

JANUARY-DECEMBER 2016



Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.

# Island Life



## ON THE EDGE

Coping with Climate Change  
and Development Challenges  
in the Maldives



## ABOUT UNDP

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UNDP works in more than 170 countries and territories, helping to achieve the eradication of poverty, and the reduction of inequalities and exclusion. We help countries to develop policies, leadership skills, partnering abilities, institutional capabilities and build resilience in order to sustain development results.

UNDP on average spend \$5 billion annually to implement its programmes to support countries and people.

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# THE ROAD WE'VE BEEN DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS



## Timeline of Key Achievements and Results

August 2015

Maldives Climate Change Policy Framework Launched. UNDP is working closely with the government of Maldives on multiple fronts towards helping the country increase its resilience to effects of Climate Change

September 2015

Disaster Risk Management Act ratified by President of Maldives Abdulla Yameen

August 2015

Supreme Court endorsed training curriculum for judiciary supported by UNDP Maldives in partnership with I-Cells Malaysia

July 2015

Maldives new Penal Code came into force

August 2015

Legal Sector Resource Centre team completed its multi-sectoral trainings to roll out penal code. Over 4000 officials from legal and justice sector of people from all major justice sector agencies trained

April 2014

Maldives new Penal Code ratified by President

## November 2015

Demonstration of integrated coastal management practices began in Gaafu Dhaalu Thinadhoo island. Expected to be completed in December

## December 2015

Integrated flood management and ground water recharging system Completed

## November 2015

Demonstration of Integrated Water Resource Management completed in three different islands which include: Mahibadhoo, Ihavandhoo, Gadhdhoo

## October 2015

Make My Island – UNDP Maldives' flagship innovation project won the 2015 RBAP Innovation Award

## October 2015

UN Maldives partners with local telecom giant Ooredoo towards supporting the implementation of post-2015 Global Goals for Sustainable Development



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*



**SHOKO NODA**  
UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR AND  
UNDP RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE  
IN MALDIVES

**The potential of crowd-funding  
platforms to finance adaptation  
projects that help communities  
build resilience to cope with climate  
change is immense**



▲ An overhead view of a local island. Coastal Erosion is one of the many major environmental challenges faced by low lying islands  
© UNDP Maldives

# A case for Citizen-Led Climate Adaptation

On a sunny day, Maawah, one of the islands of the Laamu Atoll in the Maldives, is a veritable paradise. Visitors are welcomed by white sandy beaches dotted with swaying palm trees and a modern harbor. The island's top-notch facilities include a high school and a medical clinic.



But for the people of the island, such as Yusuf Shiham and his son Mohammed, this picture-perfect scene so popular with tourists is far from the reality of their lives. They do not resent tourists, but they must contend with problems that holiday makers rarely witness.

In recent years, inhabitants of the Maldives have been on the receiving end of nature's wrath more times than they would like to count.

The Shihams' home is flooded annually by storm surges and high tides. Seawater inundates their mango and coconut plantations time and again, hitting their source of income hard.



▲ Yusuf Shiham and Mohammed Yusuf, father and son, have been on the receiving end of nature's excesses more times than they can count. Their home is flooded annually by storm surges and high tidal waves. © UNDP Maldives



UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative Shoko Noda Interacting with Community members © UNDP Maldives

With recurrent floods contaminating groundwater, and long dry spells creating drinking water shortages, the plight of these island communities could not be starker. The slightest fluctuation in ocean currents or an under-ocean earthquake thousands of kilometers away can cause tremendous damage in a matter of hours.

The science behind climate change is certainly complex, but the impact it has on lives and livelihoods is straightforward.

Simply put, besides changing the way people act and think about the

environment, the most pressing need for communities at risk is funding. Money that will help them adapt to climate change and protect their homes, jobs and lives.

In the Maldives, rising sea levels and storm surges have salinated freshwater tables on several islands. But now, adaptation projects across these islands are helping communities harvest rainwater to make up for the loss of those freshwater tables.

According to a United Nations

Environment Programme (UNEP) Adaptation Gap Report, developing countries, particularly those categorized as small island developing states, like the Maldives and various landlocked and mountainous nations, face serious challenges in terms of mobilizing resources for adapting to climate change.

The Small Island Developing States (SIDS), for instance, have relatively small settlements, where -- given concerns over economies of scale -- private for-profit investments can be difficult



to attract. These countries can spare very little of their own public resources to cater to the adaptation needs of communities spread across far-flung islands.

But financing for adaptation while seemingly simple, is an issue of contention in the global climate-change talks now taking place in Paris.

Despite international pledges made during previous conferences to raise over \$100 billion annually for such efforts by 2020, the funding provided for adaptation initiatives in local communities in 2012-13 was only about \$25 billion, 88% of which was spent outside the developed world.

UNEP's Adaptation Gap Report estimates that by 2050, the annual cost of adaptation for developing countries will have risen to between \$250 billion and \$500 billion, even with the necessary cuts to greenhouse gas emissions.

If the world is to help countries such as SIDs combat climate change, we need a more multi-dimensional approach to financing adaptation.

This includes the ability of a country to mobilize domestic resources and leverage affordable private finance, to deal with its debt levels, its vulnerability to economic shocks, as well as natural disasters.

This is where the private sector, philanthropists and individuals could play a vital role. Last year, US citizens donated up to \$258 billion, according to Giving USA, a philanthropic annual report that monitors charitable donations.

This is more than double what adaptation currently costs -- based on current

projections of \$100 billion annually. While it is true that needs are ever on the rise, fortunately, so too are contributions from individuals.

Indeed, the potential of crowd-funding platforms to finance adaptation projects that help communities build resilience to cope with climate change is immense.

In 2014, over \$16 billion was raised through such platforms and that amount is likely to double this year, says Massolution, an online platform that tracks crowd-funding contributions annually.

Crowd-funding is particularly viable in the context of SIDs, where comparatively small investments -- say, of around \$50,000 or so -- could help extend the reach of adaptation measures over entire communities and deliver big results.

In the case of the Maldives, any platform would have to be linked to the tourism industry, given that the country receives over a million visitors every year. Tourism accounts for nearly 30% of gross domestic product and over 60% of foreign exchange earnings for the Maldives.

The islands attract high-spending tourists. Hypothetically, if each tourist were to voluntarily contribute \$20 that could add up to an annual collection of \$20 million.

Working with the government, the UN is already piloting an innovative approach in the Maldives that seeks to make awareness and sensitivity about climate-change issues an integral part of development and planning at the local level, thus bringing about a change in the way communities think and act on climate change. The goal is to integrate climate change and adaptation into

government development plans and programs, at all levels including at the grassroots.

The first step under this program -- the Low Emission Climate Resilient Development (LECRd) Programme -- involves promoting a low carbon lifestyle while building communities that are resilient to the impact of climate change.

The objective is that this will lead to short-term, medium-term and long-term development planning for the islands and atolls based on the evidence from the project underway at the Laamu Atoll. The project puts decision-making and implementation of adaptation measures and projects into the hands of residents and their local councils.

In addition, under this program, the UN will provide up to \$50,000 to local councils, community-based organizations, and women's development committees. But clearly, that is not enough money to sustain projects on waste and water management, energy, floods, soil erosion and conservation for communities, for the long term.

The LECReD program will help communities develop their own climate-sensitive plans for development, and explore the public and private finance options.

While our efforts to build partnerships with the private sector and individuals are still in progress,, it is evident that the private sector, philanthropists, as well as individuals are vital to funding, and can help communities adapt to risks from climate change.

*This article was first published in the Nikkei Asian Review under the title "Adaptation projects key to fighting climate change"*



# Low Emission Climate Resilient Development

A Programme funded by the Government of Denmark and delivered by the UN in partnership with the Government of Maldives.



Bolstering capacity  
of existing system

## CREATION AND IDENTIFICATION OF DATA AND KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS FOR LOCAL LEVEL PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Creating data collection systems  
for evidence-based planning

Creating sharing  
platforms

Reviewing the  
institutional  
capacity and  
legal hurdles

## PARTNERSHIPS, COORDINATION AND PARTICIPATION PLATFORM

Creating working  
groups at Island and  
atoll levels

Increasing public  
awareness and access to  
information on climate  
adaptation

# CLIMATE ADAPTION FROM

Low Carbon Emission And Climate Resilient Model From Maldives

5-year Island and Atoll Development plans



Clearing legislative hurdles for private partnerships

Creating Policy and Investment Plans



Creating specific project proposals under the broader 5-year plans



## CREATING CLIMATE INFORMED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR THE ISLANDS AND ATOLLS



Guidance manuals for adopting national policy, standard of best practices into local planning - areas include buildings and energy efficiency, preventive measures for flooding and erosion



Local and international study tours for best practices and experience sharing



Solar power for all schools



Led lighting for all harbors and the main road for all islands

## TANGIBLE OUTPUTS



Small grants for community led projects on DRR, low cost coastal remediation, reef protection, innovative low emission climate resilient income generating activities and behaviour change initiatives



Implementing projects on water, waste and energy



Knowledge compilation for replication in other atolls



# GROUND UP

ENVIRONMENT



# Keeping Conservation Local



**MR. MOHAMED INAZ**

FORMER ASSISTANT RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE (ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY), UNDP MALDIVES. HE HAS FORMERLY WORK WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF MALDIVES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL PLANNING AND MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

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Conservation efforts in the Maldives are increasingly seeking to involve communities in the sustainable use of resources while also preserving them for future generations



In the Maldives, a paradigm shift has been taking place lately in the approach to environmental conservation. In the past, conservation in the country—as well as in the international arena—was largely concerned with the protection of a region and its flora and fauna for future generations. The approach now is “slightly different, in that conservation efforts actively seek to find an ecological balance, where the natural resources of a region can be used sustainably by the current generation while also preserving them for the future.

## GOING LOCAL

This approach was exemplified in the transformation of the Baa Atoll in the Maldives to a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, completed in the year 2011 with the help of the UNDP. Identification of key zones in the atoll and management plans for these were put in place with the active participation of the community, as it was apparent that communities wouldn't readily see the benefit in conservation for the future if they themselves were unable to use the resources available for their present-day livelihoods. This doesn't imply that people are simply looking for immediate monetary benefits, but that they are also looking for value for their community in the long run.

Another example of this collaborative approach would be our work with fishermen and the tourism sector in the Baa Atoll, as part of support through the same intervention. Considering that the prime bait-fishing spots used by locals also provided excellent dive spots for tourists to see the marine flora and fauna, conflict had arisen between the two sides. In an effort to bring them together, we intervened and offered them a platform for dialogue. These dialogues and scientific input resulted

## *Conservation has a lot to do with involving both formal and informal mechanisms. Local people need to understand why formal conservation approaches need to be adopted for them to be successful and sustainable.*

in plans to manage visits for both bait fishing and diving, also allowing the ecosystem adequate time for recovery. This arrangement has since worked out well for both groups.

As is evident from these examples, conservation has a lot to do with involving both formal and informal mechanisms. For conservation to be successful and sustainable, local communities should be able to understand why the formal approaches adopted must be locally adapted.

This is especially important for a country like the Maldives, where the environment comprises the bedrock of our development. We invariably, and by default, have to think of the environment and development together, not just for sustainable development, but for sustained development. As a small island nation, the population is distributed across many far-flung islands, making service delivery expensive. Added to that is the fact that the economy is heavily dependent on natural resources. If we take tourism, the largest contributor to the Maldives' GDP, it is the natural beauty of our ecosystems that most attracts tourists.

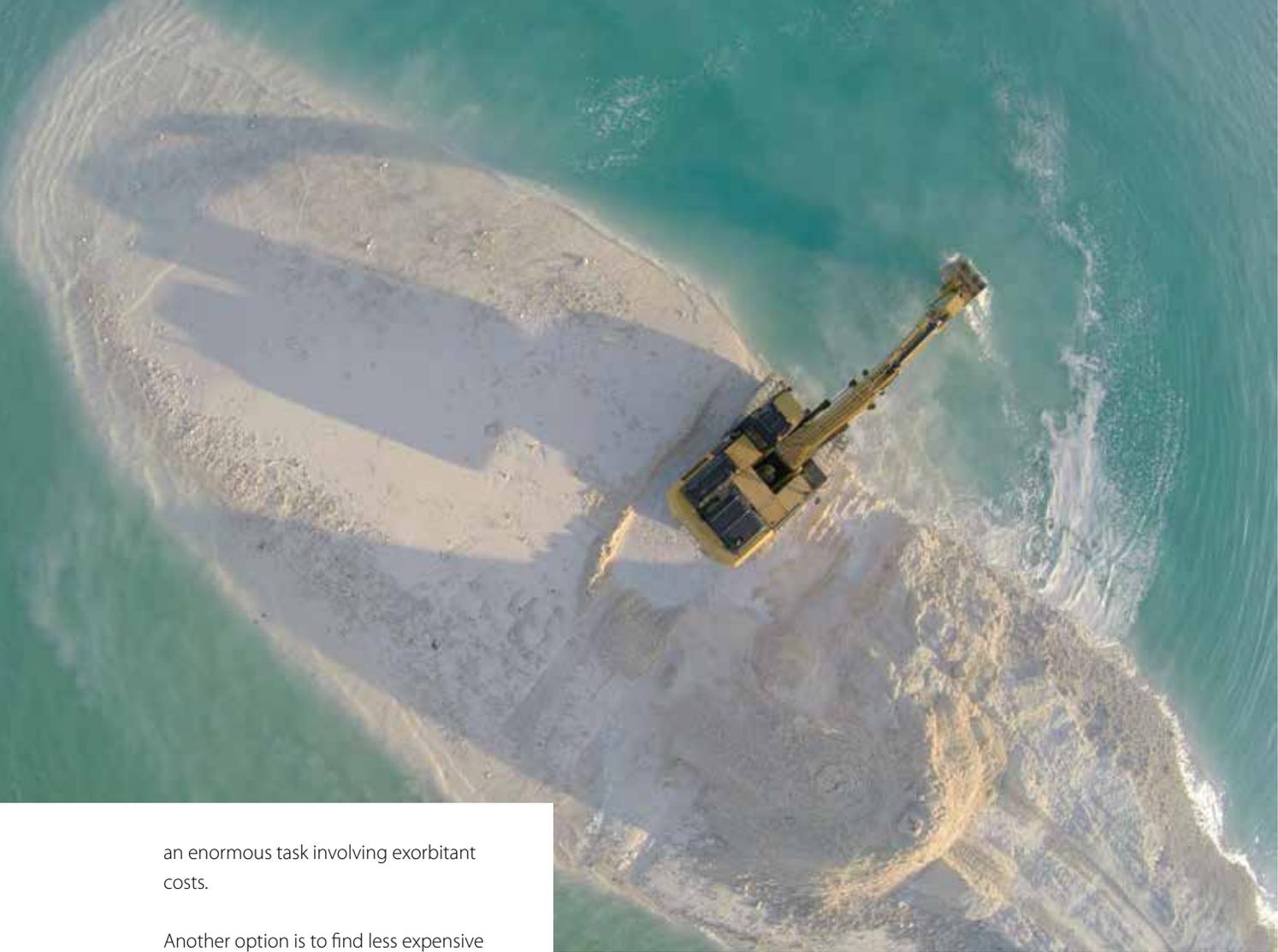
While the Maldives is now a middle-income country, this achievement currently rests on fragile grounds. Our climactic and environmental

vulnerabilities are at such a point that a single major disaster has the potential to seriously damage the economy at any given moment. Take the predictions regarding El Niño events for 2015, for instance. If the coral bleaching becomes exacerbated as a result of such meteorological events, we will witness grave economic consequences, beginning with the obvious impact on tourism.

## THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The impact of climate change on island nations like the Maldives is particularly severe. There is already evidence of a rise in sea levels and changes in weather patterns. For instance, the country receives roughly 2,000 mm of rainfall every year. While the amount of precipitation hasn't changed much overall, what has changed is its intensity: people are now facing more droughts and increased flooding events, as well as, on the other extreme, extended dry spells.

Sea swells and the storm systems too have changed. Sea-water flooding has become frequent, with people losing their homes and livelihoods in such incidents. To address this, a hard-engineered option is to build sea walls barricading these at-risk communities, but protecting all 200-odd inhabited islands with such sea walls would be



an enormous task involving exorbitant costs.

Another option is to find less expensive homegrown methods, which UNDP, with the government, is trying to do. Tourism depends to a great extent on the corals and the ecosystem around them. Maintaining and sustaining this biodiversity thus becomes critical. When we address issues of waste management, we contribute immensely to biodiversity conservation. Similarly, when we address climate change, we also contribute to conservation. Everything is thus interlinked. That's why the Maldives is such an exciting sandbox, where all of these aspects can and do come together.

In this context, we have worked with the government to develop a Coastal Management Regulation to guide investments and infrastructure development. For a country with so much coastal area, this is an important piece of legislation. Initially, we had pitched for a guideline, but recognizing the significance of the issue, the government itself proved

willing to convert it into regulation. Meanwhile, what is being proposed in the draft regulation is being piloted to demonstrate how it can be implemented.

## ENERGY AND CARBON EMISSIONS

UNDP has also worked in the past towards removing bottlenecks in the adoption of renewable energy. A great deal of research has been carried out to explore the possibilities offered by wind and solar energy. A trust fund has been set up with the Bank of Maldives and the Environment Ministry to facilitate investment, so that people can obtain soft loans for renewable energy initiatives. We have also collaborated with the Maldives Polytechnic to build technical capacity for the maintenance of renewable energy products.

At present, we are piloting a Low

Emission Climate Resilient Development (LECRd) Programme in the Laamu Atoll. While primarily focused on climate change, this is in fact a multi-faceted sustainable development-enabling programme that seeks to incorporate, aside from climate change, issues of conservation, sustainable resource use and waste management, among others, in the local development agenda. The idea is to allow thoughts on environmental and climate change to merge with planning and governance at the local level. In addition to having experts talk about these issues, the approach also hopes to create a framework for local planners and communities to work out development pathways that are sensitive to climate change and sustainable resource use. This will, Hopefully, this will better prepare them for what the future holds, based on today's local realities.

PHOTO STORY

# Adapting Tourism to *Climate Change*

BY JIN NI





Tourism is the dominant sector of the Maldives' economy, with its operations connected intimately to a diverse range of value chains that provide goods and services related to agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing, construction, energy, water and waste management. Climate change undermines the resilience, viability and profitability of these value chains, both directly and indirectly.

Maldivians don't always get to enjoy the best their country has to offer: stunning luxury resort islands like these.



The Maldives is not built on sand, but on the world's most endangered ecosystem: coral reefs. Climate change causes sea temperatures, along with the acidity of the oceans, to rise. Both kill coral, fish and the many organisms that use the coral reefs as their habitat. The resultant impact on the livelihoods and nutrition of people who rely on these resources is significant.

In Baa Atoll, an Atoll Ecosystem Conservation project was initiated to try to conserve the environment. This project, supported by UNDP and financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), is the first biosphere reserve of the Maldives, protecting the atoll's exceptional marine and coastal biodiversity. As the project becomes a model of conservation for all atolls in the Maldives, many resort islands operating in the country are becoming increasingly aware of their responsibility to make their businesses environmentally friendly, sustainable and educational.





At the Banyan Tree Resort, Moosa Shan, a young Maldivian, works in the marine lab. Part of his work is to talk to guests about the sustainability of tourism in the Maldives. He conducts activities like feeding a group of stingrays who return to the Banyan Tree every evening for food. The Hotel, similar to many other resorts and hotels in the country, is committed to developing sustainable tourism with programmes ranging from safeguarding the reef that houses the island to protecting turtle hatch sites. //

## INTERVIEW

► Ambassador of Japan in Sri Lanka and Maldives,  
H E Mr. Kenichi Sunganuma

**We intend to remain  
in close contact with  
the UN in Maldives  
to identify areas for  
further cooperation**



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**WE WILL WORK FOR THE  
DEEPER AND WIDER  
COOPERATION**

Honorable Kenichi Sukanuma, Japanese Ambassador to Sri Lanka and Maldives. A seasoned diplomat, he has served both in Tokyo and abroad in various capacities.

In August 2005, he was appointed as the Deputy Assistant Vice-Minister (Crisis Management) and in 2006 he took over duties as Deputy Director-General, Consular Affairs Bureau and International Cooperation Bureau (Global Issues).

He assumed duties as Ambassador to the Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Geneva in July 2009. He worked as Ambassador of Japan to Brunei and subsequently served as the envoy in charge of the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2014.

Japan opened its resident embassy in Male in January 2016.

**How would you describe Japan-Maldives relations?**

Japan and the Maldives enjoy good and friendly historical relations. The visit by President Yameen to Japan in April 2014 was a landmark in our bilateral ties. We cannot forget that the people of the Maldives donated approximately 700 thousand tuna cans to Japan when Japan was hit by powerful earthquake and tsunami in 2011. Our historical friendly ties will be further promoted by the opening of the Japanese Embassy in Malé in January 2016.

**What are some of the priority areas for assistance in the Maldives?**

Japan has been supporting the socio-economic development of the

Maldives mainly in the field of health and education. Japan is also helping to develop a master plan of the fisheries sector as it has high development potential. Japan also focuses on climate change, use of renewable energies and disaster risk management.

**Do you see the cooperation will increase with the opening up of the Embassy?**

We will be able to better communicate and coordinate with the Government and people of the Maldives with the opening of the Embassy. We would like to expand our cooperation in various fields including democracy, security, maritime affairs, trade and investment, environmental protection, and people to people exchanges, and we hope that through our

Embassy, we can accelerate discussions on these projects.

**What are some of your concerns for Maldives?**

We want the Maldives to remain a partner who shares basic values including democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The Maldives is located in a strategically important place in the Indian Ocean and its long term stability is vital for the peace in the region. It is also a destination for many tourists including Japanese citizens. This is why the recent political situation is worrisome. We hope to see that the Maldives takes further steps for enhancing true democracy and the rule of law, and pave the way for its long term development.

**How do you view UN and UNDP's role in supporting Maldives?**

The UN and UNDP have a vital role to play in helping Maldives to overcome challenges in strengthening democracy and the rule of law. Capacity building and strengthening related institutions to prepare for the next presidential elections in 2018 is one of the areas where the UN might like to focus.

**Do you see a possibility of cooperation between UN and Government of Japan in supporting Maldives?**

Yes, of course. Japan and the UN share the common goal of contributing to the long term stability and prosperity of the Maldives. We are already cooperating in the area of climate change and disaster risk management. We can further work together in capacity building of weak institutions. We intend to remain in close contact with the local UN office to identify possible areas for further cooperation. //

*The interview was conducted on November 2015*





◀ The People's Majlis (Parliament) in session. Only 5 out of 85 members are women. © UNDP Maldives

**GOVERNANCE**

# PROGRESS TO BE PROUD OF



**AISHATH RIZNA**

ASSISTANT RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE (DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE) OF UNDP MALDIVES. PRIOR TO JOINING UNDP, MS. RIZNA WORKED AS THE SENIOR REGISTRAR OF THE SUPREME COURT OF MALDIVES

UNDP has remained steadfast in supporting communities and the government to bring about progressive changes in the economic and social spheres of the Maldives

▼ Women led the charge during the bike ride organized by UNDP-Government implemented Tourism Adaption Project (TAP) on World Environment Day 2015. © UNDP Maldives



The Maldives is a young democracy—barely seven years into a constitutional reform process that has opened up spaces for freedom of expression and association. At this stage, we have brought about constitutional reform and embraced a whole new system for the Maldives. We We have also made huge shifts in the way the county is run, including the creation of independent institutions, an independent judiciary and separation of powers. All these

young institutions require support to build their capacity to improve their functioning.

A healthy democracy requires a strong civil society to hold the government and other institutions accountable. Civil society, including the media, need to be strengthened to expand democratic space. The Maldives has tried to introduce many reforms in this regard in a relatively short period of

time, but there have been challenges in implementing these measures.

For instance, legal frameworks for gender equality—the Domestic Violence Act, Sexual Offences Act and the Sexual Harassment Act—have been enacted. Though challenges remain in their full implementation, having these legislations in place is a positive step. Many of the Maldives' problems in governance boil down to the fact that



independent institutions are at an infant stage and yet to mature to be able to deliver its own mandate. For example the separation of Prosecution from the Attorney General's Office mandate and creating a separate Office is a huge shift in criminal justice system.

As a young Office they require adequate training and knowledge on how to conduct Prosecution as an independent function. These are areas where robust

*Civil society, including the media, needs to be strengthened to expand democratic space. The Maldives has tried to introduce many reforms in this regard in a relatively short period of time, which has seen some successes but also there have been challenges in implementing these measures.*

assistance is needed to build capacity to implement their mandates while increasing awareness on what exactly their mandate is.

Maldivians want to build foundations for good governance in strong and independent institutions that will become effective vehicles in ensuring rule of law and effective service delivery.

Compared to many neighbours, the Maldives has made strides in economic and social development. UNDP has remained steadfast in supporting communities and the government to bring about these progressive changes. Our continuous engagement with government institutions, communities and civil society has resulted in progress that we are proud of.

The recent adoption of a new penal code, supported by UNDP, is the culmination of 10 years of effort. It is an exemplary piece of legislation that seeks to codify Islamic Shariah law which will ensure consistency and uniformity in the criminal justice system.

UNDP is proud of the strong partnership we have with state institutions. The Supreme Court approached us In 2014, the Supreme Court approached us requesting support to develop a comprehensive judicial training

curriculum. The curriculum will be used in the newly-created judicial academy, which UNDP supported as well. The development of the curriculum was part of a South-South exchange programme with Malaysia.

Our support for the Election Commission in the 2013 election cycle was key in ensuring that polling officers received requisite training on how to manage elections and how to administer them, given their contested nature. Nation-wide voter education was also instrumental in raising awareness among voters. UNDP also supported youth dialogues through community-based theatre which created safe spaces where they could openly speak about issues of concerns for them and hold dialogue on social and political issues.

Our work with civil society also needs to be highlighted. Since 2012, we have conducted structured capacity-building programmes and through targeted trainings, built the capacity of civil society organisations to conduct programmes in communities. Additionally, medium-term grants are now being provided to those who complete the targeted training programmes. //

# MAKING THE JUSTICE SYSTEM **FAIRER**

A new Penal Code for the Maldives promises transparency and consistency in the dispensation of justice

*The Penal Code was first drafted in 2004 but its journey to Parliament took longer than anticipated. Throughout the process, UNDP helped make certain that reforms made to the criminal justice system would be sustainable.*

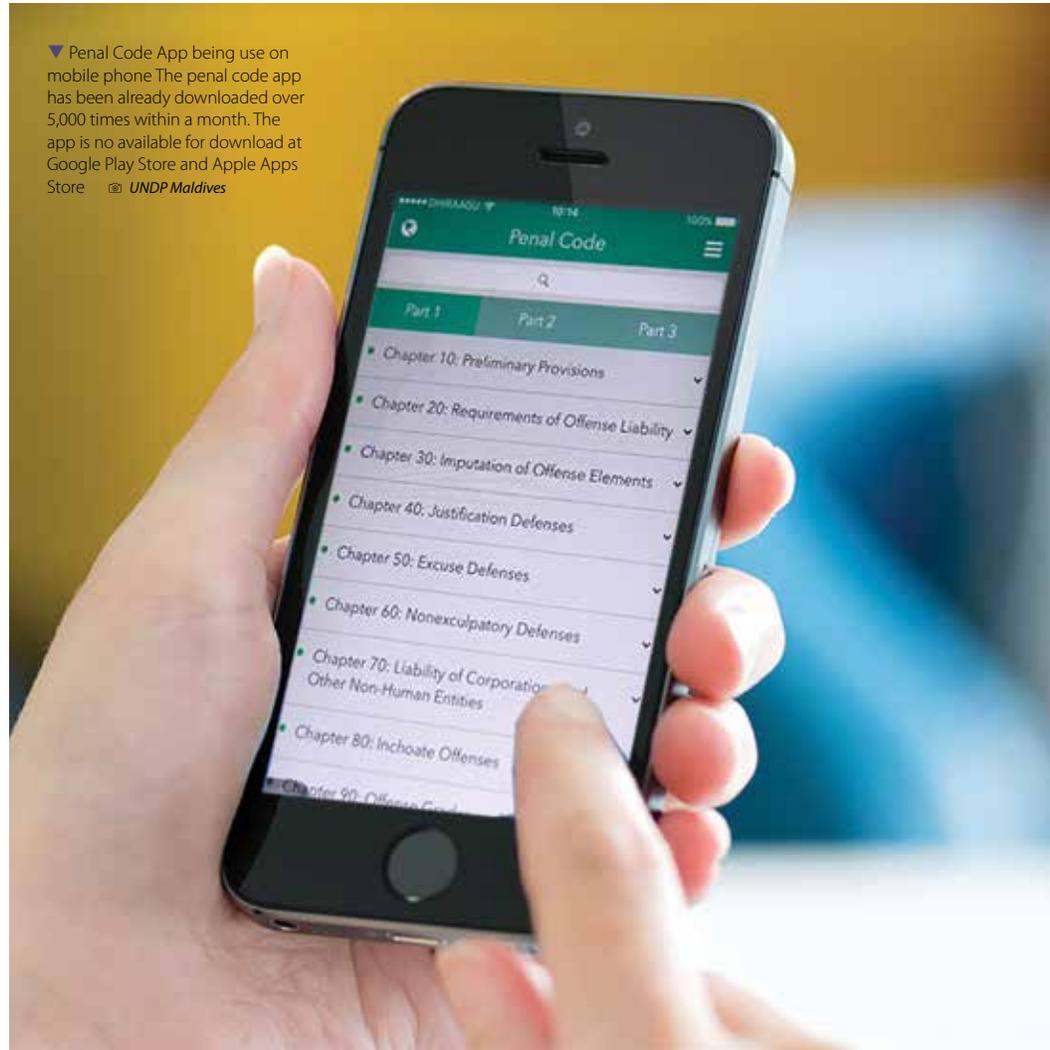
In July 2015, the Maldives enacted a reformed penal code that offers transparency on procedures, the prosecution process and sentencing guidelines.

For the first time, the Penal Code codifies principles of Islamic Sharia law, one of the key sources of law embedded in the Maldivian legal system, and aims to eliminate unpredictability while bringing clarity and consistency into the country's criminal justice system.

"The Penal Code removes the uncertainty and inconsistency of proceedings and sentencing," says Hussain Shameem, a legal expert, who was involved in the drafting of the Penal Code. "It basically takes away the discretionary power of the judges."

The old Penal Code was hobbled with complications and relied heavily on the individual discretion of the judges on sentencing. Previously, there were 98 different legislations on criminal justice

▼ Penal Code App being use on mobile phone The penal code app has been already downloaded over 5,000 times within a month. The app is no available for download at Google Play Store and Apple Apps Store @ UNDP Maldives



spread across as many statutes. This penal code not only codifies all laws into single legislation but also regulates procedures, prosecution process and sentencing.

Furthermore, as the penal code is accessible on the web and as a mobile app, citizens are able to study the code themselves. The Penal Code app was downloaded over 5,000 times within a month—that is a significant number for a country with a population of just about 400,000. The code is available in both English and Dhivehi, the national language.

The penal law reform was first announced in 2004, along with other key democratic reforms, by then President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, as part of the government's 'Roadmap for Reform'. The government subsequently requested support from UNDP in developing this new legislation. UNDP provided technical expertise by engaging professor Paul Robinson of University of Pennsylvania, one of the foremost experts on penal codes and world's leading scholar on criminal law. Robinson, who first conducted an assessment of the Maldivian criminal justice system, concluded that the old system dispensed "systematic injustices".

The Penal Code was first drafted in 2004 but its journey to Parliament took longer than anticipated. Throughout the process, UNDP helped make certain that reforms made to the criminal justice system would be sustainable. This included the creation of a legal sector resource centre for implementing the new code upon ratification. Based at the Attorney General's Office this Center has been instrumental in conducting training for over 4,000 personnel from the justice sector including police, prosecutors, lawyers and those engaged in investigation work at various Independent Institutions. //

▼ The People's Majlis (parliament) passed a reformed Penal Code that offers transparency on procedures, the prosecution process and sentencing guidelines.  
📍 UNDP Maldives





# WELL BEGUN, HALF DONE



**NASHEETH THOHA**  
ASSISTANT RESIDENT  
REPRESENTATIVE (POLICY AND  
PROGRAMME), UNDP MALDIVES

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Despite graduating to a middle-income country, the Maldives still faces obstacles to development in the form of high youth unemployment and rising income disparities

*In the remote islands, there are problems with access to basic services and living standards far below that of Capital Male!*

The Maldives recently graduated from a lower income to a middle income country. However, there remain areas where there are policy gaps, which are leading to development challenges for the country. There are two critical areas: demographics, especially the growing youth population, and the increasing inequality among regions and communities.

UNDP has been working closely with the Government of the Maldives on policy support, to identify the gaps that exist and to develop better services to cater to the needs of the people.

In Maldives, youth unemployment is high, not because of a shortage of jobs, but because of a mismatch between jobs available and the skills of job-seekers. The government to develop a policy around youth labour.

Another area where UNDP can support includes the collection of statistical data, its maintenance and use. This is especially important given that the Maldives has already adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Maldives was the first country in South Asia to attain MDG plus status, but if we look closely, there are small pockets of communities that have yet to achieve the MDGs. Therefore, data for the SDGs

needs to be localised with more of a focus on monitoring and evaluation.

It is important to note that UNDP has emphasised inclusion in all of the policy instruments it has helped develop with the Government of the Maldives. There has been a focus on voice and participation, rather than just institutional development. It is as much about participatory law-making as it is about participatory planning.

There are also issues of inequality between residents of Male, the capital, and those of remote islands. In Male, basic services like health and education abound but the population density is very high and so is the cost of living for its residents. People can barely break-even at the end of every month. That is probably one of the biggest challenges in the capital.

In the remote islands, there are issues with access to basic services leading to a lower standard of living compared to that of Male!

The geographic location of the islands, scarcity of resources such as land and people, accessibility of services, limited job opportunities that matches the skill sets of the population force people to move to Male. People from remote



and smaller islands are even more disadvantaged; their inclination to move to Malé can result in enhanced urban poverty and add to pressures on the high cost of living, housing and joblessness in the capital.

The 2014 National Human Development Report (NHDR) that UNDP prepared jointly with the government looks into



▲ Over the years, UNDP has worked closely with communities to improve livelihoods by introducing modern methods of farming and agriculture.  
© UNDP Maldives

these complex development challenges facing Maldives.

As the NHDR suggests, in order to manage the quality of life in both rural and urban locations, and to counter rural to urban migration, it is important to develop peripheral hubs outside Male. Developing a hierarchy of services for various categories of islands and clearly

informing people of the availability of services at each level has become imperative. This approach would involve central hub islands that provide tertiary services and periphery islands that provide selected services. This could significantly reduce the cost of providing services.

UNDP will continue to work with the

government to develop appropriate policies to support Maldives in its development endeavors.

The Maldives has come a long way and sets it quite apart from other countries within this region. In terms of democratic consolidation, we still have lot of issues. But we have come a long way from where we had begun? //

# MAINTAINING SOCIAL COHESION IN POLARIZED TIMES

By creating safe spaces for communities to hold dialogue, UNDP has contributed to social harmony while the Maldives matures into a democracy



**YASMEEN RASHEED**  
PROJECT COORDINATOR – RESULT  
AREA 3, INTEGRATED GOVERNANCE  
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In the run up to the presidential elections in September 2013, the Maldives was a divided country. As the main political parties fought in tightly contested elections, there were fears of negative consequences on social harmony. The election results were only announced after an unexpectedly prolonged course, with the elections being postponed on multiple occasions.

When countries undergo difficult transitions like these, the ensuing social and political tensions can have untoward effects on the nation's social fabric. This can lead to difficult social relations—adversely affecting community psychology. The impacts are felt much more acutely if the communities are smaller, where everyone knows everyone else.

With these sensitivities in mind, UNDP, in addition to providing technical support to the Election Commission to hold credible elections and conducting voter education, also placed a strong emphasis on social cohesion by creating spaces for dialogue. After the elections, these platforms for dialogue evolved into a forum to address other societal issues.

Take Lhaviyani Atoll Olhuvelifushi Island – home to some 600 people – for example. Like other islands in the Maldives, it suffers from a lack of a proper waste management system. Absence of

designated waste disposal areas and lack of awareness on practices such as waste separation, recycling and treatment have become serious matters of concern.

Through participatory dialogue, UNDP Maldives along with Local Government Authority (LGA), worked with men and women of Olhuvelifushi to openly and constructively discuss waste management and other issues.

At the end of the dialogue, the community devised an Action Plan together with the Island Council and worked out a timeline to rollout different activities to address the issue.

“We want our island to be a model for other islands. To solve our problems, we need to work together despite political or other differences. Hopefully, Olhuvelifushi will demonstrate that” Nadheema Mohamed, 33, participant said.



▲ The theatre forum of the local Social Good Summit 2015. UNDP partnered with local NGO 'Dhi Youth Movement' to have a theatrical presentation on issues around Women and Climate Change Adaptation. © UNDP Maldives

But it all began with efforts to create safe spaces in the run up to the elections in 2013.

A youth dialogue series titled 'Elections Fever' was piloted in July 2013 to provide space for youth to express themselves in light of the divisions and conflicts arising due to the elections. More than 200 youth attended the series and many participated in the discussions that followed plays based on community theatre. Community-based theatre (CBT) emerged as an effective tool for dialogue—especially in engaging the youth. Over the past three years, UNDP has trained over a dozen CBT facilitators and held over 20 youth dialogues across the country using CBT.

Additionally, in 2015, a series of dialogues were conducted using CBT methodology in Male, Lhaviyani and Laamu Atoll with participation of over 60 young people as CBT actors. CBT has also been adapted as a way to conduct issue-

based community dialogues in island communities, as UNDP demonstrated with interventions in southern atolls on issues such as gender equality, youth unemployment and political conflict.

"UNDP's community-based theatre

is providing much needed space for public dialogue. Creating a space where dialogue can be made actionable is important," says Hjalmar Jorge, an international expert on using community-based theatre to address social issues. //

## WHAT IS COMMUNITY-BASED THEATRE?

It is a theatre that is at the service of ordinary people and that aims at democratizing peoples' access to art and culture not only as passive consumers but as active participants, as creators, in the process re-discovering their inherent creative potential usually dormant and atrophied after years of non-usage.

It is an entirely community-driven process, in which people from different walks of life come together to collectively discuss important community issues, develop interactive plays about these issues and act out these plays in front of other people like them in order to start a search for grassroots solutions, in which the focus of the performance lies as much on the audience as on the actors on stage. It generates open conversation on an issue of community interest between different levels of the community.



INTERVIEW

Minister **THORIQ IBRAHIM**

# We Are Determined To Build Our Resilience To Climate Change

Our biggest fears are that the rising oceans will deplete our groundwater, affecting agriculture and food security and eroding our shores, which will have devastating consequences on our livelihoods and economy

Honorable Thoriq Ibrahim, Minister of Environment and Energy of the Maldives and the current Chair of Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), has over 25 years of experience in the various fields. He was the Maldivian Government's Project Director for the reconstruction of houses in nine islands in the Maldives that were destroyed during the Indian Ocean tsunami that hit in December 2004. UNDP Maldives' Island Life spoke to Minister Ibrahim on the challenges and opportunities facing the Maldives, including fears about rising sea levels, depleting groundwater and their subsequent effects on agriculture and food security. \_\_\_\_\_

The Maldives faces several environmental challenges, in addition to those from climate change. Can you elaborate on the government's vision for environmental protection?

Our vision entails ensuring that Maldivians are environmentally aware, that there is minimal pollution and destruction of the environment, and that there is sustainable use of natural resources, land, reefs and the open sea.

Rising sea levels present a very real and difficult challenge for the Maldives. What is your biggest fear?

Over 80 percent of the total land area of the Maldives is less than one metre above the mean sea level. All of our critical infrastructure is very close to the shoreline. This includes the majority of tourism, fisheries, communication infrastructure, utility services and about one half of our housing infrastructure, which are all within 100 metres of the coastline. Beach erosion is already a serious problem for us and even by 2013, more than 60 percent of our inhabited islands were reporting serious erosion. Our biggest fears are that the rising oceans will deplete our groundwater, affecting agriculture and food security and eroding our shores, which will have devastating consequences on our livelihoods and economy.





▲ Coastal Erosion has had severe impacts on livelihoods forcing some islanders to relocate their homes from coastal areas. © UNDP Maldives

While there are efforts being made by the government and the private sector to address climate change impacts on the tourism industry, coastal and beach erosion continue. Are you worried that this will affect tourist numbers in the long run? What measures does the government plan to take to address this issue?

Despite the grave threats facing us, we are determined to build our resilience to climate change. The National Climate Change Policy Framework, recently adopted by the President, highlights as one of its policy goals, the strengthening of adaptation action and building climate resilient infrastructure and communities. To achieve this, we are already taking initiatives to incorporate climate change projections into development planning and infrastructure programmes to adopt sustainable adaptation technologies that are appropriate to the local context. With regard to the tourism sector, the Ministry is facilitating tourism adaptation programmes and other necessary initiatives to increase the resilience of the tourism sector to climate change impacts. Such initiatives include the development of appropriate policies and the creation of enabling environments for the introduction of low emission development technologies.

Solid waste management is another big challenge. How is the government dealing with it?

The environment has been placed under increasing pressure from the growing volume of waste being generated. Until recently, there was little infrastructure development for waste management. They tend to be limited to addressing specific waste issues for regions or for types of waste. Therefore, in order to address this issue, we are bringing in two different levels of waste management systems -- one is to create a community-based system where councils from the respective community will be responsible for implementation. On the other hand, we are also creating a regional system with a waste transfer system connected to the islands. The regional facilities will be operated and managed through a state-owned enterprise. The government recognises that without a national policy framework and implementation strategy for waste management, the potential for improving environmental outcomes in this sector will be limited. In this regard, we have formulated a national waste management policy, which was launched few days ago. This policy will play a critical role in determining broad national strategic directions for solid waste in the country, the most significant being the decision to pursue regional waste management systems for the treatment of waste in the Maldives. It also establishes cost-sharing arrangements for waste management that are based on the principle that the polluter

should pay for waste management and disposal. In the meantime, the policy also identifies specific responsibilities for waste generators. It emphasises the construction of waste management infrastructure with provisions of waste to energy, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Obviously, addressing all these issues will require substantial investment and there are already a lot of ongoing actions. How do you see an increase in public and private investment to address the environmental challenges?

Under the National Climate Change Policy Framework, we have developed a plan to sustainably finance climate action in the Maldives. We strongly believe that developed countries need to support vulnerable countries adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Therefore, public funds need to be made available to address climate change impacts facing countries like the Maldives. We also believe that the new climate agreement needs to make sure there is adequate and predictable financial support beyond 2020 for climate actions. The Maldives is making efforts to strengthen the leveraging of private finance to the fullest extent possible. One of our most important activities in this regard is the Accelerating Sustainable Private Investments in Renewable Energy (ASPIRE) Project, which we recently launched. This programme aims to increase clean and renewable energy in our energy mix. I believe this programme will support H.E President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom government's policy goal to meet 30 percent of our daily peak energy demand from renewable sources. This project would also enable private sector investment in PV infrastructure development and diversify the investment base of the country by developing a local market, as well as expertise in renewable energy. The project will

make strategic use of different funding sources, including government funds as well as support from the World Bank's International Development Agency, the Scaling up Renewable Energy Investment Programme, and private sector funding to push to increase private sector risk-taking in this sector. This is just one example of our efforts to increase private sector investment in addressing environmental challenges. However, I would like to note that it is very hard for us to attract private funding for adaptation projects, such as coastal protection infrastructure, as these investments have little or no profit generation potential.

The successful joint proposal by UNDP and Government of Maldives has led to the Global Climate Fund (GCF) approving a significant amount of funding for the Maldives in November 2015. Can you elaborate on how the funds will be used?

I am very pleased the Green Climate Fund recently approved a USD 23.6 million grant to implement a project to address climate change induced water shortages in the northern atolls of the Maldives. Water security in a total 49 islands will be ensured under this project. During the past few years, we have been observing unusually long dry seasons, as a result of global climate change. As most of the communities in outer islands depend on harvested rainwater for drinking, and the existing storage capacity is no longer enough to last until the rainy season, the government faces severe challenges as well as added costs each year to deliver emergency water supplies to outer islands.

The proposed project would also contribute to the achievement of several of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. These include not only the goals to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, and the goal to combat the impacts of climate change,



▲ Solid waste management is another issue faced by islands. UNDP is working closely with government in promoting good practices of waste management  
© UNDP Maldives

but this would also contribute to the goals to promote sustainable agriculture, ensure healthy lives, and contribute to achieving gender equality, among others.”

How do you gauge the partnership among UNDP, the people and the Government of the Maldives in addressing environmental challenges?

For over three decades, UNDP has been supporting the Maldives and its people in environment protection, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and in recovery from natural disasters. UNDP has been a crucial partner in working on increasing climate resilience and in providing financial and technical support in preserving and restoring the environment. Undeniably, this has enhanced peoples' well-being and livelihoods.

How do you see future collaborations between UNDP and the government? What improvements would you like to see in terms of the support that UNDP provides to the government?

We see a future of close collaboration and cooperation. Climate change is a top priority in terms of development policies. We need support in capacity building at the national, atoll and island level so that climate change information can be translated into policies, followed by their

effective implementation.

The chair of AOSIS is a big responsibility and a tremendous opportunity, given that Maldives had led many issues concerning the environment in the international arena. What are your aspirations for the AOSIS during the period that the Maldives is its chair?

The Maldives is proud to have the opportunity to chair the AOSIS during this period in which the unity of small island states is crucial. As you are aware, we will hopefully be adopting a new climate agreement for the post-2020 period in Paris this December. The Maldives was instrumental in the inception of AOSIS back in the early 1990s. We hosted the first international conference of small island states in 1989 on sea level rise. Since then, we have proudly led island states in the international arena, especially in climate change, to ensure that special consideration and support is given to help us address our unique challenges. Under our chairmanship, we hope to continue with the spirit of AOSIS and ensure that due recognition is given to SIDS concerns in the various multilateral fora we coordinate as a group. //

*The interview was conducted in November 2015.*



**MOHAMED NAAHEE**  
COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY  
ASSOCIATE, UNDP MALDIVES

# THE PRICELESS VALUE OF WATER

UNDP helping the island communities become more resilient towards a shortage of fresh water



▲ A little girl carries water bottles during the Male water crisis @ UNDP Maldives

Water is the essence of life but for the people of Baa Atoll Maalhos—an island community of some 600 people located at the heart of the UNESCO-protected Maldives' biosphere reserve—it is a commodity in increasingly short supply. The island of Maalhos, like the majority of the islands in Maldives, traditionally depended on ground water collected from the freshwater lens of the island as the primary source of both clean drinking water as well as water for other daily needs.

But for the people of this island, the days of collecting water from the miskithuvalhu ("mosque well") is long gone.

"Our ground water is contaminated. It is unusable, unsafe and unhealthy. It is only good to flush toilets," explains 41-year-old Aishath Zulfa, who is the Vice President of the island's Women's Development Committee. "There was a time when we would all go to the mosque well to collect water. But today, the ground water has a pungent odor and a murky white color."

Rising demands for water due to an increase in population took their toll on

the limited freshwater supplies beneath the ground. The absence of a proper sewerage system and an unhealthy and environmentally-unsound system of draining sewage into the ground through septic tanks further worsened the matter.

"But we are still forced to use the water as we do not have any other alternative," says Zulfa. "We use air pumps to aerate the water so that we can at least get rid of the odour to some extent."

With the Maldives being ground zero for the immediate effects of climate change, unpredictable weather and rainfall patterns put islanders even more at risk.

"For the past three years, we have requested 30 tonnes of emergency water from the government each year during the dry season," says Abdulla Shujau, President of the Maalhos Island Council.

Realising the deficit of groundwater, local authorities have worked hard to introduce rainwater collection tanks that can store up to 2,500 litres of water into almost all households. But these tanks are all still dependent on rainfall.

"And we are no longer able to accurately

predict how long the dry season will last," says Shujau. "Even in the dry season, it may rain for the first month or two. The dry season now starts in December and it may not rain from February up until May. So the earliest time that we can start collecting water is in May,"

Faced with a critical shortage of the most basic resource for life, the people of Maalhos are looking towards innovative solutions. The Maalhos Awareness and Recreation Society (MARS), a local NGO, is pioneering the building of an Integrated Water Resource Management Facility that will utilise desalinated seawater and harvested rainwater to meet growing demands.

With a small grant from the Tourism Adaptation Project—implemented jointly by UNDP and the Ministry of Tourism—the project hopes to provide Maalhos with a clean source of water that is adequate to meet daily needs.

"We have completed almost 90 percent of the work. All the storage tanks have been built and are ready to be installed. The facility is complete. Except for some minor work, such as electrical wiring and finishing, everything is done. The facility will come into full operation within a month's time," says Ahmed Mujthaba, senior MARS member.

The facility, Mujthaba believes, will produce more than enough water for the island community, as well as for prospective new businesses such as guesthouses and restaurants that are planned to be opened soon.

"But this is not the end. We still need a sewerage system. If we want to replenish our ground water supply, we must stop draining sewage into the ground," he explains. //



▲ Water collection system in an island. © UNDP Maldives

## INNOVATION

STEP 2 (Optional): Add a photo of the reported problem.



STEP 3: Gives details about the problem, explaining the nature of the problem and its seriousness.



STEP 4: Provide a confirmation email for the app and could also submit the report anonymously.



STEP 5: Once the report is submitted, the concerned authorities are informed immediately.

STEP 1: Automatically or manually locate the area of the report on map.



STEP 6: The authorities will email back once the issue has been attended, to effectively give feedback for your report.



# BRINGING GOVERNMENTS CLOSER TO CITIZENS

Technology is helping local governments connect with their communities to address local issues



**AMINATH SHOOZA**  
PROJECT ASSOCIATE, ENERGY  
AND ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO &  
INNOVATION AMBASSADOR,  
UNDP MALDIVES

Active citizen participation is key to good governance, yet very rarely are there avenues in developing countries where citizens can hold their governments accountable from their own comfort zone—without having to attend town hall meetings or knocking on the doors of city councils. This situation is changing in the Maldives, ever since the launch of an innovative

method for citizens to participate in governance and have their voices heard. Inspired by the United Kingdom's 'Fix My Street' platform, several online platforms have been developed in the Maldives for citizens to anonymously report the problems they notice.

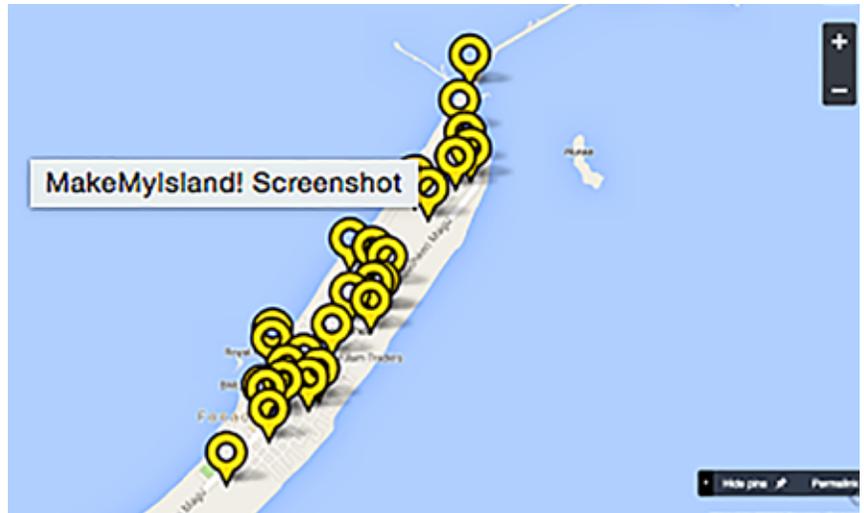
For instance, if a local fisherman notices that people are dumping garbage haphazardly, he can log onto Make-My-Island, either through the web or the mobile app, and report the matter then and there with details outlining the nature and location of the problem. The complaint is recorded on the website and mapped digitally. The council then addresses this problem and reports back to the reporter informing that something has been done about his complaint. Further, the website is a transparent

# How Does Make My Island Work ?

platform where anyone can see how many issues are reported and addressed by the authorities.

The Maldives' prototype Make-My-Island project was partnered with UNDP to tailor a cost-free solution for island residents. A series of prototype tests are being conducted in Laamu Atoll Fonadhoo Island by UNDP Maldives, with the support of the Fonadhoo Island Council and the local community, including women and youth groups and local NGOs. The results have been impressive for a pilot project. After citizens submitted their complaints, 24 municipal issues, such as damaged street lights and unauthorised dumping of waste, were reported and addressed. Since testing began, residents have reported a more engaged local council that is responding to their concerns. This will hopefully lead to improved local services in Fonadhoo and become an

▼ An image of make my island app



*The Make-My-Island project leverages the Maldives' youth bulge and its high level of mobile phone penetration to help bring governments closer to citizens. Since pilot testing began, residents have reported a more engaged local council that is responding to their concerns.*

example of what is possible for other remote islands of the Maldives.

"This project is a great asset for the police," said Ahmed Shakir, chief of police in Laamu Atoll. Who is a key partner in scaling up the pilot to four other islands of Laamu Atoll. The project is currently being tested in Male' and greater Male' to address issues of littering.

The project leverages the Maldives' youth bulge and its high level of mobile phone penetration to help bring governments closer to citizens. While there are fewer town hall meetings between residents and local councils, the country has over 600,000 mobile phone subscribers, for a national population of only 400,000. This initiative not only holds local governments accountable but also reduces the democratic deficit that is often seen in developing countries. Now, there is increasing demand for the

project to be expanded to other atolls.

The Make-My-Island project demonstrates how UNDP is looking for innovative approaches that focus on solutions from across the spectrum, by reaching out to non-traditional partners. The emphasis is on rapid prototyping and testing of ideas to come up with the most innovative and efficient solutions. //

▼ "This project is a great asset for the police," said Ahmed Shakir, chief of police in Laamu Atoll.  
© UNDP Maldives



# STILL SOME WAY TO GO



▲ Zaeema (L) is a leading female figure in Laamu Atoll. © UNDP Maldives

Though the Maldives fares better than many countries in the region when it comes to gender equality, much remains to be done to ensure gender parity in political representation and national development processes

Thirty-three-year-old Fathimath Zaeema wears many hats—she is mother to two girls, head of the Parent Teacher Association at her children's school, a full-time president of the Women Development Committee for Laamu Atoll and an evaluator for local bid committees.

Despite the fact that the Maldives fares significantly better than many countries when it comes to gender equality,

ranking 49th on the Gender Inequality Index in UNDP's 2014 Global Human Development Report, women like Zaeema remain the exception. Women's participation in public life and decision-making is not proportional to the strides the Maldives has made in reducing gender inequality. Women's political representation remains low, with women holding a mere 6 percent of seats in both the national parliament and local councils.

"There aren't many women ready to step into leadership positions," says Zaeema. "There aren't many opportunities and even where women perform, there is very little recognition of their work."

Zaeema does her part by providing training and support for other women to take up more leadership positions. She is also a big promoter of livelihood opportunities for women, training them on acquiring and retaining

traditional handicraft skills. Zaeema is hopeful about the future. Under the Decentralization Act amendments put forward to the Parliament, a minimum of one seat will be reserved for the President of WDCs. UNDP is working to support women like Zaeema and help prepare others for leadership positions in public sphere. For the next five years, UNDP will be working with the government and civil society groups to increase participation and representation of women in the public sphere.

The formidable barriers to women's participation in public office are often the same ones restricting their participation in the labour force. The unemployment rate for women was 31 percent in 2010 and across all sectors and industries, the mean monthly income for women is lower than that of men. According to the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (2009 – 2010), while the major reason given by both women and men for being unemployed was because they were unable to find suitable employment, 22 percent of women cited household chores as a reason, and another 3 percent were deterred by objections from family members. UNDP's baseline survey on women in public life further underlined that marriage and pregnancy

at a young age, geographical isolation and social norms restricting women's mobility are factors that hamper women's participation in paid work.

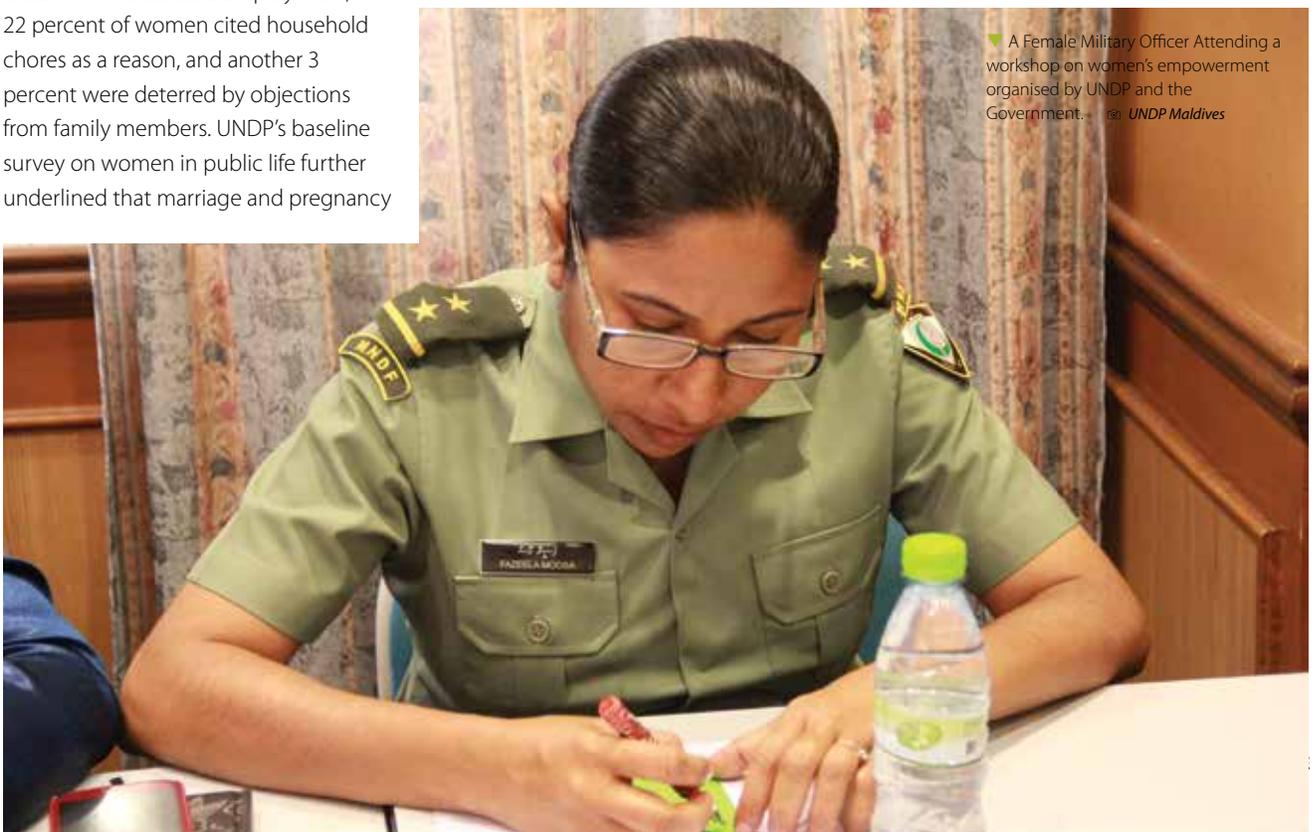
Furthermore, sexual and gender-based violence is widespread in the Maldives. According to The Maldives Study on Women's Health and Life Experiences 2007, one out of three women aged 15-49 is reported to have experienced at least one form of physical and/or sexual violence.

Thus, a lot more needs to be done to ensure that women, who constitute 49 percent of the Maldivian population, are able to participate in national development processes. In other words, increasing women's contribution and

participation in national development is crucial for the future of the country and requires interventions at all levels, across all sectors.

Legislation and policies to uphold gender equality commitments need to be introduced. It should be noted that key legislations, such as the Domestic Violence Prevention Act (2012), Sexual Harassment Prevention Act and Sexual Offences Act (2014) have been adopted. Ongoing work to pass a Gender Equality Law is another important step forward. Furthermore, institutions need to embrace gender sensitive practices, such as flexible working arrangements and effective mechanisms to address work place harassment. //

*Increasing women's contribution and participation in national development is crucial for the future of the Maldives and requires interventions at all levels, across all sectors.*



▼ A Female Military Officer Attending a workshop on women's empowerment organised by UNDP and the Government. 

# WHAT ARE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS?

The Sustainable Development Goals, otherwise known as the 2015 Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs), build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), eight anti-poverty targets that the world committed to achieving by 2015. The MDGs, adopted in 2000, aimed at an array of issues that included slashing poverty, hunger, disease, gender inequality, and access to water and sanitation. Enormous progress has been made on the MDGs, showing the value of a unifying agenda underpinned by goals and targets. Despite this success, the indignity of poverty has not been ended for all.

The new SDGs, and the broader sustainability agenda, go much further than the MDGs, addressing the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development that works for all people.

UNDP Administrator Helen Clark noted: "This agreement marks an important milestone in putting our world on an inclusive and sustainable course. If we

all work together, we have a chance of meeting citizens' aspirations for peace, prosperity, and wellbeing, and to preserve our planet."

All 17 Sustainable Development Goals are connected to UNDP's Strategic Plan focus areas: sustainable development, democratic governance and peacebuilding, and climate and disaster resilience.

## MALDIVES AND SDGs

The government of Maldives has already taken steps to begin implementation by convening a national committee for SDGs.

The Maldives has achieved five out of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ahead of the 2015 deadline, making it South Asia's only MDG plus country.







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