



DEVELOPING SKILLS IN YOUTH TO SUCCEED IN THE EVOLVING SOUTH ASIAN ECONOMY

MALDIVES COUNTRY REPORT

Maldives: Harnessing Skills Development of Challenge of Inclusive and Sustainable Growth amidst Economic, Environmental and Social Vulnerabilities








The report explores different pathways that exist from 'education to employment' and studies the ecosystem around it. It highlights the changes in sectoral composition, occupational trends, nature of employment, access to and performance in education, and inclusivity for disadvantaged groups.

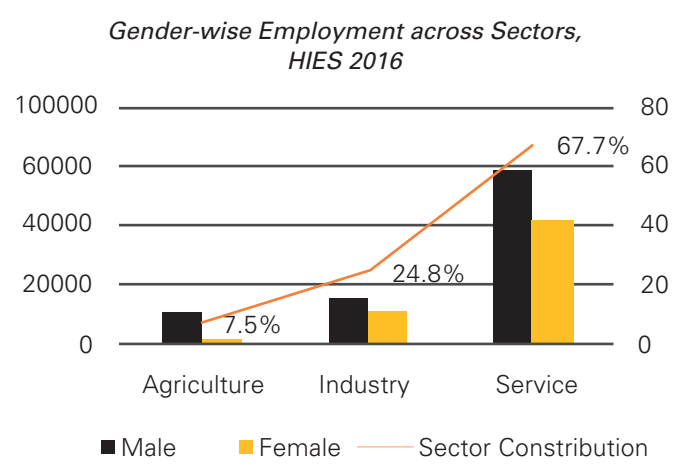
Islands fighting for survival beyond the 21st century

The Republic of Maldives covers a land area of 298 square km which is spread over 90,000 square km, making it the world's sixth smallest sovereign state. It encompasses 1,192 islands, of which only 187 are inhabited. More than 95% of the islands are less than 1 square kilometre in size. It is estimated that rising temperature and rainfall will make the Maldives uninhabitable by 2100 and there have been suggestions the government may buy land in other countries as a contingency plan. The Maldives has also pledged to become carbon-neutral by 2019 under the Copenhagen Accord.

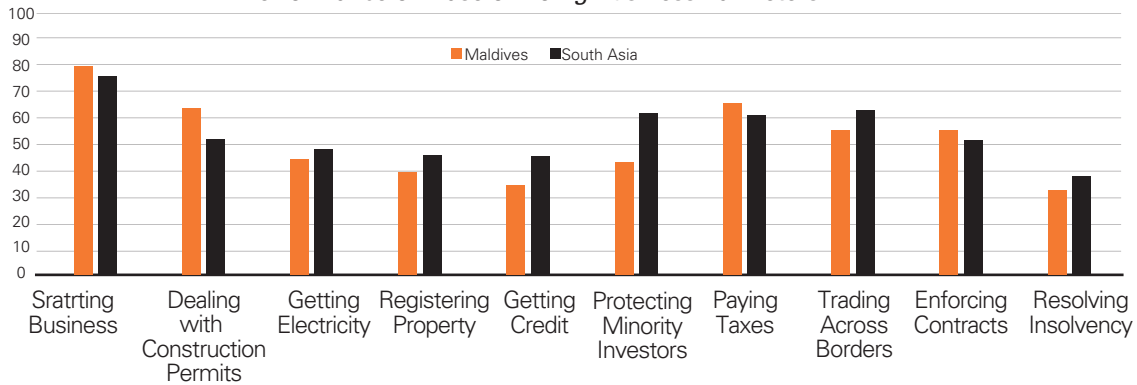
Vulnerabilities despite upper-middle income status

The Maldives is the only country in South Asia to enjoy an upper-middle income status, but it has high economic vulnerability.

 MDG plus status	 Thriving Tourism -6681mn MVR	 More Inclusivity for Disadvantaged groups
 Declining Employment in Agriculture	 Increased Impact of Migration in a few sectors	
 Unemployment at 6.1%	 NEET - 29%	



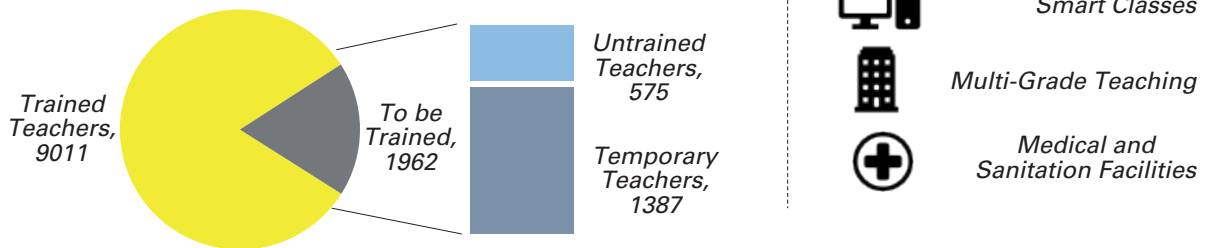
Performance on Ease of Doing Business Parameters



Need for transformation of learning in schools and improvement in its infrastructure

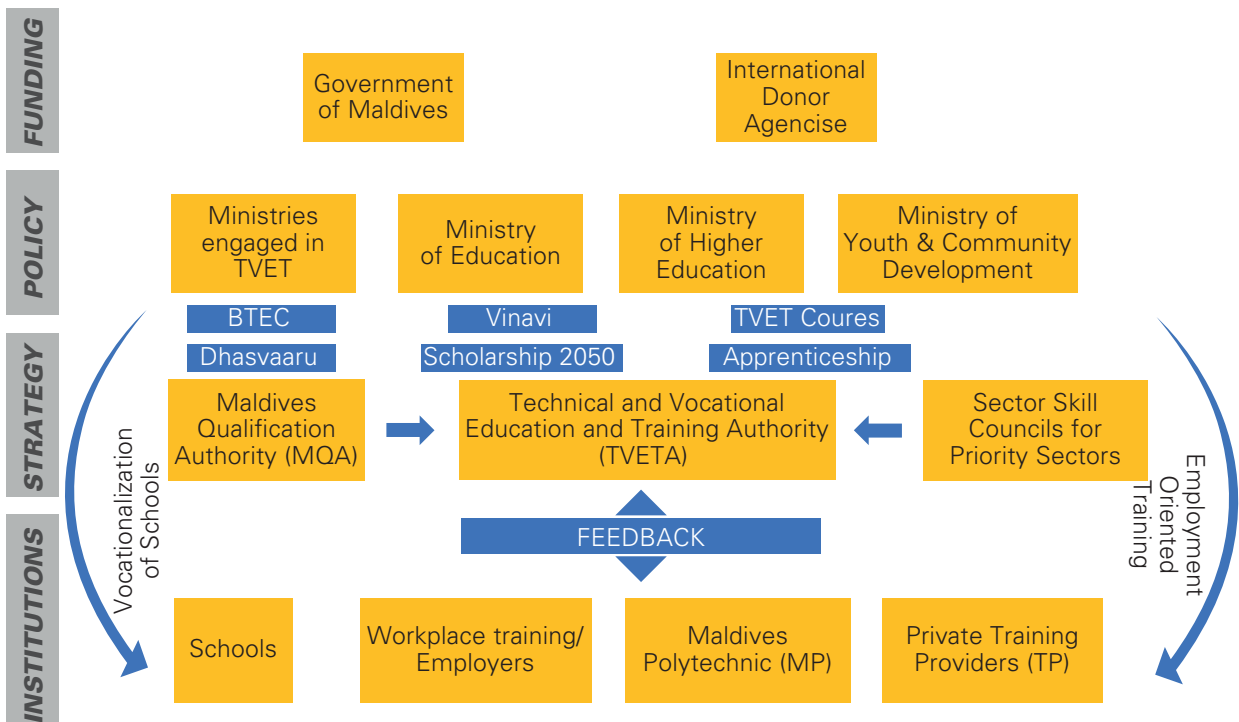
The constitution of the Maldives stipulates every child’s right to education. However, there is an alarming gap between the capital Malé and atolls when it comes to basic health care and education infrastructure. Lower population and enrolment numbers in the atolls means the cost of infrastructure development is high. Regional vocational training centers were tried and did not succeed. This experience needs to be studied in detail and a more effective strategy for their improvement needs to be implemented.

Teacher Training in the Maldives (2018)



An in-depth evaluation of skills-gaps should be carried out as this will help identify relevant training programmes to improve teaching outcomes. Examples include the ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ programme and other short-term skills improvement courses.

Lack of educational qualifications and relevant skill-sets a key barrier to employment

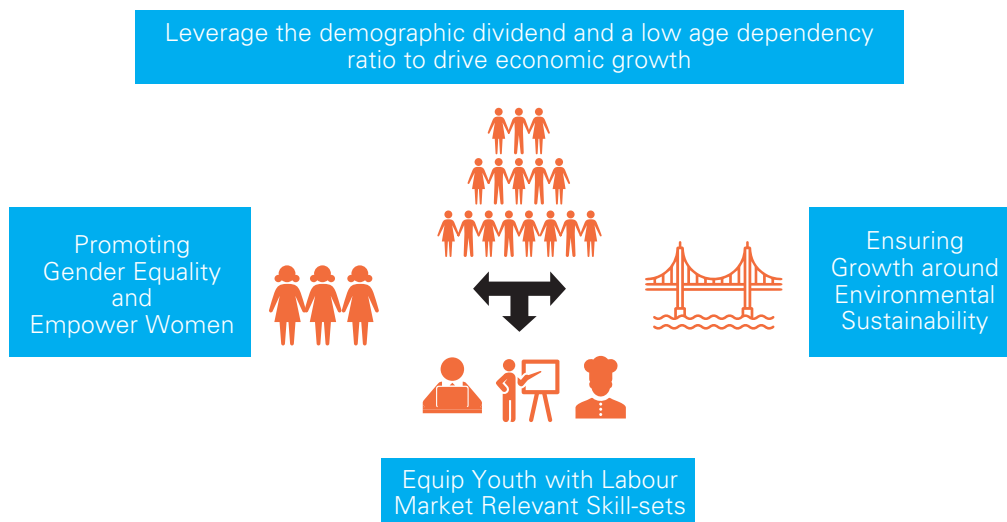


The low transition rate of students moving from GCE O-Level education to GCE A-Level has been a matter of concern. One of the main reasons for the low transition rate is the large number of students that do not pass their O-Level exams.

This makes the role of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) extremely important in establishing alternate pathways to learning and skill-development aligned with labour market needs. Relevant stakeholders need to function as a cohesive unit for improved outcomes in this regard. However only recently has the Maldives begun to transition from a supply driven model of TVET where the training institutions are weakly connected to employers. As the case studies show in the feature boxes in this note, they are starting to build a demand-driven approach with strong linkages to employers that helps project the current and future needs of the labor market.

Employment-linked training as a solution to generating jobs in atolls while addressing key issues

The report lists three focus areas that needs to be addressed to ensure equitable growth in employment. The recommendations come in the form of identified solutions which are leveraging skill-development as a tool to engage with youth and address one or more of the below listed issues.



Promoting gender equality and empowering women² - The Maldives has done an excellent job in making education accessible for all. The Special Education Policy has ensured free access to education. There is a high literacy rate of 99.4% among female youth (15-24). Female enrolment at lower secondary level has even outperformed male enrolment numbers. However, labour force participation of females is low at 42%. There is a need to break some social barriers to employment to encourage more women to participate in economic activities (Policy Planning and Research Division, 2018).

Champa Central Group's Training and Development Programme is engaging with youth and developing the behavioural and occupational skill-sets required for relevant job-roles. Champa group decided to focus on youth, which is reflected in their workforce as 70% of employees are under 25 years of age. They target fresh graduates, offering higher than market salary wages with a strong emphasis on on-the-job training. They revised job titles and regrouped job duties to create jobs that were more appealing in title and content, which helped remove the stigma certain jobs had. This helped address some of the pressure faced by local youth. They even rethought some fundamental policies. For example, a common practice followed by hotel resorts is that married couples are not allowed to work together. Champa instead encourages couples to work together, which leads to higher employment numbers in the islands. Their best practices have led to a higher than sector average female employment rate of 25%.

² This is aligned with SDG 5

Another issue that needs to be addressed is gender parity. Despite women doing as well, if not better, in education, there exists a huge gender divide in access to opportunities and a pay-gap.

Zoona, the first female divemaster in Maldives wants to adopt a cluster-based approach to training youth in the Maldives. Using ‘family-counselling’ sessions to create awareness about employment opportunities in diving and water-sports, she has managed to effectively engage with youth in the atolls including a larger than average share of women.

Ensuring environmental sustainability³ - The vulnerability to environmental changes and climate change impacts was highlighted during the Pacific Ocean tsunami in 2004, when 62% of GDP was lost and 30,000 people displaced. There has been a conscious effort on the part of government to develop greater Malé on appropriate ground, and as a result, construction competing with tourism as a main driver of economic growth (World Bank, 2017).

World Bank Group in collaboration with the Government of the Maldives is bringing much improvement in environmental health, ecosystem vitality, climate change mitigation and resilience to weather disasters, which has the potential to create significant employment opportunities.

Equip youth with skills relevant to labour market needs⁴ - The Maldives is a country in which youth training has been primarily led by private sector initiatives as per the requirements of the job market. The majority of employment is driven by the tourism and construction sectors. However, due to a pervasive belief that construction and blue-collar work is not prestigious, youth find themselves alienated from opportunities in these growth sectors. As a result, a lot of these opportunities go to low-skilled labour from other countries. This is evident from the fact that almost one in four of the labour force is a migrant worker. Implementation of TVET courses aligning youth aspirations with labour-market opportunities would help generate gainful employment for youth in Maldives.

Ooredoo Telecom has leveraged technology to facilitate self-learning and effectively delivered its skill-development programme to improve skill-matches from 12% in 2013 to 99% in 2018. Employee engagement has increased from 27% to 91% over the last 10 years. A young company workforce with 75% aged 25 years or under have benefitted from training and built promising careers for themselves.

The Zero to Hero programme is an initiative of the Faculty of Marine Studies to train youth in the Professional Association of Diving Instructors certified diving courses and certified water sport courses. A placement assisted residential training programme aims to create ‘base-leaders’ with the skills required to manage a cost-centre. The training has been successful in engaging with youth from the atolls. Almost 90% of the students successfully complete and find employment as dive-masters and water-sport professionals. The initiative has great potential to provide employment to more than 1,000 youth over the next 5 years as the demand for it grows in the tourism sector

The Sports Counsellor Programme is an initiative of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and Community Development to train youth and create jobs on the islands. They have tried to align youth aspirations in sports with infrastructure development and create job opportunities in the atolls. The role entails development of sports infrastructure and sports curriculum management in island schools. Almost 80% of the first cohort were successfully trained and placed as sports counsellors, and this sector will show a steady demand for future graduates.

³ This is aligned with SDG 9

⁴ This is aligned with SDG 4