



Blue & Green
Islands

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Urban Systems Transformation under the BGI IP

Cuba | Saint Lucia | Comoros | Seychelles

<https://www.undp.org/nature/our-flagship-initiatives/bgi-ip>



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The Blue and Green Islands Integrated Programme



135.6M
total budget USD

The total budget for the Programme includes:

- Country Projects: USD 119.9 million (average size USD 8 million)
- GCP: USD 15.7 million



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The Programme comprises:

- 15 Country Projects in 15 Small Islands Developing States implemented by 6 GEF Agencies
- 1 Global Coordination Project (GCP), implemented by UNDP



Partnerships in implementation



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United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification

The Programme benefits from financial support from UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to ensure gender equality for sustainable, progressive, and meaningful action to avoid, reduce, and reverse land degradation in SIDS.

Our vision for the Programme

Objective: to facilitate nature-positive development and reduce ecosystem degradation in SIDS by valuing nature and applying nature-based solutions in the food, tourism, and urban sectors.

We **scale solutions for system change.**



Leverage - Strategic Focus Areas

- Integrating Nature into development
- Implementing NbS in key ecosystems
- Mobilizing Private Sector Finance
- Partnering with Civil Society
- Supporting Collective Action for SIDS voices



Why Urban Systems Matter in the BGI IP



In SIDS, **pressures on nature, people, and infrastructure converge most sharply in urban areas**. Rapid urbanisation, tourism-driven growth, inadequate waste management, food import dependence, and climate exposure are degrading ecosystems and undermining resilience.

In **BGI-IP**, urban systems are addressed within **wider food, tourism, waste, and ecosystem service systems**.

With aim to support **nature-positive urban development**:

Reduce
land- and
sea-based
pollution

Improve
food and
water
security

Enable
circular
economy
pathways

Create
urban-rural
linkages that
sustain
livelihoods

Strengthen
climate
resilience in
densely
populated
areas

Each child project responds to distinct national urban challenges, while collectively advancing a shared systems agenda centered on Nature based Solutions (NbS), Ecosystem Services Valuation (ESV), and Natural Capital Accounting (NCA).

Country Snapshots

Cuba

Urban and peri urban production systems

Saint Lucia

Tourism driven urban growth and
landscape–seascape resilience

Comoros

Circular and ecosystem based urban
transformation

Seychelles

Urban circularity and finance mobilisation

Why

Urban and peri-urban areas in western Cuba are experiencing:

- Rapid expansion of **urban agriculture** to meet food security needs,
- Soil degradation, water contamination, and unmanaged organic waste,
- Disconnection between urban production, ecosystem health, and policy decisions.

These pressures threaten biodiversity in globally significant ecosystems while increasing vulnerability of urban food systems.

How

Cuba applies a **nature-centred urban production model** by:

- Integrating **ESV and NCA into municipal planning, food policies, and fiscal frameworks**
- Using **NbS to redesign urban and peri-urban agriculture, fisheries, and waste flows**
- Engaging municipalities and new private economic actors (MSMEs, cooperatives) in **multi-stakeholder decision platforms**

What

- **Urban ecological farming systems** producing fresh, nutritious food with low inputs
- **Circular bio-inputs** (biofertilisers, protein plants, bioproducts) replacing chemicals
- Urban and peri-urban **waste reuse** embedded in food and aquaculture value chains
- Strengthened municipal capacity to govern food, waste, and land use through nature-positive planning

Why

Urban growth driven by tourism has:

- Expanded impervious surfaces and degraded watersheds
- Increased pollution to rivers, coasts, and marine ecosystems
- Intensified land-use conflicts between tourism, agriculture, and urban development

Without intervention, emerging urban corridors risk replicating past environmental failures.

How

Saint Lucia uses urban systems as a **decision-making testbed** by:

- Valuing ecosystem services to **inform land-use trade-offs** in urbanising landscapes
- Linking tourism investment models with **urban and upstream ecosystem stewardship**
- Applying NbS within an **integrated landscape–seascape framework**

What

- **Urban-adjacent protected landscapes** guiding sustainable settlement expansion
- **Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES)** mechanisms aligning downstream urban/tourism users with upstream land managers
- NbS addressing **soil erosion, runoff control, and coastal water quality**
- Strengthened planning processes so urban growth reinforces—rather than undermines—ecosystem resilience

Why

Comoros' main cities face:

- Severe **solid and organic waste mismanagement**
- Flooding, pollution, and freshwater stress intensified by population growth
- Weak institutional capacity to link urban management with ecosystem health

Urban degradation directly threatens food security, tourism potential, and public health.

How

Urban systems are addressed through **circular and ecosystem-based transformation**, by:

- Embedding NbS into **urban waste, food, and water management**
- Valuing natural capital to influence **urban policy and investment decisions**
- Connecting cities with surrounding protected areas through ridge-to-reef approaches

What

- **Circular organic waste systems** converting city and tourism waste into compost, biogas, and biofertilisers
- NbS-supported urban food systems reducing pollution loads
- Improved urban water regulation through ecosystem restoration
- Institutional strengthening of municipalities to deliver **nature-positive urban services**

Why

Highly urbanised island centres face:

- Rapid growth in **organic waste generation**
- Dependence on landfills with limited space
- Disconnection between urban consumption, tourism, and ecosystem degradation

Urban systems are critical to achieving food security, climate targets, and biodiversity finance goals.

How

Seychelles positions urban areas as **engines of circularity and finance mobilisation**, by:

- Integrating **NCA and ecosystem service data into urban policy and budgeting**
- Scaling NbS that link **urban waste streams to agriculture, water security, and blue carbon**
- Leveraging digital tools and private finance to shift from subsidies to **nature-positive investment**.

What

- **Urban composting and biochar systems** using household, hotel, and fish waste
- NbS enhancing **soil fertility, water retention, and disaster resilience**
- Urban-linked MSMEs driving climate-smart cottage industries
- Blue-green finance instruments capturing urban ecosystem value (e.g. blue carbon, PES)

BGI Added Value

What the Four Countries Are Doing Together



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1

Embedding nature into urban decision making (via ESV and NCA)

2

Replacing linear urban metabolism with circular flows of nutrients, water, and energy

3

Linking cities to their surrounding landscapes and seascapes

4

Using NbS not as pilots, but as scalable system levers

5

Positioning urban areas as drivers of climate resilience, food security, and green jobs



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Thank you

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