

**Opening Remark by
His Excellency Nick Low (the British High Commissioner to the Maldives)**

‘Maths Through Stories’ Country-level Consultation Workshop

Banquet Hall, Maldives National University

Tuesday 17th June 2025

Honourable Deputy Ministers for Education Dr. Fathimath Nisham and Ms. Aminath Nazima, Vice Chancellor of Maldives National University Dr. Aishath Shehenaz Adam, distinguished guests, colleagues, and participants – good morning.

ސުވާލު ލަބުނުފު. ހަފްޓާތަކުގެ ތެރޭގައި ދިވެހިސަރުކާރުގެ ފަރާތުން ބައިވެރިވާން ފުރުޞަތު ލިބިފައިވާނެއެވެ. ދިވެހިސަރުކާރުގެ ފަރާތުން ބައިވެރިވާން ފުރުޞަތު ލިބިފައިވާނެއެވެ.

It’s a real pleasure to be here at the Maldives National University for this important ‘Maths Through Stories’ workshop. Thank you for the kind invitation and warm welcome.

Let me begin by recognising the efforts of our hosts at MNU, Dr. Trakulphadetkrai from the University of Reading, and our international partners from UNESCO and the OECD.

Your collaboration and commitment have made today’s event possible, and I commend you all.

The Maldives, like many countries, understands that strong numeracy skills are essential for both individual opportunity and national development. Yet challenges remain – from ensuring equitable access to quality education across all islands, to tackling issues such as youth disengagement and the spread of misinformation and disinformation.

Some of these challenges are familiar to us in the UK. We too have large numbers of young people whom we refer to as NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). Education and training have always been key enablers and are more than ever so now. Jobs of the future will be ever more demanding of the STEM skills (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). And it is Maths which germinates the seeds of Science, Technology and Engineering.

Workshops like this one provide a valuable space for fresh thinking, professional exchange, and building partnerships. Bringing together classroom teachers, teacher educators, and curriculum specialists is essential for developing practical, context-sensitive solutions.

I’m proud that the UK, through its universities, can contribute to this effort. The University of Reading is widely respected for its research and its commitment to turning evidence into action. Dr. Trakulphadetkrai’s ‘Maths Through Stories’ initiative is a great example – transforming research into a creative, low-cost classroom approach that helps students develop mathematical understanding, communication skills, and imagination.

The success of the Young Mathematical Story Authors competition – now involving thousands of students across nearly 30 countries – shows the global appetite for innovative ways to teach and learn mathematics.

Today's workshop is also a celebration of partnership. The UK and the Maldives have a strong history of collaboration in education. We are delighted that more than 300 Maldivian students are currently studying at British Universities. And that His Excellency President Dr Mohamed Muizzu and more than half his Cabinet went to university in the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom has four of the world's top nine universities and fifteen of the world's top one hundred universities. A remarkable statistic for a country with less than one percent of the world's population.

The presence of UNESCO and OECD colleagues adds valuable global insight, and I hope today's discussions will spark even deeper cooperation – both locally and internationally.

I encourage everyone here – whether you're a teacher, educator, curriculum developer, or policymaker – to think about how approaches like 'Maths Through Stories' might be adapted to your own settings. Connecting research, classroom practice, and policy is where real progress happens – and collaboration is key.

As British High Commissioner, I want to reaffirm the UK's commitment to supporting educational improvement through research, innovation, and international partnership.

I hope today's workshop helps build momentum for further collaboration, including with organisations like UNESCO and the OECD.

Together, we can find practical, effective solutions that benefit learners in the Maldives and beyond.

Thank you once again for the invitation, and I wish you all a productive and inspiring workshop.