

Project Update: October 2017

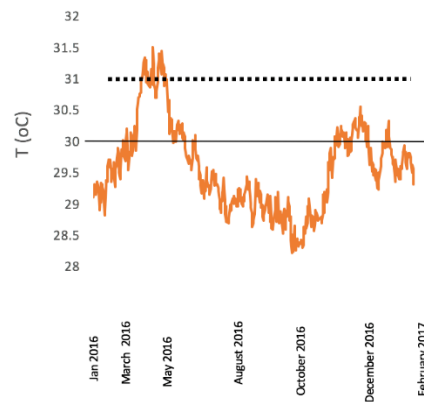
Climate change is the greatest threat to coral reef ecosystems causing global degradation worldwide. Climate change operates against other disturbances such as outbreaks of the corallivore starfish *Acanthaster planci* which substantially contributed to coral loss in the Central Maldives.

The effects and consequences of bleaching on corals reefs are relatively well known, conversely recovery trajectories and rates are less clear.

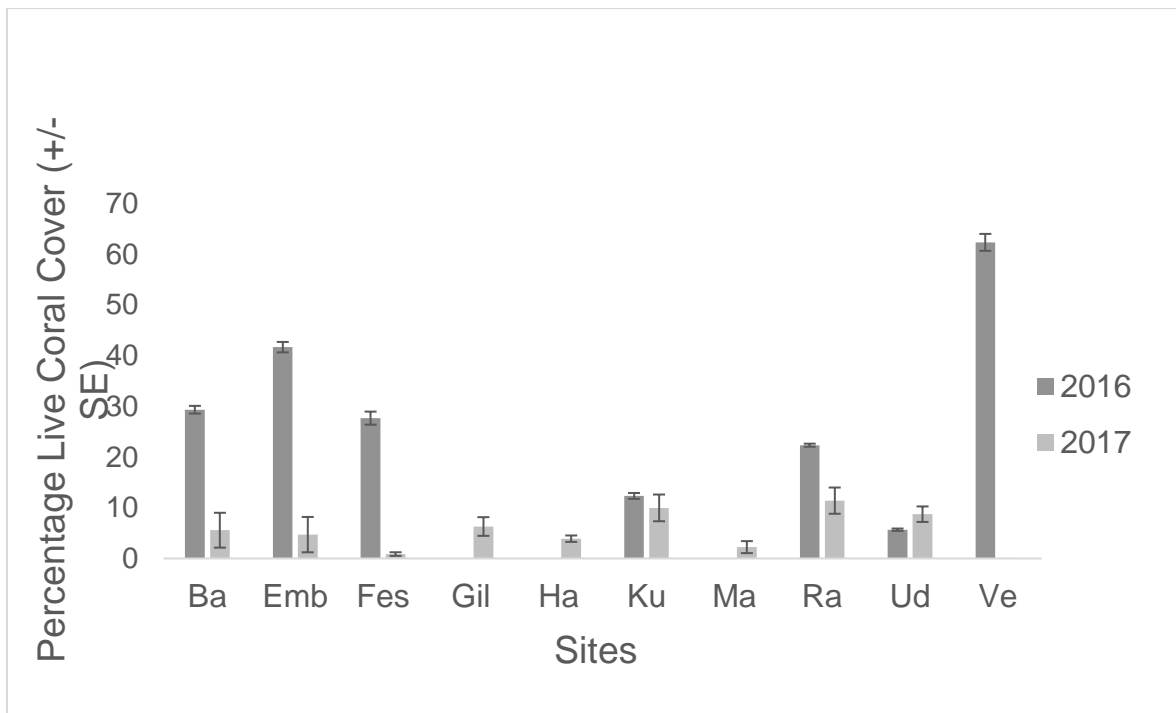
Coral Cover Findings

Sea surface temperatures started to raise above the bleaching threshold in March 2016 and remained consistently high until the end of May 2016 resulting in extensive coral loss (Fig. 1).

Coral cover declined from around 40% in 2016 to less than 5% in 2017 (Fig 1). These findings will be included in the peer reviewed journal article produced from our field trip to the Maldives, and are part of a long-term monitoring project, where we aim to predict and track recovery trajectories of different reefs within the central Maldives archipelago.



2016 to Feb 2017. Data from NOAA.



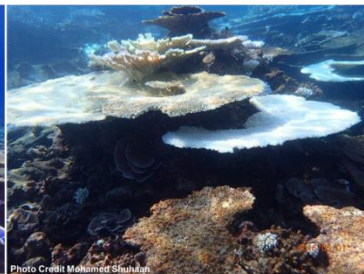
Decline in coral cover following the mass bleaching event in 2016



Before



During



After



The key will be to follow recovery and measure juvenile corals abundance. It will also be critical to understand consequences of coral loss on fish populations.

The course was a success and students were very excited! We had more students than last year!

