



Conservation of Atoll Ecosystems through an effectively managed national protected area Estate (CATENATE)

Part I: Project Information

GEF ID

10542

Project Type

FSP

Type of Trust Fund

GET

CBIT/NGI

CBIT

NGI

Project Title

Conservation of Atoll Ecosystems through an effectively managed national protected area Estate (CATENATE)

Countries

Maldives

Agency(ies)

IUCN

Other Executing Partner(s)**Executing Partner Type**

Other Executing Partner(s)

Ministry of Environment, Government of Maldives

Executing Partner Type

Government

GEF Focal Area

Biodiversity

Taxonomy

Biomes, Biodiversity, Focal Areas, Wetlands, Sea Grasses, Mangroves, Coral Reefs, Mainstreaming, Protected Areas and Landscapes, Coastal and Marine Protected Areas, Productive Landscapes, Productive Seascapes, Gender results areas, Gender Equality, Awareness Raising, Access to benefits and services, Capacity Development, Knowledge Generation and Exchange, Gender Mainstreaming, Women groups, Gender-sensitive indicators, Sex-disaggregated indicators, Beneficiaries, Influencing models, Stakeholders, Capacity, Knowledge and Research

Rio Markers**Climate Change Mitigation**

Climate Change Mitigation 1

Climate Change Adaptation

Climate Change Adaptation 0

Duration

42 In Months

Agency Fee(\$)

189,932

Submission Date

3/22/2020

A. Indicative Focal/Non-Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
BD-2-7	GET	2,110,358	7,500,000
	Total Project Cost (\$)	2,110,358	7,500,000

B. Indicative Project description summary

Project Objective

To safeguard nationally and globally significant coral reef biodiversity and associated ecosystems through a resilient network of equitably and effectively managed protected and conserved areas in the Maldives

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
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Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
Enabling policy, legal framework and capacity-building for good governance	Technical Assistance	<p>1. Improved Protected Area network governance mechanisms</p> <p><i>Indicators 1.1</i></p> <p>Governance models developed and implemented is diverse and inclusive</p> <p><i>Target: Qualitative Assessment against existing Governance models in Maldives.</i></p> <p>No. of governance models adopted and implemented at project site</p> <p><i>Target: 1</i></p> <p><i>Indicators 1.2</i></p> <p>No. of resource materials (handbooks, standards) developed through Project</p> <p><i>Target: 4</i></p> <p>No. of trainers trained.</p> <p><i>Target: 14 (male 7, female 7)</i></p>	<p>1.1 Legal framework and diverse governance models (e.g. private sector, CBOs, PPP and OECMs) formalized and adopted for decentralized management of the Protected Area network.</p> <p>1.2 Capacity development of Councils and managers on; 1) implementing good governance provisions and effective Protected Area management, and use of science and standards in sectoral planning,</p> <p>2) financial planning for sustained conservation outcomes.</p> <p>1.3 Conservation strategy including national and global standards and guidelines for representative Protected Areas selection, assessment and monitoring formulated.</p> <p>1.4 Integrated and results based management plans, and equitable governance established in selected Protected Areas using the IUCN Green List Standard and verification system and</p>	GET	502,466	2,460,000

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
Protected Area system financial management.	Investment	<p>2. The Protected Area network has an integrated and equitable sustainable financing system</p> <p><i>Indicators 2.1</i></p> <p>No. of financial framework developed and implemented at Shaviyani Farukolhu Protected Area</p> <p><i>Target: 1</i></p> <p><i>Indicators 2.2</i></p> <p>The Shaviyani Farukolhu Protected Area demonstrates a revenue trend towards sustainability</p> <p><i>Target: At least 50 percent of operational costs secured from direct receipts and 50 percent from other sources.</i></p> <p>Percentage households affected by restrictions in Shaviyani Farukolhu with alternative income generation activities identified and markets established</p> <p><i>Target: 100 percent</i></p>	<p>2.1 Financial framework setting out budgeting guidelines and innovative funding opportunities for the Protected Area network in the Atoll developed and implemented at Project site.</p> <p>2.2 Sustainable financing demonstrated through investment for fair and equitable income generation for the Protected Area management and associated communities.</p>	GET	1,366,708	4,329,000

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
Knowledge management and communication	Technical Assistance	<p>3. Effective communication and knowledge dissemination to communities and stakeholders.</p> <p><i>Indicator 3.1</i></p> <p>No. of knowledge platform established</p> <p><i>Target: 1 webpage or website</i></p> <p><u>No. of times site accessed on quarterly basis</u></p> <p><i>Target: 200 hits</i></p> <p>-</p> <p><i>Indicator 3.2</i></p> <p><u>No. of knowledge products and publications developed and published.</u></p> <p><i>Target: 10</i></p> <p>-</p> <p>Gender balance ratio achieved in project activities</p> <p><i>Target: 50 percent</i></p> <p>No. of partnership and knowledge exchange established between Protected</p>	<p>3.1 Protected area management and knowledge dissemination platform established</p> <p>3.2 Develop a project communication strategy implemented</p> <p>1) develop and disseminate knowledge products</p> <p>2) mainstream gender equality in project activities</p> <p>3) promote uptake, replication and scaling up</p> <p>3.3 M&E system incorporating gender mainstreaming developed and implemented for adaptive project management.</p>	GET	140,691	511,000

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
				Sub Total (\$)	2,009,865	7,300,000
Project Management Cost (PMC)						
				GET	100,493	200,000
				Sub Total(\$)	100,493	200,000
				Total Project Cost(\$)	2,110,358	7,500,000

C. Indicative sources of Co-financing for the Project by name and by type

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount(\$)
Beneficiaries	Shaviyani Fonadhoo Council	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	250,000
Beneficiaries	Shaviyani Fonadhoo Council	Grant	Investment mobilized	250,000
Government	Ministry of Environment, Government of Maldives	Grant	Investment mobilized	4,000,000
Government	Ministry of Environment, Government of Maldives	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2,000,000
Donor Agency	REGENERATE project	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,000,000
			Total Project Cost(\$)	7,500,000

Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified

Community consultations were held by the Ministry of Environment in January 2020 in Shaviyani Atoll. Among the discussions was the PA located adjacent to Shaviyani Fonadhoo island that shares the same reef platform. The community's vision is to establish Farukolhu Nature Park as the leading park in Maldives that showcased several unique traits of natural habitats found in the Maldives. The community consultations also identified the current resource use and immediate measures that could be put in place to increase awareness on the PA status of the island of Farukolhu. Shaviyani Fonadhoo Council is very keen to undertake the management of the PA and willing to contribute its own funds and management capacity to undertake a project. During these consultations consensus was not reached as to which party should undertake the management of the PA. The Ministry of Environment has the authority to assign the caretaking and management to a council office under the new decentralized act. The Ministry is also working on a broader approach of connecting the PAs of the entire natural atoll system referred to locally as Boduthiladhummathi atoll that comprises of 4 administrative atolls. The ultimate goal being to propose Boduthiladhummathi Atoll for recognition as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The Ministry's grant will contribute to other PAs in the system mobilizing funds for their management. The parallel implementation of this Project will strengthen the policy level decision making and financial framework for sustainability.

D. Indicative Trust Fund Resources Requested by Agency(ies), Country(ies), Focal Area and the Programming of Funds

Agency	Trust Fund	Country	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Amount(\$)	Fee(\$)	Total(\$)
IUCN	GET	Maldives	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation			0
IUCN	GET	Maldives	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	2,110,358	189,932	2,300,290
Total GEF Resources(\$)					2,110,358	189,932	2,300,290

E. Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

PPG Required

PPG Amount (\$)

100,000

PPG Agency Fee (\$)

9,000

Agency	Trust Fund	Country	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Amount(\$)	Fee(\$)	Total(\$)
IUCN	GET	Maldives	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	100,000	9,000	109,000
Total Project Costs(\$)					100,000	9,000	109,000

Core Indicators

Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
442.66	0.00	0.00	0.00

Indicator 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas Newly created

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
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Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial Protected Areas Under improved Management effectiveness

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
442.66	0.00	0.00	0.00

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Akula National Park HA. Baarah	125689 555697556	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	38.37						

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Akula National Park HA. Bilehdhoo Thila Area	125689 555697572	Select Habitat/Species Management Area	14.70						
Akula National Park HA. Gallandhoo	125689 555697567	Select Strict Nature Reserve	10.90						
Akula National Park HA. Kela	125689 555697565	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	26.00						
Akula National Park HDh. Innafushi	125689 555697566	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	2.12						
Akula National Park HDh. Keylakunu	125689 555697563	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	89.32						
Akula National Park HDh. Neykurendhoo	125689 555697559	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	58.40						
Akula National Park N. Bodulhaimendhoo	125689 555697571	Select Strict Nature Reserve	38.10						
Akula National Park N. Fohdhipparu	125689 555697568	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	1.60						

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Akula National Park N. Kendhikolhudhoo	125689 555697564	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	87.40						
Akula National Park Sh. Bolissa Faru	125689 555697570	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	3.20						
Akula National Park Sh. Farukolhu	125689 55569757	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	72.15						
Akula National Park Sh. Naalahura	125689 555697562	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	0.40						

Indicator 2 Marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
8,867.19	0.00	0.00	0.00

Indicator 2.1 Marine Protected Areas Newly created

Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
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Indicator 2.2 Marine Protected Areas Under improved management effectiveness

Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
8,867.19	0.00	0.00	0.00

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Akula National Park HA. Baarah	125689 555697556	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	12.40						<input type="checkbox"/>
Akula National Park HA. Bilehdhoo Thila Area	125689 555697572	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	4,339.30						<input type="checkbox"/>
Akula National Park HA. Gallandhoo	125689 555697567	Select Strict Nature Reserve	241.10						<input type="checkbox"/>
Akula National Park HA. Kela	125689 555697565	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	37.42						<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Akula National Park HDh. Finey Thila	125689 555697569	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	97.90						<input type="checkbox"/>
Akula National Park HDh. Innafushi	125689 555697566	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	1,363.88						<input type="checkbox"/>
Akula National Park HDh. Keylakunu	125689 555697563	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	146.13						<input type="checkbox"/>
Akula National Park HDh. Neykurendhoo	125689 555697559	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	15.83						<input type="checkbox"/>
Akula National Park N. Bodulhaimendhoo	125689 555697571	Select Strict Nature Reserve	282.90						<input type="checkbox"/>
Akula National Park N. Fohdhipparu	125689 555697568	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	330.40						<input type="checkbox"/>
Akula National Park N. Kendhikolhudhoo	125689 555697564	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	406.50						<input type="checkbox"/>
Akula National Park N. Orimas Thila	125689 555697561	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	46.30						<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Akula National Park Sh. Bolissa Faru	125689 555697570	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	950.80						
Akula National Park Sh. Farukolhu	125689 555697557	Select Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	437.73						
Akula National Park Sh. Naalahura	125689 555697562	Select Habitat/Species Management Area	158.60						

Indicator 5 Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
3,521.79			

Indicator 5.1 Number of fisheries that meet national or international third party certification that incorporates biodiversity considerations

Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)

Type/name of the third-party certification

Indicator 5.2 Number of Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) with reduced pollutions and hypoxia

Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (achieved at MTR)	Number (achieved at TE)
0	0	0	0

LME at PIF

LME at CEO Endorsement

LME at MTR

LME at TE

Indicator 5.3 Amount of Marine Litter Avoided

Metric Tons (expected at PIF)

Metric Tons (expected at CEO Endorsement)

Metric Tons (Achieved at MTR)

Metric Tons (Achieved at TE)

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Indicator 11 Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	30,962			
Male	27,769			
Total	58731	0	0	0

Provide additional explanation on targets, other methodologies used, and other focal area specifics (i.e., Aichi targets in BD) including justification where core indicator targets are not provided

The targets listed for the terrestrial and marine protected areas in the above table are the cumulative numbers of the legally protected areas by the State in the Boduthiladhunmathi natural atoll system. Some of the Protected Areas PAs in the atoll contain both terrestrial and marine habitats which has been disaggregated for this table. Calculation of figures are based on the gps coordinates designated for these protected areas. Marine areas listed under improved management practices are areas that are managed by the tourism sector, while not legally declared protected they are preserved for their economic benefits and thereby can be further strengthened to contribute to a connected and well managed PA network. This project will bring the Protected Areas in Boduladhunmathi under improved management through capacity building, guidelines, standards, financial frameworks and exchange visits. Capital investments will be made by the Project in Shaviyani Farukolhu to demonstrate the implementation of an equitable and effective management of a Protected Area with investments supporting sustainable revenue stream.. The population figures are totals of the disaggregated populations of the 4 administrative atolls in the region where GEF project will be implemented. The core indicator targets will be verified during the PPG stage.

Part II. Project Justification

1a. Project Description

1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description);

Environmental & Socio-Economic background and trends related to Global Environmental Threats

The Maldives archipelago is a chain of coral reefs and islands lying along the Lakshadweep – Maldives – Chagos ridge of 21 natural atolls and 4 reef platforms and approx. 1200 coral reef islands[1]¹, with a total land area of approx. 300km². Located in Indian Ocean, approximately 340km southwest of southern India, the Republic of Maldives is one of only four atoll island nations around the world[2]², and is unique with respect to the atoll reef systems and coral reef biodiversity it supports, the sheer abundance and variety of the islands, contrasting reef formations and associated flora and fauna, variety of reef structures it possesses and its value to human communities.

The country's population of approximately 400,000 people lives on 187 of the 1192 islands in the Maldives. An additional 145 islands have private tourist resorts[3]³. About 70% of the inhabited islands have a resident population of less than 1,000 people. Male', the capital city of the country, had, as of 2014, an estimated population of 153,379, or 45% of the country's residents[4]⁴.

With an average ground level of 1.5m (4ft 11in), Maldives is one of the lowest-lying country in the world, making the country highly vulnerable to climate change, sea-level rise and various natural hazards such as tidal waves and storm generated inundations.

The reef ecosystem of the Maldives is the 7th largest in the world and the 5th most biodiverse, spreading over an area of 8920 sq.km and represents 3% of global coral reef cover[5]⁵. Coral reefs in the Maldives are characterized by a great variety of formations, which is reflected by the richness of local *dhivehi* words used locally to describe different coral reef structures (e .g. *faru*, *thila*, *giri*, *haa* and *gaa*) based on their size and depth[6]⁶. The structural complexity and ecologically diverse habitats are essential to large numbers of both resident and transient marine life. The country's position, close to mid-point of the east and west margins of the ocean basin, means that its marine fauna has the characteristics of both the highly diverse reefs of the coral triangle and of east African reefs. This is indicative of the role the country's reefs play as a biogeographic stepping stone for dispersal and maintenance of coral reef biodiversity throughout the Indian Ocean.

The biodiversity of the Maldives includes a relatively small number of terrestrial species and a large number of marine species. Maldives has a high diversity of coral species, with approximately 250 species of hard, reef-building corals[7]⁷. More than 1,200 reef associated fish species have been identified[8]⁸. There have also been 36 species of sponge, 285 species of algae, 5 species of seagrass, 400 species of molluscs, 350 species of crustaceans and 80 species of echinoderms that have been recorded in the Maldives[9]⁹. The waters of the Maldives support a diverse megafauna of over 20 species of whales and dolphins, 5 of the 7 species of marine turtles and 40 species of sharks. 167 species of birds comprising of seabirds, shorebirds and terrestrial birds including 5 endemic to the country, have been recorded in the Maldives. They include breeding residents, southern winter visitors (shearwaters and storm-petrels), and northern winter visitors (mostly waders, raptors and passerines as well as some terns).

Among animal groups that are internationally threatened are populations of green (*Chelonia mydas*, IUCN Red List Category EN) and hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*, IUCN Red List Category CR) turtles; the Maldives is perhaps the most important feeding area for hawksbill turtles in the Indian Ocean. It is also home to globally significant populations of whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*, IUCN Red List Category EN) and manta rays (*Manta birostris*, IUCN Red List Category VU). Other globally significant coral reef species include the Napoleon wrasse (*Cheilinus undulates*, IUCN Red List Category EN), Giant Grouper (*Epinephelus lanceolatus*, IUCN Red List Category VU)[10]¹⁰. The Maldives Blenny (*Ecsenius minutus*) has so far been identified only in the Maldives, while the distribution of certain species, like the Maldivian anemone fish (*Amphiprion nigripes*) is restricted to the Maldives, Laccadives and Sri Lanka. A number of species in the Maldives are globally threatened or are listed on the CITES appendices and require particular protection and monitoring.

Though the Maldives may be best known for its marine ecosystem, the terrestrial environment has a diversity of habitats each with high ecological and social value. The coastal fringe habitat, made up primarily of scrub vegetation consolidates sediment, aiding island development and limiting erosion. Where islands are large enough, forests develop with nutrient rich soils and dense vegetation growth. There are 583 species of terrestrial flora found, of which 323 are cultivated and 260 are natural[11]¹¹. The farmed species are mostly used as a source of food and some for traditional medicine. Unique coral reef based Wetlands and marshes are also found in the Maldives, showcasing a significant and diverse community of flora and fauna within depressions on reef islands. Two types of mangrove ecosystems are found in the Maldives; 1) semi-enclosed bay areas with brackish water locally known as “*kulhi*”, and 2) muddy areas without stranding water known as “*chasbin*”. Around 15 species of mangroves are found across 150 of the islands[12]¹². The largest mangrove systems in the Maldives are found in depressions inside islands or along the borders of bay areas. For example, Keylakunu in Maldives is known as one of the most diverse true mangrove forest in the region. The *Avicennia marina* found here is rare species throughout the world. One of the bigger trees of *Avicennia marina* found in Keylakunu is over 15m tall with a diameter at the breast height of 2.4m[13]¹³. Mangroves provide a range of ecosystem services such as protecting shorelines from storm as well as erosion, nursery grounds and carbon sequestration. Mangrove habitats also support a diversity of bird species and are likely to be amongst the most important areas for resident birds across the country.

The biodiversity of atoll ecosystems underpins at least 71% of national employment, 89% of GDP and 98% of exports[14]¹⁴. Tourism has rapidly become the nation's largest sector and it now accounts for approximately 28% of GDP and more than 60% of foreign exchange receipts. Over 90% of government revenue comes from coral reef based tourism-related taxes. The rich marine environment also provides a wealth of fishing opportunities including tuna, groupers, barracuda, rainbow runner, trevally and many more. Reported tuna landings in 2017 were around 139,000 Mt[15]¹⁵. In 2017, exports of fish and fishery products were valued at USD 196.2 million[16]¹⁶. There also is a strong growth in the demersal reef fishery to meet demand from international visitors and an international reef fish market[17]¹⁷, [18]¹⁸. This industry concentrates on trevally, sea perch and sea bass with some cod, especially the *coral trout*. Reported heavy declines in the reef fishery, the bait fishery and the beche-de-mer fishery have led to these being targeted in the National Fisheries Management Plan, presently under preparation. These facts underline the significance of the conservation and sustainable management of the country's coral reef biodiversity.

In recent years, in an attempt to reduce impacts on country's atolls and coral reefs, the Government of Maldives has designated protected areas at 61 sites, totaling approximately 57,826 Ha designated under the Environment Protection and Preservation Act, while another 274 locations identified as Environmentally Significant Sites. This conservation effort is also fostered by the Government's Strategic Action Plan which states that by 2023, at least 10% of coral reef area, 20% of wetlands and mangroves and at least one sand bank and one uninhabited island from each atoll are under some form of protection and management in efforts to preserve biodiversity of Maldives and ensure maximum benefits[19]¹⁹. In addition to that, Inspired from the success of Baa Atoll as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, the government of Maldives submitted nomination dossiers to UNESCO to designate the Southern-most atolls of the Maldives, Addu Atoll and Fuvahmulah Island as UNESCO Biosphere Reserves. This is considered as a steppingstone in creating a "nationwide network of Atoll type Biosphere Reserves in the Maldives" in the future.

However, to date, due to lack of Government resources and technical capacity, the majority of legally protected areas in Maldives (except the ones that are within the Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve, Addu and Fuvahmulah) are simply "paper parks" without any established plans for their management, therefore activities that take place within those protected areas are not monitored and regulations are not enforced. Thus, even though, protected areas have a higher potential towards improving the protection of ecosystems, further work in the management of these areas would be needed to maximize efficacy as well as financial sustainability of protected area systems. A better understanding of the value of these ecosystems, as well as needs and aspirations of the people using these natural resources needs to be considered and understood to achieve equitable and effective conservation goals.

The project will take a holistic approach to strengthen the governance, financing and decision-making process for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development of *Boduthiladhunmathi* atoll (the largest naturally formed coral atoll in the world with a surface area of approximately 3788.71 sq km) as whole and use the legally protected Sh.Farukolhu PA as a demonstration site for this proposed project. Shaviyani Farukolhu was legally declared as a Protected Area on 7 October 2018. Boduthiladhunmathi atoll has 15 legally protected areas with 442.66 Ha terrestrial and 8867.19 Ha marine. The project will work to strengthen the management and transfer knowledge as well as best practices demonstrated in Shaviyani Farukolhu to the remainder of the Protected Area Network including experiences of the sustainable model developed through the Project. Within the atoll at present there are 13 islands operated as tourist resorts. The resort island house reefs are considered to be a haven for coral reef biodiversity as such defacto protected areas.

Strengthening the management practices of these tourist resort house reefs will add to the PA network efforts and connectivity of the system. A total of 3,521.79 Ha of marine area will be under improved management practices.

Shaviyani Farukolhu is a legally protected area under the Environment Protection and Preservation Act (Law No: 4/93) of the Maldives, categorized as a “Protected Area with Sustainable Use with 172.74 Ha is designated as the core area of total 509.93 Ha of Protected Area. Farukolhu is a long, narrow uninhabited island on the eastern edge of the Shaviyani atoll with a remarkable biological diversity. The northern end has several brackish water ponds, many of which are connected by narrow channels. The island’s vegetation is made up primarily of coastal scrub vegetation typical of the region. *Scaevola taccada*, *Talipariti tiliaceum* and *Guettarda speciose* dominates on the sheltered inner atoll facing shore and *Pemphis scidula* on the exposed outer atoll edge. The pond fringe areas are also dominated by these species, though there are also patches of *Pandanus tectorius*. The vegetation around the ponds is primarily made up of these species. The mangrove bay is dominated by *Ceriops tagal* with strands of *Rhizophora mucronata* and *P. scidula* in the outer bay. A high number of birds habitat the island and the mangrove bay has an abundant and diverse fish community sheltering or hunting amongst the mangrove roots. This habitat is also an important nursery ground with a high number of juvenile sharks, notably, juvenile sicklefin lemon sharks (*Negaprion acutidens*), a rare and vulnerable (IUCN Red List) species, which are also observed in high numbers[20]²⁰. There are also juveniles of commercially important fish species such as blue-fin jacks, and snappers and groupers. The importance of these Mangrove Bays as nursery habitats is undervalued across the country and a proper evaluation of the goods and services provided by the different mangrove, sea grass and wetland habitats needs to be conducted and effective management measures needs to be implemented to conserve and manage this nationally as well globally significant biologically diverse area.

Environmental problems, drivers and root causes

In the Maldives, development is intrinsically linked with the conservation of coral reef biological diversity and the preservation of coral reef ecosystems. Social, economic, development and demographic changes can alter consumption behaviour and threaten the reef structure and functions of atoll ecosystems, which support globally significant biological diversity, the basis for the country’s existence as well as life-supporting services such as shoreline protection and goods upon which the economy entirely depends, mainly tourism and fishery.

The effects of global climate change (i.e. accelerated sea level rise, sea surface temperature rise, coral bleaching changes in monsoon pattern) are increasingly impacting biodiversity levels and the integrity of ecosystem services in the Maldives. Sea level rise increases the vulnerability of island populations, livelihood assets, and infrastructure of the islands. More than 44% of settlements, including 42% of the population, and more than 70% of all critical infrastructure are located within 100 meters of shoreline. 96% of islands are less than 1 km² in area.

The coral reefs are also cumulatively threatened due to projected increases in sea surface temperature that cause coral bleaching events. Absorption of atmospheric CO₂ by the oceans that reduces PH levels, will further impair the ability of coral reefs to keep pace with the projected sea level rise. The Indian Ocean region temperatures are expected to increase by 2.1 °C by the 2050s and 3.2 °C by the 2080s. The maximum daily temperature in the Maldives is projected to increase by around 1.5 °C by 2100[21]²¹. Although the figures need to be interpreted carefully, a significant decline in the average hard coral cover in the Maldives over the past 50- 60 years has been noted. In 1958 coral cover was estimated at 65%, falling to 56% in 1964 and 27.5% in 1992. Since then, Maldivian coral reefs have suffered two severe nationwide coral bleaching events (El-Nino related), the

first in 1997/1998 and the second in 2016. During the 1997/1998 event approximately 80% of corals either completely or partially bleached in shallow areas[22]²². In 2016, the bleaching affected approximately 73% of corals on shallow (<13 m) reefs[23]²³. The impact of climate change on the coral reefs has already been severe, and it is essential that impacts from overfishing and from pollution coming from island communities do not exacerbate the impacts from climate change to enable the reefs to recover.

A variety of other stressors, strongly related to human activity on land such as outflows in surface and groundwater from agriculture, domestic sewage, solid waste, and infrastructure development, are further aggravating the impacts of climate change. For instance, natural beach erosion is a serious issue faced in many islands, often exacerbated by reef degradation, vegetation removal, construction activities, land reclamation and harbour development. Beaches, which are extremely dynamic in the Maldives, covered an estimated total area of 11-13 km² in 2006, spread along some 2,000 km of coastline.[24]²⁴ In 2004, 97% of inhabited islands experienced coastal erosion, and 64% experienced severe erosion[25]²⁵. Groundwater on all of the inhabited islands is suffering saltwater intrusion in response to over-extraction and contamination and by nutrient enrichment from domestic sewage and agricultural chemicals. Construction and dredging operations produce significant amounts of suspended sediment which adds nutrient loads to the reef and marine ecosystems and affects growth and developments of corals. Additionally, solid waste management is a major problem in most atolls as untreated and unmanaged waste disposal in reef and marine ecosystems are depleting reef and marine biota health and degrading the ecosystems.

Another key stressor on coral reef ecosystems in the Maldives are unregulated tourism activities (E.g. people behaving against the general diving/snorkeling best practices usually in relation to megafauna) in key habitats as well as unsustainable methods for reef fishing that result in large amounts of by-catch, primarily affecting herbivores (e.g. *F. Scaridae*, *F. Acanthuridae*, *F. Lethrinidae*), which are important for keeping benthic algal competitors of the weakened coral under check[26]²⁶.

The implications of accelerated coral reef degradation is of particular concern given the economic importance of these ecosystems in an atoll island nation with an economy driven by tourism and fishing. The degradation of corals and coral cover increases disaster vulnerability due to direct exposure to wave energy, threatening the very survival of the country.

Barriers that need to be addressed

The Government of Maldives fully recognises that it is necessary to ensure environmental sustainability in the country's development policy and planning frameworks across all sectors to sustain the economy and livelihoods which the country is reliant on. The need to mainstream environmental preservation into sectoral policies is acknowledged in the administration's Strategic Action Plan, which outlines the developmental targets and priorities of the Government for the five-year period 2019 – 2023[27]²⁷. To ensure progress in this front, the increment of the Project will seek to address three barriers to effect change in the Maldives.

Insufficient institutional and financial capacity for protected area management and biodiversity conservation

Limited financial resources as well as technical and institutional capacities within various government institutions to formulate and implement policies to establish and manage protected areas is a key barrier. The capacity to develop and operationalise protected area and natural resource management plans continues to be limited, largely due to insufficient staffing and incentive mechanism and lack of technical tools and systems to enhance different management models. There is little integration of scientific data and information about environmental change into policies and action plans, hampering the ability of informed decision-making to ensure biodiversity conservation in face of ongoing and future threats. This is evident from the fact that, majority of legally protected areas in Maldives (except the ones that are within the Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve, Addu Atoll and Fuvahmulah Island) lack management plans, defacto converting most protected areas into 'paper parks' (i.e. protected areas legally declared and existing on maps but with no conservation/management regulation in place). Due to budget and logistics challenges, assessing biodiversity and threat monitoring and law enforcement efforts are inadequate across the country. Key protected corals reef areas for marine biodiversity remain largely unmanaged and rangers do not have a permanent, visible or significant presence in the areas.

Lack of capacity in local Island councils to implement the broad mandate of natural resource management as specified in the Decentralisation Act is a key concern. Due to this, the formal authority and resources continue to be retained by the national ministries and there is hesitation to devolve responsibilities as outlined in the Decentralisation Act. There is limited capacity to assess or monitor key habitats and formulate management actions within local councils. The ability of the councils to make a case for increased protected area investments and ensure adequate protection of nation's biodiversity is furthermore hampered by the fact that there is little knowledge about the economic value of the services that are provided by marine ecosystems. In addition, there is insufficient understanding and capacity to implement the type of reforms that would be required for financial sustainability of protected area management. Thus, it is imperative to develop capacity of managers and councils on financial planning as well as sustainable management of natural resources to ensure environmental sustainability of economic development in key biodiversity areas.

Inadequate policy and regulatory framework to support systematic governance of natural resources

Even though there are national processes underway with the aim of improving the broad environmental preservation as well as management agenda and its policy and regulatory basis, gaps continue to exist in legal frameworks, particularly those related to natural resource use, protected area management and protection of natural resources. Governance in the Maldives has historically been driven from the top, with a centralised governance structure for the management of geographically isolated marine resources. Due to logistics as well as communication challenges, regular interventions and resource management at a local community level has been insufficient in the current system. To address these systematic challenges, a Decentralisation Bill was enacted and passed in Maldives for the first time in 2010. The Article 151 of the current Decentralisation Act of the Maldives prescribes that Atoll and Island Councils have the power to formulate regulations and to make decisions on matters which fall within their jurisdiction, including rules governing use of the reefs, lagoons and other natural resources within the island boundaries. While on paper the Decentralisation Act provides for effective local governance, the implementation of the Act has not been effective as of yet. In addition to that, the current legal and regulatory frameworks are inadequate in addressing the sectoral conflicts and issues in biodiversity conservation. Policies and strategies pertaining to economic growth and development have not yet been sufficiently aligned with existing environmental legislation, including that relating to protected areas. Thus, the policy frameworks often conflict, which lead to confusion across different sectors, and cause difficulties in making biodiversity conservation a priority sector with adequate enforcement.

The recent ratification of the 8th amendment to the Decentralization Act (Act no. 07/2010) on 15 December 2019 holds promise for changes to be implemented. With this amendment the decentralization act now provides local councils with more fiscal and legal autonomy and allocates a third of the council seats for female councillors. The bill will ensure the finances of local councils also include revenue from leasing land, islands and lagoons and 100 percent of the revenue generated from land and other resources in the

direct jurisdiction of the council. In addition, all Public Sector Investment Programmes (PSIP) under the value of MVR 5 million (equivalent to approximately USD 325,000) will fall under local councils as sectoral grants.

Apart from the Protected Area Regulation, there is no specific document that outlines the standards or provides guidance in identifying key environmental habitats for management or standardised monitoring protocols in place. There is therefore an urgent need to review and align policies and development planning across sectors, and to ensure integration of up-to-date information on sustainable natural resource use and biodiversity conservation alongside economic development strategies. Legal instruments need to be adaptive to support management actions in different atoll ecosystems. For the decentralised natural resource management to work, it is imperative to explore and identify various governance models that would align with the existing legal framework as well as formulate guiding documents to ensure private sector participation in natural resource management. Given that biodiversity is a multi-sectoral asset spread amongst variety of institutions, clarifying the legal roles and jurisdictions of variety of natural resources will be an important part of this project. Additionally, understanding how effective management plans crafted with site specific characteristic would become part of the existing regulatory framework and the importance laid on community participation in the development of management plans is also a priority area of this project.

Weak knowledge management and gender mainstreaming in natural resource management

Gender considerations are not routinely taken into account in design and implementation of biodiversity conservation interventions. Traditional gender division of labour is well defined in Maldives, and continues to prevail even in natural use and management. Women's roles in resource use tend to be restricted to domestic-oriented roles tasks that are considered more suitable for women. For instance, within the fisheries sector, women are more involved in making of shorts eats rather than going fishing or being involved in wholesale/retail. Even when they were more engaged within the fisheries sector in the past, they were involved in activities such as boiling, drying or salting of fish. In most cases, women's participation in natural resource management is limited to being informed of and executing council's plans. Women are underrepresented in the decision making sphere in marine and coral reefs resource utilization, and thus their knowledge and skills are not reflected in resource management plans. Given the differentiated roles among men and women in natural resource use, their knowledge, skills, and practices towards natural resources management are bound to vary, and identifying them is important in order to improve natural resource conservation. Moreover, identifying the structures, conditions, and processes by which people make decisions and share power can enable managers to design a more contextually appropriate management plans.

Lack of reliable data and insufficient information sharing remains an impediment to ensuring effective support for biodiversity and ecosystem management. Despite a heavy reliance on natural resources on livelihoods as well as for a sustained economic development path, there is a general lack of awareness among the people of Maldives about the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Environmental issues continue to be perceived by many in government, various industries and the general population as a constraint on economic growth, rather than as an opportunity to improve competitiveness and sustainability. This is partly due to lack of practical examples on how sustainable resource uses and environmentally responsive development designs can deliver economic outcomes that are sustainable; as well insufficient knowledge on the direct and indirect value of the marine environment, dependencies and opportunities. This creates challenges for scaling-up of successes and lessons learned of efforts being supported by international, national and local actors. Thus, preparing, communicating robust participatory and communication strategy to provide citizens and decisions makers with knowledge on the value of biodiversity, ecosystem services and lessons on best practices are thus essential for improved management of environmental governance and upscaling of project results.

2) the baseline scenario and any associated baseline projects

Due to rather limited Government budget resources available for environmental conservation and protection, projects from international donor partners constitute the great part of current baseline spending that addresses the environmental resilience and ecosystem recovery in the Maldives. Thus, the key projects that provide a baseline scenario for this GEF-7 PIF are outlined below.

Atoll Ecosystem-based Conservation of Globally Significant Biological Diversity in the Maldives, Baa Atoll (AEC)

This completed GEF supported project (2003-2012), was the stepping stone to a collaborative management of integrated conservation and sustainable development of natural resources in the Maldives. An ecosystem approach for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development was proposed through a participatory design, based on the recognition of: i) the undeniable linkages between natural coastal resources and biodiversity with the country's economic prosperity and social development, and ii) the fact that conventional approaches to conservation had not proved effective. An integrated perspective on conservation and resource management was taken where biological diversity was not accounted for simply as the number of species but for the complex interaction between the physical environment and the biological communities. In this front, the project piloted UNESCO Biosphere Reserve model in Baa Atoll which has been received extremely well for ecosystem based conservation in the Maldives. The model has been a particularly accepted model due to the integrated nature of its technical, financial and institutional implementation practices. This led to the Hanifaru Bay Protected area within Baa Atoll, with a management plan and enforcement mechanisms in place. Since then there have been decisions by the government on declaring various parts of the Maldives as Biosphere Reserves.

Climate Change Adaptation Project (CCAP)

The completed World Bank funded Climate Change Adaptation Project – CCAP (USD4.3 million 2015-2018) enabled local governments and communities to implement a clear strategy for wetland conservation, coral reef monitoring, solid waste management, and mainstreaming of climate change in island development planning for the two southern most atolls of the Maldives: Addu Atoll and Fuvahmulah Island. This project actively worked on environmental education and communication; strengthening of the national Coral Reef Monitoring Framework for improved decision making and management of coral reefs; and provided support for local eco-friendly livelihood activities in these two atolls.

This proposed GEF project will build on the results and lessons learnt from the above mentioned two projects in establishing well managed protected areas in the country,

Reefs Generate Environmental and Economic Resilience for Atoll Ecosystems (Project REGENERATE)

Another important baseline project is Project REGENERATE, a government of Maldives project, implemented by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and generously funded by USAID. The project aims at developing an operational and applicable framework for incorporating resilience into management and adaptation decisions in the Maldives for coral reefs. The project works to help local communities and government to measure and understand the impacts of climate change, and to develop management strategies that build resilience, mitigate impacts and promote adaptation. The project aims to first build the evidence base for understanding the impacts of climate change through social and ecological scientific assessments; secondly build capacity and awareness of local communities and government through trainings and public awareness campaigns; thirdly assist the government in developing management plans for coral reef ecosystems and reef-dependent people; and fourthly develop strategies for sustainability of management plans. The project has a total investment value of USD 8 million and is designed to be implemented in two phases. Phase 1 (2013-2015) played a key role in setting up institutional structures for the establishment of a network of Biosphere Reserves across the country to promote decentralised monitoring and management of marine resources, and bottom-up management practices of Marine Managed Area (MMA) in partnership with key government agencies, tourism sector and local communities. Using North Ari as a

demonstration atoll, it laid strong foundation for detailed marine spatial planning by collecting detailed ecological, sex-disaggregated socio-economic data for the coral reefs to identify management interventions for the atoll. Phase 2 (2016-2022) has focused on assisting the Ministry of Environment in identifying and setting up biosphere reserves in the country. In this aspect, in September 2019, nomination dossiers to declare the southernmost two atoll of the Maldives, Addu Atoll and Fuvahmulah Island was submitted to UNESCO. In addition to that, the project is working towards identifying key habitats for protection as well assisting the government in developing management plans for key protected areas. Through this project's capacity building component, an awareness campaign, 'Muraka Meehun' was launched which emphasises the critical relationship and interdependencies between coral reefs and human populations and promotes positive changes in the behaviour of citizens in order to reduce pressures on coral reefs. In addition to that, a management plan for South Ari Marine Park, the largest marine protected area in the Maldives has been formulated through the project and management actions have been initiated in the region. Through this project, Ministry of Environment is providing approximately USD 1,500,000 annually (total grant and recurrent) in support of biodiversity assessments and environmental conservation work. These investments as well experience of the project REGENERATE and its transference to national institutions will prove to be an important baseline for all the components of the proposed GEF project.

Enhancing National Development through Environmentally Resilient Islands (ENDhERI)

Other key investment that will function as a foundation for this proposed project is the recently approved GEF project, ENDhERI (USD 3,532,968). This project will work to enhance reef protection, resilience and ecosystem recovery by reducing development impacts in the Laamu Atoll, enabled for replication nationally through public awareness and integrating the values of marine biodiversity and other natural capital in national policies and budgets. ENDhERI proposes a practical agenda of change in the Maldives towards national adoption of Green Growth atoll development, aiming at maintaining its marine natural capital as well as specifically strengthening the resilience and recovery of reefs

The above mentioned two projects, Project REGENERATE, and ENDhERI constitutes baseline funding for the proposed project and establish incremental support to the GoM. The projects were not designed to focus on sustainable financial management of a PA system and do not contain activities specifically to strengthen institutional and technical capacity of Councils. There are also gaps in policy support needed which the project will address through developing governance models, standards and guidelines on identifying and managing key biodiversity areas across the country.

Current investments in PA management by Government and projects are insufficient to demonstrate equitable and effective management of PA system and do not address sufficiently financial sustainability. There is limited financing available for conservation of coral reef and associated ecosystems as a result of more pressing national priorities. And thus inadequate funds towards institutional and human capacity building for the management of the PA network.

The GEF funding through this project will develop institutional capacity and show how investment in the PA will be designed to generate, retain and manage revenue for conservation effectiveness. The 8th Amendment to the Decentralization Act ratified in December 2019 presents an opportunity for strengthening local governance capacity for environmental protection as part of sustainable development through PA planning and management. The Decentralization Act governs the powers and responsibilities of the local authorities empowered to carry out certain functions and describes the public services to be provided by local governments (atoll and island councils) and the responsibility of the councils to formulate and carry out plans for development of its constituencies in an equitable manner. The Act addresses the financial management of local councils, specifically relating to revenues, allocation of funds, financial grants, borrowing and management of accounts. There is a need to build local government capacity and the island and atoll level for this to be most effective. Many island councils will be looking for the potential for sustainable tourism development for their islands and atolls and (integrated) local spatial planning policy and regulations will be important tools. For many islands the concept of protected areas management as part of environment based tourism development, integrated into sustainable development is needed. Identifying the appropriate local financial mechanisms (e.g. PES) that support local environmental conservation agendas of island and atoll councils will be an essential part of the capacity development process.

The Project will build on the enabling environment granted by recent changes to the Decentralization Act, the assignment of Shaviyani Farukolhu to Shaviyani Funadhoo Island jurisdiction and the readiness of Shaviyani Funadhoo Island Council to contribute their own funds towards the management of the whole island of Shaviyani Farukolhu. The successful implementation of the Project will demonstrate the value of investing in PAs, the return on investment and will be used as a model for replication by other Island Councils.

3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project:

This proposed project for GEF financing is required to address deficiencies in institutional capacities, human resources at local council and community levels, investment shortfall for effective, integrated and sustainable protected area management, as the Government of Maldives has undertaken bold steps in increasing the percentages of coral reefs and coastal terrestrial ecosystems under protection. The project will work closely with local communities to integrate traditional knowledge, cultural backgrounds and characteristics of atolls and islands in management interventions.

This Project will contribute to CBD Aichi Biodiversity Targets 1,2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, and thereby directly supports the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2025.

Component 1 – Enabling policy and legal framework and capacity-building for good governance

The 8th amendment to the Decentralization Act (Act no. 07/2010) ratified in December 2019 now provides local councils with more fiscal and legal autonomy. Major changes include the allocation of a third of the council seats for female councillors and financing of public services and development activities through revenue generated in the direct jurisdiction of the council from leasing of land, lagoons and other resources. And 100 percent of the revenue generated from land and other resources in the direct jurisdiction of the council. In addition all Public Sector Investment Programmes (PSIP) under MVR 5 million (approx.USD 325,000) falls under local councils as sectoral grants.

To improve the country's policy framework for Protected Area network management and biodiversity conservation, the strengthening of relevant Protected Area management and governance mechanisms will be undertaken. The project will implement a needs assessment of key Government institutions responsible for protected area and buffer zone management (including Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Fisheries, Agriculture and Marine Resources, Environmental Protection Agency), local councils to inform subsequent actions for strengthening capacities.

Existing protected areas management processes, mechanisms, implementation processes and challenges will be analysed looking into different jurisdictions on roles and responsibilities of various institutions over the protection of significant marine and terrestrial areas. User group identification will be undertaken to ascertain interest groups, and gender disparities and how the decision-making processes include or exclude such groups. The purpose of this exercise will be to make sure that the institutional setups in place are inclusive, for stronger implementation of protected area management across the network. Options for changes in legal frameworks, regulations, and policies where needed will be proposed to the government and governance models (e.g. private sector, CBO's, PPP) will be developed to enable effective decentralised management of the Protected Area network (Output 1.1). This will also take into consideration the latest CBD guidance on 'other effective area-based conservation measures' as defined as part of Aichi Target 11 and part of the proposed post-2020 framework. The project will develop at least 3 governance models for managing Protected Areas. The project will implement and demonstrate at least 1 of these governance models at the Project site, Shaviyani Farukolhu Protected Area.

Through Output 1.2, the project will also focus on improving the technical and institutional capacity for fair and effective protected area management in the country. The project will assess priority training needs during PPG phase in the following areas;

- Protected Area network management as whole, such as availability of standards for management, streamlined work process for the whole Protected Area network and availability of technical knowledge
- Management of natural resource strategies in and around the Protected Area
- Ability of councils and existing financial structures for long-term sustainable financing.

Based on the above assessments, to ensure sustainable management of the Protected Area network, tools, standards, manuals and handbooks will be developed in this Component. The topics covered by these materials will include, but not be limited to; coral reef biodiversity and associated ecosystems, governance models, Management, Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), green listing standards, threat monitoring, patrolling, administration, community outreach and engagement, and coordination with law enforcement. Training materials will also be developed on long-term sustainable conservation finance such as cost-effectiveness criteria to determine the economic and social impact of shifting from business as usual to an improved sustainable ecosystems management scenario and opportunities to introduce revenue collection systems. The training materials developed in Output 1.2 will complement global standards and guidelines identified in (Output 1.3).

The resources developed by the Project will enhance the national capacity for Protected Area managers to develop conservation strategies which are adaptive, locally contextualised and grounded in latest scientific evidence. Materials developed through the Project for training will be shared with the Local Government Authority (LGA) for integration into their regular training programmes targeting councillors and council secretariats. Existing platforms such as the Maldives Conservation Portal, Ministry of Environment and Environmental Protection websites will be used as repositories for both Councils, Park Managers and public to access the resource material and handbooks developed through this Project.

Capacity building will be carried out in two phases. In phase 1, training of trainers will be conducted targeting national institutions such as Ministry of Environment, Environmental Protection Agency, Local Government Authority, Atoll Councils and registered Environmental non-governmental organizations. In Phase two, the Trainers will be engaged to deliver training at the selected Project site for elected Island and Atoll councillors and the supporting civil service secretariats of respective Councils to address gaps in land use, sustainable natural resource management, protected area management and protection of marine and terrestrial biodiversity, and sustainable conservation financing. This will empower the Councillors and the Secretariat to promote environmental sustainability and facilitate political coordination for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation. The engagement of the Council Secretariat staff (civil servants) is crucial for continuity beyond the elected period served by Councillors.

The recent Government of Maldives Strategic Action Plan (2019-2023) provides opportunities for further protection and conservation of biodiversity and key habitats across the nation. The project will support this pivotal government policy on environmental preservation and strengthen the national and sub-national policies and frameworks on biodiversity conservation and Protected Area network management.

To support the effective management of the Protected Area network, the project will support the development of conservation strategy that identifies national standards and guidelines for representative Protected Area selection, assessment and monitoring standards. These will be local and contextual adaptations of global Standards and best practice

guidance, always with the relevance and applicability to Maldives. Key to these is the adaptation of the METT and IUCN Green List Standard for protected and conserved areas, which will help set criteria and indicators suitable for benchmarking progress of Maldives' protected and conserved areas. Participatory management systems will be developed aimed at bringing together key stakeholder together to support decision-making relevant to protected area management and species conservation, including local communities, private sector, civil society, research institutions and Government. In close cooperation with academic institutions such as the Maldives National University, international institutions and other Non-Governmental Organizations with a keen interest or ongoing longterm biodiversity monitoring in the Maldives, systems will be put in place to monitor changes in species diversity and environmental status, utilizing available technology to subsequently feed this information back to relevant decision makers. Such systems may include spatial planning tools with integrated inventory, classification and monitoring of habitats for sustainable resource management strategies. Based on these assessments standardized changes to operations, processes and procedures on protected area management will be produced, documented and made available through the appropriate authorities. Under prevailing circumstances operational processes and rudimentary guidance manuals are not available except in the form of laws and regulations (Output 1.3).

Project support will enhance PA management effectiveness at site that cover 9,309.85 ha of globally significant habitats, encompassing terrestrial and marine PAs. A pilot site will be selected to demonstrate the potential for upscaling. The site will be diagnosed for required improvements needed, using the METT score, IUCN Green List Standard for Maldives. This will diagnose needs in terms of good governance, improved design and planning, effective management and monitoring for conservation outcomes. Using this framework, a management plan will be developed and PA site management and operation will be strengthened to address existing threats to biodiversity, achieving sustainable management and use in the PA and surrounding land uses through; (i) regulatory and management measures, (ii) strengthening of enforcement (patrol, surveillance, interception of restricted activities) through operationalisation of a monitoring system; (iii) development and operationalisation of habitat and biological monitoring systems for key ecosystems and threatened species; and (iv) clear park boundary demarcation for decreasing encroachment. The approach undertaken will demonstrate considerations of ecosystems, habitats and resource uses in the entire natural atoll system taken as a whole. Progress will be benchmarked and attributable to the project through the METT system and the Green List Standard. The aim is to place well managed protected areas and implement biodiversity conservation actions while making PAs more attractive and capable to welcome visitors and improve the ability of park wardens or rangers to actively protect biodiversity. Project support will also include the development of multi sector coordination mechanisms that bring together different stakeholders to ensure the sustainable management and use of these critical habitats (Output 1.4). The coordination mechanism will be connected across different scales of governance, linking to site-level governance (e.g. governance model identified in Component 1; see Output 1.1), to national and international scale via the existing international partnerships in which Maldives participates.

Component 2 – Protected Area system financial management

In order to increase the financial sustainability of the PA network, a national PA financing framework that identifies priorities and financing needs from both cost and revenue aspects based on jurisdictions defined by the 8th amendment to the Decentralization Act will be developed.

The financial performance of the PA network will be evaluated, determining financial gaps and identifying opportunities for improving overall functionality. The financial framework will be developed following a review of Maldivian financial system, Government strategies for conservation finance and existing conservation funds set up for various atolls to support the Government aims to develop a national level conservation trust fund.

The financial framework will provide a definitive baseline of expenditures; quantify and project financial gaps for the Protected Area network based on the assessment of management effectiveness. It will also cost details of appropriate investments such as information signs of unique biodiversity for public outreach, infrastructure in the form of visitor centres and/or ticket booths, boardwalks for a terrestrial protected area and/or equipment to patrol sites (eg. Drones, small vessels etc.) and set out measures to ensure the cost effectiveness of management. The financial framework will provide existing revenue streams such as contribution from private sector through partnership arrangements, research permits, licensing of vessels, fee or token sales for use of buffer areas for recreation, ecotourism, rents from scientific research, video and photography etc. In addition, and most importantly, the Project will through this output identify additional revenue streams and innovative financing mechanisms that capitalize investments into the national conservation trust fund that the Government plans to establish.

The project will implement and demonstrate the application of the financial framework through the establishment of the Shaviyani Atoll Conservation Fund for islands in the atoll to collectively contribute to biodiversity conservation and management of atoll level Protected Area network. The Shaviyani Atoll Conservation Fund will be managed by a Board comprising of Atoll Council, Island Councils, Protected Area Managers, Community Based Organizations, Private Sector Representatives from various sectors (tourism, fisheries, agriculture) and Technical Experts. There are plans within the Government for establishing a national level Conservation Trust Fund. Once this national fund is established all Atoll level conservation funds are expected to be brought under its umbrella as individual accounts.

The project will conduct financial planning for Shaviyani Atoll Conservation Fund based on the financial framework developed and make full use of an environmental economic case for increased investment in the PA system by quantifying the value of the national PAs in terms of use as well as non-use values, including the economic rate of return on investment in the PA system, and comparative cost-benefit analysis with other types of resource uses including tourism, agriculture and fisheries. Revenue generation options identified will be implemented for the Shaviyani Atoll Conservation Fund.

In Output 2.2, Strategies developed through Component 1 and the financial framework developed in Output 2.1 will be implemented to demonstrate financially sustainable conservation model in Shaviyani Farukolhu Protected Area.

The Project will implement the PA management plan developed in Output 1.4. As identified in the management plan, capital investments will be made utilizing GEFTF resources and Shaviyani Fonadhoo Island Council resources to ensure that the Shaviyani Farukolhu Protected Area is effectively managed and generates a sustainable revenue stream before the end of the Project. Pilot systems will be operationalised to engage communities and users of natural resources in Shaviyani Atoll to promote the sustainable use and the adoption of sustainable practices that reduce threats to biodiversity and support local livelihoods.

The project will evaluate existing practices and industries in tourism, fisheries and agriculture near the PA to promote sustainable practices and link this to a certification mechanism that endorses the products or services, for example, farmers, tourist operators, fisherfolk. The objective of these exercises is to alleviate pressure from unsustainable economic activities by communities living near the protected areas. In parallel with the implementation of fair and effective management measures, this component will demonstrate engagement with private sector (particularly tourism, fisheries and agriculture) in sustaining the function of the PA management. Project support will include identifying opportunities for investments and developing partnerships with both the tourism, fisheries and agriculture sectors with the goal to implement a decentralized network of effectively managed PAs on an atoll level. Partnerships especially with the tourism sector to translate experiences learnt from the GEF Atoll Ecosystem Conservation Project in Baa Atoll where a contributory mechanism was set up for the Baa Atoll Conservation Fund was established for concessions in the use of the PA.

In addition, groups of users that maybe negatively impacted socio-economically as a result of management measures will be identified through participatory engagement with the community. The Project will target this group by exploring alternative and viable green enterprise options for individuals. Activities will involve the development of new income opportunities through training, skill development and support to business incubation and links to markets, for example, small scale enterprise development such as backyard organic farming, eco-friendly products, and reviving of traditional arts and crafts. Detailed activities will elaborated during PPG phase.

Overall through this component, the project would aim to demonstrate tangible progress validated through METT scores benchmarked against the IUCN Green List Standard, and secure certification of the project site by demonstrating the potential for upscaling and how improved governance, effective management and financial sustainability can be a vehicle for more socially, ecologically and climate-resilient protected and conserved area systems in the atoll. The results of pilot interventions will be documented and inform the management of the PA network across the country.

Component 3 – Knowledge Management

Component 3 will respond to the low levels of awareness and understanding of technical and management approaches on conservation of atolls and reefs which are unique in nature and are globally significant biodiversity hotspots, and sustainable use of resources through targeted awareness-raising and knowledge management, helping pull together the strengthened technical capacity, enabling governance and financial framework and site-based demonstrations in Components 1 and 2.

Through Output 3.1, existing knowledge base websites such as Maldives Conservation Portal, Ministry of Environment and Environmental Protection Agency will be assessed for suitability to host Protected Area knowledge base. A Protected Area Management knowledge repository will be established with applicable laws, regulation and all project outputs from Component 1 and 2. The knowledge respository will contain information to assist the management of Protected Areas throughout Maldives by being the one-stop shop for all information on decentralized Protected Area management in the Maldives. The Project site will be promoted as an exemplar that uses the IUCN Green List Standard, setting a benchmark for Protected Area performance and equitable governance in the atoll, with positive social, economic and environmental impacts across the whole PA network

Through Output 3.2, a project communication strategy will be developed with the aim to provide citizens and decision-makers with knowledge on the value of protected area management and contribution to coral reef biodiversity and associated ecosystem services.

- Knowledge products will consist of; portfolios of case studies to communicate successful PA management, protected area investments and community-driven sustainable natural resource management practices. The project will generate evidence, lessons learned, and best practices used in protected area management utilizing the IUCN Green List standard, gender mainstreaming into natural resource management, to fill knowledge gaps and gather evidence on impact. Information will be disseminated through a variety of methods, including written publications, social media, blogs and webinars.
- A gender analysis and action plans will be developed during the PPG and the project will ensure that decisions made and interventions proposed for implementation, take into account the potential impacts and outcomes for different groups within society. Focused project activities will be planned with women's development committee at island level.
- Develop and implement a strategy to promote, uptake, replication and upscaling of successful approaches demonstrated through this project. Utilizing, exchange visits across the Protected Area network and systematic documentations and communication of lessons learnt from implementation and appropriate platforms, such as the PANORAMA Solutions platform and partnership, will be used for knowledge sharing and information among local communities, institutions and other coral reef dependent nations.

Output 3.3 M&E system incorporating gender mainstreaming developed and implemented for adaptive project management.

The project will establish an effective M&E system that adheres to GEF requirements, enables effective evaluation of project progress and impact, and that is inclusive of the needs of women and opportunities to strengthen gender mainstreaming through project activities Project monitoring and evaluation. During the PPG stage, project indicators will be evaluated and detailed out as necessary and form the basis of the M&E plan developed during PPG.

4) alignment with GEF focal area and/or Impact Program Strategies:

The Project aligns with GEF7 Biodiversity Objective 2 - Address direct drivers to protect habitats and species with focal area investment in Improving Financial Sustainability, Effective Management, and Ecosystems Coverage of the Global Protected Area Estate.

The Projects objective is to safeguard nationally and globally significant coral reef biodiversity and associated ecosystems through a resilient network of equitably and effectively managed protected and conserved areas in the Maldives. The Project will focus on Boduthiladhunmathi Atoll system which contains 15 legally protected areas under the Environment Preservation and Protection Act (Law No. 4/93). Currently there is no management regime for any of these 15 protected areas. The project aims to utilize GEF7 funding to build institutional and technical capacity for effective management capitalizing on the enabling environment created by the amendment of the Decentralization Act. In addition, the Project contributes directly to GEF7 programming priority by addressing financial sustainability of the Protected Area network in Boduthilandhumathi atoll with scalability nationwide.

By the end of the project the strategies, plans and financial framework developed through the project will be demonstrated in Shaviyani Farukolhu Protected Area, legally declared protected on 7 October 2018. Shaviyani Farukolhu has the potential to be categorized as a KBA. With 7 wetlands, with mangrove species, an array of avifauna, diverse coral reef habitats and mangrove ecosystems provides breeding sites and nesting grounds for many globally endangered species.

5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEFTE, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing:

Project Component	Scenario Without GEF Project	Scenario With GEF Project
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<p>1. <i>Enabling policy and legal framework and capacity-building for good governance.</i></p>	<p>Limited financial resources as well technical and institutional capacities within various government institutions to formulate and implement policies as well as manage protected areas of globally significant biodiversity.</p>	<p>Technical as well as institutional capacity gaps for decentralized management addressed to monitor key habitats. In addition to that, enhanced capacity of managers and island councils on sustainable financial planning to implement actions</p>
	<p>The GoM has identified the need to preserve key biodiversity and habitats which are key in the country's livelihood, economy and survival. Preservation of biodiversity is also recognised in the constitution as well as the administration's five-year strategic action plan. However, inadequate policy and regulatory framework to support systematic governance of natural resources inhibits the progress of this vision of the GoM.</p>	<p>Legislative frameworks are harmonized, institutional mandates and competencies are mapped, potential governance models identified and coordination is enhanced of public policies and investments between government institutions and sectors to foster protected area management and conservation of biodiversity, habitats and ecosystems. In addition to that, guidelines and standards for protected area selection as well as monitoring plans developed and communicated as well as private sector engagement in resource management strengthened.</p>
<p>2. <i>PA system financial management</i></p>	<p>The USAID funded REGENERATE project and GEF funded ENDhERI provides some support in formulation as well as management of few ecologically significant sites across the country. However, limited resources prevents demonstration of financially sustainable and effective biodiversity conservation and habitat protection in more sites across the country.</p>	<p>Enhanced protection and improved management of globally significant biodiversity, including critically endangered species as well as other vulnerable, endemic and rare species in the Maldives. In addition, environmentally and the financial framework of the project will provide practical sustainable income-generating activities that can be implemented in communities around key protected areas. It will also demonstrate how community engagement and engagement of the private sector can be expanded through the provision of practical incentives. All of this progress will be measured and benchmarked through the IUCN Green List Standard and verification process.</p>

3. *Knowledge Management & Communication*

There is only limited program out there trying to communicate the importance of biodiversity for the country. There is a lack of understanding among decision-makers as well as the general public about the status of key biodiversity in the country and the benefits that can be derived from improved practices as well as reforms to increase investment in biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource management. In addition, women participation in natural resource management is limited across the country.

The value of biodiversity and ecosystem services is understood and capitalized upon by decision makers as well the general public. Participatory management of natural resources enhanced across local communities as well increased participation of women in all aspects of natural resource management.

6) global environmental benefits (GEFTF) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCE/SCCF); and

The main global environmental benefits are financially sustainable habitat preservation thereby biodiversity conservation in landscapes and seascapes.

The Maldives atoll represents the historical archetype of coral reef atolls. The Maldives is also globally important as it comprises the 7th largest and 5th most biodiverse coral reef system in the world, and its biogeographical position means that it support critical popluations connecting the coral reefs of Asia and the Pacific with those of East Africa. Internationally threatened populations of Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*, IUCN Red List Category EN), Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*, IUCN Red List Category CR); where the Maldives is one of the most important feeding areas in the Indian Ocean. In addition protection for globally significant populations of Whale Shark (*Rhincodon typus*, IUCN Red List Category EN), Manta Ray (*Manta birostris*, IUCN Red List Category VU) and a diverse megafauna of over 20 species of whales and dolphins; reef dependent grouper species such as the Napoleon Wrasse (*Cheilinus undulates*, IUCN Red List Category EN) and Giant Grouper (*Epinephelus lanceolatus*, IUCN Red List Category VU), will have increased protection.

Maldives is an example of a community completely dependent on coral reefs and thus, the Government of Maldives recognizes the importance of biodiversity conservation and safeguarding ecosystem services. According to the Valuing Biodiversity Report (2009), biological diversity of the Maldives contributes to 71 percent employment, 89 percent of Gross Domestic Product and 98 percent of export. Significant efforts have been undertaken with the Government pledging to conserve 10 percent of every atoll comprising atleast of one representative type of each habitat (eg. Mangrove, reef, entire island) and as a result the total protected areas count in the Maldives has skyrocketed from 42 to in 2018 to 61 in 2019.

7) innovation, sustainability and potential for scaling up.

Innovation

The Project will capitalize the enabling environment created by the recent 8th amendment of the Decentralization Act where by Island Councils and Atoll Councils will now be able to generate and retain revenue from natural resources in their jurisdiction. The Project will also capitalize on the willingness and contribution of financial resources by an

Island Council towards Protected Area conservation and management. This will be the first Protected Area where investment's will be made by an Island Council towards its management. All managed Protected Areas in the Maldives have in the past relied heavily on overseas development assistance and central Government finances to establish management systems. Demonstration of financial viability in the maintenance and use of Protected Areas for revenue generation will provide an evidence based incentive to for other parties to invest in the conservation of Protected Areas.

The Project will develop diverse and inclusive governance models supported by work on a financial framework that will identify revenue streams and innovative financing mechanisms that capitalize investments into the national conservation trust fund that the Government plans to establish.

The Project's PPG and implementation will coincide with a time during which the Maldives is undergoing rapid changes to decentralized governance creating a demand for capacity in effective management of Protected Areas that fall within jurisdictions of the various Atoll and Island Councils. A huge burden will be placed on central agencies to cater for this demand. Among the new changes in structure of Island Councils is the increased and allocation of seats for the participation of females in decision-making, an opportunity to reinforce fair and equitable natural resource utilization. Thus, the Project will introduce the IUCN Green List Standard to implement an approach for equitable and effective governance in Protected Area management, establishing an inclusive bottom approach in Protected Area conservation in the country.

Management plans will be developed for specific sites through stakeholder wide participatory approach thus gathering traditional and local knowledge on resource use, significant environmental changes, observed changes from climate change and current resource use by engaging communities that reside nearby. The process documented and shared for usability at other similar sites. This application of global standards (IUCN Green List) with local knowledge and context will greatly inform other SIDS in their efforts to link local practice to global standards.

Sustainability

Actions to secure sustainability are built into each project component and will act in an inter-connected fashion to improve the policy, capacity, environment and financial dimensions of sustainability in the management of Protected Area network. The proposed project builds on a strong and supportive government baseline for Protected Area management, including the government's new Strategic Action Plan and amendment to the Decentralisation Act.

Specific activities that will support sustainability of project impact include:

- Established legal framework, governance models and conservation strategy will put in place new standards and create an enabling policy framework needed for decentralized management of the protected area network within atolls. The governance model and conservation strategy will be implemented at the Project site;
- Through the resource material produced and training of trainers, national capacity will be built in technical, administrative and financial disciplines with respect to Protected Area management. Additionally, training of councilors, civil service secretariats and Protected Area managers will provide the practical tools they need to implement effective governance and management measures as well as financial planning to sustain conservation outcomes for Protected Areas within the atoll;

- Management plans and equitable governance mechanism established in the demonstration site using the IUCN Green List and verification system will allow effective management of key biodiversity and ecological systems within the Protected Area network. The process will be documented to provide other Protected Areas to develop management plans based on this blueprint;
- Financial framework developed and innovative funding opportunities identified including but not limited to broaden investment of private sector will support ongoing management and financing of decentralised Protected Area network;
- Alternative and viable green enterprise options operationalised to engage communities and users of natural resources at and around the Protected Area site will promote the sustainable use and the adoption of sustainable practices that reduce threats to biodiversity and support local livelihoods; and
- Knowledge management and communication activities will provide an evidence base and engage wider constituencies to support and adopt decentralised PA management approached beyond the project term.

Potential for Scaling Up

The overall focus of the project is to establish equitable governance models, effective management and enhance financial viability in decentralised Protected Area network management to scale up the conservation and sustainability of Protected Area network management initiatives. The project processes will be documented through the knowledge management component and, guidelines, standards, and field handbooks developed will support replication of project activities across Protected Areas in Maldives. The Project also focuses on sustainable financing mechanisms, capacity in revenue generating and financial management to secure scaled up and longer-term investments in Protected Area network management. Identifying and mobilising investment options are a key focus and through the project, continued engagement with potential partners and options to seek additional financing to support scaling up will be ensured. Capacity building through the project also contributes to scaling up by including local councillors, civil service secretariats and park managers in capacity-building activities that will promote effective management of Protected Areas and impact beyond the project geographies and project term. The successful demonstration of the Project's approach, will be disseminated across atolls in the Maldives. The implementation of these standards on good governance and sustainable financing can be replicated across the protected area network for effective decentralized management.

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1b. Project Map and Coordinates

Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.



2. Stakeholders

Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase:

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

Civil Society Organizations

Private Sector Entities

If none of the above, please explain why: Yes

Consultations have been held on conservation of ecosystems with the general population of the Maldives at leadership levels. The National Strategic Action Plan 2019-2023 (SAP) launched by the Government of Maldives is a widely consulted document with the general public, civil society and within Government agencies. The SAP has a strong

emphasis on managing ecosystems and conservation. It has the "Living Island" as a pillar and calls for and promotes growing with nature and achieving growth while protecting ecosystems. In addition the Ministry of Environment has conducted community consultations in all four administrative atolls that encompass Boduthiladhunmathi natural atoll ecosystem in February 2020.

In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement.

The majority of the pre-identified environmental and social (E&S) risks seem of low significance – judged based on available data. One exemption are potential risks due to access restrictions. The current user groups and their use / dependency on natural resources will need to be judged during the PPG phase as part of the social analysis in order to ascertain likelihood and impacts from access restrictions. The ESMS screening will deliberate about the potential need of a Process Framework.

With regards to other E&S risks, there is a degree of uncertainty because the income generation investments for Protected Area management and associated communities are not known yet. In case these will be decided during the PPG phase, any identified E&S risks will be analysed and managed through an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) developed during the PPG stage. If the decision about investments will be taken only during the project, an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) will become necessary. Due to the small scale and benign character of these investments, an abbreviated ESMF seems sufficient. These decisions will be taken during the ESMS Screening.

Because of the uncertainty and the potential risks related to access restrictions, the project is preliminarily categorized as moderate risk project. The categorization will be reviewed during the full ESMS Screening.

Other risks identified at this stage are listed below:

Stakeholder	Implementation Role
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<p>Ministry of Environment</p>	<p>The Ministry of Environment is responsible for implementing government policies, regulations, programmes and projects related to the provision of clean water and appropriate sewerage services, provision of clean and affordable energy services, provision of clean and healthy environment free from pollution, protection of the islands from coastal erosion, advocate for the rights of small islands states in the fight against climate change, mobilize finance to adapt and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change, coordinating sustainable development goals within the government, and protection and preservation of natural environment.</p> <p>The Ministry is tasked to, among others, to, develop and implement strategic plans to preserve the Maldives' unique biodiversity, and declare protected areas.</p> <p>The following government agencies are affiliated and functions under the direct supervision of the Ministry. Environment Protection Agency (EPA), Maldives Meteorological Service (MMS), Maldives Energy Authority (MEA), UNSECO Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve Office (BR Office), Baa Atoll Conservation Fund.</p>
<p>Ministry of Tourism</p>	<p>This Ministry of Tourism is a key government stakeholder as it regulates an industry worth over half of the direct and indirect national income. The Ministry of Tourism is among its others is also officially tasked to; make tourism a vehicle for the protection and conservation of nature and natural resources, and the revitalization and preservation of the nation's cultural assets as well as for the adoption of sound environmental principles in tourism development and operation. The Ministry is responsible for all coral reef management and atoll ecosystem management within the sector.</p> <p>The Ministry will be a key stakeholder for implementing all components.</p>
<p>Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture</p>	<p>This Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture is a critical partner of the proposed project because the ministry will play a critical role in the design and implementation of management plans as it deals with utilization of natural resources for economic activities within the areas protected. The ministry will be key partner for integration of all project components relating to biodiversity conservation and enhancement of environmentally sustainable economic activities linked to protected areas.</p>

Ministry of National Planning and Infrastructure	This Ministry is an important stakeholder as it regulates land use, broader development planning, spatial planning and deals with infrastructure development projects. This ministry will be a valuable for the component; biodiversity conservation and management demonstrated on 2 target sites.
Local Government Authority	The LGA is national agency broadly responsible for the regulating the decentralized governance and management of local islands, cities and atolls, under Decentralization Act 2010. LGA also deals with coordination of government agencies with local councils. The LGA will be an important partner in the Project in facilitating knowledge dissemination.
Environmental Protection Agency	EPA is responsible for regulatory activities for protection, conservation and management of environment and biodiversity, as well as waste management and pollution prevention under the Environment Protection and Preservation Act (4/93). EPA will be one of the key agency affiliated to the Ministry of Environment having an active role in development and implementation of all project components.
Ministry of Youth, Sports & Community Empowerment	This Ministry deals with development, coordination and regulation of NGOs including community based NGOs. Its mandate also includes facilitation of community empowerment projects. Since the project stakeholders include communities and community based organization, this Ministry would be an important partner for coordination of project activities.
Maldives National University	The Maldives National University (MNU) was inaugurated in 2011 and operates across 4 campuses and 18 Learning Centers across the country. MNU will be a stakeholder in the area of capacity building aspects and knowledge management and communication component of the project.
Ministry of Arts, Culture and Heritage	This Ministry has a mission of researching and understanding Maldives heritage, including oral histories, traditional knowledge. The Ministry will be a key partner in sharing and dissemination of information on national heritage, including site specific heritage and traditions such as oral histories and traditional knowledge and resource usage of communities on or nearby protected areas.
Maldives Association for the Tourism Industry (MATI)	There are currently 145 tourist resorts in the Maldives. MATI is one of the strongest representation of the tourism industry. It will be important for the Project to engage MATI on a number of activities including but not limited to sustainable PA financing, safeguarding nationally and globally significant terrestrial and marine ecosystems and their flora and fauna and ensure environmentally sustainable livelihoods through capacity building and site level demonstration of protected area management.

Maldives Association for the Construction Industry (MACI)	The construction industry is a major employer and source of investment in the Maldives. Dredging and changes to island shapes through harbors and sea walls are a major threat to the marine biodiversity if done in a poorly designed and controlled manner. The Project will seek to develop close partnership with MACI in order to facilitate knowledge transfer, promote <i>soft engineering</i> solutions, and encourage best practices with respect to coastal planning, predictive of impacts and vulnerabilities.
Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services	This Ministry will be key partner for the output Gender strategy and action planning under all components.
Atoll & Island Councils	Atolls and Island Councils hold considerable authority on the basis of the Constitution and the 2010 Decentralization Act. Although resources and authorities are still largely retained in the National Government Ministries, the success of the Project will depend on guidance and commitment from local communities, and therefore the project will make early contact with the local government councils in order to increase understanding and buy-in from directly affected populations.
Civil society and local communities	The Project will include the participation of a wide range of stakeholders in civil society. During the project development and implementation phases, a gender sensitive stakeholder analysis and public participatory processes will undertaken in planning for and conducting project activities. Community Facilitators will be selected from target islands and trained to become key staff supporting implementation of relevant components

3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis).

Maldives is a country that has made significant progress to advance gender equality in recent years[1]. Informed by the commitments set out in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the Government of the Maldives remains committed to harmonizing its national policies, laws, and programmes with international instruments such as CEDAW, despite cultural challenges and political resistance. In Maldives, a Gender Equality Act has been ratified in 2016 and serves the purpose of establishing a framework to eliminate gender based discrimination and established the roles of government agencies – notably the Ministry of Law and Gender (now renamed to Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services) for the implementation of the law. Although cultural determinants of gender roles continue to be powerful in the country, Maldives fares significantly better than many countries when it comes to gender equality, ranking 49th on the Gender Inequality Index in the 2014 Global Human Development Report of UNDP. The island nation has the least disparities between men and women, when compared with other medium human development countries as well as its South Asian neighbors. Maldives has attained gender parity in primary and secondary enrolment, and the number of Maldivian women attaining university degrees is at par with that of men. However, women's participation in public life and decision-making level is not proportional to strides the Maldives has made in

reducing gender inequality. While equal rights of women and men are enshrined in the constitution, barriers for women's participation in public life need to be overcome.

Women have traditionally held family and land-based responsibilities, including a predominant role in agriculture. Women are heavily involved in all aspects of agricultural production, from the selection of land, to decisions regarding which crops to grow, to harvesting. However, in the tourism sector, limited mobility and social mores mitigate against women finding employment in tourism. In fisheries, the most visible activity of fish harvesting is performed exclusively by men and women are involved in the pre-harvest and postharvest stages such as in drying and processing fish. Since women's work in the sector is less visible and less recognized, women are often overlooked in policy making and resource allocation and thus often miss out on incentives to improve the productivity of the sector such as credit, technologies, and training[2]. Gender roles and associated knowledge have played an important role in these harvesting and productive activities based on bio-resources. Local knowledge systems and community-based practices have effectively ensured the sustainable harvesting and conservation of the archipelago's natural capital, helping to conserve the extent of biological diversity over time.

Thus, the project will adopt a participatory approach for maximum impact through the inclusion of all relevant social groups, with attention to the participation and inclusion of women and men equally in all aspects of the project activities. A project specific gender strategy and action plan for gender mainstreaming will be developed during the project design (PPG) phase, with actions to be taken under each component and necessary budgetary provision as appropriate. Specific targets will be set during project design (PPG phase) to ensure inclusion and participation of women and girls both in site-based project activities (such as conservation actions, the development of income generating activities, and activities aimed at capacity development), as well as ensuring that opportunities are created for women to take up positions of leadership within the management hierarchy of the project governance structures. All aspects of the project will take into account gender considerations by using gender disaggregated data when designing actions and by planning around the roles and needs of women and their relationship with the environment.

[1] ADB. (2014). *Maldives: Gender equality diagnostic of selected sectors*.

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Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? No

closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources;

improving women's participation and decision-making; and/or Yes

generating socio-economic benefits or services for women. Yes

Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators?

Yes

4. Private sector engagement

Will there be private sector engagement in the project?

Yes

Please briefly explain the rationale behind your answer.

Private sector engagement, specifically the tourism sector and other productive sectors such as fisheries and agriculture, will be prominent in this project. The regulatory and policy related component will be implemented in close consultation with private sector participants representing the productive sectors aforementioned. The project promotes private sector participation through a unified set of guidelines for assessment and monitoring of privately managed sites. This project will integrate biodiversity conservation and enhancement of environmentally sustainable economic activities linked to protected areas making private sector participation is vital. Private sector consultation, and participation will be undertaken for environmentally and financially sustainable green enterprises implemented in communities near the selected protected areas under the project.

5. Risks

Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the Project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the Project design (table format acceptable)

The majority of the pre-identified environmental and social (E&S) risks seem of low significance – judged based on available data. One exemption are potential risks due to access restrictions. The current user groups and their use / dependency on natural resources will need to be judged during the PPG phase as part of the social analysis in order to ascertain likelihood and impacts from access restrictions. The ESMS screening will deliberate about the potential need of a Process Framework.

With regards to other E&S risks, there is a degree of uncertainty because the income generation investments for Protected Area management and associated communities are not known yet. In case these will be decided during the PPG phase, any identified E&S risks will be analysed and managed through an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) developed during the PPG stage. If the decision about investments will be taken only during the project, an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) will become necessary. Due to the small scale and benign character of these investments, an abbreviated ESMF seems sufficient. These decisions will be taken during the ESMS Screening.

Because of the uncertainty and the potential risks related to access restrictions, the project is preliminarily categorized as moderate risk project. The categorization will be reviewed during the full ESMS Screening.

Risk	Level	Risk Mitigation Strategy
Access restrictions to PA site as a result of management measures	L	The Project's demonstration site is an uninhabited island that has been legally declared a Protected Area with sustainable use. The Project will assess the user groups of the PA during the development of the management plan. Participatory approach will be undertaken to ensure that the management measures put in place do not disadvantage specific groups and resources are utilized equitably.
Possible shifts in government priorities and/or policy changes, including the issues of decentralization	L	The project will strengthen the political commitment by raising the awareness of decision makers, institutions, and communities on the importance of natural capital to sustaining national development objectives. It will further strengthen and directly contribute to implementing the SAP.
Reluctance, distrust and limited institutional and community understanding and capacity to work on change with regards to managing PAs at a local level, impact reduction to reefs, and production practices	M	The awareness and knowledge management outputs of each component and community-based management approach are aimed at building trust, collaboration as well as local community and private sector contribution to the objectives. The baseline and stakeholder assessments during the PPG will determine how these actors will be involved, what additional resources are needed, and gaps addressed through GEF. The project will also strengthen capacity of decision-makers and institutions, and facilitate to empower communities through social organization and targeted training.

Continued uncontrolled exploitation of marine ecosystems / biodiversity by island communities	M	Pressure to use marine resources is significant, the threat to inshore coral reefs through intensive bait fishing is being addressed by the Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture. In addition, some communities depend on tourist resorts as a market for reef fish. The project will address this risk through multi-stakeholder engagement between resort management/middle men, fishermen and local and national governments to establish a regulated fishery as open access to the reef fishery in targeted communities is promoting over-harvesting. Incentives and monitoring of impacts will be used to explore options for systemic changes to policy and law.
Lack of institutional / individual capacities to link biodiversity concerns to other sectoral policies and provisions	M/H	The project will undertake awareness raising and capacity building on the reliance of the country on biodiversity and natural capital benefits for most if not all productive sectors, in part by using social marketing tools, sector round tables and training directed at a range of government and civil society and industry stakeholders.
Limited coordination / communication between sectoral agencies and/or ministries	M/H	The Project will partner with several key ministries – seeking shared interest through e.g. shared objectives and resources, to address negative perceptions among development-focused ministries/sectors, and the close involvement of relevant sectoral agencies is foreseen in project implementation as well as the development of inter-agency collaboration using shared national commitment to the SDGs. The exercise to develop the SAP has established a platform of sectoral agencies working together.

6. Coordination

Outline the institutional structure of the project including monitoring and evaluation coordination at the project level. Describe possible coordination with other relevant GEF-financed projects and other initiatives.

This project focuses on safeguarding nationally and globally significant coral reef biodiversity and associated ecosystems through a resilient network of equitably and effectively managed protected and conserved areas in the Maldives which requires involvement of many stakeholders at central and decentralized levels.

IUCN will be the GEF Implementation agency (IA). IUCN has expertise in managing projects in protected areas and maintaining global standards for effectively managed PA systems, nature-based solutions to global challenges, governance and sustainable development. Additionally, IUCN's diverse membership, combined with the knowledge of IUCN's group of experts on aspects of the environment makes the organisation highly suitable to implement this project.

IUCN will lead the process of project preparation and development with the participation of key stakeholders from the government and CSOs. The project execution will be undertaken through multiple contractual arrangements between Ministry of Environment (ME) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of Maldives, and stakeholders including local government institutions (Island Councils).

The Ministry of Environment (ME), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as the administrative authorities on environmental protection, are core agencies for coordination of all project related activities in the country. ME will be the National Executing Agency in this project, and will actively coordinate with relevant line ministries, CSOs, Local Government Authority, local councils and other institutions to align the project activities with relevant policies, programs as well to facilitate synergies and avoid duplication of efforts. IUCN will also provide targeted technical assistance and administrative support, which will be further discussed with key stakeholders during the PPG phase and detailed out in the project document.

Besides, this project, there are some of past and ongoing projects funded by GEF for the POS' focal area. This project will cooperate with the initiatives by integrating their individual, isolated and piecemeal effort. Those projects include;

Project	Relationship to Project
<p><i>Integrated Water Resource Management in the Maldives. GEF</i></p> <p><i>Regional Project:</i> The ongoing SIDS AIO - Integrated Water Resource Management in the Maldives, a regional UNDP/UNEP/GEF project (USD 9.4 million GEF grant) aims at promoting integrated water resources management in six island states: Maldives, Seychelles, Mauritius, Comoros, Cape Verde and Sao Tome and Principe. In the Maldives, the project will implement a demonstration project on Thoddoo Island about 70 km from Male to resolve pollution of the freshwater lens, regulate abstraction and address the challenge of saltwater intrusion.</p>	<p>The proposed project will adapt methodologies suitable for the main targeted sectors, to maximize environmental benefits to the reefs and marine environment, and provide opportunities for comparative studies and visits.</p>
<p><i>GCF Support for Vulnerable Communities in the Maldives to Manage Climate Change-Induced Water Shortages:</i> USD 25 million GCF project managed by UNDP and Implemented by ME will provide safe and secure freshwater to 105,000 people on the outer islands of the Maldives through integrated water supply systems, decentralized dry season water supplies, and improvements to groundwater quality.</p>	<p>The objectives in terms of water efficiency and supply, pollution and groundwater protection, contributes to the proposed project component; policy support and component; Integrated effective Biodiversity Conservation and Habitat protection demonstrated.</p>
<p><i>UNDP-Low Emission Climate Resilient Development (LECReD):</i> Enhanced capacities at national and local levels to support low carbon life-styles, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction.</p>	<p>Collaboration on mapping of physical and natural resources; the establishment of waste management facilities; as well as building upon the local governance mechanisms for community participation and co-management established under LECReD, would provide useful knowledge and experience, for implementation of the proposed project</p>

<p><i>Enhanced Resilience of social-ecological coral reef systems in the Maldives (REGENERATE):</i> USAID supported and implemented through IUCN and GoM.</p>	<p>Common objectives related to reef and fisheries management and relationships with tourism and fisheries sectors. Devising bottom-up management practices of Marine Management Area (MMA). Strong baseline data and information networks, including links to the MNU</p>
<p><i>Climate Change Adaptation Project (CCAP):</i> The World Bank is developing management plans for wetlands and working up coral reef monitoring projects with 14 tourist resorts</p>	<p>Similar objectives in relationship to coral reef monitoring and management planning in conjunction with tourism facilities. Monitoring methodologies and logistical organization and reporting will benefit the GEF Project.</p>
<p><i>Sustainable Grouper Fishery Assessment and Management in Laamu</i> - by Marine Research Center.</p>	<p>Proposed Project would be benefited from the field surveys on grouper aggregation and maturity.</p>
<p><i>UN Environment TEEB program</i> – various recent, ongoing and soon to start NCA projects utilizing and building upon SEEA.</p>	<p>Proposed project will utilize methodology, tools and guidelines, and the significant from TEEB team and its international partners, for capacity building</p>

7. Consistency with National Priorities

Is the Project consistent with the National Strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions

Yes

If yes, which ones and how: NAPAs, NAPs, ASGM NAPs, MIAs, NBSAPs, NCs, TNAs, NCSAs, NIPs, PRSPs, NPFE, BURs, INDCs, etc

This project is consistent with National Strategic Action Plan 2019-2023 (SAP) launched on 2nd October 2019 by the President of Maldives. The 2008 Constitution assigns protection of environment as a duty of the State as well as Local Councils highlighting the importance of conservation and sustainable use of biological resources for the benefit of present and future generations. The President of the Maldives has pledged to protect 10% of every atoll as protected areas.

The NBSAP 2016-2025, which incorporates the Aichi Goals and Targets and the country's Biodiversity Strategic Plan 2010-2020, is based on three interacting principles of which Principle 3 is directly supported by the Project "Biodiversity shall be mainstreamed into all sectors in a manner whereby monitoring of progress and accountability can occur". It also includes strengthening of the governance on biodiversity conservation at local and national level.

The project also supports priorities underlined at The Maldives Climate Change Policy Framework, National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA), and the 3rd National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP III), for fostering community participation, ownership of local communities and support for biodiversity conservation.

The proposed project sets out an approach which takes the NBSAP actions forward. It further seeks to synergies with initiatives that are currently under way or planned that are in accordance with the national direction in biodiversity and environment, and to assist in linking the practical process of change to mainstreaming at the local level to processes of awareness raising and consolidation in governance at the national level, and improving conservation efforts across Maldives.

8. Knowledge Management

Outline the Knowledge management approach for the Project, including, if any, plans for the Project to learn from other relevant Projects and initiatives, to assess and document in a user-friendly form, and share these experiences and expertise with relevant stakeholders.

The proposed project places knowledge management at the center of its strategy. Specific component on knowledge management and communication, with education, awareness, knowledge product, and up scaling replication strategies would ensure appropriate knowledge management and communication is in place.

Knowledge and lessons learnt from the project will be shared with stakeholders including national and international institutions. Moreover, information will also be used as the basis for related awareness activities; training and information sessions, as well as published in websites of Ministry of Environment, and IUCN.

IUCN's experience on the development and implementation of similar activities and programmes, will ensure an effective flow of information among the stakeholders and, consequently, a greater impact in Maldives and wider in the region and globally. IUCN will put special emphasis on lessons learnt and their dissemination in the global community.

Part III: Approval/Endorsement By GEF Operational Focal Point(S) And Gef Agency(ies)

A. RECORD OF ENDORSEMENT OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT (S) ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT(S): (Please attach the Operational Focal Point endorsement letter with this template).

Name	Position	Ministry	Date
Ms Miruza Mohamed	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Ministry of Environment and Energy	3/15/2020

ANNEX A: Project Map and Geographic Coordinates

Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project intervention takes place

