United States as a result of historical ties. Migration from Fiji has increased markedly in recent years owing to a downturn in the textile and sugar industries and the upheaval brought about by military coups in 1987 and 2000; these developments have particularly affected the migration patterns of Fijians of Indian descent.

As table 5.4 illustrates, small island developing States in other parts of the world are also experiencing significant migration. In the African island States, between 3.2 and 18.7 per cent of the population migrate, and the same is true for between 17.5 and 38.5 per cent of Caribbean nationals.

Table 5.4
Total population of selected small island developing States and the share living abroad

Region/Country	Population (thousands)	Migrants living abroad (percentage)	Main destination
Africa			
Cape Verde	470	18.7	Portugal
Comoros	600	3.2	France
Mauritius	1 222	6.9	France
Sao Tome & Principe	157	8.5	Portugal
Seychelles	84	8.7	United Kingdom
Caribbean			
Antigua & Barbuda	79	28.9	United States of America
Dominica	71	32.0	United States of America
Grenada	195	23.8	United States of America
St. Kitts & Nevis	47	38.5	United States of America
St. Lucia	161	17.5	United States of America
St. Vincent & Grenadines	109	31.1	United States of America
Trinidad and Tobago	1 313	18.8	United States of America
Pacific			
Fiji	835	13.5	Australia
Kiribati	96	2.4	United States of America
Marshall Islands	53	13.0	United States of America
Micronesia, Federated States	125	12.2	United States of America
Palau	20	20.2	United States of America
Samoa	178	35.1	New Zealand
Solomon Islands	457	0.5	Australia
Tonga	102	31.1	New Zealand
Vanuatu	210	1.0	Australia
South Asia			
Maldives	293	0.8	India

Source: David J. McKenzie, "Remittances in the Pacific", a paper presented at the Werner Sichel Lecture-Seminar Series 2005-2006: Immigrants and Their International Money Flows, held at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, on 15 February 2006.

In many countries, remittances from international migrants have become an important supplement not only to household income, but also to GDP. Of the 20 countries with the highest remittances as a percentage of GDP, seven are small island developing States. In Tonga, remittances account for 31 per cent of GDP—the highest proportion in the world. In Haiti, remittances represent almost one fourth of GDP, and in Jamaica the share is 15 per cent (United Nations, 2006a). While poverty remains a major challenge in the region, many small island developing States are receiving a sizeable income supplement that benefits individuals, households and communities. Reliance on remittances is deepening in the Pacific States; it is not uncommon for families to groom their youth for employment overseas. Many do not return. More than 60 per cent of the highly educated population from Haiti, Fiji, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago live in OECD countries; in Guyana, the corresponding figure is 83 per cent (United Nations, 2006). This loss of skilled individuals comes at a considerable cost to their countries of origin, and remittances do not counterbalance the negative consequences of the massive brain drain (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2006). A particularly serious concern is that some small island developing States are relying excessively on remittances rather than developing their own manufacturing and service industries (McMurray, 2001).

A recent report by the World Bank (2006b) argues that destination countries, rather than trying to attract the best and brightest Pacific islanders, should develop programmes that bring in unskilled workers from the Pacific Islands to work on temporary contracts. This approach would purportedly provide an outlet for the excess supply of unskilled labour in the Pacific and address labour shortages in the agriculture and service sectors of destination countries such as Australia and New Zealand. Temporary worker programmes could benefit young people in a number of ways; unskilled youth would have the opportunity to earn higher incomes than would be possible for similar work at home, and they would be able to meet family expectations by sending a share of their income home while also satisfying their desire to live a more Western lifestyle.

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Traditionally, males and females were assigned discrete social roles in the small island developing States, particularly in the Pacific. Youth were guided by these roles and led step-by-step into adulthood. In Melanesia, for example, boys were taken into men's houses or men's groups at around the age of 10 or 12, where they were initiated and socialized by the older men of the community to take on male roles and skills. Girls remained with their mothers, grandmothers and sisters, where they learned female roles and skills. Modern education systems, widely introduced in the 1950s, supplanted traditional modes of educating youth and created new aspirations.

In many small island developing States, young people experience the tensions between modern ideas and traditional norms on multiple levels. Traditional male roles, such as that of "warrior", and activities such as canoe-building, sailing and fishing have largely become obsolete, but for those without access to secondary studies or employment, such roles and activities often have not been replaced by viable alternatives. There are also limited options and opportunities for constructive activities such as sports (Asian Development Bank, 2005). In many settings, young women continue to fulfil their tradi-

tional roles, becoming wives, mothers and caregivers. Modernity has thus created far greater discontinuity between youth and adulthood for young men than for young women in the Pacific small island developing States. The elusiveness of a positive role for these disaffected young men has led to the development of a negative subculture in both urban and rural areas. This subculture defines masculinity in terms of idleness, aggression, alcohol intoxication, and the use of drugs such as marijuana and kava (a mildly narcotic traditional drink) and, increasingly, pseudoephedrine and methamphetamines (Booker, 2006).

HEALTH AND RELATED CHALLENGES

Teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and drug abuse are some of the major health issues affecting young people in the small island developing States. The causes of youth morbidity and mortality in the region are largely preventable; the majority of deaths among young people occur as a result of road accidents, suicide, HIV/AIDS and, in some island countries, homicide and violence. For girls between the ages of 15 and 19, pregnancy-related illnesses are a common cause of death, with complications from unsafe abortions being a contributing factor. These and other issues, including drug use and sexual trends, are linked to a number of considerations, including the economic situation of young people, disillusionment brought on by the lack of opportunities, and the inadequacy of health services and information.

Sexuality and teenage pregnancy: a problem of alarming dimensions

Teenage pregnancy is a major health problem in many small island developing States and is likely related to poverty and the lack of opportunities for youth. Of all the regions for which data are available, the Caribbean has been identified as the area in which residents have sex at the earliest age. Research in nine Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries revealed that one third of school-age youth were sexually active. Of these, a quarter of the girls and half of the boys interviewed said that their first experience of intercourse had occurred at age 10 or younger. In Saint Lucia, nearly 45 per cent of sexually active adolescents had had sexual intercourse before the age of 10. The results of the reproductive health survey undertaken in Jamaica in 1997 indicated that, by the age of 11 or 12, almost 20 per cent of girls and boys in the general population had had sexual intercourse. In many cases, this early sexual activity is due to forced intercourse. In a study of nine Caribbean countries, 48 per cent of adolescent girls and 32 per cent of boys who had had intercourse reported that their first sexual intercourse had been forced. Although sexual abuse among girls is also a problem in other countries, the high incidence among boys is unusual (Cunningham and Correia, 2003).

Despite high levels of sexual activity, rates of contraceptive use are low in many of the small island developing States (Cunningham and Correia, 2003). Data on contraceptive use are generally scant, but those available suggest that male youth, when compared with female youth, more commonly report the use of a condom the last time they had sex with a non-regular partner. In Barbados, 78 per cent of males reported using a condom, compared with only 33 per cent of females. In the Dominican Republic, 48 per cent of young males and only 12 per cent of young females reported condom use (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2006). In the countries of the Caribbean Community, only a quarter of school-going sexually active teenagers used some form of birth control, with only

slightly more showing concern about getting pregnant or getting someone pregnant. In Jamaica, more than 40 per cent of sexually active adolescent girls said they had not used a contraceptive at last intercourse, and 87 per cent of teenage pregnancies had not been planned (Cunningham and Correia, 2003). Family planning services are generally available in many communities, but research has shown that these services are not fully utilized by the poor.

The fact that male youth are more likely to use condoms than female youth suggests a need to explore techniques such as empowerment training that may lead to a higher incidence of condom usage among young females, especially in light of the fact that, globally, young women living with HIV outnumber young men living with HIV by 1.6 to 1 (United Nations Population Fund, 2005). There is also a need for aggressive education campaigns that offer young people access to information services and dialogue in an environment free of the stigma associated with being sexually active. Accurate information delivered at the right age within an appropriate context tends to encourage responsible behaviour (Ahmed, 2003).

Early sexual activity and low rates of contraceptive use combine to produce high rates of teenage pregnancy, particularly among those with little education and those living in rural areas. In the Dominican Republic, survey results indicated that among young women aged 15-19 years, 28 per cent in rural areas and 21 per cent in urban centres were mothers or were pregnant with their first child; of these teenagers, 60.7 per cent had no education, 34.2 per cent had a primary education, and 14.1 per cent had secondary schooling or higher (MEASURE DHS, 2007).

Fertility rates vary widely in the small island developing States (see table 5.5). The Seychelles have the lowest youth fertility rates, with 11.4 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 years and 65.5 births per 1,000 women aged 20-24 years. The highest youth fertility rates are found in Sao Tome and Principe, with 118.4 and 273.5 births per 1,000 women in the age groups 15-19 and 20-24 respectively. The youth fertility rates of other small island developing States are somewhere in the middle and are comparable to fertility rates in the United States (58.1 and 114.2 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 and 20-24 years respectively) (MEASURE DHS, 2007).

Table 5.5
Youth fertility in selected small island developing States

Region/Country	Births per 1,000 women	
	Age 15-19 (2007)	Age 20-24 (2007)
Africa		
Cape Verde	64.4	150.4
Comoros	62.5	191.1
Mauritius	26.8	104.0
Sao Tome & Principe	118.4	273.5
Seychelles	11.4	65.5
Caribbean		
Antigua & Barbuda	101.2	141.1
Dominica	20.0	80.6
Grenada	60.2	105.8
St. Kitts & Nevis	53.8	118.6
St. Lucia	35.5	92.4
St. Vincent & Grenadines	16.6	70.6
Trinidad and Tobago	11.9	66.1
Pacific		
Fiji	40.8	148.0
Kiribati	54.8	181.4
Marshall Islands	81.6	229.6
Micronesia, Federated States	33.0	133.4
Palau	61.8	114.1
Samoa	19.7	117.8
Solomon Islands	53.6	162.0
Tonga	35.5	139.2
Vanuatu	28.9	112.8
South Asia		
Maldives	85.8	204.1

Source: United States Census Bureau, International Data Base (2007) (available from www.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbsprd; accessed on 4 April 2007).

The prevalence of teenage pregnancies in small island developing States is a concern, especially given the limited support for child care. Early motherhood interferes with a young woman's ability to contribute to the economic and social development of her society, diminishes her opportunities in life, and poses certain health risks. Teenage pregnancy predisposes young girls to low educational attainment. Dropping out of school affects future job opportunities and earnings. Teen mothers are generally encouraged to continue with their education, but many choose not to, probably because schools are frequently not supportive.

HIV/AIDS

Related to early sexuality in small island developing States is the region's increasing vulnerability to HIV. The HIV prevalence rate in the Caribbean is the second highest in the world, and AIDS is the number one cause of death among adults in the subregion (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2006). Young women are particularly prone to HIV infection. In the Caribbean, HIV prevalence among female youth (1.6 per cent) is more than twice that registered for young males (0.7 per cent). In Trinidad and Tobago, females between the ages of 15 and 19 are six times more likely than males their age to be infected (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2006). HIV prevalence rates vary widely from one country to another, ranging from 0.1 per cent in Cuba to 2 per cent in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas and 3.8 per cent in Haiti. Though Haiti has been making progress, prevention messages do not seem to be reaching young people. They are becoming sexually active at a younger age, and condom use appears to be declining (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2006). Cuba, with youth prevalence rates of 0.5 per cent among females and 0.9 per cent among males, has emerged as a model in its response to HIV/AIDS. Its programme to reduce mother-to-child HIV transmission and the accessibility of its antiretroviral treatment programme are unparalleled in the region (United Nations Population Fund, 2003; Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2006).

Across the Caribbean subregion, the most common mode of HIV transmission is unprotected heterosexual intercourse. The rate of transmission among men who have sex with men is also significant, but this aspect of the epidemic is largely ignored. Societal norms have thus far precluded an open discussion on how to address this development. Continuing to treat this as a taboo topic will likely lead to increased HIV prevalence in the region (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2006).

In contrast to the situation in the Caribbean, the overall HIV/AIDS picture in the Pacific small island developing States is fairly positive, with relatively low rates of prevalence among youth. The exception is Papua New Guinea, where the incidence of HIV has been increasing at the alarming rate of 30 per cent annually since 1997. The country accounts for more than 90 per cent of all HIV infections reported in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand). The growing epidemic is partly related to socio-cultural norms discriminating against women as well as high levels of violence against women (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2006). Some other Pacific small island developing States also exhibit increasing vulnerability to HIV. Low rates of contraceptive use prevail throughout the Pacific Islands, which could result in a future upsurge in the incidence of HIV/AIDS in the subregion. In Vanuatu, as well as in the Samoan capital of Apia, more than 40 per cent of pregnant women have tested positive for at least one sexually transmitted infection. In Dili, the capital of Timor-Leste, large proportions of sex workers, taxi drivers and men who have sex with men have tested positive for herpes simplex virus type 2 (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2006).

Among women living in the Pacific small island developing States, the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections is highest for those under the age of 25. This is believed to be partly attributable to the general lack of education among youth with regard to strategies for protection. The results of a survey published by the World Health Organization indi-

cated that only 25.4 per cent of young respondents had correct beliefs about transmission and protection, and fewer than 1 in 10 young people involved in sex work consistently used condoms with commercial partners (World Health Organization, 2006).

Although studies indicate that reproductive health education leads to a lower probability of youth engaging in high-risk sexual behaviour, becoming pregnant, or contracting sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS, education about reproductive health is rarely provided in schools in Pacific small island developing States because of taboos regarding sexual matters and the belief that reproductive health education will encourage sexual experimentation among adolescents.

Factors contributing to young people's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS include unprotected sex (lack of condom use, which is sometimes related to lack of access to condoms); the high prevalence and rapid spread of other sexually transmitted infections (the pre-existence of one or more sexually transmitted infections increases the risk of HIV transmission upon exposure); the high mobility of people who are engaging in unprotected sex (for example, seafarers); the absence of discussion and education about reproductive health; promiscuity and high-risk sexual behaviour among young people; and poverty (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). The mass movement of people in tourism is another major factor compounding the problem (CARICOM Secretariat, 2004).

Young people are important partners in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The Youth Ambassadors for Positive Living programme is part of a strategy to enable young people to realize their potential as active citizens through their participation in, contribution to, and engagement with development processes. Young people who have tested positive for HIV and those who have not contracted the disease work together to educate their peers on the dangers of HIV/AIDS. In Guyana and the Bahamas, 46 young men and women have been trained as peer educators. Their post-training activities have included conducting outreach activities such as live radio programmes aimed at providing other young people with the skills and information needed to encourage positive behaviour change. The programme is being replicated across the Caribbean.

Non-communicable diseases

The prevalence of non-communicable diseases is quite high in many small island developing States, especially in urban areas. The Pacific Islands have experienced a particularly sharp increase in non-communicable diseases, which is largely attributable to the growing incidence of obesity over the past several decades. Rates of obesity are rising rapidly among young people in particular, and unless this problem is addressed, chronic disease will become increasingly prevalent in the population as it ages. Some of the highest rates of obesity in the world are found in Oceania, particularly in American Samoa, the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Nauru, Samoa and Tonga. In some cases, the rates are as high as 75 per cent (World Health Organization, 2003; Curtis, 2004).

One of the most common chronic diseases associated with obesity is diabetes—which in earlier times affected mainly older people. Today, however, increasing numbers of youth are developing early-onset diabetes (Secretariat of the Pacific Community/ Pacific Youth Bureau, 2005). Certain small island developing States in the Pacific, notably the Marshall Islands and Nauru, are among the countries with the highest rates of diabetes mellitus in

the world (Williams, 2001). Obese youth are also at risk of developing hypertension, hypercholesterolemia (elevated blood cholesterol), and atherosclerosis—conditions that are predictive of coronary artery disease (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2002). This will have an enormous impact on the demand for health-care and support services and will place a tremendous strain on national economies.

In the Pacific Islands, the increase in the incidence of obesity is believed to be related to dietary changes, the relative lack of physical activity, and a possible genetic predisposition to the condition (Williams, 2001). Those whose diets once consisted of healthy staples such as fish and vegetables are now consuming foods that are higher in fat, sugar, and salt and lower in dietary fibre. The shift from employment in agriculture-based occupations to more sedentary office work has also contributed to the problem. To combat obesity, public health policies are needed to ensure the availability of nutritious low-fat, high-fibre foods, which are generally more costly and harder to find, and to create safe, accessible places that provide opportunities for physical activity (Curtis, 2004).

Suicide

In some small island developing States, suicide rates are alarmingly high. According to the most recent data available, suicide rates in the Pacific are among the highest in the world (Booth, 1998). Chuuk State, in the Federated States of Micronesia, has the highest male youth suicide rate in the world (182 per 100,000), followed by Samoa (64 per 100,000). These figures far exceed the top non-Pacific rate of 45 per 100,000 for Lithuania. Samoa has the highest female youth suicide rate (70 per 100,000), followed by Fiji (60 per 100,000 among young Fijian women of Indian descent), and rural China (37 per 100,000). Many theorists attribute female youth suicide in Fiji and other countries in Melanesia to the low status of women in these areas (Booth, 1999). Increased suicide rates among young males in Micronesia may be related to the weakening of extended family structures occurring as a result of socio-economic changes and the inability of nuclear families to both discipline and support young men (Hezel, 1989). The general transition in Pacific island societies from traditional to modern ways and the attendant intergenerational conflict and pressures on the younger generation are also believed to be contributing to the increasing rates of youth suicide (Booth, 1998).

Youth suicide is also a problem in small island developing States outside the Pacific. In Mauritius and in Trinidad and Tobago, suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people. In Belize, Cuba and Saint Lucia, it is the third most common cause of death for this age group (see the statistical annex).

Crime

A combination of factors including social alienation, lack of opportunity, and high unemployment among large numbers of youth in unstable, poorly managed urban settings can lead to gang violence and civil unrest (Ware, 2004). This was demonstrated in 2004 in towns in Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands, where gangs of male youths roamed the streets, looting shops and burning buildings. International military intervention was required to restore order. A similar situation prevailed during the civil war in Bougainville province in Papua New Guinea until order was restored in 1998. In all three instances, unemployed, frustrated young men were easily recruited into violent conflicts between opposing factions

(Chevalier, 2001). Volatile young men in such situations are often motivated by leaders who are pursuing political agendas and who use excuses of ethnic or interregional discrimination to incite violent unrest among male youth.

Among the Pacific small island developing States, Papua New Guinea has particularly severe law and order problems in its major towns, and youth gangs (referred to as raskols) are the main perpetrators of criminal acts. This may be attributable to a combination of the factors listed above (social alienation, lack of opportunity, and high unemployment among large numbers of youth in unstable, poorly managed urban settings) as well as to poor governance.

Escalating crime is also a significant challenge for Caribbean small island developing States (CARICOM Secretariat, 2004). Rates of violent crime are rising steadily in some countries, while problems such as drug trafficking and related activities are subject to "spikes". Regardless of the nature and prevalence of different types of crime, one consistent trend across the region is that the face of crime is getting younger (Bell, 2006).

Violent crime is usually concentrated in poor urban communities. Data for Jamaica show that most offences are committed by youth between the ages of 17 and 30. Young people constitute almost two thirds of those found guilty of crimes, with males four times more likely than females to be found guilty. It should be noted that 17- to 25-year-olds committed 56 per cent of all crimes, almost 50 per cent of murders, 44 per cent of manslaughters, 42 per cent of burglaries, and 39 per cent of sex offences. By and large, the perpetrators of major crime are males between the ages of 20 and 25. Young males are also usually the victims of homicides. Out-of-school male youth aged 13-19 years were found to be most at risk of substance abuse and drug dealing (Cunningham and Correia, 2003). Young people are also more inclined to be involved in criminal gangs. Gang violence is high in the Caribbean, with 12 per cent of female students and 20 per cent of male students having belonged to a gang at some point. In many cases, youth join criminal and drug-dealing gangs to compensate for the lack of formal employment opportunities or as a strategy for confronting violence in their communities (Cunningham and Correia, 2003).

THE SITUATION OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

Poverty of opportunity and high unemployment have negatively affected young women. As noted previously, with few alternative forms of employment open to them, young unemployed women in small island developing States such as Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu often resort to prostitution to survive. In Solomon Islands, for example, an unpublished study commissioned by UNICEF documented the sexual exploitation of girls as young as 12 years old, and of young women who visit the crews of freighters and fishing ships and the employees of logging companies. In some cases, based on a distorted form of the "bride price" tradition, young women have effectively been sold into a form of "sexual slavery" by their fathers (Christian Care Centre of the Church of Melanesia and the Regional Rights Resource Team, 2004; Callinan, 2006). Similar reports have come out of Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea (Wan Smol Bag and Regional Rights Resource Team, 2004; HELP Resources and United Nations Children's Fund, 2005)

Traditional views that a woman's role in society should be limited to that of wife and mother persist, though they are less strongly enforced, in many small island developing States today. In the light of high teenage pregnancy rates, families seek to protect their daughters' reputations and the family honour by restricting any activity that might expose girls to sexual risks. Consequently, adolescent girls are often denied the freedoms and choices allowed adolescent boys. In Tonga and Samoa, for example, families are often very strict with girls and limit their movements in an effort to prevent premarital sex. In some countries, preventing a girl from being "permanently spoiled" in terms of marriage prospects may include withdrawing her from school when she reaches puberty. While this certainly limits possibilities for early sexual contact among girls, it also interferes with their chances of completing their schooling and thus deprives them of opportunities for their future lives.

Although Pacific societies regard sexual contact between an adult and a minor as highly immoral, and while such interaction is illegal in all Pacific small island developing States, such crimes are only sporadically reported when they occur. Spreading knowledge publicly about such crimes is considered to bring great shame on families and to be highly destructive to small communities (United Nations Children's Fund, 2004a-c; 2005a-b; Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands and United Nations Children's Fund, 2003; Government of the Cook Islands and United Nations Children's Fund, 2004). Silence, secrecy and the failure to report sexual abuse means that youth who are victimized by family members or others find little support or comfort. They face major difficulties dealing with the severe physical and mental consequences.

Girls in the Caribbean are also vulnerable to sexual violence, including abuse and exploitation. In Jamaica, for example, one in five girls aged 15-19 years reported being forced to have sex; for 16-year-olds, the proportion increased to one in four (Government of Jamaica and United Nations Children's Fund, 2004). The perpetrators are not always strangers, as young people are at risk of being violated by relatives, family friends, teachers, employers and others they may trust.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The geographic and natural resource characteristics of small island developing States translate into limited opportunities for industrial growth and a small formal labour market. At the same time, because of poor quality education, limited vocational training opportunities, and relatively little interest among youth in training for work outside the public sector, most young people in small island developing States do not have the skills required to secure formal sector employment. As a result, high-skill jobs often go to expatriates. With few formal sector jobs for young people, many youth in small island developing States see migration as the only means of finding employment. However, the current immigration policies of destination countries are skewed in favour of highly skilled migrants. This means that most youth from small island developing States cannot migrate. They must therefore join the ranks of the long-term unemployed or work in the informal sector or in subsistence agriculture, which is frequently seen as failure by society.

In small island developing States, particularly the Pacific Islands, the burden of lack of opportunity and the transition from small, kin-based societies to modern societies within a global economy falls heavily on youth, who develop expectations of employment in the modern economy that are seldom realized. The result is too often a situation in which unemployment, combined with rapid societal change and a clash of traditional cultures with modern ideas, leads to social alienation among youth. Such alienation expresses itself in a range of endemic social problems, including violence, risky sexual behaviour, and youth suicide.

With traditional gender and other social norms persisting and large portions of the population remaining economically vulnerable, the health and safety of youth in small island developing States remain seriously at risk. Youth, and young women in particular, continue to be at risk of contracting diseases such as HIV/AIDS and of abuse and exploitation in their homes and communities. In addition, the concentration of large numbers of dissatisfied youth in urban areas and their exposure to unscrupulous leaders ready to take advantage of them present risk factors for crime and violent conflict in small island developing States.

To address the poverty of opportunity faced by youth in small island developing States, urgent efforts are needed to improve the quality of education and employment prospects. In addition, there is a need for a variety of leisure activities that provide a positive outlet for young people's energies and frustrations as well as an opportunity to gain valuable knowledge, skills and attitudes.

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