

Blue and Green Islands Integrated Program

The Issue

Nowhere is the interconnection between nature and people's livelihoods and well-being more obvious than in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Countries worldwide are faced with accelerating change and environmental challenges. However, for SIDS, these challenges tend to be more intense and rapidly felt. They are physically small, geographically isolated and remote from international markets, with small economies that rely on a limited resource base, including unique biodiversity. SIDS are also highly vulnerable to the results of a changing climate. This includes sea level rise, more frequent and severe tropical storms, and the loss of coral reefs.

Around the world, the value of nature for the well-being of societies is often not understood and incorporated into decision-making. This leads to decisions and policies that undermine long-term societal health. Cutting down a mangrove to build a hotel or shrimp farm, for example, means the loss of an important fish nursery and storm surge protector.

SIDS economies are visibly and directly dependent on ecosystem health through tourism, agriculture, and fisheries, and are vulnerable to natural disasters exacerbated by climate change. Thus, disconnects in understanding and policy action become even more problematic in SIDS; but there are also opportunities for transformational change by addressing this challenge.

The Integrated Solution

The Blue and Green Islands Integrated Program will support SIDS to value ecosystem services and incorporate them into decision making as a basis for protecting nature as the foundation of thriving and resilient societies. At the same time, the program will support the scaling up of Nature-based Solutions (NBS) on the ground and in the water in the tourism, food, and urban sectors. The global platform will provide key technical support and capacity building, support knowledge sharing, and build collaborative initiatives with the private sector and others.

Therefore, the program will work with countries to support integrated decision-making that incorporates the value of nature through methods such as ecosystem valuation and natural capital accounting. Building on this approach, SIDS are also uniquely positioned to pioneer NBS approaches to development and recovery. As part of the program, each country will choose a set of activities to implement based on national circumstances and priorities.

National projects will have two primary areas of work:

- Addressing cross-cutting upstream issues to create a coherent enabling environment such as accounting and valuing of ecosystems and domestic public and private sector resource mobilization
- Addressing landscape level challenges in one or more of three sectors through Nature-based Solutions.

Potential Nature-based Solutions:

Tourism — Conservation, sustainable use, and restoration of ecosystems; integrated sustainability planning and decision making for tourism development; protected areas management; engaging tourism enterprises in the care and restoration of nature; and coral reef insurance.



Food (agriculture and fisheries) — Support for farmers and fishers to move toward sustainable practices; maintaining, improving, and restoring agro-ecosystems; regenerative agriculture and integrated pest management to reduce agrochemical use; promoting NBS to curb sources of land-based pollutants, including persistent organic pollutants; building robust and sustainable supply chains and strengthening producer organizations; and improving community-based or commercial fisheries management, aquaculture, and/or protected area management.

Urban — Innovative NBS to wastewater management, water security, urban flooding, renewable energy, and/or solid waste management; and restoration of degraded productive landscapes or conservation of natural areas in peri-urban and rural areas to improve the ecosystem services they provide in urban areas.

The Global Environment Facility is the world's largest funder of biodiversity protection, nature restoration, pollution reduction, and climate change response in developing countries. **In June 2022, donor governments pledged \$5.33 billion to the GEF for its next four year operating period (GEF-8). Much of the funding will be delivered through a set of 11 integrated programs that address multiple environmental threats at once.**

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Expected Impacts

The **Global Coordination** function of the program will provide technical support and national-level capacity for enabling environment interventions; support learning, knowledge exchange and collaboration; coordinate and leverage external funding opportunities for impact at scale across multiple benefits; and meaningfully engage the local and international private sectors for innovative NBS. Individual SIDS may lack the scale to address certain issues or sectors that threaten the global environment and the global platform will seek to make significant progress in one or more of these areas.

Often described as large ocean, small island states, the SIDS manage 30% of the world's territorial oceans, including many areas of high biodiversity and carbon value. With just 3% of the Earth's land surface, SIDS are home to 20% of all plants, birds, and reptiles. By supporting countries to bring the value of nature into planning and policy and implementing NBS, the program will protect unique biodiversity, mitigate and adapt to climate change, and lead in demonstrating pathways for a Healthy Planet and Healthy People.