

## **Gender and Development**

### **Situation**

- 49.2 per cent (census 2000) of the total population consists of women.
- The Constitution of the Republic of Maldives grants men and women equal rights to public positions except the post of Head of State (President) and Vice President. The positions of President and Vice President can only be held by a man of Sunni Muslim faith.
- 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 continuously carried out by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Security at various levels and through different mediums including media advocacy and social interaction.

### **Institutional Mechanism for the Advancement of Women**

- An institutional mechanism for the advancement of women was set up for the first time at the National Planning Agency in 1979, with the establishment of the Preparatory Committee for the International Decade for Women. This Preparatory Committee was renamed National Women's Committee in 1981 and moved from the National Planning Agency to the President's Office. The Office for Women's Affairs was established in 1986 and the National Women's Committee was renamed National Women's Council. The Office for Women's Affairs was upgraded to Department of Women's Affairs in 1989. A cabinet-level appointment in 1993 established the Ministry of Youth, Women's Affairs and Sports, which was renamed the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Welfare in 1996, and the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Security in 1998.

### **International Commitment**

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

## **Gender Mainstreaming**

- Gender mainstreaming is a priority of the Government of Maldives, and the structure for a Gender Management System (GMS) is being developed. A Gender Equality Council, headed by H. E. President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, was set up in December 2000. Gender Focal Points were appointed at sectoral ministries and related NGOs in September 2001. The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Security is the Lead Agency for the GMS.
- Gender sensitization of various sectors continue.

## **Priorities to establish Gender Equity and Equality in the Maldives**

- Adopting a comprehensive National Gender Policy.
- Gender sensitization
- Strengthening the GMS through capacity building, advocacy and marketing.
- Identifying present and emerging gender issues within all sectors and developing priorities for action.
- Addressing identified gender issues to eliminate discrepancies, allow for equity, and establish equality.
- Gender-based violence – Violence Against Women, Domestic violence.

## **Activities undertaken in 2002**

### **1. Gender sensitization**

- Gender sensitization/ orientation activities.

### **2. Strengthening the GMS Structure**

- Strengthening the GMS through capacity building, advocacy and marketing.
- Consultations on CEDAW
- Developed a draft plan to implement CEDAW

### **3. Keeping Gender on the National Agenda**

- Worked on identifying present and emerging gender issues within all sectors and developing priorities for action.

- Work continued on addressing identified gender issues to eliminate discrepancies, allow for equity, and establish equality.

#### **4. Gender-based violence – Violence Against Women & Domestic Violence**

- Produced TV and Radio spots to create awareness and generate discourse on VAW/DV. (UNICEF)
- Published posters to create awareness on the issue of VAW/DV. (WHO)
- Published Hiyala (March 2002) with VAW/DV as the main theme. (WHO)
- Discussed the issue of VAW/DV in gender sensitisation workshops for wards of Male'. (WHO)
- Two GAD staff gain experience through attachments at research institutions working on VAW/DV in Sri Lanka. (British Council)
- Initial training on DV/VAW aimed at setting up a multi-sectoral support system held for Police Officers, Medical Personnel, officials from the Family Court, NGOs, community activists and MWASS staff
- Consultation on CEDAW held with the assistance of CEDAW expert from IRAW-Asia Pacific to familiarize senior officials (including MWASS management staff, GEC members and GFPs) on CEDAW.
- Draft Plan of Action (which includes the issue of VAW) developed at CEDAW Consultations.
- Media material for advocacy (3 documentaries/ docudramas) on eliminating VAW/DV produced (UNICEF, GOM)

#### **Planned Activities 2003**

- Media Gender Analysis plus Gender Sensitization.
- Legal Review Phase I: Gender Analysis focussing on Family Law & Citizens' rights\*
- Gender Analysis of curriculum, and teaching/ learning materials of Pre-school and Grades 1, 2 and 3\*.
- Continue groundwork to establish DV/VAW support system.
- Research

\* funding not yet confirmed

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<sup>i</sup> Updated on 20 January 2003.