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REGENERATE MALDIVES

Maldives is a coral reef island nation made up of more than 1,200 low-lying islands. High population density, land-based pollution, and high dependence on climate-sensitive industries (i.e. fisheries, agriculture, tourism) add to the country’s vulnerability to climate change. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) works in partnership with the people of Maldives to support innovative approaches to climate risk resilience and mobilize private sector funding for actions that reduce risks associated with extreme weather, climate variability, and climate change. This project is one component of the 20-year partnership between USAID and Maldives to support self-reliance, strengthen stability, and promote economic growth.

The Reefs Generate Environmental and Economic Resiliency for Atoll Ecosystems – REGENERATE activity works to strengthen sustainable management of coastal resources, particularly coral reefs, to bolster economic, social, and environmental resilience to the adverse effects of climate change in Maldives. This activity works in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Energy, Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture, and Maldives National University to improve access to science and technology for decision-makers; increase stakeholder capacity to measure, monitor, and adapt to climate stresses; strengthen decentralized management; and establish sustainable funding mechanisms to support climate-resilient marine management.

Implementing Partner: International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN); Total Estimated Cost: \$8.1 million; Performance Period: September 2013 – September 2022

PHOTO: IUCN. SURVEYING THE REEF

OBJECTIVES

Healthy marine ecosystems are essential for sustainable development in Maldives, which relies on them to fuel its economy, supply a sustainable food source, and preserve traditional ways of life. The goal of the REGENERATE project is to strengthen marine management, adaptation to climate change, and local management of coral reef ecosystems in order to support sustainable development for those whose livelihoods depend on a healthy marine ecosystem.

ACTIVITIES

REGENERATE builds local capacity for marine management and climate change adaptation of ecosystems, local communities, and government in the Maldives. Its activities:

- Improve access to science and technology for decision-making and establish policy frameworks for increasing coastal resilience to climate change
- Increase stakeholder capacity to measure, monitor, and adapt to climate stresses through education, training, and outreach
- Strengthen governance in support of decentralized management for more resilient reef ecosystems
- Establish sustainable financing mechanisms to support climate-resilient marine management

RESULTS

PROTECTED AREAS: Supported improved management of ecologically significant areas in Maldives. Provided technical support to the Government to establish two UNESCO Biosphere Reserves: Addu and Fuvahmulah Atolls.

SURVEYS AND REPORTS: Conducted multiple survey and assessment reports that provided vital scientific findings and recommendations for policy makers to strengthen the management of coral reef ecosystems and protected areas. For instance, one survey report revealed the first recorded observation of a critically endangered mangrove species in Maldives, which is important as mangroves slow the movement of water and trap sediment, helping stabilize coastlines and reduce the impacts of storm waves and flooding – growing threats as the climate changes. REGENERATE also supported the finalization and publication of the book *Fishes of the Maldives*, as an identification guide that assists marine scientists, educators and researchers to better understand the life history and habitats of the fishes, sharks, and rays of the Maldives and Indian Ocean region.

TRAINING: To build capacity of local marine management staff and volunteers, REGENERATE provided training on ecological survey methods and assessments of endangered species and habitat conditions at a moment in time.

PUBLIC AWARENESS: REGENERATE conducted multiple seminars and information sessions to increase public awareness of environmental issues and best practices in natural resource management. An awareness campaign on social media reached over 60,000 people.