



# **ANNUAL REPORT 2013**

# Contents

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Transparency Maldives

Transparency Maldives, a National Chapter of Transparency International (TI), is a nonpolitical organization that promotes collaboration, awareness and other initiatives to improve governance and eliminate corruption from the daily lives of people.

Transparency Maldives aims to encourage discussion on transparency, accountability, good governance and the fight against corruption. We seek to engage with stakeholders from all sectors including government, business, politics, civil society, media and others in order to raise awareness about corruption's detrimental effects on development.

Unless otherwise stated, all photos are by Transparency Maldives

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# The year 2013



**“Corruption erodes trust in the democratic system and institutions. Corruption needs to be at the forefront of the agenda as Maldives attempts to come to grips with the new system of democratic governance, departing from the age-old cultures of patronage and secrecy.”**

Thoriq Hamid, Acting Executive Director, Transparency Maldives  
Oct 2013 - March 2014

2013 was an extremely challenging year for Transparency Maldives, yet in many ways, a successful year in terms of promoting transparency, fighting corruption and institutional growth.

We were often in the spotlight as the only national election domestic observer group in a highly politicized and polarized environment, following the contentious transfer of power in February 2012. Some of the challenges TM faced include security issues, including death threats, threats of dissolutions from authorities; and balancing public expectations of TM.

Despite the challenges, in 2013, we successfully advocated for passage of an international best-practices Access to Information

Act, established and trained a network of over 400 volunteers across Maldives and abroad, including Singapore, India, Sri Lanka and the UK. We also conducted the Maldives' first ever systematic elections observation, helped 38 victims and witnesses of corruption to stand up against corruption and commenced work on a campaign to increase grassroots demand for access to information.

We grew our staff number from 15 in 2012 to 22 in 2013, launched three publications, including the Pre-Election Assessment Presidential Elections 2013, Global Corruption Barometer 2013, An Assessment of the Climate Finances and conducted studies for a access to information baseline survey and the state of democracy study.



**“The five years at Transparency Maldives were the most rewarding years of my life,”**

Ilham Mohamed, former Executive Director,  
Dec 2008 - October 2013



## Mission

"Transparency Maldives strives to act as a catalyst for reforms that improve transparency and accountability in all sectors, to raise public awareness of and initiate public discussion on corruption and its detrimental effects on society and development, and to collaborate with individuals, state institutions, businesses, media, civil society organisations, local communities, religious and cultural entities, among others, in the fight against corruption in all its forms."

## Vision

"A Maldives in which the State, politics, business, civil society, and the daily lives of all people are free from corruption, which in turn will ensure transparent and accountable governance, leading to greater equality and social justice for all"





# 1. Making a difference; empowering citizens to fight corruption



**“Citizens have an option when faced with corruption; report it, fight it. We will help the public stand against corruption,”**  
Ahid Rasheed, Coordinator, Advocacy and Legal Advice Center





**“If not for Transparency Maldives, I would still be homeless. Transparency Maldives helped me get land that was promised to me ten years ago,”**  
Hafeeza, single mom with 4 children

Through our free legal advice center, we helped citizens and expatriate workers assert their rights and freedoms, and fight corruption.

The Advocacy and Legal Advice Center is one of many established in over 40 countries by Transparency International Chapters. Our center is the only free legal advice center in Maldives.

We traveled to 20 atolls in the last year and have conducted sessions on corruption, and provided free legal advice to 144 persons. 0 cases are currently under review by the center.

The free legal advice center now assists lodge access to information requests.

**“Citizens are too often hopeless in the face of corruption. Our free legal advice center aims to help citizens break the silence and stand up against corruption.”**  
Ibrahim Riza, Legal Assistant, Advocacy and Legal Advice Center



# Toll free number (800) 3300 567

Maldives has remained on Tier 2 of the US State Departments Human Trafficking Index for 3 years in a row and is home to an estimated 150,000 immigrant workers of which 80,000 are undocumented. We continue to help those affected by corruption and ineffective institutional mechanisms that have caused withholding of passports, non-payment of wages and inhuman living conditions through our free legal advice center.



“They [Transparency Maldives] helped us get 8 months of salary, and negotiated with our company to send us back home,” a group of 6 Indian construction workers.



## 2. Upholding electoral integrity; increasing transparency and public participation in electoral processes



**“We want elections to be a level playing field, not dictated by money, a system of patronage or corruption and coercion. We want the people to make their choices unbound from the tethers and effects of corruption.”**

Azim Zahir, Senior Project Coordinator, Elections Program

Local and international media attend a press conference held by TM to share the findings of the systematic domestic election observation



### 2.1 Understanding the electoral system

Transparency Maldives conducted a Pre-Election Assessment, with the help of an international consultant, to gauge and understand the legal, political and social environment prior to the election. TM met with and interviewed the Chief Justice, Speaker of Parliament, a representative of the President, leaders of main political parties and conducted focus group discussions in three island communities.

### 2.2 Systematic election observation

For the first time in Maldives, a systematic election observation was conducted, employing an internationally accepted method named parallel voter tabulation or quickcount with the guidance of Professor Neil Nevitte of the University of Toronto.

This enabled us to call the election results within three hours of close of polls through our network of 400+ observers and volunteers stationed randomly at polling stations, spanning all atolls and polling stations abroad. Additionally, we were able to gather a host of data that shed light on the functioning of the electoral systems.



## 2.3 Advocating for transparent elections



### 2.3.1 National Advisory Committee for Elections

Transparency Maldives' Advocacy and Communications Manager, Aiman Rasheed sits on the National Advisory Committee for Elections as the civil society representative and has represented the civil society on the committee in the 2008 Presidential, 2009 Parliamentary, 2011 Local Council and 2013 Presidential Elections.

The National Advisory Committee for Elections is convened by the Elections Commission and is the highest statutory advisory body for elections. The committee comprises the five members of the Elections Commission, a representative of each political party fielding candidates, a member of the Maldives Broadcasting Commission, Maldives Media Council and the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives, a representative of the Maldives Police Service, civil society and the Department of National Registration.




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**“We advocated to improve the electoral systems and build trust in electoral processes, informed by our nationwide elections observation of all national elections, commencing from the first multi-party and democratic elections in 2008,”**

Aiman Rasheed, Advocacy and Communications Manager

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## 2.4 Building a network of volunteers

The biggest challenge to conducting a nationwide domestic election observation was the recruitment, training and maintaining the perception of non-partisan observers, provided the polarized electoral environment.

To achieve the independence and perception of independence of the network of over 400+ observers and volunteers, we looked for the following qualities.

01. Should not be a member of a political party

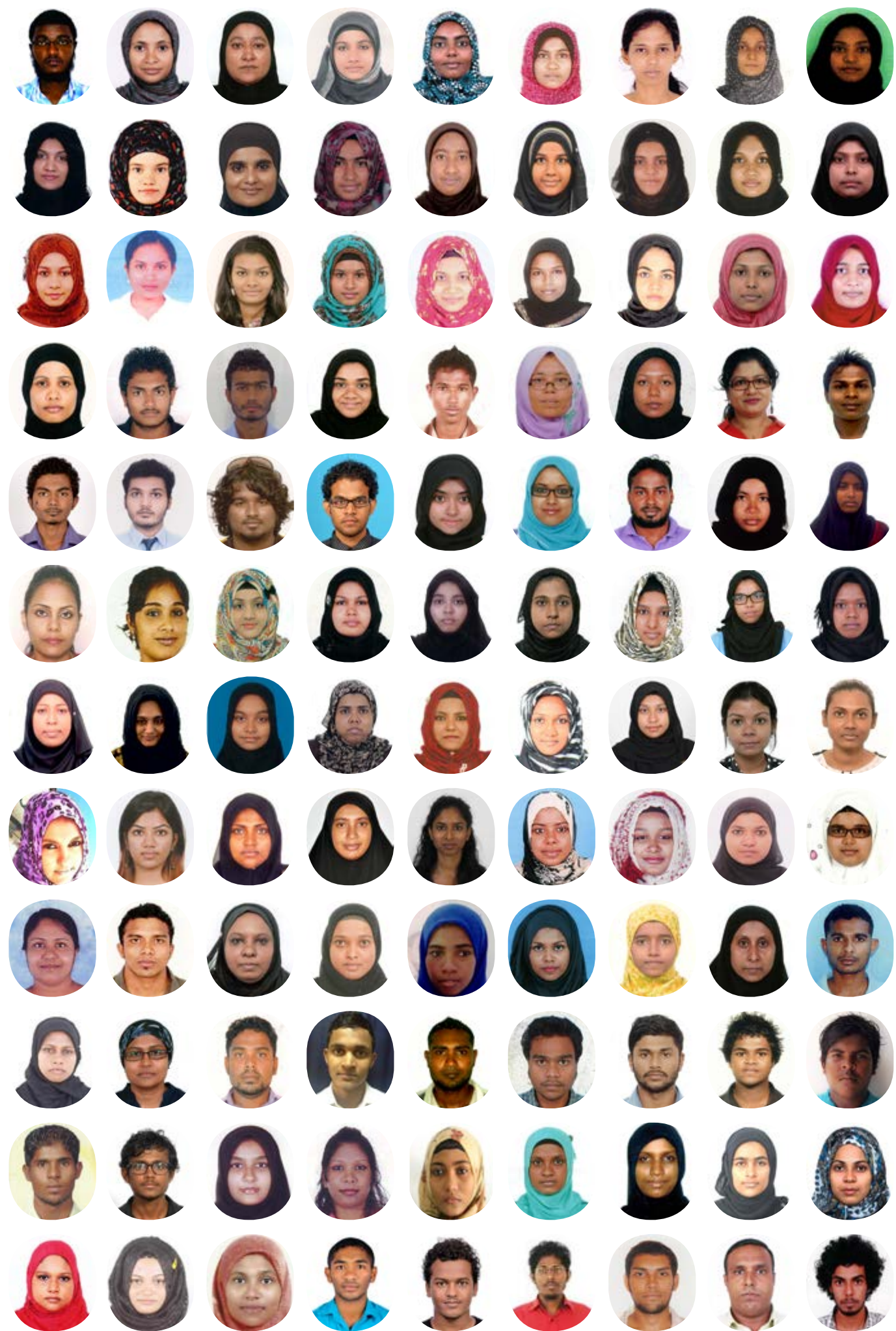
02. Must not be involved in or leading political activities

03. Should be a person of integrity

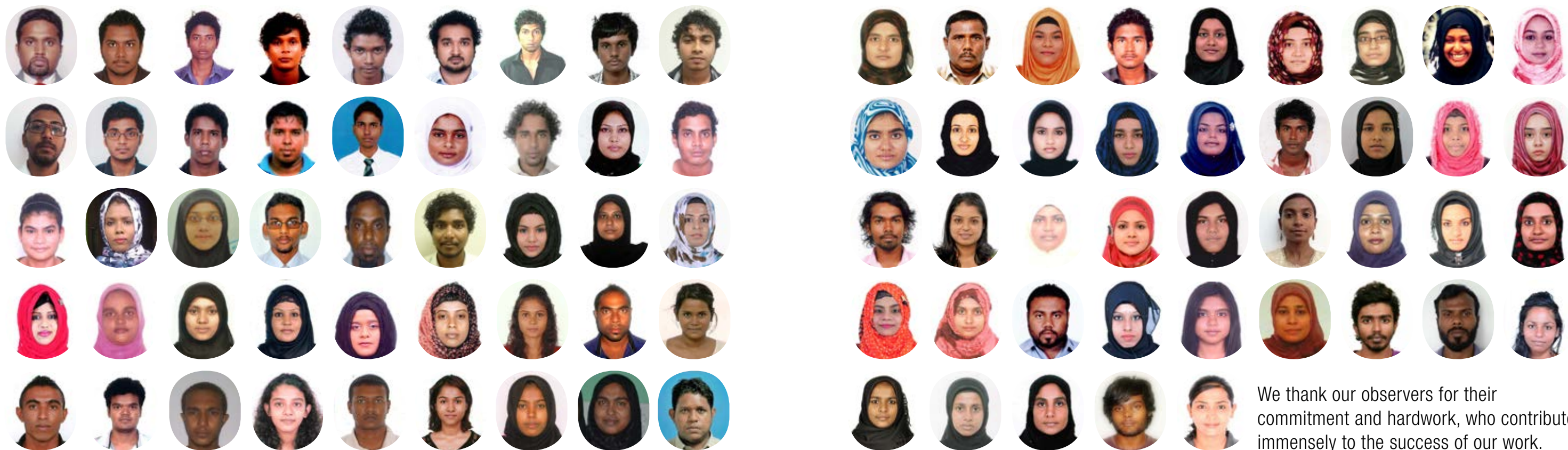
04. Must be trained on international standards of election observation











We thank our observers for their commitment and hardwork, who contributed immensely to the success of our work.



Some of our trained observers from the Malé, capital island, with TM trainers



# 3. Capacity building of citizens, local governments on civic participation,



#ahaahoadha posters displayed on a noticeboard in an island. The posters were displayed as part of a campaign to increase demand for access to information

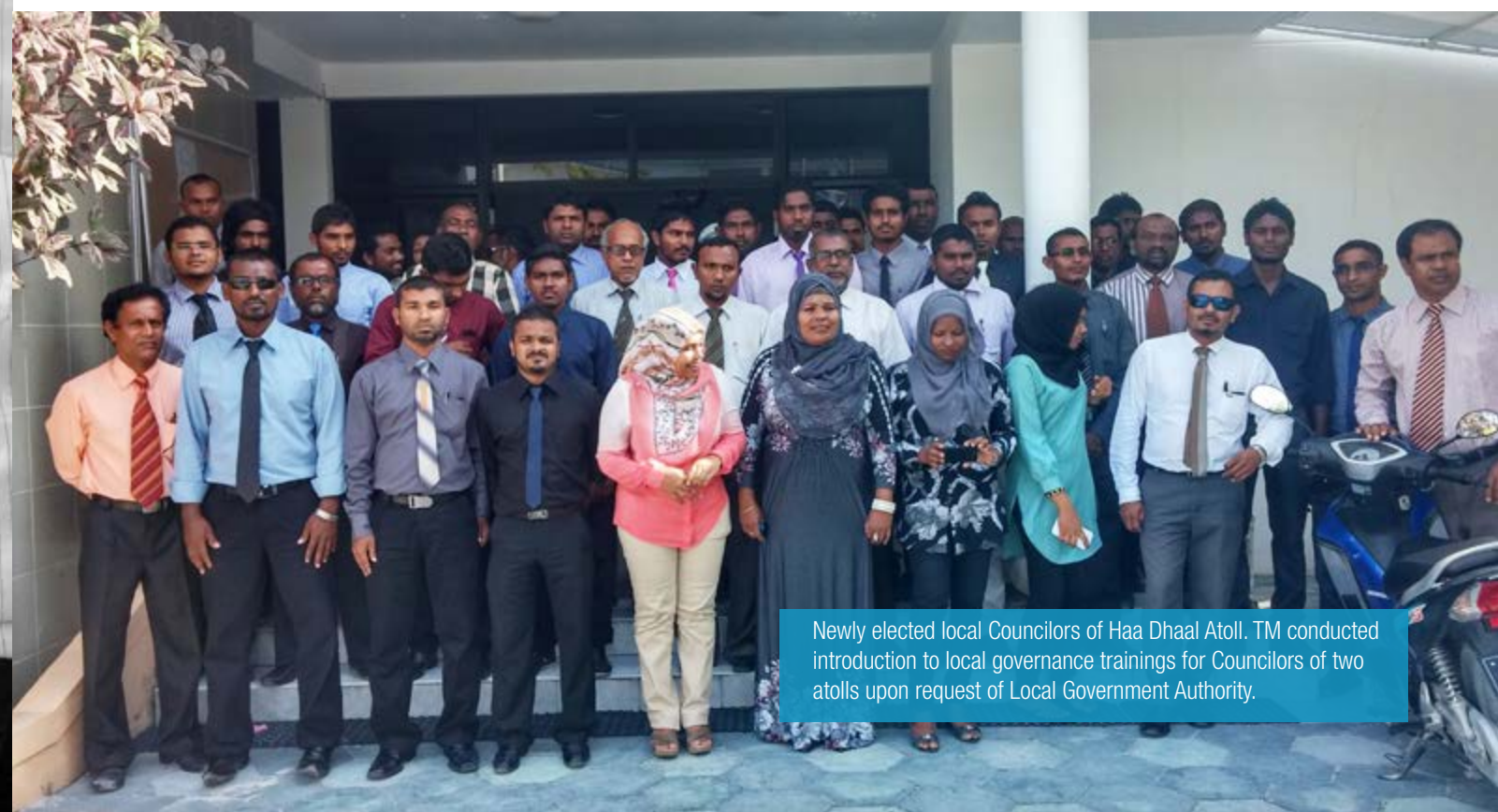
Transparency Maldives



TM believes that strong local governments, with participation of the public, will foster local democracy, leading to reduced corruption and increased transparency.

Transparency Maldives, in partnership with the Institute of Governance and Development, conducted three training programs on corruption and governance, and access to information for elected local government officials.

TM also conducted training programs in all 20 atolls of the Maldives, focusing on citizen participation during elections.



Newly elected local Councilors of Haa Dhaal Atoll. TM conducted introduction to local governance trainings for Councilors of two atolls upon request of Local Government Authority.





## 4. Leading the transparency ship; Access to Information (ATI) Act endorsed by Parliament

Transparency is critical to prevent corruption. A robust access to information regime is paramount to a culture of openness in government and state institutions. We have focused over the past few years to establish a strong legal framework that fosters proactive disclosure, protects and rewards whistleblowers, that will in turn prevent corruption and hold public officials to account.



**“Corruption thrives in secrecy. Access to information is critical in ensuring that the interests of the citizens are protected, for the public to participate in democratic processes and to hold public officials to account,”**

Shifza Omar, Project Coordinator, Access to Information Project

# 5.1 Brief history of ATI bill and our work in promoting access to information

▲ First ATI bill submitted to Parliament, rejected as the bill fell short by just one vote

2007

▲ FATI bill adopted as a regulation by the Nasheed administration, applicable to the executive

2008

▲ ATI regulation enforced

▲ ATI regulation submitted as a Bill to the Parliament. Parliament accepts the bill

▲ TM staff trained on ATI in India, by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, TM's partner

2009

▲ CHRI with TM, meets the Parliament, MPs and ATI Department at the Ministry of Home Affairs, to advocate for a robust access to information regime

▲ An additional two staff of TM trained on ATI in India

▲ TM and CHRI produce a lengthy critique of the ATI bill, with recommendations to bring the bill in line with international ATI best practices

2010

▲ TM and CHRI train all the staff and commissioners of the Human Rights Commission on ATI

▲ TM and CHRI conduct two-day training on ATI for civil society

2011

▲ TM produces a position paper on ATI. The paper highlighted key dimensions of a robust ATI regime 2012, The Human Rights Commission of the Maldives, Anti Corruption Commission, Prosecutor General, Auditor General and the Minister for Human Rights and Gender endorse TM's ATI position paper

▲ In a bid to amend the ATI bill, TM works with MP Mohamed Nasheed to draft an ATI bill from scratch

▲ Social Affairs Committee of the Parliament accepts the ATI Bill drafted by MP Nasheed and TM

▲ Right to Know Day celebrated for the first time in Maldives. A panel discussion on ATI telecast by public telecaster, TVM. Panelists included former MP and Legal Reform Commissioner, member of the Anti Corruption Commission and TM staff

2012

▲ TM conducts Maldives' first symposium on ATI. Panelists include ATI experts from Center for Law and Democracy (Canada), Open Society Initiative (USA), Open Democracy Advice Center (South Africa), Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (based in India) and a former commissioner of Central Information Commission in India. Participants include managers and leaders of main state agencies

▲ Speaker of Parliament, Abdulla Shahid pledges his support to expedite the ATI bill through Parliament, at the closing ceremony of the ATI symposium. Commences talks with political parties. Speaker hopeful of ATI Act endorsement by Parliament by close of 2012 Parliamentary sessions.

▲ ATI experts and TM meet the Social Affairs Committee of Parliament. The committee say "no barrier exists for passage [of ATI] bill"

▲ An additional TM staff trained on ATI by CHRI in India

▲ Fifth TM staff trained on ATI in India, by CHRI

▲ TM conducts workshops in five island communities to build grassroots support for ATI

▲ AhaaHoadha, a multimedia campaign launched to create a culture of asking for information

▲ TA sub-committee of the Social Affairs Committee changes the bill, for the worse

2013

▲ TM trains staff of state institutions on ATI

▲ TM meets political parties, Speaker of Parliament to request endorsement of ATI Bill

▲ TM works with the Attorney General, Speaker of Parliament, MP Nasheed, MP Eva and others to ensure that a best practices ATI Bill reaches Parliament floor

▲ Parliament endorses the ATI bill, 67 for, of 68 MPs in attendance



## 5.2 Ahaahoadha campaign

Our access to information baseline study revealed that the public were not utilizing existing formal mechanisms to obtain information. Rather, the public were requesting for information through informal methods such as phone calls. Additionally, public understanding of access to information as a driver for good governance and transparency is limited.

We started work on the AhaaHoadha campaign to raise grassroots demand, and educate the public on utilizing existing mechanisms for access to information. We conducted workshops in 5 atolls where participants from 17 islands participated. Following the workshops, the participants conducted a campaign to raise awareness on the need for access to information.

The campaign included, but was not limited to printing banners and displaying in public spaces, using street graffiti, and conducting public talks.



Participants of the #ahaahoadha campaign training program pose with TM trainers. Trainings were conducted in 16 island communities



Participants of our #ahaahoadha campaign spray paint messages and slogans demanding for transparency in the running of the government and state



# 6. Understanding and communicating corruption



**“A little corruption is too much corruption. TM seeks to create a culture of zero tolerance to corruption through communicating the debilitating effects of corruption,”**

Aiman Rasheed, Transparency Maldives

## 6.1 Access to Information Baseline Survey

The purpose of Maldives' first Access to Information Baseline Survey was to gauge the understanding of the population on access to information and the methods and mediums utilized by the public in accessing information. The study was utilized in the development

of ATI project activities and the Ahaahoadha campaign with a purpose to create grassroots demand for ATI.

The survey was conducted based on a random sample of 1,000 people. The study will be published in 2014.





## 6.2 Global Corruption Barometer

The Global Corruption Barometer surveyed the public regarding their perceptions and experiences of corruption. The survey was conducted in 107 countries, with over 114,000 respondents worldwide. This is the second time GCB was conducted in Maldives, and will over time, depict trends in perception and experiences of corruption in terms of bribery, trust in institutions etc.

<http://goo.gl/bl1lrT>

## 6.3 State of Democracy Survey

Maldives' first ever extensive state of democracy survey was conducted utilizing the 400+ observer and volunteer network spanning all 20 atolls of Maldives. The findings of the survey are generalisable to the entire country as observer locations were selected based on a random sample, and the methodology for selecting the location of interview in the islands are based on the random walk methodology.

Professor Neil Nevitte is consulting for Transparency Maldives, in the analysis and interpretation of the data. Professor Neil Nevitte is also a Principal Investigator in the World Values Survey, the world's longest running democracy survey.

The results of the survey will be published in 2014.



## 6.5 An Assessment of the Climate Finance in Maldives

Over USD 20 billion in climate finance have been pledged through 2020 for climate change related adaptation and mitigation projects.

Maldives has been pledged USD 130 million from 2008 through 2015 for environment and climate change related projects. Some projects financed through the USD 130 million have been concluded while others are currently ongoing.

“Our research highlights the lack of sufficient monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and limited transparency in the decision making and administrative processes. Climate finance records are not maintained and updated, making it impossible to gauge the complete amounts of climate finance. Additionally, no criteria exist for awarding climate projects to islands, causing politicization and loss of trust in the processes. These issues need to be addressed by the government and donors to reduce wastage and ensure the maximization of resources.” Haifa Naeem, Senior Project Coordinator, Climate Finance Program

<http://goo.gl/hbzKvU>

## 6.4 Pre-Election Assessment, Presidential Election 2013

The Pre-Election Assessment helped inform TM's voter education and advocacy efforts ahead of presidential elections. The study assessed the political environment, trust in key institutions and effects of vote buying.

TM met with leaders of the main political parties, the Speaker of Parliament, independent institutions, media and civil society, and conducted focus group discussion in three atolls, for the assessment.

<http://goo.gl/5VCmTw>

An island is devastated by the 2004 Asian Tsunami. Climate finance transparency and good governance is important to ensure that donor funds are utilized to build climate resilient communities

Photo by flickr.com/shaari





## 6.6 Annual calendar based on the Ahaahoadha campaign

Transparency Maldives published a calendar based on TM's Ahaahoadha campaign. The purpose of the campaign is to increase grassroots demand for access to information. The calendar prompts the public to ask provocative questions that are not normally in the public conscience such as;

do you wonder why elected officials accumulate so much wealth following elections? and why do courts hand down heavy-handed sentences for minor offenses and lenient sentences for serious crimes?



## 6.7 Magey Fehi Gaanoonnu Asaasee, Dhevana Baabu reprint

TM for the second time published 6,000 copies of the popular publications Magey Fehi Gaanoonnu Asaasee and Dhevana Baabu. Magey Fehi Gaanoonnu Asaasee is a user friendly, illustrated version of the Constitution of the Maldives, and contains summaries of all chapters. Dhevana Baabu is a summary of the bill of rights in the Constitution of the Maldives.





## 6.8 Voter Education shows, engagement with the media.

TM was very visible on the media in the year 2013, advocating for electoral integrity. According to the Global Corruption Barometer 2013, TM is the most recognized chapter of Transparency International.

In addition to 9 press conferences to announce reports and findings of election observation, TM appeared in over 65 hours of live TV and radio, comprising 75 separate TV appearances. TM was mentioned in the headline of 35 articles in Haveeru, the daily newspaper with the highest circulation and most visited website in Maldives. Channel News Maldives had 41 articles on TM and its work while the English only website minivannews.com had 97 articles quoting TM. Sun Media group had 25 articles on TM.

TM was featured in AlJazeera, Reuters, Xing Hua and ABC News' election programs on Maldives.



**“We must understand corruption to fight it effectively,”**  
Mariyam Shiuna, Senior Project Coordinator, Transparency Maldives

A collage of some of the TV appearances of TM staff and members during the year 2013





# 7. Building strategic partnerships, locally and beyond

As an advocacy NGO, building networks, fostering and maintaining strategic partnerships are a key focus of Transparency Maldives. Additionally, capacity building of TM as an institution and its staff remain paramount to achieving TM's vision.

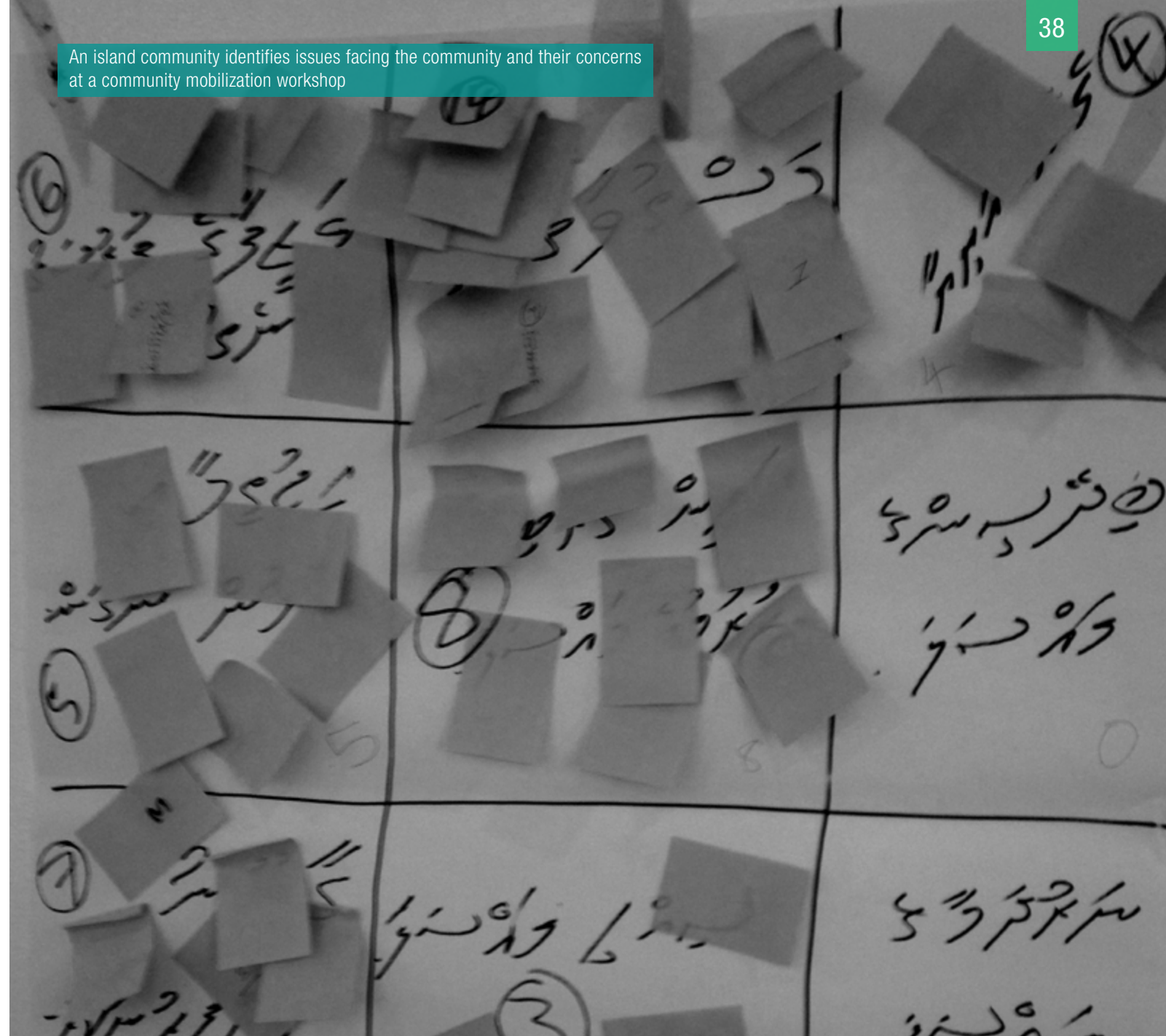
TM staff participated in several Transparency International meetings and trainings in 2013, including regional and annual meetings, a training program on strategic communication and a leadership training program. Additionally, TM staff participated as international election observers in the general elections in Kenya and Nepal.

Key advocacy successes for TM in the year 2013 include:

- Adoption of TM's access to information position paper by the Human Rights Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, then Ministry of Gender and Human Rights, the Prosecutor General, and the Auditor General. The position paper formed the basis of the best practices Right to Information Act that was successfully passed by the Parliament in December 2013.
- Commencement of the work of advocacy working group which is attended by the Anti-Corruption Commission, Prosecutor General, and the Auditor General, formed for the purposes of addressing political financing transparency issues and the abuse of state resources during the election cycle.

TM was funded in 2013 mostly by the UNDP, UNDEF, USAID through NDI and IFES, AusAID and German Environment Ministry through the TI Secretariat.

An island community identifies issues facing the community and their concerns at a community mobilization workshop



Transparency Maldives participates at a communicators meeting in Berlin, organized by TI Secretariat.





