

Maldives



The Asia Foundation has been working in the Maldives since the early 1980s, when it was ranked among the world's 20 poorest countries. Our work has reflected the changing needs of the multi-island nation. The Maldives spans 90,000 square kilometers, making equitable development a key challenge. With a diverse marine environment of 1,192 small tropical islands, high-end tourism drives economic growth.

Project Highlights

Adapting to rapidly changing social and economic development needs

TAF has provided scholarships and training opportunities, mainly in human resource development. In addition, TAF has helped strengthen legal systems for international trade and investment.

Increasing community voices in policy and development

TAF built the capacity of community leaders to convey community needs and priorities to decision-makers for conflict resolution, human rights, public security, anti-corruption, and democratic values.

Expanding and supporting knowledge and research

We supported local researchers in 2012 to conduct the first in-depth study of gangs and supported research examining the operational landscape of civil society organizations in the governance sector in 2023.

Supporting rehabilitative justice

TAF ran a vocational training program for prison inmates from 2014 through 2016. Inmates also participated in a values education program to enable their reintegration into society.

Increasing community engagement in local affairs

Worked with the Maldives Police Service in 2017 to better understand the integration of community policing approaches into operational functions.

2023 Snapshot



Partnering with 23 CSOs across 15 atolls to strengthen civic space and labor rights



More than 110k books read and downloaded by 39,000+ readers



Flagship Initiatives



Strengthening civil society

Since 2020, TAF has worked with more than 32 CSOs across the islands and atolls of the Maldives, away from the capital Malé, to equip them to engage with local councils and women's development committees to improve the relevance and sustainability of local island development priorities. Through the regional South Asia Governance Fund, we provide funding to established CSOs, such as the Public Interest Law Center. In 2023, with TAF's support, the law center and the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit of Bangladesh organized a track 1.5 dialogue between governmental and non-governmental stakeholders on labor migration, paving the way for positive change in safe and legal labor migration.

Supporting women's rights organizations

TAF has been working with women's rights organizations such as Hope for Women to support women's development committees in their mandate. Support is also being provided to the

Maldivian Women's Association to examine the role of women in the tourism sector and identify barriers to entry.

Bringing digital books to readers

The Let's Read platform, launched through the Books for Asia program in the Maldives in February 2020, has been hugely popular, with more than 237,000 books read and downloaded by 47,600 readers during the past two years. To date, 197 books have been translated into Divehi and published on the platform. In 2023, a series of original books on financial literacy was developed by local authors and illustrators and is now available on the platform. Let's Read continues to work with and through the Maldives National Library and colleges and schools through the Ministry of Education and private institutions.

Responding to the impacts of Covid-19

During the Covid-19 pandemic, TAF worked with local media partners to launch a social and traditional media campaign #Safer&StrongMaldives to counter misinformation and promote trusted sources of information.

Future outlook

TAF seeks to expand programming in the Maldives, and has identified areas of interest such as women's empowerment, community mediation, mental health, and local economic governance based on our experience of working on these policy areas throughout Asia and the Pacific.

The Asia Foundation is an international nonprofit organization working to solve the toughest social and economic challenges in Asia and the Pacific. Informed by more than 70 years of experience and deep local knowledge, we work with partners across more than 20 countries through 17 offices to improve lives and expand opportunities.