

# 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, and 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**

Provided scholarships and training opportunities, mainly in human resource development. With the country's rapid growth, helped strengthen legal infrastructure for international trade and investment.

### **Increasing community voices in policy and development**

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

### **Expanding and supporting knowledge and research**

Supported local researchers in 2012 to conduct the first in-depth study of gangs; also supported research examining the operational landscape of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the governance sector in 2023.

### **Supporting rehabilitative justice**

Ran a vocational training program for prison inmates from 2014-16. Inmates also participated in a values education program to enable their reintegration into wider 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, gender equality, and labor rights



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



## Flagship Initiatives



### Strengthening civil society

Since 2020, the Foundation has worked with over 32 CSOs across the islands and atolls of the Maldives, away from the capital Malé, to equip them in engaging 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, the Foundation provides funding opportunities to established CSOs, such as the Public Interest Law Center (PILC). In 2023, with the Foundation's support, PILC and the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) 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

The Foundation 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 over 237,000 books read and downloaded by 47,600 readers over 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, colleges and schools through the Ministry of Education and private institutions.

### Responding to the impacts of Covid-19

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Foundation 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

The Foundation 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 issues throughout Asia and the Pacific.

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives and expanding opportunities across Asia and the Pacific. Informed by 70 years of experience and deep local knowledge, our work is focused on governance, climate action, gender equality, education and leadership, inclusive growth, and international cooperation.