


Chapter 4

Inside São Tomé and Príncipe's Energy Transition: An Analysis of Challenges and Progresses

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the outlook for energy transitions in São Tomé and Príncipe, a small island developing state in Africa. It considers diverse dimensions, including the country's energy profile, national policies, institutions, and emerging challenges and opportunities. Additionally, this chapter discusses the role of international cooperation. The author poses the following research question: what are the challenges faced by São Tomé and Príncipe in the energy transitions? To answer this, the chapter draws on a range of sources, including scientific and grey literature, as well as official national development plans and reports. São Tomé and Príncipe's unique geographical location, political commitment to combating global warming, and membership in key global and regional organizations position it favorably for energy transitions. By underscoring the limitations and difficulties of national transitions in the context of São Tomé and Príncipe, this chapter aims to contribute to a broader understanding of energy transitions in small island developing states.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Small island developing states (SIDS) are diverse countries facing specific developmental and environmental challenges. There is no universal definition for SIDS, and the number of eligible states depends on the classification criteria. According to the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States and Landlocked Developing Countries (UN-OHRLLS)¹, SIDS are a distinct group of 37 United Nations (UN) Member States and 20 Non-UN Members/Associate Members that face “unique social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities,” mainly located in the Caribbean, the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans, and the South China Sea.

Since the establishment of UN-OHRLLS in 2001, it has supported, monitored, and further implemented the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA), launched in 1994; The Mauritius Strategy, adopted in 2015; and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (2014), to build synergies with other internationally agreed development goals, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and The Paris Agreement. Leandro et al. (2023) systematize the common characteristics of SIDS into five domains (geographical, political, economic, socio-cultural, and environmental) that help understand these countries and their particularities that motivated the UN-directed focus. The authors identify the principal geographical characteristics and their impact on transport dependence, also recognizing the recent independence from colonizing powers and the consequent political instability. This analysis aids in identifying the weaknesses in SIDS economies, which include lack of infrastructure, dependence on external financing, workforce outflow, high levels of socioeconomic inequality, climate change, limited access to drinking water, and land degradation.

The UN-OHRLLS emphasizes the critical role of South-South and triangular cooperation to overcome challenges and help SIDS accelerate the implementation of SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway. The body expects cooperation to “mobilize the human and financial resources, technology, innovation, knowledge, and expertise that SIDS now need.” The UN-OHRLLS’s report, *Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development in SIDS*,² describes various models of international cooperation, including “South-South and triangular practices,” to support SIDS in accelerating progress toward sustainable development (UNOSSC, 2021).

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