

The Rufford Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. The Final Report must be sent in **word format** and not PDF format or any other format. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. Please note that the information may be edited for clarity. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to jane@rufford.org.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	Hussein Zahir
Project title	Capacity building of Maldives in-country management and monitoring of threatened coral reefs
RSG reference	18742-2
Reporting period	March 2016 – August 2016
Amount of grant	£ 5,000
Your email address	hussein.zahir@lamer.com.mv
Date of this report	August 2016

1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Training of four Maldivians in Reef Check techniques		x	During the annual Biosphere Expeditions research expedition in July 2016, four Maldivians funded by the Rufford Foundation were trained and certified in Reef Check survey techniques. They were Fathimath Farah Amjad, Irthisham Hassan Zareer*, Amintha Shaha Hashim*, Arushad Mohamed. Those with a *star were trained to be Reef Check trainers who are now able to train their compatriots. All four are now involved in community-based reef monitoring programmes. There are now two local Maldivian Reef Check teams in place (Villingili (Male atoll) and and Dhigurah (South Aril atoll)), both led by alumni of the placement programme.
Surveillance of bleaching recovery 17 years after the 1998 bleaching event in the most populous part of the Maldives		x	Sites were surveyed (see preliminary report presentation). In the light of the recent El Niño event the surveys focused on response to the recent (May) bleaching event.
Initial mapping and surveillance of the Maamigili MPA with local NGO partners			Two sites were surveyed in 2016 in the Dhigurah / Mamigili MPA area. One was surveyed by a local Maldives RC team at Dhigurah in January prior to the bleaching event, and another during the July Biosphere expedition.

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

None. The project is fully on target as expected.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

1. Following the training of three Maldivians in Reef Check survey techniques in September 2014, the first-ever all-Maldivian Reef Check survey was performed by them and other community members recruited by them in November 2014 (see [press release](#), which fully acknowledges the Rufford Foundation). Since then two of the trainees, Shaha Hashim and Rafil Mohamed, have founded a local art/conservation NGO called GEMANA. This NGO has so far: (a) conducted a pilot community climate watch project in South Ari Atoll Dhigurah, including a project for community monitoring of reef health; and (b) conducted further Reef Check training sessions, qualifying another 16 Maldivians as Reef Check EcoDivers, forming the nucleus of a truly community-based reef monitoring programme, which has been active in surveying and seeding further community-based efforts (see another [press release](#), which fully acknowledges the Rufford Foundation). Finally, there are now two full local Maldivian Reef Check teams in place (Villingili and Dhigurah), both led by alumni of the placement programme. Over 25 Maldivians have now been trained and five are now Reef Check Trainers. A local 'high end' resort has (since training in 2010) conducted its own Reef Check surveys on an annual basis, and is instigating its own coral rehabilitation work. It has 'isolated' some coral cuttings in cool water tanks during the bleaching event, planted them out, and therefore allowed the process of local reef recovery to be artificially stimulated.

2. Full technical research reports have been published annually since 2011 (see www.biosphere-expeditions.org/reports). Surveys after the 2016 El Niño event showed that reefs on the seaward-facing sides of atolls were in better condition than those inside atolls. One sheltered reef is collapsing from a coral state to one dominated entirely by corallimorphs (sea-anemone like creatures). We believe it is vital to track this change in state. Another inner reef suffered from a destructive Crown-of-Thorns outbreak and devastating bleaching. But there is encouragement from all the reefs adjacent to deep oceanic water that are showing resilience in the face of increased SST associated with El Niño.

3. Other outcomes include: Data to Maldives government and Reef Check since 2005. Over 70 international volunteers trained in Reef Check. Data from over 25 sites. Post bleaching assessment (2012; 2014; 2016). Two masters theses with University of York (2008; 2016). Conference presentations (IMCC, Washington 2009). Book chapter (tsunami response). Natural History Museum coral reef exhibit opening presentation (2014). One resort trained in Reef Check that is now undertaking its own Reef Check (2010), and hosting coral rehab work (2016).

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).

A large part of this project is about training local communities and businesses to monitor the health of their own reefs. This has worked very well and we are proud to have selected the right people to establish community-based survey programmes in a very short time. Their success has been remarkable and we would like to thank all trainees for their commitment and drive.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, absolutely. With over 25 Maldivians now trained, we will apply for a third (booster) Rufford Foundation grant of another £ 10,000 to support the development of our Maldivian partners in their Reef Check work. We now have a trainer based at a local NGO in the Maldives Whaleshark Research Programme at Dhigurah Island.

1. We will use the funds to buy the local Reef Check trainer training and survey materials such that she can run local Reef Check surveys. This will build a better picture of reef health, fish populations, and recovery from the bleaching surveys.
2. The Biosphere Expeditions surveys across the nation will also continue on an annual basis, providing a platform for active Reef Check participants in understanding the recovery of wider reefs to the 1998 and 2016 bleaching events. As well as taking experienced Maldivian Reef Check practitioners and trainers, we will – where possible – recruit new placement programme individuals who show outstanding application to conservation of local reefs.
3. We will work with collaborating research establishments to produce outputs highlighting where the 2016 bleaching event has had its strongest impact, and where there is potential for full or partial recovery.

Our model for collaboration and long-term training, surveillance will continue in order to provide greater resolution and local understanding of Maldives reef condition and what can be managed. We will always focus on empowering local people to 'take on the mantle' of progressing local community-focused conservation measures.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

Internet and social media: Reports of project work have been published on the internet / social media, for example as press releases ([example 1](#), [example 2](#), [example 3](#)) or announcements of local training events ([example 1](#), [example 2](#)), or

on the Biosphere Expeditions and GEMANA and Marine Conservation Society Facebook pages.

Research and data reports: These are initially published online and also distributed to in-country partners (the Maldives Marine Research Centre), and via internet for organisations such as the Maldives Marine Science web forum.

We have also collaborated with the University of York to produce a report on the status of Maldives reefs *prior* to the 2016 bleaching event, giving us a good baseline from which to assess the status of the reefs moving forward. This will be shared with Maldivian colleagues and government agencies.

In all publications, the Rufford Foundation is acknowledged whenever applicable.

7. Timescale: Over what period was The Rufford Foundation grant used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

The grant was awarded in March 2016 and all training of Maldivians was done in July 2016, fully in line with the schedule of the original request.

8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Staff - local & international salaries, travel and expenses	£ 400	£ 400	£ 0	Staff costs were rounded pro rata calculations for the extra work, travel and expenses required for training locals. This was used to supplement a total budget of £ 3,000 and was used up in 2016 and receipts can be provided on request.
Placements	£ 4,600	£ 4,600	£ 0	Placements were costed at £ 1,150 each as a pro rata calculation for food, fuel, dive and other services aboard the research vessel. Four placements were trained in July 2016.
Total	£ 5,000	£ 5,000	£ 0	

9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

We will continue with the annual research expedition, publication of research results and influencing of local-decision makers to protect Maldivian reefs.

We will continue our local training and capacity-building programme in 2017 and hopefully beyond with a booster Rufford Foundation grant.

1. We will make an assessment on the results of the 2016 bleaching impact from our permanent monitoring sites visited this year, and that of Baros Maldives resort that surveyed local reefs before and after the bleaching event.
2. We will provide recommendations on best practice for the conservation of these sites, and MPA recommendations where possible with local partners.
3. We will provide a platform for Reef Check trainers and practitioners to re-survey sites that have been variously impacted by bleaching and overfishing.
4. We will provide a platform for outstanding new Maldivian placement programme individuals to join our 2017 (and beyond) annual surveys. We will ensure that we get excellent quality individuals that show outstanding application to conservation of the Maldives, and making a difference to local conservation before and after their recruitment to our training programme.
5. We will provide Reef Check training materials to the Maldives Whaleshark Research Programme that they can do their own Reef Check surveys. This is now possible with local staff member, Irthisham Hassan Zareer having been trained as a Reef Check trainer in July 2016.
6. We will provide a draft management strategy (including surveillance plan) for Dhigurah Island.

10. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the RSGF receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yes, as detailed above. Other examples include www.biosphere-expeditions.org/placements and social media postings such as <http://wp.me/p2byOw-1nx> and the examples below. We have also posted on the Rufford Foundation Facebook page (see below).

 Biosphere Expeditions

 **Biosphere Expeditions**

Applications are now open for our Maldives expedition placement programme. We are looking for committed Maldivians who want to make a difference to their local reefs. See www.biosphere-expeditions.org/placements for the application process and <http://biosphereexpeditions.cmail1.com/.../0A63559D8192B3FB0F...> for a success story. The Maldives placements are kindly supported by the The Rufford Foundation.



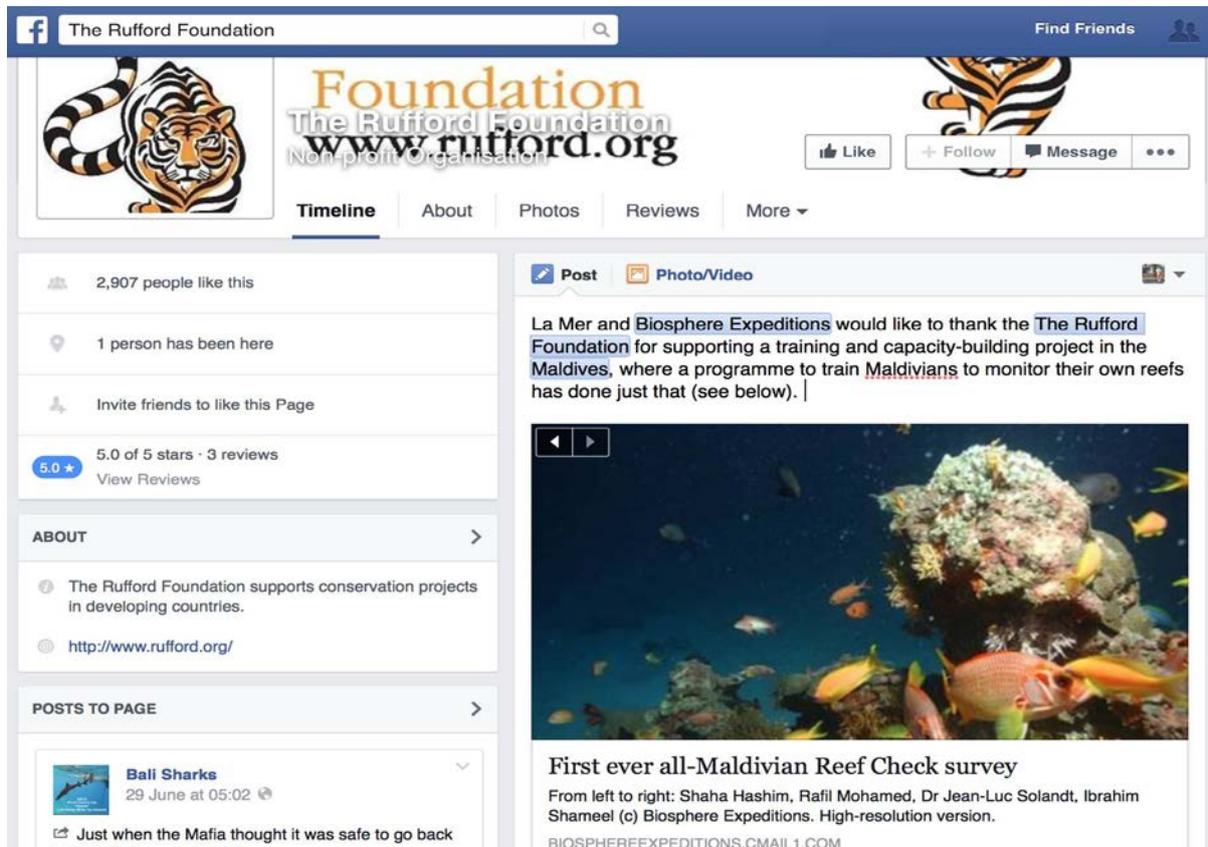
 **Biosphere Expeditions**
Shared publicly

Applications are now open for our Maldives expedition placement programme. We are looking for committed Maldivians who want to make a difference to their local reefs. See www.biosphere-expeditions.org/placements for the application process and <http://biosphereexpeditions.cmail1.com/t/ViewEmail/j/462E9D91EA76B3CA/0A63559D8192B3FB0F8C96E86323F7F9> for a success story. The Maldives placements are kindly supported by the The Rufford Foundation <http://www.rufford.org>.

Show less



+1 



The screenshot shows the Facebook profile of The Rufford Foundation. The page header includes the name 'The Rufford Foundation', a search bar, and a 'Find Friends' button. The profile picture is a tiger, and the cover photo features the text 'Foundation The Rufford Foundation www.rufford.org Non-profit Organisation'. Navigation tabs for 'Timeline', 'About', 'Photos', 'Reviews', and 'More' are visible. On the left sidebar, it shows '2,907 people like this', '1 person has been here', and a 5.0 star rating. The main content area displays a post from 'La Mer and Biosphere Expeditions' thanking the foundation for supporting a training project in the Maldives. The post includes a video thumbnail of a coral reef and the text: 'First ever all-Maldivian Reef Check survey. From left to right: Shaha Hashim, Rafil Mohamed, Dr Jean-Luc Solandt, Ibrahim Shameel (c) Biosphere Expeditions. High-resolution version. BIOSPHEREEXPEDITIONS.CMAIL1.COM'.

11. Any other comments?

If there is anything else we can do in terms of joint publicity or if there is anything else you need (pictures, receipts, reports, etc.), then please just let us know.