



Green List
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IUCN Green List in The Maldives

A Feasibility Study Exploring the Potential for Taking Forward the IUCN Green List in the Maldives

Charlie Dryden, Muhsina Abdul Rahman, Ifham Hassan Zareer, Fathimath Shihany Habeeb, Najfa Shaheem Razee, MKS Pasha, Maeve Nightingale and Scott Perkin



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Executive summary

The IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas aims to “*increase and recognise the number of protected and conserved areas that deliver successful conservation outcomes through effective and equitable governance and management*”. At the heart of the IUCN Green List is its Global Standard which provides a framework for effective conservation. Different countries take different approaches to protecting and conserving their natural habitat and as such, the IUCN Green List Standard remains relevant and applicable to the different social, economic, and ecological context through the adaptation of its indicators to the different jurisdictions.

The Republic of the Maldives is an island nation in the central Indian Ocean. The country is rich in natural biodiversity. It has large areas of coral reefs, mangroves, intertidal and open ocean habitats. These resources are of great social, ecological and economic value to the country and there is a desire to ensure that these are conserved for future generations.

The goal of this study is to ensure that the IUCN Green List is utilised in the most effective way by providing a clear understanding of the local context around protected and conserved areas in the Maldives. This is broken down into the three aims: 1) to understand issues related to PCA management, 2) to determine the feasibility of the Maldives adopting the IUCN Green List Standard and 3) to discuss how the Standard may be utilised to strengthen PCA management in the country. This will be achieved through a review of literature on the country’s existing protected area management systems followed by virtual interviews and an online survey with stakeholders in the country’s PCA network. Feedback following a presentation of the initial findings to representatives from stakeholder groups will also be incorporated into the final report.

The results suggest that despite the widespread use of PCAs, the existing management approach is insufficient to achieve effective environmental management and to meet the goals set forth in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2025 (NBSAP). The surveys identified a range of challenges to effective PCA management, notably, the lack of consistent political will, land or urban development, and a lack of financial resources as the top three issues. There was a general consensus across interviewed participants that local communities are becoming less engaged with the environment and conservation and there is significant conflict between stakeholder groups over conservation, access, resource extraction and land development goals.

The governance of PCAs is going through a process of decentralisation, with control of management being transferred from the central to local governments. Interviews with the

government, area managers and Island and Atoll Councils identified this as one of the biggest challenges, but also one of the biggest opportunities for the PCA network.

The current economic model for the PCAs relies almost entirely on funding from the central government. This presents a significant issue for the planned decentralisation of PCA management as local councils are unable to shoulder the financial burden of maintaining these areas and have limited expertise compared to the central government.

The findings of this report indicate a clear need to strengthen the management of PCAs in the Maldives. There is obvious value and significant enthusiasm for developing effective PCA management, and the existing national programmes and legal and policy frameworks are robust and well-developed. However, there are several hurdles that must be overcome. Limited resources mean strategic decisions must be made about where to invest time and resources. In some cases, increasing the effectiveness of existing ecologically significant protected areas may be more useful than targeting new areas. The recently defined category of Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) should provide a valuable alternative approach to conserving habitats that have significant potential in the Maldives.

There is significant potential for utilising the IUCN Green List to enhance the PCA network across the country. Its greatest value may be as a tool to help develop effective PCA management and ultimately a network of effective PCAs across the country. For a select few areas, achieving the Standard could be a goal and in doing so, these areas can be used to demonstrate the value of effective conservation. However, for the majority of sites, the Green List can be used to guide the development of management plans, troubleshoot issues, engage communities and verify decision making. The adoption of the IUCN Green List Standard as a diagnostic tool for analysing PCAs can identify and assess the gaps and challenges as well as areas for investment of resources and enhancing capacity.

The Maldives needs to develop an integrated approach to managing its PCA network that runs from the national to local level. This needs to include stakeholders at all levels and requires the development of a robust management framework that can be adapted to suit the needs of the country and in particular, identifies ways to engage and employ members of the local community. It will be a significant challenge to get environmental management and improved conservation outcomes to exceed land development projects as the preferred option for many stakeholders. However, this is the challenge that conservationists face in the Maldives. Evidence of effective conservation providing positive ecological, social, and economic outcomes is the best way to achieve this and the IUCN Green List would be a valuable tool for assisting management across all levels achieve this goal.

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Introduction

The IUCN developed the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas Programme (IUCN Green List) to “*increase the number of protected and conserved areas that deliver successful conservation outcomes through effective and equitable governance and management*”. The IUCN Green List Standard is a global standard in protected and conserved area (PCA) management, that is by design globally consistent and locally relevant. The IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas Standard (IUCN Green List Standard) provides a framework that can be adapted so that it is applicable to different nations. This can then be more meaningfully applied to protected areas at a national level while also ensuring that an international benchmark for quality is achieved. At the time of writing, 61 areas have achieved the IUCN Green List Standard and a further 600+ are committed to its implementation. These are spread across 60+ countries. The IUCN hopes to continue expanding the use of the Standard to ensure effective management of natural resources globally.

Different countries take different approaches to protecting and conserving their natural habitat and as such, the Green List aims to be relevant and applicable to the social, economic, and ecological context within each jurisdiction. Therefore, understanding this context is essential to understanding the feasibility and method of utilising the Green List Standard in any new jurisdiction.

The Republic of the Maldives is an island nation in the central Indian Ocean. The country has approximately 1,192 islands and a land area of only 227 km² (Ministry of Environment and Energy, 2015). It is the smallest country in Asia by land area and has a population of about 560K (National Bureau of Statistics 2021). Despite the small land area, the area of Ocean within the jurisdiction of the country is vast, with an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that spans over 920,000 square km.

The country is rich in natural biodiversity. It has large areas of coral reefs, mangroves, intertidal and open ocean habitats. These resources are of great social, ecological and economic value to the country. The country has strong links to its natural environment. Approximately 43.17% of GDP is linked to coral reef tourism (Spalding et al. 2017) and fisheries and fishing related activities remain the primary employment for many Island populations.

Objective

The goal of this study is to ensure that the Green List is utilised in the most effective way by providing a clear understanding of the local context around protected and conserved areas in the Maldives. This is broken down into the three aims: 1) to understand issues related to PCA management, 2) to determine the feasibility of the Maldives adopting the IUCN Green List

Standard and 3) to discuss how the Standard may be utilised to strengthen PCA management in the country. Finally, should the findings of the report indicate that it would be feasible to apply the Green List Standard in the Maldives, it will also present a roadmap for how this might be achieved. This will be achieved through a review of literature on the country's existing protected area management systems followed by virtual interviews and an online survey with stakeholders in the country's PCA network. Feedback following a presentation of the initial findings to representatives from stakeholder groups is incorporated into the final report.

Background

Overview of the Maldives' Protected and Conserved Area System

There are 79 designated protected areas, yet only five of these have management plans and the country is yet to develop a cohesive and effective approach to management. Of these five areas three are within The Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve: Hanifaru Bay, Mendhoo region and Olhugiri. The two additional areas Addu Nature Park in the Addu Atoll Biosphere Reserve, and Fuvahmulah Nature Park in the Fuvahmulah Biosphere. All five management plans in place have been developed locally using ecological and social data and are within the three UNESCO biosphere reserves. However, many of the remaining protected areas have been designated using minimal data, inadequate stakeholder consultation and limited knowledge and understanding of design and planning for effective management to achieve successful conservation outcomes and goals. Of these remaining areas, there is a need to prioritise for management interventions, as some areas are experiencing ongoing degradation and significant resource use conflicts, whereas others are by their nature self-sufficient and self-sustaining.

Article 22 of the constitution of the Republic of the Maldives declares that:

“The State shall undertake and promote desirable economic and social goals through ecologically balanced sustainable development and shall take measures necessary to foster conservation, prevent pollution, the extinction of any species and ecological degradation from any such goals”

Additionally, many government documents regarding the development of economic sectors, particularly tourism and fisheries, note that the prosperity and well-being of the country are closely linked to the health of the natural environment.

Laws and regulations

This constitutional declaration is enshrined in law by the Environment Protection and Preservation Act of the Maldives (Act No. 4/93) and the Protected Areas Regulation. The Act

defines the role of the government institution mandated with formulating, regulating, and executing the environmental policies to protect the environment of the Maldives. It states that these should be to the benefit of animals and their surroundings, the freshwater lens of islands, and related freshwater ponds, mangroves and to protect the environment of the Maldives from waste and hazardous gases. It is also the responsibility of the government institution to identify protected areas and natural reserves and to draw up the necessary rules and regulations for their protection and preservation. Beyond this there is no guidance as to how a protected area should be managed.

The Protected Areas Regulation came into effect in 2018. This regulation aims to:

- establish effective guidelines for declaration and management of PAs
- ensure PA declaration is consultative and transparent
- establish a mechanism to maintain a framework for PAs
- enhance awareness and participation of communities in PA designation and management
- ensure future generations benefit from natural resources, ecosystem services and the rich biodiversity of the country

The regulation discusses seven different protected area categories following the IUCN Protected Area Category System and allows a single protected area to be zoned into different categories.

The government maintains a list of protected areas on the government gazette and a further list of environmentally significant areas that are of potential to be protected are continually being identified, surveyed and a database of these areas will be maintained.

Management of protected areas is assigned to a state institution, other such entity or by a mutually agreed arrangement. A management plan must be designed for the protected area and should be created either by the government or the managing party. The plan must provide the following details:

- Name of the protected area
- The area and size of the protected area, with GPS coordinates
- Activities that are permitted and prohibited
- The protected area category
- Reasons for protection and the area's environmental significance
- Details of any zonation of the area

The plan's purpose should be to protect and preserve the area and it must be in accordance with international standards. The plan may involve collecting usage or permit fees. The

Environment Protection Agency (EPA) at its discretion may monitor the protected area management to observe any changes to the natural state of the area, work undertaken to protect and preserve the area, and the extent of management plan enforcement. The management plan and information including controlled activities, access times and offences should be available publicly via the government gazette.

In addition to specific Acts and Regulations regarding protected area management, there are several Acts that may affect the development of Green List in the Maldives:

- Act No. 1/2002 (Land Act of Maldives)
- Act No. 20/1998 (Maldives Uninhabited Islands Act)
- Act No. 6/1996 (Maritime Zones of Maldives)
- Act No. 14/2019 (Fisheries Act of Maldives)
- Act No. 12/2019 (Maldives National Heritage Act)
- Act No. 2/1999 (Maldives Tourism Act)

Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures

The Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology (MoECCT) is taking steps to recognise areas in the country that can be considered conserved following the IUCN Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) approach and has released guidelines for areas that wish to achieve OECMs status (MoECCT 2022). As of writing three candidate OECMs have been nominated.

The tourism sector in the Maldives has a somewhat unique role in environmental management. There are over 160 islands across the country exclusively controlled by single resorts and many resorts consider it their responsibility to manage the surrounding environment sustainably. The geographic area controlled by a resort is determined by the Tourism Boundary Regulation (No.2012/R-7). Significant coral reef, sea grass, mangrove, wetland and sand bank habitats lie within the boundaries of resort islands and developing these as an effectively managed network would benefit the natural ecosystems. Efforts have previously been made to work with certain resorts to create protected areas within their boundaries, however it has proven challenging for resorts to meet the requirements for protected area certification whilst continuing to undertake their business activities.

Community managed conserved areas do exist in the country, however there is little information about these or guidance available to assist in designing and ensuring effective management. The exception to this is Baa Atoll Olhugiri, an uninhabited island within the Baa Atoll UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. This area is managed by community members comprising Baa. Hithadhoo Council, Baa. Thulhaadhoo Council, the Atoll Council, and resource gathers

who use the area, and is overseen by Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve Office and the EPA. The management plan details the roles and responsibilities of the Councils and the resource gatherers to maintain the area and report illegal activities. Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve Office has the responsibilities of evaluating and monitoring the area, registration of resource gatherers, and selling permits. The management plan details activities allowed in the area by different groups and when access to the area is prohibited. The management plan is reviewed annually after monitoring the activities over the previous year, and a full review and evaluation of the plan is conducted every three years.

Management plans

There are five areas that have developed management plans, three of which have their own area specific regulations:

1. Regulation No. 2012/R-23 (B. Hanifaru Protected Area Management Regulation)
2. Regulation No. 2018/R-105 (Addu Nature Park Management Regulation)
3. Regulation No. 2018/R-106 (Fuvahmulah Nature Park Management Regulation)
4. Mendhoo Management Plan
5. Olhugiri Management Plan

Unlike the national level regulations, the regulations governing these areas are specific about permitted activities, and specific about which zones these activities can occur in. They contain zonation maps and are accompanied by GPS points that demarcate the boundaries. These regulations act as the management plan for the area, defining the rules governing access to the area, permitting and fees, vessel regulations, guide regulations, activities, penalties, and exemptions.

National plans

The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016- 2025 (NBSAP) (MEE 2015) fulfils the Maldives' obligation for Article VI (a) of the Convention on Biological Diversity which calls for the development of national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The NBSAP aims to address threats to biodiversity and to ensure biodiversity is conserved, sustainably used, and that benefits that arise from these measures are shared equitably. The NBSAP aims to address 6 broad areas with a strategy and associated measurable targets. These strategies are:

1. Strengthen governance, policies and strategies for biodiversity
2. Enhancing communication and outreach through awareness programmes and capacity building
3. Work together globally for biodiversity conservation

4. Ensure sustainable use of biological resources
5. Address threats to conserve biodiversity
6. Strengthen information management and resource mobilisation

Within these strategies are several targets and actions that encourage the use of protected or conserved areas and the development of sustainable management plans for the natural environment. Many of the targets and actions also relate to criteria and indicators present in the Green List Standard.

The Strategic Action Plan (SAP) 2019 – 2023 (Government of Maldives 2019) is the document guiding central policy planning for the current five-year period. Sectors covered in the SAP that are particularly relevant to Green List planning include:

- Decentralisation
- Environmental Protection and Preservation
- Resilient Communities
- Information, Communication, and Technology
- Arts, Culture and Heritage
- The Blue Economy

The SAP lays out policies, strategies and targets for these sectors moving forward, many of which will directly affect PCA management planning. It is beyond the scope of this report to thoroughly review the SAP, however a detailed understanding of how implementation of the Green List will both be affected by and help achieve these targets should be understood moving forward. At the time of writing the Government has stated that by 2023, at least 10% of the coral reef area, 20% of the wetlands and mangroves and at least one sand bank and one uninhabited island from each atoll should be under some form of protection and management.

The stated policy of the Fisheries and Marine Resources subsector of the SAP is to ensure the integrity and well-being of marine ecosystems. Some strategies that are proposed include protection of marine ecosystems, expanding reef health assessments, and rehabilitation and restoration of marine areas.

National governance

The Maldives is a democratic republic with executive, legislative and judicial branches which all govern the country from the capital Malé. The constitution also contains provisions that allocate certain powers to local communities through a doctrine of decentralisation which is laid out in the governance framework of the country. This process of decentralisation has taken on recent importance, particularly for protected areas, with local governments being

encouraged to take greater ownership. Decentralisation follows the administrative division of the Maldives into Atoll Councils, Island Councils and City Councils. The responsibilities of Atoll Councils include monitoring and coordinating the work of Island Councils and carrying out development activities across the atoll. They are also charged with financing these activities through grant or loan applications, or revenue generation. Island Councils have a broad remit that includes developing, maintaining, and governing the island. This includes implementing development projects, acquiring land, reef and lagoons and maintaining the peace. Four islands or regions with populations over ten thousand have been designated cities. These are Malé, Addu, Fuvahmulah and Kulhudhufushi. City Councils have similar responsibilities to Island Councils but with a broader remit.

The Protected Areas department in MoECCT has the role of developing policies and plans to protect and preserve significant sites in the country. This department has the responsibility of designating and managing protected areas across the country and provides technical guidance in identifying protected areas, formulating management plans and securing financial support for development and management of the protected areas. In addition, the Protected Areas department also has the oversight role for all the UNESCO biosphere reserves in the country.

The EPA is the primary enforcement authority for environmental compliance. It is responsible for implementing environmental laws and regulations, overseeing environmental impact assessments and investigating crimes against the environment, including the imposition of fines. The Coast Guard, the Maldives Police Service, the Maldives National Defence Force, and the rangers appointed under the Fisheries Act also play important roles in enforcing laws and regulations related to the environment.

The IUCN Green List

The goal of the IUCN Green List is to develop global consistency in fair and effective governance and management, using an approach that can benchmark a country's PCA management effectiveness against a global Standard. Instead of simply assessing at a national level and comparing areas within a country, it compares areas with other PCAs across the world, driving countries and areas to achieve a higher standard.

The initial concept of the IUCN Green List of Protected Areas was conceived in 2008. In the years since then, the Standard has evolved by drawing on IUCN best practices and the wide range of knowledge and expertise developed through the IUCN's existing Commissions, Membership and programmes. This development was supported by IUCN resolutions at World Conservation Congresses. As the Standard developed, the idea was expanded to include conserved areas outside the traditional paradigm of protected areas, becoming the IUCN

Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas. The final version of the IUCN Green List Standard has been designed to be inclusive, contextualised, and equitable. It is the only sustainability Standard for PCAs.

To achieve the overarching aim of the Green List Standard, three underlying objectives were created:

1. To ensure that the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas Standard provides a suitable measure for strengthening conservation outcomes and improving equitable and effective management of PCAs
2. To position the IUCN Green List Programme as an accessible channel for conservation capacity development for PCAs
3. To promote collaboration and investment in implementing effective and equitable conservation management in PCAs committed to work towards the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas Standard.

The Green List Standard has been designed to meet the ISEAL Credibility Principal definition of a Sustainability Standard, namely: *A standard that addresses the social, environmental, or economic practices of a defined entity, or a combination of these.*

The IUCN Green List Standard is organised into four components broken down into 17 criteria for successful conservation outcomes. These are supported by 50 generic measurable indicators that can be used to monitor the effectiveness of PCA management. The generic indicators can be built directly into management plans, or where necessary, they can be adapted to the local context to make them more relevant. A Green List Site is one that has been evaluated to achieve all 17 criteria.



The process for applying the IUCN Green List Standard (IUCN and World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) 2017) is described in detail in the IUCN Green List User Manual (IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and Assurance Services International 2019). Sites wishing to achieve Green List Status must pass through three phases.

1. Application phase

This phase serves as an “eligibility check”. It involves a voluntary commitment to meet the standard and initial evidence for 5 basic indicators to be examined by a member of the Expert Assessment Group for the Green List (EAGL) in the site’s jurisdiction.

2. Candidate phase

During this phase the site must implement all IUCN Green List Standard criteria with evidence of the indicators that will be used. Site visits and stakeholder consultations will be conducted by the EAGL and any shortcomings in the site’s management must be addressed. This phase can last a couple of months to a couple of years depending on the issues identified. Following this, the site will begin the nomination process. This involves the submission of all evidences that addresses all IUCN Green List criteria and will be evaluated by the full EAGL panel and verified by an independent reviewer. Based on the EAGL’s recommendations the final decision will be made by the IUCN Green List committee.

3. Green List phase

Once a site achieves IUCN Green List status, representatives will be awarded a certificate, the site will be allowed to use the IUCN Green List logo and the site will be promoted by the IUCN as a model for successful conservation. This status lasts for five years. The site will then be supported by IUCN to maintain its Green List status. The site will undergo a mid-term rapid review of performance to make sure performance is maintained and evidences are up to date. . In the final year of the current Green List award, the site management must begin the renewal process providing evidence that the site continues to meet the Standard criteria and justifying their continued Green List status.

Beyond certification

The goal of the Green List Programme is to ensure as many sites as possible reach the Green List Standard. However, the Green List can also be considered a diagnostic tool to help operationalise and develop effective management for sites. Using the indicators in the Green List Standard it is possible to determine how well a site is functioning and what they may need to do to improve performance (IUCN 2022 in prep.). Sites can be classified as:

- Good/precautionary action sites. Where good governance and effective management is in place.
 - Little threat to site values
 - Achieving >90 % of indicator targets
- Early warning action sites: Should take steps to stop deterioration of management and governance if any.
 - Threat to site values slightly increased
 - Achieving 70 – 90 % of indicator targets
- Threat management sites: Management and governance needs to be enhanced and remain engaged
 - Increased threat to site values
 - Achieving 50 – 75 % of indicator targets
- Intense management sites
 - Greatest need for management intervention
 - Threatened site values
 - Achieving < 50 % of indicator targets

The Green List Standard can also be used to conduct a “gap analysis” for a site’s management program. The criteria and indicators in The Standard can be used to identify gaps and make recommendations in current management frameworks to move towards more effective site management (Sabah Parks and WWF Malaysia 2020).

Utilising the Green List framework may also help with funding applications as it demonstrates to external donors that a site is trying to achieve a verifiable standard that is transparent and has clear conservation goals. Where a site has already met the Green List Standard, there is also a benefit as donors know they will be funding an effectively managed area to either ensure maintenance of that management or further develop effective management approaches.

New IUCN Green List Jurisdictions

To join the IUCN Green List Programme, the Maldives would see the creation of a new jurisdiction. New jurisdictions hoping to engage in the Green List Programme should meet four enabling conditions:

1. Written commitment from sites (or organisations managing sites) to the Green List Programme.
2. Commitment to financial and/or in-kind support from at least one organisation
3. Evidence of diversity and reliability of appropriately trained and educated local experts to form an EAGL.

4. Consultation with the relevant IUCN Secretariat Regional Director and/or IUCN WCPA Regional Vice Chair.

Expert Assessment Group for the Green List (EAGL)

An EAGL is a body of experts from within a jurisdiction with the primary tasks of ensuring the IUCN Green List Standard is applicable in their jurisdiction and to evaluate areas against the indicators of the Standard.

Once the EAGL has been established, the group's responsibilities will include:

- **Receiving training on the IUCN Green List Standard, its Generic Indicators, associated User Manual and COMPASS.**
- Establishing a **working relationship with the assigned Reviewer(s), the relevant Operations Team members and Implementing Partners** (where applicable) to enable formation of the EAGL, adaptations of the Generic Indicators and evaluations of protected areas.
- If necessary, **adapting the Generic Indicators** as per the rules and procedures of this User Manual to make them applicable to the respective jurisdictional context.
- **Evaluating PAs** for compliance with the approved Indicators following the User Manual's rules and procedures and recommend PAs for addition to the Green List if they are found to comply with all Indicators.
- **Dealing with received alerts to potential Triggers for unscheduled reviews** of Green List PAs.
- **Coordinating its work with the nearest representatives** of the IUCN Green List Programme, WCPA and, wherever possible, with relevant authorities.
- **Supporting Green List communication efforts of the Operations Team and Green List PAs** where needed and appropriate.

The EAGL must be established before sites in the Maldives can begin the implementation and certification process of the Green List. To establish a new EAGL, an organisation working on PCAs should contact either the respective Regional Vice Chair of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) or the IUCN Green List Operations Team. The WCPA Regional Vice-Chair, together with the Operations Team will issue a wide-spread call for EAGL member applications and attempt to reach as many suitable candidates as possible. The EAGL should strive for a reasonable balance of demographics in gender and professional background and in geographical and community representation.

Candidates for the EAGL should meet the following criteria:

1. At least ten years of work experience with protected areas in a professional capacity
2. Good network of regional contacts to be able to reach out to key actors
3. Ability to analyse and integrate diverse information from various sources and derive conclusions from this information
4. Strong oral communication skills
5. Fluency in the local language(s) of the jurisdiction
6. Basic command of English is desirable

Each EAGL should have at least one member with more than 15 years of experience in protected area management and should also include one Young Professional with at least five years of work experience in protected area management.

The EAGL should make recommendations and decisions based on:

- Objectivity and equal treatment of all applicant protected areas
- Scientific considerations
- Protected area documentation which will consist of:
 - Self-assessments
 - Implemented action plans (where relevant)
 - Evidence provided in indicator verifications
 - Stakeholder submissions
 - Site visit carried out by the EAGL

Implementing partner

Implementing partners (IPs) play a key role in implementing the IUCN Green List Programme in jurisdictions. IPs can be any organisation interested in supporting the implementation of the IUCN Green List Programme and can include IUCN regional or country offices, government agencies, civil society organisations or private sector organisations. IPs act as a focal point, helping to facilitate and support the process, ensuring growth of the Green List Programme within the jurisdiction. IPs have no direct part in the evaluation or assurance of the Green Listing process; their role is to help promote the Green List Programme and encourage participation by all stakeholders. IP responsibilities include:

- **Supporting the development and implementation** of the Green List Programme to make it relevant and meaningful, **especially through convening, convocation, orientation, and facilitation of the EAGL** during its initial tasks and activities, in close cooperation with the WCPA, the Reviewer and the Operations Team.
- **Conducting stakeholder mapping and active outreach** to ensure the Green List Programme is promoted to and inclusive of **individuals and/or organisations**

representing the full range of geographical regions and technical contexts in which the Green List Standard will be applied.

- **To help harmonise and streamline the Green List efforts with other similar and relevant initiatives** in the jurisdiction.
- **Supporting the ongoing implementation and promotion of the Green List Programme** through communication and outreach to potential applicant PAs, the public and other stakeholders, which may include fundraising and financial contributions.
- **Supporting the Green List efforts of sites and agencies**, which may include fundraising and financial contributions.
- **To help establish and maintain strong collaboration with key entities**, institutions and partners in the jurisdiction.

Mentors

Mentors assist areas in participating in the Green List Programme. Using a mentor is not mandatory and it is up to the area representative to decide whether to use a mentor. Mentors should be very familiar with the Green List Standard and User Manual and should help guide the area through the Green Listing process. Mentors are appointed by the area representative and can include IUCN staff, WCPA experts or any other competent individual, however they must not have a direct role in managing or evaluating the area to avoid conflict of interest. A mentor's responsibilities include:

- **Familiarising with the IUCN Green List Standard, the User Manual's rules and procedures and COMPASS** before engaging in the Green List process. i.e. study this document and take online orientation offered by the Independent Assurance Provider.
- **Advising the area representative on the Green List process**, its requirements and rules and procedures.
- **Supporting the area representative in collating evidence for the purpose of Green Listing, in developing and implementing action plans** required to achieve the approved Adapted Indicators and in engaging stakeholders.
- **Promoting the Green List Programme to other areas** in the jurisdiction.
- **Committing to become WCPA Members and join the WCPA Green List Specialist Group.**

Supporting long-term Green List activities

The IUCN Green List Programme is an ongoing process that requires repeat activities and long-term funding to sustain it. Though much of the work and funding must be performed by individual areas to meet the Green List Standard, there are also several activities performed

by the EAGL, mentors and implementing partners that require basic funding to ensure the Green List Programme remains active within a jurisdiction. The main activities include:

- **EAGL meetings:** The EAGL must meet as frequently as required to fulfil its roles and responsibilities. Costs can be minimised by meeting online; however, it is recommended that the EAGL meet in person at least once per year.
- **EAGL site visits:** one or two EAGL members must visit each protected area. During this visit, the EAGL representative should:
 - Get first-hand impression of the protected area and its performance
 - Consult with interested stakeholders
 - Review any information unavailable in digital form, or that is confidential
 - Answer any additional questions on the protected area and its Green List efforts
- **Mentor site visits:** if appointed, a mentor should visit the site to assist in launching and undertaking the Green List work. Sites would generally benefit from at least one site visit per year.
- **Developing and implementing Action Plans:** the process to reach the Green List Standard can take several years and involves implementing an Action Plan to identify and address a site's conservation weaknesses. The amount of human and financial support required to support the implementation of an Action Plan will vary between sites.
- **Supporting site management and enforcement:** to maintain the Green List Standard, sites will need to support active management of the area. This will often include management staff, rangers or other enforcement personnel and regular site monitoring.

Stakeholder consultations

To understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current PCA network in the country and to determine the opportunities and threats to utilising the IUCN Green List Standard in the Maldives, individuals from a range of stakeholder groups were consulted. Eleven interviews were conducted with small groups of 1 – 5 representatives from each stakeholder group. During the interviews, participants were first given a short presentation on the Green List Standard. Participants were then asked a series of open-ended questions about 1) the effectiveness of existing PCAs, 2) stakeholder involvement in PCAs and 3) PCA management and financing (Full list of questions and discussion points in Annex 2).

A follow-up online questionnaire was sent to interview participants and additional individuals who were unable to attend interviews (Annex 2). The questionnaire followed the three themes in the interviews using closed-ended questions to codify and clarify responses. There were additional options for comments in the questionnaire where applicable.

Results

Existing protected and conserved areas

The Maldives currently has 79 designated protected areas. However, most survey respondents felt that the current PCA network in the country is not very effective at conserving habitats and species or addressing the social and economic needs of stakeholders (Figure 1). Most participants (61%) felt that the existing PCA management was insufficient to meet the NBSAP vision for environmental conservation. 55% of participants felt that the PCA network covers key habitats well or somewhat well. Despite this, some flaws were identified, with respondents suggesting that the focus of PCAs were coral reefs and terrestrial wetland habitats whilst areas such as seagrass beds, mangroves, sandbanks, offshore habitats, and deep-water habitats have been overlooked. Additional comments suggested many PCAs were too small, and that habitat connectivity has not been accounted for.

There was agreement in the interviews that the Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve is operating as an effective protected area, both for the conservation of habitats and species and for the stakeholders of the area. Many interviewees cited this area as an example of successful conservation in the country and that management, particularly of the core area of Hanifaru Bay, effectively conserves the species and habitat present while also meeting the needs of the stakeholder communities. However, this effective management structure has thus far failed to be replicated elsewhere. Addu and Fuvahmulah Nature Parks were designated

UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in 2020 but have yet to develop the effective structure found in Baa Atoll. At present, 10-year action plans for both Biosphere Reserves are being developed with the assistance of the Nature Parks and following consultations with local and national stakeholder groups.

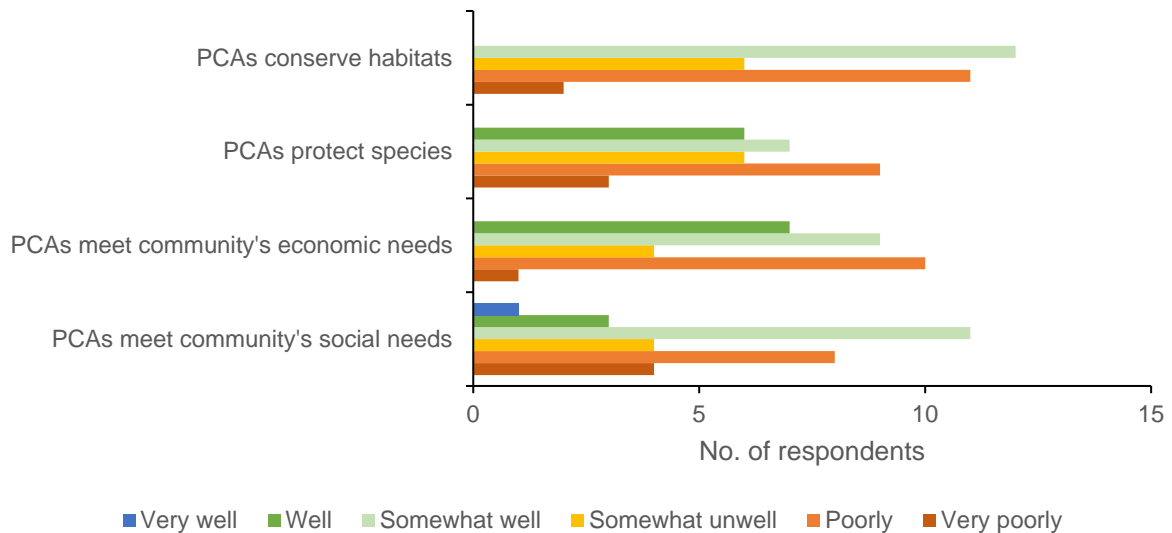


Figure 1. How well did respondents to the online survey feel existing protected and conserved areas (PCAs) conserve habits and species and meet the social and economic needs of communities.

The online surveys identified a lack of political will, land or urban development, and a lack of financial resources as the top three issues preventing effective management of PCAs (Figure 2). This was emphasised by discussions in the interviews where resources, particularly financial, were frequently mentioned as a key challenge for PCAs. The absence of financial resources has also resulted in limited numbers of management staff and rangers and the degradation of infrastructure. The interviews also highlighted the fact that all but five of the 79 existing protected areas lack management plans.

Conflict between stakeholder groups over access was also frequently mentioned in interviews. In many cases this is between groups who wish to either extract resources from areas, develop areas, or preserve areas. However, there is also conflict within groups, for example around South Ari where tour operators fail to follow guidelines around speed limits and proximity when taking groups to view whale sharks.

Low levels of environmental education and engagement of local communities was commonly mentioned during the interviews and the online surveys. Most interviewees felt that at a local level, there is little education on the value of the natural environment and how to live and interact sustainably with it. This has led to an increase in a detachment from the environment,

unsustainable practices, and notably a desire at all levels of the community to develop land to achieve short-term economic goals.

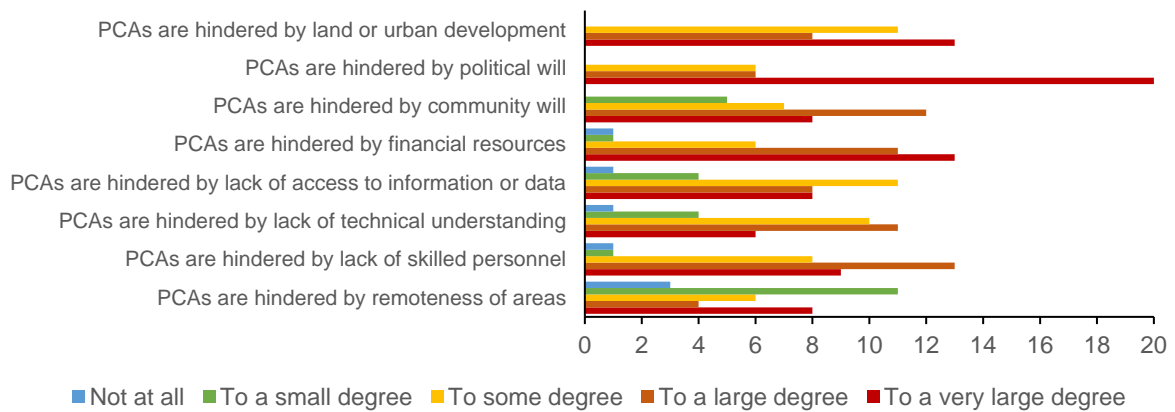


Figure 2. To what degree did respondents to the online survey believe protected and conserved area management was hindered by these challenges.

Stakeholder involvement in protected and conserved areas

Participants in the online survey identified both local and international NGOs as the most engaged in PCAs (Figure 3). These groups are involved in identifying areas of high ecological value, advocating for their protection, and creating management plans. Some international NGOs also provide funding to assist with area management. Lack of engagement from the local community and the private sector is a concern. Many interviewees suggested that there are some resorts that are actively engaged in conservation and the wider tourism sector can be engaged in conservation when there is an economic benefit, though this tends to be limited to megafauna and coral reefs. Outside of the tourism industry there little or no engagement in conservation from the private sector.

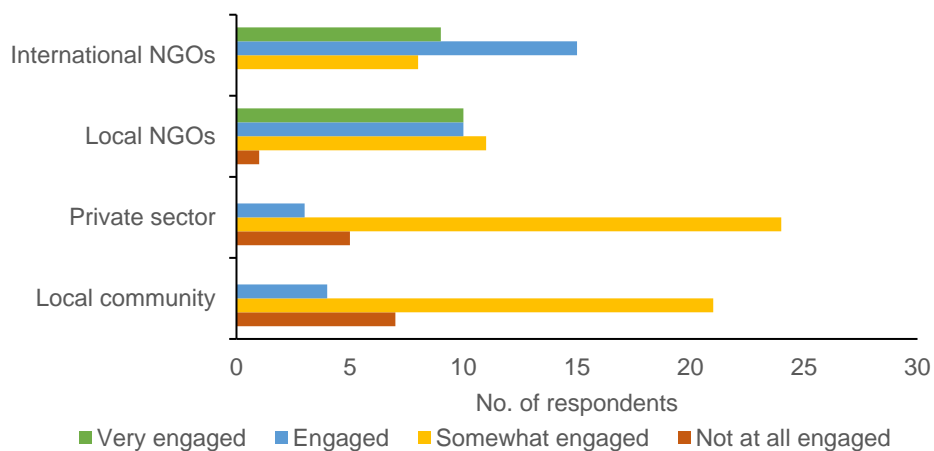


Figure 3. How engaged do you feel different stakeholder groups are in protected and conserved areas?

There was a general consensus across interviewed participants that local communities are becoming less engaged with the environment and conservation. Communities now have a greater focus on business and the local economy. This means development projects such as new airports or harbours take priority over conservation goals. There has been a failure to educate the local community on the value of the environment and natural resource management and few can make a connection between preserving the environment and long-term prosperity. This is also reflected by 69% of online survey participants who felt there is limited knowledge and expertise regarding PCAs and a high number who believed that PCA management is hindered by a lack of skilled personnel and technical understanding.

The Maldives is currently going through a process of decentralisation, transferring control of PCAs from the central government to local governments. Interviews with the government, area managers and Island and Atoll Councils identified this as one of the biggest challenges, but also is one of the biggest opportunities for the PCA network. Many of the challenges listed above are exacerbated by this change as local areas lack the funding and expertise of the central government. There is little engagement of the wider community and at this level, short-sighted economic development takes priority over environmental conservation.

However, this also provides an opportunity for local communities to take ownership of their environment and use these areas to improve environmental education across the country. This could create local enthusiasm for the environment and local experts who could help develop management of their PCAs ensuring that these areas work for both the environment and local stakeholders.

Economics of protected and conserved areas

The current economic model for the PCA network relies almost entirely on funding from the central government. This presents another issue for the planned decentralisation of PCA management as the local councils are unable to shoulder the financial burden of maintaining these areas. The hope is that PCAs can be self-sustaining, relying on access fees, usage permits and fees for recreational activities. However, the current state of PCAs means that there is little opportunity for charging fees and illegal activities frequently occur as there is little money available to fund necessary enforcement personnel.

The Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve represents a model for how this might work. The Baa Atoll conservation fund provides the financial support for the Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve. The initial funding was provided by GEF and the Maldives government. The fund is now self-sufficient with money coming from access fees, permits, tour guide exam and registration fees, and fees for commercial video and photography in the area. This money is used to cover the

annual workplan, including wages for rangers, area managers and directors. There is also a grant programme that allows the local community to receive money directly from the fund.

The management of Addu Nature Park and Fuvahmulah Nature Park has recently been handed to the respective City Councils and the financing is currently being restructured to a decentralized governance. The aim is to follow the approach used by the Baa Atoll conservation fund to generate and distribute funding.

The Maldives Green Fund was mentioned by several interviewees as a potential source of funds for PCAs. This fund was introduced in 2016 and is a USD 6 per day charge collected from tourists visiting resorts, guest houses, city hotels and safaris. The money generated by the fund is spent on environmental projects across the country, with much of the money going to water and sewerage infrastructure, waste management and coastal protection. Such projects help prevent or mitigate damage to environment from human activities. Currently the direct contribution from the fund on the environment or management and conservation measures is minimal.

Findings

Relevance

How relevant/appropriate is the IUCN Green List Standard to the Maldives?

The IUCN Green List has the potential to be a valuable approach to PCA management in the Maldives. The key issues identified through the review and surveys were: non-existent or ineffective management plans; limited political will; land or urban development; and a lack of financial resources. Each of these issues must be addressed during the Green List process, ensuring that these areas develop methods to overcome them. The lack of effective management plans for most of the existing protected areas is particularly significant and through its criteria and indicators, the Green List Standard provides a framework that can be used to guide their development. This could be replicated throughout the country, even in areas that do not intend to apply for Green List certification. The IUCN Green List approach also allows the local area management to take control of the process and can help guide and provide expertise to assist with management planning. With the current move towards decentralisation, this makes the Green List approach a particularly relevant option at this time. The set of Indicators in the Green List can also help to monitor and track the progress of management plans, providing an effective mechanism for the operationalisation of the management plan, increasing the chances of successful conservation outcomes for the sites.

A key feature of the Green List Standard that may be particularly relevant to the Maldives is the ability to screen, certify and monitor OECMs and capture the successful outcomes for conservation of natural values through its globally recognised set of Standards. The large number of privately leased resort islands has created a network of areas with high ecological value and enthusiasm for conservation but with no coordination and few robust management plans or recognition of any benefits existing protection may have. The Maldivian government is embarking on a process of certifying many of the areas that meet the necessary standards as OECMs which will allow them to then apply to the IUCN Green List Standard. The IUCN Green List Standard can be used to guide these resort islands as they seek to develop effective and cohesive management plans and help them add to the national PCA network. It should be noted that gaining OECM status is a considerable achievement although it does not automatically mean The Green List Standard will follow and the two should be considered separately.

The IUCN Green List portfolio largely covers terrestrial sites globally. Recently the uptake of Green List across the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) has also improved. In California to be applied to the whole network of 124 marine sites all along the coast of California, and is likely to be evaluated soon. The MPAs might present new challenges for the Green List approach, this includes the significant issues of climate change and sea level rise and their impacts on coral reefs and low-lying island habitats. The new marine and coastal sites have started to look into specific issues and further the EAGLs and experts can assist with these while adapting the Standards.

Feasibility

How robust is the existing information base relative to the needs of the IUCN Green List Standard?

The government of the Maldives has identified a shortlist of areas that will be included in an initial application. These areas include Hanifaru Bay, Addu Nature Park, and Fuvahmulah Nature Park, all of which are PCAs within UNESCO Biosphere Reserves. These areas have a robust information base and may potentially be able to meet the requirements of IUCN Green List Standard without the need for a large information gathering process.

Three PCAs have recently undergone a Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) assessment using the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT). These are:

- 1) Hanifaru Bay, a core area of the Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve with an active management plan.

- 2) Kudahuvadhoo Kanduoilhi, a grouper spawning aggregation site regulated under the Fisheries Act of the Maldives (No.14/2019) as a fisheries protection measure.
- 3) Angsana Velavaru house reef, as a 'no take' site under the Tourism Boundary Regulation (No.2012/R-7).

These areas represent three different types of PCAs in the country and the results of the PAME assessments can be used to identify strengths and weaknesses in their current management that will be valuable in their future IUCN Green List Standard applications. This will have allowed these areas to develop their information base in a way that is directly relevant to the requirements of Green List Standard.

There have also been a number of biodiversity assessments conducted throughout the country which could provide the background environmental information required to complete some of the application process for these areas (Dryden et al. 2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). Additionally, the EPA and Maldives Marine Research Institute (MMRI) monitor sites and conduct surveys across the country.

Is there sufficient protected area capacity/expertise in the Republic of Maldives to provide the input required to implement the IUCN Green List, including the formation of an EAGL?

Insufficient numbers of skilled personnel and a lack of technical understanding of protected areas were both identified as issues that currently hinder PCA management. Additionally, local education and engagement in the environment were also discussed by many interviewees as ongoing issues in the country. However, this lack of expertise appears to be primarily a factor at a local level. A reasonable level of knowledge capacity exists within the government departments of MoECCT, EPA and MMRI, private environmental consultancies, international NGOs and the Maldives National University.

This knowledge is concentrated in the capital, Malé, therefore it may be a challenge to achieve the geographical and community representation required for the EAGL. It may be necessary to conduct additional outreach and training exercises to fulfil these requirements.

How might experts and other stakeholders be motivated to participate in the implementation of the Standard? Might there be interest in having Site Mentors?

Willingness to work towards improving the effectiveness of PCAs in the Maldives was a theme across all surveys. The challenge is convincing individuals that the current effort by the government and decentralised, local authorities will work. Motivation will come from evidence that the Green List can benefit this process by guiding management, diagnosing problems, and rewarding success, rather than it being another layer of procedure and regulation that will only increase the confusion around PCA management. It is therefore key that discussions

regarding adopting the Green List Standard address its compatibility with existing PCA work and emphasise its additive benefits.

Many individuals working in areas related to the environment have been educated or trained by the Maldives National University (MNU) through Bachelor of Environmental Management (BEM) programme. Using this network could provide access to a range of stakeholders who may be interested in participating in the implementation of the Standard. Additionally, the MNU runs short courses for communities, high school students and NGOs. The lecturers running these courses were willing to include site visits to Green List sites and trainings on the Green List Standard in their BEM degree and short courses to expose stakeholders to the Standard and generate interest in the Green List Programme.

Site mentors are likely to be a useful option for helping certain sites achieve IUCN Green List Status in the Maldives. This is likely to vary depending on the level of local expertise present in the management authority at each site. Sites supported by the central government or tourist resorts may be less likely to need the support of mentors.

Which organisations could potentially take on the role of Implementing Partner?

MoECCT will act as the implementing partner for the IUCN Green List Standard in the Maldives. The IUCN Maldives regional office would be available to provide technical backstopping and coordinating and assisting with the facilitation of financial resources. There are also a number of international NGOs represented in the country that may be interested in a partnership role.

Potential benefits and challenges

What would the benefits and challenges of using the IUCN Green List Standard in the Maldives be?

Respondents to the online survey believed that adoption of the IUCN Green List would benefit the Maldives by creating international recognition for the Maldives, identifying gaps in existing management practices, and identifying existing protected areas where management can be improved. An issue identified by all interviewees was the number of protected areas in the country that lack any meaningful or effective management. The Standard can help guide areas as they attempt to develop effective management structures, and the successful certification of areas across the country could act as road maps towards effective management for other protected areas.

Potentially the biggest challenge for effective management, and therefore utilisation of the IUCN Green List in the Maldives is the conflict between the desire for development and for

conservation. “Progress” for many people in the Maldives is closely linked to development projects such as land reclamation, airports, resorts and harbour developments. This has led to a lack of political will around conservation as these development projects win more votes in elections. This challenge is highlighted by the current example of Addu Atoll. This area has recently been designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve; however, plans have also been approved by the government for a large-scale dredging, reclamation, and land development project in the atoll.

It will be a significant challenge to get environmental management and improved conservation outcomes to be considered progress, but there is potentially an opportunity through the Green List to show how effective conservation can be used to provide positive, ecological, social and economic outcomes. It was noted during discussions that there is often a desire to remain close to home, away from the capital, Male’, and help support family and the community but there are few jobs that allow well-educated and technically trained individuals to do this. Creating roles within atolls and islands for rangers and managers supporting PCAs would be one way of providing these jobs. Using the Standard should help create and preserve these jobs by making sure PCAs are effectively managed and economically sustainable.

Are there particular protected areas that would benefit more than others if they were to adopt the Standard?

Areas currently designated as protected but lacking any management plan would likely benefit the most from adopting the Green List. This would enable the development of effective management plans and ensure that all users of the areas are aware of the rules and regulations governing them. The access to the expertise offered through Green List adoption would also benefit areas where local experts are absent.

The OECMs around resort islands may also benefit significantly from adopting the Green List. Resorts would be incentivised to effectively manage their environment to ensure the best guest experience and to promote achieving the internationally recognised Green List Standards to tourists.

The Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve and Addu Atoll and Fuvahmulah which have achieved UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status may be less likely to benefit from adopting the standard as they should already be managing their environments effectively and have achieved international certification. Many areas across the country would however benefit from these three sites going through the application experience and developing management plans that meet the IUCN Green List Standard as these plans and the experience gained would be beneficial elsewhere.

What is the potential to use the IUCN Green List Standard as more than just a certification process for selected sites?

This likely represents the greatest value for adopting the IUCN Green List in the Maldives. PCAs in the country can be separated into three categories, 1) protected areas that are formally gazetted, 2) resort island OECMs and 3) OECMs managed by local communities. Each PCA type will likely see a range of benefits beyond certification.

The majority of existing protected areas lack management plans, and, in many cases, people are unaware of their existence. As a result, the protected areas network in the country is not taken particularly seriously on a local level and there is rarely any control over the activities taking place in these areas. Going through the Green List process will ensure the development of coherent and effective management plans and as part of the process local stakeholders must be engaged and consulted, thus making them not just aware of, but also part of the management of the area. This would ensure local values are built into management plans. Training and employing members of the local community as managers and rangers for areas could also create a pathway for communities to reengage with the environment while still earning a living, rather than relying on further land or structural development.

The IUCN Green List Standard can be adopted as a diagnostic tool for analysing PCAs, allowing the identification and assessment of gaps and challenges as well as areas for investment of resources and capacity enhancement. Helping to define the vision and goal for each site as set under its management plan, or guide in the development where needed. At the same time the Standard can help in operationalising the management plan by guiding the priorities and activities set under it, to achieve successful conservation outcomes (IUCN 2022 in prep.). Benchmarking provides an objective and consistent basis for examining desired thresholds and comparison against the set of indicators for a chosen target. It provides a useful reference point for the conservation practitioners, policy implementors, site assessors, donors and investors and other key stakeholders to identify areas of strength, improvement and investment. This is very valuable in demonstrating the sustainability, measurable progress and impact and outcome of the process. It allows the risks and opportunities of a given portfolio to be identified over time and provides guidance for de-risking and enhancing the portfolio and scope for improving its impact. At the same time the desired outcomes are achieved (IUCN 2022 in prep.).

Resort islands that already have some level of protection conferred on them would have to develop management plans to ensure they meet the requirements of the Standard. This will likely involve a focus on sustainable development, limiting damaging activities, and education and outreach projects to guests and local communities. There are over 160 islands across the

country currently under long-term lease for tourism. Virtually all these islands are surrounded by coral reef habitat, while many are also home to other valuable habitats, including wetlands, mangroves, sand banks and channel areas. Expanding the PCA network to formally include as many of these islands as possible will greatly increase the number of vulnerable habitats that are conserved.

As the Maldives developed as a nation, there has been a corresponding move toward jobs unrelated to the environment and the close connection many people once had to nature is being lost. Creating a network of OECMs managed by local communities will be an effective way of reengaging people across the country in their environment. There are currently few jobs focused on the environment so there is little interest from people. However, there are many opportunities to reengage Maldivian society in their environment and as suggested by one interviewee “if you could empower the system and use environmental conservation to provide jobs, education, and value, then maybe there would be more local engagement”. Using community managed OECMs allows grassroots representation, creating ownership and local participation.

On a national scale adopting the IUCN Green List will help the country in its efforts to create a connected network of effectively managed PCAs, helping the Maldives reach targets set out in the NBSAP and its obligations for the CBD. This will create connections between the local, national, and international values. The Maldives is home to globally significant coral, fish, plant, and bird communities and achieving great protection for these communities should be an important national and international target, one which adopting the IUCN Green List will not only help achieve (Wells et al. 2016) but also make these achievements internationally recognised.

Developing effective PCA management in the Maldives

Limited resources mean strategic decisions must be made about where to invest time and resources. In some cases, increasing the effectiveness of existing protected areas may be more useful than targeting new areas, particularly as the Maldives has a large number of gazetted areas. That said, the most “cost effective” approaches are those that have local rightsholders and stakeholder support from the outset (Dudley and Stolton 2022). This is where the use of OECMs may allow the creation of a network of effectively conserved areas developed from the bottom up with significant buy-in from stakeholders. It may be that development of a high number of smaller, strategically located sites following the OECMs approach could be more effective than sub-standard and poorly managed sites that are currently failing to deliver successful outcomes.

The Maldives has adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and committed to the 30 x 30 initiative, a commitment to conserve at least 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030. This initiative is part of a larger movement that calls for more environmental protections and safeguarding of natural habitats. This is necessary to safeguard health, food supplies, biodiversity, and the prosperity of every community. To achieve this in the Maldives, the government must engage public and private institutions, fishermen, NGOs, local officials and communities, and others to identify strategies that reflect the priorities of all groups.

The IUCN Green List should be utilised in the Maldives not as the end goal, but as a tool to help develop protected area plans and ultimately a network of effective PCAs across the country. For a select few areas achieving the Standard should be the target and in doing so should be used to demonstrate the value of effective conservation both nationally and internationally. However, for the majority of sites, the Green List can be used to guide the development of management plans, troubleshoot issues, engage communities and verify decision making. Developing the IUCN Green List in the Maldives should be used as part of a positive messaging approach to conservation which can be effective in generating enthusiasm and action among society, overcoming the feeling of paralysis and helplessness created by the negative cycle of environmental news (Vlieg et al. 2022).

There is obvious value and significant enthusiasm for developing effective PCA management in the Maldives, and the existing national programmes and legal and policy frameworks are robust and well-developed. However, there are several hurdles that must be overcome. The most significant of these are financing, political and social will. There is only one protected area in the country that is currently financially self-sustaining, and it has taken substantial investment to reach this point. Though the central government has attempted to provide funding for some areas, its resources are limited, and a significant amount of money will be required to develop the management plans and pay staff to manage and enforce the rules for these areas. Additionally, meaningful resources must be directed towards education and engagement of local communities in the environment. Without this effort there will not be the local expertise or grassroots movement required to make the PCAs function effectively.

Operationalising the IUCN Green List in the Maldives

1. Implementing partner

It is expected that MoECCT will act as the implementing partner for all applicant sites in the country. This will allow them to efficiently coordinate the Green List process for the country and provide oversight and guidance to sites through the application process. The implementing partner will become a focal point, helping to facilitate and support the process,

ensuring growth of the Green List Programme within the jurisdiction. Their role is to help promote the Standard and encourage participation by all stakeholders. It is recommended that an IUCN Green List coordinator role is created within MoECCT, and this individual should receive technical assistance from the IUCN Maldives and IUCN Asia Regional Office teams.

2. EAGL creation

A priority for setting up the Green List Programme in a new jurisdiction is the creation of the EAGL. The key issue that will need to be overcome will be geographical and demographic representation within the EAGL. There is a pool of expertise and experience to draw from in Malé, however it may be challenging to identify individuals with the relevant experience from other communities or regions. Therefore, ensuring EAGL members have a good network of contacts and experience working throughout the country should be a priority. This should guarantee there will be enough EAGL members able to review and validate applications from different areas across the country.

3. Training and capacity building

Establishing and developing the capacity of the Green List Implementing Partner is a high priority. In their role as a promoter and facilitator of the Standard, a thorough understanding of the Standard is required, as well the tools available through the Green List Programme. This is also true for individuals who wish to be part of the EAGL or become site mentors. Developing the EAGL has been identified as a potential challenge for setting up the Green List in the Maldives, therefore any training required to reach the necessary number of qualified individuals must be prioritised.

4. Creating a contextualised IUCN Green List Manual

Following the example of Malaysia (IUCN Green List Malaysia 2022), it is recommended that the IUCN Green List manual is contextualised for the Maldives and translated into the local language, Dhivehi. This will help guide the implementation of the Green List in the Maldives. A locally contextualised manual allows managers and local communities throughout the country to better understand and engage with the Standard. This should be done alongside the development of management plans for the pilot sites.

5. Pilot sites

These will be the first sites to engage in the Green List process in the Maldives and ideally should include a variety of IUCN categories and governance categories present. To select

sites, a readiness index could be created. This would determine the sites that are ready for or would most benefit from going through the Green List process. Categories could include:

- Presence of existing management plan
- Outcomes of area assessments e.g. PAME or METT4
- Availability of data
- Willingness of community/stakeholders
- Ecological and cultural value
- Connectivity between a network of sites

It may be useful for existing protected areas with well-developed management plans to go through the process first as there should be fewer complications in creating an effective management system that can meet the Green List Standard, meaning certification could take less time. Simplifying the initial applications in this way should ease the Maldives into the Green List process, preventing those involved from getting disheartened by a slow and laborious process. It should also provide a framework for other management plans and to inspire additional areas to apply for the Green List Standard in the future. Hanifaru Bay, Addu Nature Park and Fuvahmulah Nature Park would be the best candidates for this.

The pilot sites should also include protected areas without well-developed management plans and potentially new OECM designated areas. Working through the Green List application can assist developing PCAs in creating more effective management plans. The Standard can provide guidance on what measures lead to better governance and thus better conservation outcomes. These areas will take longer to finalise their Green List application but the process of developing the management plan and interacting with the expertise available during their application will generate local experience and engagement in conservation at a community level.

Each pilot site will need to confirm their commitment to the Green List and nominate a site representative who will oversee coordination of the site's application. If desired, they would then need to identify a Green List mentor who can support them through the application process.

6. Long-term sustainability of the Green List

To secure the long-term sustainability of the Green List, adequate resources must be provided for the implementing partner, EAGL creation and maintenance and mentor development. This will require significant funding from the government, the private sector or external funding bodies. Adopting the Green List Programme can help with funding applications as funding bodies can be assured that money will be spent either developing or maintaining effective

conservation measures. Applicant sites will need to develop sustainable funding models that will keep the site operational beyond the time frame of any initial funding and meet the Green List criteria. There is a multi-tiered mechanism for conservation financing:

- International – Global Environmental Facility, Blue Nature Alliance, BOBLME
- National – Green fund, government grants
- Local/ PCA site level mechanisms – e.g. Baa Atoll model, Payments for Ecosystem Services, User Fees etc.

7. OECM designations

MoECCT is currently undertaking an OECM programme and has received multiple applications from resort islands to work through the process of achieving OECM status. This process should prepare these sites for the Green List application and allow MoECCT to begin its work as implementing partner. Efforts should also be made to engage community managed areas in the national OECM programme and then to encourage their Green List applications.

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Annex 2: Surveys

Virtual interviews

Virtual interviews were conducted in English where possible and Dhivehi was used where necessary to elicit the most useful answers from participants. The interview began with a short presentation to introduce the IUCN Green List and the aim of the project. Following this an open discussion was facilitated along the three themes below with additional discussion points to prompt the respondent where necessary.

Theme 1: Existing protected and conserved areas in the Maldives

Discussion points:

1. How effective are existing protected and conserved areas at conserving habitats and species and addressing the needs of stakeholders?
 - a. Can you think of examples where they are successful/unsuccessful?
 - b. Discuss how the Green List defines and ensures effective area management
2. Threats and challenges to protected and conserved area management.
 - a. Focus on challenges related to this area of knowledge
 - b. How could these be overcome using the Green List approach?

Theme 2: Stakeholder involvement in protected and conserved area management

Discussion points:

1. What is the level of engagement by the various stakeholder groups in protected and conserved areas?
2. Does this need improvement for any groups and if so, how?
3. Mention of Green List criteria that ensure social goals and discuss how these might be achieved in the Maldives
 - a. *Good Governance*: 1.1. Guarantee of legitimacy and voice
 - b. *Sound Design and Planning*: 2.4 Understand social and economic context
 - c. *Effective Management*: 3.3. Manage within social and economic context of the area

Theme 3: Management framework and financing of protected and conserved areas

Discussion points:

1. How are existing protected and conserved areas financed?
 - a. Government
 - b. International NGOs
 - c. Grants
 - d. Visitor fees
2. What are the potential economic benefits of protected and conserved areas?
 - a. Does this differ for stakeholder groups?
3. How much does the interviewee know about existing protected and conserved area management framework?
 - a. What is the current structure of management, does this differ between sites and does it work?
 - b. Discuss the approach used by the Green List and how it might be utilised in the Maldives
 - i. How could this be useful to identifying and improving existing issues with management?

Online survey

The online survey was conducted using Google Forms. A link was emailed to all virtual interview participants as well as additional national and local government offices, NGO, private and research organisations and local community groups. There were 31 respondents to the survey (Figure A3 1). The full survey can be found below.

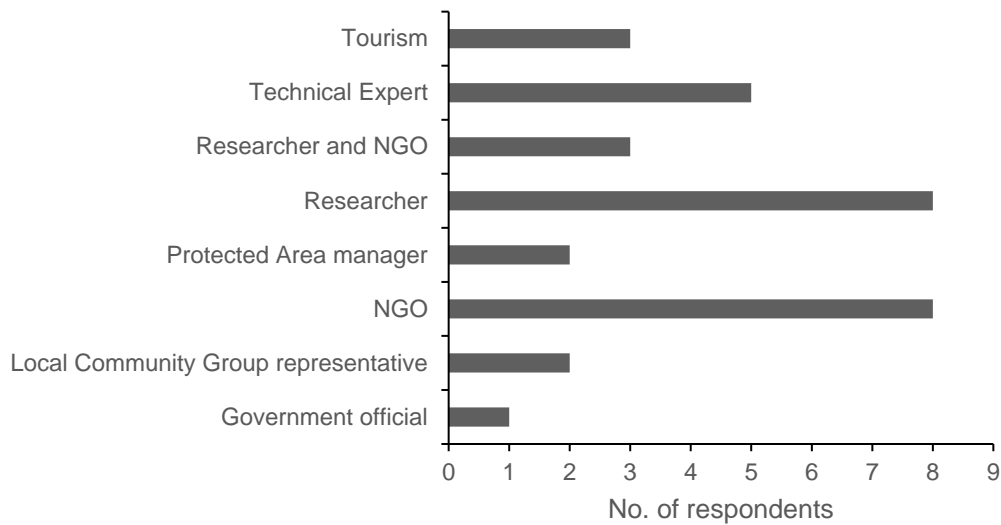


Figure A3 1. Number of respondents to the online survey from each employment background

Date:

Interviewer(s):

Interviewee name:

Interviewee position:

What term best describes your role?

1. Technical Expert
2. Researcher
3. Protected Area manager
4. Non-protected conservation area manager
5. Local Community Group representative
6. Government official
7. NGO

Section 1: Protected areas in the Maldives

1. On a scale of 1 – 5 (with 1 being the least and 5 the most), how knowledgeable do you feel you are about protected and conserved areas in the Maldives?
2. How well do protected and conserved areas cover key ecoregions or habitats?

Well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat poorly <input type="checkbox"/>	Poorly <input type="checkbox"/>
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a. If answered *somewhat poorly* or *poorly*, which ecoregions or habitats are being missed?

3. The Maldives National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan describes its vision for “A nation of people that co-exist with nature and has taken the right steps to fully appreciate, conserve, sustainably use, and equitably access and share benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services”. How well do you think protected and conserved area management currently meets this vision?

- This could be summarised as a vision for the Maldivian community to co-exist with nature in a way that conserves and sustainably manages the environment and shares access and the benefits of ecosystem goods and services.

Very well <input type="checkbox"/>	Well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat unwell <input type="checkbox"/>	Poorly <input type="checkbox"/>	Very poorly <input type="checkbox"/>
------------------------------------	-------------------------------	--	--	---------------------------------	--------------------------------------

4. How well do you think protected and conserved areas in the Maldives function with respect to:

a. Conservation of natural habitats

Very well <input type="checkbox"/>	Well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat unwell <input type="checkbox"/>	Poorly <input type="checkbox"/>	Very poorly <input type="checkbox"/>
------------------------------------	-------------------------------	--	--	---------------------------------	--------------------------------------

b. Protection of species

Very well <input type="checkbox"/>	Well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat unwell <input type="checkbox"/>	Poorly <input type="checkbox"/>	Very poorly <input type="checkbox"/>
------------------------------------	-------------------------------	--	--	---------------------------------	--------------------------------------

c. Addressing the social needs of local communities and/or stakeholders

Very well <input type="checkbox"/>	Well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat unwell <input type="checkbox"/>	Poorly <input type="checkbox"/>	Very poorly <input type="checkbox"/>
------------------------------------	-------------------------------	--	--	---------------------------------	--------------------------------------

d. Addressing the economic needs of local communities and/or stakeholders

Very well <input type="checkbox"/>	Well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat unwell <input type="checkbox"/>	Poorly <input type="checkbox"/>	Very poorly <input type="checkbox"/>
------------------------------------	-------------------------------	--	--	---------------------------------	--------------------------------------

5. What is the level of knowledge and expertise present in the Maldives, regarding protected and conserved area management and effectiveness?

Very high <input type="checkbox"/>	High <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat high <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat low <input type="checkbox"/>	Low <input type="checkbox"/>	Very low <input type="checkbox"/>
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6. To your knowledge, have there been any protected area management effectiveness assessments done at site or national levels?

Yes No

a. If so, do you know what approach or which management effectiveness evaluation tools were used?

7. What are the key threats to protected and conserved areas in the Maldives? (Max 10 bullet points, please rank them from the most serious to the least serious)

8. To what degree do you believe protected and conserved area management effectiveness is hindered by the challenges listed?

	To a very large degree	To a large degree	To some degree	To a small degree	Not at all	Not relevant
Insufficient numbers of skilled personnel						
Lack of technical understanding of protected area management						
Lack of access to information or data						
Financial resources						
Community will						
Political will						
Land or urban development projects						

a. Are there any challenges to protected and conserved area management that are not listed above or that you believe are unique to the Maldives?

Section 2: Stakeholder involvement in protected and conserved area management

9. Do you know of any organisations or groups outside of the government that are involved in area protection and management?

10. In your opinion, how engaged/interested are local communities in protected and conserved areas in the Maldives?

Very engaged <input type="checkbox"/>	Engaged <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat engaged <input type="checkbox"/>	Not at all engaged <input type="checkbox"/>
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11. In your opinion, how involved is the private sector in protected and conserved areas in the Maldives?

Very involved <input type="checkbox"/>	Involved <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat involved <input type="checkbox"/>	Not at all involved <input type="checkbox"/>
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12. In your opinion, how involved are local NGOs in protected and conserved areas in the Maldives?

Very involved <input type="checkbox"/>	Involved <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat involved <input type="checkbox"/>	Not at all involved <input type="checkbox"/>
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13. In your opinion, how involved are international NGOs in protected and conserved areas in the Maldives?

Very involved <input type="checkbox"/>	Involved <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat involved <input type="checkbox"/>	Not at all involved <input type="checkbox"/>
--	-----------------------------------	--	--

14. How well would you say national and local governments work together on protected and conserved area management in the Maldives?

Very well <input type="checkbox"/>	Well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat unwell <input type="checkbox"/>	Poorly <input type="checkbox"/>	Very poorly <input type="checkbox"/>
------------------------------------	-------------------------------	--	--	---------------------------------	--------------------------------------

15. How well would you say all parties involved in the management of protected and conserved areas work well together

Very well <input type="checkbox"/>	Well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat well <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat unwell <input type="checkbox"/>	Poorly <input type="checkbox"/>	Very poorly <input type="checkbox"/>
------------------------------------	-------------------------------	--	--	---------------------------------	--------------------------------------

a. If answered poorly, why do you think this is

Section 3: Management framework and financing of protected and conserved areas

16. Do you know how existing protected and conserved areas in the Maldives are financed?

a. Do you think this works well or are there other funding models that you think would be more effective? *(This could be region or context specific)*

17. To what degree do protected and conserved areas provide the following economic incentives within the Maldives?

	To a very large degree	To a large degree	To some degree	To a small degree	Not at all	Not relevant
Nature Based Recreation / Ecotourism						
Enhanced and sustainable resource extraction						
Employment						
Promoting alternative livelihoods						
Allocation or reinforcement of community/user property rights						
Improvement in local infrastructure						
Protection from prohibited incoming users						
Funding from private or NGO sources						

18. Are these economic incentives equally shared among stakeholders?

Yes No

a. If no, which stakeholders receive the most and which the least?

19. Do you think the protected and conserved areas in the Maldives would benefit from the adoption of an internationally developed management framework with adaptable criteria for assessing management effectiveness?

Yes No

a. If yes, would it be useful to:

- i. Create recognition for the Maldives
- ii. Identify gaps in existing management practices
- iii. Identify existing protected areas where management can be improved
- iv. All of the above

20. Are you aware of the IUCN Green List Programme?

Yes No

a. If yes, do you think this would be a good tool to introduce to the Maldives and if so, why?

21. Is there any key information about protected and conserved area management in the Maldives that this survey has missed that you would like to add?

22. Are there any organisations or individuals that you suggest we contact as part of our survey process or report development?

Annex 2: List of contributors to the questionnaire survey

List of Contributors
Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology
Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture
Ministry of Tourism
Environmental Protection Agency
Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve Office
Fuvahmulah Nature Park
Addu Nature Park
Maldives National University
Olive Ridley Project
Maldives Underwater Initiative
Noo Rajje
Kaafu Hura Council
Shaviyani Atoll Council
Meemu Atoll Council
Baa Atoll Council
Fuvahmulah City Council
Olive Ridley Project - Maldives (ORP)
IUCN Maldives
Maldives Wetlands Foundation
Maldives Resilient Reefs
US AID
Six Senses Laamu

Tetra Tech
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