

UNDP MALDIVES COUNTRY PROGRAMME 2022-2026

The United Nations Development Programme's new offer of support to the Maldives for the next five years is presented in the UNDP Maldives Country Programme 2022-2026, with three priorities that will turn commitments to concrete change:

1

INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE AND THRIVING LIVELIHOODS



2

SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE



3

PARTICIPATORY AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE FOR AND BY THE PEOPLE



It is the result of a painful exposure to the challenges of the pandemic, with people of Maldives, those living here, as well as the Government and partners bruised by the sudden shock of a brutal economic contraction and despair, amidst the lack of viable and readily available options for survival. UNDP tailored its Country Programme with emphasis on alignment and seeking coalitions across partners and by betting all it has and can leverage, influence, and generate so to assist Maldives' journey towards achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

This issue of UNDP Maldives' Island Life magazine is focused on our new Country Programme.

The global community and development agencies can support these efforts by amplifying the voices of the most vulnerable, ensuring inclusivity in negotiation rooms and in the formulation of global development policy, and increasing efforts in education and awareness, to make climate discourse accessible. We need development agencies to recognize and assist us in reforming how communities can access adaptation assistance, to achieve basic essential services and development needs while also ensuring climate resilience.

FINANCING, ECONOMIC STABILITY AND FISCAL SITUATION

You've spoken over the past year on various platforms about the challenges faced by developing countries in accessing climate financing, particularly for adaptation. In your opinion, what is the challenge and what can we do to overcome it together?

The biggest challenge we face right now is accessing climate financing. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we found ourselves having to reallocate limited funds to address multiple crises at the same time. The Maldives already spends a significant amount of our own budget on adaptation measures and that is to address immediate adaptation measures such as providing freshwater services and coastal protection.

Unfortunately, the urgency of having to address these immediate concerns means we lack the fiscal space to invest in longer term adaptation measures that are desperately needed to minimize the impact of the climate crisis. There are also limits to adaptation, limits to how high we can build our islands and how often we can replenish sandbags on the shore, and these limits become more entrenched the longer we put off concrete action on global emissions reduction.

The reality is that it is currently easier to draw financing towards mitigation *measures*, than adaptation. It is seen as more profitable. This doesn't ring true when you take into account the disruption and loss and damage as a result of the extreme climate events we now more frequently face. We have called for climate financing systems to be reformed so that access is easier and quicker. While due diligence must be upheld, the speed at which resources are made available to vulnerable communities must be in line with the ground realities.

We need to ensure that at least 50% of the total share of climate finance is used to adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis.

VISIONING, PLANNING, CAPACITY BUILDING

Given that Maldives faces a climate crisis at its shore, and the pandemic has not made it any better with a much-reduced fiscal space, how do you see your role as Special Envoy for Climate Change working to align national policy and planning?

While most of my engagements are international, I work closely with the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology and other Government stakeholders, on the need to mainstream climate resilience across all national policies. I firmly believe we need more engagement, education and awareness domestically on the impacts of the climate crisis in the Maldives, and we need to have more discussions within our community on how we should adapt. Implementing national policies that are sustainable and incorporating climate resilience into our planning can only be successful when people accept that their development needs can be met in a way that is also climate resilient. With increased decentralisation, the role of local councils, media, civil society, and ensuring the inclusion of more women and young people are especially important in these discussions.

INNOVATION

Whether it is waste, nature-based solutions, coastal protection or renewable energy production, technology transfer and innovative practices can often help fast-track these processes. In which areas do you foresee Maldives benefitting the most from such exchanges?

Technology transfer and innovation would benefit all of these areas, but I do think it could especially help fast track our work in nature-based solutions and coastal protection. Access to technology that would allow us to gather real time data and conduct analysis on our vast maritime zone, resulting in the identification of vulnerable areas, tailored interventions – preferably nature based - and strengthening of management of our protected areas.

In terms of waste management, we have seen the implementation of circular waste management practices in resorts and select local islands through the use of the technology, and community-based innovation, and all at relatively moderate costs.

With the Maldives, the success of sustainable practices, is always confronted by the geographic dispersal of our islands and the small scale of our communities. I believe the technology available now can help up overcome these challenges, and use these unique characteristics to our advantage.