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CABO VERDE

UN COUNTRY ANALYSIS

2025

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Foreword by UN Resident Coordinator in Cabo Verde

Cabo Verde, a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) composed of ten islands off the West African coast and endowed with limited natural resources, continues to demonstrate that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is within reach. With a long tradition of political stability, democratic governance, and a strong emphasis on human capital development, the country has made remarkable progress in social and economic transformation over the past decades, despite high exposure to climate change and external shocks.

Cabo Verde's ambitious development agenda has translated into tangible results across multiple sectors. Despite a challenging global and regional environment marked by conflicts, climate change, and constrained access to development financing, the country has achieved notable advances in poverty reduction, education, health, and income per capita — clear evidence of national commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Recent overlapping global crises, including global macroeconomic constraints, disparities in accessing development financing and the growing impacts of climate change, have challenged this progress. Yet, Cabo Verde's determination to protect the well-being of its citizens and preserve economic and political stability has driven a strong recovery and renewed momentum toward sustainable and inclusive growth. Persistent challenges remain particularly regarding gender equality and parity (mainly GBV women´s representation in decision making and political), social inclusion, especially for people with disabilities and regional disparities. But the country's resilience, unity, and commitment and ambition to reach the Agenda 2030 and the African Agenda 2063 continue to guide progress towards a more equitable and sustainable future where no one is left behind.

This commitment was reaffirmed in 2022 with the launch of the **Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development 2022–2026 (PEDS II)**, which is fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The PEDS II, together with national strategies to eradicate extreme poverty and strengthen social protection for the most vulnerable, reflects Cabo Verde's enduring determination to uphold human rights, embrace climate action and advance inclusive development.

For four decades, the **United Nations in Cabo Verde** has stood as a committed partner in this journey, providing technical expertise, resources, and a global perspective to support national priorities. The **United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023–2027**, signed in October 2022, renews this shared commitment around three strategic priorities:

1. **Strengthened human talent and social capital**;
2. **Inclusive economic transformation, prosperity, and a just transition toward a healthy environment**; and
3. **Transformative governance and strengthened territorial cohesion**.

These priorities frame the UN's support to the Government of Cabo Verde in accelerating progress towards the SDGs by 2030.

The **United Nations Country Analysis (UNCA)** is a key analytical function of the UN Country Team. Developed through an extensive review of national and international data and documentation, it represents the UN's independent and impartial assessment of the country's progress toward achieving the SDGs.

The UNCA goes beyond a compilation of statistics, it offers a comprehensive reflection on the country's development trajectory, identifying achievements, persistent challenges, and emerging opportunities. It serves as a foundation for evidence-based policymaking and guides the strategic priorities of the UNSDCF.

As we present this assessment, we invite all stakeholders to view it as a tool for collective action, a call to reflect, recalibrate, and strengthen our shared efforts toward a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient Cabo Verde. By aligning our actions with the insights and recommendations contained herein, we can collectively drive transformative change and ensure lasting progress for all Cabo Verdeans.

We express sincere appreciation to the **UN Country Team in Cabo Verde** for their dedicated contributions in preparing this analysis, and to national partners for their invaluable support and collaboration.

Through partnerships, knowledge sharing, and joint action, we can continue to advance Cabo Verde's development journey and co-create a vibrant, sustainable, and equitable future for all.

Executive summary

Cabo Verde, a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) with a population of just over half a million, continues to demonstrate notable progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) despite significant structural vulnerabilities. The country's stable governance, human capital investments, and consistent macroeconomic management have positioned it as a model of resilience and institutional maturity within the region. The 2025 UN Country Analysis (UNCA) provides an overview of the country´s progress and challenges and the future perspective using foresight approach.

Macroeconomic stability and structural transformation remain central to Cabo Verde's development trajectory. Following a 20.8% economic contraction in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (INE, 2025), real GDP growth rebounded to 7.2% in 2024, driven largely by tourism, services, and a partial recovery in agriculture after years of drought. The medium-term growth outlook remains positive, projected at 5.2% for 2025, although downside risks persist due to climate variability and global trade disruptions.

The unemployment rate declined from 10.3% in 2023 to 8.0% in 2024 (INE, imc 2024), accompanied by an increase in total employment to nearly 199,000 workers. However, the labour market remains characterized by informality (47.5% of total employment) and youth unemployment at 13.2%. Gender disparities persist in employment access and income levels. Addressing these labour market rigidities and strengthening linkages between education, vocational training, and productive sectors will be crucial.

Persistent food insecurity and malnutrition underscore Cabo Verde's dependence on food imports and vulnerability to climate-related shocks. As of December 2024, 8% of the population (41,299 individuals) faced acute food insecurity, with a projected improvement by mid-2025 (Cadre Harmonisé, April 2025). Chronic malnutrition, measured by stunting in children under five, affected 14.8% in 2023, the highest level since 2015. The country phases the double burden of overweight and obesity leading to non-communicable diseases causing 57% of deaths. Structural constraints, including the limited irrigated, the vulnerability of the fishery´s sector, mainly affecting rural areas, are the strategic areas which require support. Food insecurity in Cabo Verde is expected to improve August 2025, with the number of affected people projected to fall to 35,294. This improvement is driven in part by declining inflation, which reduces the cost of imported food.

Social protection continues to play a pivotal role in mitigating vulnerability and reducing poverty. Coverage reached 60.3% of the population in 2023 (Boletim estatístico sobre proteção social, 2021-2023), among the highest in Africa, driven by expanded contributory and non-contributory schemes and efforts to integrate informal workers. Institutional strengthening of the National Social Security Institute (INPS) and improved coordination between contributory and non-contributory regimes remain key to consolidating system sustainability and efficiency. However, there is a need for better targeting to include vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, pregnant women and households with children with malnutrition to ensure that no one is left behind under the principle of Leave No One Behind (LNOB).

The health sector demonstrates robust progress toward Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Cabo Verde's UHC index of 71% places it as a regional leader, reflecting gains in access and service delivery. The life expectancy is high with important disparity between men (67.3) and women (76.1). However, some challenges persist in sexual and reproductive health, where contraceptive prevalence (35% in 2022) and adolescent pregnancy rates remain an area of concern. Non-communicable diseases are increasing and require intensified health promotion efforts. Health system strengthening, digital health integration, and strengthening the health workforce are critical to sustaining gains and expanding health coverage. Resilience and emergency prevention, detection and response for outbreaks such as malaria and dengue remain challenging.

In **education**, access remains near universal, but completion and quality indicators have stagnated in the recent years. The basic education completion rate fell to 84.2% in 2023 (from 90.7% in 2015 and 87.2% in 2022), and the secondary completion rate stands at 65.4%, with gender (in favor of girls and with higher non-completion rate for boys) and regional disparities. Pre-primary enrolment recovered to 91.9% in 2023 after a pandemic-related decline, but only 30% of pre-primary teachers are qualified. Policy priorities include improving early childhood education quality and reducing non-completion rates, especially in the primary and secondary levels.

Cabo Verde has advanced **gender equality** through legislation, institutional frameworks, and political participation. Women hold 36.1% of parliamentary seats, 33.6% of cabinet positions and only 1 municipality is led by a woman. Furthermore, only 2 of the 16 Ministers are women. However, income inequality and gender-based violence remain persistent. More than half of the poor households are headed by women. Strengthening women's economic empowerment, improving access to finance, and enhancing data systems for gender-based violence (GBV) prevention are critical next steps.

In terms of **energy transition**, Cabo Verde remains highly dependent on imported fossil fuels, which constrains energy security, affordability, and economic transformation. Despite this, the country possesses significant potential for renewable energy—particularly solar, wind, tidal, and wave power—positioning it well for a rapid and sustainable energy transition. Access to electricity is high at 93.7% in 2024, and access to clean cooking fuels has risen to 85.3%, though rural reliance on firewood persists. The share of renewable energy in the national mix remains low (18.9% in 2024, portal de energia de Cabo Verde), despite increased production capacity and ambitious national climate commitments toward decarbonization.

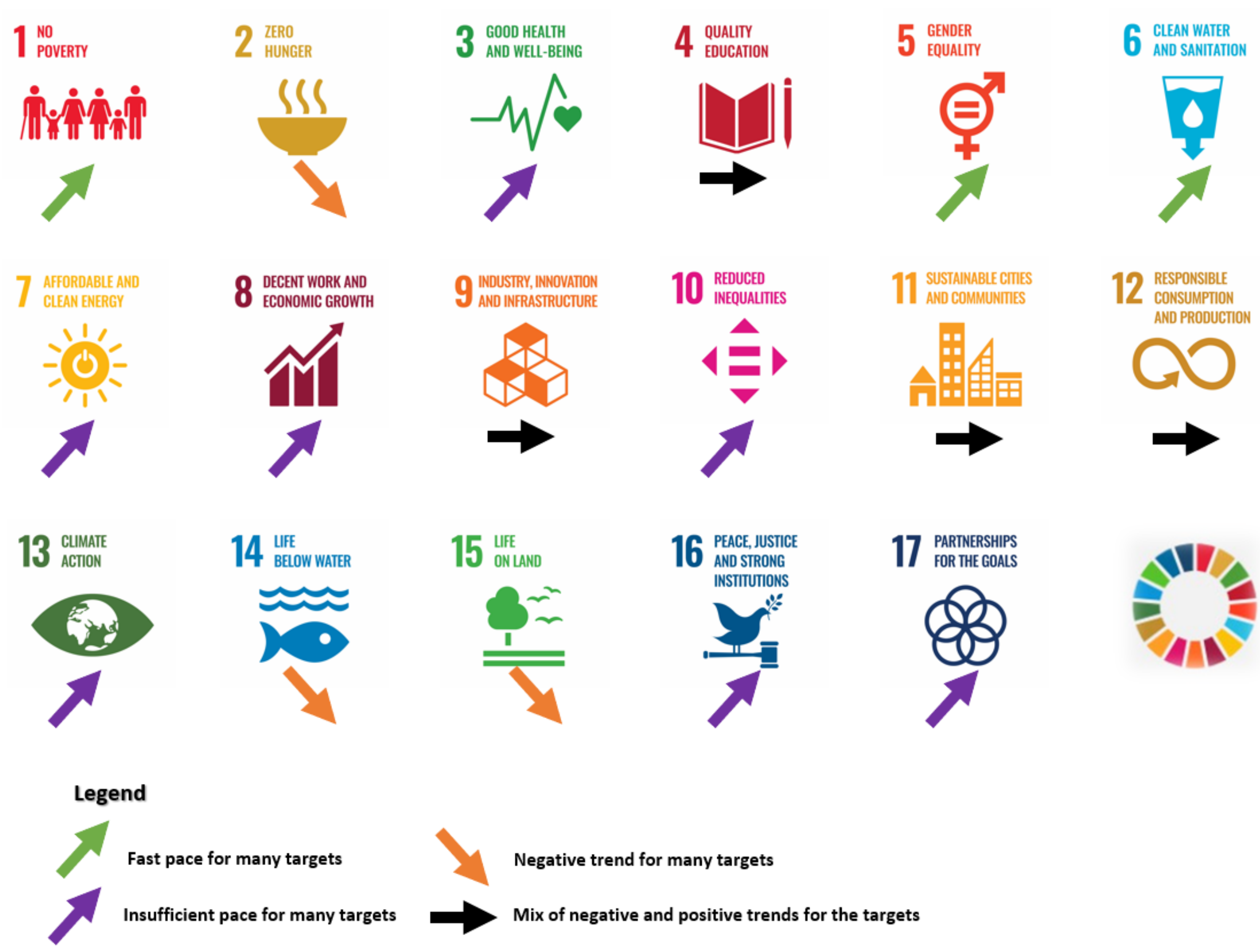
Climate vulnerability remains the single greatest long-term risk to sustainable development in Cabo Verde. Recurrent droughts, floods, and sea-level rise continue to erode agricultural productivity, infrastructure, in particular within cities and coastal ecosystems. The most recent event was the **flash floods in São Vicente, Santo Antão and São Nicolau in August 2025.** The 2025 Strategic Plan for Climate Support Mobilization (PEMAC) constitutes a key national mechanism for aligning climate finance and institutional coordination. Furthermore, the country developed with the support of the UN System and submitted to the UNFCCC the new round of its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC3.0, 2025-2030). The NDC 3.0 was submitted to UNDCCC prior to COP30 and features update mitigation and adaptation targets, localized to the ambitions and vulnerabilities of Cabo Verde and its people.

Urbanization presents growing pressures on infrastructure, housing, and waste management. With 76% of the population living in cities (imc, 2023), urban planning and resilience are national priorities. Current estimates indicate an 8.7% housing deficit and uneven access to sanitation (8.9% lacking adequate facilities). Strengthening municipal capacities concerning resource mobilization and management, territorial and strategic planning, expanding solid waste recycling (currently only 8%), housing provision and ensuring disability-inclusive urban mobility remain important priorities for the UN.

Two major accelerators, the **Blue Economy and the Digital Economy**, offer transformative potential for diversification and resilience. The Blue Economy strategy seeks to optimize Cabo Verde's maritime assets, fisheries, port logistics, and marine tourism through improved governance, value-chain integration, and sustainable practices. Similarly, the Digital Economy Strategy provides a roadmap to transform Cabo Verde into a regional digital hub by improving connectivity, digital governance, and cybersecurity.

Cabo Verde's reclassification as an upper-middle-income country in July 2025 marks both an achievement and a transition challenge. A **foresight approach** was used to analyze the potential impacts of the reclassification. Reduced access to concessional financing underscores the need to diversify funding sources through innovative finance, private sector engagement, and blended mechanisms. The country's graduation strategy must balance fiscal discipline with sustained investment in social and climate priorities as well as structural transformation of the economy. The UN system plays a critical role in supporting policy coherence, capacity development and serving as a bridge and convener with strategic partners.

<u>SDG Summary</u>



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Introduction

Cabo Verde reaffirms its commitment to the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, placing strong emphasis on accelerating progress across all dimensions of sustainable development. The country's priorities focus on sustainable and inclusive economic growth, structural transformation, and economic diversification, while safeguarding and enhancing its natural blue capital as a foundation for long-term prosperity.

On the social front, Cabo Verde aims to keep strengthening human capital development, eradicate extreme poverty, and advance inclusiveness and gender equality, ensuring that no one is left behind. Environmentally, the country is committed to promoting climate resilience, energy transition, urban sustainability, and the protection of its rich biodiversity and geodiversity.

At the same time, Cabo Verde seeks to consolidate national sovereignty, deepen regional integration and local development, and enhance its participation in the global economy, positioning itself as a proactive and resilient Small Island Developing State (SIDS) in pursuit of sustainable, equitable, and transformative development.

Cabo Verde's national development priorities are articulated in the Government Programme for the 10th Legislature and the National Agenda for Sustainable Development, *Ambition 2030*[1]. Since its launch, the country has undertaken a series of participatory strategic planning exercises that have been instrumental in shaping its development trajectory:

- COVID-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment and Recovery Plan (SEIA)
- The 2022-2026 **Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development 2022–2026** (PEDS II)
- The National Strategy for the Eradication of Extreme Poverty (ENEPE 2022-2026)
- SDG Voluntary National Report and SDG Local Voluntary Report 2021
- Leave No One Behind Assessment 2021
- The 2025 updated Nationally Determined Contribution 2025-2030
- The 2022 National Adaptation Plan
- The National Strategy for the Sea 2023-2033 (ENM, 2023)
- The Strategic Plan for Climate Action Support Mobilization (PEMAC, 2025)
- The National investment plan for the blue economy (PNIEB, 2020)
- The Strategy for Digital Economy (EEDCV)
- The National Energy Sustainability Program and the Strategy for Energy Transition
- The 2022 National Housing Plan to 2030 (PLANAH)

[11] During the pandemic, in August 2020, a wide range of stakeholders from all sectors of society – governmental entities, local authorities, civil society organizations, private sector entities, academic sector, international partners, etc. – came together under the Government's leadership to build a long-term development vision and strategy named "Cabo Verde Ambition 2030", aligned with the Agenda 2030, the Agenda 2063 and the SAMOA Pathway (SIDS Agenda 2014-2024). Cabo Verde Ambition 2030 was then reflected in the new National Development Plan "PEDS II" (2022-2026).

All these exercises have benefited from extensive and intense participation from all stakeholders from the Government, municipalities, civil society, the private sector and academia, as well as international partners. The result is a common vision for recovery and sustainable economic, social and environmental development.

Progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Cabo Verde is periodically assessed to reflect the evolving national, regional, and global context. Given the multiple and interlinked crises shaping the global environment, as well as national trends, this assessment is undertaken jointly by the United Nations system, integrating the economic, social, environmental, and governance dimensions of sustainable development through a forward-looking perspective.

The **UN Country Analysis (UNCA)** constitutes the analytical backbone of the United Nations system in Cabo Verde. It captures shifts in the national development landscape and ensures that the **UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)** remains relevant and responsive to emerging priorities. The UNCA also provides the foundation for evidence-based decision-making, joint programming, and advocacy with the Government and other stakeholders.

The **2025 UNCA** builds upon and substantially revises the 2021 edition, developed through a participatory and collaborative process that engaged the entire **UN Country Team (UNCT) and partners**. This analysis integrates recent contextual developments, particularly those following the COVID-19 pandemic, examining its socioeconomic impacts, the recovery pathway initiated in 2022, and new opportunities and challenges emerging in 2023, 2024 and 2025, both domestically and internationally, that influence Cabo Verde's sustainable development trajectory.

Conceptually, the UNCA adopts an integrated and systemic approach, analysing key development challenges and linking them to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). It also includes analyses on SDG accelerators and multidimensional risk analysis. The UNCA examines the underlying and structural drivers that shape development outcomes, considering political, social, economic, environmental, and disaster-related risks, as well as emerging issues that may affect the country's resilience and sustainability.

Grounded in a data-driven methodology, the UNCA builds an evidence base response to dynamic changes. It primarily relies on official national statistics, complemented by quantitative and qualitative information from a broad range of sources, including government reports, the National Institute of Statistics (INE), UN agencies' data portals, human rights institutions, civil society organizations, academia, and international financial institutions.

Overall, this UNCA provides a comprehensive, evidence-based, and forward-looking assessment of Cabo Verde's development landscape. It serves as a critical tool to inform UN cooperation, facilitate policy dialogue, and accelerate collective progress towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Cabo Verde.

1. Key Development Challenges

1.1. Economic transformation and employment

Economic outlook and fiscal position[2]

Cabo Verde's economic outlook remains positive**,** though subject to significant external and domestic risks**.** GDP growth is projected at **5.2% in 2025**[3], with an underlying potential growth rate of around **4.8%**, supported by a resilient tourism sector and ongoing public investment in infrastructure and climate-related projects. Inflation is expected to remain stable at around **2%**, in line with euro area trends.

The current account balance is projected to shift to a modest **surplus in 2025** and **2.4% in 2026**, reflecting rising capital expenditures and a moderation in tourism growth. Meanwhile, the **financial account** is anticipated to recover gradually to a **surplus of 1.9% of GDP by 2026**, and foreign reserves are expected to remain within the target range set by the Central Bank, maintaining a reserve coverage ratio of 9 months of imports over the medium term.

However, downside risks dominate. Cabo Verde remains highly vulnerable to external shocks, including volatility in energy and food prices**,** tourism demand, and global trade tensions**.** Climate-related risks, such as sea level rise and extreme weather events, further threaten infrastructure and economic stability. Domestically, delays in state-owned enterprise (SOE) reforms and rising public debt levels could undermine fiscal sustainability. Additionally, global trade disruptions—such as new U.S. tariffs—may indirectly affect Cabo Verde through slower global growth, reduced external financing, and lower tourism revenues.

On the upside, stronger-than-expected tourist arrivals and accelerated economic diversification could sustain higher growth. The authorities' commitment under the **Extended Credit Facility (ECF)** and **Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF)** programmes provides a framework for enhancing fiscal buffers, economic resilience, and climate adaptation**.**

To mitigate potential shocks, contingency measures include **expanding social protection** to protect vulnerable populations, **adjusting fiscal expenditures** while safeguarding productive investment, and advancing **structural reforms** to enhance competitiveness and productivity. These policy measures, combined with Cabo Verde's solid track record of programme implementation, position the country to better navigate adverse scenarios and sustain progress toward the **Sustainable Development Goals**.

Cabo Verde's **public debt-to-GDP ratio continues to decline**, projected to reach **104.9% by the end of 2025**, falling below pre-pandemic levels despite increased capital and current expenditures. The February 2025 joint IMF–World Bank Debt Sustainability Analysis (DSA) assessed Cabo Verde as being at high risk of overall debt distress and moderate risk of external debt distress, with an updated review showing no major change in this assessment. Nonetheless, the DSA confirms that debt remains sustainable, supported by a favorable debt structure and manageable debt service obligations.

The authorities are pursuing a medium-term fiscal consolidation strategy that aims to reduce public debt to **below 70% of GDP by 2034**, establishing a credible anchor for fiscal policy beyond the current **Extended Credit Facility (ECF)** programme.

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[2] IMF Country Report no 25/274 https://www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/CR/2025/English/1cpvea2025002-source-pdf.ashx

[3] same

This trajectory reflects the government's commitment to fiscal sustainability, while maintaining the necessary fiscal space for investment in infrastructure, social protection, and climate resilience.

Volatile economic growth led mainly by the tourism sector

Progress towards SDG8 was consistent during the 2016-2019 period, but that positive trend was disrupted by the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. In particular, the economy experienced its deepest recession on record, underscoring Cabo Verde's vulnerability to external shocks. In 2022, a dynamic tourist sector led a strong economic recovery, and many indicators returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Real GDP per capita has been volatile in Cabo Verde, reflecting the country's economic vulnerability to external shocks. The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the country's trajectory. In fact, the economy contracted by 20% in 2020 (figure 1), the deepest recession on record in Cabo Verde, leading to a drop of comparable magnitude in GDP per capita. Nevertheless, during the 2016-2019 period, the country registered consistent per-capita GDP growth with an average of 3.34% per year[4].

In 2021 and especially in 2022, a strong economic rebound led to an acceleration of GDP growth to 7% and 15.8% respectively, mainly driven by the tourism sector, which restored GDP per capita to the pre-pandemic level.

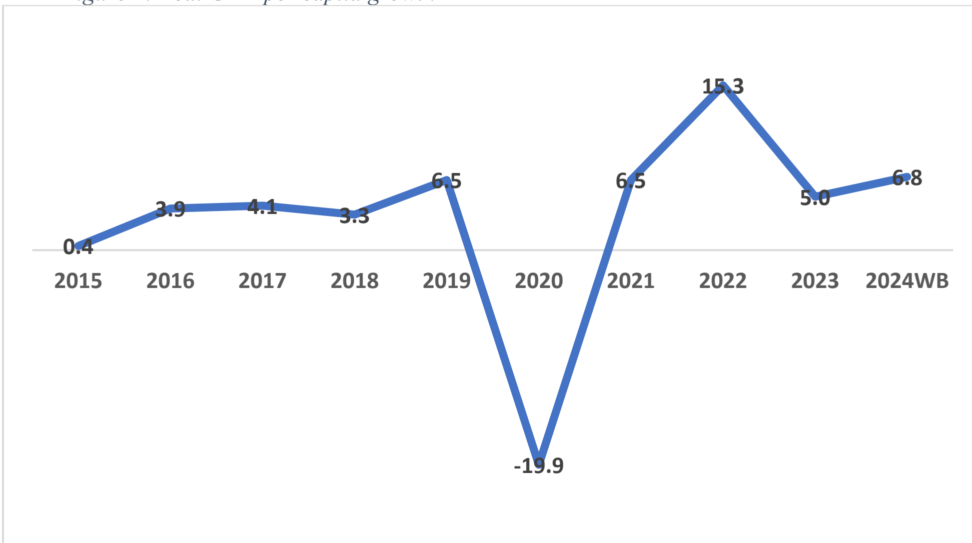
Real GDP growth accelerated to an estimated **7.2% in 2024**, driven mainly by the strong performance of the service sector, particularly tourism, and a recovery in agriculture after nearly seven years of drought. The service sector alone contributed **5.4 percentage points (70%)** to overall growth.

Figure 1: GDP growth in real terms – annual variation (percentage) – 2015-2024

Source: INE – Contas Nacionais Trimestriais - 1º Trimestre 2025 (published July 24th 2025)

[4] Calculations based on World Bank online data, consulted in September 2025.

Figure 2: Real GDP per capita growth



Source: INE and World Bank online data, consulted in September 2025

Youth and informal employment

In 2024, the employed population totaled 198,914 individuals, corresponding to an employment rate of 53.6%. Compared to the previous year, this represents an increase of 8,453 people. By gender, men account for 55.0% of total employment (109,306), while women represent 45.0% (89,608).

The unemployed population was estimated at 17,373 individuals, corresponding to an unemployment rate of 8.0%. This represents a decrease of 2.3 percentage points compared to 2023. By gender, the unemployment rate stood at 7.9% among men and 8.2% among women.

Youth unemployment remains relatively high (15-24 age group with a rate of 20.1% in 2024 and 25-34 age group with a rate of 10.4%), as does youth NEET, being considered as part of the furthest behind (Not in Employment, Education or Training), with a rate of 23.1%. Nevertheless, the proportion of youth NEET is lower than in 2019. The percentage of women NEET in this age group is slightly lower, with a rate of 22.9%, while the percentage of men is 23.2%.

The number of workers in the informal sector is 94,561 and represents a proportion of 47.5% of total employment. By sex, 59.6% of men and 40.4% of women work in informal jobs[5]. There are more women heading small informal production units (65.6%, according to data from the 3rd Survey of the informal sector). There is also an important gap between urban (43.5%) and rural (72.8%). Looking per sector, the primary sector has the highest share of informal employment (91.9% primary sector, 65.7% in the secondary sector and 37.9% in the tertiary sector).

As the National Social Security Institute (INPS) is developing efforts to increase the number of contributors to the social protection system, notably with the extension of social security coverage to workers in the informal economy, it is expected that the proportion of informal employment will decrease in the coming years. Furthermore, there are ongoing initiatives developed by the Government (i.e. Youth and Women´s bank to facilitate access to credit) with some of them having the support of the UN system.

[5] INE – Estatísticas do Mercado de Trabalho 2024

Table 1: Labour market indicators – 2019-2024

	2019	2020	2022	2023	2024
Total population	549,699	555,839	506,595	509,078	511,534
Working age population	405,007	412,086	367,860	367,514	371,190
Labour force participation	57.4%	53.0%	58.2%	57.8%	58.3%
Employment rate	50.90%	45.3%	51,8%	51.8%	53.6%
Unemployment rate (SGD 8 /Target 8.5.2)	11.30%	14.5%	11,0%	10.3%	8.0%
NEET (15-24 age group) (SDG 8/Target 8.6.1)	28%	-	27.8%	25.7%	23.1%
Proportion of informal employment (SDG 8/Target 8.3.1)	53.70%	51.6%	52.7%	48.7%	47.5%

Source: INE – Estatísticas do Mercado de Trabalho 2022, 2023, 2024

Implications for the UN system

- Continue to support the formalization of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) through technical assistance, capacity development and training.
- Strengthen technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems to reach a broader share of youth, particularly those not in employment, education or training (NEET) in close collaboration with the National Strategy for the Promotion of Decent Employment (ENPED).
- Enhance the work with the private sector to stimulate youth employment, supporting the implementation of the first job law
- Continue to support the development of policies that promote a more balanced sharing of family responsibilities and investment in the care economy

1.2. Food insecurity and malnutrition

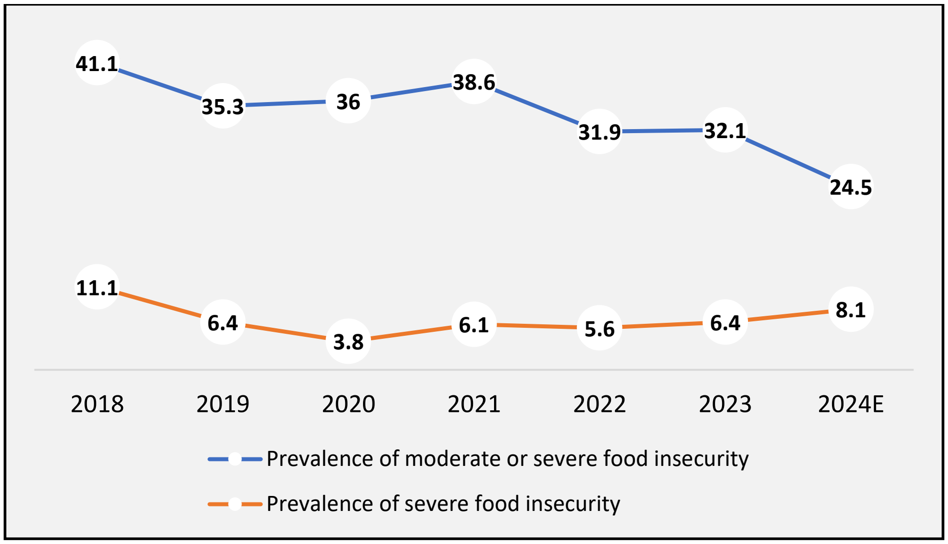
Cabo Verde remains highly vulnerable to both cyclical and structural food insecurity due to its territorial fragmentation, the scarcity of arable land (only 10% of the national territory), limited use of irrigated systems, and its high exposure to extreme climate-related events. The recent flash floods in São Vicente (August 2025) exemplify this vulnerability, as they destroyed farms, irrigation and water retention systems, and modern agricultural equipment. Ensuring year-round access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food for all thus continues to be a pressing challenge.

Still high prevalence of food insecurity

In 2020, Cabo Verde was among the 34 African countries experiencing severe localized food insecurity following the poor 2018–2019 agropastoral harvest season[6]. The COVID-19 pandemic further aggravated this situation, with the prevalence of food insecurity peaking at 38.6% in 2021—the highest on record. While some recovery was observed in 2022, prolonged drought during the 2023 agricultural season once again worsened food insecurity (figure 3).

[6] FAO. 2020. Crop Prospects and Food Situation - Quarterly Global Report No. 2, July 2020. Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9803en

Figure 3: Prevalence of food insecurity in Cabo Verde (2018-2024)



Source: Secretariado Nacional para a Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (2018-2022), and CH (April 2025) 2024

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food insecurity in Cabo Verde is undeniable. For 30.4% of those affected, the pandemic was identified as one of the main causes. Its effects varied across the archipelago, with the municipalities of Sal and Boa Vista, alongside Praia and São Vicente, being the most affected. Brava and Ribeira Grande de Santiago also experienced significant impacts.

Beyond the socio-economic fallout of COVID-19, other factors further aggravated food insecurity between 2019 and 2021, including years of drought that reduced food production and global supply chain disruptions. In 2022, despite sharp food price increases, 85% and 55% respectively between September and October compared to the same period in 2021[7], largely driven by the Ukraine crisis, robust economic growth and employment gains contributed to a temporary reduction in food insecurity.

Nevertheless, according to the Cadre Harmonisé (CH) of December 2024, **41,299 people (8% of the population)** were still facing acute food insecurity. These people are very vulnerable and at risk of being left behind. Projections pointed to an improvement by August 2025 (**35,294 people**), partly due to a decline in inflation. In Cabo Verde, where households spend **a third of their income on food**[8], lower inflation on imported food products not only alleviates food insecurity but also increases disposable income for investments in health and education. However, this heavy dependence on food imports undermines long-term human development

Patterns of vulnerability differ: **rural households** tend to experience structural food insecurity, while **urban households** are more exposed to conjunctural shocks such as the pandemic or inflation. Gender disparities persist, with food insecurity affecting **39.2% of female-headed households** compared to **29% of male-headed households**. Women also report greater difficulties in accessing food than men (25% versus 18%). Domestic workers remain the professional category most affected[9].

[7] FAO. CROP PROSPECTS AND FOOD SITUATION No. 4 DECEMBER 2022: https://www.fao.org/3/cc3233en/cc3233en.pdf
[8] Africa´s pulse, no 25, April 2022, World Bank.
documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099932505052234418/pdf/IDU06e508d9f0a9e60445f0884c0b2cc14b77cc4.pdf
[9] ICIEG, Estudo de impacto da COVID sobre a igualdade de género, 2020

Malnutrition remains a challenge

The path toward ending all forms of malnutrition by 2030 remains challenging. Chronic malnutrition, measured by the prevalence of stunting, affected **14.8% of children under five** in 2023, including **15.3% of children under 24 months**, the highest rates since 2015. These figures show no significant differences across gender or geographic areas (urban/rural).

In addition, anemia persists as a serious public health concern. Despite some improvement since 2005, in 2018 it still affected **43% of children under five**[10]. Among women aged 15–49, the prevalence of anemia was **20.6%**, rising to **22.5% among pregnant women**.

Table 2: Prevalence of stunting in children under 5 years old – 2015-2023

	2015	2018	2019	2022	2023
Chronic malnutrition	11.8	11	13,8	10.2	14.8
Stunting: age group					
< 24 months	15.7	13.3	15,9	9.2	15.3
≥ 24 months	9.7	9.4	12,2	10.8	14.5
SEX					
Female	9.8	11.9	14,2	9.4	11.8
Male	13.6	10.1	13,3	11.1	17.6
Residence					
Urban	11.3	10.5	15,3	8.5	15.4
Rural	11.2	12	11,2	13.8	13.6

Source: INE - Inquérito às Despesas e Receitas Familiares (IDRF) (2015); Secretariado Nacional para a Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (SNSAN) - Inquérito Nacional sobre a Vulnerabilidade Alimentar e Nutricional (IN-VANF) (2018-2022) and INE

Overnutrition is also affecting Cape Verdeans, with pre-obesity reaching 7.4% among children—an increase observed since 2015 (IN-FAV 2022). Among adults, 44% are overweight, with women being the most affected group at 54.9% (II IDNT, 2020).

The agriculture sector is not yet at its potential

Agriculture in Cabo Verde is predominantly family-based, occupying just over **9% of the national territory** and characterized by small landholdings, **0.4 hectares on average for irrigated plots and 0.9 hectares for rainfed plots**. The sector faces multiple structural constraints, with water scarcity being the main limiting factor, compounded by the shortage of arable soils, challenging geographic and orographic conditions, and the country's insularity as an archipelago. Despite these limitations, agriculture is practiced by roughly **one-third of households**, yet it contributes only **4.7% of GDP in 2024**[11], the lowest share of agricultural value added among West African countries.

Doubling agricultural productivity and smallholder incomes by 2030 is therefore a major challenge. Cabo Verde's predominant volcanic soils are low in organic matter, and crop yields remain modest (maize production has reduced over 78% during in 2025 – 1 074 tons – in comparison of 2024 – 4 900 tons). As a result, more than **90% of cereals**[12] (maize, rice, wheat) consumed in the country are imported—both through food aid and commercial imports. The share of food aid has been declining, now representing about **30% of total cereal imports**.

Average annual agricultural output over the last five years has been significantly lower than in previous decades[13], deepening dependence on imports. Climate change has further aggravated the sector's fragility:

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[10] INE, Terceiro inquérito demográfico e saúde reprodutiva, 2018

[11] World Bank Open Data: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS?locations=CV

[12] Sistema Mundial de Informação de Alerta Rápido https://www.fao.org/giews/countrybrief/country.jsp?code=CPV&lang=fr

[13] FAO, National agrifood systems and COVID-19 in ECOWAS; October 2020

after five consecutive years of drought, 2021 was another catastrophic year for agricultural production, with no recovery in 2022[14]. This situation led the Government to declare a **State of Calamity** and mobilize **USD 1.5 million** in emergency assistance to affected households[15].

In response, the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment has launched a Modernization Plan for Agriculture, focusing on critical investments to intensify and diversify production. Key initiatives include the development of desalination plants, the expansion of drip irrigation systems, and targeted interventions in areas with the highest productive potential.

Implications for the UN system

- Reinforce ENEPE's capacity to improve the targeting of households affected by food insecurity and malnutrition.
- Leverage global platforms such as the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG), to assist the Government in addressing chronic water shortages through integrated water management, efficient irrigation systems, and the promotion of the water–energy–food nexus in national policies.
- Build on ongoing investments, including the Global Environmental Facility, to further promote nature-based solutions, agroforestry, and climate-resilient crop systems to restore degraded lands and enhance the adaptive capacity of smallholder farmers, particularly women and youth. These interventions align with Cabo Verde's voluntary LDN targets and the country's broader blue and green economy strategies.
- Support initiatives that introduce new technologies and innovations to the agriculture and livelihood sector, engaging traditional farmers and young people.
- Support the Government's initiatives to improve irrigation systems for smallholder farmers, enhancing agricultural productivity and resilience.
- Ensure malnourished children (with stunting and anemia) benefit from complementary food assistance programmes.

1.3. Social Protection and coverage of vulnerable groups

Social protection coverage, in both the non-contributory and contributory regime, has progressively improved in Cabo Verde between 2016 and 2023, and the country stands as an example in this area. In 2023, 60.3% of the population was covered by at least one social protection measure compared to 2016, with only 43.6% covered. This is above the 52.4% of the world population effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit (World Social Protection Report 2024–26).

Table 3: Proportion of the population covered by social protection

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total	43.6	46	48.4	50	51.5	57	58.1	60.3
Male	43.4	45.3	46.9	48.5	48.4	55.8	56.3	58.4
Female	43.9	46.8	49.9	51.6	54.6	58.2	60	62.2

Source: Boletim Estatístico do Sistema de Proteção Social em Cabo Verde, 2016-2020, 2021-2023

The coverage of the most vulnerable persons (the furthest left behind), including women, children and persons with disability is expected to increase in the coming years. Furthermore, 62.2% of women were covered by a social protection scheme. Gender income inequalities is still a reality evident, as the incidence of poverty among women was 66% in 2022, and 85% of the most vulnerable households are headed by women[16]. The National Social Security Institute (INPS) is making efforts to better articulate the

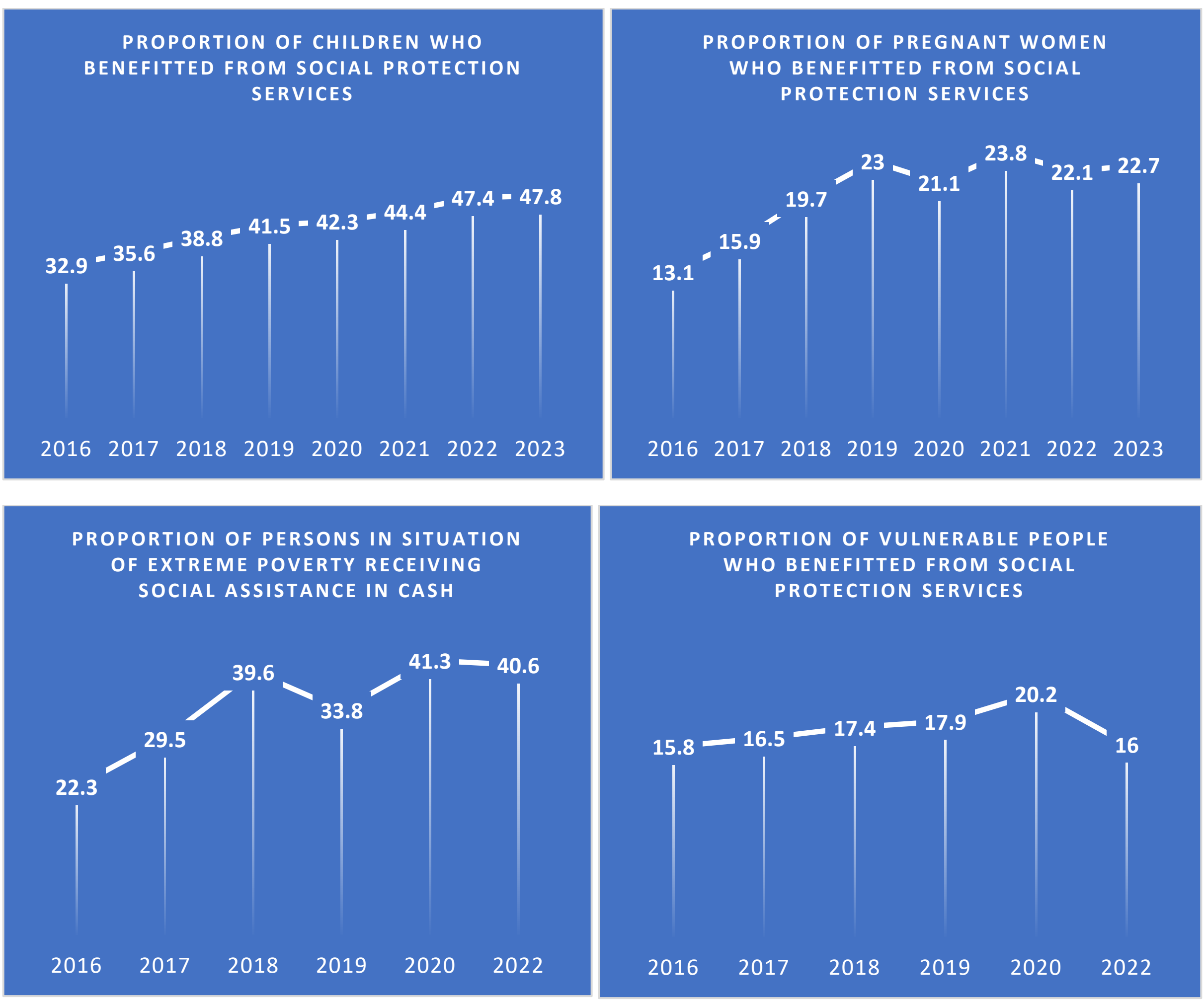
[14] IFRC, 26Apr 2022: https://reliefweb.int/report/cabo-verde/cape-verde-drought-emergency-plan-action-epoa-dref-operation-mdrcv003
[15] Imprensa Nacional de Cabo Verde, Official Gazette number 17, 16 February 2022
[16] ENEPE (National strategy to eradicate extreme poverty), 2023

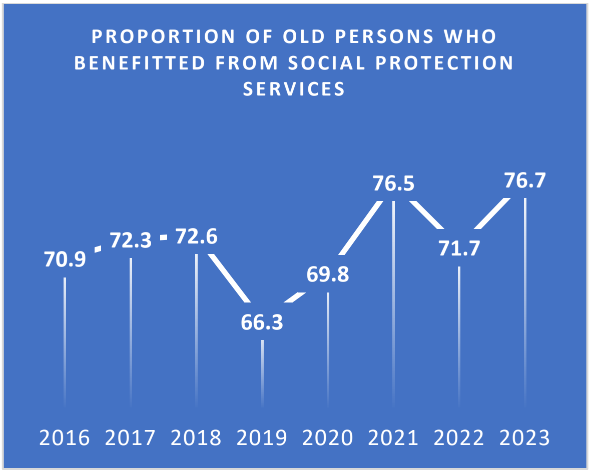
contributory and non-contributory regimes throughout people’s life cycle, which should offer better coverage when people face specific periods of vulnerability. Furthermore, recognising the INPS's interest in reaching workers in the informal economy, in 2024, a diagnosis of the extension of social security to workers who are difficult to cover in Cabo Verde was completed and presented, accompanied by the respective Communication Plan.

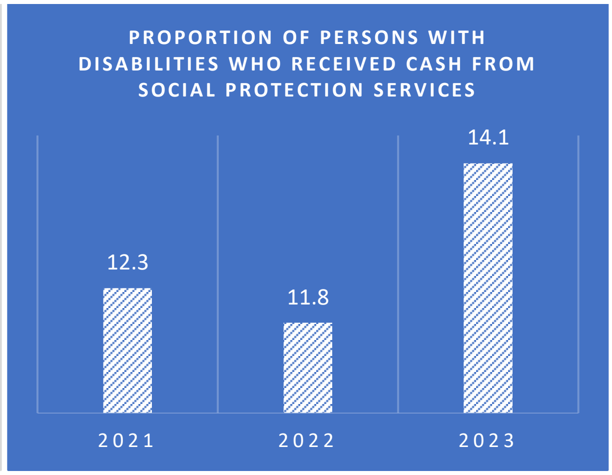
Implications for the UN system

- Strengthen national social protection systems, particularly the INPS and CNPS, to expand coverage for vulnerable groups, including pregnant women, children and older persons.
- Reinforce ENEPE’s capacity to improve the targeting of households affected by extreme poverty, as well as persons with disabilities.
- Enhance coordination with ENPED to strengthen support for vulnerable groups, particularly through technical capacity-building and employment facilitation for persons with disabilities.
- Strengthened the Single Social Registry (Cadastro Social Único) for a better targeting and monitoring of the assistance provided to vulnerable groups

Figure 4: Coverage of the vulnerable population by social protection services







Source: Boletim Estatístico do Sistema de Proteção Social em Cabo Verde, 2016-2020 and 2021-2023

1.4. Good health and well-being

Cabo Verde has made consistent progress in health, reflected in steady improvements in life expectancy. Women now live on average 76.1 years and men 67.3 years[17], an increase of 20 and 12 years, respectively, since 1970[18]. These figures are comparable to OECD averages[19] and place Cabo Verde as the country with the highest life expectancy in West Africa[20]. However, there is to analyse the cause of the gap between the men and women elaborate targeted interventions.

Strengthening Quality Health Services to Expand Universal Health Coverage

Cabo Verde faces interconnected challenges in delivering quality health services and achieving UHC. Health worker density increased from 59 to 68 per 10,000 population between 2019 and 2021, with physicians at 7.7 per 10,000 which is—above the African average but despite progress this remain below WHO's recommended threshold. Distribution across islands and access to specialists remain uneven. Medical evacuations between islands and abroad are costly and demand a more sustainable model. Emergency pre-hospital care is limited and concentrated in two main islands, lacking regulatory frameworks and standardized procedures. Many providers lack adequate training, and there are persistent gaps in infection control, waste management, and meeting the needs of migrant populations. The private health sector is not systematically quantified, and formal mechanisms for integration with the public sector are lacking. While resources are shared, sustainable models for public-private partnerships—such as for tertiary care—are still under development.

Rising Burden of Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) and Elimination of Specific Communicable Diseases

Cabo Verde faces a dual challenge of communicable and non-communicable diseases in public health. NCDs are the leading cause of mortality, accounting for over 57% of all deaths. In 2022, circulatory diseases represented 31% of deaths, cancers 11.6% and respiratory diseases 11.4%. The prevalence of risk factors is high: 17.5% of the population engages in harmful alcohol use, 9.6% uses tobacco, 44% are overweight, and 27% have three or more NCD risk factors. Suicide is also a significant concern, responsible for 41% of

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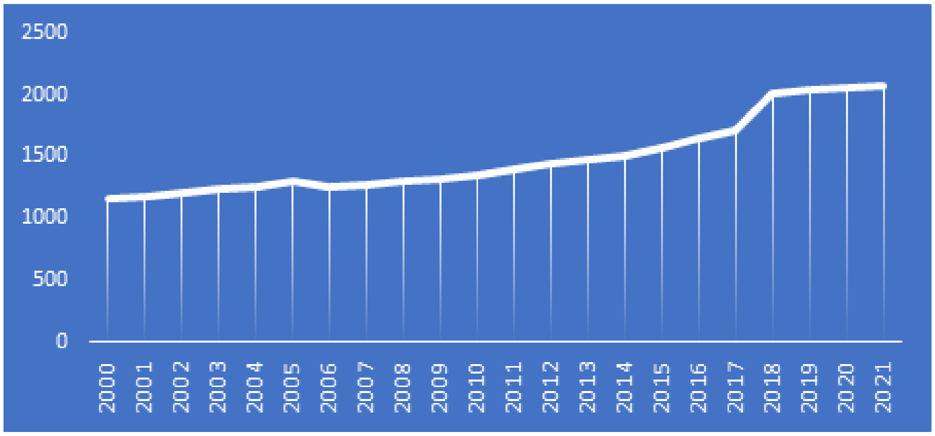
[17] INECV, Mortalidade, V RGPH 2021
[18] INE – Dados estatísticos 1970-2017 https://ine.cv/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/independencia_cv-1.pdf
[19] OECD – Health: life expectancy at birth reaches 81 years across OECD countries, a gain of more than 11 years since 1960. Women live about five years longer than men, averaging 83.6 years versus 78.3 years for men (https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/health/).
[20] According to data of the World Health Statistic Report 2023.

deaths from external causes. Progress in eliminating specific communicable diseases is notable. Cabo Verde has reported no indigenous malaria cases since 2018 and achieved malaria elimination certification in 2024. There have been no outbreaks or deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases in over a decade. However, vertical transmission of HIV persists, with four cases reported in 2018–2019.

Figure 5: Number of NCD deaths (2000-2021)



Source: WHO. [Total NCD Deaths (in thousands) (who.int)]

Emergency Preparedness and Epidemic Control

Multiple outbreaks have happened in the past 15 years including malaria, zika, dengue and COVID-19. COVID-19 led to a 19% GDP drop in 2020, increased unemployment, poverty, and health system strain. Gaps exist in epidemiological surveillance, lab certification, and antimicrobial resistance monitoring. A more solid functioning of an Emergency Operating Center and implementation of all aspects of the new International Health Regulations would improve prevention, detection and response to multiple emergencies which risk to increase do to climate change including expanding vectors, flooding and drought.

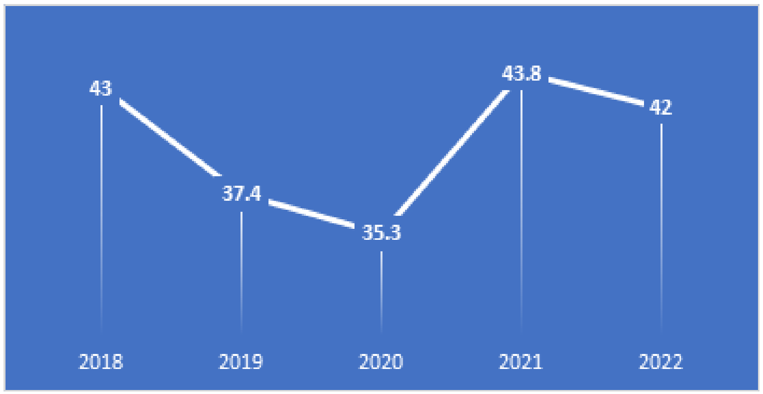
Accelerating Digital Health Transformation

Cabo Verde has strong internet coverage and expanding telemedicine (786 consultations in 2020 and 1271 in 2022). However, regularity and quality of health data reporting, analysis and use need improvement, and a national digital health strategy is still under development.

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Family planning coverage is assured in the national budget, but effective use remains low (contraceptive prevalence dropped from 43% in 2018 to 35.3% in 2020). Teenage pregnancy is persistent (18.3% of girls under 19 have at least one child).

Figure 6: Percentage of women in the reproductive age who use modern family planning methods



Source: Source: INE, Relatório ODS, 2023

Table 4: Percentage of women according the modern family planning methods used

Modern family planning methods	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Use pills	16.20	9.70	10.90	11.50	12.10	12.00
Esterelização feminina	4.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	3.80
Injections	10.20	7.00	8.40	10.00	10.20	9.80
Male condoms	8.60	7.70	7.20	12.60	8.20	7.70
IUD	1.10	1.50	1.60	3.00	2.00	2.00
Implant	2.10	6.10	2.80	3.30	4.20	6.00

Source: Source: INE, Relatório ODS, 2023

Implications for UN Positioning

- The UN should prioritize support for government-led efforts addressing these core challenges, especially those linked to SDG 3 and UHC.
- Provide expertise in policy development, strategic planning, and implementation of evidence-based standards, especially in areas with regulatory or operational gaps.
- Strengthen national systems for workforce development, digital health, and emergency preparedness.
- Support robust monitoring frameworks to track progress and inform adaptive strategies.
- Multisectoral Partnerships: Facilitate dialogue and collaboration across government, private sector, civil society, and international partners.
- Accelerate digital health solutions and telemedicine to improve access and service quality.
- Enhance preparedness and response capacity for health emergencies and climate-related risks, more specifically in the remote islands.
- SRH advocacy and sustain efforts to improve sexual and reproductive health awareness, education, and service delivery, targeting vulnerable groups.

1.5. Education

Education has been a strength of Cabo Verde since its independence, with very positive indicators at both ends of the education process: literacy, secondary and higher education. Nevertheless, there are still important gaps in eliminating inequities in accessing education, especially for lower-income households and children with disabilities, as well as in ensuring quality education and higher completion rate of secondary education.

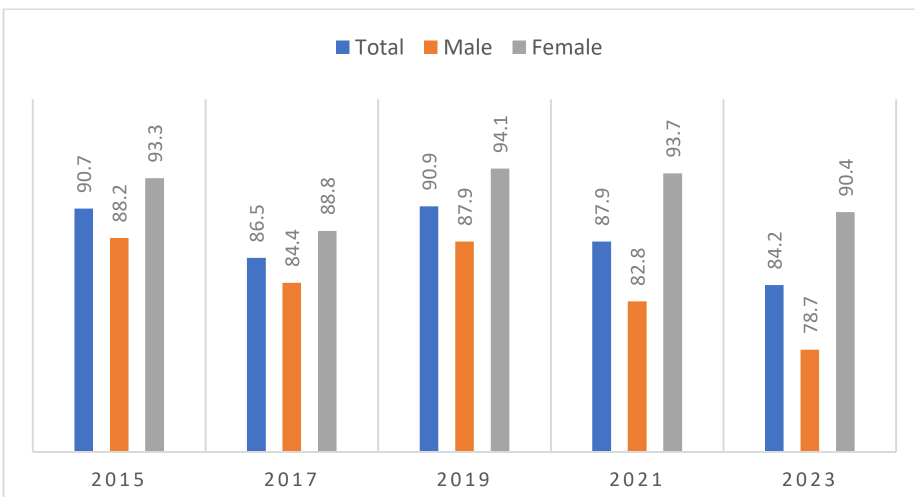
Literacy rates for the population 15 years old or more were 92.6% for men and 85% for women in 2023[21]. There is also a 12-point gap between urban and rural populations, with urban areas registering a literacy rate of 88%, compared to 75.4% in rural areas.

Universal access to primary school and efforts for better completion rate

Overall progress towards universal access and completion of free primary has been consistent since the 2000´ but was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The completion rate (children who reach the last grade of education cycle) for basic education (1st to 8th grade) has worsened from 90.4% in 2019/20 to 84.2% in 2022/23 (90.4% for girls and 78.7% for boys[22]), confirming that the learning crisis became exacerbated since the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, the completion rate for basic education (until 8th grade) was 76.3% for the population 10 years old or more, while for women (85.5%) that rate was much higher than for men (67.3%).

However, data from the 2021 Census shows a substantial improvement in primary school enrolment, reaching nearly 100% in practice[23], with gender parity.

Figure 7: completion rate of primary school



Source: INE, Relatório ODS, 2023

Secondary education indicators have revealed greater challenges. In 2023, net schooling (children of the official school age for a specific level of education are actually enrolled in that level) for secondary education has been more challenging (currently the rate is 67.2%) and the completion rate for secondary education was 65.4% in 2023 with discrepancy between boys (61.6%) and girls (68.2%).

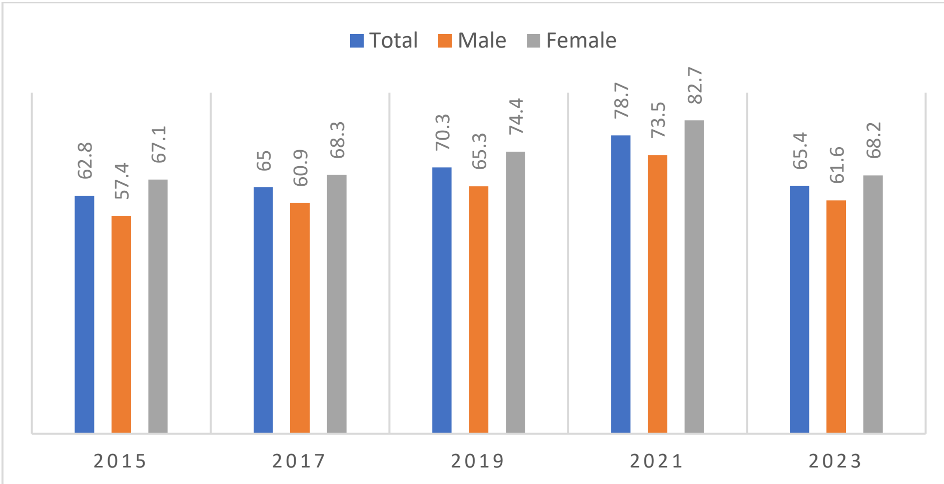
[21] INE (2024). Mulheres e Homens em Cabo Verde. Fatos e Numeros. Based on INE. IMC, Relatorio de Condicoes de Vida, 2022 e 2023.

[22] Ministério da Educação: Avaliação do Setor da Educação (relatório não publicado)

[23] The population dynamics (Census 2021 compared with Census 2010) shows a decrease in the number of children aged 0-14 years, the target group for primary education (Grade 1 to 6, 6-9 year old) and compulsory basic education (Grade 1 to 8, 6-11 years old). Since the population base for the calculation of the rate has decreased, the ratio has also improved.

The number of students in higher education has improved slightly from 2018/19 (16.9%) to 2020/2021 (18.2%), with a noteworthy female presence (150 women enrolled for every 100 men)[24].

Figure 8: completion rate of secondary school



Source: INE, Relatório ODS, 2023

Improvement of pre-primary enrolment

Pre-primary school enrolment has improved significantly since the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, the pre-school enrolment fell from 85.6% in 2019/2020 to 72.3% in 2020-21 and is now at 91.9% in 2023. This shows the education sector's vulnerability to shocks mainly when there is a direct impact on households´ economy.

Table 5: Pre-primary school enrolment rate

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total	85.3	89	86.1	83.7	84.1	85.6	72.3	87.3	91.9
Male	86.7	87.4	84.8	82.8	83.1	83.2	70.2	88.9	90.2
Female	83.8	90.7	87.5	84.6	85.2	88.1	74.5	87.8	93.7

Source: INE, Relatório ODS, 2023

Gender inequality persists in school

While there has been great improvement in gender parity in access to education (, there are still important inequities when income and place of residence are taken into consideration. The likelihood of completing basic education in poor households is 65.8% for boys aged 12-14 and 77.6% for girls, while for non-poor households it is 81.5% for boys and 88% for girls[25]. The main causes of non-completion are a higher failure rate and entrance into the labour market. Non-completion rates in both primary and secondary also vary between municipalities, reaching as high as 11.9% in the municipality of Brava and as low as 1.4% in São Salvador do Mundo (the national average is 5.2%)[26]. These inequities are also evident in access to pre-

[24] Censo 2021 and Ministry of Education Estatisticas do Ensino Superior
[25] INECV (2018). Perfil da Pobreza em Cabo Verde, 2018.
[26] Ministério da Educação. Principais Indicadores da Educação, ano letivo 2017-2018

school, as only 74.5% of children aged 4-5 from poor households access it, in comparison with 84.3% from non-poor households[27].

Special educational needs

Access to schooling for children, young people and adults with special educational needs is still limited. Among 1,900 individuals in these categories[28], 26% have never attended school and only 3.1% have higher education[29]. Most teachers at all levels - pre-school, primary, secondary, vocational or higher education - have a low or no capacity to address special educational needs. Strengthening this capacity is a priority to improve inclusiveness in education in Cabo Verde.

Quality of education and low enrolment in science

Cabo Verde has made major efforts in ensuring high quality in the areas of adult literacy and numeracy. The illiteracy rate (aged 15 and over) dropped from 61.3% in 1975 to 9% in 2022, and according to UIS (UNESCO Institute for Statistics) data estimates, in the 15 to 24 age group, the illiteracy rate was 1.3% in 2021, making Cabo Verde the third most literate country in sub-Saharan Africa, behind Seychelles and Mauritius[30], and the country with highest literacy rate in West Africa[31]. However, of the population of adults (aged 15 and over) who are illiterate, 68.29% were female in 2021[32], suggesting that there is still work to be done in reaching gender equity in access to quality education.

In terms of quality of education, the national learning assessment demonstrates no significant progress in the learning outcomes in Mathematics (data interpretation, problem-solving) and Portuguese (writing skills) since 2010[33].

Sustainable Development at the center of Education

Cabo Verde prioritizes education for sustainable development (ESD). Education for Sustainable Development empowers people with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviors to live in a way that is good for the environment, economy, and society[34]. The country has mapped ESD actors and projects and held consultations. Cabo Verde is the first African country and the fifth globally to validate and launch its Country Initiative for ESD for 2030, which is aligned with the National Strategic Sustainable Development Plan (PEDS), indicating bright prospects for future achievements.

Access to computer and internet remains very low in school

The schools in Cabo Verde provide basic services (clean water sanitation etc.). The country has registered improvement in the access of services in its schools between 2017 and 2023. The country has reached 100% of schools with clean drinking water and sanitation. However, there is a need to improve the access to internet at school (36.1% in 2023 only).

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[27] Ministério da Educação. Estudo Diagnóstico da situação do Pré-Escolar, 2019. The municipalities are Ribeira Grande de Santiago (62%), Sal (62.9%), Santa Catarina do Fogo (66.3%), São Salvador do Mundo (68.1%), Praia (71.7%) and São Vicente (76.7%).

[28] Education Signaling System based on WHO's Functional Classification of Efficiency and Health, 2021

[29] INECV, Portrait of the disability situation in Cabo Verde, 2018 Handicap Internacional, Ministério da Saúde e Segurança Social, Estudo Biocomportamental sobre a vulnerabilidades das Pessoas com Deficiência face ao VIH/Sida em Cabo Verde (Relatório de Cabo Verde),

[30] The World Bank, Development Indicators Database

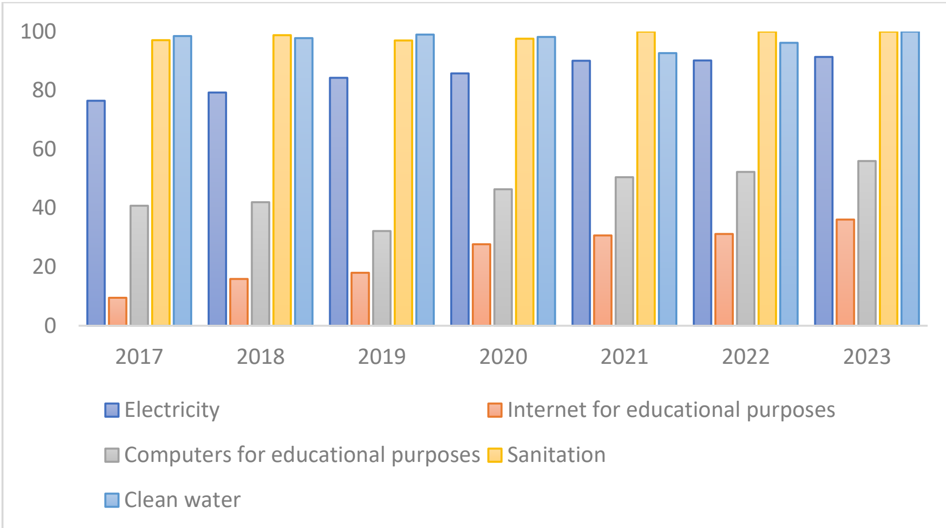
[31] According to data from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, consulted in October 2022.

[32] UNESCO Institute for Statistics on SDG4 http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/

[33] Ministério da Educação, Relatório de Provas AFERIDAS no 2º e 6º anos de escolaridade, 2019.

[34] https://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education

Figure 9: Access to basic services in schools (%)



Source: INE, Relatório ODS, 2023

Need for qualified teachers in pre-primary

Teacher qualification accounts for the quality of education. The majority of teachers are trained. In 2022/2023 98.4% of teachers in primary level and 97.4% in the secondary level have minimum required training. In secondary level in particular, there has been a positive trend since 2015, demonstrating efforts made by the country. While teachers are well-trained on those levels, the quality of pre-primary education poses a major concern, as only 30.3% of professionals have undergone training[35].

Table 6: Percentage of teachers with minimum qualification

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023
Pre-primary	39.4	30.4	29.5	29.6	31.2	37.1	37.0	30.3
Primary	97.1	97.6	98.7	97.4	97.3	95.3	96.6	98.4
Secondary	88.7	90.3	91.6	94.7	94.4	96.3	95.7	97.4

Source: INE, Relatório ODS, 2023

Implications for the UN system

- Improve the quality of early childhood education by supporting the training of teachers at the pre-primary level.
- Assist the Government in reducing school dropout and improving completion rates, particularly among boys at the primary and secondary levels.
- Support the government in improving access to computers, internet in schools and digital literacy.
- Support the Government on learning assessment, based on best international practices, to ensure quality education across the education cycles.
- Support school feeding programmes as a strategic tool to improve nutrition, health, and education outcomes, while stimulating local economies and smallholder production.

[35] INECV (2023). Relatorio Estatistico 2022. Agendas 2030 & 2063. Based on data from the Ministry of Education, Statistics

1.6. Human rights, rule of law and women's participation

Cabo Verde has made significant progress in advancing women's rights and gender equality, particularly in education and health, where many national targets have already been achieved. However, important challenges remain. Gender-based violence (GBV), income inequality and climate change impacts continue to disproportionately affect women. Although women make up 49.7% of the population[36], they head 66% of the poor households[37]. In 2023, 54% of households were headed by women, and more than half of these (50.9%) were single-parent households. By contrast, only 7.5% of households headed by men were single-parent households.

Advancements in human rights

Cabo Verde continues to strengthen its institutional and policy framework for human rights, consolidating its reputation as a regional model for democracy, rule of law, and respect for fundamental freedoms. The country's Constitution and related legislative instruments provide a solid foundation for the protection of human rights.

Cabo Verde has ratified all nine core international human rights conventions under the UN system[38], including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1975), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1981), Convention Against Torture (CAT, 1992), Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC, 1992), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1993), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1993), International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD, 1979), International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICMRW, 2003), and the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2007). At the regional level, Cabo Verde is party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1987), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1993), the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (2005), and the African Youth Charter (2010), reflecting strong alignment with continental human rights standards.

In the past year, Cabo Verde has ratified recent Human Rights obligations defined at the global level:

- The ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in December 2022.
- The ratification of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction approved in the National Assembly, which entered into force of law in March 2023.

Key developments in the national legal system and public management system to continue to fulfil Human Rights obligations include:

- The approval of the law on the prevention, rehabilitation, and participation of persons with disabilities (Law-decree nº 21/2019 of 24 May); the design and adoption of the Strategic Plan for the rights of persons with disabilities 2022-2026, which is currently under implementation.
- National Integrated Programme for the Fight against Drugs and Related Crimes 2018-2023 (Resolution no 93/2019 of 17 July 2019).
- National Plan for Social Reintegration 2019 - 2023 (Resolution no. 103/2019, of 9 August).
- National Gender Equality Plan 2021-2025 (Resolution no. 1/2022, of 5 January).

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[36] INE. Census 2021.
[37] INE. Estimativas da Pobreza 2016-2022.
[38] CNDHC, "Estudo sobre o conhecimento e aplicação das convenções internacionais de direitos humanos em Cabo Verde, 2020". In parenthesis acronym and year of entry into force in Cabo Verde's legal framework

- The operationalization of the II National Action Plan for the Prevention of and Fight Against Sexual Violence 2022-2024 (Resolution n. 122/2021 of 29 December), which is currently being implemented;

- The National Strategy and Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons in Cabo Verde 2023-2026(Resolution n. 16/2024 of 6 March 2024))

- Creation of the National Observatory on Trafficking in Persons (resolution no. 13 of 15 February 2024)

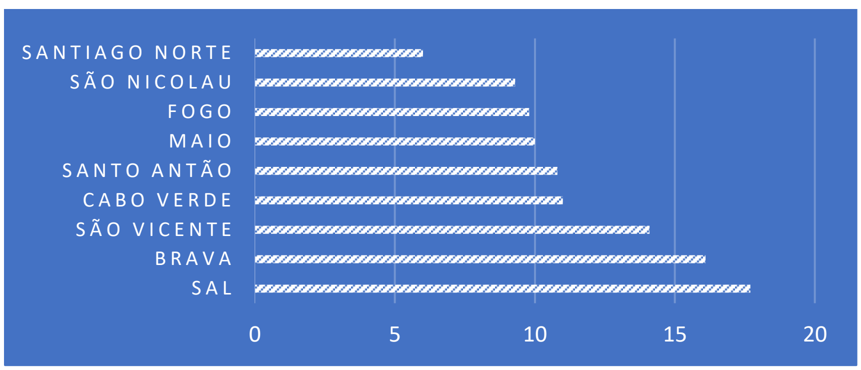
- The existence of a national strategy for the mainstreaming of Citizenship Education in line with Human Rights.

- Cabo Verde's National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Money Laundering, the Financing of Terrorism and the Financing of the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (ENCAVE)

Violence against women and girls

Over recent years, Cabo Verde has strengthened its efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls. Reported cases of gender-based violence (GBV) have declined, with the share of women victims falling from 22% in 2015 to 11% in 2020. While this is an encouraging trend, the rate remains high, with considerable variations across islands and population groups. Women in Sal (18%) and Brava (16%) face higher risks, as do separated or widowed women (33%) and women with only basic education (19%). Notably, GBV prevalence shows no correlation with family income or social status.

Figure 10: Incidence of gender-based violence in different regions - 2018-2020 (percentage)



Source: INE. IDSR III 2018, 2020

Despite progress in addressing GBV, further investment is needed to accelerate case processing and reduce judicial backlogs. While awareness has improved and more women and girls are reporting incidents, resolution rates remain low. Weaknesses in GBV data collection continue to limit evidence-based policymaking.

Persons with disabilities

In Cabo Verde, 10.6% of the population lives with at least one disability, with women disproportionately affected: 61.8% of persons with disabilities are women, meaning 13.1% of all women and 8.1% of all men have a disability. Although Cabo Verde ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2011, persons with disabilities continue to face multiple barriers to full inclusion. These include limited accessibility to public services—such as schools, health facilities, and transport systems—which are often not adapted to their needs; uneven quality of inclusive education, partly due to insufficient teacher training; and weak early diagnosis and intervention, reflecting gaps in the health system's readiness and capacities. Collectively, these barriers reinforce structural inequalities and hinder the effective realization of rights for persons with disabilities.

Immigrants from the African continent

The existing 6,743 African immigrants in 2021[39] were most at risk of finding themselves discriminated against and excluded by prejudice of race, colour, origin and by linguistic barriers, suffering exploitative conditions and lacking access to social protection[40].

LGBTIQ rights

The rights of lesbian gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons are guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Cabo Verde. However, LGBTIQ people continue to be subjected to a pervasive atmosphere of hostility and stigmatization that results in discrimination in many social spheres[41]. Access to employment and income is a serious issue for LGBTI people. Among transgender people, 37.6% claim to have been victims of violence/discrimination[42], while care is precarious.

Gender equality, discrimination against women and girls and full participation

Cabo Verde has established a strong legal and institutional framework to promote gender equality. The Constitution enshrines equality between women and men, and gender policies are coordinated through the Ministry of Family, Inclusion and Social Development, the Cabo Verdean Institute for Gender Equality and Equity, the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Gender Mainstreaming, and the Gender Observatory. At the municipal level, social services provide specific programmes to advance equality[43].

Despite this progress, entrenched gender roles still limit women's opportunities. Women face restricted access to resources, limited political participation, and barriers to contributing fully to sustainable development. Women in rural areas, women with disabilities, and survivors of gender-based violence face particularly acute barriers. Persistent obstacles include limited access to land titles, credit, and financial services; factors that contribute to poverty and low productivity among women.

Cabo Verde has made notable strides in advancing women's political representation, particularly following the adoption of the Parity Law (nº 68/IX/2019). By 2020, women accounted for 41.7% of local elected representatives, 36.1% of parliamentary seats (2021), and 33.6% of cabinet positions in the Executive (2021) [44].

However, disparities persist at the highest levels of political leadership. Out of 16 ministers in the central government, only two are women, and only one out of 22 municipalities is led by a woman[45].

Although the Constitution guarantees equal rights for women in land ownership and control, implementation gaps remain. Structural inequalities continue to limit women's economic opportunities. In 2024, men's employment rate stood at 59.5%, compared to 47.8% for women. Within households, men earned more than women in 66.7% of cases. Business and asset ownership also reflect inequality: only 28.7% of companies (out of 18,061) are led by women, and just 8.2% of women own land[46].

While Cabo Verde has made strong progress in health, education, and social development, the next frontier for gender equality lies in creating a more inclusive participation in decision-making processes and economic environment. Advancing women's political and economic empowerment will be key to reducing poverty and ensuring sustainable development.

In the labour market, gender inequalities persist. For instance, labour force participation – the proportion

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39 2021 Census data: Cabo Verde has 10.875 immigrants, of which approximately 62% are African immigrants

40 AAI (2022), Survey on Foreign and Immigration Population

41 CNDHC, II National Report on Human Rights, 2020

42 Diagnostic Study on the Social and Legal Situation of LGBTI People in Cabo Verde, 2020

43 Government of Cabo Verde, Voluntary National Review , 2021.

44 Government of Cabo Verde, Voluntary National Review , 2021.

45 INE (2024). Mulheres e Homens em Cabo Verde. Fatos e Numeros.

46 INE (2024). Mulheres e Homens em Cabo Verde. Fatos e Numeros.

of a country's working-age population that engages actively in the labour market, either by working or looking for work – is much lower for women (50.4%) than for men (65.5%)[47]. Eliminating these gender gaps will require more equal access to skills and finance, but also continued efforts to accelerate a cultural norms shift towards a more equal distribution of unpaid work in the private sphere and decent, solid jobs and managerial responsibilities in the public sphere, for women to access the jobs to be created in the coming years.

Implications for the UN system

- Strengthen institutional mechanisms and support government and municipality efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.
- Promote dialogue with senior leadership and government officials to increase women's participation and representation in decision-making positions.
- Support the government on data generation and in reinforcing specific programmes and the necessary legislative framework for an increase in social consciousness regarding the challenges faced by LGBTIQ persons.
- Support the National Commission for Human Rights and Citizenship (CNDHC) to have the human rights institution statute. In order to do so, according to the Paris Principles[48], the Constitution requires an extraordinary revision to allow the existing Ombudsman's Office to be merged with the CNDHC or to create an independent institute.
- Support the ratification of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Support the efforts to effectively implement the National Strategy for Human Rights Education at all levels.
- Strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment in rural and coastal communities by expanding gender-responsive value chain initiatives that increase women's access to productive resources, training, and decision-making
- Foster economic inclusion for African migrants: support the government to create opportunities for migrants to work legally and contribute to the economy and promote fair and ethical recruitment practices.

1.7. Industrialization, manufacturing and energy transition

Deeper economic transformation and diversification remain essential for reducing Cabo Verde's vulnerability to external shocks. Yet, structural constraints such as the country's small size and geographic isolation, limited domestic market, territorial dispersion, and high transportation costs continue to limit progress. Despite these challenges, Cabo Verde has made sustained efforts toward advancing infrastructure, industrialization, and innovation. However, since 2020, the combined impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and limited fiscal space has slowed further progress.

The industry and manufacture sector

As a service-based economy, Cabo Verde's manufacturing sector remains relatively small but has shown modest gains. Manufacturing value added (MVA) per capita increased from **USD 209** in 2023 to about **USD 216** in 2024. While the sector accounted for approximately **4.8% of GDP** in 2024, this was a marginal decline from **4.9% in 2023**[49], reflecting both modest industrial expansion and the growing weight of services, particularly tourism.

In employment terms, the secondary sector absorbed **22.5%** of total jobs in 2023, while the primary sector accounted for **7.6%** and the tertiary sector **69.9%**. Manufacturing specifically represented **9.9%** of total

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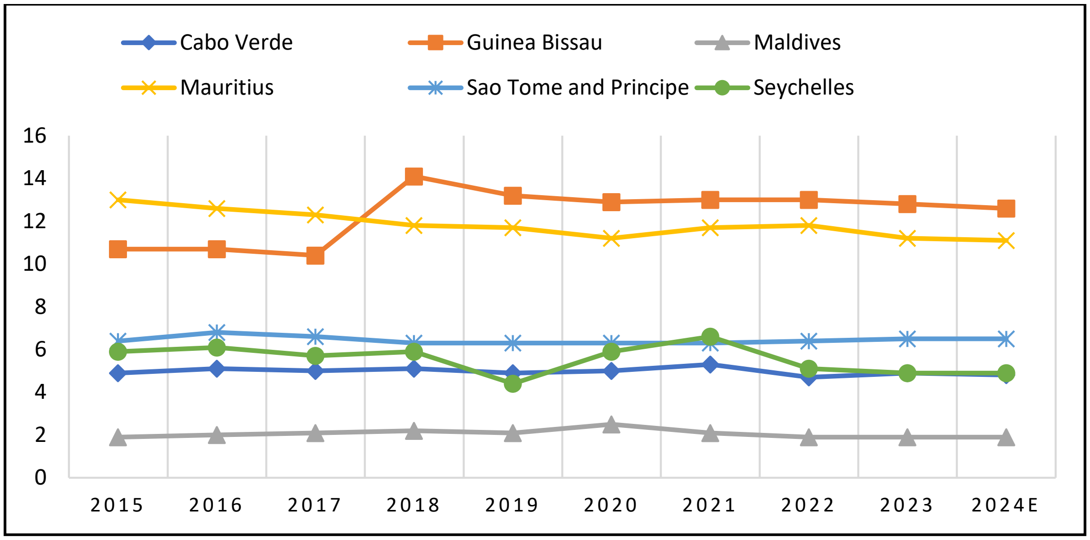
[47] INE – Estatísticas do Mercado de Trabalho 2024

[48] The Paris Principles ('Principles Relating to the Status of National Human Rights Institutions') set out the minimum standards that NHRIs must meet in order to be considered credible and to operate effectively

[49] UNIDO, SDG9 Monitor

employment[50]. Cabo Verde's manufacturing performance mirrors that of other Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which face similar structural constraints to industrial growth.

Figure 11: Manufacturing Valued Added to GDP in selected SIDS – 2010-2024 (percentage)



Source: UNIDO, Global Database, 2024

The Competitive Industrial Performance Index ranks Cabo Verde 140th out of 153 countries[51]. Stronger competitiveness of Cabo Verde's industrial products at both regional and global levels is constrained by structural challenges. These include the small size of the domestic market, limited access to domestic and foreign investment, and a high dependence on imported inputs for intermediate consumption. In addition, external shocks such as volatility in global commodity prices and disruptions in trade exert a disproportionate impact on industrial performance.

Access to finance and markets for industries

In Cabo Verde, enhancing small-scale industrialization will prioritize the transformation of blue economy. However, additional investments are needed in capacity building to improve workforce skills in Research and Development (R&D) and in mobilizing the diaspora and international partnerships to transform the country into an ocean-based circular economy. For instance, in 2020, expenditure on R&D reached approximately 0.15% of GDP[52] (vs 0.3% in Sub-Saharan Africa and 1% in SIDS)[53].

The proportion of small-scale industries in total industry value added was 17.7% in 2021 and the proportion of small-scale industries with a loan or line of credit was 12.8% in 2024, which is very low compared to Mauritius and Seychelles (respectively 70.7% and 70.3%).

Energy transition

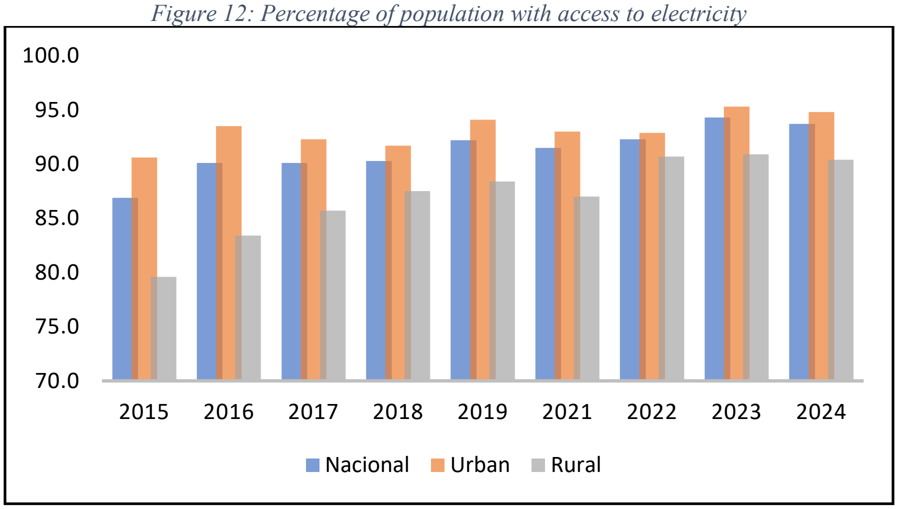
Cabo Verde's dependence on imported energy sources remains a critical limitation to both energy independence and economic transformation, particularly in the context of global energy crises. At the same time, the country has substantial potential for renewable energy (RE), including solar, wind, and emerging sources such as tidal and wave energy, which provide a strong basis for a rapid and sustainable energy transition.

[50] INE – INDICADORES DE MERCADO DE TRABALHO - IMC 2024
[51] UNIDO, https://stat.unido.org/sites/default/files/file/country_profile/CPV.pdf at 17-09-2025
[52] Government of Cabo Verde, SDG Voluntary National Review (VNR), 2021
[53] UNESCO, Global dataset, 2021

The share of RE in the national energy mix is projected to grow in the coming years. The Government has committed to ambitious climate goals, including reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 18% by 2030, or up to 24% with adequate international support, and achieving full decarbonization of the economy by 2050[54]. Planned public investments, such as a new pump storage facility and the expansion of energy storage capacity, alongside emerging foreign direct investment in tidal and wave energy, are expected to drive significant progress.

In 2024, 93.7% of Cabo Verde's population had access to electricity[55] representing a slight decrease from 94.3% in 2023, and both in urban and rural areas. The ongoing energy transition is expected to not only improve electricity access but also reduce fossil fuel dependency, lower electricity costs, and contribute to reduced water costs through more efficient desalination.

Figure 12: Percentage of population with access to electricity



Source: INECV, Estatísticas das Condições de vida dos agregados familiares imc, 2024

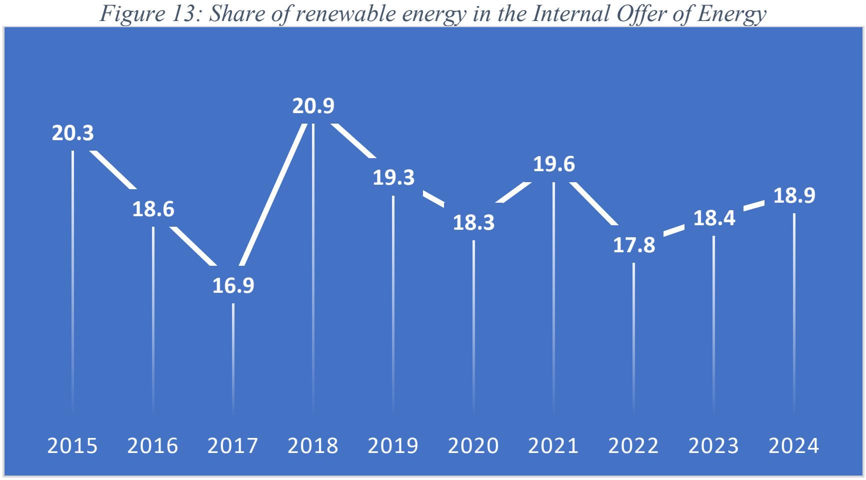
In 2024, approximately 85.3% of Cabo Verde's population relied on gas and electricity for cooking[56], indicating primary access to clean fuels and technologies. This represents an increase of nearly 15 percentage points compared to 2015. Women (85.9%) reported slightly higher access to clean cooking energy than men (84.7%).

Despite these advances, challenges remain. Cabo Verde's scarce rainfall and limited forest cover restrict biomass potential, yet in many rural and peri-urban areas, firewood continues to be the main source of energy for food preparation[57].

The share of renewable energies was 22.2% in 2014, 20.9% 2018, 18.3% in 2020, and 18.4.6% in 2023[58]. In 2024, the share of RE was 18.9%. Although the share of RE decreased, the production capacity increased from 420 Gwh in 2015 to 453 Gwh in 2020 (14 Gwh solar, 69 wind and 370 thermal)[59].

[54] Cabo Verde 2nd Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) 2020
[55] INECV, Condições de Vida dos Agregados Familiares 2024
[56] Idem.
[57] PEDS II.
[58] Ministry of Industry, Trade and Energy, Energy Indicators, 2024
[59] INECV, Anuário Estatístico 2020, 2023

Figure 13: Share of renewable energy in the Internal Offer of Energy



Source: INECV, Estatísticas das Condições de vida dos agregados familiares imc, 2023 e portal de energia (2024)

Energy efficiency, measured in terms of energy intensity of GDP, reached 0.77 toe/million in 2023, while the energy dependency index went down to 86.5% in 2023. Demand for energy is expected to increase by 35% by 2030 (from peak demand of 110 MW in 2020 to 151 MW in 2030), which the Government is planning to match with a mix of enhanced energy efficiency, limited losses (from 23% today to 10% in 2030), enhanced storage capacities and higher penetration of renewable energies.

This ambition also seeks to continuously increase energy quality, including reducing system interruptions which, in 2023, represented a SAIDI/SAIFI of 59 hours/26.5 minutes[60]. In the coming years, 20% of total electricity will be consumed by the tourism sector, and 10% by desalination[61]. The Master Plan calls for at least 50% of the on-grid electricity produced in the country to be of renewable origin in 2030 (in comparison to 18.9% in December 2024)[62].

Implications for the UN system

- Support the capacity-building of SMEs in processing, manufacturing and value addition to enhance productivity and competitiveness.
- Promote the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in Cabo Verde, enabling SMEs and the manufacturing sector to access larger markets.
- Continue to advocate for the economic diversification, expanding manufacturing industries.
- Support research and science investments to develop and expand the manufacturing sector.
- Accelerate Technical and Policy Support to help Cabo Verde expand renewable energy integration, strengthen grid stability, and implement the 2030 Master Plan and long-term decarbonization goals.
- Mobilize Financing and Partnerships for large-scale investments in storage, desalination efficiency, and emerging technologies such as tidal and wave energy.
- Promote Inclusive Energy Access by supporting measures that reduce reliance on firewood in rural areas, advance clean cooking solutions, and ensure that the energy transition benefits vulnerable groups and key sectors such as tourism and water.

[60] National Directorate of Industry, Trade and Energy, 2024
[61] Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Energy, Master Plan for the electricity sector (PDSE 2018 - 2040), 2018
[62] Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Energy, Diagnostic on renewable energy use in Cabo Verde, 2020

1.8. Urbanization and cities´ development

The country is facing the challenges of rapid urbanization, with the ratio of land consumption to population growth reaching 135%[63]. If left unchecked, this trend could compromise efforts to make cities more productive, inclusive, and sustainable.

To address this, the national territorial planning entity (INGT) is strengthening urban planning to mitigate inadequate settlements. In 2024, 18 terms of reference were launched for detailed neighbourhood planning in several municipalities.

In terms of the capacity of municipalities for resource mobilisation and management, information from 2023 and 2024 reveals that endogenous revenues account for only 36% of total municipal revenues in average, while transfers from the central government and other transfers, such as from the environment fund, service fees and road maintenance, account for the remainder. This portrays a great dependency of local governments on the different spheres of government for them to run their operations. Recent initiatives by the national government with support from the UN system are working on addressing this challenge.

Housing deficit and access to basic services

In Cabo Verde, 75.8%[64] of the population lives in the country's 24 cities. In 2023, only 0.6% of urban housing was classified as non-classical (i.e., inadequate). However, this classification is based solely on the housing unit itself, without considering the broader urban context in which it is located. The national housing deficit is estimated at 8.7%, equivalent to around 11,000 units, and another around 20,000 units are required to cover new residents, in particular in the largest urban centres.

Access to basic services remains a challenge: 8.9% of urban housing units lack sanitation facilities and 21.3% in rural households, reaching almost 30% in some municipalities. These gaps in sanitation have direct consequences for health and well-being.

Mobility and adapted systems for persons with disabilities

Cabo Verde benefits from a solid road network and a car fleet in good condition, ensuring that most of the population has safe and relatively easy access to wthin-island transport. In urban areas, an average of 17.3% of households own a car, with Praia (the capital) showing the highest rate (22%). However, no city in Cabo Verde has mobility systems adapted for persons with disabilities, and barriers associated with poor urbanism practices continue to severely restrict accessibility.

Waste management

According to the National Strategic Solid Waste Management Plan (PENGER), hazardous waste accounts for about 0.5% of total urban waste collected, equivalent to 729.47 metric tons annually. The Plan aims to achieve a 50% reduction in hazardous waste by 2030[65].

Cabo Verde has already adopted a ban on the import and use of non-biodegradable plastic bags, expected to reduce fine plastic waste entering collection systems by 80% by 2030. Additional targets include:

- Ensuring selective waste collection in at least 60% of municipalities by 2030;
- Establishing 8 units for organic waste recovery by 2030, and;
- Recycling or recovering 60% of paper, glass, plastic, and metal waste by 2030.

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[63] United Nations Environmental Program: https://wesr.unep.org/scorecard/

[64] INE, ESTATÍSTICAS DAS CONDIÇÕES DE VIDA DOS AGREGADOS FAMILIARES, IMC - 2023

[65] Government of Cabo Verde, Voluntary National Review , 2021.

Currently, 95.8% of urban waste is collected by public services. However, recycling remains very limited: only 8% of waste is disposed of in properly managed landfills.

Integrating disaster risk reduction into city planning

Using the 2015–2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction as a strategic guide, Cabo Verde has developed a **National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy (ENRRD)** and a **National Post-Disaster Recovery Framework (QRD)**. It has also piloted a **Detailed Urban Risk Assessment (DURA)** in three municipalities (Praia, Mosteiros, and Ribeira Brava). In response to rising **climate risks in urban areas**, the Government has integrated disaster risk reduction into urban planning processes and has initiated **climate risk mapping**. A National Observatory Service was recently launched to support national efforts in disaster risk reduction to prevent, prepare for, and respond to natural hazards and climate-related event.

Implications for the UN system

- Strengthen municipal capacity in revenue generation and resource management.
- Reinforce the capacity of municipalities in urban planning through comprehensive climate resilient municipal master plans
- Support municipalities in enforcing climate-sensitive urban management practices in land management and infrastructure development.
- Assist municipalities in deriving integrated public service delivery, including in housing and waste management
- Advocate for and support waste re-cycling initiatives

1.9. Climate vulnerability, disaster risk reduction and resilience

Cabo Verde has made significant progress on SDG 13 by adopting UNFCCC mechanisms and integrating climate change into national policies and development strategies. Cabo Verde has an insignificant contribution to greenhouse gas emissions (<0.1% of global emissions), being one of the lowest per capita emitters in the world. However, Cabo Verde is ranked **92nd out of 187 countries** of the most climate-vulnerable nations according to ND- Gain Vulnerability Index[66] **(2023)**.

The country faces multiple climate-related hazards, including volcanic eruptions (the most recent in Fogo in 2014), recurrent droughts, floods and torrential rainfall (the last recorded being in the islands of São Vicente, Santo Antão and São Nicolau in August 2025 with 9 fatalities and in the northern part of Santiago in November 2025), landslides, and mudflows. These events carry significant social and economic consequences. In addition, sea-level rise threatens to damage coastal infrastructure, human settlements, in particular in largest urban centers, and ecosystems through salinization, submersion, and erosion. Changing sea currents are also causing biodiversity disruptions, loss of species, and irregular rainfall and storms.

As a Sahelian island state, Cabo Verde has long suffered from droughts that undermine agricultural productivity, food security, and rural livelihoods, often leading to nutritional stress and migration. The 2017 drought and food crisis, considered the most severe since 1977, left **62.3% of rural households** (17,203 families) vulnerable due to drastically reduced agricultural output.

[66] A country's ND-GAIN index score is composed of a Vulnerability score and a Readiness score. Vulnerability measures a country's exposure, sensitivity and ability to adapt to the negative impact of climate change. ND-GAIN measures the overall vulnerability by considering vulnerability in six life-supporting sectors – food, water, health, ecosystem service, human habitat and infrastructure - https://gain-new.crc.nd.edu/ranking/vulnerability visited 18 September 2025

According to Cabo Verde's First Biennial Update Report submitted to the UNFCCC on 2024 the country's total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2019, excluding emissions and removals from Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF), were estimated at approximately 969.53 Gg CO_2eq. This represents an increase of 16.71% compared to 2015, and 153.21% compared to 1995. Carbon dioxide (CO_2) was the most prevalent GHG, with emissions estimated at 667.40 Gg, reflecting a 15.53% increase compared to 2015, and 118.27% compared to 1995. In 2019, the energy sector was the dominant source of emissions, accounting for approximately 72.69% of total national emissions (including LULUCF). Within this sector, energy production and transport were the most significant contributors, responsible for 31.4% and 28.8% of total emissions, respectively. The waste and agriculture sectors together contributed around 30.90% of total national emissions in 2019, including LULUCF. On a per capita basis, emissions in 2019 were estimated at 1.82 tCO_2eq per person, representing a 75% increase compared to 1995.

Despite these challenges, Cabo Verde remains committed to advancing transparency, carbon and land degradation neutrality, biodiversity conservation, and the sustainable use of ecosystems. Strengthening these cross-sectoral efforts, while tapping into growing climate finance opportunities (including the voluntary carbon market), can accelerate the transition to a resilient and sustainable development model.

Climate measures into national policies

Cabo Verde ratified the UNFCCC and in 2017, submitted its **Third National Communication on Climate Change** and it updated **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0. 2025)** with the support of the United Nations system led by UNDP and the Resident Coordinator Office. The process was informed by various stakeholders, including women's groups, youth, government partners, UN-agencies, NGO and development partners, and civil society actors. The NDC 3.0 was submitted to UNDCCC prior to COP30 and features update mitigation and adaptation targets, localized to the ambitions and vulnerabilities of Cabo Verde and its people. Currently, the development of a Gender and Inclusion Roadmap and an Investment and Financing Plan for the NDC3.0 are taking place to support the successful implementation of an innovatively financed, gender-responsive and socially inclusive NDC.

Cabo Verde adopted the **National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy (2017–2030)**, aligned with the Sendai Framework. It also created the **National Disaster Risk Management System (SINAGERD)** to address underlying risks, reduce exposure and vulnerability, and institutionalize disaster risk governance. Tools such as **Urban Risk Assessments** and **Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) Guidelines** for droughts and floods support evidence-based prevention and recovery. The most recent PDNA was developed after the flash floods in the islands of São Vicente, Santo Antão and São Nicolau, and Detailed Plans (at the urban level) which include a climate lens are currently undergoing in many municipalities across the country.

The **National Adaptation Plan (2022–2030)** establishes three overarching objectives and ten strategic actions focused on institutional strengthening, knowledge and technology improvement, financing, and resilience building in vulnerable communities. Implementation is planned at national, sectoral, and municipal levels, with five municipalities serving as pilots.

Financing climate action

In **September 2025**, Cabo Verde launched the **Strategic Plan for Climate Support Mobilization (PEMAC – Plano Estratégico de Mobilização a Apoio Climático)**. The PEMAC represents a cornerstone initiative for strengthening Cabo Verde's resilience to climate change, serving as a key instrument within the country's climate governance and sustainable development framework. Launched with the support of the Climate Action Programme, the PEMAC adopts a holistic and integrated approach aligned with the country's main strategic instrument, including the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the National

Adaptation Plan (NAP), and the Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS 2050), to ensure coherence, sectoral synergies, and effective institutional coordination. Furthermore, the country has set up a the National Secretariat for Climate Action and the Cabo Verde´s Climate and Environment Fund as instruments for climate action.

The plan aims to identify priority projects, map climate finance needs (both domestic and international), diagnose barriers such as limited institutional capacity, complex fund access procedures, and data quality gaps, and sets out concrete actions to overcome them. It focuses on mobilizing technological, financial, and institutional resources while promoting the engagement of public institutions at all levels, the private sector, and civil society. This approach could align with international guidance on integrating investment needs in climate planning, including in recent work on strengthening the role of FDI in NDC implementation[67].

To strengthen financial preparedness, Cabo Verde established a **National Emergency Fund in 2018**, financed by 0.5% of non-earmarked tax revenues from the previous year, returns from investments, and public, private, and international contributions.

Further opportunities include integrating **traditional knowledge and cultural heritage** into disaster risk reduction strategies, as successfully tested in other SIDS, and scaling up **nature-based solutions** for adaptation and risk reduction.

Implications for the UN system

- Support the implementation of the PEMAC and mobilize financing for climate action, especially innovative financing mechanisms, including through the implementation of Investment policies to advance national climate plans[68].
- Assist the Government, particularly the National Secretariat for Climate Action (SNAC), in advancing climate resilience and adaptation measures.
- Strengthen institutional capacity for the development and implementation of Post-Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNAs) and subsequent recovery actions.
- Reinforce and enhance the operationalization of the national early warning system for disaster risk reduction.

1.10. Crime and drugs

Concerns remain regarding the enforcement of laws and the population's perception of insecurity. Cabo Verde faces growing pressures from drug trafficking and its spillover into local criminality, alongside rising urban crime, issues that are now among citizens' top concerns. The judicial system is often slow to respond, creating bottlenecks that affect both economic activity and the protection of human rights, while reinforcing perceptions of impunity.

Increase of criminality

In 2023–2024, criminal cases registered by Cabo Verde's Public Prosecution Services rose by 11.5% (269 homicide cases in 2022/2023 vs 300 in 2023/24). There was also a peak in the number of criminal cases processed by courts in 2021-2022, since it was the year with the highest number of cases filed and the lowest number of cases carried over. The number of homicide victims per 100,000 people also grew from 5.7 in 2021 to 7.7 in 2023.[69]

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[67] UNCTAD, Investment policies to advance national climate plans , United Nations: Geneva, UNCTAD/DIAE/PCB/2025/2. See: https://unctad.org/publication/investment-policies-advance-national-climate-plans

[68] UNCTAD, Idem; Investment policies to advance national climate plans, United Nations: Geneva.

[69] INECV (2024). (based on data from the Ministry of Internal Administration)

Recognizing that today's challenges transcend national borders and demand greater international coordination, Cabo Verde has stepped up its investment in combating criminality. Legislative reforms and institutional capacity-building measures are being advanced with the support of both national and international partners. In this context, a **new National Strategy and Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons (2023–2026)** was approved through **Resolution No. 16/2024 of 6 March 2024**[70]. The plan outlines strategic interventions to strengthen prevention and protection measures, with a particular focus on safeguarding children from human trafficking.

Cabo Verde has strengthened its legal framework with the publication of a new Criminal Code and a Criminal procedure Code in February 2021[71]. Ongoing reforms are focused on consolidating the rule of law, modernizing judicial structures, and improving the organization and performance of the judiciary. These reforms are expected to boost the productivity of the justice sector. However, the limited number of judges and prosecutors continues to hinder the system's capacity to adequately respond to growing demands.

Drug control

Cabo Verde's strategic location off the West African coast, its long coastline, and limited control of national and international waters make the country vulnerable to drug trafficking and related crimes. Drug trafficking, together with the corruption it often entails, poses serious risks to national and regional security. A major seizure of over five tons of cocaine from a Brazilian vessel on the high seas in April 2022 reinforced concerns that Cabo Verde is being used as a transit and storage hub for cocaine destined for Europe. Data since 2019 suggests this trend has worsened, particularly via maritime routes[72].

Domestically, trafficking has fueled increased consumption of illicit substances, which in turn has driven higher levels of criminality, youth gang activity, and homicide rates in urban areas over the past decade[73].

In response, the country has introduced a mix of policy measures, legal reforms, and capacity-building efforts, resulting in successful drug seizure operations. Still, further consolidation of these achievements is needed, along with stronger measures to prevent urban crime and reduce drug use.

Implications for the UN system

- Support the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons, ensuring alignment with international human rights standards.
- Enhance the capacity of the judiciary and support ongoing reforms to strengthen rule of law, access to justice, and accountability.
- Support government entities in improving maritime security and border control, particularly along maritime routes.

[70] Government of Cabo Verde, Official Gazette of the 6 March 2024
[71] Government of Cabo Verde, Official Gazette of the 11th of February 2021, 2021
[72] UNODC (2023). Global Report on Cocaine 2023
[73] Cabo Verde National Programme on drugs and crime (2018-2023)

2. Acceleration Pathways

As a SIDS, Cabo Verde continues to face significant structural constraints that limit economic diversification and sustained growth. The national economy remains highly dependent on the tourism sector, which accounts for approximately **25% of GDP**, **75% of foreign direct investment (FDI)** inflows, and **39% of total employment**[74]. This heavy reliance on a single sector, coupled with dependence on external inputs, heightens the country's vulnerability to external shocks, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic and global conflicts. Cabo Verde is among the **ten most economically vulnerable countries in Africa**[75], highlighting the urgency of building greater economic resilience.

The economy is, however, recovering strongly from recent crises, driven largely by a rebound in tourism. GDP growth reached **7.2% in 2024**, supported by the tourism sector. Despite this positive trajectory, the Government recognizes that deep structural transformation and diversification remain essential to achieving inclusive and sustainable prosperity. The Strategic Sustainable Development Plan (PEDS II, 2022–2026) underscores the need to transform the way wealth is generated and distributed, both across and within sectors, ensuring that economic gains are more broadly shared.

In order to deliver the Agenda 2030, five national SDG accelerators have been identified and strategically aligned to the annual national planning and budget:

1. Development of human capital.
2. The Blue Economy, recognizing the great potential of the maritime economy and the importance of protecting ocean and coastal areas health.
3. The Digital Economy, to stimulate the adoption of technology and digital solutions to support value chains and inclusive digital transformation.
4. Renewable energies, as they will determine the reduction of factor costs.
5. Tourism industry, as when tourism anchors agriculture, fishing, crafts, creative industries, and other services, these in turn accelerate modernization, productivity, and the entire tourism constellation.

The five accelerators interact with one another in a systemic way and are influenced by a set of enablers defined by financing, partnerships, security issues, institutions and systems, and connectivity within and across islands through physical or digital means.

A gender analysis of the SDG accelerators has also been conducted, highlighting, among other findings, that women have very low participation rate in scientific and technological training, studies, and professions. There is also a major gender gap in agricultural practices such as in irrigated agriculture. In general, women have less access to land, technology, irrigation, and modern agricultural practices that are more productive and profitable. These gender gaps led to the establishment of specific targets for women in the 2030 Agenda commitments on gender equity and empowerment.

The **SDG Accelerator exercise** has effectively linked short-term recovery measures with Cabo Verde's longer-term sustainable development vision, which integrates climate action and resilience-building. Nevertheless, continued exploration of alternative development scenarios remains crucial to ensure

[74] PEDS II and World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/countries_e/cape_verde_e.htm
[75] African Development Bank, African Economic Outlook amid COVID-19, 2020

adaptability in a rapidly evolving global and national context. Strengthening partnerships will be key to unlocking the country's potential for economic diversification, social inclusion, and sustainable resilience.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the financing gap for the SDGs has widened significantly. Addressing this challenge will require complementing public investments in SDG accelerators with increased private sector engagement and financing, consistent with the vision set out in *Cabo Verde Ambition 2030*.

2.1. The digital transformation

A key pillar of this transformation agenda is digitalization, given its cross-cutting potential to enhance productivity, innovation, and resilience across all sectors. The Government has recently accelerated the development of the information and communication technology (ICT) sector as a driver of economic diversification, job creation, and new income generation. The emerging vision of a **"Digital Archipelago" of "Cyber Islands"** seeks to position Cabo Verde as a regional hub for digital services, by creating an enabling environment for technology providers, nurturing ICT talent, and expanding digital solutions to boost productivity and competitiveness throughout the economy[76].

Digital infrastructure, access, and internet use [77]

Cabo Verde's internet penetration rate is above average compared to its peers (figure 14), but still has space to grow, driven by improved affordability and better connection quality. With around 74% of the population and 68.7% of households using the internet in 2024[78], the country is ahead of most of other SIDS, and behind only Mauritius and Maldives.

However, the limited international internet bandwidth, at 44 kb per user, is a main weakness, according to the Network Readiness Index (NRI). In addition, there are notable disparities in internet penetration among the rural and urban populations. For example, while 77.2% of residents of urban settlements use the internet, while only 64.4% in rural settlements (2024).

Digital Government and Institutions[79]

Cabo Verde has established several foundational elements for digital government, supported by a strong institutional framework. The **National Operational Nucleus for the Information Society (NOSI)** and the **Multisectoral Regulatory Agency for the Economy (ARME)** play central roles in advancing the country's digital agenda. The creation of the **Ministry of the Digital Economy** further reinforces the Government's commitment to coordinating digital transformation efforts across public administration and the broader economy.

Citizens currently benefit from access to a range of online public services through a unified "one-stop shop" platform, while the planned data exchange system aims to enable integrated and end-to-end service delivery. Ongoing initiatives, such as the foreign trade one-stop shop (JUCE) and the e-Embassy project, demonstrate growing momentum toward a more efficient and connected digital ecosystem.

At the local level, the Government has recently launched the **SIMPle** platform, a new integrated digital system created to modernize and strengthen local government by giving municipalities their own modular, digital toolkit. An upgrade from the outdated legacy systems, SIMPle empowers all 22 city councils to

[76] https://www.itu.int/hub/2020/12/connecting-continents-how-cabo-verde-plans-to-become-a-digital-hub/
[77] https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Dashboards/Pages/Digital-Development.aspx
[78] INE, Acesso e utilização das tecnologias de informação e comunicação – 2024 https://ine.cv/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/tic-imc-2024-versao-final.pdf
[79] https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/61714f214ed04bcd6e9623ad0e215897-0400012021/related/Cabo-Verde-Potential-Digital-Dividends-06082022-vf.docx

develop customized micro-services that fit local needs – from administrative tasks to citizen engagement – promoting efficiency, transparency, and innovation at the municipal level

Despite this progress, e-government infrastructure remains insufficiently developed to ensure resilient and inclusive service delivery. According to the 2020 UN E-Government Development Index (EGDI), Cabo Verde ranked **110th out of 193 countries**, underscoring the need for continued investment in digital infrastructure, interoperability, and capacity-building to fully realize the potential of digital governance.

Digital Development Policies and Regulations

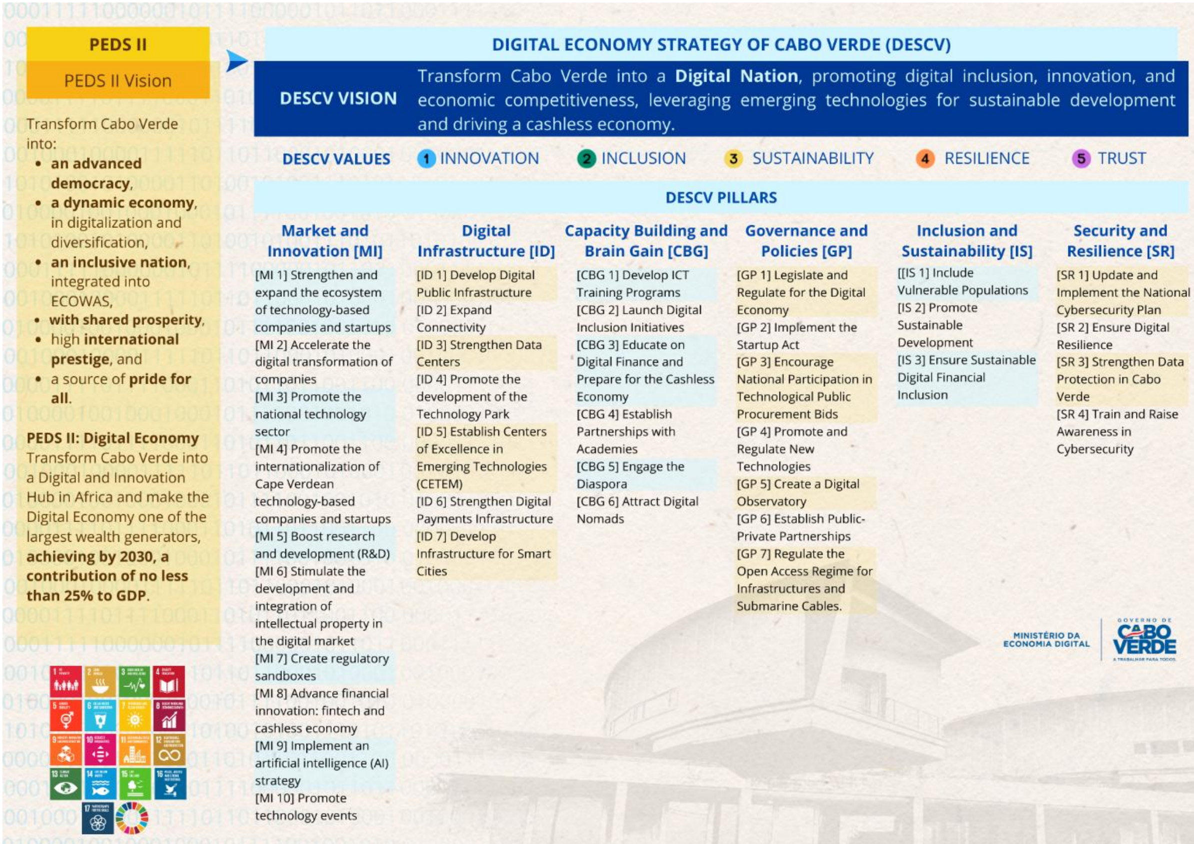
In its efforts to promote the digital sector for economic diversification, the government is enhancing sectoral policies, strengthening the regulatory framework, and improving the legal environment[80]. Digital development is central to the government's *Strategic Sustainable Development Plan* (PEDS 2022-2026) along with the dedicated *Cabo Verde Digital Strategy* (EDCV) Agenda for 2019-2021. Some elements of the digital economy's regulatory and legal framework are in place, but sector-related policies need to be enhanced to encourage investments. This is particularly relevant in light of recent work on international investment in the digital economy, which underscores how targeted policy reforms and stronger regulatory frameworks can attract the type of digital FDI needed to expand connectivity and foster innovation[81].

Insufficient market competition is still limiting growth. With the development in e-government, data privacy, data protection, and sovereignty also started to gain prominence. The *National Cybersecurity Strategy 2016-2020* identified priority areas for the country's cybersecurity capacities. However, the Cybersecurity Capacity Review carried out by the World Bank in 2019 found the country's capabilities in areas such as software quality, technical security controls, or incidence response to be insufficient. In addition, ITU's Global Cybersecurity Index 2020 positioned Cabo Verde 136th in the world and 27th in the Africa region in terms of the resilience of its cybersecurity system.

The country has recently approved, in October 2024, the Digital Economy Strategy of Cabo Verde (EEDCV) that outlines a path for the future, focusing on modernizing technological infrastructure and on creating an environment where all Cabo Verdeans can seize the opportunities brought by digitalization. This Strategy is structured around 6 strategic pillars, comprising a total of 37 strategic objectives. The implementation of this strategy will require a concerted effort from all sectors: government, private sector, academia, and civil society.

[80] https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/61714f214ed04bcd6e9623ad0e215897-0400012021/related/Cabo-Verde-Potential-Digital-Dividends-06082022-vf.docx
[81] See UNCTAD. World Investment Report United Nations, Geneva, 2025.
UNCTAD International investment in the digital economy. United Nations, Geneva 2025.
International investment in the digital economy: an UNCTAD toolkit for policymakers. United Nations, Geneva.

Figure 14: Summary of the Digital Economy Strategy of Cabo Verde



Innovation and Entrepreneurship

There is an emerging entrepreneurship landscape in Cabo Verde; however, the innovation ecosystem is still nascent. A variety of programmes aim at cultivating digital entrepreneurship, but start-ups activities are still limited. According to the Global Innovation Index 2025 (GII), Cabo Verde's innovation performance ranked 95th among 139 countries and 7th in sub-Saharan Africa. The Global Startup Ecosystem Index 2025 ranks it 75th among 100 countries globally which is an improvement of 12 places compared to 2021. With the growing trends, the ICT sector's (telecommunications and postal services) contribution to the economy was 2.7% of GDP in 2021.

Several public-funded initiatives have been designed to foster entrepreneurship and help technology start-ups, including the finalization of a TechPark in Praia in 2025, a hub offering incubation, training and qualification center with ICT facilities with focus on youth.

Digital Skills

Sustained effort is needed to promote the digital skills agenda. Modernization of the national school curriculum and enhancement of ICT laboratories in schools could produce tech-savvy graduates going into ICT careers. The adoption of technologies in the education process is still hampered by limited reliable high-speed connectivity and lack of ICT skills among teachers. Several initiatives, such as NOSiAkademia, Outcode programme and others are aimed at filling the ICT skills gaps in the market.

Implications for the UN system:

Strengthen the regulatory framework for digital development

- ***Conduct a regulatory gap analysis for the digital economy.*** This activity would include identifying gaps that hamper the development of digital businesses and digital entrepreneurship and studying global examples and best practices in terms of policies and regulations to close those gaps[82].
- ***Support the creation of formal and non-formal dialogue platforms*** to engage the private sector, academia, and diaspora networks in strategic discussions about sector-related policies and strategies. Such platforms and collaboration mechanisms could enable more precise identification of market failures and the design of more targeted interventions to address those failures.
- **Support the government** especially at local level to digitalise their services based on the SIMPle

Enhance digital foundation, including data ecosystem and cybersecurity

- Build cyber resilience by strengthening the infrastructure for trusted ecosystems coupled with programmes to enhance the cybersecurity capacity among government entities, firms, and individuals. This would include conducting a national risk assessment and identifying Critical Infrastructure; designing and implementing cybersecurity awareness and literacy programmes; and promoting adoption of international ICT and cybersecurity standards in the government and private sector.
- Support the development of a national data policy to promote the exchange and use of open government data by government agencies, private sector and academia. This work would include a legal and regulatory gap analysis, stocktaking of available data infrastructure and national databases, and their integration with the Data Platform Exchange Framework. The policy would also define national targets to develop a strong data ecosystem in Cabo Verde and a roadmap on how to achieve those.
- Personal Data Protection and Addressing Harmful Online Content**:** Updating and strengthening legislation on personal data protection and digital privacy is increasingly critical to address emerging risks linked to disinformation and hate speech across online platforms. Reinforcing this legal and institutional framework would help ensure a safer, more ethical, and trusted digital environment for citizens and institutions.

Invest in Human Capital

- Develop a national digital skills agenda as an overarching framework to help coordinate various programmes in the field. This could help consolidate many available training programmes, improve their relevance for the private sector, and ensure their long-term sustainability. It could also address existing gender gaps more effectively, as women continue to be underrepresented in technology-oriented education programmes and jobs.

Financing of the digital sector and digital finance

- Coordinate and streamline investments of Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), public sector participants and other stakeholders to align with the national digital skills agenda.
- Cabo Verde's current regulatory framework for digital finance remains limited in its ability to foster innovation and is still highly centralized within the Bank of Cabo Verde. Advancing a comprehensive reform of the digital finance ecosystem represents a significant opportunity to

[82] On that aspect, UNCTAD is initiating a technical assistance programme to assess these aspects and provide concrete policy recommendations to attract international investment in the digital economy.

unlock economic potential, enable new business models and payment solutions, and expand financial inclusion. As part of this reform, revisiting the role of SISP as the primary provider of digital financial services will be important to promote greater openness and competition, creating space for a more dynamic and innovative private sector contribution.

2.2. The potential of the Blue Economy

Cabo Verde's Blue Economy is central to its development model: the archipelago's vast exclusive economic zone, strategic mid-Atlantic location and coastal assets position the ocean as a core source of growth, jobs and resilience. Over the last decade the government has framed the blue economy as a national priority, linking fisheries, ports and logistics, maritime services, sustainable marine tourism, aquaculture and emerging ocean energy to broader goals of diversification, climate resilience and export-led growth. International partners and development banks have backed this vision with technical assistance and infrastructure investments aimed at strengthening ports, improving fisheries governance and scaling up sustainable tourism[83].

Economic footprint and potential

The blue economy already contributes meaningfully to livelihoods and foreign exchange through mainly tourism and fisheries, and the government has set ambitious targets to raise the maritime sector's contribution to the economy (including a public target to scale the sector substantially by 2030). Ports such as Porto Grande (Mindelo), Palmeira and Praia are focal points for maritime logistics, intra-island connectivity and cruise and yachting development. Ongoing investments, regional and multilateral, are modernizing port capacity (including green/energy-efficiency components) and expanding cruise terminal capacity, which together are expected to boost visitor inflows, trade and local service value chains. These investments are intended to support a shift from predominantly tourism-dependence to a more diversified, ocean-based matrix of activities.

Fisheries, aquaculture and value-chain upgrading

Small-scale fisheries remain vital for food security and coastal employment, while industrial and licensed foreign fleets and tuna value chains drive export earnings. Recognizing sustainability and governance gaps, Cabo Verde has prioritized improved fisheries management, including the approved National Action Plan to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing (PAN-INN), and has engaged with FAO and other partners to professionalize value chains and to strengthen monitor, control and assure surveillance. Developing domestic processing, cold-chain logistics and better sanitary-veterinary capacity could capture more value locally, raise incomes, and create decent jobs (including for women and youth)[84].

Tourism, cruise and marine recreation

Marine and coastal tourism (beaches, diving, sport fishing, yachting and increasingly cruise calls) are major drivers of growth and job creation. Projects such as the Mindelo Cruise Terminal aim to position Cabo Verde as a competitive mid-Atlantic cruise destination, while also creating linkages for local suppliers and small businesses. However, tourism growth raises serious environmental risks: coastal degradation, plastic pollution, pressure on reefs and water resources for which there are some distributional concerns unless

[83] World Bank Economic Update 2024: The Latent Potential of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Cabo Verde. https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099060624085036575/p5004821bf54600a41b38315f0d172005a1

[84] FAO – Cabo Verde pioneers strategic national plan to combat illegal fishing https://www.fao.org/policy-support/news/detail/cabo-verde-pioneers-strategic-national-plan-to-combat-illegal-fishing/en?utm_source=chatgpt.com

managed with regulatory safeguards, zoning and benefit-sharing mechanisms. Sustainable tourism standards, waste management systems and destination-level planning are essential components of a blue-economy approach.

Governance, planning and financial instruments

Cabo Verde has advanced strategic instruments, such as the National investment plan for the blue economy (PNIEB, 2020), tourism operational programmes and steps toward maritime spatial planning and special economic zones (including port/zone authorities) to channel investments and coordinate stakeholders. Multilateral partners (World Bank, EIB, EU and others) support projects that combine infrastructure upgrades with institutional strengthening, climate resilience and digitalization. With FAO support, the country has also approved a comprehensive set of policy tools to transition from a maritime economy to a **blue economy**: **the PNIEB**, the **Policy Charter for the Blue Economy, the Unified Strategic Blue Economy Framework, the National Plan for the Blue Economy,** the **Blue Economy Promotion Programme and the National Strategy for the Sea**.

Cabo Verde recently ratified, through parliamentary approval, the **Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement)**, reaffirming its commitment to multilateral mechanisms for ocean governance and biodiversity conservation in international waters.

Despite progress, gaps remain in data, enforcement capacity, integrated maritime planning, and access to long-term finance for private sector scaling. The challenge is to align national budgeting and climate finance mechanisms with project pipelines that are bankable, gender-sensitive and environmentally robust[85].

Environmental and social risks

Cabo Verde's blue economy is vulnerable to climate change (sea-level rise, flash floods caused by cyclones, coastal erosion, changing fish stocks), marine pollution (notably plastics), and biodiversity loss. Plastic pollution linked to tourism and transboundary sources threatens both ecosystems and the very tourism assets the country depends on. Poorly planned port or other coastal infrastructures can exacerbate habitat loss. Moreover, benefits of blue growth are uneven: coastal communities, women fishers and informal workers may be excluded without deliberate inclusion policies and capacity building.

Constraints to scaling inclusive, sustainable growth

Key constraints include (i) limited domestic processing and cold-chain capacity that restricts capture of fisheries value, (ii) weak enforcement and IUU fishing risks that undermine stocks and earnings, (iii) port performance and last-mile logistics bottlenecks that raise trade costs, (iv) inadequate financing instruments for small and medium maritime enterprises, and (v) data and institutional fragmentation across ministries and islands. Addressing these requires coordinated reforms across fisheries, transport, tourism, environment and social ministries, and stronger public–private partnerships with clear social and environmental covenants.

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[85] UNCTAD's *Investment Policies to Advance National Climate Plans*, launched at COP30 provides guidance for policymakers in implementing this approach.

Implications for the UN system:

- **Strengthen fisheries governance and value chains**: scale up surveillance (VMS, observer programmes), improve stock assessments and data collection (i.e. small pelagic and demersal species) support cold chain/processing investments, empower institutions and communities through co-management approaches and promote climate resilient and science-based practices.
- **Support port and green logistics modernization**: embed energy-efficiency, onshore power supply, and coastal risk safeguards in port upgrades to maximize jobs and reduce emissions.
- **Promote sustainable marine tourism and circular blue innovations**: promote gender-responsive entrepreneurship and training for local MSMEs, including women-led ventures in blue fashion, eco-tourism, and circular waste management (fish by-products, plastics, seaweed).
- **Advance maritime spatial planning (MSP) and integrated data systems**: invest in MSP, marine data platforms with gender disaggregated data indicators and cross-sector coordination to enhance transparency, reduce resource-used conflicts, guide investments and support climate adaptation.
- **Leverage blended finance and concessional climate funds**: design bankable project pipelines (e.g., eco-ports, aquaculture hubs, community-based resilience projects) combining grants, concessional loans and private capital.

For Cabo Verde, a well-managed blue economy is a pathway to more diversified growth, resilient livelihoods and climate-smart development. The government and partners should treat the ocean economy as transversal, linking trade and infrastructure, social inclusion, climate adaptation and biodiversity stewardship, and prioritize actions that unlock finance, protect ecosystems, and ensure that ocean wealth benefits coastal communities and women equitably. Strategic, sequenced UN support (policy advice, technical assistance, and catalytic financing) can accelerate this transition while embedding the “leave no one behind” principle across the sector.

3. The future of Cabo Verde after being reclassified as an upper-middle income country – a foresight analysis

On 1 July 2025, the World Bank officially reclassified Cabo Verde from a lower-middle-income country to an upper-middle-income country (UMIC). This change resulted from a combination of strong economic growth, moderate inflation, and a downward revision in population estimates, which raised the country's per capita income above the upper-middle-income threshold. The reclassification marks a major milestone in Cabo Verde's development trajectory and reflects decades of progress in governance, human development, and macroeconomic management. However, it also introduces new policy challenges and financing constraints. Using a strategic foresight perspective, specifically the Futures Wheel approach, this section explores the potential ripple effects—first-, second-, and third-order—of Cabo Verde's new income status and their implications for sustainable and inclusive development, resilience, and the United Nations' engagement in the country.

The Futures Wheel Approach and Central Event

The Futures Wheel is a strategic foresight tool that maps direct and indirect consequences of a key event. In this analysis, the central event is Cabo Verde's transition to upper-middle-income status. Around this hub, first-order consequences represent immediate impacts, second-order effects represent secondary outcomes, and third-order effects capture long-term structural and systemic changes. This approach helps identify opportunities, risks, and policy responses relevant for future UN programming.

Immediate/short term Impacts

- **Changes in access to concessional finance and aid eligibility**: Cabo Verde may gradually lose access to certain concessional windows, grants, and preferential mechanisms reserved for lower-income countries. This may require increased reliance on domestic revenue and non-concessional borrowing.
- **Improved investor perception**: The new classification enhances investor confidence, potentially improving Cabo Verde's sovereign creditworthiness and attracting more foreign direct investment (FDI), particularly beyond tourism.
- **Increased pressure for diversification**: As expectations for higher living standards grow, the economy faces mounting pressure to diversify beyond tourism toward sectors such as the digital economy, renewable energy, blue economy, and value-added services.
- **Social inclusion and equity concerns**: Rising per capita income may conceal disparities between islands, genders, and income groups, requiring continued attention to social protection and equitable service delivery.
- **Fiscal sustainability**: Reduced concessional funding and higher borrowing costs may strain public finances, emphasizing the importance of prudent debt management and domestic revenue mobilization.
- **Shift in development cooperation**: UN agencies and bilateral partners are likely to recalibrate their engagement focusing more on policy advice, institutional capacity development, and innovation.

Medium-term impacts

- **Self-reliance and fiscal transition**: The reduction in concessional aid may accelerate efforts to strengthen fiscal frameworks, modernize tax systems, and enhance public expenditure efficiency.

- **Skills and infrastructure for diversification**: Economic transformation will depend on investments in human capital, technical and vocational education, and infrastructure, including ports, energy systems, and digital connectivity.
- **Policy reform and social protection**: Social protection systems will need modernization to cover informal workers, rural populations, and youth, ensuring no one is left behind in the transition.
- **Debt management**: High public debt levels (estimated above 100% of GDP) increase the urgency of strengthening debt sustainability frameworks and improving State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) governance.
- **Donor transitions**: Development partners may phase out some programs focused on basic services. Without adequate national capacity, this could risk creating gaps in support for vulnerable groups.

Long-term structural and systemic changes

- **Structural transformation**: The long-term trajectory could lead to a more diversified economy built on green, blue, and digital sectors. Enhanced value chains in fisheries, renewable energy, and agro-processing could reduce import dependence.
- **Institutional and governance strengthening**: Increased expectations for transparency, efficiency, and accountability could stimulate public sector reform and improved regulatory frameworks.
- **Resilience and climate adaptation**: As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Cabo Verde will face increasing pressure to invest in resilient infrastructure and adaptive systems to manage droughts, coastal erosion, and sea-level rise.
- **Social expectations**: A growing middle class may drive demands for improved governance, participatory decision-making, and social justice.
- **Financing innovation**: With declining grant support, Cabo Verde may need to expand access to climate and blended finance, green and blue bonds, diaspora financing, and debt-for-climate swaps.

Opportunities and Risks

Opportunities:

- Increased private investment and potential for sustainable growth through diversification.
- Strengthened national ownership and fiscal self-reliance.
- Greater access to capital markets and innovative financing instruments.
- Possibility to leverage middle-income status to negotiate improved trade and investment terms.

Risks:

- Loss of concessional finance leading to fiscal strain.
- Persistence of inequality between islands and socio-economic groups.
- Environmental and climate shocks undermining economic gains.
- Rising debt service burden if borrowing is not carefully managed.
- Possible reduction in external support for social sectors during donor transitions.

Implications for the UN System

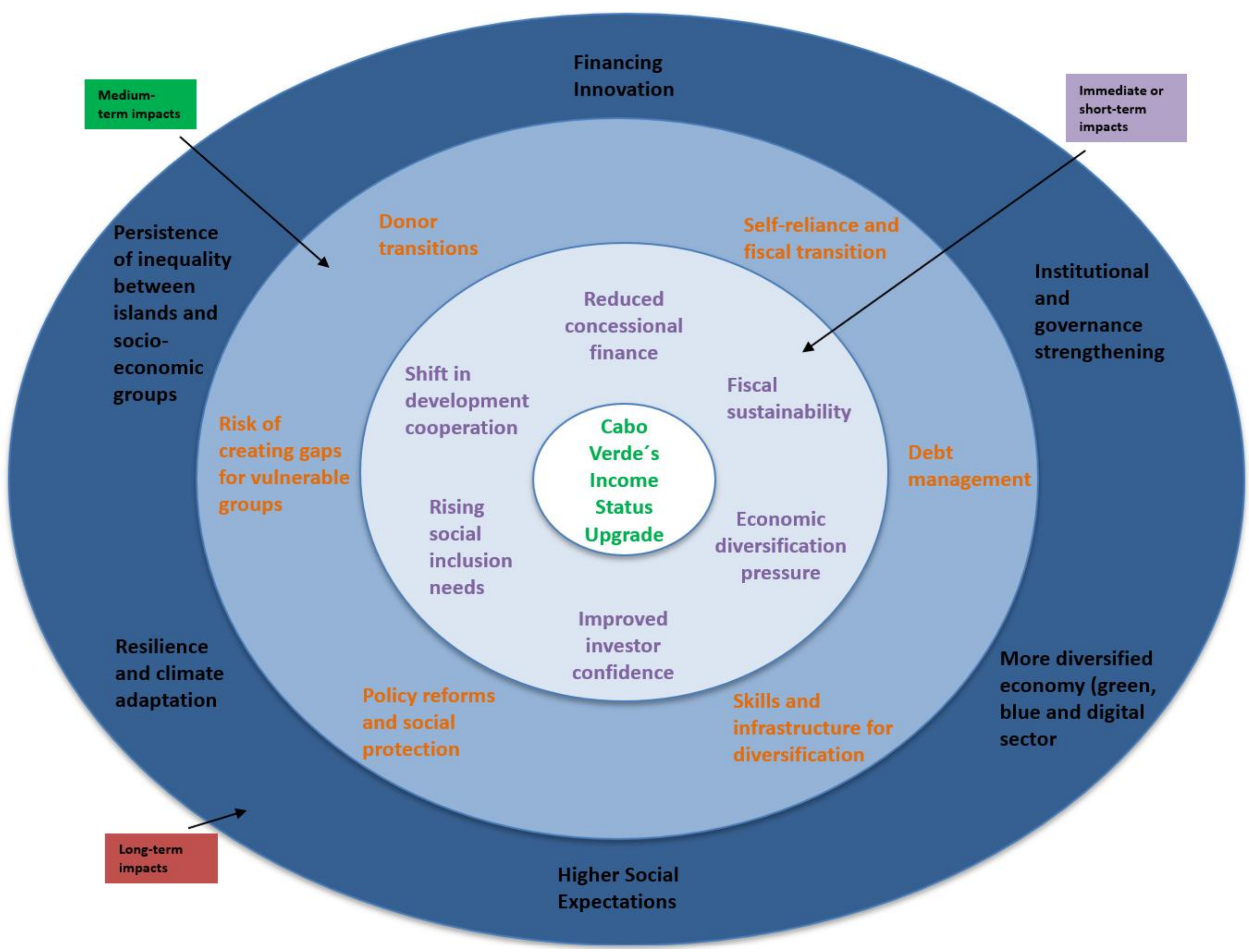
The reclassification requires the United Nations system to adjust its analytical and programmatic focus in Cabo Verde. The UNCA should frame the UMIC status as a transition point requiring adaptive, inclusive, and forward-looking policies. Key implications include:

- Realigning UN support from traditional development assistance to policy, innovation, and capacity development and development of big/transformative bankable projects moving from funding to finance.

- Strengthening national systems for social protection, gender equality, and inclusion (LNOB) to ensure equitable development outcomes.
- Enhancing economic resilience through support for diversification, innovation, and climate adaptation.
- Supporting public finance reforms and debt management to maintain fiscal sustainability.
- Leveraging foresight and scenario planning tools in policy formulation and monitoring.
- Encouraging innovative financing, including green and blue bonds, blended finance, and diaspora engagement.

Cabo Verde's reclassification as an upper-middle-income country is a testament to its resilience, stability, and progress in human development. Yet it marks the beginning of a new phase, characterized by higher expectations, more complex policy demands, and reduced access to concessional finance. Strategic foresight, particularly through tools like the Futures Wheel, can help policymakers and partners anticipate challenges and identify pathways toward sustainable, inclusive, and resilient development. For the UN system, this milestone calls for recalibrating engagement around institutional strengthening, inclusivity, and innovative financing to ensure that Cabo Verde's next phase of development leaves no one behind.

Figure 15: Scenarios after Cabo Verde´s reclassification to an upper-middle income country



4. Multidimensional SDG Risk Analysis

Nature of risk	Description of risk and impact	Probability	Impact in the short-term
Limited fiscal space to invest in strategic areas of PEDS II	Fiscal deficit and public debt increased substantially during the pandemic. At the end of 2025, public debt is projected at 104.9% of GDP. The Government has now embarked on fiscal consolidation to reduce the fiscal deficit and debt levels, while debt service is expected to increase in the coming years. The Government's limited fiscal space could prevent necessary capital and social spending, including in social protection, to accelerate investments in strategic areas identified in the PEDS II and for the eradication of extreme poverty.	**High**	**High**
New exogenous shocks (financial, environmental, political)	Cabo Verde, as a SIDS, will continue to be extremely vulnerable to exogenous shocks with the potential to disrupt years of consistent progress towards the Agenda 2030. During the pandemic, the Government responded with countercyclical policies, which helped to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. However, the Government has less policy space if new exogenous shocks occur in the short term.	**High**	**High**
Disruptions in global supply chains and higher food prices	The Covid-19 pandemic and particularly the war in Ukraine have had an adverse impact on supply chains, including on food and fertilizers. As a result, given that Cabo Verde imports 80% of its food products, annual inflation for food products was 17.8% in January 2023, leading to abrupt pressure on the State and household budgets, livelihoods and food insecurity. As the conflict in Ukraine and the Black Sea Grain Initiative remain unpredictable, food stocks in the world market could be disrupted again.	**High**	**High**
Higher cost of fuel	The higher costs of fuel, in a context of shrinking limited fiscal revenues and high inflation, can lead to the inability of the Government to continue buying enough fuel to supply households, the industry and water desalination plants with enough energy to function continuously, leading to more or less frequent shortages affecting access to basic and social services and livelihoods.	**High**	**High**
Longer and more frequent dry spells (climate change)	Droughts have been increasing mainly because of climate change (2016-19), followed by insufficient rainfalls in 2020 - 2022. If these drought-rain patterns are to continue, land productivity will decline and rural populations may suffer more severe food insecurity, limiting the ability of the rural poor to work, thus further affecting the revenues of poor families.	**High**	**High**
Fish stocks continue to decrease	The fishing sector contracted by 30% in 2022, in part as a result of climate change and overexploitation. If the productivity of the fish sector continues to decrease, it will put the livelihoods of rural coastal communities and urban fishing communities at risk. Fish and seafood may not be able to be substituted as a primary source of nutritious food for these populations, thus aggravating the risks of poverty and food insecurity.	**High**	**High**
Slow progress towards the expansion and diversification of the tourism sector	The tourism sector will continue to be the main driver of economic growth and has already recovered to pre-pandemic levels, after tourist arrivals increased by 264%. However, tourism activities continue to be concentrated in two Islands, Sal and Boa Vista, which accounted for nearly 83% of tourist arrivals in 2022. This type of concentration perpetuates economic inequalities between islands, while adding pressure on water and electricity resources, as well as on fragile ecosystems. There are also concerns over economic sustainability, as resorts import most of the products, failing to generate linkages with local suppliers. This will also limit employment creation and poverty reduction.	**High**	**Low**
Slow progress towards economic diversification and transition to formality	This would mean **perpetuating the risks associated to current economic structural weaknesses**, heavily relying on tourism and a limited number of trade partners, as well as a large informal sector which accounts for 53.8% of total employment. These weaknesses are limiting Cabo Verde's resilience and ability to cope with future external shocks, increasing the risk of further setbacks on the progress towards the achievement of the SDGs and stable prosperity for all.	**High**	**Low**
A deepening digital divide at the national level	As a small island nation, Cabo Verde acknowledges the importance of being connected to the world and having reliable inter-island connectivity. More recently, the ICT sector development agenda has gained momentum as a potential source of new income, job creation, and economic diversification. However, the notable digital divide in the country, as internet penetration rates among the rural and urban populations are quite different, could be exacerbated and increase regional inequalities.	**High**	**Low**

Internal and external migrations, brain and manpower drain	Regional inequalities can also lead to internal and external migrations. Internal migrations can increase social pressure in some municipalities, if housing and other structural investments do not accompany demographic changes. External migrations can lead to brain-drain and further shrink the available workforce in some islands or in the country as a whole.	**High**	**Low**
Deeper regional inequalities	Limited regional integration and unbalanced development will lead to limited socio-economic development and opportunities in some islands, aggravating regional inequalities. This is a lost opportunity to tap into available resources in different islands, municipalities and people. In addition, if a small domestic market is indeed a structural constraint in Cabo Verde as a SIDS, this market becomes even smaller if more than 30% of the population continue to be excluded.	**High**	**Low**
Limited economic empowerment of women and gender parity	The incidence of poverty among women is 66%, while labour force participation is much lower for women (50.4%) than men (65.5%) (2022). Small retail (25.6% of women's jobs vs. 12.3% of men's), hospitality (12.8% vs. 6.1%), and domestic employment (11.6% vs. 0.2%) are the top three sectors for female employment, all three of which are characterized by high levels of vulnerability, informality and abuse. Ensuring gender equality in terms of economic opportunities will therefore demand more equal access to skills, finance and technology, without which many of the SDGs may not be achieved.	**Low**	**High**
Insufficient capacity to mobilize fresh water for agriculture	Increasing water access, in conjunction with lower energy costs, is instrumental to agricultural development in Cabo Verde. Water and energy shortages limit local productive capacities, especially in terms of reliability and consistency, representing critical barriers for local businesses and organizations operating within the agriculture and fishery value chains. Without further improvement in wate access, agriculture production will further contract, while successfully competing with foreign suppliers, mostly based in Europe and currently accounting for a vast majority of services and goods within the tourism industry, will become even more difficult.	**Low**	**High**
Increase in organized crime, particularly drug trafficking	Given its geographical location, combined with evidence on the cocaine trafficking route gathered in the past two decades, Cabo Verde can become a drug trafficking platform, requiring further efforts to combat organized crime. Failing to do so will contribute to internal trafficking and higher consumption of illicit substances, and will change patterns in Cabo Verdean society – such as a rise in criminality and other social problems such as youth gangs and higher homicide rates in cities, as has already been observed during the last decade. Urban crime and associated threats have become one of the main concerns for Cabo Verdeans. Failing to do so, will accentuate rising **violence and crime**, particularly armed assaults, homicides among youth, and the perception of impunity in the country with justice delays, which have been deteriorating during the pandemic.	**Low**	**High**
Significant biodiversity losses (in the short term)	Cabo Verde is one of the world's top 10 marine biodiversity hotspots. Losing part of its biodiversity would have important implications not only on the environmental equilibrium of the country and the planet, but also on the living conditions of local communities that benefit from the economic activities directly linked thereto, such as tourism activities, and depend on this biodiversity.	**Low**	**Low**

Conclusion

Cabo Verde’s progress toward the SDGs reflects a strong national vision and institutional maturity, yet sustaining this trajectory requires tackling structural vulnerabilities, particularly economic diversification, food insecurity, and climate resilience. The country’s transition to upper-middle-income status presents both opportunities for domestic resource mobilization and risks of reduced concessional finance.

The United Nations system, through the UNSDCF 2023–2027, should concentrate its analytical and operational efforts on three fronts: (i) consolidating economic transformation through the digital and blue economies, SME formalization, innovation and energy transition; (ii) reinforcing human capital by improving education quality and tackle school drop-outs, universal health coverage, and inclusive social protection; and (iii) advancing climate action by operationalizing PEMAC and leveraging access to international climate finance. Strengthening data systems appears to be central for a better monitoring of the progress and achievement of the country. Furthermore, there is need for the United Nations System to continue supporting programmes and initiatives on women and youth empowerment. Regional and islands disparities are still a challenge. Hence, there is need to continue reinforcing and supporting local development programmes.

Cabo Verde’s future depends on leveraging its strategic location, stable governance, and human capital base to transition toward a climate-resilient, innovation-driven economy. Continued UN support, guided by the UNCA’s evidence and policy recommendations, will be critical to sustaining inclusive growth and ensuring that the principle of leaving no one behind remains central to Cabo Verde’s development pathway.

Annexes

Annex 1 : SDG Tracker

SDG	Indicator		SDG Target	Trend
1	1.1.1	Population under the international poverty line (%)	●	↗ ↗ ↗ ↗
	1.2.1	Population under the national poverty line (%)	●	↗ ↗ ↗ ↗
	1.3.1	Population covered by social protection systems (%)	●	↗ ↗ ↗
2	2.1.1	Prevalence of undernourishment	●	↗ ↗
	2.1.2	Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity (%)	●	↗ ↗
	2.2.1	Prevalence of stunting among children under 5 years (%)	●	↘
	2.2.2	Prevalence of malnutrition among children under 5 years (%)	●	↘
3	3.1.1	Maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births	●	↗ ↗ ↗ ↗
	3.1.2	Proportion of births attended by skilled health professional	●	↗ ↗ ↗ ↗
	3.2.1	Under-five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	●	↘
	3.2.2	Neonatal mortality rate per 1,000 live births	●	↘
	3.3.1	Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population	●	↗ ↗ ↗ ↗
	3.3.2	Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population	●	↗ ↗
	3.3.3	Malaria incidence per 1,000 population	●	→
	3.3.4	Hepatitis B incidence per 100,000 population	●	↗ ↗ ↗
	3.7.1	Proportion of women of reproductive age (aged 15–49 years) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods	●	↗ ↗
	3.8.1	Coverage of essential health services (WHO)	●	↗ ↗
	3.c.1	Health worker density and distribution	●	↗ ↗ ↗
4	4.1.2	Completion rate - Ensino (Primary education - 6th grade) (%)	●	↘
		(Lower secondary education - 8th grade) (%)	●	↘
	4.2.2	Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex	●	↗ ↗ ↗
	4.3.1	Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months	●	→
	4.5.1	Parity rates (girls/boys) in education	●	↗ ↗ ↗ ↗
	4.a.1	Proportion of schools offering basic services (%)	●	↗ ↗ ↗ ↗
	4.c.1	Teachers with the minimum required qualifications (%)	●	↗ ↗ ↗ ↗
5	5.2.1	Women subjected to physical/sexual/psychological violence (%)	●	•
	5.2.2	Women subjected to sexual violence not by intimate partner(%)	●	•
	5.5.1(a)	Women in the national parliament (%)	●	↗ ↗ ↗
	5.5.2	Women in managerial positions (%)	●	↗ ↗ ↗
	5.b.1	Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone	●	↗ ↗ ↗
6	6.1.1	Population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	●	↗ ↗ ↗ ↗
	6.2.1	Population using safely managed sanitation services (%)	●	↗ ↗ ↗ ↗
	6.5.1	Degree of integrated water resources management (%)	●	•
7	7.1.1	Proportion of population with access to electricity (%)	●	↗ ↗ ↗
	7.1.2	Primary reliance on clean fuels and technology (%)	●	↗ ↗
	7.2.1	Renewable energy in electricity production (%)	●	↗ ↗
8	8.2.1	Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person	●	→
	8.3.1	Proportion of informal employment in total employment	●	↗ ↗
	8.5.2	Unemployment rate by sex and age	●	↗ ↗
	8.6.1	Youth (15-24) not in education, employment or training	●	↗ ↗

9	9.2.1	Manufacturing value added as a proportion of GDP	🔴	→
	9.2.2	Manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment	🟠	↗ ↗
	9.b.1	Medium/high-tech industry value added in total value added	🔴	→
	9.c.1	Proportion of population covered by a mobile network	🟢	↗ ↗ ↗ ↗
10	10.1.1	Growth in expenditure/income per capita of the bottom 40% (%)	🟢	↗ ↗ ↗
	10.2.1	People living below 50 per cent of median income (%)	🟢	↗ ↗ ↗
	10.5.1	Financial Soundness Indicators	🟢	↗ ↗ ↗
11	11.1.1	Urban population living in inadequate housing	🟠	→
13	13.1.2	Number of deaths, missing persons and persons affected by disaster per 100,000 people	🟠	●
14	14.5.1	Marine protected areas (%)	🔴	●
	14.7.1	Sustainable fisheries as a proportion of GDP in small island developing States, least developed countries and all countries	🔴	↘
	14.a.1	Proportion of total research budget allocated to research in the field of marine technology	🟢	↗ ↗
15	15.1.1	Forest area as a proportion of total land area (%)	🔴	●
	15.7.1	Wildlife that was poached or illicitly trafficked - Turtles	🟢	↘
16	16.1.1	Victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population	⚫	↗ ↗
	16.9.1	Births registered with a civil authority	🟢	↘
17	17.1.1	Total government revenue as a proportion of GDP	⚫	↗ ↗
	17.1.2	Proportion of domestic budget funded by domestic taxes	⚫	↗ ↗ ↗
	17.3.1	Official Development Assistance, as a % of GDP	⚫	↗ ↗ ↗
	17.3.2	Emigrant Remittances as a % of GDP	🟢	→
	17.4.1	Debt service as a proportion of exports of goods and services	🔴	↘

Legend

🟢 Goal already achieved	↗ ↗ ↗ ↗ - Fast pace
🟢 Goal likely to be achieved	↗ ↗ ↗ - Positive pace
🟠 Goal difficult to to be achieved	↗ ↗ - Insufficient pace
🔴 Goal with deeper difficulties	↘ - Negative trend
⚫ Target not quantifiable	→ - Stagnation
	● - Insufficient data for a trend analysis

Annex 2: Process of the strategic foresight analysis

A strategic foresight exercise was conducted in parallel with the Cooperation Framework soft assessment, bringing together the UN colleagues and national focal points for each of the three strategic priorities. The objective of the session was to review and adjust ongoing UN actions and activities where necessary, and to analyze the potential implications of Cabo Verde's reclassification as an Upper-Middle-Income Country (UMIC) on the implementation of the Cooperation Framework and the achievement of the SDGs.

Participants were divided into three thematic subgroups, each corresponding to one of the Cooperation Framework's strategic priorities. Within these groups, participants discussed possible impacts and adaptation measures linked to Cabo Verde's reclassification, identifying both challenges and opportunities for sustaining development gains and mobilizing partnerships in a changing financial landscape.

The exercise utilized Menti.com as a participatory tool to collect real-time inputs from participants. This was followed by interactive discussions in each subgroup, during which participants reflected on the proposed options and their respective implications. Each subgroup then synthesized its findings, which were subsequently shared in a plenary session. The plenary allowed for the consolidation of all contributions and the preparation of a comprehensive summary of insights to inform future UN strategic planning and programmatic adjustments.

The questions and discussion´s points are summarized below:

	Guiding questions	**Responses**
Cabo Verde´s reclassification to na Upper-Middle Income Country	What are the expected immediate positive and negative consequences (1–2 years) of the transition for your sector or area of expertise (for example, development financing, social protection, governance, private sector, etc.)?	
	What secondary (second-order) effects could result from these immediate consequences (3–5 years)?	
	What long-term risks, trade-offs, or opportunities could emerge?	
	Which areas will require continued support from the United Nations?	

List of participants

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Sample of photos