

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2018 | EDITION 3 | MALDIVES

Island life



BE PART OF THE
Solution

Celebrating the role of communities,
private sector and individuals to bring
about local solutions to local problems



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

ABOUT UNDP

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in more than 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.

In the Maldives, UNDP has worked for close to 40 years, in virtually all areas of human development from poverty eradication to democratic governance to environment protection, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

In all our work, we make concerted efforts to focus on meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable groups, particularly women and youth.

Our decades of experience on the ground has consistently helped the country meet its development aspirations, and to bring the voices of the people to the forefront – in turn helping to transform challenges into opportunities in the Maldives.

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1190

ISLANDS IN THE COUNTRY

ONLY
188

ISLANDS ARE INHABITED
BY MALDIVIANS

APPROXIMATELY
126

ISLANDS HAVE BEEN
DEVELOPED AS TOURIST
RESORTS

OVER
393

GUESTHOUSES DEVELOPED
IN 77 ISLANDS

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KEY HIGHLIGHTS



POLE AND LINE TUNA FISHING
SUPPORTS MORE THAN
30,000 LIVELIHOODS

42 MARINE PROTECTED
AREAS

MALDIVES HAS THE
7TH LARGEST
CORAL REEF SYSTEM





ALL SPECIES OF TURTLES FOUND IN
THE MALDIVES INCLUDING THE
"ENDANGERED"
GREEN TURTLES AND
THE "CRITICALLY
ENDANGERED"
HAWKSBILL TURTLES
ARE PROTECTED



REEF DEPENDENT
TOURISM MAKES UP **60%**
OF TOTAL TOURISM REVENUES
AND **43%** OF GDP



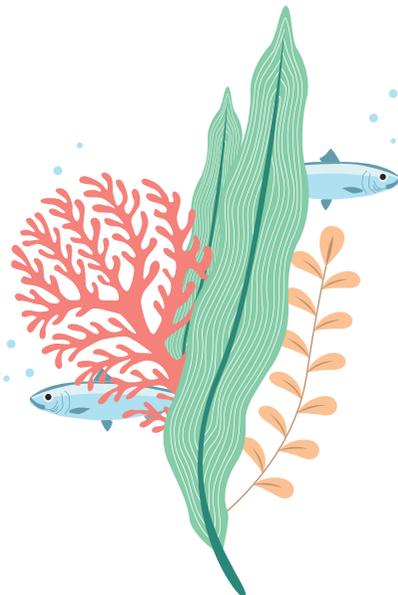


Shoko Noda

UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR AND
UNDP RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE
IN THE MALDIVES

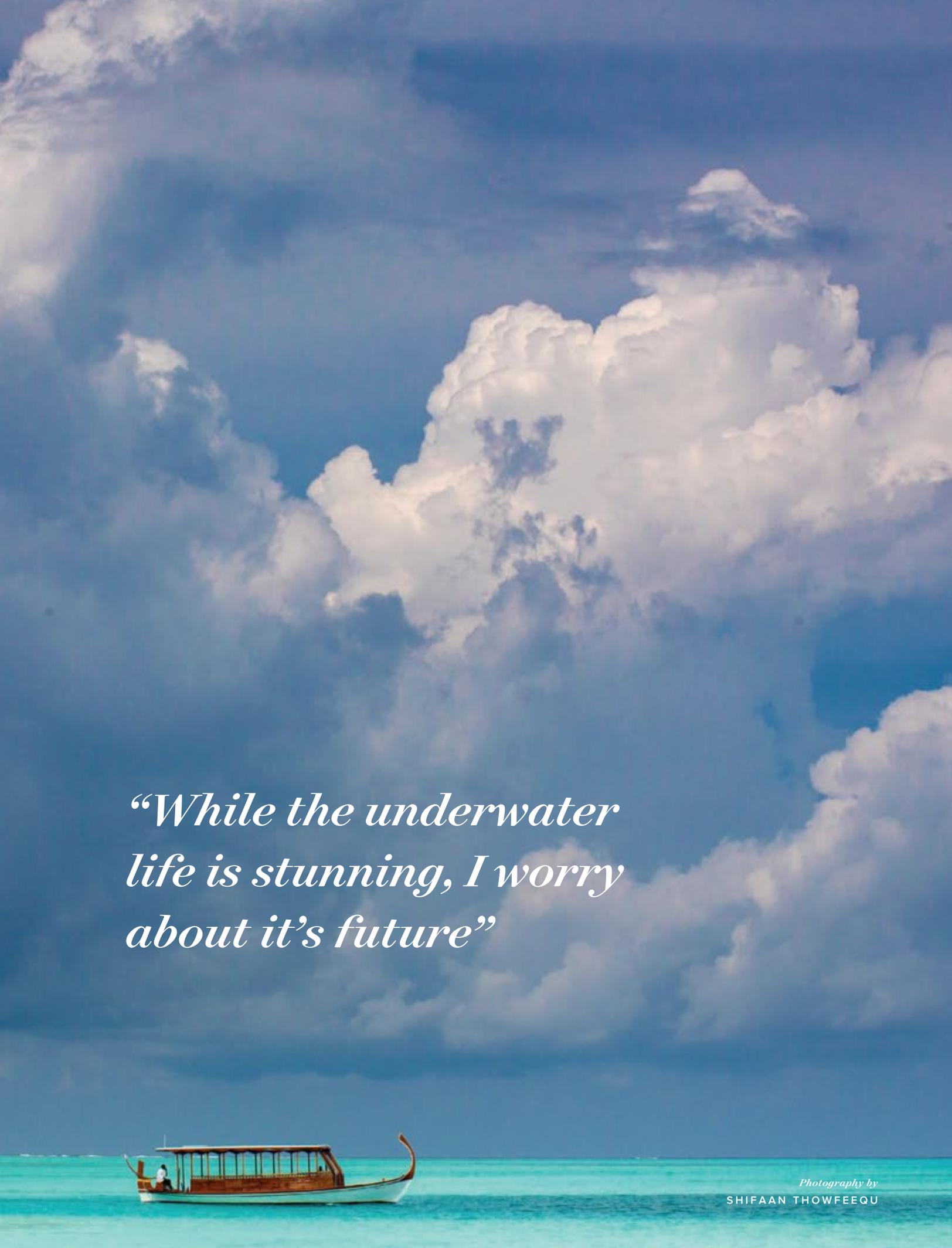
Welcome to this third edition of *Island Life*-
*It focuses on the importance of partnerships and the
participation of citizens towards a sustainable Maldives*

SAVING OUR OCEANS, SAVING OUR PLANET



When I arrived in the Maldives, I truly understood why the Earth was called the Blue Planet. Scattered across the vast Indian Ocean the low lying islands of Maldives have a beauty and uniqueness like no other, different shades of blue cover the majestic creatures below water. The remoteness of these islands means it contains a rich biodiversity, with some species originating from the country itself. For decades, the survival of this rich ecosystem has been based on the harmonious balance between nature and communities.

While the underwater life in the Maldives is stunning, I worry about its future. The corals were bleached badly in 2016 and recovery is slow; the sea temperatures have risen because of the El Niño. This, coupled with negative human activity such as overfishing, is making Maldives one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change on this Planet. In 2016, over 100 islands requested assistance for drinking water supplies and 80% of the islands reported severe beach erosion. Climate Change is real and it's happening now.

A wooden boat with a canopy is on the water. The sky is blue with large, fluffy white clouds. The water is a vibrant turquoise color.

*“While the underwater
life is stunning, I worry
about it’s future”*

Photography by
SHIFAAN THOWFEEQU



Save the Beach members talking to Nikolaj and Shoko about their Marine Conservation Projects

Photography by
UMAIR BADEEU / UNDP MALDIVES

Given this, the Sustainable Development Goals come at a very opportune moment. It provides a framework for all of us - government, civil society and private sector partners to work towards the same goals, resulting in greater impact and increasing our chances of achieving them.

In this third issue of UNDP's annual publication, *Island Life*, we explore some of the challenges facing communities, and how the people are dealing with and adapting to these challenges. In particular, we focus on the importance of new partnerships and the participation of citizens beyond borders to help the Maldivian people lead better lives.

We are excited to present to you a number of inspirational figures, who continue to advocate and contribute for the country's betterment through sustainable means. I interviewed UNDP's Goodwill Ambassador, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau when he visited the Maldives in October 2017. We talked about the people he met and their ongoing struggle to adapt to the severity of climate change. During his visit, he launched the 'Unite for Climate Action' project. It aims to bring private sector partners together for stronger climate action.

I also spoke to Mr. Ismail Rasheed, CEO of Dhiraagu about the important role private sector plays in contributing to development, especially within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. What has become evident from these interviews is the importance of building new partnerships for stronger impact at the community level.

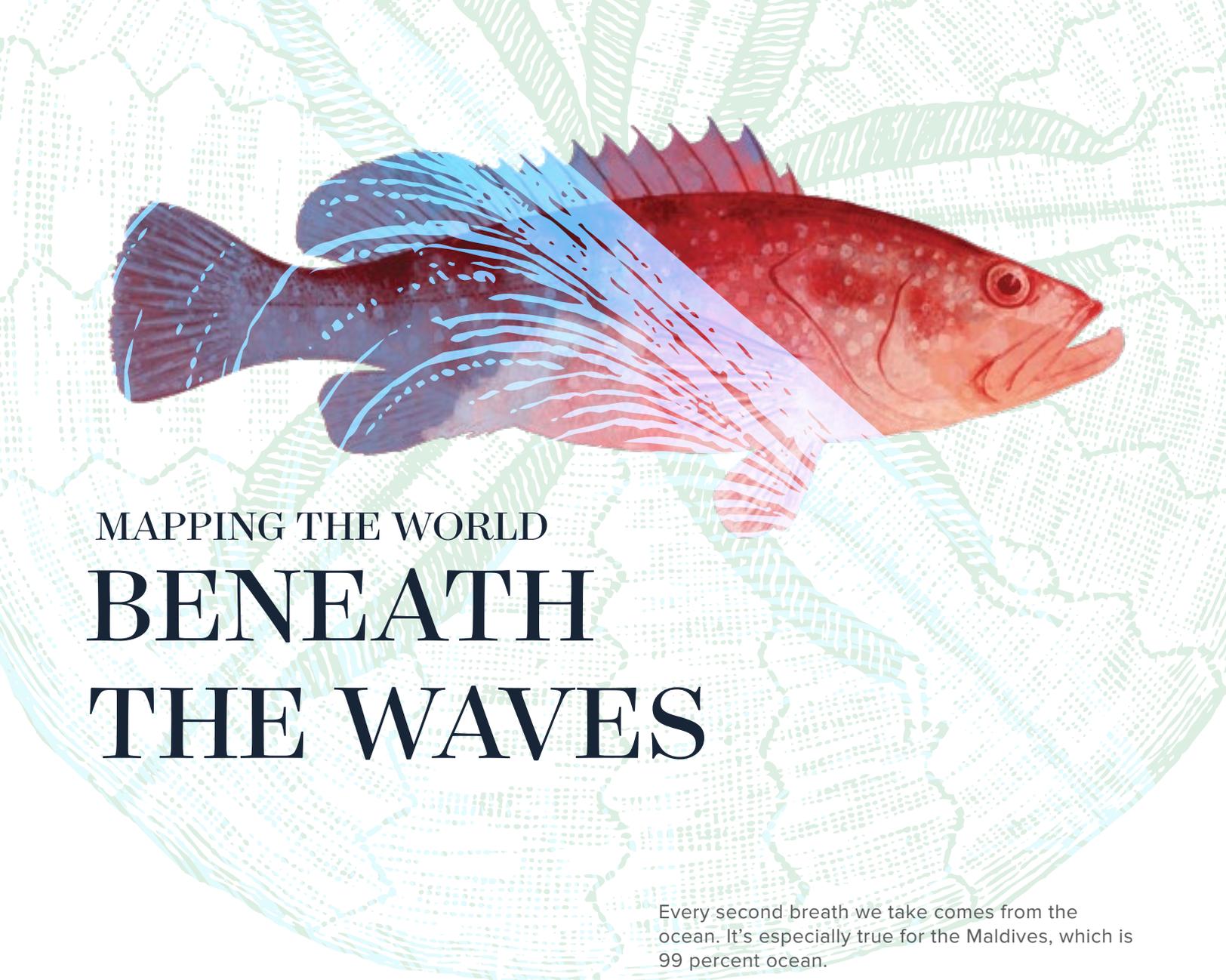
This edition also showcases the Make My Island Platform – a unique platform which connects communities with the private sector. The stories featured in this edition captures the potential of communities, especially youth, in bringing about local solutions for local problems through this bold step.

I hope you will read these stories and be inspired to protect this beautiful country and all its inhabitants. We can achieve amazing results when we work together.

*Come join us
and Be Part of
The Solution*



<https://give.undp.org/campaign/maldives/c146736>



MAPPING THE WORLD
**BENEATH
THE WAVES**

*“If trees are
Earth’s heart and
rivers its arteries,
then oceans are
its lungs.”*

Every second breath we take comes from the ocean. It’s especially true for the Maldives, which is 99 percent ocean.

Scattered across the middle of the Indian Ocean, the archipelago is a true wonder of nature. Each of its almost 2,000 islands are surrounded by powder soft white sandy beaches and shades of blue waters that protect gardens of corals and its diverse marine life.

For many island nations like the Maldives, the ocean provides much more than the air we breathe; it provides a steady income source for many island communities and is a key attraction of our growing tourism industry.

However, the very ocean which we all depend on, is today under threat. Negative human action such as overfishing, violent storms and increasing temperatures of the ocean are resulting in flooding and corals bleaching.¹

¹Warmer water temperatures can result in coral bleaching. When water is too warm, corals will expel the algae living in their tissues causing the coral to turn completely white.

Mohamed Naseem, a resident of Laamu Atoll, has been a fisherman for over 20 years. He built his house and sent his eldest daughter abroad for studies from the money he earned through fishing. He considered himself a lucky man; he was able to double his income from the newly discovered ‘gold’ in the fishing industry – groupers.

However, the number and size of groupers have greatly declined due to climate change and negative human actions such as overfishing and catching young groupers. For fishermen like Naseem, this drastic change has meant a significant loss in income.

From fisheries to tourism, the income opportunities available for the ordinary Maldivian have always been linked to our surrounding environment – from the beautiful coconut palms to the colourful reefs. It’s time to connect all the dots: from the smallest of creatures in the sea all the way up the food chain to us, humans.

We need to find better ways to protect the ocean and all marine life, so that its benefits are shared equally and sustainably by everyone.



FISHERIES SECTOR EMPLOYS 11 PERCENT OF THE WORKFORCE AND PROVIDES ALMOST ALL OF MALDIVES PHYSICAL EXPORTS



A man removing fish scale in
HDh.Kulhudhuffushi

Photography by
ASHWA FAHEEM / UNDP MALDIVES

In most cases, communities don't really think about the importance of not overusing the ocean's resources and keeping it healthy. To add to this, data on what's happening under the ocean surface is limited. It is only through stories from fishermen like Naseem or when we go snorkelling we realise what's happening to our oceans and the marine life.

"It looked as though someone has thrown a bucket of white paint all over the coral reef," UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Nikolaj Coster-Waldau said, after snorkelling in the reefs of Laamu Atoll in October.

In an effort to better understand what's happening to our oceans, UNDP has partnered with relevant local authorities to map life below water by conducting a marine mapping survey in Laamu Atoll.²

The results show ocean life in great detail, in a way that has never been captured in the Maldives before. It shows the depths of different reefs, types of fish living there and the impact of coral bleaching. Using these findings, the next steps will be to identify how people currently use all the resources offered by the ocean and ways to work together to make sure we are not overusing them.



Habitat image of Laamu Atoll Maavah island showing areas of algae growth (in green), reef coral (in red) and lagoon floor (in light blue) etc

Image by UNDP MALDIVES

PLANNING

DEFINE GOALS & OBJECTIVES



IDENTIFY THE STUDY LOCATION



DATA EVALUATION

PROCESS RAW SATELLITE IMAGES



ON THE GROUND INSPECTIONS



DATA COMPILATION



MANAGEMENT APPLICATIONS

PLANNING FOR ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

MANAGING MARINE RESOURCES

MINIMIZING CONFLICTS

DESIGNING MARINE PROTECTED AREAS



² This exercise was conducted under UNDP Low Emission Climate Resilience Development (LECRd) Programme. LECReD aims to build capacities at national and local levels to support low carbon life-styles, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction in Laamu Atoll



A family fishing in
Alif Dhaal Atoll

Photography by
SHIFAAN THOWFEEQU

What is amazing about this initiative is that the data collected can be used to map the oceans for the entire Maldives. It will also support the government's plan to become the first UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Nation in the world.

For the average Maldivian, the ocean and its beauty remain masked by the turquoise waters. But by mapping the world beneath the waves, communities can understand how life above and underwater are connected and how our future depends on keeping our oceans alive and healthy.



Woman from Fuvahmulah
taking her catch (octopus) home

Photography by
ASHWA FAHEEM / UNDP MALDIVES



OCEANS PRODUCE
ALMOST 50-80
PERCENT OF OXYGEN
AND CONSUME 25
PERCENT CARBON
DIOXIDE FROM THE
ATMOSPHERE.



MAKE MY ISLAND: BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Photography by
ASHWA FAHEEM / UNDP MALDIVES

The private sector is the engine that drives an economy. It not only contributes to job creation but their support to communities leaves a lasting positive impact.

Previously in the Maldives, private sector contributions to community development initiatives have been done through various forms of sponsorships & donations. Today, it's amazing to see how views have changed. Progress of the community is seen through mutual partnerships with the private sector, transfer of technology and helping to voice out concerns of the public. The country is also realizing that the very essence of development for the Maldives is to create bonds between communities and the private sector.

At UNDP, we believe that building networks between the local community, the private sector and the government is a stepping stone for development. Both, the private sector and the community can benefit from each other. This leads to a thriving community and in turn, a thriving nation. The aim is to bring localised solutions to the Maldives' complex development challenges such as gender equality and climate change.

Business as usual is no longer an option.

In 2016, we embarked on a mission to help communities achieve a better quality of life through private sector support. This led to the creation of the 'Make My Island' platform.

'Make My Island' represents a very unique approach to development – building new partnerships where private sector corporations from different backgrounds bring together their experiences. Through collaboration, we are able to come up with local solutions for local issues within communities. A bold step, but a much needed one.

It's been exciting to see all our partners coming together as one, working towards a bigger cause. What unites our partners and makes them special is their drive to help the people of Maldives live better lives. If 2017 has taught us anything, it is that by working together, we create a more lasting impact – for individuals, communities and the whole country.



ALAU ALI
MANAGING DIRECTOR
ALIA INVESTMENTS

"It is very encouraging to see local communities taking initiative to improve their quality of life despite the significant and exceptional challenges they face. Alia is motivated to express our support and to empower local communities to continue to do so."



AMIT MAJUMDER
MANAGING DIRECTOR
JUMEIRAH VITTAVELI

"We aim to build a better future not only for our guests who consider Jumeirah Vittaveli their home away from home, but also for our colleagues for whom this island is their actual home. Our own colleagues' BOLI (Building Our Lives Innovatively) Initiative is an important part of our community development programme, as we regularly visit surrounding islands to support infrastructure and educational institutions such as hospitals, children's homes, or schools. Cooperating with the UNDP is the logical next step in this evolution, bringing our expertise and knowledge together with other partners in the destination and building important networks that will have a positive influence on creating a better future for everyone in the Maldives."



NAJIB KHAN
CEO
OOREDOO MALDIVES

"We are proud to support the Make My Island initiative and to be a part of the global movement towards achieving SDG 13 Climate Change. It is of vital importance to invest in community development, as the ability to carry out a planned & effective response during a disaster can significantly reduce the damage caused. Localized solutions are essential for communities in the Maldives; as each island is different, and requires individualized disaster responses. Through this, communities can utilize the skills they develop to act as the first responder in an emergency, in order to reduce the impact of the disaster."

QUOTES FROM PRIVATE SECTOR



SONU SHIVDASANI
FOUNDER, CEO
SONEVA

"From the very beginning, the community and the environment have been at the heart of our business. It is very encouraging to see the UNDP's efforts at mobilising the private sector to give back to local communities. I have no doubt that the combined endeavours of businesses, individuals, NGOs, government, and communities will achieve great things and we should certainly keep the momentum moving forward."



ISMAIL RASHEED
CEO & MD
DHIRAAGU

“Our most important goal is to make sure that no one is left behind, giving everyone access to the latest innovations that would enhance lives and contribute to national development. We believe that by working together with government ministries and agencies as well as private businesses and organisations like the UNDP will help us to achieve sustainable development and the SDGs by 2030.”



SHANKAR NARAYAN
CEO
SBI MADIVES

"SBI has always been deeply involved with community development projects around the world. We are especially glad to support the turtle and reef conservation project by UNDP as it is beneficial to both local communities in the Maldives and the marine environment. Sea turtles and reefs symbolize the ocean, and their health is a reflection of the state of the ocean. As the Maldives is so inextricably linked to the ocean, turtles are represented even on Maldivian coins and currency notes. We are sure that SBI's support for the reef and turtle conservation project will help UNDP bring about great improvements to both the marine environment and the local community's awareness of and participation in measures needed to preserve our oceans for generations to come."



VAIBHAV GARG
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
MANAGER
MERCURE MALDIVES

“Personally, in my life serving for the cause and community has always presented itself as an ideal opportunity to gain not only the social experience but also helped me get an insight into people's and community lives. Working for the cause and community is an extremely satisfying and rewarding experience and it does not matter whether one chooses it as a career option or volunteers the time and effort for social care, getting volunteering experience in life is an opportunity to contribute to our society and community at large. It springs from selfless gesture and a genuine desire to serve”



FAYA
SOUTH FOUNDATION

“At South Foundation, we believe that service to humanity is the best work of life. And it is partnerships created towards this goal that will ultimately help to foster and make this idea a reality”

GETTING THE FUTURE RIGHT: SDGs



Respect and value women's work in the economic and public sphere as well as at home

Encourage women and girls to participate in all economic and public spheres

End all violence against women and girls including forced marriage, sexual exploitation, trafficking and abuse in all its forms.



Ensure equal access to justice and legal information for all.

Strengthen institutions so people can trust them.

Combat crime and corruption.





Ensure the sustainability of marine ecosystems by developing sustainable fishing practices and monitoring proper waste management.



Ensure that all cities and communities are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Promote the appreciation and protection of the environment and culture.

Make cities resilient to disaster and adaptable to climate change.

Provide safe and organized transportation that is not harmful to the environment.

Gender equality continues to be a challenge that the world community faces in the 21st century. It is calculated that if women were given opportunities and paid equally to men in the workforce, it would contribute an estimated USD 17 trillion globally. At the local level, tradition and culture also limit women's participation in the economic, social and political sphere. In the Maldives, women's unemployment rate is 39 percent, twice that of men (19 per cent). More than one-fifth cited household chores to be the main reason for not working. On top of that, only 6% of the local councillors are female.

However, women continue to overcome these barriers and take strides forward. This is the story of Fathimath 'Fathuma' Haneefa from S. Hithadhoo¹. She heads the NGO, Addu Women's Development Initiative² (AWDI). Fathuma has always wanted to support women to do different types of work, using the materials from their surroundings. One day, she had the idea to use the coconut palms available in her island to make items such as thatch and souvenir products. She taught many of the women how to fully utilise different parts of the palm tree.

ISLAND CHAMPIONS

Photography by
ASHWA FAHEEM / UNDP MALDIVES



“People in Addu usually use palm leaves at home, so when the tourism industry began to boom in our region, we decided to introduce the idea of selling these woven palm leaves to the nearby resorts,” she explained.



A woman thatch weaving from dried coconut leaves

Photography by
ASHWA FAHEEM / UNDP MALDIVES

Fathuma and her team started this initiative with high hopes. Sadly, after some time, they met their first challenge. They noticed that they were running out of usable palm trees in Addu, mainly due to loss of land that could be used for agriculture, the age-old practice of replanting coconut palms and beach erosion. So they decided the best thing to do was to plant their own coconut palm grove. Although they were ready and motivated to manage one, they didn't have the funds.

She was very worried, but not long after, the team hit a stroke of luck. A Facebook post by UNDP Maldives with an open call for small grants³ caught Fathuma's attention. With no second thoughts, she decided to try out for the grant.

“I didn't even know what I was doing. We presented our idea the best we could, and they really liked it! We said we'd plant 200 palm trees in the mangrove area in Addu. We did, and looked after them for two years. We now have 428 palm trees!” Fathuma said. She hopes to make this a wealthy business opportunity for the women in her community so that they can earn their own income, while looking after their families.

³ GEF Small Grant programme provides financial and technical support to projects that conserve and restore the environment while enhancing people's well-being and livelihood

“OUR SOCIETY IS WHERE OUR CHILDREN WILL GROW UP, WE MUST CONTRIBUTE TO THE HEALTH, PRODUCTIVITY AND WELL-BEING OF OUR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES. IT IS ONLY TOGETHER WITH WOMEN THAT WE CAN CREATE A BETTER FUTURE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION”

The outspoken and kind-hearted Fathuma is now re-married after her first husband passed away and has seven children. She has been involved in social work since she was 15 years old.

“I survived my husband’s death and looked after our two children on my own. So, I’d like to say to all the women out there, you can do anything,” she said.

Fathuma and her team has shown her own community and beyond, the power of a simple idea. It has the potential to bring positive change in communities and better quality of life for all, and sometimes, we need to look no further than our surroundings for inspiration.

Photography by
ASHWA FAHEEM / UNDP MALDIVES





Photography by
UMAIR BADEEU / UNDP MALDIVES

GAME OF THRONES STAR, NIKOLAJ INSPIRES MALDIVIANS TO 'UNITE FOR CLIMATE ACTION'

On a hot Sunday morning in October, Maldives welcomed a special guest, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau; best known for his role as Ser Jaime Lannister in the widely popular HBO series *Game of Thrones*. He arrived in the island nation to kick off his climate action journey as UNDP Goodwill Ambassador.

During his three day visit, Nikolaj saw first-hand the level of erosion on the Maldives' world-famous beaches and the aftermath of storm surges. He also met Maldivian people in a local island, who had lost their entire agricultural land and who are living in constant fear that their homes might be destroyed by the waves.

At the end of his trip, Nikolaj and Shoko Noda, UNDP Resident Representative to the Maldives, talked about the trip they took together and his reflections. He shared his thoughts on the people he had met and their struggles in adapting to the harsh effects of climate change.

His wish? To spread the message that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be achieved without saving our home, the Earth, first.

SHOKO NODA: We're so excited to have you here with us in the Maldives. What touched you most during our visit to the islands?

NIKOLAJ COSTER-WALDAU: I'm very excited to be here and I've learned so much about the country during my short time here. What struck me most about this country was the Maldivian people – so welcoming and generous. It reminded me that we aren't so different, no matter where we live and go in the world. We all share the same experiences and we all just want to have a better life.

Because of the nature of these islands, almost every challenge Maldivians face is linked to climate change. I saw just how vulnerable the country is to beach erosion and sea swells – you can see it in all the islands we went to. This is a huge challenge and it's only going to get worse. We have to help them find ways to cope.

SN: What do you think is the most serious climate change issue for the Maldives?

NC: It would have to be water - access to water.

I met this incredible woman, Muna, a teacher from Laamu Atoll. She and her husband had a chili farm. She was trying to get her bachelor's degree in teaching and they needed the extra money to get by. She had done an amazing job and then just a week before harvest, the whole island got flooded because of sea swells. She took me to the site of the once blooming farm. It was devastating to see all the crops completely damaged. If she had access to fresh water, she could've easily saved at least some of the crops, but she lost everything.



Muna showing her chilli farm to Nikolaj in L.Maabaidhoo

Photography by
UMAIR BADEEU / UNDP MALDIVES

SN: We went snorkeling as well. How was your underwater experience?

NC: I've never been to this part of the world and the only place I had seen a coral reef is on TV. It's different when you're actually snorkelling over the reef. Seeing the different types of fish and all sorts of beautiful marine life in the ocean was absolutely breath-taking!

At the same time, the amount of coral bleaching that has taken over the reefs is alarming. It looked as though someone had thrown buckets of white paint all over the place!

This really goes to show just how fragile these reefs are and how important they are to the ecosystem. There are many factors in play; for example, high temperatures and pollution. But do we fully understand the consequences of this? The impact it could have on people's livelihoods in the long run? It's something we need to understand and make others understand better. We need to stop polluting our planet, our home. It's not going to be easy, but the small actions we take can go a long way towards making a meaningful impact.



In 2016, 60% of all assessed coral colonies were affected by bleaching

Photography by
ASHWA FAHEEM / UNDP MALDIVES



Photography by
ASHWA FAHEEM / UNDP MALDIVES

IN 2016, OVER 80% OF THE ISLANDS REPORTED SEVERE BEACH EROSION

SN: Did you see any action being taken by the community to tackle these problems?

NC: I went to this school, the students there were very smart. They took me around and showed me what they've been doing. They told me how it was getting hotter and hotter, and they couldn't use the school compound during daytime. Everyday some of the kids had to go home because of the heat. So, the students actually made a huge 'green hall' over the school compound using cucumber and passion fruit vines. I was amazed! They even made this fish pond and used the fish waste as a natural fertiliser. It's spectacular what people, especially kids, can come up with. They saw a problem and found a solution for it.

I also met a group of very passionate young people running an NGO, called Save the Beach. It's incredible how far they've come since starting about ten years ago. They saw rubbish being thrown all over the beach and plastic going into the ocean. They, too, saw a problem and took action. Now, what they are doing has spread across many of the islands.



School students in L.Maabaidhoo talking about their 'green hall' idea

Photography by
UMAIR BADEEU / UNDP MALDIVES

From everything I've seen and all the people I've met, I can see that everybody wants change. Everyone is so eager to make it happen. It's a great thing to see.

SN: What can we do as individuals to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals?

NC: All of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals are equally important. But when you look at Goal 13, Climate Action, it's kind of this big unknown because if we don't deal with climate change, all bets are off when it comes to the other Goals. If we don't stop climate change, the cost is going to be enormous and we won't have the resources to deal with the 16 others.

Something I've noticed here in the Maldives is that it starts with just a couple of friends who go, "why don't we do this and that?" And suddenly this idea grows into something bigger. Is it going to have a big impact if I clean the one beach full of plastic? Maybe not. But if I had 100 people and we cleaned a lot of beaches, that's going to make a big impact. By working together, not only can we keep that plastic out of the ocean, but we can achieve all the Sustainable Development Goals.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksXm96X8i7s&feature=youtu.be>

SN: How important is gender equality for the achievement of SDGs ?

NC: Well, women being half the population, we can't achieve any meaningful change without their full participation. I have two daughters - two teenagers - and I want them to experience the same opportunities and rights as men do. To deal with these global challenges, we need to involve everyone. Countries who engage women do much better.

The women I met here were so hard working and they had an amazing sense of humour. I went to a school in Laamu Atoll and met some amazing young girls. I can see that change is coming. The Maldivian population is so young and they are eager for change. Of course, you also want to look up to role models and I was very lucky to meet one; Zoonaa. She has been a diver for over 20 years now. She recently became the first female PADI course director in the Maldives. She is breaking barriers and boundaries, and she doesn't think much of them because for her, it's a very natural thing to do. The opportunities are there for all of us; we must support both our boys and girls to pursue their dreams.



The only female PADI course director in Maldives, Zoonaa Naseem

Photography by
UMAIR BADEEU / UNDP MALDIVES



SN: Do you think there's hope for the future?

NC: Of course, I believe we can and will work through these challenges. It's going to take all of us, but the benefits are enormous. We're witnessing people all over the world coming together because they want change. It's really a wonderful sight. We've realised that we can't keep doing this, that we can't keep cleaning up after every disaster. Everyone wants a healthy planet. It's like that famous saying, "We act as if we live on nine planets when we only have this one," and we have to take care of it.

SN: What's your message to the people of Maldives?

NC: You can never be too ambitious. Climate change is real. It can potentially destroy our planet. I also see this moment in history as a huge opportunity.

We haven't done so well for the past 150 years. At least now we understand that our actions aren't sustainable. If we want to survive as a species, we've got to do things differently. I see this as a great opportunity to bring about positive change, like getting clean water and air, a better quality of life, and passing on this beautiful country to the next generation.

So, get engaged and get others engaged. Take action, on your own and together. It doesn't have to be life altering. But if everyone does a little bit, we can collectively make a huge impact.

<https://give.undp.org/campaign/maldives/c146736>



SMALL ACTIONS, BIG IMPACT

UNITE FOR CLIMATE ACTION

*“ THEN IT
HAPPENED
ONE DAY. I LOST
EVERYTHING ”*

Fathmath Muna, 31, is a teacher in her home island Maabaidhoo, in Laamu Atoll. Teaching has always been her dream job. She was working and studying part-time, travelling to the capital city, Male' every other weekend for classes. She was almost done with her advanced diploma in teaching, and needed to complete her bachelor's degree so that she could continue working as a teacher.

However, being a mother of two, she could barely make ends meet. So, Muna and her husband decided to get a small plot of land to grow and sell chillies. They couldn't have been happier; with the extra money, she would be able to manage her expenses and also pay for a bachelor's degree in teaching.

“Then, it happened one day,” Muna recalled.

Muna was in class when she got the call from a friend in her island. She was told that huge waves were coming inland and had already reached her chilli farm. Shocked and in disbelief, she urged her friend to show it to her on video call. All she could do was watch as her precious farm got swept away with the sea water. The extra income that would have given her the opportunity to enrol in a bachelor’s degree was all gone.

Maabaidhoo in Laamu Atoll was one of the many islands that was hit by a major sea swell¹ in August 2017. For Muna, the natural disaster destroyed not just her farm, but her plans for the future as well. “It was only a week before the harvest. My whole farm was ruined,” Muna said.



Muna showing her chilli farm to Nikolaj in L. Maabaidhoo

Photography by
UMAIR BADEEU / UNDP MALDIVES

IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



Flooding in the island of L. Maabaidhoo

Photography by
AHMED ARUSHAD

Unfortunately, Muna’s story is not the only one. There are many more men and women just like her; individuals and communities who have lost their entire income sources and homes due to climate change and its devastating force.

The Maldives is spread across 1,200 islands and just a mere metre above the sea level. These low-lying islands are very sensitive to climate change; longer drought periods and stronger rain storms are becoming more frequent. This, combined with our own actions such as ocean pollution, is having a major negative impact on our marine life as well as our everyday lives.

The remoteness of these islands and the limited support available within and from nearby islands has made recovery even more challenging. Islands like Maabaidhoo are struggling to adapt to this changing climate, which seems to be getting more and more extreme every year.

“If [Muna] had access to fresh water, she could’ve easily saved at least some of the crops, but she lost everything,” Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, the UNDP Goodwill Ambassador, said, after visiting Muna’s farm in October.

After his travels to UNDP project sites in Laamu Atoll where he interacted with local communities and business leaders, Nikolaj gave a strong message to us all; “Get engaged”. Small actions by individuals and businesses can lead to a lasting and meaningful impact.

¹ Collection of waves produced by strong storm winds hundreds of miles out from the sea. The high waves often cause floods on islands in the Maldives.

GETTING BUSINESSES AND THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

In the Maldives, Nikolaj helped kick-start UNDP's Unite for Climate Action project, which aims to get more partners involved to support climate change related emergencies more successfully. Experts will work directly with people living in the islands to come up with local solutions by developing island-level climate action plans and training locals in emergency response.

Funds for the project are raised through contributions made by well-wishers, especially local businesses. Private sector companies – from telecom giants to well-known companies – pledged to 'Unite for Climate Action' during the fundraising dinner hosted in the capital, Male'.

“I believe we can and will work through these challenges. It's going to take all of us, but the benefits are enormous. We're witnessing people all over the world coming together because they want change. It's really a wonderful sight. We've realised that we can't keep doing this, that we can't keep cleaning up after every disaster. Everyone wants a healthy planet. It's like that famous saying, 'We act as if we live on nine planets when we only have this one.' And we've got to take care of it,” Nikolaj said



Nikolaj discussing the impacts of climate change in L. Maabaidhoo island

Photography by
UMAIR BADEEU / UNDP MALDIVES

The project has an ambitious goal of covering all the 188 inhabited islands in the country, with the highest priority given to the islands most threatened by climate change. For people like Muna who are increasingly becoming victims of climate change, it may very well be the lifeline they have been waiting for.

CLIMATE PLANS

This category comprises islands without any plans to respond to disasters or any resources for implementation.

Develop Community Based Disaster Risk Management Plan (CBDRM)



implement disaster and risk management plan

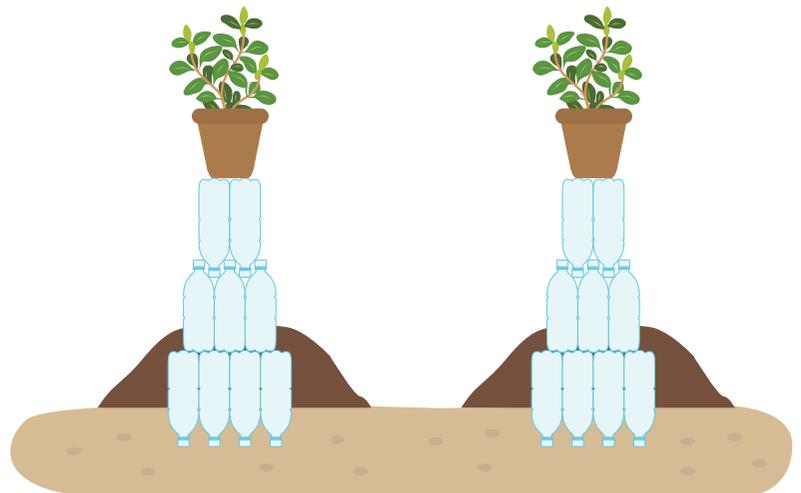
CLIMATE WARRIORS

Islands with existing plans to respond to disasters, but no resources to implement these plans.

support the establishment of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and provide training

CLIMATE LAB

Climate Lab is about piloting innovative and sustainable solutions, which can be replicated throughout the Maldives. Under this initiative, UNDP will be working to pilot a wave breaker and elevated farming solution for affected people like Muna.



CONNECTING THE NATION:

THE DHIRAAGU STORY



Many of us cannot imagine life without telephones, not just mobile phones but normal telephones as well. This was the case in most islands of the Maldives, almost four decades ago, when telephones were not as common as they are now. Ask any grandparent, and you are probably inviting them on a trip down nostalgia's path as they reminisce about times when phones were rather unfamiliar objects.

When Dhiraagu was established in 1988, the telecommunications services available in the Maldives was very limited and centred around the capital Male'. Fast forward 10 years, Dhiraagu had changed the entire development landscape, providing telephone services to every inhabited island in the country. A service that fuelled social development, boosted community engagement and economic development.

The tourism industry was initially centred around Male' Atoll. Dhiraagu's network expansion across the country proved a boom for tourism as well and was a key factor in the industry flourishing to all parts of the country.

Mr. Ismail Rasheed, the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Dhiraagu radiated passion as he gave Island Life an insight into the Maldives' development story from the perspective of Dhiraagu.



Photography by
UMAIR BADEEU / UNDP MALDIVES

We have seen Dhiraagu grow as the country developed. How have you adapted to the growing customer needs and technological progress?

Thank you. Well, Dhiraagu did not just introduce telephone services to the Maldives, it's also the pioneer in introducing internet and mobile services. We have one of the highest rates of internet and mobile penetration in South Asia, and this indicates the immense potential these technologies have for development. Technology plays an important part in all aspects of life. Commerce, health, education, economic and social development. It has resulted in a new digital public sphere, a more informed and empowered class of citizens. In this digital age, we no longer consider ourselves just a phone company, we are a digital services provider with a mission to enhance lives through technology. The services we provide are all focussed on enabling and empowering people to get ahead using tomorrow's technology today.

How do you view the role of the private sector in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) signed by all UN member states in 2015?

I believe the private sector has an important role to play in development along with government and other multilateral organisations. Everyone in society, including businesses such as Dhiraagu, have an important role to fulfil. I would like to think that in the case of the Maldives the private sector has immensely contributed to the country's development. The SDGs, all 17 of them are of great importance for developing societies to lead meaningful sustainable lives. For instance, companies could lead by example and play a key role in creating environmental awareness and protecting our fragile ecosystem. The same is true of promoting health, education or even ensuring that we consume resources sustainably. Dhiraagu has always focused on being a good corporate citizen, one that subscribes to the highest standards of governance and one committed to a prosperous and progressive society. For a company such as ours, the SDGs provide a useful reference in shaping not just our CSR activities but our overall corporate conduct.



Photography by
ASHWA FAHEEM / UNDP MALDIVES

We think it's really great that Dhiraagu has been working with UNDP towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Any particular SDG that you hope to work more closely with?

First and foremost, I think all of the SDGs are equally important and we should all work hard to achieve them. Dhiraagu for its part will do all it can to embrace all the SDGs. Having said that, our work does focus on some specific SDGs. For us, the three SDGs linked to environmental protection and promotion; Life below Water, Life on Land, and Climate Action have special significance. We understand the fragility of our environment and we continue to see the negative impacts of climate change on our fragile environment. We take our duty to protect our ecosystem both on land and sea very seriously. Similarly, we are one of the largest producers of renewable energy in the country which is why SDG 7 Affordable and clean energy is also relevant to our work. Our work reducing reliance on plastic bottles cross cuts with SDG 10 promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns.

We have always maintained our commitment to good governance and being a responsible business. Which is why SDG 8 with its focus on Decent Work and Economic Growth is an important one for us. We continually strive to ensure the welfare of our staff as well as ensuring a conducive environment where individuals and teams can excel in their work. Similarly, we consider ourselves a driver of economic growth. SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure development also has relevance to our outlook and work. We take pride in introducing digital innovations that would enable Maldivians to get ahead and we have heavily invested in telecoms infrastructure in the Maldives and we will continue to strive in this regard.



Youth Leadership Programme
closing ceremony

Photography by
MOHAMED SHUAAU / UNDP MALDIVES

So, what would you say have been the key achievements from your own initiatives as well as the ones with UNDP?

It's such a privilege and a pleasure for us to work with the UNDP. It is one of the pre-eminent development agencies in the world, their long presence and the complimentary nature of their values with those of Dhiraagu in the Maldives makes them a highly valued partner for Dhiraagu.

We've had a number of successful initiatives with UNDP focusing on youth engagement. One of them recently was 'Film for Change'. This initiative supports youth to explore social issues through the medium of film and to bring positive societal change. It gave an opportunity for a fresh team of young people to learn new skills in the area of filmmaking from experts in the industry. The three short films produced by the talented youth focused on gender equality, reduced inequalities and responsible consumption and production.



Photography by
YASMEEN RASHEED / UNDP MALDIVES

I'm also proud of the successful outcome of our collaboration with UNDP on the Youth Leadership Programme in Kulhudhuffushi in June. The YLP is the largest youth alumnus organisation in the Maldives and we were quite happy to be engaged in the various sessions.

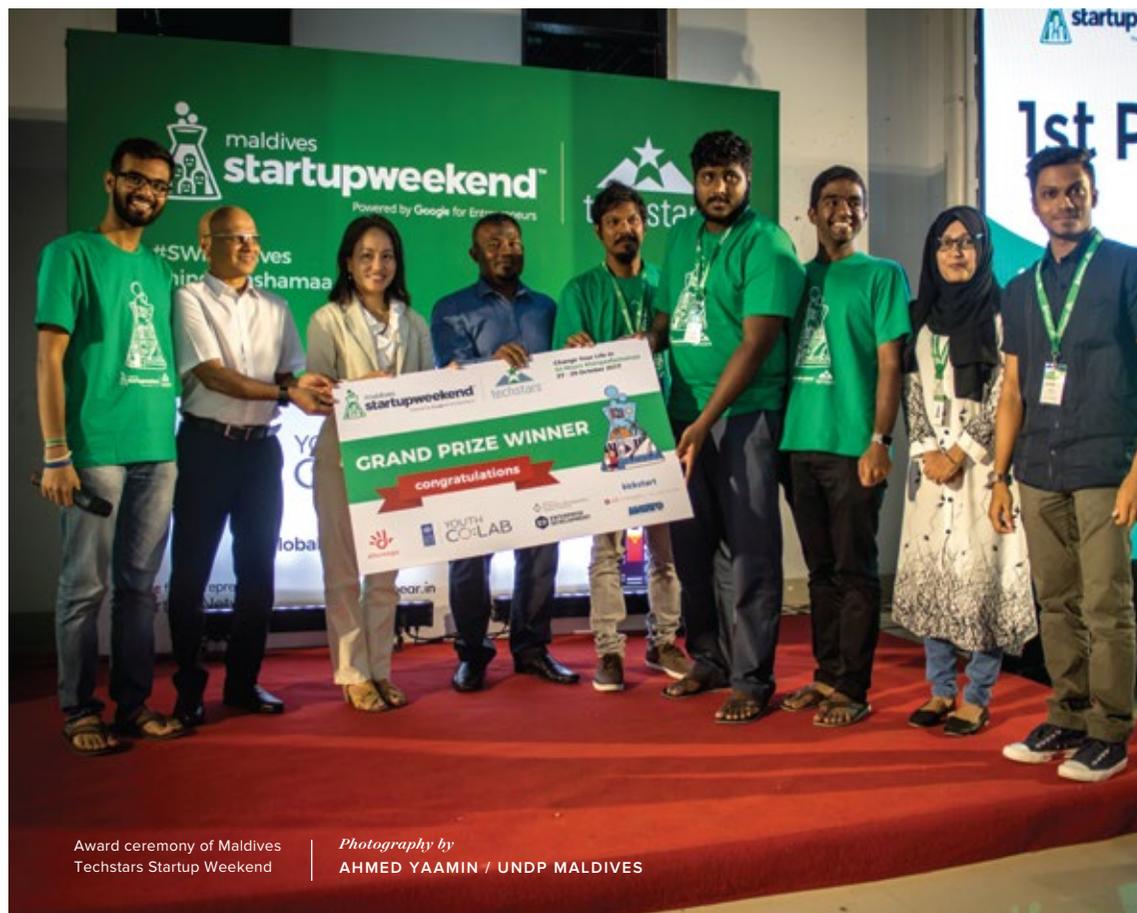
Other than that, we've also been running a very successful apprenticeship programme for the past nine years, training 168 students so far. We give young men and women from all atolls the chance to be trained and get work experience in different areas. We believe that this programme contributes to youth development in a big way.

Children's education is another key component. We give a considerable discount to all the schools on our broadband services, and we work closely with the education ministry to further expand these services.

Looking ahead, how do you see Dhiraagu's role in the development agenda?

It's truly an honour that we've been able to play a key role in community and youth development as well as environmental protection. We, ourselves, are still developing with the country. We have been a partner in the development of every sector, from health to transport to infrastructure. We believe that by working together with government ministries and agencies as well as private businesses and organisations like the UNDP will help us to achieve sustainable development and the SDGs by 2030.

Our vision has always been to enrich lives. Going forward, we would focus on enriching lives through new digital services in such areas as health, entertainment and education. The whole telecommunications industry is going through a massive digital transformation. Our most important goal is to make sure that no one is left behind, giving everyone access to the latest innovations that would enhance lives and contribute to national development and for Dhiraagu to continue to inspire the nation.



Award ceremony of Maldives Techstars Startup Weekend

Photography by AHMED YAAMIN / UNDP MALDIVES

NEW SOLUTIONS TO OLD PROBLEMS

Amazing things happen when you put youth at the front and center of development work. Their strong characteristics such as confidence, hope and creativity will help us to develop new solutions to our old problems! The world today faces enormous challenges including impacts of climate change, high youth unemployment, gender inequality and access to the most basic services for all. These are everyday challenges that youth faces around the globe and using these experiences they are able to come up with the most needed solutions.

Here at UNDP Maldives, we wanted to bring youth from across the country to learn from each other's experience and come up with new ideas and perspectives to our local problems.



Photography by
UNDP MALDIVES

JULY 17' YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

Get involved was one of the key take-aways at the Youth Leadership Programme 2017.

Through interactive activities and discussions, participants learned about human rights, democratic principles, domestic violence and how to be gender champions. The programme also included sessions on self-defense, first aid and learning to conduct household surveys.

"I think young people sometimes don't realize how much power and responsibility we have. We need to mobilize and work together as one. It's time to get serious!" Aleef, HDh.Nellaidhoo

Youth Leadership Programme provided the opportunity for participants to become young and passionate human rights defenders, gender equality champions, basic first aid trainees and above all - dynamic leaders.

AUG 17' FILM FOR CHANGE

What happens when you give young people who have a desire to spark change, the equipment and skills for filmmaking? Well, they give us a much clearer picture of where the problems lay. Getting a glimpse into the mind of a young person is truly a refreshing experience.

Film for Change did just that. It gave interested young participants a huge opportunity to be able to create a short film, from coming up with the story to actually producing it. They produced three thought-provoking films that shed light on the different aspects that need to be improved in our society. It was so exciting to see how far they came from start to finish.

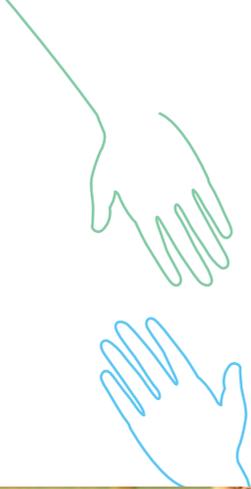


Photography by
UMAIR BADEEU / UNDP MALDIVES



Fine Ali
@Shaari

Saw some impressive short films on vital issues from #Film4Change by @Dhiraagu & @UNDPMaldives. Kudos to participants and mentors.



Photography by
MOHAMED SHUAAU / UNDP MALDIVES

SEP 17'

MIYAHELI SOCIAL INNOVATION CAMP

It was a fantastic and innovative weekend as Miyaheli – Social Innovation Camp 2017 officially kicked off in September 2017. Young Maldivians from four northern atolls were invited to send in their creative ideas that could be used to improve their own local community. The selected five ideas were teamed up with volunteers from across the country and mentors. The two day camp was filled with inspiring discussions on creating and building ideas and making new friends. Our five innovators, and the volunteers and mentors that teamed up with them, worked passionately all weekend long to bring their ideas to life!

The winning three ideas were given seed funding to test their ideas in the real world. By bringing together a diverse group of people to collaborate in one space, the aim was to bridge the gap between having an idea and making it into a reality.



Kenaa
@ahmd_aham

@MiyaheliSIC miyaheli has been a wonderful opportunity for people to pursue their plans to tackle societal issues #SalhiHalleh

OCT - NOV 17' STARTUP WEEKEND MALDIVES

Another fun-filled weekend was Techstars Global Startup Weekend Maldives. Over 55 participants joined the first ever Startup Weekend held in the country! It gave them a chance to experience the highs and lows of being an entrepreneur in less than 54 hours.

Techstars Startup Weekend was aimed towards creating a highly motivating weekend filled with enthusiastic, smart and passionate people assembled under one roof with a single motive – experience what it takes to create a startup. It gave a whole bunch of youth from different backgrounds the opportunity to be able to put forward their brilliant ideas, and through that, the chance to actually flesh them out.



Photography by
SHAZIF ADAM



Inad Hussein
@inerds

Thank you for the inspirations @catchdhanish @aishwajyh & Misthoh #SWMaldives #HingaaFashamaa @swmaldives

WHY YOUTH MATTERS

YOUTH MAKE UP THE BIGGEST CHUNK OF THE COUNTRY'S SMALL POPULATION;

47% TO BE EXACT!

For this reason, any progress that takes place in the country will not be complete if it does not consider the ideas of our youth. So, when it comes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well, there is no doubt that young minds are the missing link.

THE MAGNIFIED PROBLEMS OF TOMORROW

Not only are the youth the single largest population group in the Maldives, they are also the leaders of tomorrow. These future leaders will face our current challenges on a much larger scale, and will need to come up with smarter solutions to solve them.

So, increasing young people's knowledge of the SDGs is very important. By doing this, our inspiring youth will be able to use the SDGs as guidance when dealing with issues that will come up the future.

Our cities have been going through a lot of growth in the past decades. Today, we are realising the many issues that needs to be addressed such as pollution and congestion, if we are to make this development sustainable.





We are also a society that creates a lot of plastic waste, and we do that without really thinking about the effect this will have on our natural environment.

DID YOU KNOW THAT BY 2050 THERE WILL BE MORE PLASTIC IN THE OCEAN THAN FISH?

The survival of the ocean life as well as the beauty of our delicate islands are in very real danger because of this plastic pollution. If this continues, tourism, the main source of income for the country, will be in serious threat.

It does not stop there. Maldivians have always depended on fish as their main source of food, making these ocean plastics an alarming threat to our diet and traditional way of life as well! This is a problem our future generations will need to really think about.

TOWARDS A BETTER WORLD



Young people have proven again and again that they have the unique ability to gather groups of people for amazing causes. This can be a very helpful talent in creating the world that we all wish to achieve through the SDGs. Despite all the challenges they face all over the world, we have noticed that the youth are optimistic for a better future.

ACCORDING TO A GLOBAL SURVEY OF 180,000 YOUNG PEOPLE, 68 PERCENT BELIEVE THE WORLD WILL BE A BETTER PLACE BY 2030.

We have 13 more years left to work on implementing the 17 global goals. In order to turn these goals from hope to reality, we need to plan smart and start working together. For the Maldivian youth to believe this development agenda is for them, we would need to trust and involve them in this journey.

UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Energy organized civil society information seminars. Over 100 representatives of Civil Society Organization across the country participated, many of whom are young people with exciting ideas on development.

Now armed with Knowledge on SDGs and it's goal to "Leave No One Behind", one group of youth developed a mythical island called SDGs Island.

SDGs Island



MALDIVES CLIMATE STORY TO THE GLOBE:

PEACE BOAT

ASHWA FAHEEM

“I believe in people. I believe in unity. I believe in art and how it can influence positive change. I am using the camera as a tool to explore the consequences of climate injustice and, most importantly, to document the effects of beach erosion and the impacts of climate change on human life.”



There is a lot of discussion at an international level on whether climate change is real. Here in the Maldives, we see it with our own eyes every single day; right in front of us, in one way or another.

As a freelance photojournalist in the Maldives, I have been travelling to islands across the country to document the everyday lives of the people. I have witnessed first-hand the dramatic effects of climate change in these islands, my home.

We need to show this evidence to people around the world and give them information on just how fragile our environment, is and how so much of our own actions are destroying the planet. I believe that once people fully understand the seriousness of the climate crisis, they will eventually take action. This is not just a crisis for the developing island nations. It is without a doubt, a global crisis!

This is where photography comes into play. I strongly believe in photography as a powerful medium of communication. Through my journey, I have discovered the magic a simple photograph can hold; a captured image speaks a universal language.

I had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to join the Peace Boat¹ on their 'Ocean and Climate Youth Ambassador Programme'. Seven youth ambassadors were selected from Marshall Islands, Seychelles, the Maldives, Fiji, Kiribati, Trinidad and Tobago, and Belize. We were the face of one of the greatest challenges of our time; climate change.

We set sail in September 2017, travelling the sea, far and wide; from Spain to New York. Under the Northern Lights and ocean view, we were able to share our own climate change experiences and learn from each other.

Our ship travelled for three weeks, starting in Barcelona where we exchanged questions and ideas with environmental studies students on how we can save our oceans. We then stopped in Portugal, France, London, Scotland, and Iceland to have similar discussions.



Photography by
ASHWA FAHEEM / UNDP MALDIVES

Metal collected for recycling purpose. An average of 330 tonnes of garbage is collected in the island of Thilafushi everyday.

¹Peace Boat is a Japan-based international non-governmental and non-profit organization that works to promote peace, human rights, equal and sustainable development and respect for the environment. Peace Boat carries out its main activities through a chartered passenger ship that travels the world to create dialogue on global issues.



Photography by PEACE BOAT



Ashwa speaking at the Floating Festival Of Sustainability event in New York

Photography by NEIL MURPHY



Peace Boat at port of Barcelona

Photography by NEIL MURPHY

Our final destination was the Floating Festival Of Sustainability event in New York. There I was a speaker to talk about the power of photography, in light of climate change. I spoke about how all individuals can take small actions to make a difference towards the protection of our environment. I also presented a photo series to show how Maldives is being impacted by climate change. We, as a team of youth ambassadors representing the three oceans, stressed on the importance of world leaders paying attention to the voices of youth. After all, the only way we can tackle the issue of climate change is if we work together, as one.

Like every photograph, these images will always remain as evidence of the effects of climate change on the lives of communities like those in the Maldives. The Peace Boat journey as well as the images, exhibited and shared in six countries, will hopefully inspire generations and perhaps motivate individuals to take giant leaps for climate action!



TSUNAMI:

WHERE REGULAR RESPONSE SOLUTIONS DO NOT APPLY

AHMED MOHAMED SHIHAB

Everything I have heard about surviving a tsunami has been simple and to the point; get to a higher ground and run towards inland. It makes perfect sense, as it appeals to our basic instinct to move further away and out of reach of danger. But in the Maldives, where I live, these instructions leave people more confused than confident, and could cost lives.

SURROUNDED BY WATER

When the tsunami hit the Maldives in December 2004, I was at home sleeping. After being pulled out of bed, I rushed outside, only to see that the entire road had been blanketed with water. I could see people wading through the water, confused and uncertain. I stood knee-deep in water, the chaos around me faded away, and for a moment I thought the island was sinking.

The Maldives is a country of small islands scattered across in the Indian Ocean. Composed of a delicate coral reef ecosystem, nearly 80 percent of the islands are less than one metre above sea

level. Only three out of 186 inhabited islands are larger than three square-kilometres. So, when a tsunami strikes, there is no inland to run to as the opposing shoreline is just minutes away. Finding higher ground is also complicated because most of our islands have only a handful of two-storey buildings.

The truth is that we can't take any of the usual actions for a tsunami response. Our islands are flat and surrounded by water. What can we do if and when a tsunami hits us again?

A DROP OF HOPE AMONG THE WAVES

The ultimate answer lies in the ocean—a boat evacuation. Further from the shore, at around 100-metre depths, tsunami waves are just a few inches high. Like sleeping giants, they pass underneath without any indication of what is to come. Yet, a successful boat evacuation requires planning, coordination and practice. The reality is that most of our islands don't have enough boats to evacuate everyone. Gaafu Alif Atoll Villingili is one such island.

Given the lack of boats and high-rise buildings on the island, consultations identified the local mosque and hospital as the two best options for shelter. It may not be your typical shelter, but it was the next best alternative. We decided to conduct a full-scale tsunami drill using the two shelters.

We rolled up our sleeves and got to work. We wanted to move beyond a simple drill, and achieve a complete education and preparedness programme. To do this, we worked with dedicated partners in the Ministry of Education, the National Disaster Management Centre, Maldivian Red Crescent, the Fire and Rescue Service of the Maldives National Defence Force, Maldives Police Service, and in the Maldives Meteorological Services.

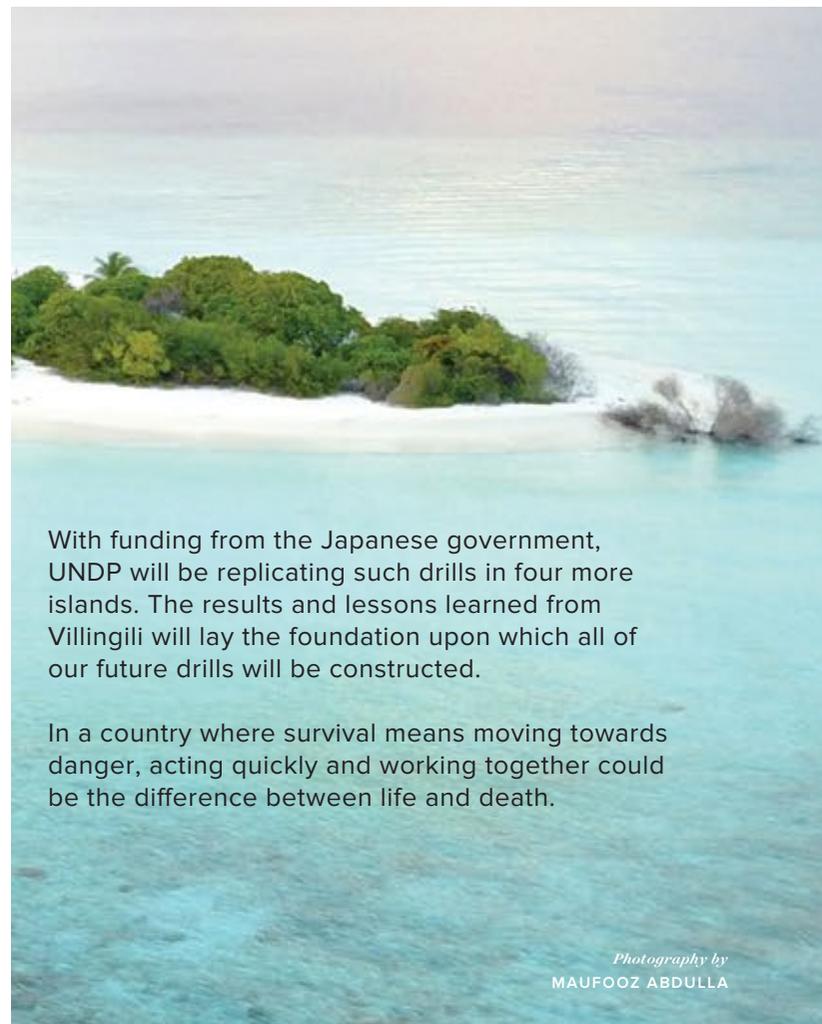
ONE SCHOOL, ONE ISLAND

Children are agents of change. When we teach children to recognise and respond to disasters, they in turn educate their families and communities. For the first school tsunami evacuation drill in the Maldives, we mobilised over 550 students in Gaafu Alif Atoll Villingili. With the involvement of students and residents of the island coming together to watch, the drills reached beyond the schools to the wider community. I would like to believe there were at least 550 exciting conversations on tsunami preparedness that day. For instance, Aisha, a fifth grader, told me that the drills made her more confident about what to do if a tsunami struck her island.



Tsunami evacuation drill in Gaafu Alif Atoll

Photography by SHAIRI MATHUR / UNDP MALDIVES



With funding from the Japanese government, UNDP will be replicating such drills in four more islands. The results and lessons learned from Villingili will lay the foundation upon which all of our future drills will be constructed.

In a country where survival means moving towards danger, acting quickly and working together could be the difference between life and death.

Photography by MAUFOOZ ABDULLA

The **December 26, 2004** Indian Ocean tsunami was caused by an earthquake that is thought to have had the energy of **23,000** Hiroshima-type atomic bombs. The epicenter of the **9.0 magnitude** quake was located in the Indian Ocean near the west coast of Sumatra. The violent movement of the Earth's tectonic plates displaced an enormous amount of water, sending powerful shock waves in every direction, creating the largest magnitude earthquake in **40** years.

The tsunami struck the Maldives at around **9:30am** local time. The country is so low that tsunami water swept over nearly every inch of the entire nation. The infrastructure on **20** of the islands were completely destroyed. More than **12,000** people were left homeless and **82** reported deaths.



Street play highlighting
urban waste issues

Photography by
UNDP MALDIVES

SMART CITIZENS AT THE HEART OF SMART CITIES

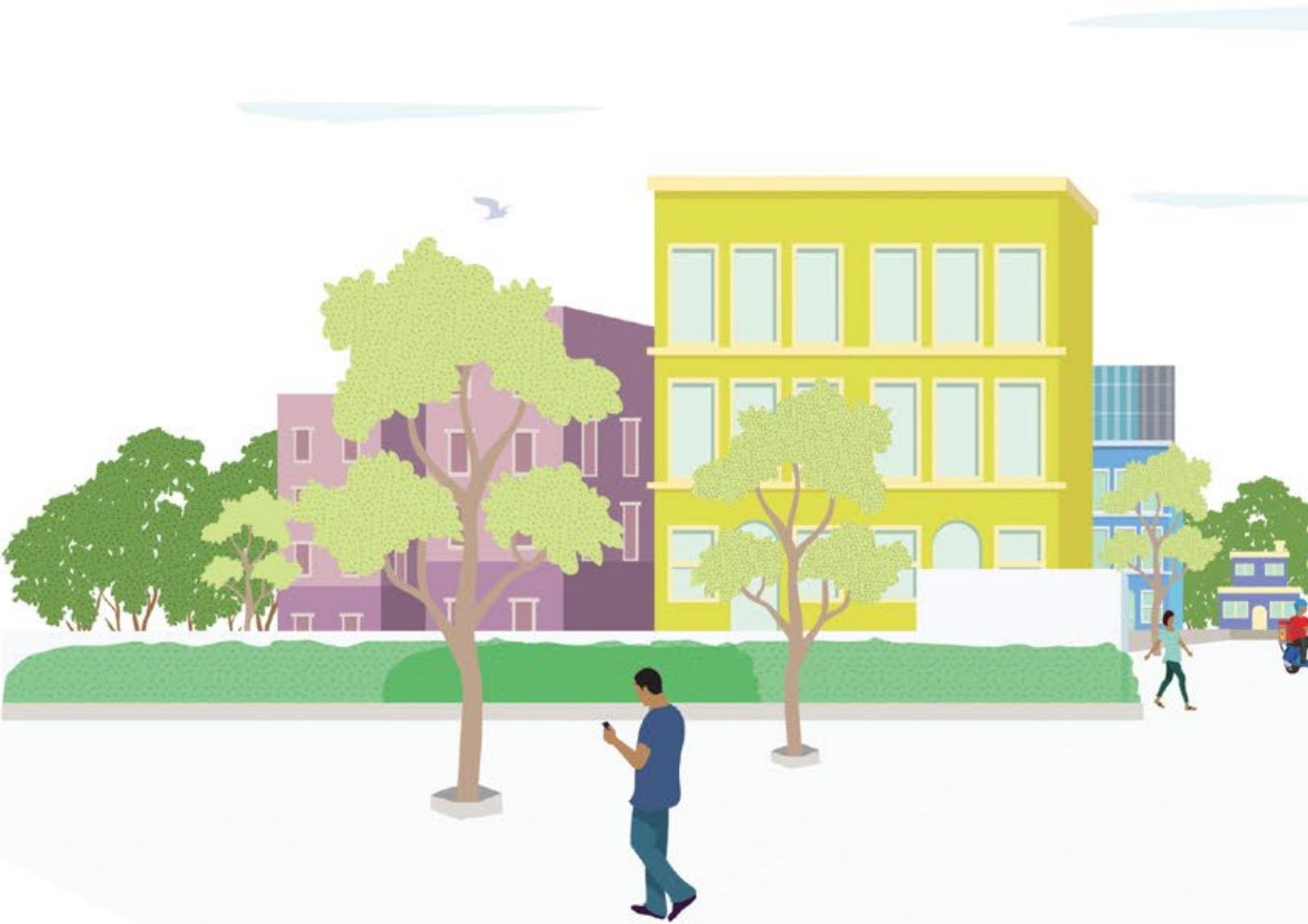
NOORA IBRAHIM ZAHIR

The capital of Maldives is one of the most densely populated cities in the world. Nearly two thirds of the country's population resides in Male¹. For an island that has an area of only 5.8 square kilometers, that's a lot of people and a lot of buildings. This has in turn amplified problems which are typically prevalent in an urbanized society.

To address this, an ambitious project was kick started to reclaim 188 hectares of land adjacent to

Male'. The new city, Hulhumale', is set to feature much-needed social housing, recreation and employment opportunities. This will be complemented by the establishment of local tourism, communications, healthcare and industrial hubs. State-of-the-art infrastructure is the main focus which will make Hulhumale', the first smart city in the Maldives, linking up all the services and ICT networks to a digital platform.

¹2014 census shows over 120,000 Maldivians are living in Male'



In 2015, Ooredoo Maldives made two strong commitments to support two significant and extremely interconnected initiatives – the establishment of a Digital Maldives and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The reach of digital technologies is unprecedented and can help make a direct contribution to nearly all of the issues SDGs aim to address. As part of the company’s vision to use its technologies as a tool to effect positive social and economic change, Ooredoo Maldives partnered with UNDP Maldives to explore potential areas where their joint expertise could make a real difference.

In the year 2016, UNDP Maldives, Ooredoo Maldives and Housing Development Corporation (HDC) started a journey together to bring about inventive new technologies and innovations into the city of Hulhumale’. The project, dubbed ‘Smart Cities’, has an aim to offer creative and smart solutions for urban challenges, to tackle issues ranging from transportation, environment, economy and governance to the quality of life. The project gives equal priority to ensure that the technological solutions introduced will remain inclusive and accessible to all of its population.

“Across the world, the potential of smart technologies as an enabler for social and economic



progress is being felt. And we know that it can make a direct impact on the issues being addressed by the Sustainable Development Goals. As such, we're pleased to partner with UNDP to tap into the transformative power of smart solutions in bringing new opportunities and growth to the people of Hulhumale', and making a real difference in their lives" Najib Khan, CEO of Ooredoo Maldives, said during the official launching of the project.

Smart Cities brings the Government, Private Sector and Development Agencies together to redefine what development should mean to us. This partnership contributes towards a development where everyone is connected and contributes to

city development, even the most vulnerable groups. Our goal being "To Leave No One Behind". The Smart Cities project aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals, contributing towards enhancing education, creating safer environmental conditions and better community relationships. The potential benefits of a 'smart city' to the residents of Hulhumale' remain endless. It aims to bridge the divide between communities and service providers by creating awareness, and engaging the people of Hulhumale with smart solutions – a sustainable community towards a sustainable future.

*“Small actions we take
can go a long way
towards making a
meaningful impact”*



SMALL CONTRIBUTION, BIG DIFFERENCES

EVERY CONTRIBUTION IS POWERFUL

A small contribution might be dismissed as insignificant to bring changes through big programmes. But often a small grant can be a game changer for communities.

It can also be the support for communities to test out non-conventional ideas and make it into a reality.

A DOOR TO BIGGER THINGS

A successful local solution can lead to replication in other islands, and to greater development. A small idea can be scaled up to bring about positive social and environmental change in communities.

<https://give.undp.org/campaign/maldives/c146736>





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Resilient nations.*

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