

# United Nations in the Maldives 2016-2020 UNDAF

## Annual UN Country Results Report 2018



Photo: UNDP Maldives

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

AGE	Acute Gastroenteritis
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ARC	Advocating the Rights of Children
ASRH	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
CEDAW	The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERTs	Community Emergency Response Teams
CLE	Clinical Legal Education
COP24	Conference of the Parties 24
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSGs	Community Social Groups
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DHIS	District Health Information System
DHS	Demographic Health Survey
DPA	UN Department of Political Affairs
EML	Essential Medicine List
EMTCT	Elimination of mother-to-child transmission
EPI	Expanded Programme on Immunization
FCSCs	Family and Children Service Centers
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAP	National Gender Equality Action Plan
GLAAS	UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water
GNI	Gross National Income
GoM	Government of Maldives
HDI	Human Development Index
HEOP	Health Emergency Operations Plan
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HNAP	Health National Adaptation Plan
HPA	Health Protection Agency
HPV	Human Papilloma Virus
HRCM	Human Rights Commission of the Maldives
HRH	Human Resource for Health
IDMP	Island Disaster Management Planning
IHR	International Health Regulation
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IT	Information Technology
IUU	Illegal, Unregulated or Unreported
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
KEF	Knowledge Exchange Forum
LECRd	Low Emissions Climate Resilient Development
MEMIS	Maldives Educational Management Information Systems.
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MFDA	Maldives Food and Drug Authority
MHQS	Maldives Healthcare Quality Standards
MNU	Maldives National University
MoGFSS	Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services

MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
MRC	Maldives Red Crescent
NAPHS	National Action Plan for Health System
NBBD	Newborn and Birth Defects Database
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NCD	Non-communicable disease
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OOSC	Out of school children
OPHI	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative
PEN	Package of Essential Non-Communicable Disease
RC	Resident Coordinator
SAP	Strategic Action Plan
SBCS	Social and Behavior Communication Strategy
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SHE	Society for Health Education
SIDS	Small Island Developing. States
SIQAAF	School Improvement, Quality Assurance and Accountability Framework
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
ToT	Training of Trainers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN OHCHR	United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	The United Nations Development Assistance Framework
VAC	Violence Against Children
WAMCO	Waste Management Corporation Limited

## Foreword

I am pleased to present the 2018 annual progress report of the United Nations Development Framework (UNDAF) 2016-2020. The UNDAF 2016-2020 is a joint commitment of UN and the Government of Maldives in building inclusive and equitable society and improving quality of life for all people in the Maldives. It is centered on making a difference in the four key areas which are Youth and Children, Gender, Governance, and Environment and Climate Change. The Annual Progress Report 2018 outlines the results and achievements of UNDAF in 2018, describes challenges and defines ways forward.

2018 is the third year of UNDAF implementation during which UN continued working with the Government of Maldives, CSOs and other stakeholders in providing sectoral policy analysis, generation of disaggregated data and evidence on those groups that are left behind to support informed decision making and policy formulation, strengthening institutional capacity and improving capacity building for data collection and monitoring and reporting in different sectors. UN continued to support advocacy of the SDGs in the country and their mainstreaming into the national and sectoral development policies and plans and creating database system to monitor and report SDGs implementation.

We facilitated formulation of education sector analysis and education sector plan, supported strengthening of health system and developed school nutrition policy and food-based guidelines. We have also supported institutional capacity of social service providers, judiciary and law enforcement agencies in improving their skills for prevention, protection and response to violence against children. Contributions were made in increasing the citizens' voice and stronger rule of law and accountability systems for governance and creating for safe space for young people to engage in dialogue and strengthening access to justice for vulnerable people. Undoubtedly, national and local capacity building to prepare and respond to natural and manmade disasters were among the key focus areas of the UN work in the country.

Our strength lies in our partnerships. On behalf of the UN Country Team in Maldives, I would like to thank our Government counterparts, CSOs, development partners and most of all, the people of the Maldives. As we embark on our achievements, we do recognize the work that lies ahead. We must continue working together, to reach out the furthest left behind first to ensure "leaving no one behind" and achieve sustainable, equitable and inclusive development. As a valued and trusted development partner of the Maldives, the UN stands with the people of the Maldives to work towards a brighter future.

Dr Arvind Mathur  
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United Nations in the Maldives

## 1. Development trends in 2018

The beginning of 2018 saw further exacerbation of the political crisis that began in 2012. The tensions culminated in a dramatic Supreme Court order for the immediate release of all political prisoners and the reinstatement of defected parliamentarians. This unexpected ruling would have cost the ruling party their parliamentary majority. The government's response was to take over judiciary and overturn the decision, while instilling a 45-day state of emergency. The use of the judiciary, police and defense forces by the government re-enforced perceived political motivations, eroded public confidence in government institutions, and caused further deterioration of the human rights situation including crackdown on opposition protests, injuries and arrests.

In the run-up to presidential elections in September the opposition parties' coalition coalesced around a common candidate, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih. Concurrently, the geo-political situation between India and China and the Maldives became increasingly tense. Party polarizations spilled into respective foreign policies with the ruling party taking an increasingly pro-Chinese stance leading to a strained relationship with India. Despite numerous anomalies in the electoral process, citizens exercised their fundamental right to vote peacefully with 89% of voter turnout. In a dramatic twist the joint opposition candidate came out with a convincing majority of 58% of the votes and unseated the incumbent President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom. The UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), working with the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) and Peace and Development Advisors as well as UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR), has been promoting political dialogue and social cohesion, through regular high-level visits and impartial engagement of the political actors, appeals to the government to pursue democratic processes and uphold human rights. As one of the few trusted actors on the ground, the UN was able to maintain its sense of impartiality while providing balanced analysis. Maldives was qualified by DPA as a good example of preventative diplomacy.

After a hesitant but finally peaceful transfer of power, H. E. Ibrahim Mohamed Solih assumed office on 17 November 2018. With cabinet appointed and more political appointees being nominated across various sectors, the government is accelerating the implementation of the joint coalition's 100-day reform agenda that demonstrate the new government's people-centered and equitable approach to governance and development. Some of the flagship areas of the new government are judicial reform, elimination of corruption, increased transparency, participatory planning, and asset recovery for the state institutions and decentralization of governance. Notably, the government has established commitment for long-term strategic development planning and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with a new Planning Ministry set-up and mandated for evidence-based planning through legislation.

The 2019 state budget of US\$ 1.9 billion, the largest ever, was approved in late November. Following the state visit of the President Solih in December, India committed to US\$ 1.4 billion as budget support, currency swap and line of credit for the social and economic development of Maldives. The two countries also inked four pacts on visa liberalization, cultural cooperation, IT and electronics cooperation, and improving the ecosystem for agriculture business. In November, the Maldives pledged before the UN Committee against Torture that it would uphold the 65-year moratorium on the death penalty. In December, Maldives applied to re-join the Commonwealth.

According to the government, 56 of the 67 pledges across 19 sectors have been fulfilled within the first 30 days of the government. The government is further developing a costed Strategic Action Plan (SAP)

2019-2023 to operationalize the pledges beyond first 100 working days and is planning to present the SAP for prospective support from bilateral and multilateral partners at a development cooperation forum in March 2019. The Parliamentary election is scheduled for early April 2019, and local elections in 2020. The fragmented and diverse interests of the coalition partners may mean that the current political unity is short-lived; a risk that needs to be taken into account for UN engagement politically and in development work.

Despite the struggle for its democratization process, Maldives is a development success story of sustained growth and impressive improvements in health and education within the last three decades. The country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita reached \$10,675 in 2017, compared to \$200 in 1978. It continues to grow at a rate of 7.1 percent bolstered by construction, tourism, communications, transport, and fisheries. Maldives' Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2017 is 0.717, which put the country in the high human development category - positioning it at 101 out of 189 countries and territories. Between 1995 and 2017, Maldives' HDI value increased from 0.539 to 0.717, an increase of 33.0 percent. Between 1990 and 2017, Maldives' life expectancy at birth increased by 16.2 years, mean years of schooling increased by 2.3 years and expected years of schooling increased by 4.1 years. Maldives' Gross National Income (GNI) per capita increased by about 154.7 percent between 1990 and 2017. However, when the HDI value is discounted for inequality, the HDI falls to 0.549, a loss of 23.4 percent demonstrating inequalities experienced by Maldivians of different walks of life in enjoying a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. The country has eliminated many diseases, such as polio, measles, malaria, and lymphatic filariasis and the people of the Maldives enjoy universal health coverage. Against these successes of the health sector, the country faces significant challenges to control non-communicable diseases and protect health from the effects of climate change.

Climate change is the reality in the Maldives. Coastal erosion, coral bleaching and temperature rise are major environmental issues for Maldives. The sea level rise is a long-term threat with 80% of land less than 1 meter above sea level. Over 45 islands faced water shortages due to significant changes to weather patterns. More than 60% of coral reef bleaching caused by the 2016 El Nino continues to adversely impact underwater life and natural resources vital for livelihood. Tourist resorts have started implementing coral recovery programs to make the Maldivian reefs resilient to changes in temperature and increase their rate of regeneration. Like the past years, an increasing number of storms during the monsoon season caused floods.

The Maldives ends the year 2018 with signs of hope for human rights and human dignity. The state has commenced investigations of alleged human rights abuses, corruption, jailing of dissidents, murders, disappearances, and the theft of tourism revenues. Still, the new government faces an uphill battle of tackling the accumulated national debt, the unwieldy coalition, religious conservatism and judicial reform. The people and international community are hopeful that the government will rise up to these future hurdles to restore stability and push through democratic and economic reforms.

## 2. Results of UNDAF implementation in 2018

### 2.1 UNDAF Outcome Area 1: Youth and Children



*Photo: UN Women*

The Social and Behavior Communication Strategy (SBCS) on the first 1000 days was finalized, and implementation has been initiated in the selected islands. This was a key step forward towards enabling a positive environment for prevention of overweight and obesity in early childhood by supporting appropriate maternal, infant and young child nutrition during critical periods. Improved education data systems have informed new policy directions for improving quality of learning in students. UN support to child protection sector assisted in further strengthening a child protection system in preventing, protecting and responding to violence against children.

Alternative learning and skills development programs were implemented to reach out to children in conflict with the law who are out of school.

A high focus was given to designing an intervention to address the key factor of behavioral issues linked to child malnutrition in the Maldives. Capacity of health workforce was built on infant feeding,



immunization, advanced pediatric life support and newborn care services to create an enabling environment for good nutrition in the schools.

The education sector saw a major progress in 2018. UN facilitated development of education sector analysis and education sector plan, which addresses many of the challenges in education sector. It has also supported the curriculum roll-out, through development of resources and syllabus. Building institutional capacity for collection of data to monitor its implementation was also supported. UN also supported a roll-out of Life Skills Education in schools, school's reviews for compliance of quality standards and advocated for improving access for children out of school to learning and skills development opportunities. Development of Alternative Learning Programs for children in conflict with the law was done with UN support.

UN's Child Protection programme continued its support for strengthening of institutional capacity of the social service providers, judiciary and law enforcement agencies, and creating an enabling environment. UN contributed towards enhancing the supervision at Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services (MoGFSS), particularly to social workers to strengthen services of Family and Children Service Centers (FCSCs) and also developed capacity of law-enforcement agencies, including Police investigating officers and Prosecutors office to enhance child-friendly juvenile justice practices. UN continued supporting enhancement of the Community Social Groups (CSGs) capacity at island level, which is playing a key role in reaching out to the most vulnerable children and families.

Sexual and Reproductive Health for young people remained a relevant area for development support. While several achievements were made in this direction, the traditional supported areas have indicated signs of slippage.

UN also continued to support initiatives that contributed to the overall health systems strengthening, including health data management system and capacity building in specific areas.

#### 2.1.1 Output 1.1. Enhanced capacity for equitable and quality child & youth-friendly health services, including nutrition, child health & ASRH (UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO)

The SBCS for the first 1000 days of life was developed and endorsed by the Government, and its implementation was initiated in 12 pilot island communities, reaching out pregnant women and young children in these islands. The SBCS interventions, through at an early stage, has started equipping parents of young children and pregnant women of target communities with knowledge and skills on appropriate nutrition and nurturing care. The staff trained on Infant Young Child Feeding in these communities are providing children and their families with nutrition counselling. Combined, the capacity of health workforce at sub-national level has improved in target islands to better respond to child malnutrition at an early stage. To create an enabling environment for good nutrition in the schools, UN supported developing a school nutrition policy and food-based guidelines. These documents provide nutritional guidance on appropriate food for children and adolescents and restricts intake of unhealthy food in the schools. Capacity health service providers in specialized areas of child health was built. Multiple UN agencies collaborated and supported to scale-up the facility-based newborn care trainings at sub-national level, covering atolls where frequent referrals were coming from. Combined, these initiatives have built the capacity of health workforce which in turn are continuing to the improved quality of health services

to children. Assistance is also provided to design an Adolescent HIV Prevention package for health sector, for young people at risk.

The third National Reproductive Health Strategy (2014-2018) was reviewed, with the objective to support the Ministry of Health to assess its implementation. A rights-based approach will be used for the review to consider needs of the population resident in Maldives, and the results of this review will inform formulation of the fourth National Reproductive Health Strategy from 2019 to 2023. UN continued to strengthen access to sexual and reproductive health information using innovative means and engaging the civil society. In this regard, Society for Health Education (SHE) continued its Cafe style information provision series to young people, reaching 700 youth. The mobile application Siththaa formed the basis of comprehensive package to deliver the information. So far 2918 downloads of Siththaa has been recorded.

Awareness on infant and young child feeding practices continue to be improved with regular trainings. However, monitoring on actual implementation is still lacking. UN supported review and update of the National Family Planning Guidelines, which has specific tools on addressing adolescents as well. Support was provided in preparation and submission of the National Validation Report of Elimination of mother-to-child transmission (EMTCT) of HIV and Syphilis. Data collection across the country and Multiple stakeholder engagements and coordination of several forums were facilitated. "Know your status" campaign was launched by H.E Vice President on World Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) day and committed to ensure formation of a high-level steering committee for HIV and Hepatitis Program. As part of strengthening health services for newborns training on facility based newborn care and management of sick newborns and training on introduction of preterm care package was conducted. National Immunization Policy of the Maldives and Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) Manual was developed. Some of the UN agencies collaborated to support a public health surveillance and immunization training for focal points from atolls and Male' Region. Position papers for Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), Pneumo and Rota vaccine introduction developed.

#### 2.1.2 Output 1.2. Enhanced capacity to deliver quality inclusive education (UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, WB)

The education sector saw a major progress in 2018. The Government of Maldives made considerable investments in upgrading the school infrastructure including provision of high-speed internet to all the schools across the country and upgrading existing teachers. Initiatives introduced under the policy "No Child Left Behind" such as Bachelor of Technology (BTECH) and school on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Internship programs were expanded to the schools outside the Capital, Male'. The key stage 3 (Grade 6-7) of the new curriculum was introduced in all the schools across the country. Further, preparations for rolling out the key stage 4 (Grade 8-10) of the new curriculum in 2019, including development of syllabus and learning materials were undertaken in 2018.

Contribution towards improving learning included building institutional capacity for collecting data for monitoring new curriculum implementation and sharing the data with relevant stakeholders to address the gaps and challenges. Further, support was provided for conducting schools' reviews for compliance with the School Improvement, Quality Assurance and Accountability Framework (SIQAAF). This enabled

to identify schools that require additional attention and support from the Ministry of Education. Support was provided to build capacity of the schools for rolling out the Maldives Education Management Information System (MEMIS) which enabled all the schools to issue the students' report cards using the system. UN also facilitated development of education sector analysis and formulation of education sector plan, which addresses many of the challenges in education sector.

A 15-credit point self-learning tool for teachers was developed in 2017. In 2018 the module was transferred to the online format CANVAS and been offered as a module for Bachelor of Education Course. This tool will enable teachers to effectively deliver reproductive health education components integrated in the Key Stages one to three. The resource materials and textbooks for both students and teachers form a major part of the curriculum where the competencies are to be grounded. Senior officials from the National Institute of Education and the SHE were given the opportunity to participate in the Regional Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) where recommendations point towards building capacity of teachers to deliver effectively the sexual and reproductive health content.

### 2.1.3 Output 1.3. Enhanced capacities to prevent violence against children & adolescents (UNICEF)

Child Protection programme continued its support for strengthening institutional capacity of the social service providers, judiciary and law enforcement agencies, and creating an enabling environment. UN in partnership with Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Advocating the Rights of Children (ARC) facilitated consultation with civil society, and adolescents and young people. The consultation identified critical issues to be addressed. These concerns were shared with the Attorney General's Office and the Parliament.

Contributions were made towards enhancing supervision at MoGFSS. Case supervision was carried through technical support, in 10 out of the 19 FCSCs. The exercise identified gaps in case management processes, risk assessments and individual intervention plans. These gaps were addressed by organizing a refresher training for social workers. UN contributed towards enhancing capacity of investigating officers and prosecutors. In addition, support was provided in organizing orientation on child-friendly juvenile justice practices for magistrates and judges together with the law enforcement agencies and senior management staff from schools. The joint training has resulted in an increase in multi-sectoral case conferencing leading to a more holistic intervention to children cases. UN's contribution was for capacity building of the social service workforce including social workers, investigating officers, prosecutors, magistrates, school counsellors and liaison officers. The main focus of the training was to improve their skills for prevention, protection and responding to cases of children as victims of violence, juvenile offenders and witnesses.

The CSGs at island level plays a key role in reaching the most vulnerable children and families. Continued support was provided to enhance capacity of the CSGs in five atolls reaching out 20% of the islands. Some CSGs are working with families and children in selected islands identified through their mapping, while the rest have completed their mapping of vulnerable families. Engagements were continued for raising awareness on child abuse prevention.

These interventions are changing behavior of the communities and bringing a positive change towards the child victims of abuse and their families.

#### 2.1.4 Output 1.4. Enhanced systems for prevention of substance abuse and rehabilitation for youth and children (UNICEF)

Provided technical expertise to conduct a review of the rehabilitation programmes and design a programme for young drug users.

#### 2.1.5 Output 1.5. Increased opportunities for skills development (UNICEF, UNESCO)

Support was provided to the Juvenile Justice Unit to improve access to alternative forms of learning and skills development for out of school children (OOSC) and adolescents in conflict with the law. Contributions were made to increase the capacity of Juvenile Justice Unit to implement life skills education for adolescents in detention facilities. A total of 12 children in detention facilities received life skills education. However, limited resources at the JJU and the absence of a proper facility hampered the expansion of this program to adolescents in conflict with the law and other children and adolescents out of school. A total of 10 adolescent boys completed the vocational education program offered by the Maldives Polytechnic which was part of the alternative learning program. Further, support was given to development of quality standards for a total of 47 vocational courses available at the Maldives Polytechnic for adolescents and young people, which enhanced the quality of the programs.

A stakeholder forum was convened to share most recent information on the situation of education and skills development for OOSC in conflict with the law. This forum enabled stakeholders to recognize the importance of removing institutional silos to avoid duplication of work. Following the forum, a Small-Scale Funding Agreement was formalized with the Maldives Red Crescent (MRC) to assess the situation of children out of school in Addu Atoll in the South Region, which according to the Census 2014, has the highest number of OOSC after Male, the Capital.

A platform for young people to discuss pertinent policy issues at the Maldives National University (MNU) was opened. Three such dialogues were held coinciding with the World Population Day, the launch of State of World Population Report, and Theveli, Research Symposium at MNU. UN facilitated the Maldives Model UN and Youth Summit organized and led by youth themselves. Both of these events the young people showed leadership and recognized important human rights issues including youth, peace and security, reproductive rights and gender equality during the discussions.

## 2.2 UNDAF Outcome Area 2: Gender



*Photo: WHO Maldives*

A positive change in the representation of the appointed positions in the cabinet is seen with the new government that came on board in November 2018. A total of 26% of various level positions in the cabinet portfolio is represented by women. Nevertheless, women in elected positions are somewhat low as the female candidates contesting have not changed. The proportion of women in labour force has declined from 54% to 47% and there is a 20% gender wage gap as identified by the HIES 2016, which indicates no change. Women and men who justify beating has declined; yet more women continue to justify this behavior.

### 2.2.1 Output 2.1. Strengthened capacity of gender responsive frameworks and mechanisms (WHO, UN Women)

Since there was no political will, at the midterm review exercise, it was decided to freeze this output. The decision was presented at the Steering Committee meeting held in May.

### 2.2.2 Output 2.2. Full stakeholder participation and monitoring of CEDAW and other gender relevant intergovernmental processes (UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women, RCO)

Support was provided to enhance access to justice sector services for most vulnerable groups in society including women and strengthening of overall gender framework.

A Knowledge Exchange Forum (KEF) was organized jointly with the MoGFSS and some of the UN agencies. This forum aimed at supporting all key sectors and to identify urgent challenges and promising opportunities in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Maldives. The following four thematic papers pertinent in international human rights law and women's rights in Islam were prepared to be presented at the two-day forum. The idea was also to bring the government Gender Focal Points to the same platform with the civil society to discuss these important concepts and reach a common understanding on the following matters.

1. Do adolescent girls have adequate knowledge to make healthy and informed life choices?
2. Women's Rights and Islam: Why does Musawah say equality in the Muslim family is "necessary and possible", and how applicable are these claims to the Maldives' Muslim context?
3. What constitutes a woman and family friendly framework on child custody, pre-nuptial agreements, marriage and divorce?
4. Women's Economic Empowerment and Unpaid Care Work in the Maldives

By the request from the Government, the KEF had to be unfortunately cancelled at the last minute. However, the papers were validated and discussed together with the CSOs before finalization. These papers have provided important insights to the (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) CEDAW Reporting being carried out later in the year.

Support was provided in the formulation of the 6th CEDAW State Report together with the MoGFSS. Further information from Ministry of Economic Development will be incorporated into the report and circulated to the partners before submitting to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). MoGFSS aims to have it submitted to CEDAW Committee by 1st March 2019.

UN in partnership with the MoGFSS undertook advocacy and awareness raising on eliminating violence against women. Additionally, a number of communications materials were developed and disseminated to the general public during the 16 Days of Activism. UN also held a public event to raise awareness on HeForShe and increase the number of signatories for the Maldives - short briefings were also given to men and boys on how they can engage and contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment.

### 2.2.3 Output 2.3. Strengthened Institutions and legislations implemented to effectively prevent and respond to GBV (UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP)

A Media Practitioners Workshop was conducted on Women's Rights in Maldives, in partnership with Musawah/Sisters in Islam, Malaysia to cover positive discourses on women's rights in various media on women's rights in Islam as well as giving practical skills in communication for the media in reporting on Gender-based violence (GBV) and women's rights issues.

Support was provided for professional development training of health workers and social workers on service provision for the elderly and victims of abuse in 3 different atolls. The objective of trainings was to ensure that first responders working with victims of abuse, i.e. health workers and social workers are better equipped with skills in providing services to the elderly and victims of abuse in different situations. The training specifically covered sign language training for health workers and social workers and Training of Trainers (ToT) on service provision of health workers and social workers for elderly and victims of abuse.

UN also focused on strengthening the supervision of social workers. Case Supervision was carried out with technical and financial support, in 10 out of the 19 Family and FCSCs. Gaps identified include irregularities in case management processes, risk assessments, and individual intervention plans. UN supported refresher training covered these areas increasing efficiency in the work of the social workers at MoGFSS.

### 2.3 UNDAF Outcome Area 3: Governance



*Photo: UNDP Maldives*

UN supported further development of a national level data system and three sectoral data management systems. The MaldivInfo database was upgraded to fit to “data-for-all” version and was updated with additional information from administrative sources and newly released survey data. Maldives Child Protection Database was expanded to cover all atolls and FCSCs for better management of reported violence against children (VaC) cases. UN with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) developed the first country estimate on Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) for the Maldives. The disaggregated data from these three databases are assisting with the identification of vulnerable children, facilitating targeted interventions to ensure that no child is left behind.

UN in collaboration with the NBS developed the institutional capacity to establish the child focused national MPI for the country. The MPI investigates poverty beyond income and builds the understanding of how people experience poverty in multiple and simultaneous ways. It identifies how children and people are left behind in education, health and standards of living using 11 key indicators. A joint stakeholders exercise furnished consensus on the indicators most relevant to Maldives which are linked to the SDGs and national priorities. Furthermore, the process led to building capacity among key stakeholders on calculating a national MPI. The MPI will be finalized using data from the soon-to-be-released Demographic Health Survey (DHS) 2016-2017.

In 2018, two studies were embarked on, namely study of Child Marriage and on Adolescent Issues. The desk review on adolescent issues identified areas for further interventions and programmatic actions.

Data collection is underway for the Child Marriage study and expected to be available by the end of January 2019. The findings from the study will provide much needed updated data about child marriage in the country.

The assessment of infant and young children' feeding practices indicated that fathers need to be more engaged in matters related to feeding. It also indicated that this is a matter solely left for the females. The tasks of feeding were seen as a responsibility of the females in the households. The designing of the SBCS strategy for the first 1000 days of life considered specific roles of fathers and mothers, and incorporated aspects that minimized the stereotypical roles. For instance, fathers were identified as a key target group, and messages to fathers on their role in enabling mothers to breast-feed are included. Similarly, it includes nutrition counselling information, messages for working mothers on continuing breastfeeding when returning to work. Furthermore, dissemination of early childhood care and messages used in the global movement *#earlymomentsmatter*, which include messages for fathers and mothers.

Contributions were made towards increasing citizen's voice and stronger rule of law and accountability systems for governance with a key focus on creating safe spaces for young people to engage in dialogue and strengthen access to justice for vulnerable people. Given the challenging operating environment and non-availability of key stakeholders in the government, interventions were readjusted towards the community through civil society. Efforts on improving access to justice were sustained with community-oriented initiatives such as the community-based paralegal trainings that educated and empowered local residents across the country, to provide legal assistance within their island communities.

Initiatives such 'Film for Change' and Miyaheli - social innovation camp provided young people with platforms to create dialogue around SDGs. This equipped young people with entrepreneurial skills whereby they are able to come up with their own startups. Likewise, to reduce youth vulnerability and understand the drivers of violent extremism in the Maldives, partnerships were sought with the government. A national action plan on preventing violent extremism is being developed. This would become the foundation on which prevention work will be carried out in 2019.

Contributions were made towards facilitating the Government to utilize migration information and data for national development planning in a sustainable manner. UN also contributed by strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Health to analyze and respond to migration health risks, needs, and challenges.

### 2.3.1 Output 3.1. Institutional capacities strengthened for implementation of legislative reform, oversight and local and national level evidenced based inclusive equitable and sustainable policies and planning (UNDP, ILO, UNICEF, WHO)

A new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MNU and UN provided an opportunity for the UN to support the university to host a multi-disciplinary research forum with the participation of researchers from eight countries in South Asia besides a wide range of national researchers. The rich discussion of the over 100 research papers was intended to advance evidence-based decision making.

In 2018, UN embarked on two major studies: A study of Child Marriage and (desk review) Study of Adolescent Issues. Data collection is completed for the Child Marriage study and is hoped to be made available by end of January 2019. The findings from the study will provide much needed data on validating



and verifying the situation of child marriage in the country. The desk review on adolescent issues identified areas for further interventions and programmatic actions by multiple UN agencies and national partners.

UN continued its work towards improving access to justice through with community-oriented initiatives such as the community-based paralegal trainings that educated and empowered local residents across north and south of the country, to provide legal assistance within their island communities. Most of the participants have had personal experience in matters related to accessing justice and are familiar with the issues faced by the community in their island. As such, they were keen to gain further knowledge on their rights and become engaged as paralegals. Similarly, the establishment of Clinical Legal Education (CLE) in law programmes in the MNU, the first of its kind, equipped students with practical skills and instilled pro bono ethics through initiatives, such as community teaching and attachment opportunities with government agencies, private law firms and civil society organizations (CSOs) that provided legal assistance to marginalized groups. To further cultivate a culture of pro bono services, and as a result of their involvement in the CLE programme, private law firms along with CSOs also initiated pro bono conferences that identified avenues to systematize pro bono work and are presently working on establishing a Clearing House Model within the private bar.

Support was provided for Ministry of Health in its various functions for ensuring access to quality healthcare services and availability of safe medicines and medical products throughout the country. In this context, technical support was provided for developing national policies, reviewing National Essential Medicine List (EML), developing Maldives Healthcare Quality Standards (MHQS) and training of the assessors to conduct the MHQS assessment in health facilities. Current work continues for establishment of Quality Management system in compliance with International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001:2015 for Maldives Food and Drug Authority (MFDA). Technical support was provided to review the herbal medicine regulation system and is working closely with MFDA in addressing the gaps and challenges. The heightened importance of data and its availability for measuring and monitoring SDGs progress has made it priority to improve current information system. Availability of data will play a critical role for evidence-based policy decisions for improving governance, transparency and accountability. Support is also being provided for finalization of Maldives DHS 2016-2017 and technical assistant for implementing very important two components that makes the health information systems which are District Health Information System (DHIS2) and e -registry for Human Resource for Health (HRH). The year concluded with support to fulfill two very important activities for health sector in fulfilling the 100-day pledge; the launching of National blood policy and holding the National Symposium for Traditional and Alternative Medicine. The symposium provided an opportunity for practitioners, researchers, implementers and the regulatory body to discuss currently challenges faced in traditional medicine and identify a way forward for addressing these gaps.

### 2.3.2 Output 3.2. Civil society and vulnerable groups have enhanced capacities to engage, contribute & participate in national development processes (UNDP)

Initiatives such as Film for Change that empowered youth to explore social issues relevant to the SDG using the medium of film, strengthened dialogue processes to engage civil society with a focus on youth and women groups and further engaged the public in discussions in social media and café screenings. Miyaheli, the Social Innovation Camp, empowered youth and provided them with entrepreneurial skills

to build their own startups to address social issues in the country. Innovative platforms such as the Youth Vision Workshop engaged youth from Ha, Haa Dhaalu, Shaviyani, Ga, Gaafu Dhaalu, Addu and the Greater Male' region, in discussion on key priorities for the country's development through the construction of art pieces. The workshop was followed by exhibitions in each region and selected participants were able to engage in dialogue with policy makers in attendance.

With the upcoming April 2019 Parliamentary and Local Council Elections, work has been done to strengthen the participation of women in the political sphere. A total of 127 participants from women's wings of political parties and interested women from Haa Dhaalu, Shaviyani, Ga, Gaafu Dhaalu, Addu and the Greater Male' region were educated and empowered to contest for the Parliament elections in April 2019 through leadership trainings that focused on the importance of women leaders in the governance system and the development of leadership and campaigning skills.

### 2.3.3 Output 3.3. Mechanisms and frameworks developed to promote inclusive and sustainable growth, economic diversification, social protection and improved employment conditions for vulnerable groups (UNDP, IOM, ILO, UNICEF)

The Hulhumale' Smart Cities pilot project continued in 2018. Several initiatives under this project were geared towards strengthening community participation in the development of Hulhumale' city and reducing the gap between residents and city level decision makers. Community-based theatre was utilized as a platform to identify urban issues faced by youth and to enhance youth participation to solve urban challenges. Majority of the activities under this project were undertaken with youth. Under this project, key disability activists were able to engage with local planners and city decision makers as part of the Promoting Disability Inclusive Development Forum. Planners and decision-makers were informed on everyday challenges faced by PWDs in accessing basic city services. This forum ended with the development of a joint action plan by city service providers and mandated institutions to tackle some of the key concerns raised. "BeSmartBeInclusive" campaign, a social media campaign was run to get the public to engage in the dialogue of disability friendly city services. Through the Urban Innovation Camp 19 young men, and 11 young women were given the opportunity to respond to 3 key urban challenges: community participation in city planning, waste management, and transport management with their own innovative solutions. The 3 winning teams are currently working on developing these solutions with the mandated service providers. The products will be handed over to the city public service providers upon completion in 2019.

Migration in the Maldives: A Country Profile 2018 is completed, and the printed report will be handed over to GoM in early 2019. The report serves as a key strategic tool to develop evidence-based approaches to migration policy making and to address the key findings and recommendations of the report. Migrant Information cards were printed for the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives (HRCM) to raise awareness of the rights of migrants which display the rights of migrant workers and provide contact details of relevant authorities in the case of any violation. The cards were printed and are being distributed to migrants upon arrival in the country. Migration Festival was organized in association with the MNU. Along with films on migration, a panel discussion was held, and migrant workers presented testimonies of their experience to the audience. However, due to Government request the migration data management training that was planned for the capacity building of government officials was

cancelled. Situation Analysis of Migration Health in the Maldives received government comments after a long delay and will be finalized and shared with the Government in early 2019.

UN continued its support to develop a monitoring framework to monitor and enhance reporting on vulnerable or deprived children. This was achieved through development of an online system to track and monitor children and vulnerable, with the intension of making them graduate from their vulnerabilities.

#### 2.3.4 Output 3.4. State institutions and civil society have enhanced capacities to participate in intergovernmental & intragovernmental processes, harmonize international obligations into national policy framework and monitor and report progress (UNICEF)

No programme interventions were carried out in this regard for the year 2018.

#### 2.3.5 Output 3.5. Governance systems enhanced for improved performance in health care delivery (WHO)

Technical support was given to develop and finalize the Health Emergency Operations Plan (HEOP), which was endorsed and launched in July 2018, which strengthened preparedness and response to outbreaks and scaled up surveillance in the country. Maldives experienced torrential rainfall in April 2018 which led to flooding and water damage, for which the prepositioned IEH Kits at the strategic islands and atolls levels were found helpful in responding to this emergency. Help was given to the islands to stock up Chlorine tablets. Maldives also experienced a nation-wide rise of Dengue and Acute Gastroenteritis (AGE) cases in 2018, and as part of the continued support from UN to control vectors and vector borne diseases, UN supported procurement of Vector control equipment including 50 hand sprayers, vectobac 10 bottles, deltamethrin 48 bottles and 10 fog machines. Support was given to Health Protection Agency (HPA) to coordinate awareness session for migrant workers and staff at Waste Management Corporation Limited (WAMCO), in addition to arranging clinicians training on Management of Dengue cases. Further, assistance was given in developing and finalization of National Action Plan for Health System (NAPHS) which is mainly based on International Health Regulation (IHR) Action Plan of the country. UN continues to support Hospital emergency readiness training (HERP) and the rapid response training (RRT) at regional and atoll levels to strengthen emergency response.

The National Non-communicable disease (NCD) campaign; 25 by 25, was kick started at a public event in collaboration with stakeholders including government agencies and NGOs. During the event the UN handed over 10 outdoor gym equipment to the Minister of Health to be placed in 10 different islands. UN also promoted physical activity within the workplace and within communities in their step towards beating NCDs. UN collaborated with HPA in launching the Package of Essential Non-Communicable Disease (PEN) programme for primary health care facilities in the Maldives. PEN offers opportunity to strengthen primary health care level in the Maldives by minimizing gaps and increasing utilization of NCD services to those in vulnerable, remote settings in the society. UN is also working with the HPA to develop a National Cancer Control Plan for prevention and treatment of cancer in Maldives.

As part of efforts to strengthen mental health services in the country, a capacity building training for public health workers on Mental Health Gap Action Plan was conducted in July 2018. The training was organized by HPA in association with Mental Health Awareness Foundation with facilitators from NHS Foundation Trust, London. Support was given to technical staff to work with the mental health programme to support the government to implement the activities outlined in the Mental Health Action Plan.

During April 2018, capacity building trainings were held for nurses, midwives and reproductive health focal points of all 19 atolls; on provision of quality services of overall national reproductive health programmes and new guidelines. To further strengthen new born health, birth defects surveillance and QI, a training workshop was conducted in August 2018 where a team of facilitators conducted a training to Review and Strengthen Newborn and Birth Defects Database (NBBD) Surveillance, Review and Strengthen Newborn Care and QI approaches and Introducing Preterm Care Package in Maldives. A Rapid Assessment of status of implementation of adolescent health and school health programme is being undertaken to understand the current situation and identify activities to further strengthen the programmes.

Capacity building training on facility based newborn care and management of sick newborns was held for Lhaviyani Atoll during 27 – 31 January 2018. This is part of a series of trainings to roll out facility based newborn care trainings for the whole country. Seven regions have already been covered in 2016 and 2017 and for 2018 two atolls have been identified. The trainings are based on essential and newborn care trainings manuals and conducted by trained professionals who completed the ToT training held in 2016.

## 2.4 UNDAF Outcome Area 4: Environment and Climate Change



*Photo: UNDP Maldives*

UN supported the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to strengthen the capacity of 8 island communities on child and gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction planning and response. Nine island communities of Laamu atoll were also engaged together with Ministry of Environment to create awareness on safe waste management practices.

In 2018, UN continued its engagement with the government on the implementation of its green climate fund project to provide safe drinking water to 49 islands across the Maldives that experience climate induced water shortages. This was the key initiative that UN pursued in 2018. Progress however was limited as there were significant delays in the procurement process for the civil works of the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and rainwater harvesting activities which were the main planned drivers for financial delivery in 2018. As a result, the only 3 million of the 11 million targets could be achieved. The soft components of the project such as tariff,

groundwater baseline and capacity building components were also delayed at all stages from ToR development to multiple unsuccessful rounds of procurement. As a result, very little work was able to be undertaken on this front.

The online platform - Laamu Koshaaru - to enter island level administrative data is now available for managing data. The system allows island and atoll councils to compile administrative data from different sectors such as population, health, energy, agriculture, and food security. The database facilitates analyses, ensure safe and secure storage of data, and renders data accessible to all. The tool once populated with data will support evidence-based decision-making process and should feed data into the Island and Atoll Development Plans.

- 2.4.1 Output 4.1. Strengthened, effective and accessible knowledge-based mechanisms that incorporate relevant sector data (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, FAO, UNOPS, UN Women, WHO)

Support was given for data-entry in Laamu Koshaaru (web portal application) training to Laamu Atoll island councils. This exercise included modifying forms and menus, bug-fixing and interface upgrades which includes features to extract aggregate data in excel format. Currently, discussions are ongoing between NBS and LGA to integrate Laamu Koshaaru into e-gov services, with the support of NCIT.

- 2.4.2 Output 4.2. Key tools are introduced so that development issues are effectively coordinated, and promote ecosystem-based environmental and economic sustainability (UNDP, WHO, UN Women, FAO, UNOPS)

Technical assistance was provided to develop the Occupational Health guideline and Mercury free strategy and policy. Support was also provided to develop the Health care waste management policy, strategy and demonstrate a pilot model using waste autoclaves. UN collaborated with Ministry of Environment to develop the communication strategy to implement the National Awareness strategy for Water and Sanitation. Technical assistance was also provided to develop the guidelines on chemicals and chemical waste handling, storage, transport and dissemination. As Maldives has agreed to join the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) 2018 cycle, funds were mobilized technical assistance was provided to conduct the survey.

Financial and technical support was provided to HPA in the development of the Health National Adaptation Plan (HNAP). UN and Health Care without Harm collaborated in developing the Green and Climate Smart Hospital Policy and Strategy for the Maldives. UN Coordinated and supported inputs to the Global Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Climate and Health Initiative. Supported participation of MOH in first ever global conference on Air Pollution and Health and Conference of the Parties 24 (COP24). Draft concept paper was developed for Green Climate Fund. Maldives has also become the first country in South East Asia Region to participate in the breath life campaign.

Technical assistance was provided for the formulation of a national plan of action to combat Illegal, Unregulated or Unreported (IUU) fishing to support the Government of Maldives in implementation of its international commitments in this regard.

- 2.4.3 Output 4.3. National and local-level systems are enhanced to prepare for, respond to and be resilient to natural and human-induced disasters, including climate change, and benefit from enhanced dialogue among relevant stakeholders in all sectors, with a special focus on vulnerable groups and women (UNICEF, WHO, UNDP, IOM, FAO)

Building on the support provided to the government to establish Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) in 2017, UN worked with the NDMA in the current year to establish eight new CERTs in islands

which are vulnerable to climate hazards such as seasonal sea-surge flooding. The overall goal of the intervention is to strengthen local capacity to prepare and respond to man-made hazards and those exacerbated by climate change. Four new CERTs were established in the north region in the islands of Makunudhoo, Baarah, Kendhoo and Maduvvari and four in Laamu atoll (south region) in the islands of Maavah, Isdhoo, Fonadhoo and Kunahandhoo.

With the support of a national consultant based in the NDMC (who improved its capacity to better plan, coordinate, implement and monitor activities under the joint annual work plan, 2017/2018), the continuation of the work to establish CERTs in the most vulnerable island communities ensued. The teams established had demonstrated their support in responding to incidences of flooding in the islands whereby ensuring that all island-wide activities such as schooling, health-centre operations and trade did not come to a stop, as was the case prior to establishment of the island-level teams trained in disaster preparedness and management.

With the support of UN, the four island communities from the northern underwent the Island Disaster Management Planning (IDMP), developed their Island Disaster Management Plans and established the CERTs. Since UN had supported the IDMP process in all 11 inhabited islands of Laamu in 2017, only CERT establishment was carried in the four selected islands. Both UN and NDMA worked with island councils to involve adolescents and young people, particularly girls and women in all disaster risk reduction capacity building activities. The CERTs also have a high participation of young women, who actively engage the public on issues of emergency preparedness and response. The activities carried out in Laamu atoll were part of the UN-supported activities under the One-UN joint programme - Low Emissions Climate Resilient Development (LECRd).

Additionally, Emergency Funds were provided for dewatering pumps and accessories to each of the four islands selected from the north region, to ensure that the CERTs have equipment to manage island emergencies. The trainings coupled with the equipment, has ensured quick responses.

Awareness raising sessions for children and adults on community-based waste management in 9 selected islands in Laamu atoll were carried out. These sessions as part of the LECReD programme focused on the same islands where UN had supported building of waste management centres. A booklet on safe waste management practices, was developed to guide sessions aimed at influencing positive behavior change towards safe and environmentally effective community waste management. The sessions carried out with the support of a national consultant, engaged 988 (including 510 students) participants in the islands of Fonadhoo, Mundoo, Maabaidhoo, Isdhoo, Kalaidhoo, Maavah, Kunhandhoo, Maamendhoo and Hithadhoo. The sessions were welcomed by the island communities, particularly on how household level waste sorting and usage of government-provided waste sorting bins.

### 3. Results in cross-cutting areas

#### 3.1 Gender Equality

UN continued to strengthen the CSGs as the key component of the national child protection system at community level. CSGs work with vulnerable families for preventing and responding to VAC and GBV. The assessment of infant and young children's feeding practices indicated that fathers need to be more engaged in matters related to feeding and included this as a component in the strategy. Specific Safe Space sessions were conducted for girls to empower them on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH). In addition, the peace and security dialogues included discussions on gender equality and ensure a balanced representation was met.

UN has been working towards creating a more enabling environment for the advancement of women in the country. In cooperation with government partner's efforts were made to provide women with the opportunities to participate and compete in leadership roles via capacity building and enabling legal settings. UN in partnership with the MoGFSS developed the National Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP), which focuses on equal participation and representation of men and women in the economic, political and social sphere through strategic interventions and leadership, and governance is one of the key areas focused in the plan. It will facilitate the roll out the 2016 Gender Equality Law. UN took part in consultations on its draft; as well as encourage quotas (currently non-existing) and enable women's access to resources for development. The GEAP has been endorsed by the stakeholders and will be implemented with the M&E component currently being developed. It focuses on fostering equal participation and representation of men and women in the economic, political and social sphere through strategic interventions on key outcome areas namely, Leadership and Governance, Economic Empowerment, Gender Mainstreaming, GBV and Access to Justice further guaranteeing the safety and rights of women in the country.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) being one of the biggest challenges towards gender equality, UN has been working towards creating a safer and enabling environment for women's participation in the public sphere. Through initiatives such as the GEAP as well as the National Domestic Violence Action Plan it is envisaged that the framework for protection given to women and survivors of SGBV and DV are safeguarded.

UN in its work promotes Gender Equality in line with Gender Equality policy 2015. Gender marker is used to improve quality of projects by emphasizing the importance of addressing specific needs and concerns of women, girls, boys and children and of different ages. Both Migration Profile and Migrant Health Situational Analysis identified different needs of gender groups and what their specific needs are. They also provide gender disaggregated data health & migration profile.

Interventions were aimed to empower women to meaningfully participate in the public sphere through community and national level interventions. UN continued to highlight the gender disparities through evidence and data generated to monitor SDGs. In addition, advocacy with relevant stakeholders was initiated to bring the attention to change social norms on women's right and Islam, in collaboration with Musawah/Sisters in Islam.

A gender situation analysis of the rural sector was undertaken in 2018 and the results will become available in 2019.



Both UN and NDMA worked with island councils to encourage adolescents and young people, particularly girls and women to participate in all disaster risk reduction capacity building activities. It is noteworthy that the CERTs also have a high participation of young women, who actively engage the public on issues of emergency preparedness and response.

### 3.2 Human Rights

UN designs and delivers programmes through a human rights-based approach by facilitating consultations on the draft Child Rights Bill which included adolescent girls and boys and young people as well as NGOs. In addition, UN actively contributed to the bill through participation in the consultation with the government agencies led by the HRCM. The advocacy and support to establish alternative learning spaces for out-of-school children has the right to education for all children at its heart.

Universal access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights remains one of key works of the UN. All activities take the stand to uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) principles. UN especially focused on universal access to reproductive health and rights to bring to the decision-making tables on population dynamics including the international migration.

To contribute towards the work being done locally to safeguard human rights for all, efforts are being undertaken by UN to ensure that the rights and needs of youth are addressed in the country. The nationwide study on Youth Vulnerability commissioned by UN aims at better understanding of the vulnerabilities faced by Maldivian youth and certain factors/groups that are further exacerbating this vulnerability towards violence and violent extremism. This study is the first of its kind that has focused on violent extremism and its effects on young people. It identified the drivers of violent extremism and presented recommendations to the government on addressing those in order to ensure the rights to safety and protection to all youth in the country. This is also the first study that has focused on youth challenges and their voices in the recent years and is therefore expected to provide groundbreaking information that will inform policies and decisions of the government in the coming years.

### 3.3 Sustainable Development Goals

UN continued to support SDG unit at Ministry of Environment for the overall advocacy of SDGs and more specifically for SDG child indicators. In this regard, a workshop on SDG child indicators was carried out to government and civil society to orient them on SDG indicators with identification of lead government office on SDG child indicators. This was followed by distribution of advocacy posters to all islands.

The International Day of the Girl Child was marked together with the Ministry of Environment and the Maldives girl Guides Association. UN facilitated population dialogues on relevant themes including the launching of SWOP2018 and World Population Day 2018, in partnership with MNU. Furthermore, UN supported the National Youth Advocacy Summit 2018 and the Maldives Model United Nations 2018, to advocate for Youth, Peace & Security. The population dialogues also focused on engaging with youth to advocate for sustainable development policies, by using existing data and studies particularly on population projections data. UN also celebrated the International Day of the Girl Child, by partnering with Maldives Girl Guide Association to create awareness on SDGs, particularly on Gender Equality for 6-24-

year-old girls. Additionally, availability of island level administrative records contributed to strengthening all 17 SDGs.

By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortalities to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births. By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water- borne diseases and other communicable diseases. By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.

UN's engagements working with the SDGs Division mandated to oversee state implementation of SDGs played a key role in positioning UN as a thought leader in SDGs. Development of national/sectoral policies (e.g. prioritizing SDG targets relevant to the national context or drafting a national strategy for the implementation of the SDGs). Alignment of national policies (development, sectoral) with migration-related SDG goals. Migration Profile directly contribute to SDG 10.7 on migration governance. Migrant Health Situational Analysis project contributes to Universal Health Coverage SDG goal 3. Several interventions to provide access to justice for the most vulnerable groups in society including women were rolled out in 2018. Interventions contributed towards the outcomes envisioned under SDG 16 & SDG 5 specifically.

## 4. Financial Performance in 2018

Financial performance in 2018 is shown in the table below. Out of a total US\$ 15.3 million of budgeted funds, only 47.5% or US\$ 7.3 million were utilized. UNDAF activities in 2018 were impacted to a significant level by the presidential elections and the 45-day State of Emergency (SOE), which created an uncondusive environment to work with political parties and judiciary. Activities involving communities or the local councils were also difficult to implement given the pre-occupation with the campaigns<sup>1</sup>, which impacted fund utilization rate.

**Financial Performance in 2018\***

Outcome Area	UN Agency	Budget for 2018	Fund Utilization in 2018	Implementation Rate (%)
Outcome 1: Youth & Children	UNICEF	1,130,500.00	1,122,926.27	99.3
	UNFPA	179,389.00	178,915.00	99.7
	WHO	31,500.00	204,500.00	649.2
<b>Subtotal Outcome 1</b>		<b>1,341,389.00</b>	<b>1,506,341.27</b>	<b>112.3</b>
Outcome 2: Gender	UN Women	31,266.00	27,482.79	87.9
	UNICEF	10,000.00	10,000.00	100.0
	UNFPA	204,082.13	181,752.13	89.1
	UNDP	121,000.00	61,176.00	50.6
	WHO	27,000.00	27,000.00	100.0
<b>Subtotal Outcome 2</b>		<b>393,348.13</b>	<b>307,410.92</b>	<b>78.2</b>
Outcome 3: Governance	UNDP	1,046,992.00	850,187.00	81.2
	UNICEF	179,768.00	162,185.55	90.2
	WHO	116,959.00	730,401.00	624.5
	IOM	85,955.00	49,620.00	57.7
<b>Subtotal Outcome 3</b>		<b>1,429,674.00</b>	<b>1,792,393.55</b>	<b>125.4</b>
Outcome 4: Environment & Climate Change	UNDP	11,658,266.33	3,180,000.00	27.3
	UNFPA	25,055.11	24,154.95	96.4
	UNICEF	106,226.00	106,226.00	100.0
	WHO	234,485.00	234,485.00	100.0
	FAO	154,000.00	130,000.00	84.4
<b>Subtotal Outcome 4</b>		<b>12,178,032.44</b>	<b>3,674,865.95</b>	<b>30.2</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>15,342,443.57</b>	<b>7,281,011.69</b>	<b>47.5</b>

\*Source: UN Maldives staff data

<sup>1</sup> 2016-2020 UNDAF Final Evaluation Report, [http://www.un.org.mv/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Maldives\\_UNDAF-Final-Evaluation-Report-11-July-2019-5.pdf](http://www.un.org.mv/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Maldives_UNDAF-Final-Evaluation-Report-11-July-2019-5.pdf)

## 5. Challenges in 2018, Lessons learned and way forward

The UN in Maldives in partnership with Government, civil society, private sector and other development partners implemented diverse programmes by utilizing expertise of the UN agencies in 2018. Below are some of the challenges faced in 2018 and the proposed strategies to overcome and recommended ways forward.

### 5.1 Coordination & joint efforts

There are several parties and authorities involved in different sectors that UN works in and therefore it is important to clearly define roles and responsibilities in order to avoid duplication and focus on activities that would have impact. Furthermore, while there are several areas where UN agencies work together, there was limited coordination between UN agencies working on the same result.

Coordination and communication are critical to be up to date with different activities that are being carried out. For a one UN front when working with partners there is a need for better information sharing between agencies and coordination on common or similar results. Minimize agency silos, which is leading to fragmentation of interventions across outcomes. To improve coordination when working with the same sector, across– reiterate the need for a special joint workplan that is a reflection of sector-wide work, pull-out the activities that cuts across different outcomes and between agencies.

In the absence of a national framework document and acknowledging the weak capacity at the ministries, it is all the more important to collaborate UN's efforts to strengthen transformative results rather than implementing piecemeal efforts to ensure the most furthest is reached first in the development programmes. Therefore, it is very important to increase ownership of the Government through closer engagement, align current Government's priorities, and incorporate into the workplan and emphasize the need to have a signed workplan, to fulfill organizational requirements.

### 5.2 Data management & monitoring systems

Some of the main challenges during the year remains as lack of data, research and capacity to undertake data analysis. The culture of using evidence to inform planning needs to be cultivated using the existing databases. Concurrently, more resources need to be allocated to monitor service delivery and its effectiveness. This supplemented by strengthened processes will help to increase accountability of institutions.

### 5.3 Changing political environment

Programme implementation saw two periods of slowdown in 2018. The unpredicted SOE declared in early February impeded the implementation of activities especially with the judiciary and the law enforcement agencies. The second period was in the run up to the presidential election and in the following weeks until the new government took office in mid-November.

There was heightened sensitivity in the run up to the presidential elections. Some partners became extra cautious regarding information sharing such as research findings and reports, as the information could be interpreted in different ways. This situation impacted some key activities. For example, Household Income and Expenditure Survey Report was published without the chapter on poverty, and data on juvenile crimes that were regularly published were not available for public use. The priorities of the government were aligned to campaign priorities hence there were challenges to implementation of key legislation. Key

stakeholders in the government were not available for most part of the year which meant that UN had to reorganize its way of working and focused more on the communities. However, the Presidential election also posed challenges to implement the activities in the island communities since the public were heavily engaged in political activities and could not give time to participate in the activities causing significant delays in the programme implementation.

This situation also resulted in a wait and watch scenario for development partners and donors and there were challenges in resource mobilization for the programme. To overcome this, partnerships were sought with the private sector for domestic resource mobilization.

To minimize the effect of the slowdown in programme implementation steps were taken during work planning to ensure implementation is not affected by the events surrounding the presidential elections. The peaceful Presidential elections of September 2018 has opened up the space for meaningful engagement with the government on much needed democratic reforms. Closer coordination, with national partners both at technical and policy level may lead to opportunities to implement activities, even if at a smaller scale. Align current Government's priorities and incorporate into the workplan. There is a need to orient the new appointees on the UNDAF itself. Emphasize the need to have a signed workplan to fulfill organizational requirements.

#### 5.4 Capacity gaps and sustainability of interventions

High turnover of both political and technical staff at the institutions, effects the sustainability of the work and institutional memory. Capacity gaps beyond the scope of interventions also affect the effective application of knowledge, in some areas. This can be addressed by supporting the Government to institutionalizing the programme outcomes to enhance institutional memory. Alternatively, innovative mechanisms, such as forming civil society advisory groups to strengthen the sectoral ministries can address some of these challenges.

#### 5.5 Addressing sensitive issues

Sensitivity on sexual and reproductive health and gender stereotyping requires a progressive discourse to support both the issues from a religious perspective.

Reproductive health continues to be a taboo subject that needs investment for long term social change campaigns is paramount in order to change mindsets within the society and sustain the gains made. Already signs of slipping back to the worse situation, for example in contraceptive prevalence rate, is evident from the findings of the latest DHS. Concerted effort from all UN Agencies is needed to ensure the narrow space for the dialogue remain open. Even though the Health Master Plan and the Reproductive Health Strategy recognize the issues facing young people, there is little mention about adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) in the strategy to expand information and services. Young people are now open to advocate for their SRH and reproductive rights. However, there is a need to expand beyond young people in Male' and reach the most vulnerable/excluded in the atolls. Having a strong UN presence, the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Strategy linked to National HIV AIDS programme can build the momentum with the new government. The need to invest time and effort to develop evidence-based and positive messages using sociocultural examples and deliver consistent messaging by the UN country team in their regular advocacy is evident. Social norm change is crucial to facilitate the implementation of laws and policies.

## 5.6 Implementation of laws and policies

Lack of resources, capacity and accountability mechanisms hinders proper implementation of laws and policies and hinders rights holders (especially the most marginalized populations) from benefitting from these laws and policies in a meaningful manner. There is a need to work with the People's Majlis and other relevant state bodies to ensure accountability. Furthermore, public need to be educated on laws and policies to demand greater accountability from duty bearers.

## 5.7 Enhanced partnership with civil society

More platforms need to be established for civil society, young people, women, communities residing outside of Male' and migrant workers to take part in an inclusive, participatory and transparent development. There is need to establish more permanent mechanisms for ensuring engagement, participation and contribution of these important and vulnerable groups.

---- The end ----