

# Everyday lives and environmental change

Uma Kothari | Alex Arnall | Mizna Mohamed

## Introduction

Day-to-day life is often regarded as mundane and ordinary, and therefore not particularly worthy of study. Our 18-month project shows, however, that the everyday is central to understanding how environmental change occurs and its daily impacts on people's lives.

## Geographical focus

- The Maldives, an archipelago nation located in the Indian ocean.
- Our particular focus is on three inhabited islands positioned in the north Malé atoll.
- These islands have been selected, in part, due to their proximity to major 'uninhabited' tourist resort islands.

## Research methods

- The project is using innovative textual and visual approaches to help uncover people's day-to-day routines and activities.
- Ethnographically, individual narratives and biographies are providing information on past and current connections between people, poverty and their immediate physical environments.
- Creative and visual methodologies, including participatory photography, are enabling sharing of knowledge, experiences and practices.

## Key findings

- People are most concerned about gradual changes in their immediate, physical surroundings, such as beach and sand erosion, and the build-up of waste and debris on the coast.
- These localised changes attract little attention from international and national decision makers, yet are of considerable significance to those living with, and affected by, them.

## Intended audiences

- The intended audiences are the Maldivian government, representatives of advocacy, NGO and business groups, and advisors in international development agencies.
- One example of engagement with these stakeholders is an exhibition of islanders' photos in the national capital, Malé, which we are organising in partnership with UNDP. The photographs will highlight the issues that are making a profound difference to island-based communities.

## Project impacts

- The project is impacting in many ways. Conceptually, it has already shown that it is in the everyday that we can see what is important to people.
- It has brought the perspectives and voices of marginalised communities living on outer islands to the 'centre', the capital, Malé, and to the attention of policy makers through presentations and a photography exhibition.
- In terms of capacity building, local islanders, such as women's groups, are taking part in participatory photography workshops. These activities place value on people's perspectives and allow participants to express themselves through visual imagery.
- The Maldivian partner, ENDEVOR, and project Research Assistant are learning about new research approaches and methods.



Participatory photography workshop, Huraa, Maldives. August 2018

### Acknowledgements

- We are very grateful to the people in the Maldives who shared their knowledge and experiences of everyday life and environmental change with us.
- We would also like to thank the project Research Assistant, Afrah Rasheed, for her contribution to data collection.

### Contact information

- Uma Kothari**, Global Development Institute, University of Manchester
- Email: [uma.kothari@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:uma.kothari@manchester.ac.uk) | <https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/uma.kothari.html>
- Alex Arnall**, School of Agriculture, Policy and Development
- Email: [a.h.Arnall@reading.ac.uk](mailto:a.h.Arnall@reading.ac.uk) | <https://www.reading.ac.uk/apd/staff/a-h-arnall.aspx>
- Project website: <http://www.everydaylives.manchester.ac.uk/>