

2019-10-17

Small island states excluded from climate research when they need it most

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<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/14991>

10.1038/d41586-019-03120-3

Nature

Springer Science and Business Media LLC

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More injustice for small island states

A statistical loophole is stopping research funding from getting to small island states — among the most vulnerable to climate change and among the least culpable for it. (By contrast, international aid after disasters such as that caused by Hurricane Dorian (go.nature.com/33eggxt) can be swift and forthcoming.)

In general, funders that provide aid and development use gross national income per capita as the sole measure of a country's development (go.nature.com/35djbd8). Countries with small populations, including the small island states, are therefore unlikely to appear on the list of nations eligible to receive aid, compiled for “statistical purposes” by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Although the OECD specifically states that the DAC list is “not designed as guidance for aid or other preferential treatment”, several UK research funders, for example, do use the DAC list to determine the eligibility of countries in research partnerships (go.nature.com/3jq92mm).

The solution is to include the official UN list of small-island developing states (go.nature.com/2ab2xhf) as eligible partners in research and development programmes.

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