

Global Astronomy Survey : Maldives

First Submission: Mr. Ahid Rasheed (SPoC) [see human resources section] 21 June 2009

SPoC Approval : Yes

1. Professional (Research) Astronomy:

(i) Number of universities offering Astronomy : None. (we do not have any universities in the Maldives)

(ii) Number of universities offering Physics: None (refer above)

(iii) Number of academics who have been trained in Astronomy: None

(iv) Number of astronomical facilities: None

(v) Self evaluation (according to the different phases above, how would you rate your country in terms of Professional Astronomy?) : Phase 4. Professional Astronomy is non-existent here.

2. Public Understanding of Astronomy:

(i) What governmental astronomy/science outreach programmes for the public take place: None

(ii) What non-governmental astronomy/science outreach programmes for the public take place: None. A presentation (the first of its kind ever) was given by a Sri Lankan astronomer earlier this year titled "The Universe as seen through the Hubble Space Telescope".

(iii) Comment on the presence of astronomy in the media (TV, radio, newspapers): There is very little presence in the media. The media do inform whenever there is an eclipse but does not go into the details of it.

(iv) Comment on the presence of astronomy/science in the general culture of the people: Most Maldivians do not have much of an opinion when it comes to science. Most people are not much interested in it. In addition, the increase of fundamental Islamic teachings has become a challenge to the presence of science in general. In addition, there is not much culture for the development of science and scientific thinking. There is not much opportunity for kids to develop scientific thinking. As far as astronomy is concerned, people do not have any avenues to pursue it. Astronomy is a welcome subject of conversation with a considerable number of the youth. I believe that if they have access to telescopes and observatories/planetariums, astronomy would become a popular field in this country.

(v) Self evaluation (according to the different phases above, how would you rate your country in terms of Public Understanding of Astronomy?): Phase 4. There is very little public understanding of astronomy, and even less interest in it.

3. Astronomy in Schools:

(i) What governmental astronomy/science education and outreach programmes for schools take place: None. The government earlier did organize inter-school Science Fairs, but even this has been discontinued for more than 5 years now.

(ii) What non-governmental astronomy/science education and outreach programmes for schools take place: None

(iii) Comment on the presence of astronomy in the school curriculum.: Astronomy is not part of the school curriculum. However, Astronomy is touched on a bit in the primary schools within the Science subject, but is discontinued from the secondary level.

(iv) Comment on the status of astronomy/science in schools: Interest in science subjects has been on the decrease for more than a decade now, mainly because of the popularity of Business subjects. As the main industry in Maldives is tourism (which is service based), more and more students take up business subjects in order to get lucrative jobs in the tourism industry. There are very few job opportunities in the fields of science or maths. Furthermore, the education system doesn't give room for students to gradually develop science interests, knowledge, skills etc. It is mainly geared towards non-science fields, possibly because teaching science is more expensive and teachers lack exposure to science. Plus we don't have any place like museums, aquariums, planetariums, etc that build interest or can be tools for teaching.

(v) Self evaluation (according to the different phases above, how would you rate your country in terms of Astronomy in Schools? Please include any other relevant information to motivate your choice.) : Phase 4. Astronomy is an area that needs to be developed in the school curriculum.