

## **a) Gender and Development**

### ***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 and Family at various levels and through different mediums including media advocacy and social interaction.
- The Ministry of Gender and Family oversees the institutional mechanism for the advancement of women in the Maldives.

### ***International Commitment***

- The Maldives ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in July 1993.
- The Maldives has also acceded to the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW on 13 March 2006.
- The Maldives is 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 on 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 Seventh National Development Plan reaffirms gender mainstreaming as a priority and incorporates gender as a cross-cutting issue.

The National Policy on Gender has been formulated and it came into effect on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2006.

### ***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.

- Combating gender-based violence.
- Implementation of CEDAW.
- Collecting sex-disaggregated data and analyzing them in the gender perspective.
- Legal review and reform with a focus on Gender in the Criminal Justice System.
- Empowerment of women
- Establish a decentralized social protection service for women

## **b) Children**

### *Steps taken to protect the rights of children in the Maldives*

- The signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on 21 August 1990 (the Convention was ratified on 11 February 1991. Two optional protocols to the Convention were ratified by the Maldives on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2002).
- Designing and commemoration of the Year of Maldivian Child in 1991.
- Convening of the National Conference on Children in 1991.
- The enactment in 1991 of a law entitled the Protection of the Rights of Children.
- The preparation of a National Plan of Action based on the Declaration and the goals set for the 1990s by the World Summit for Children.
- The establishment in 1992, of a National Council consisting of senior representatives of Government Ministries and the civil society to provide policy directions and guidance in the monitoring and implementation of the provisions of the law on the Rights of the Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The establishment in 1992 of a Unit for the Rights of Children (URC) to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the Law on the Rights of Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The URC is also responsible for providing counseling services to children and families, extending technical support to rehabilitation efforts at institutions for children in difficult circumstances and collecting data about vulnerable children.
- On the Maldives initiative, SAARC member countries formulated a SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia. The Convention was adopted during the 11<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit.
- Developments in the area of juvenile justice include the establishment of a Juvenile Court on 1 August 1997 and the establishment of the Family and Child Protection Unit (FCPU) at the Police Headquarters. The URC, the FCPU 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 the 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 Right 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 and came into effect in July 2001.
- 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 (NPA) towards the wellbeing 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 the situation of children regularly to identify and target services for vulnerable groups.
- 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.
- Establish a decentralized National Child Protection System.

### **c) Families**

A National Conference on Strengthening the Family was held in 1995. The Conference endorsed a Plan of Action the implementation of which is underway.

A Family Law had been enacted and came into force in July 2001.

The International Day of Families is marked in the Maldives on 15 May of every year.

The work to draft a Family Policy is expected to start during the last quarter of 2006.

### **d) New Developments**

Since the beginning of the year 2006 the Ministry of Gender and Family has integrated its service provision to women, children and families. Hence the 1992 established URC has been renamed and a Child and Family Protection Authority have been established which

would oversee the rights of the child, women and the policies and legislations with regards to the family.

Protection services, including counseling and social work is now being provided by the Child and Family Protection Services and the Family and Community Development section undertakes the implementation of the international instruments such as the CEDAW, CRC, Commonwealth Plan of Action, Sanya Declaration etc including advocacy. The Planning, Monitoring and Research Section undertakes research with regards to children, women and families, monitors and reports on the implementation of these instruments in addition to policy planning and implementation.

Similarly a project is underway to establish Social Protection Services Centers to provide decentralized social services for children, women and families in the atolls. It is expected that 6 such centers would be fully functional by the end of 2007 and the whole project for all the atolls is expected to be complete by the end of 2009.