

(c) Gender and Development¹⁴

Situation

- 49.2 % (census 2000) of the total population consists of women.
- Traditional gender roles continue to exist in the Maldives and hinder women and men from fully enjoying the benefits of a gender equitable society. Gender sensitization work is consistently carried out by the Ministry of Gender, Family Development and Social Security at various levels and through different mediums including media advocacy and social interaction.
- The Ministry of Gender, Family Development and Social Security oversees the institutional mechanism for the advancement of women in the Maldives.

International commitment

- The Maldives ratified the Convention of the Elimination of the All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in July 1993.
- The Maldives is a party to the Beijing Platform for Action, the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development, the SAARC Plan of Action on the Girl Child and the SAARC Convention of Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.

Gender Mainstreaming

- A Gender Management System, based on the Commonwealth model was put in place in 2001 under the Government policy of gender mainstreaming. The basic structures for this system are in place, with the establishment of a Gender Equality Council in December 2001 and the appointment of focal points in all sectors. Work continues in strengthening the system through capacity building and advocacy.
- The Sixth National Development Plan reaffirms gender mainstreaming as a priority and incorporates gender as a cross-cutting issue.

Priorities to establish gender equity and equality in the Maldives

- Gender mainstreaming for the effective inclusion of gender concerns in all policies, programmes and projects.
- Empowerment of women to ensure the participation of women in the political, social and economic spheres.
- Advocacy and gender sensitization.
- Collecting sex-disaggregated data and analyzing in gender perspective.
- Addressing gender-based violence.
- Implementation of CEDAW

¹⁴ Information in this section was provided by the Ministry of Gender, Family Development and Social Security, December 2004

- Adopting a national policy on gender.
- Legal reviews and reform with a focus of Gender in the Criminal Justice System.
- Capacity building to strengthen the national women's machinery and the Gender Management System.
- Research
- Affirmative actions for gender equity and equality.

Activities undertaken and ongoing in 2004

1. Advocacy and gender sensitization

- Gender sensitization and awareness raising activities
- Publication of *Hiyala an annual magazine*, advocating and addressing various issues relating to gender.
- Publication of bulletins, posters and leaflets for awareness raising and advocacy.
- Gender advocacy for media personnel.

2. Empowerment of women

- Marking of the International Women's Day
- Monitoring a revolving fund loan scheme for women.
- Monitoring the work and conducting leadership training for island women development committees.

3. Addressing gender based violence

- Preparatory work for the survey on Women's health and life experiences.
- Training of social workers for addressing domestic violence and violence against women.
- Training to address cases of the instances for healthcare personnel at IGMH
- Counselling training for nurses and other healthcare personnel at IGMH
- Counselling training for nurses and other healthcare personnel to deal with cases of violence against women in all its form.
- Establishment of a multi-sector support system is in progress

4. Implementation of CEDAW

- CEDAW reporting
- Review and analysis of the impact of the Family Law.

Areas of focus / activities planned for 2005

- **Strengthening the Gender Management System**
- **Gender Sensitization and Orientation Programme**
 - Gender sensitization and orientation for various target groups of Health, Education and Justice.
 - Gender sensitization of media personal
- **Implementing CEDAW**
 - Workshop for gender focal points reporting on CEDAW and to develop a reporting framework.
 - Publish report on the analysis of the impact of the Family Law and conduct awareness programmes to address the identified issues.
 - Continue work on engendering the legal system and to address issues in the Criminal Justice System.
- **Addressing the issues of Domestic Violence/ Violence against Women (DV/VAW)**
 - Continue ground work for support system for victims of violence
 - Workshop for police on investigative procedures on cases of violence against women
 - Develop, publish and distribute user-friendly information sheets / flyers on services available to victims of VAW and contact information for support services.
 - Capacity building of staff of the GAD section and other stake holders to deal cases of VAW / DV
- **Advocacy and information dissemination**
 - Publish and disseminate “ Hiyala”
 - Print an annual bulletin on status of women in Maldives
 - Publish a calendar on the current status of women in Maldives.
 - Print and distribute posters.
- **Empowerment of women**
 - National seminar to review and address barriers to women’s participation in development.
 - Marking International Women’s Day
 - Training workshops to strengthen island women development committees
 - Training women in the leadership training course(katheeb course)
 - Lending loans for women and monitoring the scheme.
- **Research**
 - Research on women’s health and life experiences.

- Advocacy and awareness programmes based on the research findings.

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- Developments in the area of juvenile justice include the establishment of juvenile Court on 1 August 1997 and the establishment of the Child Protection Unit (CPU) at the Police Headquarters. The URC, the CPU and the Juvenile Court continue to build a multi-disciplinary approach to juvenile delinquency at island and atoll levels and strive to mainstream child protection through inclusion of child protection awareness in training island/atoll leaders.
- Some national laws have been reviewed and amended in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These include the regulation in relation to Juvenile Justice that has been amended to restrict criminal proceedings against children in favour of rehabilitation, and the rules and regulations in relation to the employment of children. A family law was enacted in 2000.
- Additional mechanisms are being piloted since December 2000 to strengthen child protection nation-wide.
- A special website of the URC was launched on 10 May 2001.
- A National Plan of Action towards the well-being of children in the Maldives for the decade 2001 – 2010 was prepared through a consultative process with participation by the stakeholders, including children. The NPA was based on the recommendations outlined by a UN General Assembly report ‘ A World Fit for Children ‘ of May 2002

Future priorities to strengthen child protection measures in the Maldives

- Review the existing Law on the Protection of the Rights of Children.
- Assess regularly the situation of children to identify and target services for vulnerable groups.
- Establish a decentralized National Child Protection System.
- Formulate a national policy to address the needs of children with special needs and disabilities.

- Strengthen capacity building in the area of child protection.
- Further training of child protection workers in all the islands, who assist children in difficult circumstances.
- Conduct situational analysis for all atolls, through island-level consultations to evaluate the needs of the community prior to the establishment of the Child Protection System.
- Create awareness on child protection issues through the media and print material.
- Develop clear and standard procedures and protocols in consultation with all stakeholders, in working towards the protection of children in vulnerable situations.

(e) Family Development and Social Security Section ¹⁶

Policy Advocacy

- A National Conference on Strengthening the Family was held in 1995 to discuss issues related to family, especially social problems encountered due to the high incidence of divorce. The Conference endorsed a Plan of Action on the strengthening of families, and recommended the enactment of a family law. The implementation of this Plan is underway.
- The Family Law was ratified on 21 December 2000 and came into effect on 1 July 2001.
- An ongoing programme for creating awareness among the community on the importance of strengthening family relations is underway.
- The International Day of Families is marked in the Maldives on 15 May every year
- The International Day of Disabled Persons is marked in the Maldives on 3 December every year since 1981.

Current provisions of social security

- The Ministry of Gender, Family Development and Social Security provides social security mainly through social assistance and safety net programmes. Given the limited resources, priority is given to those from low income backgrounds.

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- Under social assistance, the following programmes are in place:
 1. Financial support for Maldivians in obtaining healthcare services locally or abroad.

Financial support to children from low income families and those in other difficult circumstances to obtain necessary school books and other such materials.

2. Under social safety nets, a monthly payment of Rf. 500 is paid to those who are unable to meet their basic needs. The threshold is determined by the following criteria,
 - Living not more than one meal a day;
 - Has less than 2 sets of clothing; and
 - Has no shelter to live in

Disability Provisions

- Financial support in obtaining assistive devices and prescription drugs for people with disabilities.
- People with severe mental and physical disabilities as well as elderly people who have no primary caregivers are housed in the Home for People with Special Needs in Guraidhoo Island, Kaafu Atoll.

Reform

Pension Reform

- Under assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank, the following measures are being taken to reform the social security system of the Maldives.
- Under assistance from the ADB:
 1. In October 2002, a workshop was held to introduce 'Models for Restructuring of the Maldivian Social Security System'.
 2. In January 2003, a report was published by the Ministry of Gender Family Development and Social Security entitled 'Enhancement of the Social Security System'. The report provides a comprehensive analysis of the current social system in the Maldives and recommendations for reform.
 3. In July/August 2004 two staff from the Ministry participated in a study tour on the social security system of Australia, which was jointly organized by the Department of Family and Community Services of Australia and the Ministry.
- Under assistance from World Bank:

1. In October 2003, a World Bank team undertook a brief analysis of the social security of the Maldives and compiled a paper entitled 'Income and Support for the Elderly in the Maldives'.
2. A one-week training workshop on Pension Reform Options Simulation Toolkit (PROST) was conducted from 13-16 June 2004. Three participants were given license to use PROST for the purpose of social security reform of Maldives.
3. In October 2004, a World Bank Team visited the Maldives on a follow up mission to further discuss recent developments on the reform process of the social security system.

Health Insurance

Government Employees Health Insurance Scheme

- The Ministry is currently in the process of designing a health insurance scheme for all government employees, which is to start in early 2005.

Future areas for action:

- The MGFDDSS will continue to play an important role in the pension reform process, which is currently executed by MOFT.
- Discussions are underway to develop an integrated safety net framework in order to address the weaknesses evident in the current system.
- Development of a social policy framework in order to allocate the available resources for social protection more efficiently.