

UNICEF MALDIVES' 7 FLAGSHIPS

**Respond Today for Tomorrow:
For Every Child, An Opportunity**

2022 - 2026



RESPOND TODAY FOR TOMORROW: UNICEF'S 7 FLAGSHIPS

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UNICEF Maldives exists to collaborate with partners to provide every child with an opportunity to survive, develop and achieve their full potential. Respond Today for Tomorrow is a set of flagship initiatives for creating a Maldives that is fit for children, and children who are fit for Maldives. A Maldives that is fit for children promotes the survival, development, and well-being of all children, irrespective of where they live or their level of income. Children who are fit for Maldives are those who achieve their physical, cognitive, social, and emotional developmental milestones, live in hope and dignity, are engaged, and have the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the development and sustainability of the country.

The Maldives, an upper-middle-income, small island developing state in the Indian Ocean, has made notable progress in advancing child rights. Yet, there is still significant unfinished business in relation to inequalities, child vulnerabilities, impacts of climate change, and the high cost and inefficiency in the provision of social services across the dispersed archipelago. The COVID-19 pandemic, urbanization particularly in the greater Male' area, overdependence on tourism, and the recent massive infrastructural expansion in the country have further exposed challenges, such as a reduction in fiscal space, worsening of mental health issues, disruptions in education, increased violence, and environmental degradation. Climate change is an existential crisis in the country.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022–2026 has identified human capital development as a strategic priority for the next 5 years. UNICEF’s Country Programme Document 2022–2026 aims to contribute to the UNSDCF by prioritizing health and nutrition, child protection, education, social protection, and climate-resilient actions.

In the context of accelerating child rights and human development in the Maldives, UNICEF has identified seven game-changing flagship initiatives that are transformative, offer opportunities for addressing key systemic bottlenecks, and contribute to achieving universality and leaving no child behind, in the face of multiple challenges facing the Maldives. These are:

01 Positive Parenting

02 UPSHIFT and imaGen: Skills for Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Engagement & Employability

03 Mental Health and Substance Abuse

04 Climate Smart and Resilient Actions

05 IBAMA: Supportive Island Communities

06 Leveraging Innovation and Technology for Scale

07 Developing & Engaging Young People

These flagships together constitute UNICEF’s agenda to Respond Today for Tomorrow in the Maldives. The flagships serve as catalysts for multi-sectoral action and focus for the convergence of key partners and programs. UNICEF will invest in mobilizing national commitment around the flagships that would be translated into increased investments and accelerated actions for sustainable change in the lives of children.

Dr. Edward Addai

UNICEF Representative to Maldives

POSITIVE PARENTING

For Every Child, A Safe, Loving and Caring Family

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What is it?

The Positive Parenting Programme seeks to target parents and caregivers. It aims to equip them with relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to provide age and culturally appropriate and responsive care. It is set within a changing family structure in Maldives which is putting a lot of stress on the families and abilities to balance the modern day demands to maintain their livelihoods and traditional role of the family in the provision of a safe, loving and supportive environment and the fulfilment of a child's right to health, care, education and recreation.

What do we know about the problem?

The emerging problem is that parenting in Maldives is becoming increasingly complex and challenging for many parents due to a range of factors including the evolving needs of children, changes in family dynamics, exposure to online exploitation and harm, the need for both parents to work, inadequate training of child-care workers, peer pressure, anxiety among young people, and unemployment. This has resulted in increased vulnerabilities among young people contributing to drug abuse, crimes, recruitment into gangs, and violence in society. Additionally, while stimulation and responsive care in the early years give children a good start and a solid foundation along the course of life, there is currently no comprehensive parenting programme and support system to guide parents, although both parents and children have expressed the need for guidance and support.

How do we address it?

01

Design, test and roll out an island-based Social and Behavior Change Parenting Programme that will raise awareness of positive parenting, build the knowledge, tools, skills, and attitudes of parents and caregivers, and provide a support system for age-appropriate and responsive positive parenting. The program will include community health workers, social workers, teachers, IBAMA members, Women's Development Committees, neighbourhood police, and civil society.

02

Advocate for age-appropriate parenting policies, core and targeted packages of interventions and tools to guide the evolution of the Positive Parenting Programme and mobilize political support and investment to finance its implementation.

What change will we achieve in five years?

The expected change in five years is that the Government will own and allocate financing for parenting programmes in the national budget, multi-stakeholder partnerships will be in place to support parenting programmes, comprehensive positive parenting programmes will be available in at least 50% of islands in Maldives, and age-appropriate policies, interventions, and tools will be defined to guide the evolution of the Positive Parenting Programme.

If you are interested in partnering with us, you can:

- Advocate for positive parenting programmes, adopt family-friendly policies and practices and showcase them, and support the scale-up of flagship initiatives to reach all islands.
- Provide financial or in-kind contributions to promote delivery of positive parenting programmes.
- Provide technical support for training of facilitators and parents.

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UPSHIFT & IMAGEN: SKILLS FOR INNOVATION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, ENGAGEMENT & EMPLOYABILITY



For Every Child, 21st Century Skills

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What is it?

UPSHIFT is a UNICEF global innovation to provide young people with transferable skills needed for life and livelihood. It is an adaptable and scalable approach for young people to acquire competencies and to engage positively with their communities as change-makers. UPSHIFT is being implemented as part of the national curriculum in Maldives, to provide young people with foundational skills for innovation, entrepreneurship, engagement and employability, and thereby contributing to bridging the school to work transition. IMAGEN Ventures will be implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education to provide young people between the ages of 16 to 24 with entrepreneurial skills.

unicef 
for every child

What do we know about the problem?

The high rate of youth unemployment in the Maldives, particularly between the ages of 15–24 and the heavy reliance of the Maldivian economy on the tourism sector, make it vulnerable to external shocks.

- The Maldivian youth comprising over 65% of the population hold the future of the country's prosperity. Yet, 37% of young people between the ages of 15–24 are neither in education, employment nor training. Young people also lack key job-relevant skills contributing to high youth unemployment and only 42% of women are in the workforce.
- Limited skills, space and opportunity for youth engagement and active participation in school and society.
- While recent developments have demonstrated the resilience of the Maldivian economy, the COVID-19 pandemic has also reminded the country of the need to diversify the economy which is heavily dependent on tourism and vulnerable to macroeconomic and to mitigate external shocks.

How do we address it?

01

Introduce and scale up skills development programmes, including training on social innovation and entrepreneurship, to help young people identify and design solutions to problems in their communities.

02

Partner with the private sector to address skills gaps and provide mentorship and internship opportunities.

03

Establish platforms for young people to actively engage, participate and make meaningful contributions to issues affecting them, including climate change and environmental sustainability.

What change will we achieve in five years?

The expected changes are:

- Students who complete lower secondary education can demonstrate 21st century skills for life and work
- The presence of at least 300 skilled young people (150 males and 150 females) who are innovative with entrepreneurship mindsets.

If you are interested in partnering with us, you can:

If you want to partner with us, you can:

- Provide financial or in-kind contributions to promote social innovation and entrepreneurship through annual ImaGen bootcamps and UPSHIFT innovation challenges.
- Provide internship and mentorship opportunities for school leavers and young people to acquaint them with the world of work.
- Collaborate on conducting engagements with schools and students on school to work transition, aligning education with industry demands.

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MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE ABUSE

For Every Child, Mental & Social Well-being

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What is it?

The Mental Health and Substance Abuse flagship seeks to promote mental health and psychosocial well-being and prevent substance abuse and other mental health conditions in children, adolescents, and their families.

What do we know about the problem?

Mental health is our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It is part of our overall health and affects individual well-being and exists within communities. However, mental health issues are often stigmatized, and substance abuse is one of the most prevalent and destructive mental health disorders.

Adolescence is a time of significant psychological, physical, and social change, which can heighten the risk of mental health and psychosocial problems. Globally, half of all mental health conditions start by 14 years of age but most cases, while treatable, go undetected and untreated. Substance abuse also starts during adolescence. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problem, leading to increased rates of mental ill-health, domestic violence and substance abuse. Parents and caregivers have expressed their need for tools and capacities to support their children and promote their positive mental health and well-being while parents and caregivers themselves, need support from their families and communities.

How do we address it?

Design and implement a multi-faceted and comprehensive Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) programme that includes prevention, early detection, and treatment. The programme will include:

01

Rolling out an evidence-informed communication and advocacy strategy to raise awareness and tackle stigma and discrimination against mental health and substance abuse.

02

Collaborating with the Ministry of Education and other relevant stakeholders to rollout a program on social and emotional learning and skilling of adolescents in self-care, self-regulation, and mental wellbeing. This includes, building the capacity of parents and caregivers to provide supportive environments for young people.

03

Designing, testing, and rolling out a mental health service system that links to communities, schools, and the health system, including integration into IBAMA.

What change will we achieve in five years?

The proposed outcomes of the programme include children, adolescents, families, and island communities enjoying a conducive environment for improved mental health and well-being, increased capacity of schools, social sector and community-based service providers to promote, prevent and respond to issues related to substance abuse, mental health and well-being, and more resilient communities and institutions that are better equipped with the skills and knowledge of promoting mental health and psychosocial well-being.

If you are interested in partnering with us, you can:

- Join the National Mental Health Communications Campaign to advocate for policies and practices that will transform communities and workplaces to be more conducive to mental health and well-being.
- Engage in programmes to equip out-of-school and vulnerable adolescents with social and emotional learning and skills to help them become resilient young people.
- Invest to strengthen community-based mental health and psychosocial services at selected islands.
- Support creation of safe spaces for young people to positively socialize and have conversations on mental health to reduce stigma.

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CLIMATE SMART & RESILIENT ACTIONS

For Every Child, A Green & Resilient Island

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What is it?

The climate resiliency flagship seeks to promote the development and implementation of climate smart actions that would strengthen resiliency and make islands safer for every child.

What do we know about the problem?

Climate change is an existential threat to the Maldives, the lowest and flattest country in the world, with high levels of vulnerability to natural hazards and climate change. Climate change in the Maldives is expected to contribute to rising sea levels, increases in temperature, and flooding. About 64% of Maldivian islands are facing shoreline erosion. Increases in mean annual temperature, as well as the intensity and frequency of heat waves, are already putting more people at risk of heat-related medical conditions. Without significant efforts to improve climate resilience, the risk of food insecurity and child malnutrition is expected to rise by up to 20% by 2050.

How do we address it?

01

Create a cohort of empowered and climate-smart young people and create spaces for them to engage actively in climate policy dialogues and develop climate-smart actions that contribute to the green and blue economy in partnership with the education system, academia, and the public and private sectors.

02

Document and disseminate ongoing national and global climate-smart actions to facilitate adoption/adaptation and scale-up.

03

Support the Government to implement and scale-up climate-smart, resilient, and child-friendly social services, infrastructure and initiatives at the central and local levels to reduce climate vulnerabilities.

04

Provide training to strengthen Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and fast-track interaction between CERT and IBAMA for preparedness, early warning, rapid detection, and response to emergencies.

What change will we achieve in five years?

In five years, the Climate Smart and Resilient Actions Flagship will create a network of young people driving the climate change agenda and island communities will be more resilient from adopting innovative and climate smart technologies and strategies.

If you are interested in partnering with us, you can:

- Provide financial or in-kind contributions for climate-smart innovations and meaningful engagement of young climate advocates.
- Provide spaces and opportunities for young people to learn, experience and contribute to ongoing efforts.
- Join UNICEF to advocate for climate-smart resilient actions.

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IBAMA: CARING ISLAND COMMUNITIES

For Every Child, Supportive Island Communities

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What is it?

IBAMA – Ijthimaae Badhahi Madhadhuverin (translated IBA -You; and MA - Me) - is a multi-sectoral platform at the island level for identifying vulnerable children and families and linking them with services. The platform brings together social service providers such as education, health, protection, and local governance at the island, city, and atoll levels, and serves as a key coordination mechanism for stakeholders. IBAMA enhances access to social services and reinforces the country's decentralization process and local governance.

What do we know about the problem?

Several laws on decentralization and working together for vulnerable groups exist in Maldives today. IBAMA provides an intersectoral platform for operationalizing these laws and coordinating the activities of different sectors at the community level. Despite significant access to basic social services and social protection interventions at the island level, pockets of multidimensional and overlapping deprivations and vulnerabilities that require a multi-sectoral response exist. For example, children and families become vulnerable from poverty, violence against children, gender-based violence/domestic violence, disabilities, and dropping out of school. Vulnerable children and women are also exploited into crimes and drug use. IBAMA provides a platform for the early identification of vulnerable children and families and linking them to social services.

How do we address it?

01

Advocate for community ownership and support the government to establish IBAMA in all islands, cities, and atolls.

02

Provide training, supportive supervision, and technical support to improve the functionality and performance of IBAMA.

03

Create a platform and network of IBAMA for knowledge sharing, inter-island learning, and exchange of good practices.

04

Design and roll out a Social and Behaviour Change Campaign to advance the IBAMA brand and contribution to child rights and social development in Maldives.

What change will we achieve in 5 years?

In five years, the flagship will contribute to ensuring that every island in the Maldives has a functional IBAMA that identifies and links the most vulnerable children, families, and individuals to timely, quality, and coordinated social services.

If you are interested in partnering with us, you can:

- Adopt an island and support the establishment of a functional IBAMA.
- Provide financial or in-kind contributions to address the needs of families to overcome vulnerabilities.
- Support capacity building of the social service workforce to improve the quality of services.
- Support designing and setting up an IBAMA knowledge sharing platform.

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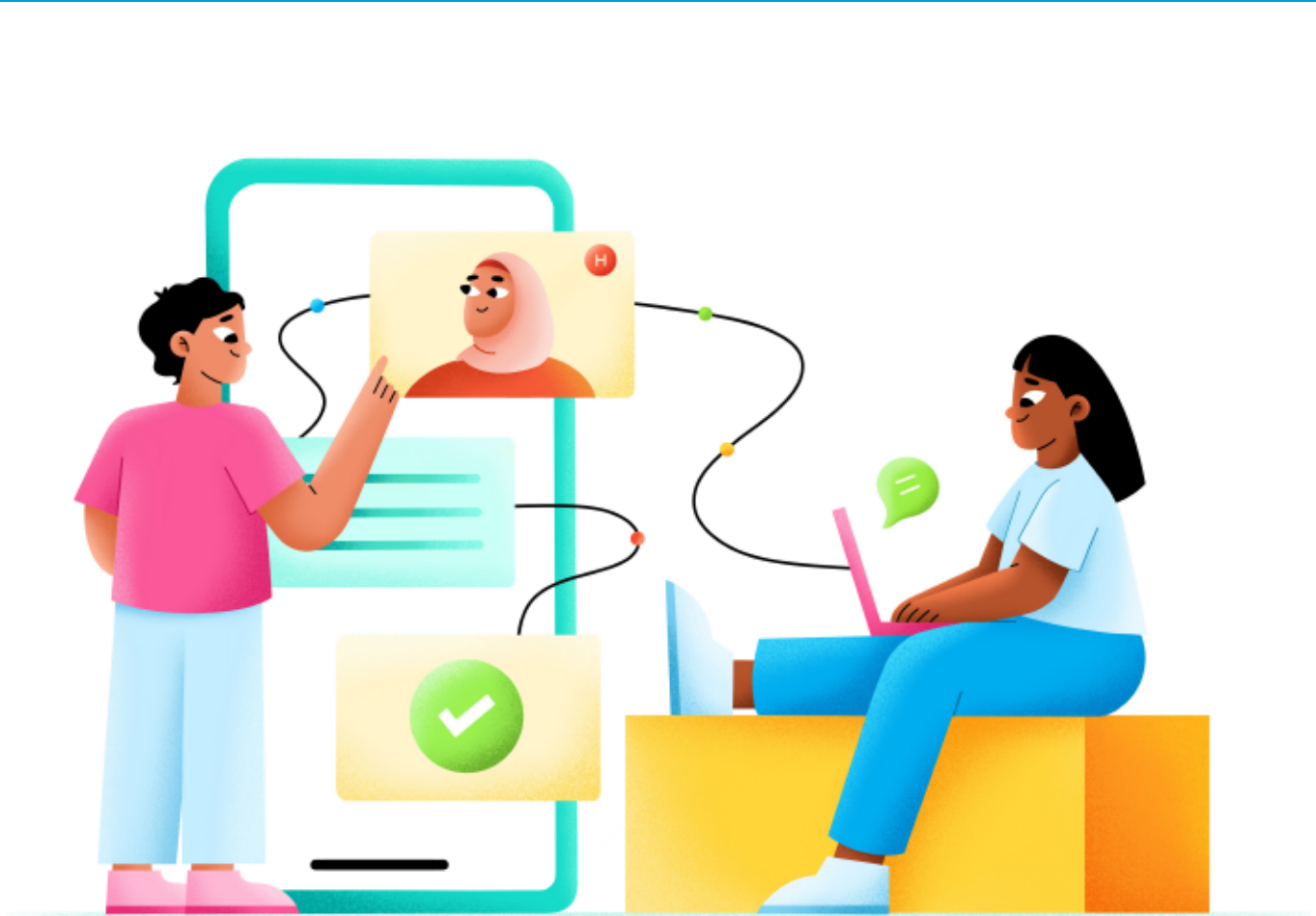
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LEVERAGING INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY FOR SCALE

For Every Child, Technology & Innovation for Change



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What is it?

The innovation and technology for scale flagship aims to facilitate the use of technology and innovation to address critical bottlenecks and gaps in services in the Maldives. It also seeks to empower young people to co-create solutions to the country's challenges, including climate action, education, inclusion, protection, and access to health services.

What do we know about the problem?

Maldives geography of several islands and dispersed population make it difficult to provide equitable and quality services. The country is also extremely vulnerable to external shocks and the impacts of climate change. However, the Maldives boasts a high level of internet connectivity and digital literacy, particularly among young people, which can be harnessed to accelerate innovations and use of technology to address the country's challenges.

How do we address it?

01

Provide e-learning platforms, interactive digital content, and mobile applications that can be accessed from any device with internet access within the education sector.

02

Develop and implement technological solutions to ensure that the internet is a safe space for children, strengthen functionality of existing mobile applications to report and respond to cases of violence against children, and utilize artificial intelligence to identify potential cases of child abuse and neglect.

03

Develop technological solutions to improve mental health services, such as telepsychiatry services, mobile applications to promote mental wellbeing, provide mental health support to children and their families as well as data analytics and artificial intelligence to improve the diagnosis and treatment of mental health conditions in children.

04

Organize co-creation events, bootcamps, and innovation challenges to provide spaces and opportunities for young people to ideate and develop innovative solutions to the challenges of Maldives.

05

Document and disseminate innovative solutions existing within the country and facilitate their adoption and scale-up.

What change will we achieve in five years?

In five years, the flagship will contribute to the establishment of a youth led innovation ecosystem that generates scalable solutions for Maldives.

If you are interested in partnering with us, you can:

- Provide financial or in-kind contributions or collaborate in organizing bootcamps and innovation challenges to promote social innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Provide short internship opportunities for young people to acquaint themselves with the world of work.

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DEVELOPING AND ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE



Young people: Can and will be changemakers

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What is it?

The Youth Development and Engagement flagship aims to develop and leverage the agency of young people to contribute to creating the Maldives we want, which is "a Maldives fit for young people and young people fit for Maldives". The flagship seeks to establish a cohort of responsible young people that will drive transformational change and contribute substantively to nation-building in the Maldives. Specifically, the flagship will equip young people with relevant knowledge, skills, and tools and provides them with spaces to be seen, heard, and engaged, creating belongingness, and making them competitive, compassionate, and caring young people.

What do we know about the problem?

Maldives is in its third stage of demographic transition, where both death and birth rates are low due to improvements in health, education, economic development, and women's empowerment. This stage presents a window of opportunity for achieving the demographic dividend, but it will close by 2040. It, therefore, means that young people in Maldives have a unique role to play in transforming the country, but this role needs to be harnessed intentionally and urgently.

While the Government has achieved significant progress in reducing mortality rates, increasing access to education and healthcare, and providing new opportunities to young people, especially for girls, young people in Maldives are still facing some unique challenges, including:

- Maldivians are increasingly becoming global citizens with associated challenges to their identity as Maldivians, and in some cases, disconnection from culture, heritage, traditions, and language.
- Young people are experiencing fundamental changes to the traditional societal and family structure driven by globalization and internet access.
- Young people are increasingly becoming frustrated, apathetic, and impatient with the status quo. They have a lot of insecurities related to their livelihoods, high cost of living, access to decent work, income, and housing. These are manifesting in polarizations, exposure of young people to gangs, drugs, crime, violent extremism, and mental health issues.
- Significant gaps still exist between the skills of young people and industry needs, with associated unemployment and increasing migrant population to bridge the human capital needs of the country.
- Young people are also concerned about climate change and the disparities that exist between and within urban and rural communities that limit opportunity, drive internal migration, and reinforce income inequalities.

How do we address it?

01

Build capacity of young people, including training, provision of internships, and mentorship, to provide them with tools, skills, and knowledge in design thinking, advocacy, and accountability to leverage their agency.

02

Create physical and virtual spaces, including bootcamps and youth challenges for young people to convene, connect, and co-create relevant solutions for Maldives, including acceleration of the UNICEF Maldives Flagships.

03

Provide opportunities for young people to engage in activities that harness their collective voices and views to contribute to policy and programming decisions.

What change will we achieve in five years?

The youth development and engagement flagship will seek to creating:

- A cohort of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years that are engaged in creating social change.
- Young people, including scouts and student unions of colleges and universities, meaningfully contribute to policy dialogue and decision-making processes on issues that impact their lives and future.

If you are interested in partnering with us, you can:

- Provide training and mentorship opportunities for young people.
- Provide financial or in-kind contributions for youth engagement initiatives that are of mutual interest to UNICEF and partners.

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INFOGRAPHIC ON THE FLAGSHIPS



Legend

- Accelerated Interventions
- Enabling Environment

