



ANNUAL REPORT
2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 4 Who we are
- 8 Our Guests
- 18 Our Voice
- 22 Our Research
- 44 Laamu's Community
- 54 Resort Sustainability
- 58 Sustainability Fund
- 61 How to support MUI

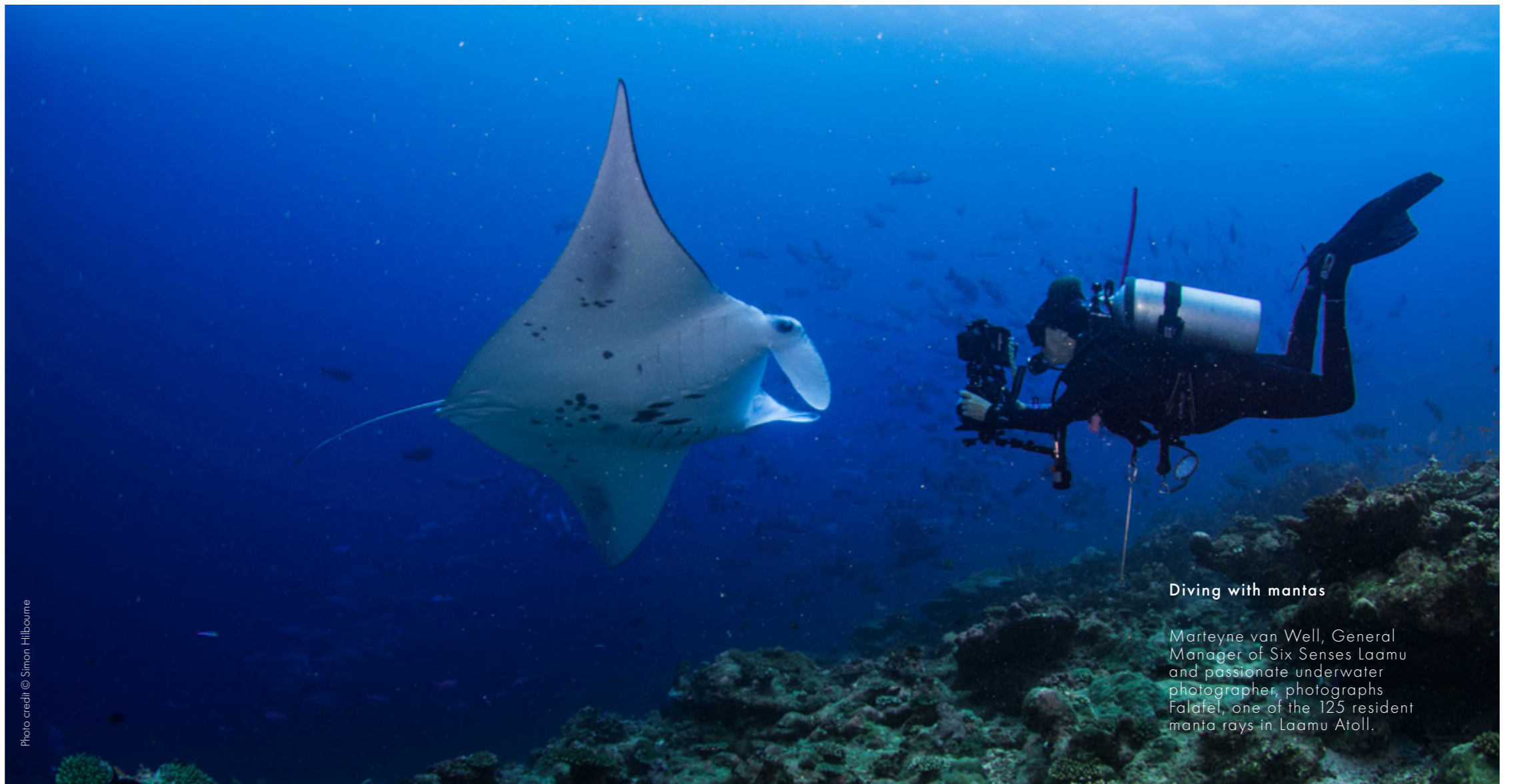


Photo credit © Simon Hilbourne

Diving with mantas

Marteyne van Well, General Manager of Six Senses Laamu and passionate underwater photographer, photographs Falafel, one of the 125 resident manta rays in Laamu Atoll.

FROM OUR GM

As an avid diver and photographer, I witnessed first-hand the tragedy that was the 2016 coral bleaching event in the Maldives. As an ocean conservationist, I was devastated by the impact on the ecosystem I love. Sadly, three-quarters of the country's corals bleached and unfortunately the reefs in the Laamu Atoll were not immune.

At the time, I felt helpless to fight the seemingly insurmountable problems our oceans are facing— not just coral bleaching, but overfishing, plastic pollution and habitat destruction. I knew my passion for ocean conservation was shared by

the team at the resort, our owners in Singapore and the management team at Six Senses Hotels Resorts and Spas and I was determined to use the resources at my disposal to drive action at a local and global scale. Inspired by the work done by other conservationists, I set a challenge to myself and to our 3 member marine team: Let us leave

a legacy in Laamu – let us leave this beautiful and unique part of the Maldives better than how we found it! Let us engage with our guests, share our passion for the oceans

and the need to conserve it, let us touch the hearts and minds of the local community and mobilise them to help protect it, let us call on the network of global experts in order to conduct research which can help teach us how we can tackle conservation challenges.

'Let us leave a legacy in Laamu - Let us leave this beautiful and unique part of the Maldives better than how we found it'

With that, the concept for the Maldives Underwater Initiative (MUI) was born. The idea was to bring together the greatest minds in marine conservation to find innovative solutions to Laamu's most pressing issues. In June 2018, this vision became a reality with the formation of MUI. Our team has grown to 10 and is supported by our Sustainability

Manager as well as our Community Education and Outreach Manager. We have welcomed 17 visiting experts in the past year and learned from their expertise and

in turn shared our learnings and experiences with our guests, our team and our local community. Within a short space of time, the team has clocked numerous achievements, from the largest ever turn out to our Turtle Festival, to winning the Green Hotelier's Community Award and Skål International

Sustainable Tourism Award for Marine and Coastal initiatives. The work done and relationships forged resulted in securing a courageous pledge from the Laamu Atoll Council to protect key habitats which will hopefully lead to a locally-managed marine protected area in the near future.

MUI is just at the start of its journey and with ambitious plans for 2019, we will continue to strive to inspire and drive actions and spread conservation messages within our sphere of influence and beyond.

Marteyne van Well

Underwater Photographer & General Manager, Six Senses Laamu

WHO WE ARE

The Maldives Underwater Initiative (MUI) is a marine conservation initiative from Six Senses Laamu. Based at the 5-star resort in the Maldives, MUI consists of staff from the resort and its three NGO partners: Blue Marine Foundation, The Manta Trust and Olive Ridley Project. MUI inspires action through education, research and community development.



SIX SENSES LAAMU

Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas is at the forefront of the sustainable tourism curve, with corporate sustainability guidelines consisting of 70 standards, and a target to eliminate single use plastic from operations by 2022. What sets Six Senses Laamu apart from the 144 other resorts in the Maldives is its dedication to sustainability and marine conservation. Forming MUI was a natural progression of the resort's goals to protect and conserve Laamu's unique environment.

THE MANTA TRUST

The Manta Trust is a UK-registered charity that coordinates global mobulid research and conservation efforts. Their mission is to conserve mobulid rays and their habitats, through research, education and collaboration. Since 2014, the Manta Trust have been working in Laamu to study the local manta ray population and to educate guests and the local community about the importance (and vulnerability) of manta rays in the Maldives.

BLUE MARINE FOUNDATION

Blue Marine Foundation (BLUE) exists to combat overfishing and the destruction of biodiversity – arguably the largest problem facing the world's oceans – by delivering practical conservation solutions, including the creation of large-scale marine reserves. Since 2016, the team has been addressing key knowledge gaps in the Maldivian grouper fishery and working with the community towards better fisheries management and improving the resilience of Laamu's reefs.

OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT

Olive Ridley Project is on a mission to remove ghost nets (lost or discarded fishing gear) from the ocean; to rescue and rehabilitate injured sea turtles, reduce and reuse marine debris, and educate the world about the dangers of ghost nets and the perilous situation of sea turtles. Since April 2018, a sea turtle biologist has been stationed at Six Senses Laamu to study the local turtle population, monitor turtle nests on the island, and collect data on ghost nets found in and around the atoll.

OUR MISSION

To lead the tourism industry in the Maldives through meaningful marine conservation efforts based on research, education and community outreach.

OUR VISION

A local and global community of marine stewards that will create a culture of positive action for our oceans in Laamu and beyond.



OUR GUESTS



240% Increase in interactions with guests, compared to 2017



13 International conservation days celebrated



12 Turtle nests witnessed hatching by guests



226 Guest dolphin cruises conducted



493 Snorkel excursions conducted



16 Visiting Experts engaged guests



LAAMU'S STORIES

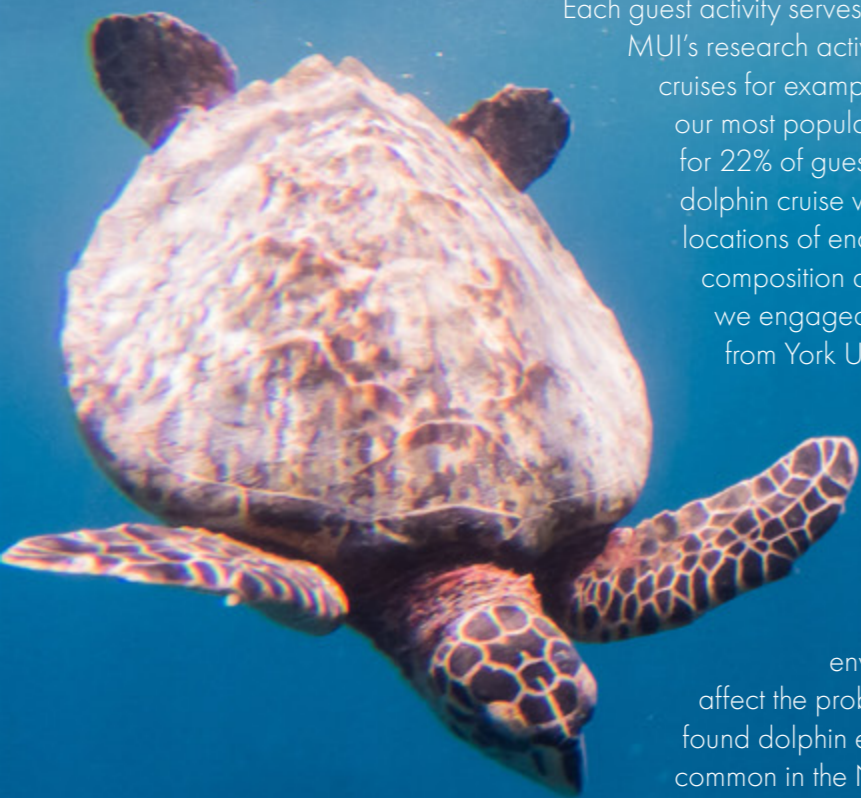
Ethan is one of Six Senses Laamu's repeater guests. His enthusiasm for the marine environment inspired the MUI team to design a junior marine biology programme. In 2019, we're inviting young marine conservationists aged 6 to 16 to join the unique program aimed at nurturing the next generation of marine stewards.

GUEST EDUCATION

At MUI, we believe being a marine biologist at a resort is about more than just being a snorkel guide. Above all, it's about science communication. Every single guest interaction is an opportunity to inspire others to care about the plight of our oceans. Different people engage with conservation messages in different ways, which is why we offer a range of activities, from hands-on workshops, presentations and Kids Club, to dolphin cruises, guided snorkels and reef cleans. In 2018, guests visited Six Senses Laamu from all around the globe. Together they have helped spread messages about marine conservation to 85 countries.

Each guest activity serves a higher purpose for MUI's research activities. Take our dolphin cruises for example, which continue to be our most popular activity (accounting for 22% of guest interactions). On every dolphin cruise we collect data on the locations of encounters, the group composition and behaviour. This year, we engaged a Masters student from York University to identify the locations that spinner dolphins (*Stenella longirostris*) are most commonly sighted at, timings of their daily migration and environmental factors that affect the probability of sightings. We found dolphin encounters are most common in the NE monsoon months (Oct-Apr) and least common during the SW monsoon (May-Sep).

Within the resort, guest awareness of MUI and its activities is on the rise, with a 240% increase in average monthly guest interactions compared to 2017. There was also a 270% increase in Trip Advisor reviews mentioning the MUI team and 12 times more mentions of team members by name, compared to the same period last year.



VISITING EXPERTS

Dr Gerry Allen
Ichthyologist (Fish Scientist)

Charles Clover
Journalist, Marine Conservationist

Dr Mark Deakos
Manta Ray and Cetacean Researcher

Dr Mark Erdmann
Coral Reef Ecologist

Dr Julie Hawkins
Marine Conservation Biologist

John Hoover
Fish Identification Specialist

Dr Jillian Hudgins
Turtle Biologist

Roger Munns
Underwater Cinematographer

Zoona Naseem
PADI Course Director

Claire Petros
Sea Turtle Vet

Erin Quigley
Underwater Photographer

Jon Rawlinson
Science Communicator

Prof Callum Roberts
Marine Conservation Biologist

Dr Ray Rochester
Veterinarian

Dr Guy Stevens
Moluscid Researcher

Dr Alex Tattersall
Underwater Photographer



Photo credit © Roger Munns

Roger Munns

Roger was one of the principal cameramen on the BBC's Blue Planet II series. He is a British Emmy and BAFTA award-winning underwater cameraman, based in Sabah, Malaysia.



LAAMU'S STORIES

Home to endangered seabirds, diverse species of crabs, shrimps, worms and fish, the mangrove forests of Laamu Atoll, along with its seagrass meadows, are intimately linked to its coral reefs. Without healthy mangroves, we would not have our thriving marine ecosystems. The team is working on a turning Laamu's mangroves into a guest experience, the first of its kind in the country.



426,000 Facebook impressions



119,000 Instagram impressions

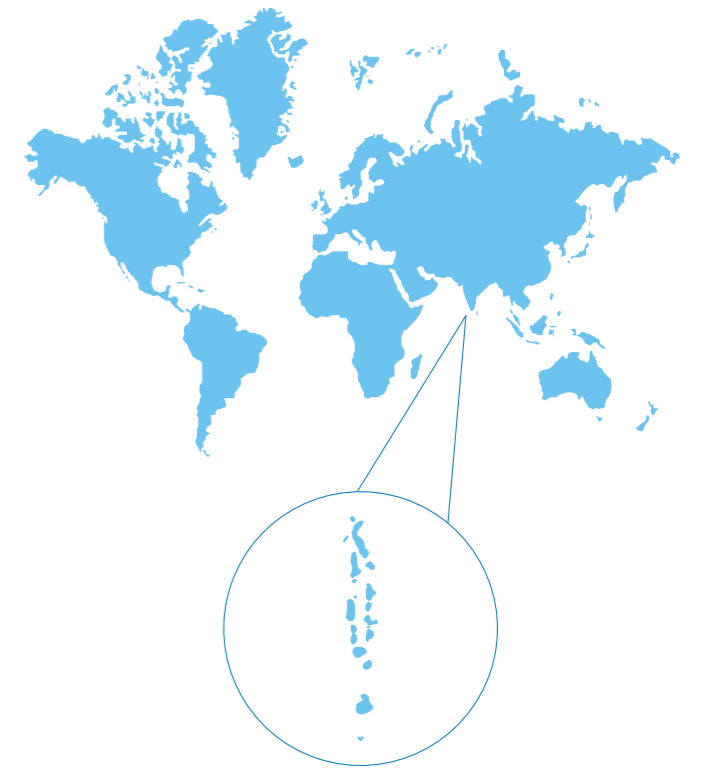


17 articles published about MUI's activities

OUR VOICE

Cinematic Science

Visiting expert, Jon Rawlinson from Cinematic Science, films one of Laamu's local fisherman (portait on page 40) for one of MUI's upcoming video releases.



This year, the marine team at Six Senses Laamu re-branded as the Maldives Underwater Initiative (MUI) to better reflect the united efforts of Six Senses Laamu and its on-site partner NGOs against the threats facing our oceans.

MUI has directly engaged nearly 9,500 guests staying at Six Senses Laamu and reached a further 280,000 people in 46 countries via our social media channels. In the past six months, we've managed to cultivate a community of conservation-minded followers that share our vision for a healthier ocean in Laamu and around the world. We made a total of 545,000 impressions on this community and their networks on Facebook and Instagram.

This year we shared newsworthy events with our networks via press releases, including the installation of our mid-water coral nursery, winning Green Hotelier's Community Award, celebrating one year of our Eku Eky Program, winning the Skai Sustainable Tourism Marine and Coastal award, and removing prawns from our menus. The world agreed that these events deserved the attention of the public, and 17 articles about MUI were written to spread the good news.

LAAMU'S STORIES

We are trialing innovative ways to tell compelling conservation stories. Virtual reality is one way we can show the underwater world to guests that don't swim and Laamu Atoll residents that have never seen a coral reef underwater before!



OUR RESEARCH



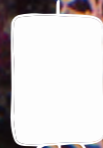
1,476 hours of research dives



376 hours of research snorkels



3 Masters theses published



5 scientific conference poster presentations



4 scientific conference oral presentations

CORAL RESTORATION



4.1 km² of reef protected in Biosphere Reserve pledge



180 corals planted back onto the reef



800 corals grow in our mid-water nursery



64% increase in volume after 6 months of growth



Spot the frogfish

This frogfish is perfectly camouflaged among the mosaic of hard and soft corals, sponges, macroalgae, ascidians, hydroids and more that comprise Laamu Atoll's reefs.

RESTORING THE REEF

In 2016, water temperatures averaged 32°C for a period of three weeks (that's only 1.5°C above the maximum summertime average). Because of this, three-quarters of the corals in Maldives rejected their symbiotic algae that provides the corals' colour and up to 95% of their food. Many of these bleached corals then died. Laamu was not immune to this event however, we found site-specific severity; our inner reefs were the most affected, while deeper outer reef and channel sites, supplied with cooler tidal water daily, remain relatively untouched.

The good news is – two years on- we are seeing promising signs of recovery. Our recent study of *Acropora* corals (a genus of branching coral that was most affected by the bleaching event) found an average of 4.8 *Acropora* corals per m² in areas of our house reef, 62% of which were new recruits. Guests are noticing the signs of recovery too, with only one Trip Advisor review mentioning coral bleaching this year, in comparison to 10 in 2017. This is both a testament to the recovery of the reef and the work the team does in communicating what happened and the processes of recovery. Despite this, with the increasing frequency of temperature anomalies leading to mass bleaching events, natural recovery may not be enough to assure the survival of this precious ecosystem.

We're hoping to help our house reef in two ways: placing it within an IUCN Biosphere Reserve (in 2018 we pledged 4.1 km² of Six Senses Laamu's reef to the Ministry of Environment and Energy Maldives' Biosphere Reserve proposal) and through active restoration.

This year we welcomed our Coral Biologist who spent her first few months investigating processes governing health and survival during the collection and planting of coral fragments in our mid-water coral nursery. We found that harvesting fragments didn't affect the donor colonies, which showed very fast recovery and no differences in growth compared to other colonies on the reef after six months. We also found that during the first two weeks, fragments allocated resources to attaching to the nursery ropes. After 6 months, nursery fragments had increased in volume by 64% on average, in comparison to reef corals, which increased by 31% on average. We've now planted 180 corals from our nursery back on our house reef, and will continue to refine our methods to ensure rapid attachment, growth and survival. Guests are also able to share in this work by participating in our Restore the Reef activity.

#PROTECTMALDIVES

SEAGRASS

There is a perception in the Maldives that seagrass and tourism cannot coexist. Purely for aesthetic reasons, this vital habitat is actively removed from resort islands. This is despite its valuable role as a carbon sink, food source, nursery habitat, sediment stabiliser and nutrient filter that protects and maintains surrounding coral reefs.

Recognising the value of this habitat, in July 2017, Six Senses Laamu made a pledge to protect its 50,000 m² (five hectares) of seagrass meadows. The feedback we have received from guests, who now more frequently spot feeding turtles from their villas or snorkel with eagle rays, has been overwhelmingly positive. We asked guests to help us collect information on what they saw, as Seagrass Citizen Scientists. Each guest that completed the survey saw, on average, 11 megafauna (turtles, sharks and rays) in the seagrass around their villa (over an average stay of four days).

"We loved seeing turtles and stingrays around our villa... [The seagrass] adds to the colors and shades of the water visually so no aesthetic reason not to have seagrass!!" — Six Senses Laamu Guest, 2018

Thanks to this feedback from guests, we are now convinced that tourism and seagrass can coexist. This year MUI, along with the Blue Marine Foundation (BLUE) and other partners, made it our mission to convince other resorts to join us in protecting seagrass across the country. We have connected with 49 resorts and have determined that 50% of resorts that have seagrass actively remove it. By the end of 2019, we aim for that number to be zero.



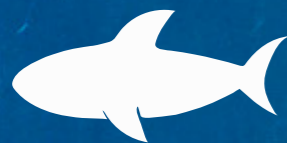
50,000 m² of seagrass protected



>100 species of fish live in the seagrass.

CO₂

25T of carbon stored each year (the equivalent of driving a mid-sized car around the earth twice)



11 sharks, turtles and rays seen on average by guests over the course of their stay.

OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT

Green sea turtle

Although commonly found on coral reefs, green sea turtles can also be seen grazing on seagrass meadows, where they eat 2kg of seagrass a day.



TURTLES IN LAAMU 'SAFE AND PROTECTED'

In Laamu atoll, sea turtles are so abundant that you'd be unlucky not to encounter one during your stay at Six Senses Laamu. Home to significant numbers of both hawksbill (Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species) and green turtles (Endangered), Laamu Atoll is also thought to contain the most significant green turtle nesting site in the country, Gaadhoo, and our own Olhuveli Island sees large numbers of green turtle nests each year.

In the Maldives, sea turtles, their eggs and habitats are fully protected under the Maldives Environmental Protection and Preservation Act (4/93). Despite their protected status and relative abundance in Laamu, sea turtles still face significant threats, including: harvesting for meat and eggs, capture of hatchlings for the pet trade, entanglement in ghost nets (discarded fishing nets) and destruction of nesting and foraging habitats. That's why, in April 2018, the Olive Ridley Project (ORP) joined MUI, in order to study the local turtle population, monitor turtle nests and collect data on ghost nets found in and around the atoll. Using the unique facial patterns of each sea turtle, which act like a fingerprint, the ORP collects data on the number and distribution of turtles in Laamu. In 2018, the ORP added 128 turtles to the existing Laamu database, bringing the total to more than 400 individuals and making ours the second largest database in the Maldives, which is all the more remarkable given we are the only resort maintaining this database, whereas other atolls have many resorts contributing to a single atoll's database. We have now identified 424 individual turtles (253 hawksbill and 171 green turtles).

Each year around the time the season changes from the 'wet' SW monsoon, to the 'dry' NE monsoon, discarded fishing nets (ghost nets) drift into Maldivian waters, entrapping, on average, 100 turtles each year. In 2018, we rescued 14 green and olive ridley turtles that were found entangled in ghost nets or plastic debris. Five of these turtles had severe injuries that required them to be transported to rehabilitation centres for treatment.

424 identified turtles in our database (128 new turtles identified in 2018)

14 green and olive ridley turtles rescued

31 green turtle nests laid on Olhuveli island (out of 88 nests laid since 2011)

1,542 hours spent monitoring turtle nests

1,685 turtle hatchlings successfully made it to the ocean

480 guests witnessed turtle hatching events



On a more positive note, we had a record year for nesting green turtles on our island. Thirty-one nests (up from the previous record of 18) were recorded. It's estimated that these nests hatched 1,685 turtles that in 15-50 years, when they reach sexual maturity, will return to the same area to mate and (if they're female) lay their own eggs. Thanks to our Nestwatch volunteers and more than 1,500 hours of monitoring throughout the night, 480 guests were able to see these hatching events in the most natural way possible.

ORP and Blue Marine Foundation are currently collaborating with Six Senses Laamu and the Laamu Atoll Council to help monitor and protect Gaadhoo, a nearby uninhabited island with one of the highest rates of turtle nesting activity in the Maldives. Residents of Gaadhoo had previously acted as custodians of the nesting beach. However, since the local population was relocated in 2016, nests on the island have been subject to uncontrolled poaching. In December 2018, the Laamu Atoll Council announced their plan to protect Gaadhoo, and ORP are currently gathering data to support this protection and help develop a long-term sustainable management plan.

Photo credit © Maneyne van Well



LAAMU'S STORIES

Laamu's annual turtle festival is the opportunity for the community to come together and celebrate the importance of turtles. This young dolphin, ray, and turtle act out a skit about the importance of protecting marine life for a balanced ecosystem. Inspiring the youth of today is important to secure a future for these endangered species.

THE MANTA TRUST



Feeding frenzy

Laamu's mantas are most commonly found at their local cleaning station. However, once in a while we'll catch them at the surface, feeding on the plankton-rich waters.

LAAMU MANTA RAY CONSERVATION

Just a 15-minute boat ride away from Six Senses Laamu and 20m below the surface is a playground for manta rays. And a beauty salon. And a singles bar. The cleaning stations at Hithadhoo Corner (a series of large coral blocks teeming with cleaner wrasse eager to caress and clean their large, up to 3.5m, clients) serve all of these functions for the resident population of 125 reef manta rays. Each manta has a unique spot pattern on its belly from which they can be identified. While other sites in the Maldives host larger populations of manta rays, our two aggregation sites, Hithadhoo Corner and Fushi Kanduu, have the enviable quality of hosting mantas year-round.

As with turtles in Laamu, the abundance of manta rays in Laamu Atoll belies the dangerous decline in their populations worldwide. Reef manta rays are listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species and their populations continue to decline in the face of human impacts such as targeted fisheries, bycatch and destruction of key habitats like coral reefs. For the past five years, the Manta Trust has partnered with Six Senses Laamu to address gaps in our knowledge of manta rays and to educate guests and the local community about the importance (and vulnerability) of manta rays in the Maldives.

Each guest dive to Hithadhoo Corner is accompanied by a Manta Trust researcher. They provide information about the mantas, research initiatives, citizen science opportunities and the code of conduct for diving with mantas. This year, Manta Trust hosted a Master's student who investigated whether diver behaviour had any impacts on manta ray behaviour. The research found that divers who followed the Manta Trust's code of conduct were unlikely to have any negative impacts on the natural behavior of the mantas. Manta Trust has also been studying what the manta rays get up to when no one's around. Thanks to 733 minutes of remote underwater video (RUV) footage, the team are beginning to understand the secret lives of mantas and how they use cleaning stations when divers aren't around.

Reef manta rays are born at a whopping 1.5m in disc width. During gestation they fold their wings over their heads, giving mum a distinctive bump that lets researchers study the duration of pregnancies and allowing the fetus to grow to a size where they can be fully independent at birth. Even though we track pregnancies, no one has ever seen a manta give birth in the wild and little is known about how fast manta rays grow once out in the big blue world. To address this, the Manta Trust has been employing paired laser photogrammetry, where lasers are placed a known width apart, allowing photographs of the pinpoints on the back on the animal to give an estimate of their size. In 2016, the team assisted Dr Mark Deakos (of HAMER) in measuring 82 manta rays and this year, 11 of these were measured again. The smallest manta ray measured in 2018, a 2.7 m juvenile, had grown by 30 cm over the two year period. With further measurements, the team can get a handle on the growth rates of Laamu mantas, which could yield the size-at-maturity estimates necessary to predict rates of population decline (or growth).



632 hours of survey effort in 2018



45 individual mantas sized



703 confirmed sightings of mantas in 2018



11 pregnancies recorded in 2018



125 individual manta rays identified since 2014



759 guests joined dives with Manta Trust researchers



BLUE MARINE FOUNDATION



10 grouper spawning aggregation sites identified with scientific verification of one site



2 species of grouper have had size at maturity verified



155 fishermen engaged in project activities



13 schools given locally-relevant marine ID books



200 students participated in BLUE's snorkel lessons



1 grouper fisheries management recommendation report submitted to the government





Fishermen Livelihoods

Latheef lives on nearby Hithadhoo. Each morning he rises with the sun to catch trevally and tuna. He is also one of 140 fishermen that BLUE interviewed to help identify grouper spawning aggregation sites in Laamu Atoll.



RESILIENT REEFS FOR THE MALDIVES

When the mood is just right—thanks to a full or new moon—large predatory fish called groupers get amorous. Back in the 1990s before groupers began to be commercially fished in the Maldives, groupers would aggregate en masse in the thousands on the reefs of Laamu to reproduce. Now, these large fish are much smaller in size, and their numbers far fewer.

This is not just the case for groupers, many coral reef fisheries in the Maldives lack basic management regulations—like no take areas—needed to secure population replenishment. Without healthy fish populations, Maldivian reefs cannot function and provide services to the people who depend on them. BLUE's goal in the Maldives is to restore Maldivian coral reefs back to resilient and thriving ecosystems that benefit nature, Maldivian people and the economies that depend on them. To achieve this, BLUE works across the board with the government and relevant stakeholders to increase the coverage of marine protected areas (MPAs) and improve fisheries management.

In 2016 and 2017 BLUE proved that existing size limit regulations for the grouper fishery are too small. Through interviewing over 140 grouper fishermen and diving in precarious currents, BLUE discovered 10 new grouper spawning aggregation sites. One of these sites was studied in detail, making it the only scientifically verified grouper

spawning aggregation site in the country. BLUE is now working to create a larger marine protected area centred around this grouper aggregation site. The area would encompass coral reefs and their connected habitats—seagrass and mangroves—while ensuring protection for charismatic giants like reef manta rays as well as globally threatened species including hawksbill turtles and napoleon wrasse.

Through community education and engagement, BLUE has secured community support for such a protected area. Last year, the Laamu Atoll Council declared their intention to protect five marine areas, many of which were advised by BLUE, a true testament to their work. In 2019, BLUE will be working to conduct baseline surveys at sites and involve the community in the development of the MPA.

BLUE works to inspire the next generation of marine conservationists. In 2018, BLUE donated marine identification guides to all 13 schools in the atoll, enabling the children to explore their local reefs, many for the first time ever.

BLUE has also been working to improve Six Senses Laamu's sustainable fishing practices. In 2018, the resort took prawns off their menu and a responsible fishing booklet was developed for guest fishing trips to minimise impacts on reef fish stocks. In 2019, BLUE will support the resort to develop a working relationship with local reef fishermen which will ensure they received a higher price for sustainably caught fish. They hope this model will serve as an example for other resorts across the country, whose demand for reef fish places pressure on local fish stocks.

LAAMU'S STORIES

BLUE's vision is for everyone in Laamu Atoll. By working with the community on voluntary codes of conduct for fishers and a management plan for a marine protected area, we can secure these resources into the future.



Climate Change

The Maldives is on the brink. Rising seas and coral bleaching threaten livelihoods. We are striving to equip communities with the skills to tackle these challenges.

LAAAMU'S COMMUNITY



ATOLL-WIDE COMMUNITY IMPACTS

HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY TRAINING

90 students from Isdhoo, Kalaidhoo, Kunahandhoo and Hamadhu school took part in a hospitality industry training session.



LAAMU TURTLE FESTIVAL

1,500 people from all 11 islands pledged 'Turtles in Laamu - Safe and Protected', part of Olive Ridley Project's mission to rid the ocean of marine debris and rescue turtles from ghost nets.



GAN CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL

More than 2,300 children attended to celebrate Universal Children's Day, an event organised by Maldives Police Family and Child Protection Department. MUI held a stall to educate kids on the marine environment.



BOOK DONATIONS

BLUE donated marine ID books to all 13 of Laamu's schools and held marine education classroom sessions with 220 students.



EKU EKY

Quarterly meetings with council members, school representatives, and the police represented the views of 13,000 people in discussions on sustainable development in Laamu Atoll.



INTERNATIONAL SURFING DAY

30 students from Maamendhoo and Hithadhoo joined in a beach clean and surf. An additional ten students got a surf lesson from three-time Maldives surf champion, Kuda Issey.



FARUKOE

380 students from all 13 of Laamu's schools were taught how to snorkel and explore their island's coral reefs.



CAREER BUILDING SESSION

18 young women from Mamendhoo joined a career building session about the hospitality and diving industry. PADI's first female Course Director from the Maldives, Zooni Naseem, led the session.



EARTH DAY

We celebrated Earth day with 30 students from Maamendhoo school by doing a beach clean and a workshop on how to make cloth bags from old t-shirts. Another 40 students watched a documentary about plastic pollution.



INTERNATIONAL COASTAL CLEANUP DAY

More than 130 members from the Hithadhoo community, including 45 students, joined in a beach clean.



'HELLO HALLU'

20 students from Hithadhoo took part in a six-month marine education programme run by the Manta Trust to teach students about their island's natural resources and how to protect them.



INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION



'Hello Hallu'

One of Manta Trust's 'Hello Hallu' students on a field trip to their local mangroves in L. Hithadhoo.

Together Everyone Achieves More. That is the foundation of our Eku Eky program (meaning 'together' in the local language, Dhivehi). The program began in 2016 and brings together community leaders from all 11 inhabited islands to represent the atoll's 13,000 residents. Eku Eky seeks to support the local island councils, schools, and police department in taking ownership of sustainable development projects in the atoll. It does so by providing access to financial support through Six Senses Laamu's Sustainability Fund, and assistance in grant writing and project management. The quarterly meetings are also an opportunity to discuss shared goals, such as making Laamu Atoll plastic-free and establishing a network of marine protected areas.

Our greatest opportunity to drive change is by educating, inspiring, and empowering the youth in Laamu to be stewards of their own natural environment. This year, we directly engaged more than 2,000 youth from across all 11 islands in theory and practical marine education sessions, snorkelling lessons, beach clean ups, and community events, such as the 3rd annual Laamu Turtle Festival and Gan Children's Festival.

"I have never looked underwater because I don't have a mask or equipment. If I had the equipment I'd go every day"

Most young people in Laamu have lived their whole lives within a few hundred meters of the ocean, yet many have never been snorkelling. The Maldives Ministry of Education responded to this by initiating the Farukoe programme, which has two main objectives: getting every single student in the country to explore their island's reef by snorkelling (93% of students have) and making every school nationwide plastic-free (213 schools have banned single use plastics). We aligned our efforts with Farukoe and took 380 of Laamu's students snorkelling on their 'backyard' coral reefs. We hope that by showing students the ocean through the eyes of conservationists, we can inspire them to be the next generation of environmental stewards in Laamu.

LAAMU ATOLL

PLASTIC-FREE



25 water filters donated to every school and pre-school in Laamu.

3,724 students now have access to safe, reliable drinking water.

1,360,000 single-use plastic bottles avoided each year.



2,800 pieces of rubbish removed from the reef.

1,400 kg of rubbish collected from beaches.



LAAMU'S STORIES

For many girls, the Farukoe program gave them the opportunity to snorkel and see underwater for the very first time! Many expressed interest in choosing a career in marine sciences after just one snorkel session.

RESORT SUSTAINABILITY



6,450 m³ of grey water recycled



6,500 kg of recycled glass products produced



10,250 kg of compost produced



1,750 eggs collected from our chicken farm



7,450 kg of vegetables harvested



226,600 plastic water bottles avoided by bottling our own desalinated water

GREEN BUSINESS

Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas operate with the philosophies of wellness and sustainability at their core. These values permeate through all areas of resort operations, from Experiences and Food & Beverage, to the Spa and Housekeeping, even Engineering. Guests' visits are enriched by gaining knowledge of how to live better lifestyles, both on holiday and back at home, by making decisions that benefit their health and the health of the planet. Six Senses properties implement a sustainable business model, whereby they give back to local communities and protect

surrounding natural environments as a means of ensuring that they can continue to provide authentic experiences and luxury services for generations to come.

Tourists visit the Maldives to see coral reefs, marine life, and beautiful beaches. When a business relies on natural assets like Six Senses Laamu does, environmentally-responsible operations that conserve these are a must. What we do on land is just as important as what we do underwater.

'Waste to Wealth'

Used glass bottles don't go to waste at Six Senses Laamu. These crushed glass shards from bottles can be used to build table platters and other ornaments.

WASTE

Six Senses has announced that the company will be plastic-free by 2022. By bottling our own desalinated water in reusable glass bottles, we avoided 226,600 single-use plastic bottles this year and we reduced the total amount of waste we generated by 9%.

PLASTIC-FREE

USD \$31,151 was spent to donate 55 reverse osmosis water filters for all 21 schools and pre-schools in Laamu Atoll, as well as 30 households in Maamendhoo. 3,949 students and families now have access to safe, reliable drinking water, and will avoid bringing over 1,360,000 single-use plastic water bottles to school every year!

SUSTAINABLE TOUR

Guests are invited to see our sustainability initiatives in action. Highlights of the tour include our Earth Lab, Kukulhu Village (chicken farm), onsite tailor, carpentry workshop, desalination plant, and host village. The number of guests who participated in educational activities, such as back of house tours and marine presentations, increased by 27% this year.

LEAF GARDEN

We produced 7,450 kg of 30+ different varieties of organic herbs, salad leaves, microgreens, and sprouts for our kitchens and bars, as well as 24 kinds of chillies and two varieties of mushrooms. This is up 9% from our garden production last year. In addition, 60 hens and 5 roosters in our Kukulhu Village (chicken farm!) produced 1,750 eggs in their first eight months on the island.

COMPOSTING

Organic waste from landscaping is processed in our wood chipper machine and combined with food waste to be composted into organic soil for the garden. We produced 10,250 kg of compost in 2018, an increase of 15% from 2017.

WATER

Low-flow fixtures installed on taps and showers, as well as increased leak detection, helped to reduce water consumption by 25%. 6,450 m³ of grey water was recycled for landscaping.

SUSTAINABILITY FUND

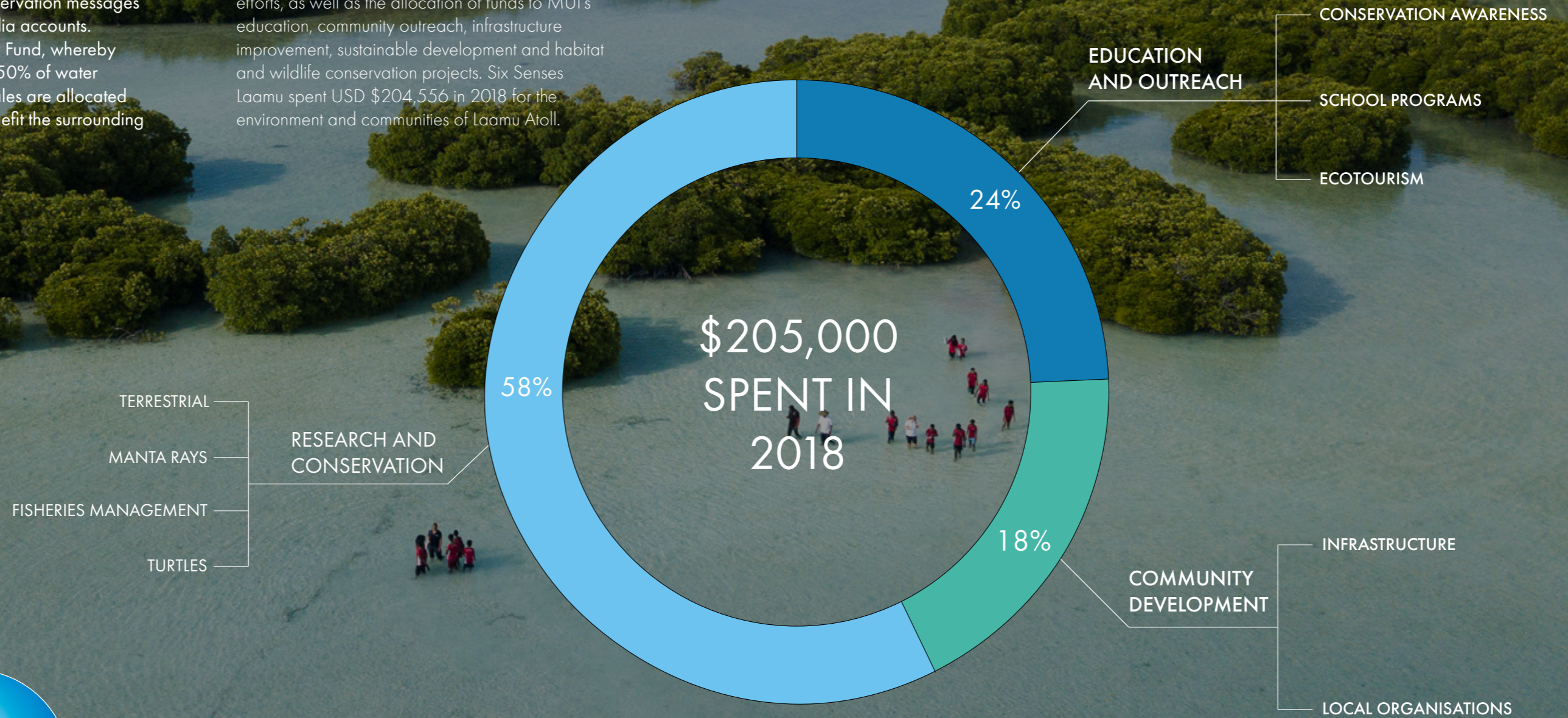
All of MUI's work is supported directly by Six Senses Laamu and its partner NGOs. In 2018, MUI's operational costs, including equipment purchases and salaries of three permanent staff, amounted to USD \$29,087. These staff inspired 9,500 guests and spread conservation messages to 280,000 unique social media accounts. Six Senses has a Sustainability Fund, whereby 0.5% of total resort revenues, 50% of water sales, and 100% of soft toy sales are allocated towards local projects that benefit the surrounding

community or environment.

The vast majority of MUI's work is supported by this Sustainability Fund via donations to MUI's three partner NGOs, which supports our research efforts, as well as the allocation of funds to MUI's education, community outreach, infrastructure improvement, sustainable development and habitat and wildlife conservation projects. Six Senses Laamu spent USD \$204,556 in 2018 for the environment and communities of Laamu Atoll.



\$16,542.13 spent sponsoring the 3rd Annual 'Turtles in Laamu - Safe and Protected' Festival (labelled conservation awareness). These expenses include food cost for over 1,500 attendees, t-shirts for 600 participants, boat transport for 400 participants from other islands, and reusable water bottles for 390 students.



\$22,510 spent on a research boat for the MUI team to study the nearby Hiithadhoo Channel, which is a manta ray cleaning station and biodiversity hotspot.



\$31,151 spent to donate 55 reverse osmosis water filters to all 21 schools and pre-schools in Laamu, as well as 30 households in Maamendhoo. These filters will prevent students from bringing more than 1,360,000 single-use plastic water bottles to school every year!



Photo credit © Erin Quigley

Longfin Bannerfish

A pair of longfin bannerfish, a common inhabitant on Laamu's reefs, aren't shy to check out Visiting Expert Erin Quigley's camera.

HOW TO SUPPORT MUI

FOLLOW MUI ON SOCIAL MEDIA



[@MUInitiative](#)



[@maldivesunderwaterinitiative](#)



[@MaldivesUnderwaterInitiative](#)

DONATE TO ONE OF OUR PARTNERS NGOS



Donate to **Olive Ridley Project** at:
www.oliveridleyproject.org/donate



Donate to **Blue Marine Foundation** at:
www.blumarinefoundation.com/support-us/donate/



Donate to **The Manta Trust** at:
www.mantatrust.org/support-us

VISIT SIX SENSES LAAMU



Your stay with us will contribute to the Sustainability Fund, which directly supports the work of MUI

AN INITIATIVE BY



IN COLLABORATION WITH



WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO

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Maldives Marine Research Centre
Maldives Ministry for Education

Moodhu Bulhaa Dive Centre
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The Long Run
The Reef World Foundation
UnderwaterVisions & Nauticam UK
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AND THANKS TO OUR TURTLE FESTIVAL SPONSORS

Daben
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Horizon Fisheries
Kadhoo Airport
Laamu Atoll Police Department

Maabaidhoo Island Council Secretariat
Maldivian Air
Ocean Group Maldives
Reveries Diving Village
Tropic Surf



Photo credit © Erin O'Quigley

Manta Point

Our local cleaning station can surprise even the most seasoned of divers. During courtship season you might just find yourself being sneaked up on by a friendly giant.



SIX SENSES

LAAMU

L. Maamendhoo

Maamendhoo School is sandwiched between beautiful coral reefs and dense seagrass meadows, offering perfect opportunities for the MUI team to take its students snorkelling.