

# **B.ATOLL UNESCO BIOSPHERE RESERVE OFFICE**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2017**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

On 28<sup>th</sup> June 2011, Baa Atoll was designated as a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. Hence Baa Atoll UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Office was officially inaugurated on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2012 by President Dr.Mohamed Waheed Hassan Manik. In the year 2018, 08 permanent employees worked in Biosphere Reserve Office (Here in after referred as BR Office). They are Outreach Officer, Conservation Officer, Administrative Officer, Assistant Computer Technician, Accounts Officer, 02 Rangers and 01 Launch Captain

## **Office Management**

-In order to ensure the effective management of BR Office, several meetings were held with EPA, Baa Atoll Council, Ministry of Environment & Energy (here in after referred as MEE) and BR Office. Current Administration, work plans, challenges and areas for improvements were discussed in these meetings. As result, some of the issues were resolved. However, there were several issues identified and recommendations for these issues were presented by the BR Office, which shall be resolved in the year 2019.

-Quarterly reports were published as news letters on BR Office Website.

-Discussions were held with the seniors of MEE regarding the operations of BR Office Also, the challenges and issues were discussed in this meeting.

-Daily updates of Biosphere Reserve Office were updated on BRO Website and Social media platforms.

-Several meetings were held with councils, government offices and institutions.

## **Outreach**

-Approximately, 500 leaflets and brochures were distributed to resorts, guest houses, schools and other institutions.

-New leaflets were designed.

- Awareness sessions were held for general public. However, lack of interest from general public for these sessions was noticed.

-A new billboard was installed in Dharavandhoo Domestic Airport. In addition, billboards were installed in B.Hithaadhoo & B.Thulhaadhoo harbor area. BR Office plans to install billboards in all inhabited islands of B.Atoll by the end of 2017.

-Biosphere Reserve was remarkably promoted in social media platforms.

-In order to promote the tourism industry of Maldives, Biosphere Reserve's logo was used by the Tourism Ministry and other institutions. This resulted in further promotion and popularity of Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve.

-Information regarding Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve was provided for students from B.Atoll Education Centre (B.Eydhafushi), B.Kendhoo, B.Kamadhoo School. Students from B.Kendhoo School were granted to access Hanifaru MPA. Information was provided for these students regarding the unique biodiversity and characteristics of Hanifaru MPA.

-BRO Staff participated in 7<sup>th</sup> World network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserve Meeting, held in Jeju Island, South Korea. Also, BRO Staff participated in Man and Biosphere Reserve Youth Forum held in Italy. These meetings were a great work exposure, experience and information sharing opportunity for BRO staff.

-Awareness sessions were held for teachers of B.Atoll Education Centre (B.Eydhafushi)

-BRO provided information and organized a field trip in B.Atoll for the students who visited from Villa College, Marine Science programme.

-BRO provided logistics support for the Ranger training programme held by I.U.C.N. Also, four field officers from BRO participated in this training programme and attained certificate.

- Several meetings were held with the managements of resorts and dive schools in B.Atoll.
- BRO participated in the career day held in B.Atoll Education Centre (B.Eydhafushi) and reached out to more than 500 students. In this event, BRO provided information regarding the biosphere reserve and the career opportunities in the field.
- A guest house conference was held.
- In conclusion, outreach programme was held effectively during the year 2017. Note worthily, with enhanced resources in BRO, it would further enrich the outreach programmes.

## **Livelihood**

- Information, logistics and technical assistance were provided for the parties who were granted the free aid from B.Atoll Conservation Fund.
- Note worthily, these projects were remarkably managed and supervised twice by Biosphere Reserve Office.
- Also, most of these projects were concluded successfully.
- However, livelihood component was not effectively managed and it was noted that absence of a livelihood officer in the office could be the reason for this.

## **Administration**

- Daily minutes, monthly attendance report and monthly salary sheet were sent to Ministry's HR section, respectively.
- All the letters, memos and other documents received to BRO were filed. Also, all the invoices were regularly sent to Ministry's procurement section.

## **Finance**

- Hanifaru Island Access Application Forms were filled.
- Acceptance of Tour Guide Registration Fee and Hanifaru Tokens were sold and receipts were sent to respective stakeholders.
- All the cash receipts, safe report and token report were prepared on a daily basis, and income report was updated monthly.

## **Conservation**

- Similar to previous years, in order to prepare for this year's Hanifaru season, maintenance works of Hanifaru entrance along with maintenance work of mooring buoys in the area was carried out. During the season, mooring buoys were damaged and hence new mooring buoys were installed.
- Similar to previous years, BRO rangers monitored Hanifaru MPA according to the schedule. Also, ranger daily reports and monthly reports were sent to EPA. By the end of 2017 more than 3000 persons visited Hanifaru MPA.
- Unauthorized access to Hanifaru MPA was monitored and recorded with Maldives Police Service personnel. These cases were reported and sent for Maldives Police Service for further investigation.
- Hanifaru tour guide exam was held for 48 persons. Out of these, 40 persons passed and BRO requested EPA to issue Hanifaru Tour guide license cards for respective persons.
- Similar to the previous years, in order to gear up for Hanifaru season, Hanifaru Island cleaning programme was held on 05<sup>th</sup> May 2018. All the government offices and other institutions in B.Eydhafushi participated in this event.



- Hanifaru entrance maintenance work along with maintenance work of mooring buoys in the area was carried out from 29<sup>th</sup> April 2018 to 04<sup>th</sup> May 2018.



-Similar to previous years, BRO rangers monitored Hanifaru MPA according to the schedule. Also, ranger daily reports and monthly reports were sent to EPA. By the end of 2018, more than 5000 persons visited Hanifaru MPA.

-On 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018, Olhagiri Management Plan was gazetted. With this effect, an agreement was made with BRO, B.Atoll council and EPA.



-B.Mendhoo region management plan was gazetted on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

-Total 05 parties' unauthorized access to Hanifaru MPA was recorded and these cases were reported and sent for Maldives Police Service for further investigation.

-It was noted that in the year 2018, all the protected areas in B.Atoll were monitored throughout the year. Random checking and monitoring was done monthly or twice a month. BRO has timely responded and attended reports of unauthorized access in all protected areas and took prompt action accordingly. However, BRO requires additional staff and resources to further enhance the monitoring process.

-Amendments for the current Hanifaru regulation were discussed among BRO staff and these changes are to be sent to the Ministry.

-All in all, 85% to 90% of 2018's work plan was completed. It was also noticed to be the year in which BRO operated most effectively within the past 7 years. However, the reasons for incomplete tasks were due to lack of technical support, resources and fewer staff.



# **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, BRO appreciates the support from Ministry and EPA for their unwavering assistance to BRO. Note worthily, on behalf of all staff of BRO; we would like to express our sincere thanks for the support and guidance from the Managing Director of Baa Atoll Conservation Fund, Mr. Abdulla Shibau. Further, we are grateful for the continuous support from B. Atoll council and B. Atoll resorts.