Annual Report 2014
Transparency Maldives
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Transparency Maldives (TM), National Contact of Transparency International (TI), is a nonpartisan organization that promotes collaboration, awareness and other initiatives to improve governance and eliminate corruption from the daily lives of people. TM views corruption as a systemic issues and advocates for institutional changes that will punish and prevent corruption.

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Foreword

The year 2014 started with a major advocacy success for Transparency Maldives (TM) with the passage of the landmark Access to Information Act following 5 years of campaigning by TM. After a politically turbulent year in 2013, TM looked to 2014 with more determination to address governance issues in the country and strengthen its programs and interventions, based on the lessons learnt in 2013. In addition, a change in the leadership of TM as well as the board of TM in 2014 meant that there was new opportunity for the organisation to invoke new ideas and strategies based on the foundations laid by predecessors.

As in previous years, we continued with our engagement and outreach in communities across the country, undertook research to understand corruption loopholes in various sectors, held discussions with multiple institutions and raised our voice on various platforms to advocate for the cause we believe in.

In the past year, we were also fortunate to receive exposure opportunities for our staff to share knowledge and learn from partners in the region and strengthen our collaboration and partnerships with multiple stakeholders to drive our agenda of change. Our engagements with various stakeholders from local councillors and youth actors to international partners always provide us with new insights to shape our programs.

Unlike previous years, in 2014, we travelled across the country to deliver civic education to young people as we believe the state of democracy in the Maldives requires a long term strategy of education for young people on democratic values and grassroots mobilisation to strengthen democracy in the Maldives. As such, our ‘Democracy Talks’ in schools and ‘Civic Forums’ in various islands proved to be immensely eye opening and rewarding.

We also focused on shaping policy and transforming behaviours through a series of high level events, roundtables and lobbying on issues related to corruption, democracy, and migrant worker rights to name a few. Most notably, we drafted an Associations Act in line with international best practice and standards and held a symposium to bring stakeholders together to collectively lobby for a best practice NGO law in the Maldives.

Despite immense governance challenges for the country, and the precarious environment in which TM operates, TM’s efforts to promote good governance and eliminate corruption has been possible through the tireless dedication of its staff, who continue to put in extraordinary effort, as well as our board members, who give their time and expertise to guide the work of TM.

TM is grateful for the generosity of its funders and the time given by volunteers and interns who have continued to believe in our cause.

Mariyam Shiuna
Executive Director
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. Advocacy and lobbying

1.1. Promoting Access to Information

Access to Information (ATI) has been a strategic focus area of Transparency Maldives (TM) since 2009. Having campaigned for 5 years to have an ATI Act in the Maldives, the passage of the ATI bill in January 2014 is one of TM’s biggest advocacy successes.

To ensure that the ATI legislation will be effectively implemented and act as a driver for transparency, and a tool for fighting corruption, TM conducted several multi-stakeholder workshops with high level government and independent institution officials; the Local Government Authority (LGA); local councils and stakeholders across 12 atolls.

TM in association with the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) also held a South Asia Regional Conference of RTI Advocates and Practitioners on Promoting People’s Right to Information: Achievements and Challenges. The conference was held to discuss the achievements and challenges in consolidating Access to Information regimes in the region and was attended by activists, information commissioners, and members of parliaments from 10 countries including India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Maldives.
1.2. **Promoting Freedom of Association**

The current Associations Act (Law no: 1/2003) predates the 2008 Constitution and as such limits the Right to Associate.

In July 2014, TM reviewed the current Associations Act, comparing it with international best practice and undertook an extensive literature review on NGO law. In order to advocate for a best practice NGO law, TM held lobbying meetings with the Parliamentary Social Affairs Committee, Ministry of Home Affairs, the Attorney General’s Office and several NGOs in the country.

TM also published a position paper on Freedom of Association in the Maldives, highlighting the gaps in the existing legislation and recommendations for closing the gaps and conforming to international obligations and standards for an open democratic system of governance.

On 12 August 2014, TM convened a multi-stakeholder consultative symposium to understand and identify the gaps and challenges that exist in the current Associations Act, and to initiate dialogue regarding the systemic issues in the Act as a regulatory framework. The symposium was attended by the Attorney General, members of the Parliament, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Youth and Sports, UNDP, NGOs from 5 islands, sports clubs and charity foundations. The closing remarks at the symposium was delivered by the Attorney General, Mohamed Anil.

Following consultations with several stakeholders, a final draft of the model Associations Act was drafted with support of international expert and was formally presented to the Attorney General.
1.3. **Civil Society Organizations - Parliament Dialogue Group**

In order to facilitate greater engagement between lawmakers and civil society actors, TM launched a Civil Society - Parliament Dialogue Group, comprising 3 parliament members (MPs) and 7 civil society organizations (CSOs). The purpose of the Dialogue Group was to foster a culture of openness and transparency in the Parliament, and to facilitate a CSO - MP partnership that will build public confidence in the Parliament.

The Dialogue Group is designed to address key areas of concern between MPs and CSOs and spur a sustainable partnership between MPs and CSOs.
CSOs and MPs discussed issues of concern in parliamentary system that hinder the participation of CSOs in the policy process

1.4. **Promoting financial transparency**

To promote financial transparency and to combat corruption and illicit enrichment TM published a position paper identifying issues in the asset declaration system that is currently practiced in Maldives, with a full list of key recommendations to increase transparency, accountability, and integrity of the governance system.
2. Upholding electoral integrity

2.1. Parliamentary Election Observation 2014

As part of TMs election observation effort for the 2014 Parliamentary elections, TM recruited 299 observers and conducted observer training and civic/voter education workshops for short term observers (STOs) and regional coordinators in 16 geographical areas across the Maldives and deployed 165 out of 180 trained Short-term observers (STOs) to observe randomly selected voting stations.

The STOs accredited by the Elections Commission, reported to TM on the opening of the polls, the voting process and closing of polls on the day of the Parliamentary Election, 2014.

![TM briefs the media on findings of the Parliamentary Election Observation 2014](image)

2.2. National Advisory Committee for Elections

TM's Advocacy and Communications Manager, Aiman Rasheed represented civil society on the National Advisory Committee for Elections during the Parliamentary elections held on 22 March 2014.
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.
3. Civic education and participation

3.1. Democracy talks

TM conducted a “Democracy Talks” program, aimed at 8-12 graders in 6 islands in association with Human Rights clubs, or democracy-focused clubs in schools.

A total of 256 young citizens across 6 islands attended the Democracy Talks which covered the basic concepts of democracy, citizenships and civic responsibilities and community participation.

Students discussed issues in their community and presented ideas on addressing such issues as “positive citizens”

3.2. Civic and voter education

TM travelled to 16 atolls to conduct civic/voter education workshops and civic forums in 2014. Targeting the 2014 Parliamentary election, this program entailed a larger and wider dissemination of civic and voter education messages and was conducted in partnership with local councillors and community based organisations (CBOs).
TM mobilized representatives from CBOs, Women’s Development Committees (WDCs), political parties, police, health, education, gender office, public office staff, newly elected local councillors and private sector staff in selected islands as well as members of the general public for the civic education workshop.

A total of 366 participants attended the civic education workshops, which covered sessions on voter education and information, democracy, role of citizens in democracy and decentralization.

The civic education workshops were conducted in HA. Dhidhoo, HDh. Kulhudhuffushi (with participants from Sh.Atoll), N. Manadhoo, B. Eydhafushi, R. Dhuvafaru, Lh. Hinnavaru, AA. Rasdhoo, ADh. Mahibadhoo, M. Muli, Dh. Kudahuvadhoo, Th. Hirilandhoo, L.Fonadhoo, GA, Dhaandhoo, GDh, Thinadhoo, Gn, Fuvahmulah and S. Hithadhoo and Malé (with participants from Kaafu Atoll).

Civic forums or town-hall style community consultations, were also conducted across the atolls to facilitate community dialogue space and increase the willingness and ability of citizens to participate in political processes and assess the effectiveness of civic forums in local communities.

18 civic forums were successfully conducted with a total of 350 local participants across 18 islands. Several councils adopted the civic forum model to conduct consultations with the public and 3 islands conducted council led civic forums.
TM published a study based on TM’s experiences in conducting civic forums in over 19 islands.

4. Legal Aid

4.1. Advocacy and Legal Aid Centre

The Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre (ALAC) is one of many such centres established in over 40 countries by Transparency International Chapters.

In 2014, TM provided free legal advice to over 150 persons and travelled to Addu City and Fuvahmulah Atoll, to conduct mobile camps to provide legal advice to the general public. There are currently no cases under review.

The majority of cases received were regarding the differences in interpreting laws by Local Councils and the Local Government Authority on jurisdiction and land issues.

The legal advice center also assisted citizens in lodging access to information requests.

Migrant workers visit an ALAC mobile camp held in Male’
5. Governance

5.1. Enhancing women’s participation

Women’s Development Committees (WDCs) are platforms provided for women to participate in the decision making process in their communities and undertake activities for the development of women and their communities.

Based on research TM developed a 2 day program to capacity build WDCs. The capacity building training was conducted for WDCs from 10 islands focusing on decentralization, women in politics, role of women from an Islamic perspective, fundraising and resource mobilization.

TM conducted a qualitative baseline research with WDCs in 10 islands to gain insight into the reasons why WDCs do not operate, identify their challenges and capacity issues, and to identify recommendations for capacity building of WDCs.

Based on Interviews with WDCs in HA. Dhidhdhoo, Hdh. Kulhudhuffushi, N. Manadhoo, Dh. Kudahuvadhoo Th. Hirilandhoo, L. Fonadhoo, GA. Dhaandhoo, Gdh. Thinadhoo, Gn. Fuvahmulah, and S. Hithadhoo, a baseline research report with a full list of recommendations was published.
5.2. United Nations Convention Against Corruption

TM is involved in the Maldives review of its compliance to the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC). ALAC's Project Coordinator, Ahid Rasheed sits in the country task force (as civil society representative) which was mandated with completing Phase I. Self Assessment of the first review cycle (2010 - 2015).

Upon completion of the Self-Assessment Checklist in December 2014, an interim report on the self-assessment was submitted to UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The Assessment is hoped to contribute to national anti corruption reform and help governments review the implementation of UNCAC and facilitate its obligations.

ALAC assists the official focal point of Maldives for the UNCAC review mechanism in ensuring that Maldives complies with the guidelines put forward by UNODC.

Ahid Rasheed also participated in the International Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on the Review Mechanism for UNCAC held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Organised by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the workshop was attended by civil society organisations and government officials from 14 countries across Asia.
6. Understanding corruption

6.1. Assessment of Women’s Development Committees in the Maldives

TM conducted a qualitative baseline research with Women’s Development Committees (WDCs) in 10 islands to gain insight into the reasons why WDCs do not operate, identify their challenges and capacity issues, and to identify recommendations for capacity building of WDCs.


Assessment of Women’s Development Committees in the Maldives https://goo.gl/lCbvZ0

6.2. Freedom of Association in the Maldives

TM published a position paper on the Freedom of Association in the Maldives, highlighting the gaps in the existing legislation and recommendations for closing the gaps and conforming to international obligations and standards for an open democratic system of governance.

Freedom of Association in the Maldives https://goo.gl/ZJ00Op

6.3. Failure to disclose assets: A pathway to corruption

To promote financial transparency and to combat corruption and illicit enrichment TM published a position paper identifying issues in the asset declaration system that is currently practiced in Maldives, with a full list of key recommendations to increase transparency, accountability, and integrity of the governance system.

Failure to disclose assets: A pathway to corruption https://goo.gl/qTak6c

6.4. Democracy at the Crossroads

In the conviction that the successful performance of democratic institutions requires a complementary set of supporting democratic values, TM conducted a nationwide random survey of the Maldivian public in August 2013. This is the first democracy survey conducted in Maldives and it provides important benchmark data and points to significant democratic deficits within Maldivian political culture.

It provides important benchmark data. Subsequent surveys will shed light on the trajectories and pace of change. They will help us to understand where democracy in the Maldives is headed.
As part of the survey we conducted forums with 37 participants in various focus groups, including women leaders, youth leaders and institutional leaders.

Dr. Neil Nevitte discusses findings of the Democracy Survey 2013 in a meeting with women leaders

Democracy at the Crossroads [http://goo.gl/eCWV4V](http://goo.gl/eCWV4V)

### 6.5. National Integrity Systems Assessment

Based on the concept that a coordinated and collaborative effort is needed by a range of institutions to effectively fight corruption, a National Integrity Systems Assessment (NIS) was conducted, evaluating 13 institutions in the Maldives in terms of their legal strengths in fighting corruption and how effectively they are performing their functions.

The consultative research and report also looks at the cultural societal, political and economical environment to account for the context in which these institutions are functioning. The methodology and guiding questions applied in research were developed by Transparency International and NIS Assessments have been done in over 77 countries.

National Integrity Systems Assessment [http://goo.gl/kXdQu](http://goo.gl/kXdQu)
6.6. **Local Council Election**

TM published a position paper on the Local Council Election 2014, to bring to the attention of the public and relevant institutions some of the major systemic issues within the electoral framework and to advocate for changes to the system.

The position paper highlights critical and fundamental issues in the local governance and council election systems. It is hoped that the position paper initiates discussion on these issues and paves way for the implementation of the recommendations to strengthen the local governance and council election systems.

Local Council Election [http://goo.gl/ooeBw9](http://goo.gl/ooeBw9)

6.7. **Civic forum: A path to community engagement**

To capture TM’s experiences in conducting civic forums and the process that was followed, a study titled ‘Civic Forum: A Path to Community Engagement’, was published to provide practitioners and stakeholders with a useful insight into how community consultations can be conducted in a Maldivian context; with the tools to design and implement future interventions to strengthen local governance in the Maldives.

Civic forum: A path to community engagement [http://goo.gl/rwH5m0](http://goo.gl/rwH5m0)
7. Knowledge transfer and exchange

International election observation

- International observer for the Egypt Referendum with TI Observer Group, January 2014.
- International observer for the Solomon Islands National Election with Commonwealth Observer Group, July 2014.

Workshops/conference

- International Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on the Review Mechanism for UNCAC, 24-27 February, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Civil society exchange workshop on promoting post-election accountability, 30 June - 2 July, Delhi, India.
- TI Speak-Up Asia Workshop, 4-6 September, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- NDII election peer exchange, 23-27 September, Yangon, Burma.
- REDD+Finance and Governance Workshop, 7-10th October, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Asian forum on global governance, 26 October - 2 November, Delhi, India.
- IFES roundtable discussion on political finance and women’s political participation, 27 November, Male’, Maldives.

TI Meetings

- Asia Pacific Department Meeting, 16-20, May 2014, Kathmandu, Nepal
- TI Annual Members Meeting, October 2014, Berlin, Germany

Trainings

- Communication Workshop, 9-11 April 2014, Bangladesh.
- Executive Director Induction Program, 16-20 May 2014, Kathmandu, Nepal.
8. **Media engagements**

In 2014, TM published 4 research publications, 3 position papers and 7 press statements. TM appeared in 26 TV appearances, 8 radio shows and was mentioned in local news 30 times.

**Publications**

Civic forum: A path to community engagement [http://goo.gl/rwH5m0](http://goo.gl/rwH5m0)
Assessment of Women’s Development Committees in the Maldives [http://goo.gl/lCbvZ0](http://goo.gl/lCbvZ0)
National Integrity Systems Assessment [http://goo.gl/kXdQtu](http://goo.gl/kXdQtu)

**Position papers**

Local Council Election [http://goo.gl/ooeBw9](http://goo.gl/ooeBw9)
Failure to disclose assets: A pathway to corruption [http://goo.gl/qTak6c](http://goo.gl/qTak6c)

**Press statements**


The opening of polls was smooth, transparent and well-administered  [http://goo.gl/R80Blp](http://goo.gl/R80Blp)

Polling day processes well-administered and transparent, but wider issues of money politics threatens to hijack democratic process  [http://goo.gl/cO2doU](http://goo.gl/cO2doU)


Transparency Maldives calls for more transparency in order to avoid escalating the social, economic, and political repercussions stemming from the water crisis  [http://goo.gl/8XfhgD](http://goo.gl/8XfhgD)

TM calls on the state to uphold, respect and operate within the boundaries of the constitution, and democratic norms and principles  [http://goo.gl/HmF36m](http://goo.gl/HmF36m)
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