



Nações Unidas
SÃO TOMÉ E PRÍNCIPE



COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS

Sao Tome and Principe

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FOREWORD

This document is the United Nation's collective analysis from the perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals and its promise of leaving no one behind. It is based on the primary and secondary data that has been collected, and an inclusive and participatory process involving stakeholders across the UN system, government, development partners and civil society organizations. Specific consultations have been held with vulnerable groups such as handicapped and rural communities in the most deprived districts, as well as with development partners, and the international finance institutions present in Sao Tome: AfDB, IMF and the WB.

A core team of multi-agencies thematic working groups have been at the center of the preparation of the document, following the agreed upon methodology, which culminated at the broad consultations on

root causes of the development challenges and possible accelerators to achieve the SDGs.

The elaboration of the document has benefitted from the first Voluntary National Report (VNR) on SDG progress, submitted to ECOSOC in July 2022. The intersectoral analysis with a prioritized set of key development challenges have informed the new Cooperation Framework of the UN covering the period 2023 till 2027, that sharpens its focus on key transition areas to accelerate the SDGs where the UN has a comparative advantage and can make the difference. CCA's integrated and evidence-based analysis should be updated regularly to serve as an up-to-date analytical resource to ensure that UN support is relevant and linked to national development priorities. The present report was updated in January 2025.



Eric Overvest

Resident Coordinator

Sao Tome and Principe

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite a steady improvement of socio-economic indicators over the past decade, in particular health, education and economic growth figures, the pace of sustainable development has waned as the competitiveness of the growth sectors have not been sufficiently based on long term sustainable sources: high and volatile ODA and a surge in FDI related mainly to tourism and an expected oil boom which has not yet materialized, while the fiscal base has remained limited. The transition from a subsistence economy to a service economy has been partially successful, while the role of private sector funding has remained relatively timid due to weaknesses in infrastructure and the enabling business environment. Thanks to increases in social spending to reach well over 30% of the budget, with strong and sustained support of external financing, important achievements in social indicators have been made possible. Several groups, however, continue to remain behind and have not been able to benefit from the socio-economic development of the past decade. It concerns the people below the international poverty line whose number stubbornly remains at two thirds of the population but also the unemployed women who have had less opportunities than their male peers, women and children who have been subject to violence, the elderly and handicapped, the latter are mostly excluded from socio-economic life. Emphasis is also put on youth as the growing emigration of youth causes a serious brain drain in the economy. The districts of Caué en Lembá have the lowest socio-economic development indicators while Principe Island faces additional challenges of double insularity resulting in very high cost of logistics.

From the perspective of the SDGs, several main cross-sectoral challenges have been identified with possible accelerators that address the root causes of the uneven

development trend and seek to fast-track the efforts to achieve the 2030 agenda.

Challenge 1-Jobs and Social Protection: Weak economy which does not generate enough decent jobs and resources for the socio-economic development of the growing population and to fund the social protection system.

Challenge 2- Education: Quality of education and professional, technical, vocational training is insufficient to provide decent jobs for the young women and men.

Challenge 3- Food Security: Low food production, poor nutrition, hygiene and lack of access to improved sanitation and potable water affect the health, educational and economic outcomes of the poor, in particular women and children.

Challenge 4- Health: Delivery of essential health services is insufficient to evolving needs while vulnerable people are not adequately covered by social protection programs.

Challenge 5- Energy, Climate change and Biodiversity: Climate action to foster the energy transition, integrate adaptation to Climate change and biodiversity conservation, into policy making and implementation strategies.

Challenge 6- Governance: Weaknesses in institutional capacities, core public administration functions and control mechanisms, affect the trust in Government and effective delivery of services.

Challenge 7- Justice and Security: Weaknesses in the justice and security system affect negatively economic growth and the protection of vulnerable groups.

For each challenge, a set of accelerators has been formulated which could boost the implementation of the SDGs. Digitalization, energy transition and development financing have been identified as key accelerators as well as the youth potential. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted severely on the tourist economy of the

archipelago, and its macro-economic situation, further reducing the fiscal space to transform the economy towards the areas in which STP has its competitive advantages. Climate change is impacting negatively the socio-economic development, in particular for coastal communities. Other external risks which can have a strong effect on the implementation of the SDGs relate to the ongoing Ukraine-Russia war. The increases in oil prices and agricultural products has fueled inflation in STP. As a result, the cost of living has greatly increased, thus, negatively impacting purchasing power and poverty figures. According to the UN study on the impact of inflation on poverty rates, extreme poverty rates have doubled since the last household survey in 2017,

The ongoing off-shore oil exploration requires the country to put in place a strong accountability framework and public financial management to ensure that, in case oil is found in sufficient quantities, oil revenues are used in a transparent way, in support of the SDGs.

Connectivity is relatively high and in 2023 the 4G network was introduced, which provides for a huge opportunity for reaping the benefits of new technologies and digitalization.

Overall, there are strong capacity gaps in data collection and analysis for assessing the performance of the SDGs as the main household survey dates from 2017. The lack of disaggregated data also hampers the evidence-based identification of the most vulnerable.



1 INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe (STP) is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) situated off the western coast of Central Africa. With a limited land area of about 1,000km² and a coastline of just 209 km, STP has the smallest economy of Africa's sovereign states. However, thanks to its rich biodiversity, both on land and in the sea, it qualifies as one of the few carbon-negative countries in the world. The inaccessibility of much of the primary forest that covers more than one fourth of the landmass makes it one of the richest and most diverse forest ecosystems in Africa and a haven for endemic and threatened species. The geographical location of the two main islands Sao Tome and Principe, surrounded by an Exclusive Economic Zone that is 160 times the land surface, explains the country's geostrategic importance.

STP is a very young country and obtained its independence in 1975, after more than 500 years of colonization by Portugal and the exploitation of the plantation economy that dominated socio-economic life on the islands. Since 1990, the country has embarked on a multiparty democracy under a semi-presidential system. It became one of the first African countries to undergo democratic reform with constitutional changes that legitimized opposition political parties and paved the way for free elections in 1991. As of today, STP is being hailed as an example of democratic freedoms in Africa with free and fair elections which have witnessed frequent peaceful transitions of power. Freedom House (2021) rates STP as "free" with a score of 84 out of 100¹. The island of Principe, inhabited mainly by descendants of Cape Verdean plantation laborers, and much smaller in size than the

main island of Sao Tome, has certain autonomy with a regional parliament and government.

Since independence, STP has made huge progress in terms of social development, currently with gross enrollment rates of basic education close to 100%, with better expected school years, life expectancy at birth and maternal mortality rates than the averages of the Sub-Saharan Africa, the LDCs, and the Medium Development countries². The country provides free education and basic health care and has a social security system for workers in the formal sector and a social protection scheme for the most vulnerable people. As a result, the Human Development Index (HDI) of STP rose from 0.56 to 0.613 between 2010 and 2022, placing the country close to the average for countries in the medium human development group (0.63).³ These improvements are also reflected in the increase of average life expectancy from 68.2 years in 2010 to 68.8 years in 2022⁴.

Economic performance has also made significant progress as measured by GDP, with an increase from \$1,130 in 2010 to \$3,420 per capita in 2024⁵, which is considered a middle-income country. The GNI at PPP even amounted to \$ 4,062 per capita (2022). This is mainly thanks to the foreign investment in tourism and related services sector as well as the investment sprawl based on oil prospects after the first oil explorations started in 2003, although no oil has been found since. The economic growth figures over the past 10 years have averaged around 4.1%⁶. In 2020, despite COVID, growth was at 3.1% strongly boosted by international aid, but this subsided to 0.9% in 2024 according to IMF

1 <https://freedomhouse.org/country/sao-tome-and-principe/freedom-world/2021>

2 HDR 2020

3 <https://hdr.undp.org/>; HDR 2022 data

4 <https://data.who.int/countries/678>

5 <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPDPC@WEO/STP?zoom=STP&highlight=STP>

6

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=ST>

figures. Thanks to the socio-economic progress over the past decade, the country graduated from the Least Development Country category in December 2024⁷. t

Nevertheless, despite these positive development gains, the economy has not generated enough quality jobs and the incidence of poverty in STP has remained stubbornly high. A little over one-third of the population (35.6%) lives in extreme poverty on less than the international poverty line of \$1.90 per day, and more than two-thirds of the population is poor, using the higher poverty line of \$3.20 per day, and the country's Gini coefficient has risen from 32.1 in 2000 to 30.8 in 2010 and to 40.7 in 2017, indicating an alarming widening in the inequality gap⁸, which is characteristic of lower middle income countries. A World Bank poverty estimate of IOF data based on consumption aggregates rather than expenditures provides for an extreme poverty of 25.9 %, which is high compared to small island states as Cape Verde (3.2%) or Comoros (17.6%).

The economic model of the country has been largely based upon tourism and its related services sector in restauration and wholesale/retail, as well as agriculture which mostly consists of subsistence farming but accounts for 70% of rural employment⁹. The Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukraine crisis have greatly impacted the economy. The tourism sector recovered from the huge drop in tourists in 2020 and 2021 with tourism numbers now back to 2019 level. But the impact of the high prices of agricultural and fuel imports has been felt with inflation of over 25% in 2022 which decreased to around 10.9% by the end of 2024. Fuel imports are the main source of foreign currency drain as the country is fully reliant upon oil for its thermal power generation. Fishing has traditionally been another source of subsistence, primarily artisanal fishing.

STP has no national industrial fishing vessels but has signed fishing agreements with European Union, Japan, and China, which have allowed foreign operators with industrial fishing fleets to exploit the STP waters under license. However, institutional capacity weaknesses, particularly human and technical capacity, and inadequate data systems mean that government is unable to effectively enforce licensing agreements and monitor and control catches. Moreover, harmful, and unsustainable fishing practices by fishermen have led to over-exploitation and depletion of marine resources, forcing artisanal fishermen to go further at sea to fish.

The private sector in STP is small, fragile and comprises mainly informal, micro-enterprises and a small number of medium and large companies in the formal sector. Reforms introduced in the 1990s to liberalize the economy led to the almost total privatization of enterprises, with Postal Services, Airport and Port Administrations and the Electricity and Water Company under state management. Whilst a modest number of small and medium sized national entrepreneurs exist, in general they lack access to capital, and their relative competitiveness is largely a result of the country's inadequate business environment, isolation and insularity. A few entrepreneurs have successfully achieved to market biological/ecological products at international level, such as coffee and chocolate.

STP faces development challenges that are typical of small and insular states, imprinted in its structural multi-dimensional vulnerabilities, and that affect its ability to deal with all sorts of shocks and achieve balanced budgets, with high dependence on imports to satisfy domestic demand, particularly basic consumer goods and fossil fuels. Its remoteness increases production costs

⁷ 2015, 2018, 2021. The graduation by December 2024 was endorsed by UNGA resolution A/RES/73/133

⁸ World Development Indicators
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=ST>.
This is in discrepancy with INE IOF 2017 (48.4).

⁹ STP VNR 2022

and its size and ability to reach production scales curbs the diversification of its economy, making it more vulnerable to external shocks, including those resulting from climate change and global political economy. The humid tropical climate with high level of precipitation and air salinity also affects the cost of maintenance and wear and tear. On the one hand, its small and untrained workforce constrains the efficient production of goods and services at the scale needed to meet the demand of both local and export markets, and on the other hand, there is a need to improve the business environment to propel the attraction of investment and the maturation and expansion of the private sector. The difficulty of providing services to a scattered population implies a high cost of public goods and a high level of public expenditures to provide satisfactory public services, including the provision of adequate levels of energy and water to its citizens and companies, further compounding the high costs of production.

The socio-economic development of STP has been largely funded by Government expenditures, sustained by external aid and government borrowing, as well as by foreign direct investment mostly in the tourism and related services sector. About 95% of the public investment budget is financed through debt and external aid¹⁰. The country has grown accustomed to relying on foreign resources, but national sources of wealth and comparative advantages of the small island state have not been sufficiently exploited.

STP's population of close to 210,000 by the end of 2024, has grown on average, by 1.3 % per annum in the past 12 years, although growth has slowed since 2016, particularly due to high migration to Portugal. The country has a youthful population with a median age of 18.6 years and with 61% under the age 25¹¹. Due to its history of plantation economy and contractual laborers in colonial times, more than one third of households are headed by women.

To date, the country has no known market valuable mineral resources, but a good potential exists for the development of petroleum related resources within its territorial waters in the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea.

Due to external factors, inflation figures have been high over the past years (25.2% in 2022, 17% in 2023 and 10.9% in 2024) and have eroded purchasing power of the population, in particular the poorest segments. Thanks to the mobility agreement for Portuguese Speaking countries, many Santomeans, in particular youths, have chosen to emigrate to Portugal in recent years. The Embassy of Portugal confirmed that 35 000 visas have been granted to Santomeans in 2023 and 2024, representing 16.7 % of the population. This brain drain has impacted all sectors.

¹⁰ State Budget 2023

¹¹ INE IOF 2017

STATISTICS

POPULATION



Estimated Population
(Dec 2024): **209,607**

Preliminary data INE Population Census 2024



Average population growth
2012 - 2024: **1.3%**

INE Population census 2024



Population median age
(2017): **18.6 years**

INE IOF 2017

POVERTY AND INEQUALITY



Poverty Index (2017): **66.7%**

INE IOF 2017



Extreme Poverty
(2017): **35.6%**

INE IOF 2017



GINI coefficient (2017): **40.7**

WDI 2022

HEALTH & LIFE EXPECTANCY



Life expectancy at
birth: **68.8 years**

WHO 2022



Maternal mortality ratio
per 100,000 live births (2017): **130**

MICS 2019



Infant mortality per 1,000
live births (2020): **22.4**

EDUCATION

MICS 2019



Net Frequency Rate
Basic Education: **89.9%**

VNR 2022



Net Frequency Rate
Second Cycle/Secondary
Education: **29.9%**

VNR 2022

WATER AND SANITATION



% of houses connected to
potable water supply
(2017): **21.9%**

VNR 2022



% of population with access
to improved sanitation
(2019): **45%**

VNR 2022



% of population using
open defecation: **45%**

VNR 2022

ELECTRICITY



% Population with
access to electricity: **83.1%**

VNR 2022

FOOD SECURITY



% of households reporting
severe food insecurity: **10%**

INE IOF 2017

MACROECONOMICS



Debt to GDP ratio
(2022): **128%**
IMF Data 2022



GNI per capita, PPP
(current international \$)
(2021): **4,062**
WDI 2022



Foreign direct investment,
net inflows (% of GDP)
(2020): **10%**
WDI 2022



Inflation: 2023: **17.3%**
Estimation 2024: **10.9%**
BCSTP 2025

EXPORTS



Main export products in 2024:
cocoa beans (**54%**), palm oil (**32%**)
BCSTP 2024

EMPLOYMENT



Estimate % work in
informal sector: **60%**
INE IOF 2017



Social Protection
Coverage: **22%**
INE Statistical Bulletin Social Protection 2022



Unemployment
(2017): **8.9%**
INE IOF 2017



2 PROGRESS TOWARDS THE UN 2030 AGENDA

The overall vision of STP to achieve the SDGs has been framed in its 2030 Agenda for Transformation, which was adopted in 2015. The 2030 Agenda for Transformation was built on broad consultations with civil society, the private sector and development partners in 2014 that led to the publication of a consensual strategic vision for the country entitled "Sao Tome and Principe 2030: The Country We Want". The Transformation Agenda, which envisages putting the country on the path to sustainable economic and social development, was presented to the country's first International Conference for Investors and Partners held in London in 2015 (STeP IN), and is aligned with the Samoa Pathway, the African Union 2063 Agenda and 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals¹². The newly developed National Development Plan (NDP) 2025-2040 translated the overall vision into 3 year planning goals. The approval of the Law for the National Planning System (Law 6/2017), which defines planning mechanisms, processes and responsibilities, provided the legal framework for the implementation of the last NDP. It sought to operationalize the 2030 Transformation Agenda by providing a medium-term reference framework for the country's economic and social development policies and to serve as an instrument for resource mobilization. The global objective of the NDP is "accelerated economic growth that reduces poverty and protects the environment" that contributes to accelerating and entrenching the dynamics of change necessary to achieve the SDGs and was declined in the five strategic objectives which are aligned with the 5 P's of the 2030 agenda¹³.

In 2020, the country approved a stimulus package of around 6.8 million USD to support the health sector, the economy and social protection in response to the Covid

pandemic. This was followed in 2021 by the approval of the Government of the National Plan for Socio-Economic Resilience and Mitigation against Covid 19 (PNARME) to accelerate the SDG implementation and mitigate the socio-economic setbacks that the Covid pandemic generated, which guided resource allocations by UN agencies.

Overall, monitoring of the SDG progress has been hampered by the lack of institutional mechanism (no intersectoral committee or structure set up by the Council of Ministers), the absence of national SDG targets and indicators, as well as deficiencies in the production of regular and disaggregated statistic data to measure progress.

Led by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Blue Economy the country produced its first Voluntary National Review (VNR), in June 2022, that contains a baseline of progress indicators in measuring the achievements of SDGs. The impact of the leadership of this Ministry in achieving the multisectoral challenges of the 2030 agenda and in preventing a silo approach by individual institutions has been reduced by the lack of institutional mandate and political empowerment to steer the various sectors. A summary of progress towards achieving the SDGs is presented in Annex 1. An estimated 139 of the 239 global indicators in 2030 Agenda are measured by the National Statistical System, that falls under the Ministry of Planning and Finance.

The VNR highlights many recurrent challenges, where more and better needs to be done. For example, it notes that the incidence of poverty in STP remains practically unchanged in the past decade, with the worsening of inequality in income distribution. It brings evidence that many Santomeans experience food insecurity, with severe implications for their health,

¹² Alignment analysis carried out by the UN

¹³ Idem

and that the proportion of agricultural areas in which productive agriculture is practiced has decreased.

With regard to health, it states that noncommunicable diseases (NCD) have not received sufficient attention from health authorities while cardiovascular diseases have become the main causes of mortality in STP. At the same time, by the levels that it has been reaching and due to the associated social risks, the consumption of harmful substances has also been a growing concern, particularly alcohol. It states the need for an increased focus of the health system to NCDs and behavioral changes aimed at addressing NCD risk factors without losing sight of combating transmissible diseases which outcomes have been greatly improving.

Concerning the education indicators, the VNR notes that despite the gains with the adjusted net frequency rate in primary education, the secondary school completion rates remain low. In addition, a large proportion of teachers has not received basic teacher training, which jeopardizes the quality of education.

Furthermore, urban planning is poor. Due to the high population growth, urban suburbs are sprawling in a disorderly fashion, and have problems related to access to reliable energy supply, clean water and sanitation. The collection and treatment of solid waste is of particular concern. Half of the population still practice sanitation outdoors and just little over half had hand washing facilities. The country has made some progress in access to electricity, where the percentage of the population with access reached surpassed 80%, but less than 5% of the energy is generated through clean sources by 2024. The VNR shows that there is a long way to go for green energy, and this has implications for cost and quality for both households and businesses, as well as for the environment.

Climate change already produces noticeable effects in STP, e.g., with rapid pace of sea level rise already causing severe coastal degradation and salinization, and an increase in the incidence of extreme weather events and a highly variable climate. The report informs of direct economic loss of millions of dollars due to the current effects of climate changes, with a higher incidence in the services, agriculture, housing and transport sectors.

The VNR also notes that STP reduced official unemployment rates over the past 10 years, however, this relates to the formal sector, which employs less than a third of the working population. Moreover, the report highlights the persisting problem of sexual abuse of minors, gender inequality, high rates of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and girls' marriage before the age of 15. The problem of early pregnancy of girls is also highlighted. Worryingly the VNR informs that in recent years the subject of corruption has gained much prominence in Santomean society, especially in the public domain.

Advancing towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) necessitates strategic policy investments aligned with national priorities. Key pathways identified for accelerating SDG progress include achieving universal health coverage, fostering full employment with equal pay, reducing income inequalities, and enhancing institutional transparency. The country's economic classification as "in debt distress" underscores the need for strategic financial management and innovative financing mechanisms to address developmental challenges and accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda. The IMF Extended Credit Program was signed in December 2024 for 24M USD over a 3 year period.

PEOPLE - SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

As evidenced in the VNR report, STP has made notable gains in health and education outcomes over the past 20 years. Maternal (130/100 000 live births) and under five mortality rates (16.1/ 1000 live births) have improved substantially, vaccination coverage (98.5%)¹⁴ is among the highest in the region and malaria, mother to child HIV transmission and filariasis transmission are due to be eliminated in the years to come, and school enrolment rates have greatly improved. Average expenditures for the health and education sectors over 2016-2020 have been at 13.9% and 16.6% of the general government expenditures, well above the ECCAS mean of 5.9% and 12.9% respectively¹⁵.

The Social Protection system has been strengthened over the past years which is an important safety net for the most vulnerable, reaching about 22% of the total population¹⁶. The social assistance scheme includes social transfers to the disabled, people over 60 years old who are not included in the social security scheme and vulnerable female headed households.

Despite the response to evolving contexts such as the COVID-19 pandemic, to advance social protection initiatives in Sao Tome and Principe, challenges remain, particularly in achieving a fully integrated approach to planning, implementing, and monitoring interventions. While successes, like the roll-out of the Comprehensive Social Registry (CSU) and the District Health Information System (DHIS2), indicate progress, gaps persist in areas such as coordination, resource allocation, and capacity building. Efforts to empower vulnerable groups, such as youth and persons with disabilities, show promise but require sustained attention to ensure inclusivity and sustainability. Enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration, strengthening

monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and promoting gender equality will be essential for fostering social protection in Sao Tome and Principe and advancing towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The health system, though fragile and highly dependent upon external financing, has shown its strengths thanks to free health care, the geographical coverage with 40 health facilities and the availability of human resources. There are 0.38 doctors and 2.39 nurses/midwives per 1,000 inhabitants, which puts the country in the 11th position of 47 African countries in terms of the number of physicians per 1,000 inhabitants. Doctors are present in all district health centers. This medicalization of primary care could be a huge asset in front of the rising tide of NCD, with strong external support of specialists and human resources training (Portugal, Brazil, China and Cuba). Overall, improved water and sanitation facilities and clean environmental practices, including solid waste management, could show a strong positive impact on the health of the population and the progress in eradicating transmittable diseases. Still, only 24.4% of households meet the SDG criteria for basic domestic water, sanitation and hand washing, especially in rural areas. Around 57% of dwellings do not have any form of improved sanitation based on 2019 figures¹⁷. The lack of wastewater treatment facilities, the poor access to safe water and sanitation infrastructure and sanitary practices, compounded with poor housing standards with large number of family members per housing unit, contribute strongly to the challenge of controlling transmittable diseases such as acute respiratory infections and diarrhea, being the latter the main cause of child mortality.

¹⁴ Integrated strategy for Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child and Adolescent Health and Nutrition, 2019-2023

¹⁵ STP budget 2016-2020 and World Development Indicators, for 2019.

¹⁶ Data from INE Statistical Bulletin on Social Protection 2022

¹⁷ Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019

While relatively good services for transmittable diseases and mother and child health conditions are available due to continuous investment by key partners such as the Global Fund and GAVI, there is no integrated approach to people's health and important services to prevent and control non communicable diseases (NCD) and specialized treatments of NCDs are quasi-inexistent. NCD constitute 70% of total deaths. A strong community prevention and health promotion program, globally recognized as the most cost-effective manner to control NCDs, is not institutionalized nor systematically applied. The high alcohol consumption, mostly locally brewed spirits and palm wine, and low awareness of the impact of environmental pollution on health are some of the causes of the high rate of NCD.

With regard to sexual and reproductive health, STP has an Integrated Reproductive Health Program¹⁸ that covers family planning, prenatal and postnatal care of pregnant women and children in the first 24 months, vaccination, and nutrition. Family planning services is provided in all 38 health units and at least 5 contraceptives methods are offered. The Contraceptive prevalence rate of modern contraceptives increased from 37,4% in 2014 to 46% in 2019, and the unmet contraception needs women in the 15-19 age group has dropped from 32.7% in 2014 to 27.1% in 2019¹⁹. The early childbearing is still very high, with 21.9% of young women between 20-24 years who gave birth to their first child before the age of 18²⁰.

In general, delivery of health services in STP has been impeded by an archaic health infrastructure, equipment and system. Primary health care services rely on obsolete infrastructure, limited equipment, irregular essential drugs availability, poor sanitation and high cost in electricity and transport. The coverage of essential health services is 63% (MICS 2019 data). The Joint external evaluation of STP's capacity to comply with the

International Health Regulations, which took place in May 2019, found limited capacity in all 19 technical areas, except for vaccination. In the 2021 Global Health Security index²¹, STP ranked 158th out of 195 countries on its level of preparedness to prevent and respond to public health emergencies. The Covid pandemic highlighted the existing weaknesses but also the strengths of the geographical coverage and availability of human resources. STP is among the 10 African countries with the best Covid-19 vaccination coverage. The epidemiological early warning and surveillance system to timely detect, investigate and address health outbreaks and epidemics has been strengthened and shown improvements, as evidenced by the latest Dengue outbreak.

Governance in the health sector requires significant reforms as decision making and resource allocation is currently not informed by evidence. Public resources are allocated to health facilities along public finance rules and provider payment mechanisms which are not sufficiently adapted to the new challenges in the health system. Based on the findings of a recent evaluation on the progress and obstacles for Universal Health coverage, certain gaps and priorities for system reform have been identified. These are: (i) the need to move from vertical to integrated programs, (ii) the shift from a hospital-centered care delivery to a strong network of primary health centers able to deliver health services adapted to the needs of people and closer to their homes, (iii) the reform of health financing that ensures vulnerable people have access to health care without facing financial hardship. These priorities will be incorporated in the new national health development plan 2023-2028.

STP has made progress in improving access to education in recent years, although enrolment in non-formal education and vocational training for out-

¹⁸ Programa de Saúde Reprodutiva, PSR

¹⁹ Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014, 2019

²⁰ <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-health/adolescent-health/>

²¹ 2021 Global Health Security index

of-school youth remains a concern, as well as the quality of education in general.

To enhance the quality of early childhood education environments in Sao Tome and Principe, it is recommended to prioritize hygiene and safety measures, ensuring daily cleaning of kindergarten spaces and adequate care of outdoor areas to promote children's well-being and health. Additionally, creating safe, clean, and welcoming physical spaces with distinct areas for various activities and providing diverse, high-quality materials that stimulate creativity and holistic development are crucial. Flexibility in curriculum implementation, incorporating diverse content areas based on national guidelines and international best practices, as well as encouraging sensitivity to individual children's needs, promoting predictable yet non-routine daily routines, and ensuring access to safe outdoor spaces for exploration and physical development are essential. By considering and implementing these recommendations, Sao Tome and Principe can contribute to fostering high-quality educational environments that support the holistic development and well-being of children aged 3 to 6

Public expenditures in the education and training sector have gradually increased from 8.1% of the total state expenditures in 2016 to 17.5% in 2020²². The Government has prioritized the construction and rehabilitation of schools and has considerably improved the numbers of classrooms available and the number of establishments offering the full cycle of classes. As a result, the supply of classrooms relative to the increase in the school-age population has improved for all levels of education.

Enrolment at all levels of education has increased, especially in preschool, the third cycle of basic education (Grades 7–9), and at secondary level (Grades 10–12) over the past decade. An estimated 93% of all

students who enter the first year of primary school eventually complete primary education, similar to peer countries. Secondary enrolment is slightly higher than in peer countries, particularly for girls²³. However, the enrolment in technical and professional education fields barely reaches 6% and STP has relatively low tertiary enrolment, which, at 13% trails that of Cabo Verde (though outperforms Comoros). The country had 6 vocational training centers, 5 of which are public and 1 private, offering a variety of courses in terms of both duration and sectors, and 6 higher education institutions, 3 public and 3 privates.

Nonetheless, the insufficient and inadequate learning offer, adapted to the needs of labor market has led to a labor market characterized by a shortage of skilled labor. This shortage is broad and includes plumbers and electricians, and people with management and accounting skills (both in the private and public sector). Financial literacy is generally low. The perceptions of young people regarding the quality of the school curriculum leaves many students without the necessary skills and critically, less interested in school and continuing their education²⁴. In fact, between the ages of 20 and 24, men massively enter the labor market with very low qualifications, reducing their potential access to highly skilled and productive jobs. Also, considering that 71% of people with higher education work in the public sector, the private sector is basically left with low-skilled workers. This is in fact corroborated by INE's survey with MSMEs, in which 86% of owners/employees reported not having had any training in the areas in which they operate²⁵.

Improvements in access to education and in availability of teachers have led to an increase in literacy rates and there is a noticeable generational increase in educational attainment within households across all incomes. However, the increase in enrolment at all levels of education has

²² STP budget and expenditures 2016-2020

²³ Ministry of Education - MEES 2018

²⁴ WB STP Systematic Country Diagnostic, 2021.

²⁵ INE IOF 2017

not yet translated into better quality of education, as witnessed by the relatively high rate of children in primary and secondary education who need to repeat a year, the low learning outcomes for core subjects such as mathematic/reading/writing and the school dropout rates. As an example, 1.9% and 5.8% of children enrolled in basic and secondary education dropped out of school²⁶. Moreover, the overall secondary school completion rate has decreased from 40.5% in 2017 to 34.3% in 2019 with only 39.7% of girls and 28.9% of boys completing this level. MICS 2019 data show that while 60% completed lower secondary education, only 10% completed upper secondary education. The low quality of education is mainly due to insufficiencies in pedagogical training, as more than 80% of teachers in preschool education, 61% in primary education, and 48% in secondary education do not have adequate formation²⁷. A recent consultation²⁸ on the performance of the STP education system and performance also identified lack of institutional coordination and low monitoring capacity as adjacent causes of the education system performance and consequent school dropout.

In relation to hygiene and sanitation, only 27.2% of schools have access to clean drinking water and provide little, if any, support for menstrual hygiene management leading to 11% of school-age girls reporting being unable to participate in school and social activities during their last term due to lack of adequate sanitary infrastructure. These factors also contribute to high school dropout rates and low enrolment in tertiary education. Moreover, there is a notable difference between the education of children from the richest and poorest families. School transport, uniforms, books and school supplies increase the indirect costs to families of education. About 23% of youth

cite a lack of financial means as the reason they are not in school. Nearly one-fifth of poor households with children in school (18.4%) indicate that they had to remove their children from school due to their inability to pay education-related costs. Children from poor households have an enrolment rate for the third cycle of basic education (Grades 7–9) or higher that is 1.3 times lower compared to children of non-poor households, and two times lower when it comes to enrolment in Grade 10 or higher²⁹.

Sao Tome and Principe faces the double burden of malnutrition which impacts severely on the health and education outcomes. Around 10% of households reported severe food insecurity with at least one household member skipping a full day of meals due to lack of money. 42% of households experiencing food shortages for a few months of the year, and 26% declaring that they are affected by this problem for almost the entire year³⁰. On the other hand, the WHO-MOH Steps 2020 report on NCDs risk factors reports that 45,2% of surveyed adults presented a ponderal surcharge with 8% of men and 21% of women being obese and therefore at higher risk of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases as well as metabolic problems such as diabetic or hyperuricemia (gout). Similarly the 2022 world obesity report estimates that Sao Tome and Principe will be, by 2030, among the top 10 African countries and the first African SIDS with the highest prevalence of obesity (11%). There are many causes of the poor nutritional status of vulnerable groups, starting by poor diets and high consumption of unhealthy, processed food, of alcohol, sugar, oil and salt due to weak agriculture productivity and a weak supply system with logistical problems, a lack of financial and human resources in the main areas of food security including insufficient number of nutritionists, and a lack of capacity to respond to food

²⁶ Multiple Indicators Clusters Survey 2014

²⁷ RESEN, Education Sector analysis, June 2018

²⁸ UN STP CCA retreat, April 2022.

²⁹ World Bank, 2020

³⁰ INE IOF 2017

security/nutrition crises in emergency situations due to poor information management systems and poor coordination mechanisms. Anemia rates among children under five in STP are 59%, more than 20 percentage points higher than the average rates of its peers and has increased 3 percentage points between 2010 and 2016. Anemia exacerbates the effects of malnutrition leading to poor growth in children, vitamin and iron deficiencies, and poor educational performance³¹. The national school feeding and health program (PNASE³²) is the main national food safety net, benefiting over 50,000 school-aged children (25% of the country's population) and has contributed to improved educational outcomes.

Crowded housing conditions also affect health and education outcomes. Houses are predominantly constructed of wood and covered with zinc sheets with only 19.2% made of masonry and covered with tiles. STP's growing population is highly urbanized which, in conjunction with the high incidence of poverty, means that a large part of the population is living in high density, poorly planned, informal neighborhoods, in substandard housing with poor hygiene and sanitation, and insufficient basic urban services such as access to clean water. As an example, it takes 49.4% of women an average of 30 minutes to carry water from an improved water source. Overcrowding is a major issue with 43% of residential dwellings having only one room for sleeping, while nuclear families have an average of 4.7 members³³. The environmental and health risks associated high density and overcrowded conditions hasten the spread of diseases that disproportionately affect poor and vulnerable groups and particularly young children. High density living and overcrowding can have social, psychological and gender impacts, lead to

increased levels of gender-based and domestic violence and sexual abuse.

The national strategy for promoting gender equality and equity³⁴ promotes the protection of sexual and reproductive health rights in accordance with the program of action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as Article 12 of CEDAW. The National Strategy to Combat Gender Violence, 2019-2023, provides for, amongst other things, the elimination of gender-based violence (GBV), an increase in women's participation, and their education and empowerment. Nevertheless, despite apparent progress, gender inequality is persistent and prominent throughout the country, deeply rooted in slowly changing social and cultural norms and a system of patriarchy and discrimination that shape attitudes that are often passed on through the generations. 19.1% of women and 13.8% of men (in the 15 to 49 age group) think it is justified for men to beat women under certain circumstances, and social norms often require women to have their spouse's permission to take measures in relation to their sexual and reproductive health³⁵. Laws against domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape exist, but for cultural reasons, women tend not to vocalize or report the injustices committed against them, or the barriers they confront, with 96% of women reporting that they have never experienced gender-based discrimination, adding to the difficulty women have in asserting control over their own advancement³⁶. Nonetheless, police reports suggest a significant increase in gender-based violence against both women and girls during the Covid-19 lockdowns³⁷.

STP has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter

³¹ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.ANM.CHLD.ZS?locations=ST>

³² Programa Nacional de Alimentação e Saúde Escolar, 2012.

³³ Census of Population and Housing (INE 2012)

³⁴ ENIEG III, 2019-2026

³⁵ MICS 2019

³⁶ World Bank, 2021

³⁷ United States Department of State, 2021

on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and in 2016 the Government adopted the National Child Protection Policy. A National Child Rights commission has been established to coordinate the implementation of the policy but is not yet operational. Notwithstanding, STP has successfully increased birth registration with 98% of children in the 1 to 5 age group registered, but the children from the poorest families still have lower birth registration rates. Despite these successes, the challenge remains to reach the 1 to 2% of children that are unregistered especially considering that 13% of children

live in households that do not include their biological parents. More than half of all children living in households without a biological parent live with grandparents and almost half of children in the most populated districts of Água-Grande and Mé-Zochi have at least one parent living elsewhere. In comparison to most other countries in the region, STP has a lower proportion of children living with both biological parents and a much higher proportion of those living only with their biological mothers as one third of households are female headed.

PROSPERITY - ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION ANALYSIS

Sao Tome and Principe accumulated 27.2% growth in its real GDP in the decade spanning from 2014 to 2023, averaging 2.7% annually, considerably below the 7% or higher per year to effectively boost socio-economic development³⁸. This growth journey was marked by significant fluctuations, driven largely by fluxes in Official Development Assistance (ODA) and sporadic dividends from oil revenues. These financial injections enabled the government to invest in critical social infrastructure, particularly in the health and education sectors, improving the human development outcomes and ultimately leading the country to graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status in December 2024. STP Human Development Index score in 2022 placed the country in the medium human development group, in the 141st position out of 198 countries. This score is above the Sub-Saharan Africa and LDC averages but still below the Small Island Development States (SIDS) average³⁹.

Despite these advancements, STP remains a country reliant on low-productivity activities in the primary sector, particularly in agriculture and fisheries, with a predominantly informal sector, employing over 60% of the population⁴⁰. The undiversified and limited-sized economy, with its high dependence on cocoa beans and palm oil exports, and tourism, is unable to generate sufficient decent employment opportunities and income sources across the entire territory. This is largely the result of inadequate linkages between public and private investment, weak territorial and local value-chain development, a poor environment for promoting private entrepreneurship and business innovation and diversification, unreliable energy supply, poor logistics and transportation links, a small consumer market, and limited financial inclusion. In 2023, UNDP estimated that the STP diaspora could be around 11 to 13% of the population⁴¹ as a result of Santomeans seeking better life conditions abroad.

³⁸ UN 2030 Agenda, [target 8.1](#).

³⁹ UNDP HDR, 2024.

⁴⁰ INE Household Budget Survey, 2017.

⁴¹ UNDP "A Preliminary Assessment of the Impact of Migration on São Tomé e Príncipe", 2023.

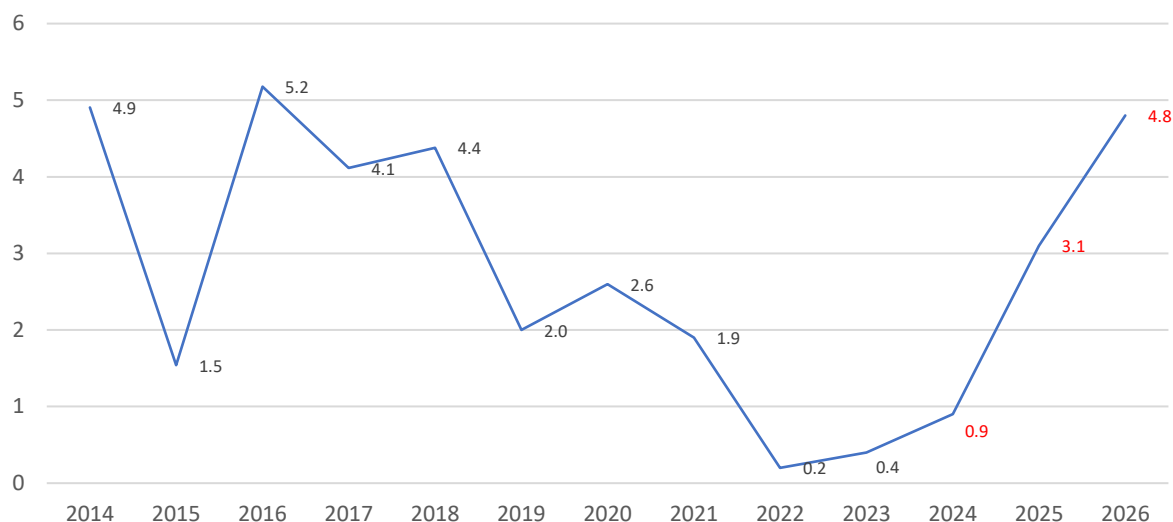


Figure 1: Real GDP Growth (%/year). Source: INE (2014-2023), 2024, and IMF (projections 2024 - 2026), 2025.

From 2022 to 2024, the country experienced economic stagnation, surging inflation, and a deepening crisis in external reserves. The absence of an IMF program in 2024 hindered external resource mobilization, impacting the implementation of the state budget and the ability of the Central Bank to address pressing financial needs, particularly foreign exchange.

Local structural factors, including limited supply in the agriculture and fishing sectors, compounded by the high import of foodstuff, have been identified as significant contributors to high inflation. The implementation of Value Added Tax (VAT) in 2023 led to a transient increase in the inflation rate, reducing the purchasing power of Santomean families. The country observed an accumulated inflation of 17% in 2023, representing a deceleration compared to the 25.2% recorded in 2022. By the end of 2024, inflation had further eased to 11.6%⁴², reflecting ongoing policy efforts to stabilize prices. Despite this relative improvement, inflationary pressures continue to affect households, particularly in essential goods such as food and energy. The country observed an

accumulated inflation of 12% in 2024, noteworthy representing a deceleration compared to the 25.2% recorded in 2022.

From 2022 to 2024, real GDP marginally grew respectively 0.2%, 0.4%, and 0.9%⁴³, primarily driven by a sustained decline in public and private investment and reduced credit availability to the economy. However, the Central Bank projects a GDP recovery of 3.1% in 2025 and 4.8% in 2026, underpinned by reforms for macroeconomic stability and growth in key sectors such as the green energy transition, which is vital for fiscal stability⁴⁴.

Over the past decade, the primary engine behind GDP growth has been the tertiary sector, which expanded significantly, reaching 75.9% of GDP in 2023. Despite its economic potential and significant role in rural employment, the primary sector contributed only 13.9% to GDP, reflecting its low productivity. Within the primary sector, growth has been driven mainly by subsistence agriculture and fishing, with fishing accounting for 5.8% of GDP in 2023. Export agriculture, despite its strategic importance, averaged about 1% of GDP. The secondary sector continued its

⁴² INE, 2025.

⁴³ INE and IMF, 2025.

⁴⁴ IMF and BCSTP, 2024.

contraction, declining to 2.56% of GDP in 2023 from 4.1% in 2022, indicating a shift away from industrial activities. Construction activity shrunk from 1.9 to 1.4% of the GDP, and the agro-food industry remained small, contributing only about 0.6% of GDP.

Apart from a few commercial farms specializing in niche ecological coffee and spices, including vanilla and pepper, STP's agriculture remains primarily family-based, with mixed farming practices for subsistence. Combined, subsistence and export agriculture and livestock production accounted for 7.9% of the GDP in 2023. More than 50% of the country's arable land

remains dedicated to cocoa production. Since large-scale palm oil production began in 2019, palm oil has become STP's second-largest export product, accounting for 27.7% of export value in 2024, after cocoa beans, responsible for 68.8% in the same period⁴⁵. Aside from manufactured chocolate, accounting for only 0.6%, STP exports are concentrated in direct agricultural outputs. In 2024, 86.8% of all STP exports, which in the reference 2024 period accumulated about 17.5 million USD, were to Europe, with the Netherlands receiving 50.9%, followed by Belgium, with 19.4%.

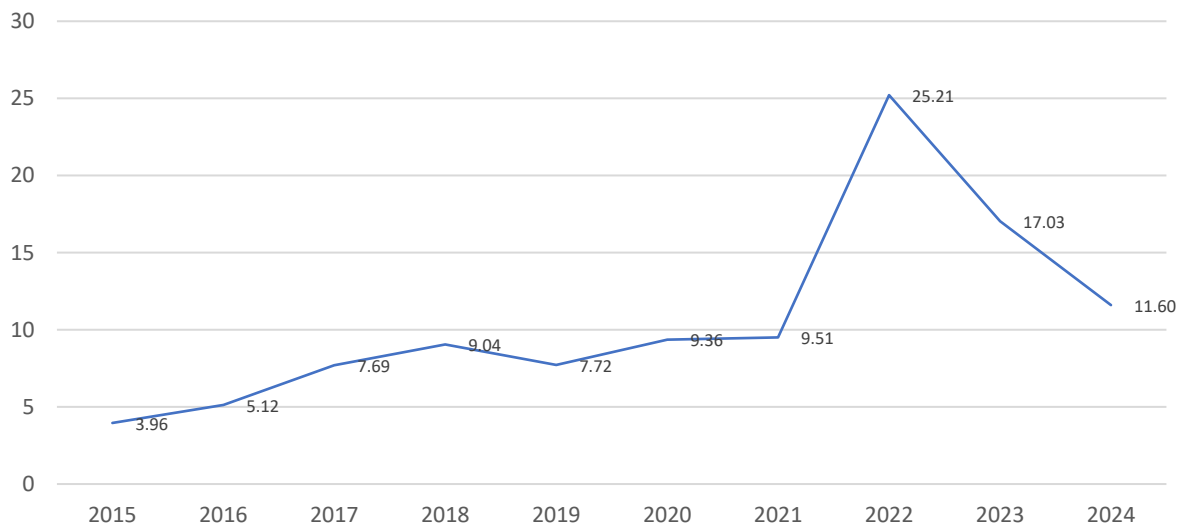


Figure 2: Cumulative inflation rate per year. Source: INE, 2025.

⁴⁵ BCSTP, Trade Balance related to Jan-Oct 2024. All Import and Export information is based on the last available official statistics for this reference period.

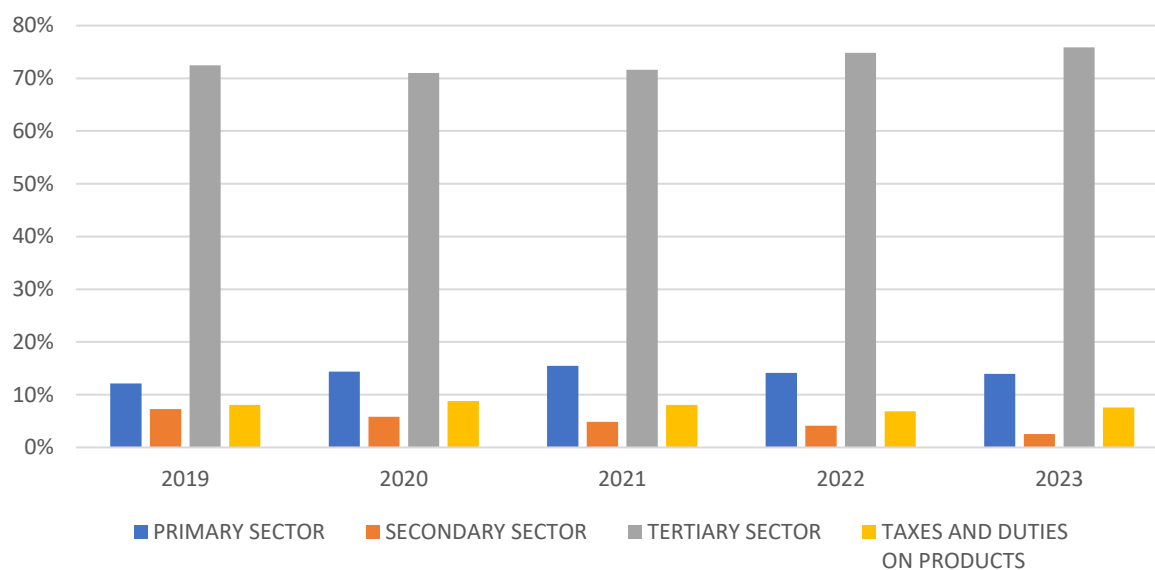


Figure 3: GDP Composition (2019/2023). Source: INE, 2024.

The country remains highly dependent on food imports, which account for 21% of all imports (126 million USD⁴⁶) and nearly 50% of all food consumed. Strengthening local agricultural production, expanding irrigation systems, and improving access to fertilizers and technology are key policy priorities to enhance food security and reduce dependency on volatile global markets supply, and are deemed current priorities for the government⁴⁷. Locally produced cereal peaked at 4,500 metric tons in 1996 but reached only 941 MT in 2018⁴⁸, evidently showcasing the need to escalate investments and productivity of agriculture.

The fishing sector, though holding economic and employment potential, remains artisanal and largely informal. STP lacks national industrial infrastructure and fishing vessels, relying instead on foreign operators under fishing agreements with the European Union (EU). The last agreement with the EU ended in 2024, and negotiations are ongoing for a new one starting in 2025. Investment in

infrastructure remains weak, with antiquated landing facilities, insufficient cold storage, and limited ice production constraining the sector's growth. Addressing these challenges through improved regulation, infrastructure development, and skills training for local fishermen could significantly boost the sector's contribution to GDP and is another priority for the government. Both agriculture and fishing hold significant importance to national food security, aside from economic importance.

Tourism remains a priority sector for the STP government. It is estimated that the sector directly contributed to approximately 14.8% of GDP in 2016⁴⁹. While reaching an annual 34,900 international tourists before COVID-19, in 2019, the pandemic led to a significant decline in 2020 and 2021, with international visitor numbers recovering in 2022 and surpassing the previous record with 35,800⁵⁰ arrivals in 2023. Although the tourism value chain has become an important source of employment and

⁴⁶ Idem footnote 10.

⁴⁷ UN consultations with Ministers of Agriculture and of Economy and Finance, 2025.

⁴⁸ WDI, 2022.

⁴⁹ STP Strategic and Marketing Plan for Tourism, 2018.

⁵⁰ STP Government Bulletins, 2024.

economic growth for STP, its development is hampered by poor infrastructure (energy, transportation, public signs, access to tourist sites, etc.), weak service standards, limited health services, and the high price of air ticket. In addition, the Government sectoral planning in tourism is frail with insufficient intersectoral coordination, monitoring, and very limited financial

resources to public and private stakeholders. To address these challenges, government policies are being revised to incentivize investment in tourism-related projects, improve service delivery, and promote cultural heritage sites to attract a more diverse range of tourists⁵¹.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total International Arrivals	29,193	33,424	34,918	10,718	15,101	26,257	35,817

Table 1: Total International Arrivals per year. Source: STP Directorate of Tourism, 2024.

To date, STP has no known market-valuable mineral resources, but the medium-term potential for petroleum development remains. Prospection drilling began in 2022, and depending on government strategy and leadership, this sector could catalyze public investments in key social development areas. Additionally, the country's focus on environmental sustainability may impact the long-term viability of oil exploration efforts, requiring balanced decision-making to ensure economic benefits without compromising biodiversity. In 2024, Total Energies secured a 60% stake and operatorship in Block STP02, situated about 60 kilometers off Príncipe's coast. Sonangol holds 30% of the remaining interest, while the National Petroleum Agency of Sao Tome and Principe (ANP-STP) retains 10%. This acquisition strengthens Total Energies' ongoing operations in the neighboring Block STP01⁵². In 2024, the government of STP conveyed optimism about initiating oil production within five to ten years. However, industry experts urged caution, highlighting the necessity for additional exploration and analysis to verify the presence of commercially viable reserves⁵³. In 2025, STP will continue its

efforts in oil exploration within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), but the country has yet to achieve significant commercial oil discoveries.

STP's private sector remains small and fragile, composed mainly of informal micro-enterprises. The business environment remains challenging, with STP ranking 148th out of 190 countries in the World Bank's 2019 Doing Business report. Financial inclusion is also limited, with more than 60% of small enterprises and 85% of micro-enterprises lacking bank accounts. Although the mobile phone penetration rate stood at 87% in 2018, financial literacy remains low. The 2021 National Financial Inclusion Strategy⁵⁴ aims to expand financial services, focusing on digital finance and inclusive green financing. Strengthening entrepreneurship programs, improving access to credit, and enhancing skills training opportunities will be crucial to fostering private-sector development and attracting foreign direct investments, and are also deemed priority interventions for the government.

Transportation remains a major constraint for STP's economic development. In early 2025, four international airlines and one

⁵¹ UN consultations with the Minister and Director of Tourism, 2024.

⁵² Total Energy, 2024.

⁵³ Voice of America, 2024.

⁵⁴ BCSTP, 2022.

national airline (in partnership with a European company) provided limited connections to Europe (Lisbon) and Africa (Accra, Libreville, and Luanda). In addition to issues related to availability and cost, regional and international transport also suffer from poor logistical performance, especially for air cargo, and air and maritime transport between the two main islands remains irregular. The lack of a deep seaport and insufficient export facilities further limits trade growth. Road infrastructure is basic, with maintenance challenges exacerbated by climate change-related events such as the 2021-2022 floods, which caused damages exceeding 6% of GDP⁵⁵. Developing multimodal transport solutions, improving logistics efficiency, and investing in climate-resilient infrastructure are key strategic objectives to enhance connectivity and socio-economic resilience and are in the government pipeline.

To achieve sustainable economic transformation, STP must prioritize economic diversification by modernizing agriculture, fisheries, and manufacturing to enhance productivity and export value. Strengthening value-added industries such as agro-processing and semi-industrial fisheries, alongside expanding eco-tourism and cultural tourism, will generate employment and reduce dependence on primary sector exports like cocoa and palm oil. The country must also stabilize its macroeconomic environment by improving public finance management, strengthening its engagement with international financial institutions, and expanding technological and financial inclusion to support

entrepreneurship and small businesses. Additionally, enhancing energy security through renewable energy investments - such as hydro, solar, and wind power - will reduce dependency on imported fossil fuels, lower production costs, and improve industrial competitiveness. Infrastructure improvements, particularly in transportation, logistics, and inter-island connectivity, are crucial to facilitating trade, supporting tourism, and mitigating climate-related vulnerabilities.

To create a more business-friendly environment, STP must simplify regulations, improve investor protections, and expand financial access, particularly for micro and small enterprises. Strengthening private sector development through targeted entrepreneurship programs and foreign direct investment incentives will help stimulate job creation and economic growth. In parallel, investments in transport infrastructure, including a deep-sea port and enhanced regional air and maritime connectivity, will improve market access and trade efficiency. As the country explores its petroleum potential, a transparent governance framework is essential to ensure oil revenues support long-term economic and social development without compromising environmental sustainability. By addressing these structural constraints and leveraging its strategic opportunities, STP can transition from low-productivity, aid-dependent growth to a resilient, diversified, and sustainable economy.

PLANET – ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY ANALYSIS

The outstanding value of the natural heritage of STP has been acknowledged by global conservation organizations such as World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Conservation International with the country

listed as one of the world's 200 biodiversity hotspots. STP is classified amongst the countries with the highest levels of endemic species in the world, mainly birds,

⁵⁵ "Relatório Enxurrada em São Tome e Príncipe", Ministry of Finance, 2022. Estimated losses and damages of Euro 33 million.

amphibians, plants, bats, reptiles, butterflies and mollusks distributed in different terrestrial and marine ecosystems and habitats. A quarter of

landmass in STP is covered by primary forest (see figure 9).

#	Name	Príncipe Island			Sao Tomé Island			Total		
		Area (ha)	Distribution (%)		Area (ha)	Distribution (%)		Area (ha)	Distribution (%)	
1	Native Forest	3,478.50	25.0%	90.8%	22,607.80	26.4%	85.5%	26,086.30	26.2%	86.2%
2	Secondary Forest	4,926.96	35.4%		26,120.30	30.5%		31,047.26	31.2%	
3	Shade Plantation	4,237.13	30.4%		24,418.25	28.5%		28,655.38	28.8%	
4	Non-Forest	1,274.41	9.2%	9.2%	12,423.30	14.5%	14.5%	13,697.71	13.8%	13.8%
	TOTAL	13,917	100.0%	100.0%	85,569.65	100.0%	100.0%	99,486.65	100.0%	100.0%

Table 2: Forest area in São Tomé in 2014 (Soares 2017) and Príncipe in 2016 (Freitas 2019)

The ecological wealth of STP is also recognized by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) through its Man and the Biosphere Programme, which resulted in the designation of a large part of the country's territory as a biosphere reserve in 2012, including the entire island of Príncipe, and its islets Bom Bom, Boné do Jóquei, Mosteiros, Santana and Pedra da Galei, and Tinhosas Islands, as well as the Obô Natural Park on the island of São Tomé, which represents 30% of its land area. Nevertheless, the people of STP rely heavily on forest resources and deforestation is increasingly leading to erosion and environmental degradation. In recent years, STP has strengthened the legal framework for the management of forest resources and conservation of biodiversity. The degradation of mangroves through encroachment and illegal harvesting is leading to a proliferation of invasive, salt tolerant vegetation causing coastal erosion and leading to the destruction of the coastal infrastructures. Hunting and the use of wildlife resources are an important part of life in rural communities and contribute to

nutrition and food security, but the fast-increasing population puts additional strains on sustainable forest management. The Ibrahim Index of African Governance ranks STP in 9th place in the category 'sustainable environment' and its stewardship of the environment is considered to be 'slowly improving' over the period 2010-2019⁵⁶.

Forested areas as a percentage of total territory have declined from 60.5% in 2010 to 54.7% in 2019 and the number of threatened species has grown from 70 to 140 over the same period⁵⁷. Habitat loss is resulting from over-exploitation of forests and large-scale commercial agricultural production, such as palm oil or vanilla tree plantations. Wood remains the main input used in the residential construction, and this constitutes one of the greatest environmental threats to the forests.

STP has made significant progress in electricity supply, reaching 83% of the population in 2019, of which 83.3% of the urban population and 81.8% of the rural population, although still lower than peer Cape Verde, with 94% in the same year (WDI, 2020). However, the country relies on

⁵⁶ Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2020), "Ibrahim Index of African Governance: Index Report"

⁵⁷ UNDESA "World Statistics Pocketbook, 2022."

imported oil for thermal power generation, which produces 95% of electricity, with only 5% originating from clean sources (hydroelectric power). The high price of electricity combined with frequent power outages means that families depend on alternative energy sources, mostly charcoal or diesel generators for wealthier families. Irregular access to electricity means that biomass consumption (wood-energy and agricultural waste) remains an important source of energy at the household level and in small-scale commercial sectors. Furthermore, 46% of households use polluting fuels and technologies for cooking, with only 3% using clean fuels and technologies for cooking and lighting. Kerosene is a frequent recourse for lighting in both poor households (42.1%) and relatively higher income households (31.8%). In rural areas, 73.9% of households remain dependent on firewood or charcoal for cooking (compared to 34.6% in urban areas) which is one of the main threats to ecosystem and biodiversity conservation⁵⁸, and the use of such forestry sources are not supported by sustainable forest management plans and practices.

Currently, only 20% of waste in STP is collected by public and private services with the remaining 80% burned or dumped on slopes, cliffs and abandoned land. Recycling is very limited, with a few small-scale initiatives by NGOs. The 2nd National Plan for Integrated Solid Waste Management (2018-2023) identifies the main causes for the current critical situation in the sector as being: (i) an obsolete legal, regulatory and institutional framework; (ii) a lack of financial, technical and human resources for an adequate integrated waste management at local and regional government level; (iii) Lack of coordination, planning and clear attributions in the sector institutions; and (iv) inadequate and insufficient infrastructure.

⁵⁸ INE MICS 2019

⁵⁹ According to the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management (2016),

In recent years, changes in climate have affected the length of the rainy season period, the amount and frequency of rain and resulted in higher temperatures. The most recurrent hazards are droughts, floods and severe storms, including increasingly intense storms, rain related flooding and landslides, and sea level rise. STP is particularly vulnerable to coastal and river flash floods following heavy rainfall. The convergence of these hazards from 2014 to 2021 resulted in widespread flooding across coastal communities that destroyed homes and caused loss of lives⁵⁹.

People who rely on agriculture for their livelihoods have been worst affected and put their food and nutrition security at serious risk. The lack of irrigation systems to mitigate the impact of climate change and increases in pest and diseases affecting fruit, vegetables and staple foods, have impacted on agricultural production and reduced the incomes of rural families in STP. Moreover, these factors have resulted in food production being insufficient to meet domestic demand making local produce expensive compared to imported alternatives. As a result, the population is increasingly preferring to purchase imported food products over those that are locally produced. STP's fisheries are also vulnerable to climate change. The potential severity of the impact is not fully understood but includes acidification and rising sea temperatures, and the impacts are likely to be initially seen on fish stocks themselves but later marine and coastal ecosystems on which much marine biodiversity depends will be impacted. An ongoing study of the WB on the impact of climate change on African marine fisheries estimates that by the end of the century, STP's maximum catch potential could decrease by 40%. Pollution and coastal development present additional threats with waste affecting yields and contaminating catches⁶⁰. These

⁶⁰ World Bank, Systematic Diagnostic on Prosperity for all Santomeans': Priorities to end poverty, promote growth and build resilience in São Tomé and Príncipe, September 2021.

weather hazards are not only causing coastal and soil erosion and the destruction of infrastructure but are also resulting in an increase in diseases and malnutrition, in particular for poor communities⁶¹.

On the other hand, STP's climate vulnerability deeply contrasts with its low level of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and its status as a net carbon sink that contributes to global CO² removal. In July 2021, STP submitted an updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the result of a participatory process, that contemplates a 27% reduction in emissions by 2030 to be achieved by increasing its target of renewable energy generation from 26 MW to 49 MW and by reducing power grid losses and decarbonizing the transport sector. The NDC's implementation plan seeks to reduce climate-related risks and increase community resilience, but its 150 million USD budget has not been funded so far.

The country is also signaling the will to push a transition to blue economy, to address overfishing, marine pollution, and climate change and maximizing the social and economic benefits of oceanic resources over the long term⁶², but again

this will require a paradigm shift that changes the pattern of public and private investments and the evaluation of development proposals and monitoring that prioritizes criteria related to sustainability, and financial resources that are not present.

Despite the efforts to strengthen the environmental legal and regulatory framework, STP's capacity to implement sustainable management of its natural resources is challenged by (i) weak organization/planning of agricultural sector due to lack of data, low access to land for vulnerable people, weak rural services, lack of transformation support, (ii) low organization of fishing sector, coastal areas and oceans, due lack of coastal planning, lack of security and surveillance, inefficient practices and poor access to credit, (iii) over-exploitation of forests, due to lack of policies and incentives, weak institutional capacity both technical and financial, lack of monitoring and surveillance, lack of construction alternatives, and (iv) dysfunctional mechanisms for climate change response, due to frail institutional capacity, including inexistence of early warning system as well as insufficient waste management system.



PEACE - GOVERNANCE ANALYSIS

Sao Tome and Principe is considered an example of democracy and peace in the central African region ⁶³. The multi-party democratic system, under semi-Presidential system similar to Portugal's political system, introduced since 1990 has led to calm and fair elections, multiple peaceful transfers of power to rival parties for Government leadership or for the post of President, the formation of a coalition Government between various political parties and the slowly strengthening of maturity of the democratic institutions. Presidential elections took place in 2021 and legislative/local elections in September 2022, which led to a peaceful transition of power after a landslide victory by the main opposition party ADI. The current number of female MP's in the newly voted Parliament stands at only 15 % and is lower than some previous legislatures. However, a parity law which provides for 40% of female representation in Government, public sector and elected bodies was approved and promulgated in September 2022. Application of the law remains a challenge. The current Government has 40% women Ministers while women only represent 20% of the newly appointed Constitutional Court judges. Civil society organizations, social media and the press enjoy a relatively high level of freedom, though the media sector is poorly developed. This is confirmed by the Freedom House ranking of 2021 in which STP scores highly (84 out of 100)⁶⁴.

Political stability has been strengthened over the past years. The first 2 decades of democratic transition have been marked by many changes in Government composition and Prime Ministers, fueled by the prospects of oil discoveries which never materialized but raised the stakes. For the

second time in history, a government managed to complete its full term in 2022. The first being from 2014-2018.

The Government of STP is devoted to multilateralism and the country is part of the Small Island Developing State community⁶⁵ though it has not yet played a very active role in this forum. It is slowly assuming more responsibilities in the international field. Most recently, STP was elected to the presidency of the CPLP (Communities of Portuguese-speaking Countries) for a two year period (from mid 2023 to mid 2025). STP was reluctant to accept the position due to its difficult economic situation, but was encouraged to accept by its peers, especially representatives of Portugal and Angola⁶⁶.

Governance challenges remain abundant in a new democracy. The governance system as stipulated in the Constitution is based on a social contract between the population and the state. The backbone of democracy to uphold the constitution is an effective rule of law that protects the freedoms and rights of the citizens and guarantees access to justice.

A first challenge exists at the level of the state/citizen social contract as the state is seen by the population as the provider of wealth and services. Tax payments are minimal and international aid is seen as the solution to all problems. The political environment is hampered by a permanent latent conflict, mutual distrust among the main political players, and precarious social cohesion linked to the poverty and poor social indicators of the general education in all areas of life, except health and education. In May 2023, VAT was introduced for the first time.

⁶³ "São Tomé and Príncipe holds regular, competitive national elections and has undergone multiple transfers of power between rival parties" in Freedom House (2021)

⁶⁴ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/sao-tome-and-principe/freedom-world/2021>

⁶⁵ São Tomé and Príncipe is one of the 38 members of UN considered as "Small Island Developing States (SIDS)"

⁶⁶ See for example : "Portugal reitera "Apoio total" à presidência são-tomense da CPLP em 2023" & "São Tomé assumirá a próxima presidência da CPLP"

Over the past 20 years, the political agenda has been marked by expectations of the existence of oil. Exploratory drilling is still underway in its territorial waters but so far, no major oil discoveries have been announced⁶⁷. The history of exploitation of natural resources in Africa has shown that natural resources may be a curse but can also be a blessing if good governance and social cohesion are guaranteed⁶⁸.

STP suffers from fragile governance and a political mode of action that is characterized not so much by a "winner takes all" approach as by a "once you lose you lose all" view. This makes elections not just competitive but increasingly a matter of political survival. Symptomatic of the heightened politicization and lack of national political consensus on fundamental matters was the controversial approval of the current electoral laws at the end of 2020⁶⁹. The 2018 elections showed a hardening of positions, with the country experiencing electoral violence for the first time. Despite a strong polarization between the 2 main political parties, the parliamentary and local elections of September 2022 took place peacefully and were praised internationally for being fair and transparent, marking an important milestone in the consolidation of democracy in STP.

However, the tragic events of November 2022 have shown the weaknesses of the justice and security system. On November 25, the army barracks revolt was followed by the torture and extrajudicial killings of 4 civilians which has tarnished the reputation of the country internationally and shown the weaknesses of the justice sector as well as of the democratic control of the security sector.

Social cohesion is affected by growing economic inequality but is also a corollary of the State/Citizen social contract being weak. From their perspective, the citizen does not see the benefits in their social contract with the State, with poor and inefficient service delivery. The social contract on the citizen's side is also weakened by low tax collection and a growing parallel economy. Paradoxically, despite weak social cohesion, electoral participation remains high, with 8 out of 10 electors casting ballots⁷⁰.

The second challenge is at the level of the rule of law institutions, which are still young. A large inflow of fresh resources will put pressure on them, in particular the justice system which is relatively weak. Widespread perception of corruption and the lack of credibility and independence of the justice system are signs of a weak social cohesion. The President of the Republic stated in January 2022 that "the country is caught in a web of corruption, which has become institutional"⁷¹. A few months later, in April, São Toméan civil society launched the country first Corruption and Governance Report and Index which concluded that "corruption and bribery are seen as common practice in a country where political power controls the administration and justice."⁷². The latest Afrobarometer survey in the country (2018) confirms the perception of corruption, with 65% of those surveyed believing that the government handles fighting corruption badly (up from 46% in 2016), and 61% perceiving corruption as having increased (up from 48%), and 80% of respondents being concerned about possible retaliation if they report corruption⁷³.

67 Projecto Jaca" inaugura a busca de petróleo na ZEE de São Tomé e Príncipe"

68 See for example Polterovič, Viktor M., Vladimir V. Popov, and Alexander Tonis. 2010. Resource abundance: a curse or blessing? New York, NY: United Nations, Dep. of Economic and Social Affairs.

http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2010/wp93_2010.pdf.

69 "São Tomé e Príncipe: Presidente veta polémica revisão da Lei Eleitoral

70 See for example "São Tomé e Príncipe: Resultados provisórios dão vitória nas legislativas à ADI"

71 See for example "O país está enclausurado numa teia de corrupção, que passou a ser institucional"

72 See : Índice de Corrupção e Governação em São Tomé e Príncipe (ICG – STP) 2021.

73 See Afrobarometer Project. Afrobarometer 7 Merged 34 Country Survey 2016-2018 [dataset]. Version 1. International: Afrobarometer [producer and distributor, 2021.

The structural weaknesses of the rule of law and the justice system is the main challenge for the fight against corruption and the implementation of the development agenda and the sustainability of peace in the country. There is a perception that there is neither equality before the law nor equity in the application of the law. In addition, there is frequent arbitrariness, a lack of procedural and legal transparency, and a lack of independent instruments for oversight of the justice sector. The politicization of justice is one of the factors adding to political instability and economic fragility. The several divergent decisions on the Rosema brewery case⁷⁴, conflict over the constitutional agreement which resulted in the delay of the second round of the presidential elections⁷⁵, and the detention of members of former governments⁷⁶, are some of the examples illustrating the weakness of the rule of law.

As with the justice sector, the security sector suffers from structural deficits and lack of capacity that limit its effectiveness and make it susceptible to political and partisan interference. The general normative framework in force in Sao Tome and Principe does not appear to take sufficient account of coordination issues between the various institutions in the justice and security sectors.

Another challenge to be addressed is the professionalization of the armed forces and security services. Defense and security institutions do not appear to have undergone in-depth strategic reviews or major reforms for several years and suffer from discrepancy between current needs and their capabilities. There is a need for an in-depth strategic review and reform of the defense and security institutions to align their requirements with their capabilities to

address threats such as maritime insecurity, illegal trafficking, and financial crime. This includes rationalizing internal security units, consolidating the naval force, and establishing a comprehensive territorial network while strengthening parliamentary oversight.

In addition, institutionally, a clear separation of the administrative supervision of the defense and security forces should be established to avoid confusion of roles and competition for resources between both institutions. The numerous internal security units are not streamlined to make the national police force the main player in this internal security and there is no clarity whether the naval force should be consolidated as the primary tool for external territorial defense.

Beyond these, the country needs to better participate in regional engagements to strengthen its security institutions by leveraging training, information exchange, resources and expertise provided by bilateral partners and organizations with extensive expertise in security sector reform.

The present state of the rule of law and security institutions governance exclude vulnerable members of the population from justice. Women, youth, the elderly, disabled people, and the poorest face great difficulties, costs, and disincentives in accessing the justice system. This applies particularly to residents in remote or rural areas. Furthermore, the still emerging civil society⁷⁷ faces structural weaknesses in becoming a dominant voice, and in addition there are deficient institutional spaces to channel their voice to the organs of sovereignty. The lack of digitalized civil registry, the poor authentication and absence of interface between various parts of citizen registries is hampering the

<https://www.afrobarometer.org/countries/sao-tome-and-principe/>

⁷⁴ See for example “Demissão de 3 juizes conselheiros do Tribunal Constitucional”

⁷⁵ See for exemple “Eleições em STP: Tribunal Constitucional voltará a analisar o recurso de Delfim Neves”

⁷⁶ See for example “São Tomé e Príncipe: Díficil acordo entre Polícia Judiciária e Ministério Público.”

⁷⁷ NGOs including organizations that focus on human rights and governance issues are free to operate in STP. The Federation of NGOs in STP has over one hundred members, focusing largely on poverty, education, health, and gender, but few have sufficient resources or capacity to have a sustained and lasting impact on public policy.

effectiveness of the public administration and provides an additional cost to the mandatory update of voter registries in times of elections.

As is the pattern in SIDS countries, STP faces rising emigration, with an estimated 20% of Sao Tomeans living abroad⁷⁸. The diaspora represented 12% of voters in the 2022 elections⁷⁹. Emigrants have been increasingly vocal and present in the national political discussion, but mainly via social networks and not in an institutional forum. The political and civic inclusion of youth remains a challenge. Despite their demographic importance the youth have a limited presence in national bodies, parliament, or local government. Limited economic opportunities, high cost of living and the recent relaxation of the visa rules for Portuguese speaking countries have resulted in a surge in emigration, in particular of youth, and in visa issuance, estimated at 35 000 in 2023-4, representing 16.7 % of the population⁸⁰

On human rights, the country has made some progress over the past years with the ratification of key treaties and the alignment of domestic legislation with human rights conventions. An example is the Penal Code which was updated in 2021 to enhance the Code's alignment with international human rights conventions. Due to capacity constraints, reporting to some of the main Human Right treaties and bodies is behind schedule⁸¹. The latest Universal Periodic Review⁸² (third cycle) took place in 2021 and its recommendations relate mainly to the inclusion of the vulnerable in socio-economic life, gender-based violence, access to justice and the inclusion of people with disabilities⁸³. Weaknesses were also recorded in the absence of an independent human rights institution to monitor the human rights situation and make recommendations. The next UPR review for STP will be in January 2026.

3 POPULATION GROUPS LEFT, OR AT RISK OF BEING LEFT BEHIND

The concept of “leaving no one behind” goes beyond traditional notions of poverty (monetary poverty) and requires a deeper and multi-dimensional analysis to combat discrimination and rising inequalities, requiring the identification of patterns of exclusion, vulnerability and inequality as a means to identifying those people or groups who are already, or at risk of being,

excluded and discriminated against. Analysis based on a review of relevant literature and consultations with public sector, civil society and development partners, indicate that a significant proportion of the population of STP faces, or risks, exclusion and marginalization. These have been identified as following:

POOR PEOPLE AND THE EXTREME POOR

Between 1990 and 2022, STP's HDI score increased by 38.3% achieving a value of 0.613, placing the country in 141th place

out of 189 countries and territories. However, STP's HDI is still slightly below the average for countries in the medium

⁷⁸ In the absence of updated census, see for example Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development

⁷⁹ 14 328 voters in diaspora were registered in the 2022 legislative elections against a total of 122 596 voters (CEN)

⁸⁰ Figures from the Embassy of Portugal in Sao Tome and Principe, February 2025

⁸¹ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/La teReporting.aspx

⁸² The [Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\)](#) is a unique process which involves a review of the human rights records of all UN Member States. The UPR is a State-driven process, under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, which provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations.

⁸³ UN Human Rights Office, Universal Periodic Review - Sao Tome and Principe

human development group (of 0.631), although above the average for Sub-Saharan Africa (0.547) and LDC (0.538). When adjusted for inequality, STP's HDI falls to 0.52, a loss of 10% due to inequality

in the distribution of the HDI dimension indices. Nevertheless, STP performs slightly better than its peers, with the score for medium development countries being of 0.46 and for Sub-Saharan Africa of 0.38.

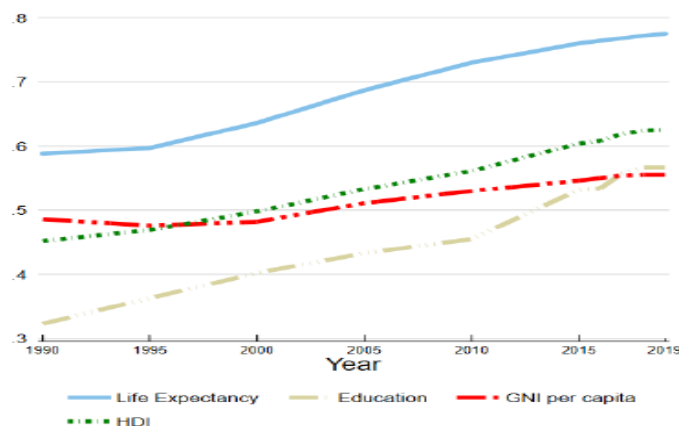


Figure 4: Trends in São Tomé and Príncipe's HDI component indices 1990-2019

STP HDI improvements are largely attributable to an increase in average life expectancy, improvement in GNI per capita from \$3,338 in 2010 to \$4,054 in 2022, and an increase in the expected and average years of schooling from 10.6 to 12.7 and from 4.9 to 5.9 respectively over the period 2010 to 2022⁸⁴. These development gains have led the country to graduate from LDC status in December 2024.

However, and on the other hand, the country's Gini coefficient has risen from 30.8 in 2010 to 40.7 in 2017⁸⁵, indicating that the inequality gap is widening at an alarming rate, meaning that a sizeable proportion of STP's population is not sharing in the benefits of the country's progress on human development. Statistical averages such as the GNI per capita conceal the inequality. This means that, despite the previously identified development gains, the country still faces serious human development challenges in terms of the eradication of extreme poverty

and malnutrition, in which little progress has been achieved since 2001⁸⁶.

Poverty rates have remained stubbornly high, practically unchanged, marginally increasing in 2017 (66.7%), compared to 2010 (66.2%)⁸⁷. Poverty is relatively evenly spread across the territory although slightly higher in urban than rural areas (26.8% and 24.4% respectively). Urban areas and the districts of Caué and Lembá in the south and south/west have markedly higher levels of poverty. Some 46% of households comprising couples with children are poor, and female-headed households are poorer than their male equivalents with a poverty rate of 61.6% compared to 55.8%⁸⁸. The incidence rate of extreme poverty in STP is 35.6% based on the expenditures data of the 2017 household survey, implying that the total per capita expenditure of 35.6% of individuals in STP is less than the cost of the food basket that provides the minimum caloric requirements, corroborating the

⁸⁴ HDR, 2022

⁸⁵ WDI 2022

⁸⁶ WFPCSP (2019-2024) - UNDP. Reports on Human Development: Human Development Indicators <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/STP>.

⁸⁷ INE IOF 2010, 2019.

⁸⁸ INE IOF 2019.

significant prevalence of food insecurity in the country.

The picture looks a bit different when looking at the multidimensional poverty. The concept of multidimensional poverty is measured by each person's deprivations across 10 indicators⁸⁹ in three equally weighted dimensions: health, education and standard of living. The most recent global report in 2021⁹⁰ indicates that in STP 11.7% of the population (about 25,000

WOMEN

Women in Sao Tome and Principe continue to face structural and systemic barriers to equal participation in the labor market. Despite the Parity Law adopted late 2022 and recommending 40% of women representation in the government, parliament, and public administration, the labor force participation rate remains significantly lower for women (41.4%) than for men (74.4%), with women also experiencing higher unemployment rates (7.9% vs. 4.1% for men). Women are underrepresented in the small formal private sector but are overrepresented in the public sector and in the most vulnerable types of employment, particularly in the informal sector, domestic work, and unpaid labor in family enterprises.

One of the primary structural barriers is the gendered division of labor, deeply rooted in sociocultural norms and expectations that assign women the primary responsibility for unpaid domestic work and caregiving. Women continue to bear a disproportionate burden of household chores and childcare, limiting their availability for formal employment. In poor and rural families, women and girls are also responsible for collecting water and wood for fuel, further restricting their ability to

persons) are multidimensionally poor, including some 2.1% (4,500) severely (multidimensionally) poor, while an additional 17% are classified as vulnerable to become multidimensionally poor (36,200). Overall, the monetary poor and the multidimensionally poor constitute the most vulnerable group of people in STP, comprehending all other groups, which, to some extent, are the consequence of the high level of poverty.

pursue education, skill-building, and economic opportunities.

Additionally, legal and institutional gaps contribute to the persistence of gender inequalities in the workforce. While Sao Tome and Principe have laws promoting gender equality, challenges in enforcement, limited access to affordable childcare, and the absence of policies supporting work-life balance hinder women's full economic participation. Occupational segregation also plays a role, with women concentrated in lower-paying, less secure jobs and sectors traditionally perceived as "feminine," reinforcing a significant gender wage gap. The distribution of Gross National Income (GNI) per capita reflects these disparities, with women earning less than half of what men earn.

Structural barriers in education and skills development also impact women's employment opportunities. While educational attainment has improved, gender biases in vocational training and professional development limit women's entry into high-growth and higher-paying industries such as technology, finance, and energy. Limited access to financial resources, land ownership, and business capital further restrict women's ability to enter or expand entrepreneurial ventures.

89 Nutrition, child mortality, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing and assets.

90 2021 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) <https://hdr.undp.org/content/2021-global-multidimensional-poverty-index-mpi#/indicies/MPI>

Santomean's score on the Women, Business and Law (WBL) Index increased from 53.8 in 2008 to 83.1 in 2023⁹⁰ following a series of reforms, including the law on domestic violence in 2008, new Criminal Code in 2012, and new Labor Code in 2019.

In the 2021-22 Human Development Report (HDR), Sao Tome and Principe had a Gender Inequality Index (GII) value of 0.494, ranking 124th out of 162 countries,

reflecting persistent gender disparities in health, empowerment, and economic activity. The country's Gender Development Index (GDI) value was 0.907, with a female HDI of 0.584 compared to 0.643 for men. While this is above the Sub-Saharan African average, it remains below that of peer countries such as Cabo Verde, which has made more substantial progress in gender parity.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Sao Tome and Principe has a predominantly young population, with 61% under the age of 25. This youth demographic presents both challenges and opportunities for the country's development trajectory. A well-educated and employed youth population could drive economic growth and social transformation. However, high unemployment rates, gender disparities, limited access to quality education, and persistent vulnerabilities are major barriers preventing young people from fulfilling their potential.

- **Youth Unemployment:** The unemployment rate among 15-24-year-olds is 21.3%, significantly higher than the national average. Many young people lack financial resources to continue their education or perceive that the school curricula are irrelevant to labor market demands. As a result, they enter the workforce with low technical qualifications and are absorbed into informal, low-productivity jobs, perpetuating poverty.
- **Gender Disparities:** Young women face additional barriers due to traditional gender norms, limited access to economic opportunities, and disproportionate caregiving responsibilities. The gendered division of labor restricts their participation in formal employment and entrepreneurship.

- **Youth at Risk:** Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to early pregnancy, sexual exploitation, and gender-based violence, which further limits their educational and economic opportunities. Violence against children and youth remains alarmingly high, with 84% of children experiencing violent discipline and 70% facing psychological aggression.

Despite constitutional guarantees of free education, hidden costs such as school materials, transportation, and meals remain significant barriers, particularly for low-income families. As a result, 27% of school-age children from the poorest 40% of households cite education as "too expensive," leading to higher dropout rates and lower enrollment levels. Additionally, there is a mismatch between the education system and labor market demands, as school curricula fail to equip youth with practical skills in STEM, digital literacy, and vocational training, leaving them ill-prepared for employment. The lack of investment in technical education further exacerbates this issue, limiting young people's ability to access higher-paying, stable jobs. Gender disparities also persist, as socio-cultural norms, early pregnancies, and unpaid domestic work disproportionately affect girls, restricting their educational attainment and transition into formal employment.

São Tomé and Príncipe's small and undiversified economy presents significant challenges for youth employment, as economic activity remains concentrated in agriculture, tourism, and informal trade, with a weak formal private sector unable to generate sufficient job opportunities. Youth, particularly women, face structural barriers to employment, including limited job creation and a lack of diversified industries. Gendered disparities in economic participation further exacerbate inequalities, as women are overrepresented in the public sector and informal employment but underrepresented in the formal private sector, where wages and job security are higher. Women also face a significant income gap, with their GNI per capita being less than half that of men. Additionally, financial exclusion remains a major constraint, as young entrepreneurs, especially women, struggle to access credit and financial services, limiting their ability to start and grow businesses. Weak legal frameworks and restrictive banking practices further hinder youth entrepreneurship and financial inclusion, reducing opportunities for economic independence and upward mobility.

Gaps in social protection systems leave many young people in Sao Tome and

Príncipe without adequate safety nets, increasing their vulnerability to poverty, child labor, school dropouts, and economic insecurity. Low investment in social protection programs limits the country's ability to effectively address these challenges, exposing many youth to economic and social risks. Additionally, violence and exploitation remain widespread, with 84% of children experiencing violent discipline, 14% subjected to severe physical punishment, and 70% facing psychological aggression. Sexual exploitation of girls, including transactional sex, is a growing concern, further contributing to early pregnancies and reducing their educational and employment opportunities. Weak enforcement of child protection laws and gaps in the justice system result in low prosecution rates for gender-based violence and child exploitation cases, limiting access to justice and support for victims. Addressing these challenges requires strengthening social protection mechanisms, enhancing legal enforcement, and expanding targeted interventions to protect and empower vulnerable youth.

91

PEOPLE WORKING IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR

Most of STP's population (above 60%) works in the informal sector and is much poorer than those working in the formal sector, in precarious urban jobs related to domestic services, retail and transportation or in small scale agriculture or fishery production, including working as farmers, fishermen or selling the related products (known as *palaiés*⁹²).

The INE 2017 household survey used social security contributions as a proxy for

working in the formal sector, and of the total respondents at working age, 21% are covered by social security while 68.7% informed not to be contributing to social security. The survey also identified that those employed in the informal sector have a poverty rate of 63.8%, against a poverty rate of 47.4% for those working in the formal sector, establishing a clear relation between informality and poverty.

91 INE IOF 2017.

92 Informal seller in the streets.

PEOPLE LIVING IN THE RURAL AREAS AND IN THE ISLAND OF PRÍNCIPE

The analysis above has disclosed that the households in rural areas have lower performance for basic domestic water, sanitation and hand washing. Also, that poorer households in rural areas, have poorer health outcomes, and are heavily dependent of forest resources such as firewood for cooking. They suffer from the consequences of lack of proper infrastructures related to health, education, transport and from weak institutional support, rural services, transformation support to their income generation activities, such as fisheries and agriculture, which are increasingly impacted by climate change, with losses of production and of incomes for rural families. They have less

access to financial services for both family and businesses' finances.

Regarding the island of Príncipe, the issues identified in previous paragraph are aggravated by an insufficient air and maritime connections, further slowing its socioeconomic development. Although the socio-economic situation does not differ greatly from Sao Tome Island, Príncipe Island is left behind on certain aspects such as access to justice, cost of logistics resulting from the poor connections, and high cost of construction and access to quality education and health⁹³, which is due to the double insularity.

ELDERLY AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

According to the INE, only 5% of the population of STP are aged 60 years or over. However, elderly people have a number of pre-existing vulnerabilities resulting from a variety of factors that are linked to a significant decline in their income following retirement age, including lack of pensions for having worked their whole life in informality, which may push them to work as much as possible, even after retirement age. On average, 49.4% of the total income of households headed by an elderly person comes from remittances⁹⁴. Elderly people are also more likely to suffer from underlying health conditions and non-communicable diseases, which as previously mentioned is the first cause of mortality in STP. People with disabilities face specific challenges encompassing physical and environmental accessibility barriers, stigmatization, limited access to education, employment, health services, and inadequate government support and institutional frameworks. Additional hurdles include

restricted access to technology, transportation limitations, policy inadequacies, lack of community education, and insufficient participation in decision-making processes. In addition, they are not well represented in the formal labor market, and often depend on family support and the social protection system, which has a specific fund for the handicapped. The database of the single social registry "Cadastro Unico" that includes around 30 000 of highly vulnerable people in need of support indicates that 12.9 % of them have either visual, motoric or mental deficiencies.

The latest data from São Tomé and Príncipe, sourced from the 2012 General Population and Housing Census (RGPH-2012), sheds light on the current situation regarding people with disabilities (PWDs). With 6,274 individuals identified, comprising 3.5% of the population, the majority reside in urban areas, indicating higher incidences in such environments. Gender disparities reveal a higher

⁹³ UM RC Príncipe mission report, May 2022.

⁹⁴ INE IOF 2017

prevalence among women, exacerbated by poverty rates where women are disproportionately affected. Furthermore, data on children between 0 to 11 years old highlight significant numbers at risk or with disabilities, with only 49% having access to the education system. These statistics indicate pervasive challenges facing PWDs in Sao Tome and Principe, necessitating comprehensive interventions across education, healthcare, and socio-economic sectors to foster inclusion and ensure their rights and dignity are upheld. The local consultation process on the inclusion of people with disabilities in Sao Tome and Principe provided an in-depth understanding of their challenges, needs, and aspirations. Conducted at the headquarters of disability associations and other community spaces, the process ensured inclusive participation from persons with disabilities, their families, civil society organizations, and key stakeholders. Utilizing interviews and focus groups, the consultation captured

diverse experiences related to accessibility, education, employment, health, and social participation. The findings highlight critical barriers such as physical inaccessibility, stigma, limited employment opportunities, and insufficient government support.

The consultation underscored the urgency of adopting inclusive policies, strengthening institutional support, and increasing engagement with international partners. Participants emphasized the need for investments in accessible infrastructure, vocational training, improved healthcare services, and enhanced social protection mechanisms. Recommendations include the development of targeted policies, the establishment of a national disability fund, tax incentives for assistive equipment, and the inclusion of people with disabilities in decision-making processes.



4 FINANCIAL LANDSCAPE

The financial landscape in Sao Tome and Principe (STP) is primarily characterized by public domestic and international finance, with a declining private sector financing since 2017. Government revenue is a crucial source of budget financing, representing 13.7% of GDP in 2023. However, when comparing to other African Small Island Developing States (SIDS) revenues, STP lags behind, as fiscal revenue constitutes 26.2% in Seychelles (2020), 19.8% of GDP in Mauritius (2023) and 18.4% in Cabo Verde (2020). Historically, over 90% of the Public Investment Program has been funded by Official Development Assistance (ODA) and loans, as government income barely covers public administration salaries and operational costs. São Tomé and Príncipe has a peg currency agreement with Portugal for the dobra.

Between 2016 and 2023, public domestic and international ODA finance averaged approximately 30% of GDP, and private financing through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), remittances and credit to private sector also averaged about 30% of GDP, however the latter cluster with a sharp decline observed in 2023, to 12.3% from 38% in 2022. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are predominantly funded through public resources and ODA. Analysis of the state budget reveals an increase in allocations to social sectors from 28% to 34% in 2023, exceeding the average for Sub-Saharan African countries, while allocations to economic areas have decreased from 22% to 15%. In 2023, budget allocations to education reached 18.3%, health 12.1%, while environmental allocations remained low at approximately 1%⁹⁵.

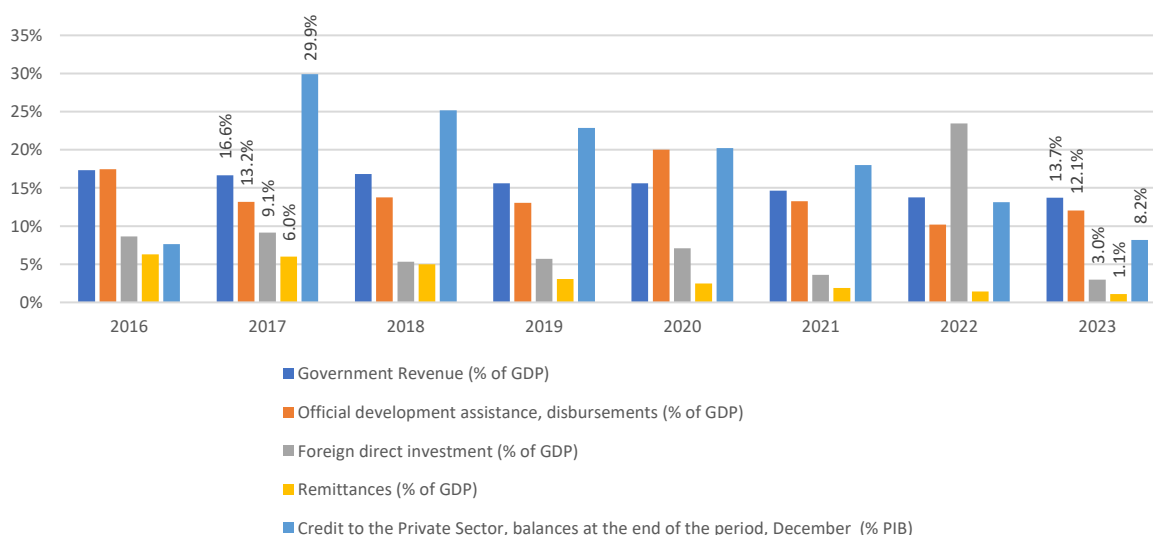


Figure 5: Financial Landscape 2016 - 2023. Sources: INE, BCST and OCDE.

95 Calculated from STP budget 2023.

STP public financial management is rated poor by the last World Bank Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA)⁹⁶ for STP, released in 2019 based on an assessment of performance for the period 2016–2018, where it was identified significant weaknesses across all facets of public financial management. The PEFA found no strong links between the Government’s strategic development plans, the medium-term fiscal frameworks and annual budgets, and concluded that STP’s development is compromised by its low capacity to plan, formulate policy, coordinate implementation, monitor performance, and introduce corrective measures. Planning and budgeting are generally inadequate and do not allow for the budget to be used as a strategic and credible instrument for control and decision-making. Government forecasts of revenues and expenditures, particularly over the medium term, are neither effective nor realistic, constraining the ability of the government to elaborate a credible cash flow plan. This leads to low budget execution, especially in the social sectors, and large budget variances in both revenue and expenditure categories meaning that the budget cannot be used effectively as a tool to discipline the management of STP’s public resources.

STP has benefited from debt relief under the HIPC and MDRI⁹⁷ initiatives, and its debt to GDP ratio declined from 125% in 1999 to 57% in 2008. Nevertheless, since then the stock of public debt as percentage of GDP has shown an increasing trend, reaching 95.6% in 2021. STP’s public debt stood at USD 603.6 million in 2023⁹⁸, equivalent to about 89% of the GDP (USD

679 million USD)⁹⁹, with imported fuel-related liabilities accounting for a significant portion. Electricity production remains a key structural socioeconomic issue in STP, and renewable energy accounts for less than 5% of the energy mix, despite the country’s hydroelectric potential. The reform of the electricity sector is critical to economic transformation, reducing the debt burden and reliance on fossil fuels, which accounted for about 30% of imports in 2024.

Expanding solar and wind energy projects, modernizing the national grid, and promoting energy efficiency measures are paramount to achieving sustainable energy security. In its January 2025 report, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) assessed that STP remains in debt distress due to prolonged unsettled external arrears, amounting to approximately 1.6% of GDP at the end of 2023. Despite this, the IMF considers the country’s debt sustainable, projecting that public debt will follow a downward trajectory. This outlook is contingent upon the authorities’ commitment to reforming the state-owned utility company EMAE, implementing fiscal consolidation, and enacting energy sector reforms. The IMF emphasizes that while debt sustainability is preserved, it is subject to significant risks, particularly the potential materialization of contingent liabilities¹⁰⁰.

The energy transition to green sources is paramount for STP development, not only for environmental and debt sustainability, but also to release public resources for investments in socioeconomic development.

⁹⁶ PEFA

⁹⁷ HIPC - Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative and MDRI - Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative

⁹⁸ STP Debt Cabinet, Ministry of Finance, 2024.

⁹⁹ Author calculation using official debt reported by Debt Cabinet, INE nominal GDP value in STN, and BCSTP USD exchange rate (average 2023). In 2025, IMF reports 2023 Debt at USD 524.6 million, 77% of the GDP.

¹⁰⁰ IMF, 2025.

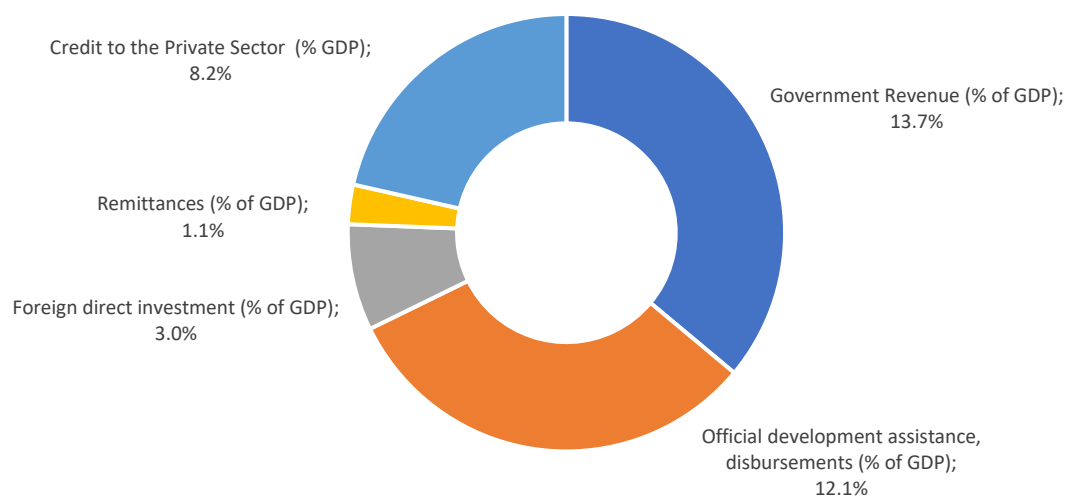


Figure 6: Financial Flows (%/GDP, 2023). Sources: INE, BCSTP, OCDE.

ODA plays a critical role in financing STP's development, and it is also a valuable source of grants and loans for the country, a trend that is likely to continue for the medium-term. In recent years ODA consistently represented over 90% of the country's Public Investment Program, and similar to other SIDS, the ODA per capita is relatively high (averaging USD 289 /capita in the past decade). Investments in the health and education sectors are highly dependent on ODA, but also the agricultural sector a main recipient of ODA, which have varied from 20.6% of the GDP in 2015 to 12% in 2023. From 2014 to 2023, STP's development assistance landscape has been shaped by a combination of key players, with total ODA disbursements fluctuating over the years, peaking in 2020 at USD 94.2 million.

The primary sources of ODA include multilateral organizations, DAC countries¹⁰¹, and EU institutions. Contributions from DAC countries have varied, with Portugal remaining the most consistent major donor. Other countries' contributions tend to be smaller and subject to more variability. Portugal stands

out as a major bilateral donor, consistently providing substantial support. For instance, in 2015, they contributed USD 27.5 million, and in 2022, this figure rose significantly to USD 32.3 million. Other DAC countries like Japan, Canada, and France have provided support, but generally at lower levels compared to Portugal and multilateral organizations.

Multilateral organizations collectively contribute a significant portion of ODA, reaching USD 77.5 million in 2020. The World Bank Group and the IMF are pivotal in this regard. The EU institutions have also played a crucial role, with increasing disbursements over the years, demonstrated by their USD 16.5 million contribution in 2023. The United Nation's contributions to STP, channeled through various agencies, have generally fluctuated between approximately USD 4 million and USD 9 million annually from 2014 to 2023.

The United Nations system is committed to focusing its development efforts on an inclusive social system, climate action, green and blue growth, as well as transparent and accountable institutions in STP..

¹⁰¹ DAC countries are member states of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), an international forum within the

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

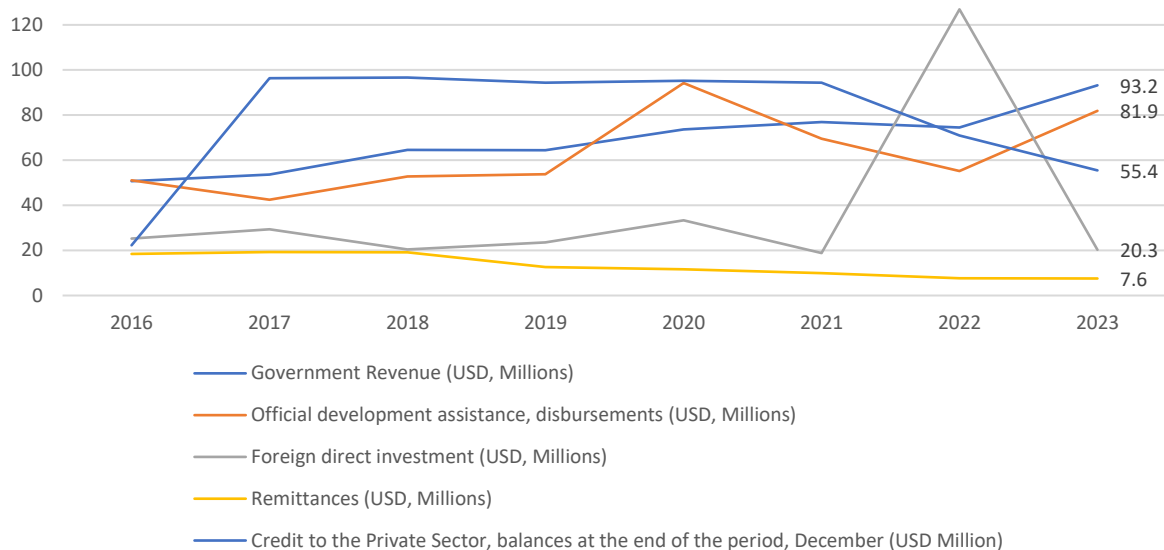


Figure 7: Financial Flows (USD Million, 2016 - 2023). Sources: INE, BCSTP, OCDE.

FDI plays a crucial role in STP's development, yet its potential remains constrained by a challenging investment climate. The country's development relies on government expenditures, sustained by ODA, government debt, and FDI, primarily directed towards the oil and tourism sectors.

While FDI has contributed significantly to external financing, its connections to the SDGs are currently limited and require strengthening¹⁰². Over the past decade, FDI inflows have experienced significant fluctuations, reaching notable figures such as USD 25.2 million in 2014, USD 29.4 million in 2015, and peaking at USD 126.9 million in 2022. As a percentage of GDP, these inflows have ranged from 23.5% (2022) to 3% (2023), stressing the varying impact of FDI on the national economy, and indicating a substantial decline compared to the previous year, with FDI at USD 20.3 million in 2023.

Compared to other African SIDS, STP average FDI share of GDP from 2016 to 2023 (8,2%) is only behind Seychelles at 10%, and surpasses Cabo Verde at 5.3%, further indicating its importance to the national economy. The investment climate in STP continues to pose challenges. Indicators reveal that the private sector face difficulties in enforcing contracts, resolving insolvencies, registering property, accessing credit, protecting minority investors, and obtaining electricity.

To fully leverage FDI for sustainable development, STP needs to enhance its business climate and attract investments in key sectors, such as renewable energy, education, health, water, and sanitation, thereby strengthening the links between FDI and the SDGs. Remittances as a percentage of GDP have generally decreased in the last decade, fluctuating from 6.4% in 2014 to 1.1% in 2023, significantly lower than peer countries (Cabo Verde 14.4%, WDI). This decline most likely has a larger impact on female-headed and elderly-headed households as

¹⁰² INE VNR, 2021.

the main recipients of remittances in STP. According to the INE household survey¹⁰³, remittances account for 40% and 49.4% respectively of the total income of these households. However, it is important to note that this data is not capturing remittances that come through the informal economy.

The private financial sector in STP remains underdeveloped, concentrated, undiversified, and lacking depth¹⁰⁴. In 2025 it consists of five banks, primarily owned by foreign investors, and two small firms offering microfinance products. Credit to the private sector has significantly declined, from 33.2% of GDP in 2014 to 8.2% in 2023. Aggregate soundness indicators of the banking system have shown recent improvements, particularly in solvency (29% in 2020), robust provisions,

and liquidity (49% in 2020). However, the high level of Non-Performing Loans (29.6% in 2020) remains a concern, contributing to high credit costs and limiting banks' willingness to provide sufficient credit to the private sector.

This is particularly critical as credit availability is a key driver for private sector investment and financing SDG-related investments¹⁰⁵. Furthermore, the majority of credit extended by banks to the private sector is directed towards trade-related activities, such as construction (37%), consumption (20%), and business services (19%). Agriculture and fisheries combined received only 3% of total loans provided by banks in 2019, indicating limited bank financing for productive investment in these sectors¹⁰⁶.

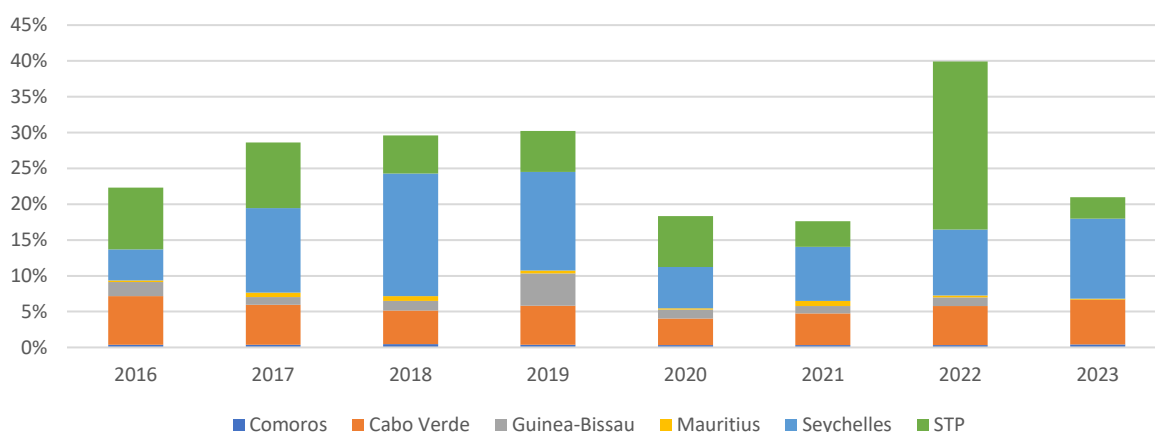


Figure 8: African SIDS (FDI/GDP, 2016 to 2023). Sources: BCST for STP and WB for other SIDS.

¹⁰³ INE IOF, 2020.

¹⁰⁴ Commercial banks provide conventional financial services, such as savings and checking accounts, money transfers, debit cards, and loans.

¹⁰⁵ According to the finance theory while excessive credit to private sector can pose risks, its availability can be key driver for sustainable development and job creation. Country with credit to

private sector between 70 and 100% of GDP, is considered with well-developed financial system and country with credit to private sector of GDP less than 15%, means that firms and households has very limited access to credit for investment and income generation.

¹⁰⁶ BCSTP, WDI 2020

5 ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN MULTIDIMENSIONAL RISKS TO SDG ACHIEVEMENT

VULNERABILITY OF BEING A SMALL ISLAND STATE SUFFERING THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The first group of risks for STP results from it being a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) with multi-vulnerabilities. They are vulnerable economically because they have small domestic markets, little diversified and heavily dependent on external trade, with high transportation cost. Their social vulnerability results from the rapid population growth that places stress on the provision of basic services and employment opportunities. Their environmental vulnerability is due to a fragile natural environment, which is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, especially the rise in sea level. SIDS tend to have insufficient resilience to cope with the increasing incidence of natural disasters

such as - storm surges, droughts, and landslides. STP is partially self-sufficient thanks to a rich biodiversity and subsistence farming/fishing sector, but has also become increasingly vulnerable, in particular environmentally under the impact of climate change. This is manifesting itself in the rapid sea level rise already causing severe coastal degradation and salinization, in an increase in the incidence of extreme weather events and in a highly variable weather, putting coastal communities at risk and in particular the poorest communities.

UKRAINE-RUSSIA WAR

The impact of the Ukrainian-Russia war has hit the country hard, mainly due to the generalized rise in prices of goods, in particular food and oil. The country is highly dependent upon imports. Increasing oil prices will increase the domestic debt through EMAE, and thus, decreasing the fiscal space for the government. Angola and STP are the two countries with the highest percentage of food products in the Consumer Price Index in Africa. Although the country has benefited from the increase in prices of palm oil, the second most important export product, the high oil prices have caused a surge in prices overall, including transport cost. Higher transport cost increases the prices of export products with loss of

competitiveness, but more importantly, the cost of imported goods increases. Imports are 7 to 10 times more important in value than exports for the archipelago. The double insularity of Principe has an even greater impact on prices. The increase in prices will affect the purchasing power of the citizens, with few possibilities of the government to compensate this after the Covid exceptional support measures under a tight fiscal situation. The Ukraine-Russia war may also shift development funding to the rebuilding of Ukraine. Considering the country's high dependence on ODA, this could have a severe impact on the country's path to achieving the goals of the 2030 agenda.

REGIONAL DYNAMICS IMPACTING THE PEACE AND SECURITY OF STP

STP has sovereignty over a substantial part of the Gulf of Guinea, a key maritime area for the transportation of crude oil from the two largest African producers, Angola, and Nigeria. It is also a coveted maritime area for piracy, especially piracy of goods, but also susceptible to other illicit trade, such as drugs and illegal fishing. Sao Tome and Principe is vulnerable to being a territory that can eventually be used for various illicit trafficking, which benefits from weak surveillance capacity, as well as limited capacity to monitor and investigate financial flows. This situation is a high risk, both in terms of security and in terms of negative impact on the shipping industry, which pays high insurance premiums for vessels. STP has no land borders but is not immune to the political, economic and

security dynamics existing in the Central African region. STP is a member country of ECCAS (Economic Community of Central African States) and engages with the agenda of this organization. As peace and democracy in neighboring countries can have a contagious effect, so can conflict in the region. Remarkably, STP has sidestepped conflicts, although neighboring countries have had decades-long civil wars and more recently the region has seen the rise of armed non-state groups, hate speech and religious intolerance. As emphasized in the peace resolutions approved by the UN security council in 2016, the peace agenda must be based on prevention, which requires a permanent evaluation of country contexts and meticulous watchfulness.

POTENTIAL DISCOVERY OF OIL

Oil discoveries in sufficient quantities to commercially exploit can be a blessing for the country in which peace has always prevailed and which is graduating to a middle-income country. However, as we have seen in so many oil-rich countries, it also increases the pressure on the financial management and transparency of the use of resources. The country adhered to IATI from the early stage of possible oil discoveries in the joint economic zone with Nigeria, which never materialized. A robust regulatory framework and law on the use of oil resources, with establishment of a sovereign wealth fund, have been put in place, hailed as good practices. Although no major discoveries have been made in the economic zone of STP, surveys and exploration is continuing. The discovery of large oil or gas deposits will increase the risks of external and internal political patronage. This can destabilize the

democratic process and further polarize society, fueled by the discontent of a large part of the population that has been excluded from the socio-economic boom of the past decade. The confluence of the eroding social cohesion due to high cost of living and the tensions around large oil discoveries could split and polarize the society. The 2018 legislative elections witnessed electoral violence which had not been seen before. Oil can be a lever for development in the country and reducing the Island's dependence on foreign aid, it can also be a reason to accentuate divergences and splits in society. In any scenario, the country will benefit from strong governance institutions, inclusive, transparent and with strong control mechanisms for the monitoring of public accounts, and a justice system that is not vulnerable to politics and economic power.

6 CONCLUSIONS – CROSSCUTTING CHALLENGES AND ACCELERATORS

The analysis undertaken in this CCA places the achievement of the SDGs and the analysis of underlying causes of why certain groups are left behind at its core. STP's widening inequality, persistent poverty, limited social mobility and rising costs of living, further compounded by the increasing cost of living, linked to the Ukraine Russia war and the long-term impact of Covid-19, are undermining social cohesion. This is further exacerbated by the inadequacy of basic services such as water and sanitation, health, electricity, waste management, housing and urban planning.

Seven interrelated key development challenges have been identified which address the social cohesion of the archipelago, which require a broad intersectoral approach to define the policy choices and catalytic investments to accelerate the attainment of the SDGs. The complexity of the sustainable development agenda is compounded by the multi-vulnerability of a small island state with a very small market, high transportation cost due to its isolation, macro-economic vulnerability with relatively high debt and low fiscal base and a limited landmass to develop industrial activities. In addition, the country is very vulnerable to external shocks such as the Covid-19 pandemic has shown, but also to climate change. The below seven challenges impact the sustainable development and underpin social cohesion of the archipelago.

When addressing these challenges, the local mentalities and characteristics of this small insular society should be taken into consideration, with the existence of certain abhorrent patriarchal and sociocultural norms and practices (such as early marriage, teenage pregnancies, gender-based and sexual violence), the laid-back "leve-leve" attitude and the personal character of political and economic power distribution that permeate into the public administration decision-making, having a

polarizing effect on society. This makes the complexity of achieving the SDGs even more challenging.

Challenge 1- Jobs and Social Protection: Weak economy which does not generate enough decent jobs nor resources for socio-economic development and social protection of the vulnerable.

The economy is small, inadequately diversified and highly vulnerable to shocks while the technical and financial capacity of operators is weak. For the majority of the population, income is generated through low-productivity subsistence farming, fishing and other informal activities. The subsistence agriculture, however, cannot satisfy domestic demand both in terms of quantity and price, and most food products are imported. A minority of the working population is engaged in formal high productive sectors such as tourism, services and manufacturing. This explains why only 21% of the population is covered by social security, and why two thirds of the population is still considered poor. Apart from informality and low productivity, the labor market is characterized by skills mismatches and shortages. Domestic fiscal resources are able to cover the salaries and operational cost of the Government, but the investment budget is almost entirely funded by loans and ODA. The private sector is small, and the investment climate is poor due to weaknesses in regulations, in the justice system and in the financial sector, as well as a deficient, costly and unreliable electricity sector that is the main source of the debt distress of the country, reducing prospects for mobilizing more financing for development. Most micro and small enterprises do not have bank accounts, similar to the majority of the population which is not part of a formal banking system. SDGs have been largely funded by state resources and ODA, which have brought tangible results in the social

sectors, but have been largely insufficient to make a difference in the transformation of the economic model. The social protection system protecting the most vulnerable cannot be locally sustained if the economy is not generating more fiscal income. Despite the huge disadvantages of a small island state, STP has some unique comparative advantages that could boost the implementation of the SDGs.

Some of the accelerators that have been identified concern: (i) reform of electricity sector and transition to renewable energy, (ii) financial inclusion to provide better access to financing including mobile banking ; (iii) review of the regulatory framework for the private sector and its enforcement through the justice system; (iv) fiscal reforms to increase the tax base and to improve the tax collection system; (v) entrepreneurship development in lucrative value chains and (iv) innovative mechanisms to involve diaspora in development.

Challenge 2– Education: the quality of education is insufficient to provide decent jobs to young women and men in particular

Numerical and mathematical literacy is low as well as retention rates in secondary education. The education system does not provide the social mobility for poorer kids to access to higher education and better opportunities. Poorer children face high dropout rates as their parents are unable to assume the cost of education. Tertiary education, research and professional, technical and vocational training opportunities are very limited but have a direct impact on the labor market. The low-productivity economy can only be transformed by a marked improvement in the quality of education. The skills that are required by the private sector, such as IT, mathematics and vocational competencies, are difficult to find. With 61% of the population below 25 years and a median age of 18.6 years, the labor market is unable to absorb the large number of unskilled youths with poor educational ratings. The double insularity

of the island of Principe offers an additional challenge to quality education and to access tertiary education. A better educated population with the right skills for the future requirements in public and private sector has an impact on all the development challenges identified in this CCA.

Some of the accelerators that will be able to transform the education system concern: (i) improvement teacher capacities and school management; (ii) digitalization in educational learning methods; (iii) introduction of healthy behaviors, life skills and entrepreneurship in education; (iv) increased investment in professional, vocational training; (v) partnerships with tertiary institutions.

Challenge 3- Food security: Low local food production, poor nutrition, hygiene and low access to improved sanitation and clean water affect health, educational and economic outcomes of the poor.

Poor people rely on subsistence-farming, fishing and forest products but face malnutrition challenges. 10% of the population is in severe food insecurity and 59% of children under the age of 5 are suffering from anemia, causing stunting and learning problems. 8% of adult men and 21% of adult women are obese and at higher risk of cardiovascular, pulmonary and metabolic problems such as stroke and diabetes. Most dwellings do not have any form of improved sanitation, 45% of the population practice open defecation and only 24% meet the SDG criteria for basic domestic water and sanitation and hand-washing facilities. Almost half of all women spend at least half an hour every day in fetching water from a potable water source. In urban areas, wastewater treatment is lacking and poor sanitary practices, including solid waste management, are a growing cause of transmittable diseases. These reasons directly impact the health and educational outcomes of the poorer households. The south-western districts of Caué and Lembá are the poorest and most affected.

The accelerators that could improve the nutrition, water and sanitation situation concern among others: (i) improved local production and commercialization of local food products, (ii) investment in adequate water/sanitation in schools and health clinics; (iii) improved urban planning; (iv) solid waste management, wastewater treatment and recycling investments.

Challenge 4- Health: the delivery of essential health services is insufficient to evolving needs while vulnerable people are not adequately covered by social protection programs

The health sector has benefitted from important external investments but access to adequate health services, treatment and medicines remains a challenge for many São Toméans. On the other hand, prevention at the community level is not sufficiently institutionalized and the high consumption of locally-brewed alcohol, drugs use by adolescents, poor nutrition and low physical activity impact on the high rate of NCDs, accounting for 70% of deaths in the country. Social protection programs and safety nets are not sufficiently comprehensive to provide adequate coverage for the vulnerable groups. This impacts on the children's, adolescents and youth's ability to develop their full potential and to contribute to the future socio-economic development of the country.

The accelerators for an improved health system concern, among others: (i) digitalization of health care systems and interlinkage with social registry; (ii) community health prevention programs; (iii) production and management of evidence-based health data to inform policies and resource allocations, (iv) capacitated health workers and availability of basic health equipment in clinics; (iv) improved laws and systems to ensure availability of quality drugs and medical products to people; (v) Expanded social security system.

Challenge 5- Energy, Climate Change and Biodiversity: Adaptation to Climate change

and biodiversity conservation are not mainstreamed in policy making and implementation.

Climate change has shown its damage to the socio-economic infrastructure and livelihoods sustained by agriculture and/or fishing. Expanding economic activities to support inclusive and sustainable growth while maintaining biodiversity needs to consider the potential impact of climate change and natural hazards which have already led to major socio-economic losses for the country. To cover the future cost to fund adaptation measures addressing vulnerability and strengthening the resilience of communities, more resource mobilization is required, while appropriate policy changes are being implemented. With a small tax base, STP continues to be heavily reliant on ODA and private financing for climate funding. The bioserve in Príncipe puts additional strains on construction and development of economic opportunities, as regulations for biodiversity conservation do not allow for exploitation of raw materials such as sand from the beach, and thus specific finance mechanisms should be put in place to compensate for the conservation of the rich biodiversity system.

Accelerators: (i) evidence generation and evidenced-based planning for climate adaptation; (ii) improved protection of land and marine biodiversity; (iii) green bonds and climate adaptation and resilience financing; (iv) increased capacity for preparedness, early warning and response to disasters

Challenge 6- Governance: weaknesses in institutional capacities, core public administration functions and control mechanisms affect the effective delivery of services to the population

Transparent, effective, inclusive and accountable institutions play a crucial role in advancing poverty eradication. Institutional capacity weaknesses, linked to the educational weaknesses, are underpinning many of STP's development challenges. In all sectors, the capacity to

formulate evidence-based policy, plan, coordinate implementation, and monitor performance is poor. In addition, there are significant capacity weaknesses across all facets of public financial management which hamper the capacity of the Government to mobilize budget aid and external financing, as well as a general lack of reliable and disaggregated administrative data. The public administration requires a modern work ethic that puts merit and efficiency above solidarity with social networks in allocating jobs, contracts and resources. This will enhance the returns on public investment, create stronger institutions and greater accountability in service delivery and financial management. Potential oil discoveries, which can be an important source for sustainable growth, will put great pressure on the existing governance systems.

Some of the accelerators that have been identified concern: (i) improved PFM systems; (ii) improved digitalization of public services and data; (iii) inter-sectoral coordination and approaches; (iv) Improved results-based management and core administrative functions of planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring, (v) strengthened anti-corruption and IATI compliance for oil revenue management, and (vi) strengthening of civil society and local actors.

Challenge 7- Justice and Security: Weaknesses in the justice system affect negatively the protection of vulnerable groups (against e.g. GBV and SGBV) as well as the development of the private sector development

Women, youth, vulnerable groups, the elderly, disabled people, and the poorest face great difficulties in accessing and obtaining justice particularly in rural areas and in Principe island, which relies on the main island of Sao Tome for the justice system. The incidence of violent and sexual abuse of women and children is a major concern and the lack of integrated justice, law and order and social services

means victims of violence have little protection or access to treatment. Negative social norms further undermine these efforts. Private sector is also strongly impacted by the insufficiencies of administrative courts to settle disputes and uphold property and contractual rights. This also explains the low level of FDI in the country. The negative public perceptions of the dysfunctional justice system erode the social cohesion, and in the long term, the stability of the state.

Some of the accelerators that have been identified concern: (i) digitalization of the justice system; (ii) strengthened role of attorney general; (iii) training of judges; (iv) improved women political and civic participation; (v) review of legal framework to enhance independence of justice and rules of ethical conduct, and (v) Improved access of rights holders to justice and integrated GBV services.

These seven challenges will form the basis of the discussion on the UN's comparative advantages. The analysis has been based on available statistics, research and analytical documents. However, there are strong capacity gaps in data collection for assessing the performance of the SDGs as well as statistics. The main reference document is the Household Budget Survey of 2017, which is the only tool used to calculate poverty and employment outcomes. A Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) was carried out in 2019, mostly on social data. The last population census dates from 2011 and population figures for today are based on extrapolations. Sao Tome produces national accounts, but only on the production side, but not on consumption or income side. This also hampers an in-depth assessment of the level of implementation of the SDGs, as highlighted in the VNR report of STP. A full Census will take place in 2024 which will be a unique opportunity to gather the disaggregated data on income, housing and demographic indicators.

An integrated policy approach is needed to achieve the SDGs, as transformative entry points or - key transitions that can have catalytic and multiplier effects. This includes (1) food systems; (2) energy access and affordability; (3) digital connectivity; (4) education; (5) jobs and social protection; and (6) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution

Food Systems Transition underscores the pivotal role of agricultural development in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) and fostering social cohesion. This transition encapsulates the imperative to enhance agricultural practices, diversify crops, and empower small-scale farmers to ensure food security and promote sustainable livelihoods. Initiatives to improve digital connectivity and educational opportunities further complement efforts to strengthen food systems and promote inclusive growth.

Energy Access and Affordability Transition focuses on addressing the challenges and opportunities related to energy infrastructure and policies in the country. STP faces significant difficulties in ensuring reliable and affordable energy access, particularly in rural and remote areas. The transition emphasizes the promotion of renewable energy sources, such as solar and hydroelectric power, to diversify the energy mix and reduce dependency on costly and unreliable sources. Key proposals should include the development of renewable energy infrastructure and the establishment of energy policies aimed at increasing access and affordability for all citizens.

Digital Connectivity Transition emerges as a pivotal component in the nation's journey towards sustainable development. With the introduction of the 4G network in 2023, the archipelago has entered a new phase ripe with opportunities for leveraging digitalization to address various socio-economic challenges. Digital connectivity holds immense potential for driving positive change across multiple sectors, including governance, education, health, and economic growth. Key proposals and

initiatives include the improvement of digital infrastructure; promotion of digital literacy; integration of technology in education; or expansion of E-Governance.

Education Transition addresses socio-economic disparities, enhances workforce capacity, and fosters inclusive growth. Key challenges include low literacy rates, inadequate retention in secondary education, and limited access to tertiary education opportunities, particularly in the remote island of Príncipe. To enhance educational quality, accessibility, and relevance, it is needed: improvement of teacher capacities; digitalization in education; life skills and entrepreneurship education, expansion of professional and vocational training; forging partnerships with tertiary institutions to expand access to higher education, promote research and innovation, and address the unique educational needs of Príncipe Island.

Jobs and Social Protection Transition aims for proposals including improving educational quality and access to vocational training to equip the youth with the skills needed for the job market, enhancing agricultural practices and promoting agroecology to bolster food security, and implementing social protection programs to safeguard the most vulnerable populations. Additionally, the transition emphasizes the importance of fostering partnerships between the government and international organizations, prioritizing gender equality and inclusivity in job creation efforts.

Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss, and Pollution Transition highlights the significant impact of climate change on socio-economic infrastructure and livelihoods, particularly in vulnerable coastal communities. STP's reliance on agriculture and fishing makes it particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of climate change, emphasizing the urgent need for adaptation measures. Moreover, the preservation of biodiversity, including the unique ecosystems of Príncipe Island, presents both opportunities and challenges for sustainable development.

ABBREVIATIONS

AfCFTA - African Free Trade Agreement
AfDK - African Development Bank
COVID - Coronavirus Disease 2019
CLTS - Community-Led Total Sanitation
AIDS - Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BCSTP - Central Bank of São Tomé e Príncipe
CSO - Civil Society Organization
DHIS - District Health Information Software
ECCAS - Economic Community of Central African States
EMAE - Water and Electricity Company
ENCO - Nacional Oil Distribution Company
FAO - The Food and Agriculture Organization
FDI - Foreign Direct Investment
GBV - Gender Based Violence
GDP - Gross Domestic Product
GNI - Gross National Income
HDI - Human Development Index
HIV - Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HDR - Human Development Report
ICT - Information and Communication Technology
ILO - International Labor organization
INE - National Institute of Statistics
IMF - International Monetary Fund
IOF - Household Budget Survey (Inquérito aos Orçamentos Familiares)
IWMP - Integrated Water Management Program
LDC - Least Developed Country
MICS - Multiple Indicators Clusters Survey
MRV - Measuring, Reporting, Verification
NDC - Nationally Determined Contributions
NFMS - National Forest Monitoring System
NWFP - Non-wood Forest Products

NCD - Non-Communicable Diseases
ODA - Official development assistance
RCO - United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office
SDG - Sustainable Development Goal
PFM - Public Financial Management
SIDS - Small Island Developing State
STP - São Tomé e Príncipe
UN - United Nations
UNCT - United Nations Country Team
UNDAF - United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP - United Nations Development Program
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA - United Nations Fund for Population
UN-Habitat - United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIDO - United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNSDCF - United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNV - United Nations Volunteers Programme
UPR - Universal Periodic Review
US\$ - US Dollar
VAT - Value Added Tax
WASH - Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB - World Bank
WDI - World Development Indicators
WFP - World Food Program
WHO - World Health Organization

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 – AGENDA 2030 SUMMARY OF PROGRESS ACHIEVED 2015-2021

SDG	Summary of Progress Achieved 2015-2021	
	<p>End poverty in all its forms everywhere</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 2010 and 2017 poverty (defined as US\$1.90 per day) in STP reduced by about 10 percentage points, from 35.6% to 25.9%. • The 2017 Household Survey recorded the incidence of extreme poverty at 47% (INE, 2020). • Female-headed households are poorer than their male equivalents with a poverty rate of 61.6% compared to 55.8%. (INE, 2020). • The most recent available data (2014) indicates that 22.1% of the population (47,000 people) are multidimensionally poor while an additional 19.4% are classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty (41,000). • The share of the population that is multidimensionally poor, adjusted by the intensity of deprivation, is 0.092 substantially below the average for SSA of 0.299.
	<p>End hunger, achieve food security improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a reduction in the prevalence of undernutrition (moderate and severe stunting) in children under five years of age from 17.2% in 2014 to 11.7% in 2019. With regard to the prevalence of malnutrition, the situation worsened from 2.4% in 2014 to 4.5% in 2019.
	<p>Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rate of infant mortality has reduced from 24.0 per 1,000 live births in 2016 to 22.4 per 1,000 live births in 2020. • The proportion of births assisted by a health professional increased from 92.5% in 2014 to 95.4% in 2019. • In the same period, the coverage rate of prenatal care at the first consultation increased from 97.5% to 98.1%. In 2019, about 98% of women aged 15-49 received antenatal care at least once from skilled health personnel. • The percentage of births attended by a skilled attendant, increased from 92.5% in 2014 to 96.8% in 2019. • There is a consistent decrease in maternal mortality in STP, which went from 100 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2009 to 74 in 2014. In terms of maternal and neonatal mortality, the country is close to achieving the global target. • In 2019, the country registered 41 new cases of HIV, which corresponds to a rate of 0.2 per 1,000 inhabitants and a decrease of about 29% compared to the previous year. • Between 2016 and 2020 the incidence of TB decreased by 27%, from 162 cases per 100,000 inhabitants to 118 cases.



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

- Malaria is no longer the main cause of morbidity and mortality in the country. In 2020, only 1,944 were registered, a decrease of about 21% compared to the previous year. During those two years no deaths were recorded. The goal of eliminating this disease in the country by 2025 is achievable.
- Non Communicable Diseases are currently the main causes of mortality in the country, especially cardiovascular diseases.
- The country has recorded an improvement in the use of contraceptive methods by women aged 15 to 49, currently married or in a consensual union, from 34.4% in 2014 to 49.7% in 2019.
- In 2019, about 94% of children aged 12-23 months received all recommended immunizations before their first/second birthday against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (DTP) and 93% against pneumococcal (conjugate) immunization.
- Remarkable progress has been made in the early childhood development index with the percentage of children in the 36 to 59 group on track for development in at least three of the four areas (reading-calculation, physical, socio-emotional, learning) increasing from 54.5% in 2014 to 62.9% in 2019.
- The adjusted net attendance rate for basic education in 2019 was 90%, for 1st cycle secondary education 55% and for 2nd cycle secondary education 30%.
- Participation in organised learning (1 year before the age of entry into school) was 74% in 2019.
- The attendance rate in the 4-17 years age group increased from 86% in 2015 to 90.8% in 2020.
- In the same period, the enrolment rate in higher education for the population aged 19-23 years, increased from 35.4 % to 43.5 %.
- Improvement in the legal and institutional framework relating to gender equality are notable, for instance the creation of the Interinstitutional Commission responsible for implementing the "Integral Public Policy for a Dignified Life for Women".
- STP is close to achieving the goal of eliminating disparity between the sexes in basic education regardless of the economic well-being of the families as evidenced by the 2019 Gender Parity Index, which stood at 1.02.
- However, many challenges persist in terms of gender equality, especially in terms of access to the labour market, income and the political participation of women.
- Case of domestic violence, child sexual and gender based violence are showing increases
- In 2020, about 85% of Santomeans had access to improved water sources and 62.5% had access to basic sanitation.
- In 2019, about 98% of household members used an improved drinking water source located on the premises, available when needed, an increase of 4% on 2014 data.



Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all

- However, only about half (54%) of households in STP had hand washing facilities, where water and soap are present and about 45.5% of household practice open defecation.
- Access to electricity has increased from 69% in 2014 to 83% in 2019.
- The country is investing a transition to clean energy (hydropower) and is increasing the production capacity of the Contador River plant from 1.4 MW to 3 MW.
- Nevertheless, currently only 5% to energy is generated from renewable sources



Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

- Economic growth has been insufficient for the country's development needs, especially in terms of job creation.
- The country's competitiveness is low and the annual GDP variation rate per employee has been decreasing since 2017.
- Informality is high, especially in the primary sector. The formal sector employs less than a third (31.7%) of the working population, which means that most of STP's population works in the informal sector.
- There have been improvements in the unemployment rate in the country, having reduced from 13.6% in the 2012 Census, to 8.9% in 2017.
- Tourism is considered a strategic sector for STP's development. However, in 2018 it only contributed 4.6% to the economy.
- The added value of the country's incipient manufacturing sector as a percentage of GDP has decreased from 1,588 Dobras in 2015, to 1,449 Dobras in 2017.
- Value added in manufacturing per capita has grown from 1.25 in 2015 to 1.42 in 2017.



Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

- There are many constraints at the level of port and airport infrastructures in terms of quality.
- In terms of air transport, the average number of passengers per year for the period 2017 to 2019 was 113,000 peaking in 2018 at 124,000. passengers.
- In terms of maritime transport, Maritime transport the volume of goods transported increased from 163,390.7 tonnes in 2017 to 187,679.3 tonnes in 2020.
- The percentage of the population covered by a mobile network was 93%, with 191,178 thousand people covered with the 3G network, which represents an increase of around 4% compared to 2017.
- The added value of the country's incipient manufacturing sector as a percentage of GDP has decreased from 1,588 Dobras in 2015, to 1,449 Dobras in 2017.
- Value added in manufacturing per capita has grown from 1.25 in 2015 to 1.42 in 2017.



Reduce inequality within and among countries

- STP's Gini Coefficient has risen from 32.1 in 2000 to 40.7 in 2017
- There are regional disparities in terms of access to clean water and sanitation, ICT, and employment.
- LGBTI people are not protected by law.
- Physical access for people with disabilities is not universally guaranteed
- The labour share of GDP, including remuneration and social protection transfers from 2014 to 2017 remained virtually stationary at around 41% per annum.
- The proportion of people living in households with an income below 50% of median income in 2017 was 17.0%, higher than the 8% recorded in 2010.



Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

- 72.8% of the population of STP lives in urban areas in non-classic housing or in housing with lack of housing conditions.
- Urban areas are poorly planned with persistent problems relating to sanitation, sewage treatment, solid waste disposal and rainwater drainage.
- The proportion of people directly affected by disasters has increased from 0.18 per 1000 inhabitants in 2017 to 0.28 in 2019.



Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

- STP has elaborated a number of strategies and plans to promote sustainable consumption and production:
 - Strategy for the Transition to a Blue Economy.
 - Agricultura, fisheries and rural development policy
 - Policy for sustainable consumption at regional level
 - Plan for Sustainable Consumption and Production
 - Plan for the Development of Low Cost Energy



Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

- STP has adopted a National Strategy and National Action Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change.
- STP's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (July 2021), contemplates a 27% reduction in emissions by 2030.
- Mitigation measures include a proposed increase in renewable energy production, a reduction in power grid losses, and the decarbonization of the transport sector.



Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

- STP lacks the conditions that allow it to assess its maritime ecosystems including the quality of water on the beaches.
- STP has ratified the main international conventions applicable to the sea, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources in 2017



Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems,

- There have been gains in terms of sustainable forest management. Between 2015 and 2020, the proportion of illegal deforestation reduced from 64.6% in 2015 to 53.9% in 2020.

sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss



Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels



Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

- The country has 4 important sites for mountain biodiversity covered by protected areas.
- In 2012, the island of Príncipe was classified, by UNESCO, as a World Biosphere Reserve. The country has been striving to maintain this classification.
- Levels of homicide have decreased from 2017 to 2020 for both men and women. In 2020, zero female homicides were registered
- Levels of physical and psychological violence have dropped over the period 2017-21 but sexual violence has marginally increased
- In 2019, 83.5% of children in the age group of 1 to 14 years were subject to physical punishment or psychological aggression with girls slightly more affected.
- Transparency International, placed STP in 64th position in the 2019 Corruption Perception Index with a score of 46 points.
- According to Global Corruption Barometer - Africa 2019, 55% Sao Tomeans think the government is doing badly in terms of corruption.
- In 2019, the births of 98.6% children under 5 were registered without significant variation according to gender, means of residence and age. All deaths are registered
- The country conducted a population and housing census in 2012 and plans are being made to conduct a further one in 2023.
- Persons in need of international protection have no access to refugee status determination procedures and other forms of subsidiary protection
- Stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness are not identified and protected due to the absence of statelessness determination procedures and policies aimed at preventing and reducing statelessness.
- Government revenue as a proportion of GDP has been stable at 31% over the period 2017-21 despite the Covid Pandemic.
- In 2020 85% of Government finance came from external sources
- ODA represented about 32% of GNI in 2002 and has fallen sharply to about 12.3% in 2019.
- From 2015 onwards, there has been a fluctuation in the level of FDI, which peaked in 2019 at about US\$ 57 million, more than double the 2015 figure.
- In 2017, international remittances to STP totalled an amount of about US\$ 19.6 million, representing about 6.3% of GDP.
- STP has accessed the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Fund.

ANNEX 2 - MULTI-DIMENSIONAL RISK TO SDG ACHIEVEMENT IN STP

SDGs	Risk Area	Threats/Risk Factors
16	Democratic space, peace, security & political stability	Erosion of trust and political polarisation
		Limited impact and effectiveness of decentralisation reforms
	<u>RISK ASSESMENT</u>	Few formal mechanisms, channels and opportunities for Civil Society engagement and dialogue and to hold government account
	Probability: HIGH	Potential social unrest and political instability due to failure to capture the demographic dividend
	Impact: MEDIUM	Weak advocacy for the interests of women and youth in the political arena
		Lack of media plurality and independence
16	Governance, institutional capacity, data & information management	Weak political leadership to undertake bolder and needed reforms
		Weak capacity of the public sector to plan, formulate policy, coordinate implementation, and monitor performance
	<u>RISK ASSESMENT</u>	Weak capacity to produce the data and evidence required to underpin development policy, programme development and to monitor progress
	Probability: HIGH	Poor integration and coordination between sectors regarding the implementation of development programs (SDGs)
	Impact: HIGH	Weak linkages between strategic plans, the medium-term fiscal framework and sector annual budgets
		Weak capacity of public financial management, low budget execution rates and frequent budgetary reallocations, focus on short term fixes to the detriment of more sustainable longer-term actions and solutions
16	Justice, rule of law & human rights	Low credibility and effectiveness of the justice system due to the slow administration of justice and the use of antiquated management systems
		Difficulties in accessing and receiving justice particularly in remote and rural areas
	<u>RISK ASSESMENT</u>	Limited free legal aid due to lack of funding
	Probability: HIGH	Limited capacity of police and criminal investigation services
	Impact: HIGH	Inexistence of an integrated criminal statistics system and forensic analysis capacity
		Limited safeguarding and promotion of human rights
		Negative social norms undermining the safeguard the human rights, particularly for women, girls and children
		Incidence of violent and sexual abuse of women and minors
1	Social cohesion, social protection, equality and non-discrimination	Increasing urbanization, poorly planned and informal neighbourhoods, in substandard housing
		Rising cost of living and widening inequality
		Deteriorating access and quality of health services, poor quality housing and inadequacy of basic services such as WASH, electricity, waste management, and urban planning
	<u>RISK ASSESMENT</u>	Inadequate reach of social protection and social safety nets
	Probability: MEDIUM	Poor sectoral integration of social safety nets

SDGs	Risk Area	Threats/Risk Factors
5	Impact: HIGH	Limited social mobility
		Child labour, especially in the poorest households and in rural areas for children aged 12 and older
	Gender equality & women's empowerment	Patriarchal and sociocultural norms and practices reinforcing gender inequality
		Prevalence of gender-based and sexual violence, including the sexual abuse and exploitation of young girls. Lack of formal mechanisms for women to vocalize or report the injustices committed against them, or the barriers they confront
	RISK ASSESMENT	Prevalence of early marriage and teenage pregnancies
	Probability: HIGH	Women and girls assume greatest responsibility for unpaid, domestic and caring work, particularly of children and the elderly
	Impact: HIGH	Unequal participation of women and girls in the social, economic, political and policy life of the country
		Women do not exercise full control of their sexual and reproductive health choices
2		Women are underrepresented in tertiary education and have lower access to financial services and technology
		Inexistence of gender sensitive state budget for the operationalization of gender markers and indicators across all sectors.
	Food security, agriculture, and land	Climate change and natural disasters reducing rural incomes and increasing poverty and food insecurity
		Poor data and management in the agriculture and fishing sectors
	RISK ASSESMENT	Inexistence of a modern and digitized land registry, undermining the equitable distribution of land and risk conflicts
	Probability: HIGH	Difficult access to land by young farmers and women
	Impact: MEDIUM	Low agricultural productivity by smallholder farmers, impacting domestic demand and market prices
		Weak agro value chains due to a low-level processing capacity and inadequate storage facilities (for both agriculture and fishing)
3		Inadequate agricultural infrastructure, availability of inputs and support services resulting in low productivity
		Poor transport networks undermining the commercialization of surplus and cash crops
		High food imports causing price fluctuation
	Public health	Fragile health system
		Weak health system management, needing reform to regain quality, affordability, sustainability, and acceptability
	RISK ASSESMENT	Health infrastructures becoming obsolescent and unsafe
	Probability: MEDIUM	Limited capacity to comply with International Health Regulations in all 19 technical areas
	Impact: MEDIUM	Rise of non-communicable diseases (NCD)
	Poor health data production and management, impacting health sector planning, resource management and patient care	

SDGs	Risk Area	Threats/Risk Factors
		Poor health services access by the poorer households, particularly in rural areas
		Frequent shortage of drugs and medical products, with unaffordable prices for the greatest part of the population
		Weak public capacity to respond to health emergencies
4	Education, training & human resources	Slow improvements in the quality and relevance of education curricula versus market needs
		Limited basic infrastructure in some schools (improved sanitation, and key resources like books and other learning materials)
	RISK ASSESMENT	Increased school dropout
	Probability: HIGH	Limited access to school for children with disabilities
	Impact: HIGH	Limited professional, technical and vocational training
		Limited access to tertiary level education
		Increased barriers for access to education opportunities for children of the poorest families
12, 13	Environment, natural resource management, climate change & disaster risk	Fast-growing population, illegal logging, and land degradation
		Over-exploitation of forest resources, on which the poorest heavily depend
	RISK ASSESMENT	Over-exploitation and depletion of marine resources due to harmful and unsustainable fishing practices
	Probability: MEDIUM	Weak institutional, human technical and financial capacity and inadequate data systems and monitoring to sustainably manage and safeguard natural resources
	Impact: MEDIUM	Increasing natural hazards due to climate change
		Weak financial and technical capacity to mitigate climate change impacts and strengthen resilience
		Limited management of solid waste and waste valorisation (recycling)
6, 7	Infrastructure and access to social services	Limited access to essential basic services like safe drinking water and sanitation by poorest households contributing to the increased incidence of malnutrition and communicable diseases
		Infrastructure deficiencies impacting on the quality of public service delivery particularly in the health sector
		Deficient production and distribution of electricity
	RISK ASSESMENT	Low share of renewable energy production
	Probability: HIGH	High costs and unreliability of electricity transferred to business and domestic consumers
	Impact: MEDIUM	High use of polluting fuels and technologies for cooking and lighting by poorest households
		Low connectivity and high costs of international transport (ports and airports) impeding economic development
		Limited road transport infrastructure and local transport services constrain access to markets, inputs, and economic opportunities (agriculture and fishing sectors)
8	Economic development and economic inclusion	Small, fragile, inadequately diversified economy, highly vulnerable to shocks

SDGs	Risk Area	Threats/Risk Factors
		High dependence on low-productivity activities in the primary sector with a small and predominantly informal commercial sector
	RISK ASSESSMENT	Limited economic growth, highly dependent of agriculture, tourism, oil-fuelled foreign direct investment (early 2000s), and government expenditure
	Probability: HIGH	High spatial asymmetry in economic activity
	Impact: HIGH	Economy unable to generate sufficient employment opportunities across the entire territory, particularly for women and young people
		Private sector lacking access to capital, entrepreneurial experience and business acumen
		Fragility and vulnerability of the largely informal sector
		Labour force technical inequalities and disparities (gender, geographical)
		Inadequate business and regulatory environment not encouraging or facilitating investment, business growth and job creation
		The labour market is characterized by a high vulnerability (50% of all jobs considered vulnerable)
		Underdeveloped financial system limiting private sector development
		Potential offshore oil discovery that can lead to political and social unrest
16	Regional and global trade and influences	Low international transport infrastructure and connectivity impeding the development of regional trade
	RISK ASSESSMENT	Weak private sector unable to integrate regional and global value chains
	Probability: MEDIUM	
	Impact: MEDIUM	
17	Local, regional & global partnerships & resource mobilisation	Small tax base for capital investment projects, heavy dependence on ODA
	RISK ASSESSMENT	Graduation from LDC status could detrimentally impact access to development aid and concessional finance
	Probability: HIGH	Weak institutional capacity to manage ODA flows and ensure they are effectively and to attract FDI
	Impact: HIGH	Weak ownership of development programmes could impact sustainability