IUR - SIDS
INTEGRATED URBAN RESILIENCE IN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES AND COASTAL CITIES

NATIONAL AND CITY ‘STATE OF PLAY’
BELIZE CITY, BELIZE
**ABOUT IUR - SIDS**

The Integrated Urban Resilience in Small Island Developing States and Coastal Cities (IUR-SIDS) is a Joint global Programme by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) processed through a Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) for urban risk reduction and resilience building action. The Joint global Programme will unfold during a 2023-2025 first phase reaching 10 countries/cities, which will lay the foundation for potential scaling-up and scaling-out of the approach to support more cities and countries in a second phase from 2026 to 2030. The overall goal of the IUR-SIDS programme is that, by 2030, at least 100 small and medium-sized cities are supported to develop risk-informed urban development plans and implement urban resilience building interventions addressing all resilience dimensions viz. physical, environmental and socio-economic -- while strengthening urban governance informed by a systems’ thinking to secure resilient development outcomes. Through delivering as One, the two UN agencies will maximize synergies of action, opens opportunities and provide coherent results in SIDS and coastal cities.

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**About UNDP**

UNDP is the leading United Nations organization fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality and climate change. Working with our broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, we help nations to build integrated, lasting solutions for people and planet.

**About UN–Habitat**

UN-Habitat supports national and local governments, academia, civil society and the private sector, with the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and SDG11, which aims for sustainable cities and communities. We support processes of institutional capacity-building regarding sustainable urbanization and knowledge-transfer between regional counterparts, in particular through key initiatives like National Urban Policies, the City Prosperity Initiatives, Urban Integrated Solutions and others.
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The Horizon 2030: National Development Framework for Belize 2010 – 2030 is a strategic instrument with a multi-sectoral approach embodying the vision for Belize in the year 2030, as a long-term development agenda. The Horizon 2030 Framework covers several thematic areas that are organized under four main pillars:

The Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) 2016 – 2019 is a national strategic document with a multi-sectoral approach providing detailed guidance on priorities and on specific actions to be taken during the planning period, including actions that contribute to longer term development objectives beyond 2019. Specifically, the GSDS identifies four Critical Success Factors (CSF): CSF1) Optimal National Income and Investment; CSF2) Enhanced Social Cohesion and Resilience; CSF3) Sustained or Improved Health of Natural, Environmental, Historical and Cultural Assets; and CSF4) Enhanced Governance and Improved Citizen Security. The Strategy was later extended to 2021 and until the next medium-term development strategy would officially take over.

The Plan Belize Medium-Term Development Strategy (MTDS) 2022 – 2026 is a national strategic document with a multi-sectoral approach launched in January 2023 to guide the decision-making of the government over the next 5 years, giving it a pathway to achieve multidimensional development
II. Administrative / Political structure, electoral cycle and next elections (National government; city nodal authority)

Belize is a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy with two levels of government: national and local. Belize’s parliament comprises a house of representatives and a senate. The 31 members of the house of representatives are directly elected every 5 years with the leader of the majority party appointed as prime minister by the governor-general. The members of the senate are
appointed by the governor-general on the advice of the prime minister, of the leader of the opposition and suggested by non-governmental organizations. The next general elections should take place in November 2025.

Belize has a comprehensive legal framework for local governance and decentralization. The Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government is charged with overseeing the administration of the systems of local government in Belize. The Ministry provides oversight, guidance, support and capacity building initiatives to these various systems whilst monitoring their strategic and operational activities on a day-to-day basis.

The Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management is in charge of implementing the 2030 Agenda in Belize. The Ministry plays a key role in Belize’s response to the climate crisis, in disaster risk management nationwide, and in its commitment to a sustainable development path. The National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) is the full-time government department responsible for the training and coordination across the public and private sector to prepare for, mitigate from, respond to and recover from disasters. NEMO is a participating state of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), an inter-governmental agency for disaster management in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). CDEMA’s main function is to make an immediate and coordinated response to any disastrous event affecting any member-state of the CARICOM, once the state requires such assistance.

Belize City is governed locally by the Belize City Council. It is a statutory body formed under the Belize City Council Act which is regulated by the Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government. The Council consists of a mayor and ten other members elected by the citizens. Municipal elections are held every three years on the first Wednesday in March, with the next round scheduled for March 2024.
III. Local competencies and jurisdictions (relevant to interventions; key sectors and stakeholders)

At the local government level, Belize City Council has a statutory duty to provide ‘rules and good governance’ and to provide certain basic services. The City Council has several responsibilities, including revenue collection, planning and infrastructure, crime and drug reduction and prevention, public health, market management, maintaining streets and drains, sanitation and waste disposal, parks and playgrounds, traffic control, environmental protection, coordination of public utilities and cemeteries, and fostering citizen participation. The unit coordinating public utilities oversees the activities of the bodies providing electricity, water and sewerage, gas, and other utility services.

Some of the key stakeholders of the Belize City Council include the Belize Waste Control, Belize Port Authority, Belize Electricity Limited, Belize Water Services, and the Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute (CZMAI), among others.

IV. Revenue and financing streams – national budgeting for city level planning, development and implementation, etc.

In fiscal years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, the actual programme expenditures of the Local Government Department of the Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government were close to BZ$7.4 million and BZ$4.3 million respectively (around US$3.4 million and US$2 million) to strengthen the local authorities through policy development, guidance and support. The estimated programme expenditures for FY21-22 and FY22-23 of the Department were close to BZ$4.7 million and BZ$4.8 million respectively (around US$2.2 million). The grants allocated to Municipalities and statutory bodies were close to BZ$6.9 million in FY19-20 and BZ$3.7 million in FY20-21 (around US$3.2 million and US$1.7 million respectively), and were estimated to be close to BZ$4.36 million for FY21-22 and FY22-23 (around US$2 million).

The primary sources of revenue for Belize City Council come from taxes (property tax collection and arrears, etc.), traffic revenue (motor vehicle licenses and registration, drivers’ licenses, etc.), fee and services (building permits, cemetery fee, etc.), licences (liquor licensing taxes, trade licensing taxes, special trade licensing taxes, etc.), rentals (market, parking spaces, etc.), fines for failing to comply with by-laws, and subsidies coming from the central government. In FY19-20, these subsidies were slightly above BZ$3 million (almost US$1.6 million), while the total revenue of the City Council amounted BZ$24 million (almost US$12 million). Following the actual and estimated programme expenditures of the Local Government Department of the Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government, subsidies coming from the central government might have plummeted from FY20-21.

V. Regional and international partners’ engagement and investments --- development investments by IFIs, regional or other entities, etc.

The World Bank Group’s (WBG) engagement with Belize is guided by the Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Belize which presents the World Bank Group’s program and anticipated results framework for 2017 to 2022. The CPF is well aligned with the country’s long-term development strategy, Horizon 2030. The CPF’s overarching goal is to support Belize in strengthening its economic
resilience, organized around two focus areas: (a) fostering climate resilience and environmental sustainability; and (b) promoting financial inclusion and social resilience. To support these focus areas, the CPF envisages the implementation of a program that could reach up to US$30 million in new loans. In recent years, the World Bank engaged with Belize in a variety of projects such as the Climate Resilient Infrastructure Project (2014), Municipal Development Project (2017), Covid-19 Rapid Response (2021), and Climate Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture Project (2022).

The Canada-Caribbean Resilience Facility (CRF) is a single-donor World Bank-executed trust fund, managed by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR). The trust fund is financed by the Government of Canada and is valued at Canadian dollar (CAD) 20 million (estimated US$15.5 million). The Facility was established to achieve more effective and coordinated gender-informed climate-resilient preparedness, recovery, and public financial management practices over a five-year period (2019-2023) in nine Caribbean countries, including Belize, Dominica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. In fiscal year 2022, the CRF disbursed US$115,715 in Belize.

The Caribbean Development Bank’s (CDB) engagement with the Government of Belize spans more than five decades; Belize is a founding member of the Bank. The Country Engagement Strategy (CES) for 2022 to 2026 is guided by the strategic objectives of Belize’s Medium-Term Development Strategy and rests on three strategic pillars: (a) building social resilience; (b) building economic resilience; and (c) building environmental resilience. The programme of assistance is designed to achieve six project outcomes.
The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been authorized to operate in Belize since 1982. Current UNDP activities are guided by the Country Programme Document (CPD) for Belize (2022–2026). The CPD vision is to support Belize in investing in climate action and sustainable natural resource management, including interventions that directly promote a greener development pathway, exploiting opportunities offered by blue and green economies, effective governance, and equitable creation of a safe Belizean society. Over the years, UNDP has been supporting the Belizean Government to leverage financing from a variety of sources such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) or the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and has also been serving as a development partner to other development counterparts such as the European Union (2012–2017), the United Kingdom Department For International Development (2019–2023), and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (2022–2023).

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has an active portfolio of loans with Belize based on the IDB Group Country Strategy with Belize 2022–2025 to help the country overcome the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and support efforts to achieve long-term robust, inclusive, and sustainable growth. The country strategy focuses its actions on three priority areas: (i) fiscal sustainability and management; (ii) private sector productivity and sustainable growth, with a focus on MSMEs; and (iii) human capital. Total approved amount: US$128.16 million.

The **Belize Urban Resilience and Disaster Prevention Project 2019–2022** is a US$1.2M project funded by the Republic of China (Taiwan) through its International Cooperation and Development Fund (TaiwanICDF). The project, executed by the Government of Belize in collaboration with the Taiwan Technical Mission in Belize, assisted the Belizean government in the use of GIS technology to establish an early warning system and improve flood preparedness and disaster response efficiency. At the end of 2022, the Flood Warning Capacity Improvement for the Belize River Basin Project was launched as the continuation of the cooperation to improve Belize’s disaster prevention and response capabilities.

Apart from the above-mentioned partners, since it became an independent nation in 1981, Belize has received support from many governments through their development agencies such as Japan (2009–2011 - disaster prevention; 2008–2010 - fisheries), South Korea (2017, 2021 - transportation), India (2022 - COVID-19 response capacity), Germany (2019-2023 - tropical rainforest protection; 2020-2023 - energy), Australia (2022-2023 - small grants scheme), and the European Union (2021-2027 - green growth and sustainable socio-economic development, and trade and economic integration).
VI. Development challenges and gaps

Belize faces many development challenges; their progress will depend on bold actions. The country is exceptionally vulnerable to storms – from its geographic location in the hurricane belt – and other weather-related risks, and highly exposed to climate change. The country’s coastline is low-lying and will face severe damages if sea level rises, and storm surges and flooding intensify. Belize has a high rate of poverty, with large segments of the population living in unplanned settlements. A report from 2010 prepared by the Government of Belize states that 43% of the population is poor, with 14% vulnerable to becoming poor. UNICEF and ECLAC estimate that 6 out of 10 children in Belize lack at least one of these basic needs: adequate nutrition, clean drinking water, proper sanitation, adequate housing, and access to education and information. Governmental ability to address these development challenges is constrained by high debt levels, limited fiscal space, inadequate institutions and institutional gaps. With an economy relying heavily on tourism, the severe impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic further worsen the situation. Belize’s difficult economic conditions and subsequent budget cuts could impede significantly the achievement of the country long-term development strategy, Horizon 2030.

Adding to these and their own local development challenges, **urban communities in Belize are confronted with insufficient capacities for municipal governance and sustainable urban planning and management.** In Belize City and its metropolitan area, this has manifested in insecure land tenure, and unplanned and unregulated urban development – including in flood-prone areas – where physical and social infrastructure like electricity, water supply and sanitation, green spaces, stormwater systems, health and educational facilities, waste disposal, or mobility, are either non-existent or inadequate. The pollution and environmental degradation from the city’s unplanned growth resulted in loss of natural protection the mangrove swamps provided from storms and flooding. At or below sea level, Belize City receives over 200 centimeters of rainfall a year and suffers easily from flooding, being pluvial with intense seasonal rainfalls, fluvial from the Belize River, and coastal related to tropical storms and hurricane winds (storm surge). Particularly vulnerable to storms, the former capital of Belize lost its administrative status to Belmopan after the devastating impact of hurricane Hattie in 1961. Whilst still being the centre of commerce, history and culture, and the most populated city, building stock and infrastructure are deteriorating in various neighborhoods with public spaces becoming unsafe. Crime, violence and insecurity have been on the rise, worsened by social, physical and economic risk-drivers such as lack of employment and educational opportunities, and inadequate social protection measures.
GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

I. Global policy frameworks and positioning

In late 2013, Belize volunteered to act as a UNDESA’s pilot country, to help demonstrate how national development planning could work in harmony with the emerging “Post-2015 Development Agenda” of the global community of nations. The UNDP office in Belize provided facilitation and logistical support to the Belizean Government, as well as coordination of partners.

On September 23rd, 2022, the Prime Minister of Belize, John Briceño, addressed the general debate of the 77th session of the UNGA where he discussed various topics including the climate crisis that Small Island Developing States like Belize are fighting.

II. Agenda 2030

**VNR:** Voluntary National Review 2017  
**NDC:** Nationally Determined Contribution released in 2016; Updated Nationally Determined Contribution released in 2021.  
**NAP:** Since February 2023, a readiness proposal for the formulation and implementation of a multisectoral National Adaptation Plan (NAP) was approved by the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The NAP will be supported by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) Readiness Support, with the Belize Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment as National Designated Authority, and the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) – Belize’s first nationally accredited entity to the GCF – as Delivery Partner.  
**NUA national report:** Not available

III. National / local engagement (networks, MCR2030, inter-regional forums, etc.)

Belize is a member State of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Central American Integration System (SICA) and Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), among other international and regional memberships. Belize is also a Participating State of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), a regional inter-governmental agency for disaster management in the CARICOM, and a founding member of the Caribbean Development Bank (CBD). In January 2023, Belize officially assumed the Pro Tempore Presidency (PTP) of the SICA’s Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD) for the period January 1 to June 30, 2023.
Belize City is a member of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Cities Network and of the Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Network (CSCN). The mayor of Belize City, Bernard Wagner, is currently one of the four members of the CSCN Steering Committee, providing oversight, guidance and policy direction to the Network.

**ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES IN DRR, CC-CCA, RESILIENCE**

The Belize-Green Climate Fund Country Programme was launched in February 2023 for the period 2022 – 2026. This country document endorsed by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) highlights Belize’s climate priorities and outlines a portfolio of projects and programs that will aid the country in achieving climate resilience. The country programme highlights priority sectors and initiatives for adaptation and mitigation, including a pipeline of medium- and lower-priority projects to be submitted as funding proposals to the GCF.

The Belize profile of the World Bank Group (WBG) Climate Change Knowledge Portal (CCKP) provides climate-related information, data, and tools to enhance the understanding of changing climate across climate, disaster risk, and socio-economic datasets. The web-based platform offers climate data aggregations at national, sub-national, and watershed scales.

The BIDeconomics Belize: Developing a Sustainable, Resilient and Inclusive Belize developed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) presents a comprehensive analysis of development challenges and opportunities for promoting inclusive and sustainable development in Belize, recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and achieving long-term growth.

At the city level, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) implemented the Emerging and Sustainable Cities (ESC) methodology to support the development of Belize City – Rediscover, Reconnect – Action Plan for Sustainable Urban Development (launched in 2019) offering a blueprint for how the city can prioritize its urban policies, projects and actions over the next 15-20 years in order to follow a more sustainable and resilient growth and development trajectory. The document, developed between IDB and the Government of Belize through the Belize City Council, identifies key challenges faced by the city and recommends prioritized short-, medium- and long-term actions.

At the community level, Florida State University worked with the Belize Association of Planners (BAP) to collect data on resident perceptions and observations of climate change and natural disaster risk in two local communities of Belize City: Jane Usher and Between Canals. The final report Climate Change and Natural Disaster Risks in Belize City 2018 presents the baseline data obtained through surveys on these two communities impacted by severe weather events and climate change.
The Belize Mayors’ Association (BMA) represents the mayors of all the city and town councils. It provides collective support for and on behalf of the town and city governments.

The Belize Association of Planners promotes social justice and sustainability in the built environment in Belize. It addresses relevant planning and development issues such as urban resilience and climate justice by working in partnership with public authorities, the private sector and civil society organizations.

The Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) located in Belize coordinates the Caribbean region’s response to climate change, working on effective solutions and projects to combat its environmental impacts and global warming. The CCCCC provides climate change-related policy advice and guidelines to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Member States through the CARICOM Secretariat and is accredited as a Regional Implementing Entity (Direct Access Entity) by the Green Climate Fund (GCF).
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Get in touch

**Ronald Jackson**
Head, DRR and Recovery Team (DRT), Crisis Bureau UNDP
Ronald.jackson@undp.org

**Rajeev Issar**
Policy Specialist, DRT, Crisis Bureau UNDP
Rajeev.issar@undp.org

**Esteban Leon**
Head, City Resilience Global Programme
UN-Habitat
Esteban.leon@un.org