

## The Rufford Foundation

### Final Report

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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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole, Grants Director**

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#### Grant Recipient Details

<b>Your name</b>	Hussein Zahir
<b>Project title</b>	Continued work on Maldives corals through capacity-building, research & MPA management
<b>RSG reference</b>	18742-3
<b>Reporting period</b>	September 2016 – February 2017
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£ 10,000
<b>Your email address</b>	hussein.zahir@lamer.com.mv
<b>Date of this report</b>	March 2017

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

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Training of five Maldivians in Reef Check techniques				During the annual biosphere research expedition in July 2017, six Maldivians funded by the Rufford Foundation were trained and certified in Reef Check survey techniques. They were Hussein Zahir, Adam Saaneez, Nizam Ibrahim, Hassan Ahmed, Farah Amjad, Ibrahim Shameel*. Those with a *star were trained to be Reef Check trainers who are now able to train their compatriots.
Surveillance of bleaching recovery after the 2016-bleaching event				Sites were surveyed and preliminary results were presented at the European Coral Reef Symposium, 13th-15th December 2017, University of Oxford, UK. A full technical research report will be published by June 2018 (and of course we will notify Rufford when it is). Peer-reviewed publications are planned.
Progress MPA management plan				Monitoring whale sharks at Mamigili MPA has continued. Independent Reef Check teams have now been set up by graduates of the placement programme to monitor the reefs of the MPA. The annual survey expedition will return to these reefs in 2018 to assess recovery from the 2016 bleaching event.
Analyse and disseminate findings				Sites were surveyed and preliminary results were presented at the European Coral Reef Symposium, 13th-15th December 2017, University of Oxford, UK. A full technical research report will be published by June 2018 (and of course we will notify Rufford when it is). Peer-reviewed publications are planned.

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. Since

then two of the trainees, Shaha Hashim and Rafil Mohamed, have founded a local art/conservation NGO called GEMANA. Shaha Hashim has since by and large dropped out, since she has found high-level employment with the Blue Marine Foundations grouper project.

Employment came about in large part due to her training and involvement with this Rufford project, so we are pleased about this even if it means that Shaha is by and large no longer available for this project. With Rafil Mohamed as the driver, a second local NGO Reef Check Maldives was founded in 2017 to take over further Reef Check training of Maldivians and capacity building in reef conservation. Recent activities of Reef Check Maldives include: Kuramathi Island Resort (house reef survey) (June 2017), Save the Beach Anniversary Event - Reef Check awareness sessions for primary school students (November 2017), Hydrous Expedition (December 2017) – run by placement graduate Farah Amjad. Training of six more Maldivians in Reef Check (December 2017 – February 2018). Over 30 Maldivians have now been trained and six are now Reef Check Trainers.

2. Full technical research reports have been published annually since 2011 (see [www.biosphere-expeditions.org/reports](http://www.biosphere-expeditions.org/reports)). Most recently survey results were presented at the European Coral Reef Symposium, 13th-15th December 2017, University of Oxford, UK. Overall, the baseline condition of reefs is affected due to disease, crown-of-thorns, *Drupella*, previous bleaching, overfishing, run-off, construction. Inner reefs are undergoing phase shifts: Some inner reefs are now dominated by *Discosoma* corallimorphs, others by algae. Outer reefs are faring better due to more resilient coral life forms / proximity of deeper water and steeper 'drop-off' aspect. The Maldives Government and the international community are ineffective at dealing with the scale of the issue. Developing community-based conservation initiatives and citizen science, as well as further surveying and tracking of reef health, are crucial to protecting Maldives reefs.

3. Other outcomes include: Data to Maldives Government and Reef Check since 2005. Over 80 international volunteers trained in Reef Check. Data from over 30 sites. Post bleaching assessment (2012; 2014; 2016; 2017). Two masters theses with University of York (2008; 2016). Conference presentations (IMCC, Washington 2009; European Coral Reef Symposium, Oxford, 2017). 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, 2017). Foundation of two local NGO as a basis for community-based reef conservation efforts (see 1. above).

**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. This development is now at the cusp of

turning from volunteer / part-time to professional / full-time. Part of our next continuation grant application is to support this positive development.

**5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

Please see question 9.

**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 or announcements of local training events or on the Biosphere Expeditions, GEMANA, Reef Check Maldives 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 has been 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 Q2 2017 and all training of Maldivians was done in Q3 2017, 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 & inter-national salaries, travel and expenses	1,500	1,500		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 £ 4,000 and was used up in 2017.
Misc - transport, admin	1,500	1,500		This was used to supplement flights for two international staff from the UK to the Maldives.

Equipment	500	500		This was used on Reef Check training materials and equipment (£ 200) and an underwater camera (£ 300).
Education & PR-materials	250	250		This was used for a re-run of a coral reef educational booklet for primary school children, which were used during awareness sessions conducted by Reef Check Maldives
Placements	6,250	6,250		Placements were costed at £ 1,250 each as a pro rata calculation for food, fuel, dive and other services aboard the research vessel. We managed to squeeze one more placement than planned out of the funding, so six instead of five placements were trained in July 2017.
<b>Total</b>	10,000	10,000		

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

With the help of this grant we have been able to achieve extraordinary success in building local capacity and setting up a budding community-based reef monitoring programme. Given the Maldivian Government’s lack of interest in genuine reef conservation, this civil society involvement is exactly what is needed to protect Maldivian reefs into the future and make Maldivians aware of the great asset they must protect for the continued welfare of our nation. NGO Reef Check Maldives has been formed, but needs to professionalise itself. Our completion grant application will ask for funding for this. More Maldivians should be trained in Reef Check techniques and more local Reef Check Trainers should be trained so that by the end of the completion grant, a critical mass of locally trained Reef Check Divers and Reef Check Trainers is reached. Our completion grant application will also request funding for this. Finally, Maldivians should take over the baton of leading the annual reef research expedition. Completion grant funding will also enable this local empowerment element.

**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](http://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).

Expedition reports on [www.biosphere-expeditions.org/reports](http://www.biosphere-expeditions.org/reports)

### 1.10. Acknowledgements

This study was conducted by Biosphere Expeditions, which runs wildlife conservation expeditions all over the globe. Without our expedition team members (listed above) who provided an expedition contribution and gave up their spare time to work as research assistants, none of this research would have been possible. The support team and staff (also mentioned above) were central to making it all work on the ground. Thank you to all of you and the ones we have not managed to mention by name (you know who you are) for making it all come true. Thank you also to Hussein Zahir of LaMer and Shiham Adam from MRC for guidance and advice, and to Agnes van Linden of the MV Carpe Diem for running like dockwork an excellent live-aboard research base. Biosphere Expeditions would also like to thank the Friends of Biosphere Expeditions for their sponsorship and/or in-kind support. We thank the crew of the MV Carpe Diem for being such excellent hosts. Thank you also to Richard Rees of the MWSRP. Support from the Rufford Foundation via LaMer for the placement programme is gratefully acknowledged also.



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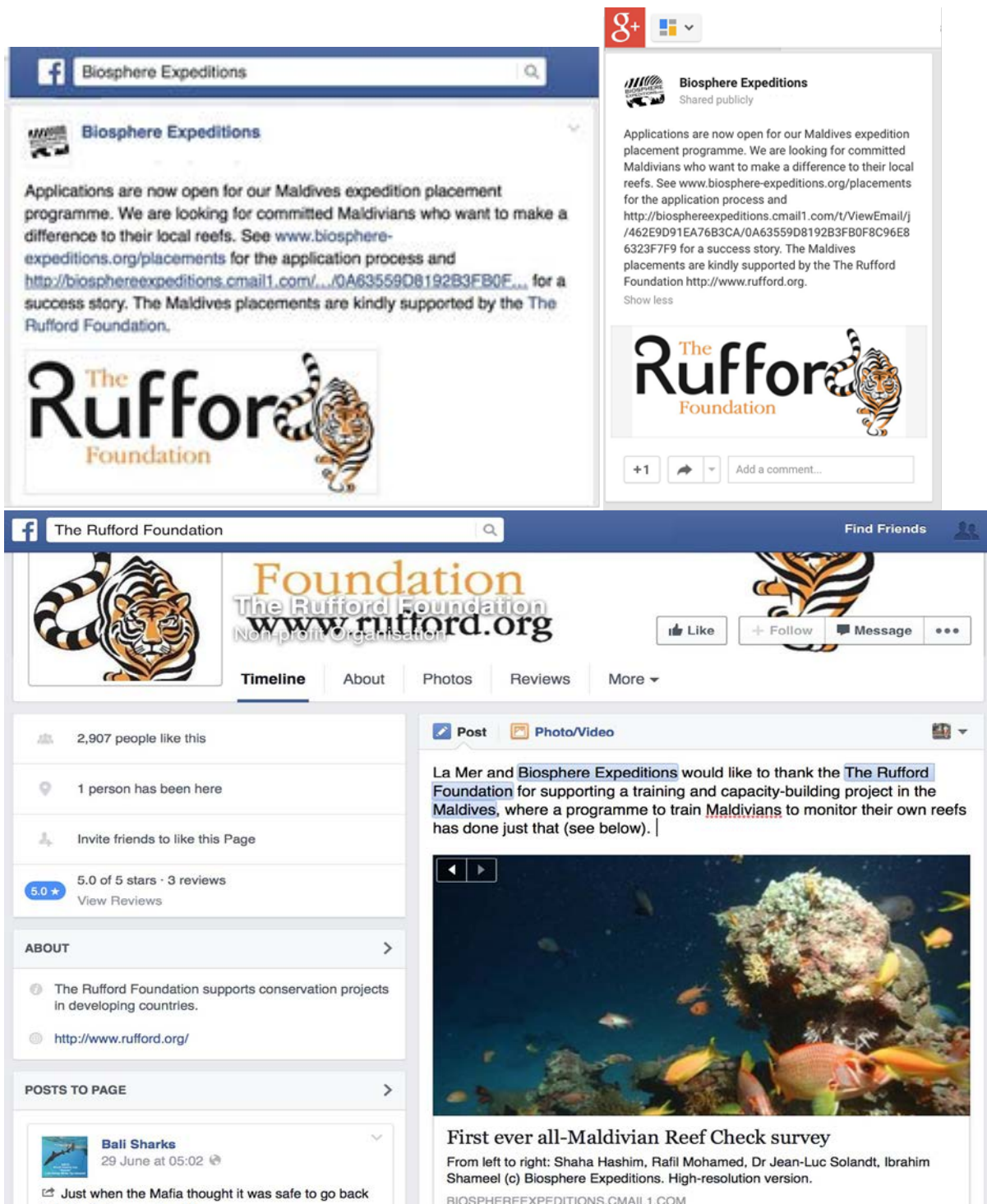
Status Photo/Video



Reef Check Maldives, Gemana, LaMer and Biosphere Expeditions would like to thank The Rufford Foundation for its continued support of coral reef conservation, community-based conservation action and capacity-building in the Maldives, where a coral reef crisis is unfolding. Without the support of the Rufford Foundation local NGOs such as Reef Check Maldives and Gemana would simply not exist, let alone be able to take action in the face of government inaction and corruption. Thank you very much Rufford!

www.reefcheckmaldives.org





The image shows two screenshots of Facebook posts. The top screenshot is from the 'Biosphere Expeditions' page, dated June 29, 2015. The post text reads: "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." Below the text is the Rufford Foundation logo. The bottom screenshot is from the 'The Rufford Foundation' page, dated June 29, 2015. The post text reads: "La Mer and Biosphere Expeditions would like to thank the The Rufford Foundation for supporting a training and capacity-building project in the Maldives, where a programme to train Maldivians to monitor their own reefs has done just that (see below)." Below the text is a video thumbnail showing a coral reef with many colorful fish. The video title is "First ever all-Maldivian Reef Check survey" and the description lists the participants: "From left to right: Shaha Hashim, Rafil Mohamed, Dr Jean-Luc Solandt, Ibrahim Shameel (c) Biosphere Expeditions. High-resolution version." The video URL is 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.