ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Baa Atoll Conservation Fund

The year 2023 marked another year of steady progress for the Baa Atoll Conservation Fund (BACF) in supporting the conservation and sustainable management of the Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve.

During the year, BACF maintained a sound financial position while continuing to generate income through Hanifaru Access Permits, Biosphere Reserve partnership fees, tour guide examination fees, and photography and videography permits. The Fund's running capital increased from MVR 12.40 million at the beginning of 2023 to MVR 14.35 million at the end of the year.

The year also saw continued growth in the network supporting conservation across Baa Atoll. 71 new Hanifaru tour guides were certified, 14 new partnership agreements were established, and four additional areas were declared protected, bringing the number of protected areas in the atoll to 14.

These achievements demonstrate the continued commitment of the BACF, its partners and stakeholders to protecting the unique marine and terrestrial ecosystems of Baa Atoll while supporting responsible tourism, local participation and sustainable development.

I thank the BACF Board, partners, government institutions, councils, communities and all stakeholders whose continued cooperation contributes to the protection of Baa Atoll's natural heritage.

Abdulla Shibau
Baa Atoll Conservation Fund

2. ABOUT THE BAA ATOLL CONSERVATION FUND

The Baa Atoll Conservation Fund (BACF) is a Trust Fund established **on** 18 April 2012 under **the** Public Finance Act (Act No. 3/2006) of the Republic of Maldives.

The Fund is governed by a Board of Directors and managed by the Fund Manager/Managing Director in accordance with its founding documents, Terms of Reference, Rules of Procedure and applicable laws and regulations.

The primary purpose of BACF is **to** co-finance activities that contribute to making Baa Atoll a world-class model of atoll ecosystem conservation**,** in accordance with its designation as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

BACF provides an important mechanism through which revenues generated from activities associated with the Biosphere Reserve can contribute towards conservation, management, education, research, community initiatives and sustainable development.

The Fund works in close cooperation with the Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve Office, Government agencies, local councils, communities, tourism operators, researchers, educational institutions and other stakeholders.

3. BAA ATOLL UNESCO BIOSPHERE RESERVE

The Government of Maldives nominated Baa Atoll for UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status on 28 September 2010. On 28 June 2011, Baa Atoll was designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve at the 40th anniversary meeting of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme in Dresden, Germany.

Baa Atoll became the first UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in the Maldives.

The designation recognises the exceptional ecological importance of Baa Atoll while promoting an integrated approach to conservation and sustainable development.

The Biosphere Reserve seeks to balance:

- Conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems;
- Sustainable use of natural resources;
- Scientific research and monitoring;
- Environmental education and awareness;
- Sustainable livelihoods;
- Responsible tourism; and
- Participation of local communities.

BACF contributes to these objectives by providing financial support and institutional mechanisms for activities that strengthen the long-term sustainability of the Reserve.

4. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

4.1 Opening Capital

During the year, the Fund generated total income of **MVR 2,830,942.00**. Income was primarily generated through Hanifaru Access Permits, Biosphere Reserve partnership fees, tour guide examination registration fees, and photography and videography permits.

Total expenditure for the year amounted to **MVR 878,750.00**, resulting in an income surplus of **MVR 1,952,192.00**.

As a result, the running capital of BACF increased to **MVR 14,347,731.07** at the end of 2023.

4.2 Income

BACF generated total income of **MVR 4,021,048.00**

Running Capital BACF end 2022	**12,395,539.07**
Income	
Sale of Hanifaru Access Permits	
Male' and Eydhafushi	2,188,832.00
BR Partnership Fees	
Resorts, Dive Schools, Liveaboards	492,240.00
Tour Guide Exam Registration Fees	
Male and Eydhafushi	28,640.00
Photography and Videography Permit and other permits	121,230.00
Total Income	**2,830,942.00**

The largest source of income was the sale of **Hanifaru Access Permits**, demonstrating the importance of sustainable visitor management and associated conservation financing within the Biosphere Reserve.

4.3 Expenditure

BACF Management Costs	
Salary and Allownaces	476,000.01
	476,000.01
Transport	
Internal /Sea	42,408.00
Internal /Air	48,904.00
Overseas	0.00
	91,312.00
Office Management Costs	
Office Operation	0.00
Services for Office Operation	0.00
Office Equipment	0.00
Fuel	258,060.00
Miscellneous Expenses	7,434.94
Printing Costs	21,497.40
	286,992.34
Meetings, Workshops, Seminars	
Meetings, Workshops, Seminars	0.00
	0.00
Maintenance	
Spare parts	0.00
BR Vessel	7,195.65
	7,195.65
Procurement of Goods	
IT Related Hardware	17,250.00

Other Equipment	0.00
	17,250.00
Programmes	
Celebration of Special Occassions	0.00
Community Programs	0.00
	0.00
Total Expenditure	**878,750.00**

Total expenditure during 2023 amounted to **MVR 878,750.00**

5. FINANCIAL POSITION AT THE END OF 2023

5. FINANCIAL POSITION

The financial performance of BACF during 2023 can be summarised as follows:

Opening Running Capital:
MVR 12,395,539.07

Add: Total Income:
MVR 2,830,942.00

Less: Total Expenditure:
MVR 878,750.00

Net Increase: MVR 1,952,192.00

Closing Running Capital:

MVR 14,347,731.07

The increase in running capital provides BACF with a stronger financial foundation to support future conservation, community and sustainable development initiatives within the Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve.

6. CONSERVATION AND BIOSPHERE RESERVE PARTNERSHIPS

During 2023, BACF continued to expand cooperation with tourism and other stakeholders supporting the objectives of the Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve.

A total of 14 new partnership agreements were established during the year, comprising:

- 1 resort
- 3 guesthouses
- 10 dive schools

These partnerships strengthen the role of the tourism sector in supporting conservation and responsible management of the Biosphere Reserve.

The partnership approach also provides an important mechanism for engaging businesses operating within Baa Atoll in conservation-related activities and contributing financially to the long-term management of the Reserve.

7. HANIFARU MANAGEMENT AND TOUR GUIDE CAPACITY

Hanifaru Bay remains one of the most internationally recognised marine areas within Baa Atoll and an important component of the Biosphere Reserve's conservation and sustainable tourism programme.

During 2023, **71 new Hanifaru tour guides** were certified.

The continued certification and training of local guides contributes to:

- improving visitor management;
- strengthening interpretation and awareness;
- promoting responsible tourism practices;
- reducing impacts on marine wildlife; and
- increasing local participation in the sustainable tourism economy.

The expansion of the certified guide network represents an important investment in the long-term management of Hanifaru and the wider Biosphere Reserve.

8. PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY and RESEARCH PERMITS

BACF continued to facilitate the controlled use of Baa Atoll's natural areas for photography and videography during 2023.

A total of 8 photography and videography permits were issued during the year while 7 research permits were issued.

The permit system provides a mechanism for regulating commercial and other professional photography and videography activities while generating resources that can contribute to conservation and management of the Biosphere Reserve.

9. EXPANSION OF PROTECTED AREAS

One of the significant conservation developments during 2023 was the declaration of four additional protected areas by the Government.

The newly declared areas were:

1. Nelivaru Region
2. Innafushi Region
3. Dharavandhoo Thila
4. Huraafaru Region

These additions increased the number of protected areas within Baa Atoll to 14.

The newly protected areas represent environmentally and ecologically significant habitats and further strengthen the conservation network of the Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve.

The expansion of the protected-area network is an important step towards maintaining biodiversity, protecting critical marine habitats and strengthening ecosystem-based management across the atoll.

10. CONCLUSION

The year 2023 was a year of continued institutional, financial and conservation progress for the Baa Atoll Conservation Fund.

BACF ended the year with a running capital of **MVR 14,347,731.07**, reflecting a net increase of **MVR 1,952,192.00** during the year. The Fund also strengthened its stakeholder network through **14 new partnership agreements**, expanded local capacity through the certification

of **71 new Hanifaru tour guides**, and supported regulated photography and videography activities through the issuance of **8 permits**.

Most significantly, the declaration of **four additional protected areas** increased the number of protected areas in Baa Atoll to **14**, further strengthening the ecological foundation of the Biosphere Reserve.

These achievements provide a strong platform for BACF to continue its role in mobilising resources, supporting conservation, strengthening partnerships and contributing to the long-term vision of Baa Atoll as a model of sustainable atoll ecosystem management.



Annual Report 2023
Baa Atoll Conservation Fund