

MALDIVES

2026 – 2029



COUNTRY PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

"A better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world."





UN-HABITAT

UN-Habitat ROAP Country Programme Overview

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FOREWORD

Urbanization in the Maldives has advanced at an unprecedented pace driven by demographic changes, climate impacts, economic transitions, and migration patterns that concentrate people in the capital Malé and other urban centers. These dynamics present both challenges and opportunities: from managing land use, housing, and basic services within the constraints of a low-lying archipelago, to reimagining urbanization as a driver of resilience, sustainability, and inclusive development.



I am pleased to present UN-Habitat's Country Programme Overview (2026–2030) which provides a strategic vision to support the Maldives in this transformation, aligning with national priorities such as the 20-Year Master Plan for National Development, decentralization policy, and global commitments under Agenda 2030, the SIDS Strategy, and the New Urban Agenda. Anchored in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan, this strategy underscores our mandate to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities, ensuring adequate housing for all and leaving no one behind.

It is our privilege to accompany the Maldives on this journey toward resilient, inclusive, and sustainable urban futures.

Harshini Halangode

Country Focal Point
UN-Habitat

01

COUNTRY ANALYSIS

1.1 NATIONAL CONTEXT



Male, Capital of Maldives

The Maldives consists of over 1,192 small coral islands, with approximately 187 of them inhabited, spread across 26 natural atolls. Its land area is under 300 km² spread over a vast maritime area of 90,000 km², making it one of the world's most geographically dispersed countries. It is the sixth smallest country in terms of land area, equal to approximately 1% while the remaining 99% of Maldives is sea. About 90% of the islands are smaller than 0.5 km², leaving little land for development or agriculture. Only 27 km² of land is cultivable - less than 10% of the total land area - hence the country imports 90% of its food.

With 80% of the land lying less than 1 meter above sea level, the Maldives is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate

change due to sea-level rise, coastal erosion, frequent extreme weather, and flooding, which threaten existing settlements and limit expansion.

The Maldives is administratively divided into 20 atolls. Only about 4.7% of the country's total land area is classified as urban, underscoring spatial constraints of urban development. Urbanization is concentrated on a few key islands, including Malé, Hulhumalé, Addu City, and Fuvahmulah. Malé, with a population of approximately 211,908, ranks among the most densely populated cities in the world, exceeding 21,364 per square kilometre (Statistics, 2022). Due to severe land scarcity, large-scale land reclamation projects such as the development of Hulhumalé in the Greater Malé area have been undertaken. Hulhumalé alone has the potential to accommodate up to two-thirds of the current Maldivian population. Moreover, the 'Maldives Population projection 2022-2062 estimates that close to 54% of the Maldives resident population will reside in Malé by 2062.

The Maldives has also embarked on a significant process considering notably the specific geography/topography towards the development of two regional hubs (North

and South) and seven urban centers across its 20 administrative atolls to decentralize development and improve service delivery across the country, while decongesting Malé.

1.2 FACTSHEET

 0.53 M POPULATION	 0.3 % POPULATION GROWTH	 13,379 USD GDP PER CAPITA
 0.22 M URBAN POPULATION	 42 % URBANIZATION RATE	 30 – 32 % HOUSING AFFORDABILITY
 0.7666 HDI INDEX	 7.24 % AGING RATE	 99 % ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

Population, Population Growth, Gross Development Product, Urban population, Urbanization Rate, - World Bank, 2024, Housing Affordability- Housing Income and Expenditure Survey, 2019, Human Development Index- World Bank 2023, Aging Rate- UN,2024, Access to Basic Services- UNDP 2025

1.3 MACROECONOMIC TRENDS AND CHALLENGES



Tourist Resorts in Maldives

reserves (with a USD 1 billion in external debt servicing in 2025), widening fiscal deficits, and external vulnerabilities, (World Bank Development Update, 2025) the pressure on government spending, particularly on housing, infrastructure and urban planning is

Successfully having transitioned into an upper middle-income status, Maldives is highly dependent on its two-sector blue economy of tourism and fisheries, the former especially susceptible to external shocks including conflicts, economic slowdowns in other countries, disasters triggered by natural hazards, and infectious diseases. Faced with rising macroeconomic risks due to high public debt (134.2% of Gross Development Product in 2024), falling

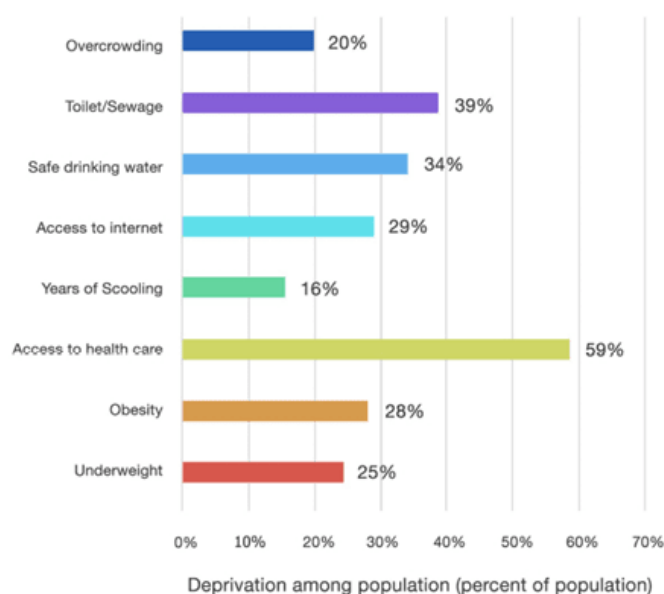
constrained. Residents/migrants settle in overcrowded or substandard housing, with poor services and are more exposed to climate and economic shocks, with fewer resources for adaptation or relocation.

1.4 DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

The official statistics for total population of Maldives as of 2023 is 515,132, constituting of 382,639 Maldivians and 132,493 foreigners, while world bank statistics in 2024 indicate an increase in population to approximately 530,000. Maldivian society is ethnically and culturally homogenous. The official language is Dhivehi, which is unique to the Maldives and the official religion is Islam. The current median age is 32.7 years with 50% under 35. Although the population has continued to increase within the last few years, the population growth rate is projected to decline after 2050, attributed to the growing aging population.

1.5 MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY

Despite the Maldives achieving upper-middle-income status, multidimensional poverty persists, particularly in outer atolls and among vulnerable groups. Maldives measures multidimensional poverty with dimensions such as health, education and information as well as standard of living. As of 2020, 95,000 people have been identified as living in multidimensional poverty within the republic, of which 13% live in Malé, and 87% live in the atolls. Beyond income-based measures, many Maldivians experience deprivations in housing quality, access to basic services, education, health, and employment opportunities. Addressing multidimensional poverty in the Maldives therefore requires integrated, place-based strategies that strengthen local governance, enhances access to essential services, and promote inclusive, sustainable livelihoods.



*Deprivation Among Population, 2016/2017, Source-
statisticsmaldives.gov*

1.6 GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

While gender equality is enshrined in key legislation and Maldives have ratified key international conventions that uphold human rights and gender equality, gaps in implementation exist. Maldives has a significant gender gap in the labour force with high youth unemployment. The Gender Equality Action Plan (2022 – 2026) aims to put in motion a shift in advancement of gender equality. It also focuses on women's property ownership and access to basic services as it remains uneven for women and marginalized groups in overcrowded urban areas and remote atolls.

In the Maldives persons with disabilities, account for 6.9% of the population and more women (7.8%) live with disabilities than men (6.1%), with a higher prevalence. Disability in mobility was the most common among elderly, with 1 in every 3 elderly women having disability in mobility.



Aerial View of Malé

Urbanization in the Maldives is shaped by its dispersed geography and socio-economic context. Traditionally composed of small fishing and farming settlements, the country has seen increasing migration from outer islands to the capital city of Malé. As of 2023, Malé's 9 km² area accommodates about 42.3% of the national population, resulting in extreme population density, housing shortages, and pressure on infrastructure and services, while many outer far-flung islands

experience depopulation and underinvestment. Despite progress in urban development since democratic reforms in the 2000s, limited land, resources, and fragmented planning continue to constrain sustainable urban growth.

The Maldives faces the dual challenge of managing rapid urbanization in Malé while ensuring balanced, resilient development across the atolls. Internal migration to cities like Malé, Hulumalé and Addu City continues to be driven by better access to jobs, education, and healthcare, resulting in overcrowding, housing shortages, and strained infrastructure. As urban sprawl accelerates, living conditions deteriorate, negating the primary reason for migration.

Government efforts to decentralize development in regional hubs will support voluntary population consolidation and strengthen connectivity across atolls, ease pressure and fiscal burden to provide basic services across the archipelago and promote balanced growth. However, there is an urgent need for integrated, sustainable, and equitable urban planning across the Maldives.

03

HOUSING, LAND and BASIC SERVICES

a) Land

All land in the Maldives is owned by the state with individuals and entities granted land primarily through leases or long-term use rights, rather than full freehold ownership. This model provides some level of tenure security, especially for residential and commercial use, though it may limit private land ownership rights (ie. it could be harder to use land as collateral for loans or to pass it on as inheritance, etc).

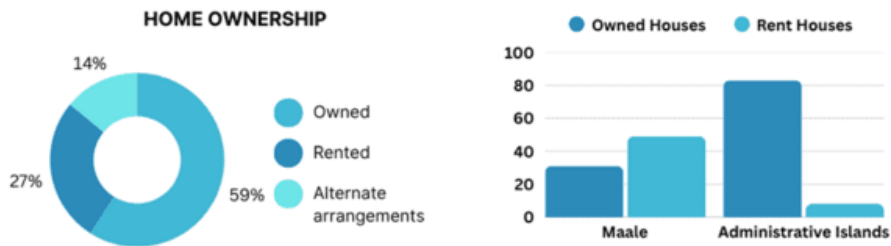
In urban areas like Malé and Hulhumalé, land tenure is more formalized, with registered plots and long-term leases and titling of land recipients. In outer islands, tenure arrangements are often informal or customary, making them more vulnerable particularly in the face of relocation pressures from climate-induced land loss or erosion, especially in low-lying islands. The government has prioritized land development and reclamation (e.g., in Gulhifalhu, Giraavaru Falhu, Uthuru Thila Falhu, and Hulhumalé Phase III) to create additional land supply to alleviate housing and land-scarcity pressures. However, these can conversely disrupt traditional tenure arrangements if not implemented through community led approaches. Furthermore, many land reclamation practices lack a systematic approach to anticipate sea-level rise and capacities to account for local flood risk differences to inform location and design choices.

The Maldives has made efforts to modernize land administration, aiming to restructure and standardize the country's infrastructure planning and land use management which must follow the Physical Development Plan (Urban Planning and Management Act, 2024 and Decentralization Act, 2010), including digital land registries and zoning regulations. However, land scarcity in dense urban zones, uneven distribution of land among the capital and other atolls, implementation gaps, limited institutional capacity, and lack of public awareness are key challenges that need to be overcome, including the existential threat posed by sea-level rise and coastal erosion to island land-bases and tenure security.

b) Housing

Maldives faces unique housing constraints including high construction costs due to the scarcity of land, rapid urbanization, lack of technical expertise, and heavy reliance on imports (Development Update, 2022), leading to challenges in accessing affordable housing. Affordable housing development in the Maldives is largely driven by the government. High construction costs, limited access to domestic financing, and the reluctance of local banks to fund social housing, constrain private sector participation in the affordable housing market. Private sector is thus focused mainly on high end residential, commercial and tourism projects.

According to the 2022 Census, the Maldives has 94,424 households, with 45% in Malé (42,571) and 55% in the atolls (51,853), including resort and industrial islands. 87% of households live in houses, flats or apartments, 11% in collective living quarters, and 2% in boats or buildings not originally intended for habitation. In Malé, only 31% are homeowners compared to 83% in the atolls, reflecting limited land availability and high housing costs in the capital.



Home Ownership 2022 Source: generated through data from Census 2022

Despite public investments in housing, there still remains a critical shortage of affordable options of around 20,000 units – 70% within the Greater Malé Region - and uniform rent rates in social housing projects limit access for low-income and vulnerable populations (Development Update, 2022). While Malé and other major urban centers generally exhibit higher structural standards and better access to basic services compared to rural areas, they still face serious challenges - overcrowding of households, poor ventilation, and limited natural light are prevalent issues and a precursor to many social problems. Furthermore, poor quality construction material vulnerable to saltwater corrosion and wind damage are used and many homes lack elevation above flood levels, exposing residents to recurrent inundation and storm impacts.

Housing affordability in the Maldives is a growing crisis, with many households spending over 40% of their income on housing, well above the global benchmark (30%). Rental prices have increased by over 20% in the last three years, and rental programs fail to reach low-income groups, leaving many luxury units vacant and inaccessible. Over a third of the urban population live in informal or inadequate housing, often lacking basic services and vulnerable to climate risks (CEIC Data, World bank, 2017). Poorly planned urban expansion, driven by tourism and land reclamation, which destroys the natural buffers that protect the islands and lead to environmental degradation, has weakened climate resilience.



Houses constructed under the 'Gedhoruverin' programme Source: <https://thepress.mv/153879>.

In 2008 UN-Habitat together with UNDP assisted the government in developing an “Affordable Housing for All” Policy which includes a) the development of an analytical framework to identify effective strategies for the production of affordable housing, b) development of an analytical framework for land holding evaluation, and c) capacity building of the Ministry of Housing, Transport and Environment (CEIC Data, World bank, 2017). However, revision of this policy and effective land management plans with a robust legal framework is long overdue, hence housing development has often been

unplanned and poorly regulated, largely due to weak institutional capacity, frequent political shifts, and allegations of corruption related to land tenure.

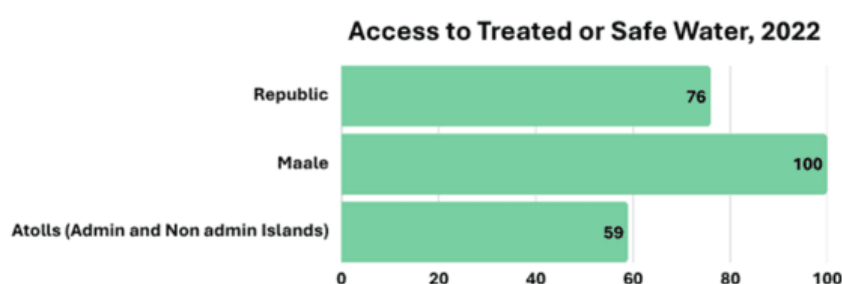
3.1 BASIC SERVICES

Owing to the rapid growth of urban populations, especially in Malé, the provision of essential services, including water supply, sanitation and waste management, are a significant challenge.

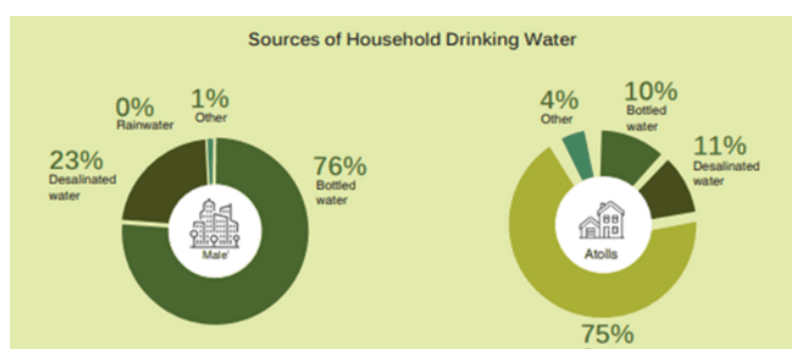
Access to Safe Drinking Water

Water security in the Maldives relies on a mix of rainwater harvesting and desalination, but both face challenges from climate change and infrastructure gaps. Groundwater lenses fed by rainfall - the islands' only natural freshwater source - are highly vulnerable to saltwater intrusion, droughts, and poor sewage systems, worsened by mangrove loss and land reclamation (Waste and Water Accounts, 2018, Water and Sanitation Masterplan 2021-2035).

Rainwater harvesting mechanisms are often insufficient due to the lack of integrated planning, space or maintenance, as well as changes in rainfall patterns and extended dry periods. Hence, Malé and several urban areas rely on seawater desalination plants to enhance water security, which are costly, often powered by imported fuel, and can only meet limited demand.



Access to Treated or Safe Water, 2022, Source: generated with data through Census 2022



Sources of Drinking Water, Source: 20210805-pub-water-and-sanitation-master-plan-2021-2035.pdf

76% of the overall population has access to treated or safe drinking water. Malé enjoys universal access, while only 59% of residents in the atolls have similar access, as many rely on untreated rainwater for daily use. The majority of Malé's population relies on bottled water, while across the Atolls rainwater tanks in household compounds serve as the most common source for drinking water.

Waste management (including plastic and marine pollution)

Environmental degradation, with inadequate waste management, is also a growing urban issue threatening the country's blue economy. Due to limited land and infrastructure and dispersed characteristics of the islands, coupled with the lack of regulatory frameworks for segregated systems, management and recycling, most waste is either openly burned or dumped near coastlines, leading to toxic emissions, microplastic contamination of marine life, degraded coral reefs, and polluted beaches.

The Maldives generates over 860 metric tons of waste daily, with the majority being plastic. In Malé alone, an estimated 280,000 plastic bottles are discarded every day. Waste generation rates from tourists and locals are high with a per capita daily generation of 3.5kg and 1.7 kg respectively. The primary method for garbage disposal within the country is through formal channels like Waste management Corporation Limited (WAMCO) or the Island Council, representing 78% of households (World Bank, 2022).

The lack of efficient and conscious waste management systems throughout the nation, coupled with the lack of responsible citizen behavior and awareness has led to the accumulation of garbage, impacting both the environment and public health, and poses a huge reputational risk for Maldives' tourism that offers pristine marine environments.



Thilafushi Island, Source: See the Island in Maldives Made Entirely of Trash

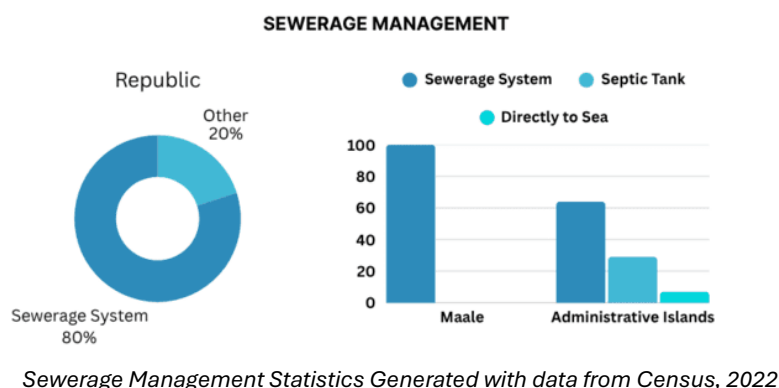


Source: Garbage In, Garbage Out: Waste management in the Maldives | IUCN

Furthermore, the country faces significant challenges in managing industrial and hazardous waste, across key sectors including maritime and aviation, where the maritime sector lacks port reception facilities for handling ship-generated waste (Maldives CCDR, 2024).

Sewerage and Drainage Management

Most islands lack centralized wastewater treatment plants, and untreated sewage is often discharged into the sea, posing marine and public health risks. Moreover, flooding and saltwater intrusion compromise sanitation infrastructure, especially on low-lying and outer islands where the commonly used septic systems are vulnerable to overflow and contamination during storms.



Effective enforcement of the Water and Sewerage Act is needed (Maldives Common Country Analysis, 2024) to ensure proper treatment, safe disposal, and consistent monitoring with stronger regulatory oversight and penalties for non-compliance and environmental safeguards. The National Bureau of Statistics notes that sanitation data is fragmented and not routinely collected, making planning difficult.

Sustainable Transport

With its vast geographic dispersion, transport between islands and atolls is infrequent and expensive - despite the presence of ferries and boats - constraining sustainable equitable development. Efficient connectivity between islands and atolls is essential for socio-economic integration, equal access to services, disaster response, and to promote regional equity.



Ferry in Maldives

Overcrowding in Malé has exacerbated issues like traffic congestion, negatively impacting the well-being of residents. Furthermore, with an increasing aging and/or disable population, there is also an urgent need to efficiently implement accessible transportation and infrastructure.

The construction of the causeway bridge has significantly improved transportation and connectivity between the capital city of Malé and the airport island (Hulhulé) as well as Hulhumalé, however the reliance on fossil fuel-based transport associate negative externalities like traffic congestion, emissions, pollution and urban heat. Comprehensive urban planning can contribute to the reducing these pressures as well as leverage investments in sustainable and accessible transportation, infrastructure, sustainable practices, and equitable access to services to foster resilient cities and communities across the Maldives (Maldives Common Country Analysis, 2024).

04 CLIMATE CHANGE

Extreme climate vulnerability has influenced the Maldives' Foreign Policy as a vocal advocate at international climate change fora, and a member of the Alliance of Small Island States. At domestic level, the challenge lies in implementation of pledged commitments due to a lack of technical capacity, funds, coordination vis-à-vis its geographic dispersion and economic development agenda.



Coral Reefs

Sea level rise, coastal flooding, sea erosion, and storm surges are the main climate threats causing infrastructure damage that risk displacing communities, increasing poverty and undermining food and water security. Without adaptation, coastal flooding could damage up to 3.3 percent of total assets by 2050 during typical one in a decade level floods. For rare, more intense events, damage to natural assets could reach up to 3.8 percent (for one in a century-level floods) and 4.4 percent (for one in a millennium-level floods). The annual expected damages amount to around US\$200 million depending on existing flood protection standards.



Coastal Flooding, Source: <https://en.sun.mv/62663>



Floods in Maldives, Source: <https://motherearthtravel.com/asia/maldives-travel-safety/>

Despite the Maldives' ecosystem being its productive asset, rapid urbanization and socioeconomic development together with poorly planned urban development and pressure to expand islands through reclamation has led to environmental degradation, affecting the delicate marine ecosystems and reducing the natural buffers that protect the islands from climate change-related sea-level rise.

The extensive coral reefs support natural island growth and a wide array of marine life that forms the foundation for economy and climate resilience. The flood protection service of coral reefs alone is valued at US\$442 million or 8 percent of GDP per year (Maldives Common Country Analysis, 2024). However, coral reef degradation has compromised the islands' ability to sustain this vital sand production, representing a substantial reduction in the ecosystem services.

Newly reclaimed areas do not have a coastal vegetation belt, increasing the risk of erosion and impacts from coastal flooding events. Similarly, the impact of Urban Heat Island is increasingly felt with temperatures in Maldives being above the South Asian average, and Male is identified as one of the cities that grapple with soaring temperatures and high humidity, leading to severe discomfort, rising health risks, and more frequent warm nights.

Despite its high vulnerability to climate and disaster risks, the Maldives lacks a robust framework for resilient building practices, including code compliance and green construction standards. Existing regulations do not adequately address climate-smart or energy-efficient materials, and quality control is limited, especially for low-rise housing. Although the 2017 Construction Act was a step forward, stronger enforcement and collaboration with the private sector are needed to embed resilience into public housing. Long-term efforts should focus on integrating climate resilience into land use planning, building codes, and approval processes.

05

COUNTRY FOCUS - THEMATIC PRIORITY AREAS

		
RESILIENT HOUSING & INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES	CLIMATE-RESILIENT URBAN SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE	NATURE POSITIVE & CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE URBANIZATION
Climate-resilient housing, including informal settlement upgrading. Settlement planning on habitable land with secure tenure. Urban planning & policies and related capacity development.	Expand access to climate-resilient services - WASH, waste, mobility, energy. Empower communities through People's Process & maintain systems adapted to local risks. Strengthen governance to integrate risk reduction, climate adaptation, and emergency response.	Promote nature-positive settlements by conserving blue-green ecosystems. Integrate nature-based solutions into planning to reduce climate risks. Safeguard cultural heritage and embed community identity and diversity in urban-rural continuum.

TARGETS

COUNTRY IN NUMBERS

		
\$25 Mn	6,000	4000
Fund Secured for Projects in the Country	Beneficiaries Assisted by the Projects	Number of People with Access to Safe Water

MALDIVES



1. Support the development of a comprehensive **National Urban Policy** linked to the upcoming **20-year Master Plan for National Development** that can guide/leverage climate smart sustainable settlements and infrastructure investment. This will enable synergies and articulation among different sectors, policies and programs, promoting decentralized satellite urbanization in selected designated urban centres to decongest the capital city and consolidate a balanced system of urban centres and rural settlements aligning with the government's regional development agenda.



2. Support the development of **National Climate Resilient Affordable Housing for All Policy** underscoring that adequate housing is a cornerstone of social inclusion, public health and climate security. Strengthen the **Construction Act** and building codes by integrating climate risk assessments and resilience standards for all housing and infrastructure. Establish regulatory frameworks for implementation to enhance enforcement, and develop technical guidelines for resilient, low-cost housing emphasizing elevation, saltwater-resistant materials, and wind-resistant design, fostering urban regeneration and slum upgrading strategies. Promote capacity building and collaboration across public, private, and community stakeholders.



3. Develop a **National Land Use Policy for sustainable urban planning** and support the establishment of a **multipurpose Land Registry**. Furthermore, it should include mapping and monitoring of high-risk zones with clear demarcations, integrating risk data into zoning regulations and establishing legal safeguards to prevent development in areas where mitigation is not feasible. These should include efforts to strengthen national and local capacity to formulate, implement and enforce **Island Land Use Plans (ILUPs)**.



4. Promote urban adaptation measures by implementing nature-based solutions and green infrastructure and public spaces to reduce **urban heat, improve groundwater recharge and stormwater management** towards resilient, healthier, and livable cities.



5. Implement **sustainable water management with integrated planning and community involvement**, by expanding and maintaining rainwater harvesting systems across all islands, encourage water recycling and irrigation for smallholder agriculture; invest in decentralized desalination technologies, especially solar-powered systems; protect freshwater lenses by monitoring and regulating groundwater extraction and restoring mangroves (among other nature-based solutions) to reduce saltwater intrusion, while upgrading sewerage systems.



6. Support the development of accessible **green and sustainable integrated transportation networks** for better connectivity. This will increase affordability, curb emissions and pollution while reducing dependency on fluctuating global fossil fuel prices.



7. Contribute to the implementation of the national **solid waste management** strategy aligned to the **National Strategic Action Plan**. This should include phasing out open dumping and burning and investing in sanitary landfills. Advancing cooperation with private sectors to ban single-use plastics and reduce waste (for instance through the development of programmes for the use of perennial energy sources such as biogas ensuing leachate reduction targeting hotels and households), while promoting alternatives through incentives and public awareness campaigns.

06 PLANNED INTERVENTIONS



Safe Settlements, Secure Futures: Enhancing Climate-smart Housing and Water Systems for Vulnerable Communities in the Maldives

Project's aim

The project aims to strengthen climate resilience in vulnerable communities and human settlements across the Maldives by focusing on housing, basic services, and inclusive governance.



**TOTAL
BUDGET USD**
20 million

Relevance to regional implementation plan:

Universal access to resilient, risk-informed and climate sensitive basic services and infrastructures.



TIME FRAME
60 months

Additional Priorities:

Resilient, risk-informed and climate-sensitive housing and community for all.

Urban management transformation through integrated planning, participatory governance and advanced technology



LOCATION
Maldives

OUTPUT, OUTCOME AND IMPACT:

Output

- Strengthening policy and regulatory frameworks to develop climate-resilient affordable coastal settlement solutions integrating nature-based solutions
- Enhancing water security and flood proofing through climate resilient technologies and nature-based solutions.
- Strengthening institutional and social resilience



Rainwater collection system in the Maldives. Photo credit: Jon Randall

Expected Outcomes

- Reduced climate vulnerability of communities through improved inclusive planning, resilient infrastructure and eco-system services
- Practical demonstration of climate smart, affordable, and culturally appropriate housing
- Increased access to safe, sustainable and reliable integrated water management systems and infrastructure, reduced flood risk among coastal communities.
- Strengthened integrated governance systems at national, local and community levels with developed capacities for climate resilient housing and infrastructure enhancing the ability to respond to extreme climate events.

2

Coastal Resilience: Advancing Climate Smart Settlements in the Maldives

Project's aim:

To enhance climate adaptation, reduce climate induced internal migration pressures, and strengthen sustainable settlement systems through integrated blue-carbon ecosystem restoration in key atoll communities



TOTAL BUDGET:
USD 4 million

Relevance to regional implementation plan:

Harmonized co-existence of cities and nature and preservation of cultural diversity.



TIME FRAME:
48 months

Additional Priorities:

Universal access to resilient, risk-informed and climate-sensitive basic services and infrastructures
Urban management transformation through integrated planning, participatory governance and advanced technology



LOCATION:
Maldives

OUTPUT, OUTCOME AND IMPACT:

Output

- Strengthened data analytics, and policy to address climate induced migration
- Blue Carbon ecosystem restoration and protection for livelihoods and settlement stabilization
- Climate-resilient community systems and governance



*Coral Reefs in the Maldives,
Photo- The Maldives Expert*

Expected Outcomes

- Evidence based, climate sensitive policies that address internal migration and ecosystem protection combining data driven planning that enables decentralized, climate resilient housing and settlement solutions
- Strengthened ecosystem-based coastal protection and reduced physical vulnerability and migration pressures through improved local livelihoods and community ownership/ stewardship to support settlement stability
- Enhanced local governance and financing systems which strengthen community resilience, ensure long-term maintenance of restored ecosystems, and reduce migration pressures through better-managed, inclusive settlement systems

Impact:

- Reduce economic and climate driven internal migration pressures.
- Enhance ecosystem based coastal protection and community ownership.
- Improve green-blue livelihoods.
- Build climate resilient, sustainable settlements outside high density urban areas.

3

Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Mobility for the Maldives: Renewable, Accessible, and Connected Transport Solutions

Project's aim:

This project aims to implement a transformative mobility initiative in the Maldives that addresses urban congestion, inter-atoll connectivity, and the mobility needs of vulnerable populations.



TOTAL BUDGET:
USD 20 million

Relevance to regional implementation plan:

Urban management transformation through integrated planning, participatory governance and advanced technology



TIME FRAME:
60 months

Additional Priorities:

Universal access to resilient, risk-informed and climate-sensitive basic services and infrastructures



LOCATION:
Maldives

OUTPUT, OUTCOME AND IMPACT:

Output

- Policy Framework and guidelines: A national strategy and standards for inclusive and sustainable urban mobility
- Infrastructure and technology: Deployment of solar-powered electric buses, ferries, charging stations, and smart scheduling and ticketing platforms
- Capacity Building: Training programs for transport operators on inclusive service delivery



Congested Street in Malé. Photo credit: The press

Expected Outcomes

- Environmental: Reduction in carbon emissions and fossil fuel dependency.
Increased adoption of renewable energy in public transport
- Social Inclusion: Improved mobility for elderly and disabled populations.
Greater access to services, education, and employment.
- Economic Development: Enhanced inter-atoll trade and tourism.
Green and inclusive job creation in transport and renewable energy sectors
- Urban Decongestion: Reduced pressure on Malé through improved regional connectivity with the development of regional hubs

Impact

- Promote the use of renewable energy in transport systems
- Enhance accessibility for elderly citizens and people with disabilities
- Reduce urban congestion through decentralized mobility solutions
- Establish affordable, accessible, and regularly scheduled boat transport between atolls.

07

OTHER PLANNED INTERVENTIONS

7.1 LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND (LNOB)



LNOB will be integrated across all interventions, ensuring that vulnerable and marginalized groups including women, youth, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and migrants actively participate in designing and decision-making processes. Key actions include promoting inclusive and accessible tourism to engage aging and mobility-limited populations, and advancing community resilience through

participatory, gender-responsive urban programming that enhances safety, accessibility, and economic empowerment in underserved atolls.

7.2 VOLUNTARY LOCAL REVIEWS (VLRs) AND SDG LOCALIZATION

UN-Habitat will continue to support the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the institutionalization of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) as a tool for monitoring, accountability, and local action.

Following the 2025 VLR done in Male, support for potential rollouts in other atolls will be provided, leveraging lessons learned from the best global practices. Key actions will include capacity development of local, sub-national and national authorities to collect, analyze, and report SDG and urban indicators, reinforcing vertical coherence, development of data platforms to strengthen evidence-based planning and the integration of VLR findings into city development strategies and policy frameworks. These initiatives will enhance Maldives' contribution to the national and regional SDG reporting process, strengthening alignment between local, national, and regional actors.





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