

# United Nations in the Maldives UNDAF 2016-2020

## Annual UN Country Results Report 2019



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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 2019 Annual Progress Report of the United Nations Development Framework (UNDAF) 2016-2020. The UNDAF is a joint commitment of United Nations and the Government of Maldives to pave the way towards an inclusive and equitable society and improve the quality of life for all Maldivians. It focuses on making a difference in four key areas, namely Youth and Children, Gender, Governance, and Environment and Climate Change. This publication highlights the results achieved during 2019, and how the UN Maldives will tackle challenges ahead.

The year 2019 marks the fourth year of implementation of the UNDAF during which the UN worked closely with the Government of Maldives, CSOs and a wide range of partners. Given the critical need for strengthening data and evidence-based analysis as such, the UN Maldives provided support for sectoral policy analyses, generation of disaggregated data and evidence on marginalized groups to support informed decision making and policy formulation, and to strengthen institutional capacity and capacity for data collection, monitoring and reporting across various sectors.

The UN Maldives facilitated formulation of the education sector analysis and the national education sector plan, supported strengthening of the healthcare system and developed school nutrition policy and food-based guidelines. Institutional capacity was strengthened in the of social, judicial, and law enforcement sectors to prevent, protect and respond to violence against children. The UN continued to amplify citizens' voice and stronger rule of law and accountability systems for governance and creating for safe spaces for young people to engage in dialogue and strengthening access to justice for vulnerable people. Moreover, national and local capacity to prepare and respond to natural and manmade disasters were among the key focus areas of the UN's technical assistance efforts.

The strength of the UN Maldives is our partnerships. On behalf of the UN Country Team in Maldives, I would like to thank our Government partners, CSOs, development partners and most of all, the people of Maldives. As we note the achievements in 2019, we recognize the efforts required to build back better from the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 while ensuring that leave no one is left behind. The UN Maldives remains committed to support the people of Maldives, especially those left furthest behind to ensure they enjoy an inclusive and resilient future through accelerated achievement of the 2030 Agenda.



**Catherine Haswell**  
**United Nations Resident Coordinator**  
**United Nations in the Maldives**

## 2. Development trends in 2019

The year 2019 was the first full year of the new Government of Maldives, led by President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih. Elected on an ambitious reform agenda, the administration of President Solih implemented major reforms to governance of the country including in the area of decentralization and judicial administration. The 2019 parliamentary election saw the ruling party win a super majority in the legislature, the first time a single party won by such a margin in the country's short democratic history. This momentum has ensured the delivery of legislative change required to deliver on the new Government's reform agenda. The fragmented and diverse interests of the coalition partners of the government however may mean that the current political unity is very vulnerable and is a risk that needs to be considered for UN's programmatic engagement.

Local council elections were scheduled to take place in April 2020, and party preparations included new party registrations as well as clear indications of some of the core issues that will dominate campaigning platforms. The banning of the Maldivian Democratic Network (MDN) by the Government, after considerable public and political pressure has caused international and domestic concern for freedom of expression while highlighting strong sensitivities and the risk of political manipulation by different actors around related issues. MDN was officially banned on 5 October 2019, under subsections (a) and (b) of section 19 of the Associations Act, dealing with elements "contrary to the tenets of Islam". The risk of further narrowing of civic space and growing influence of radicalized groups in Maldives continues with return of foreign fighters and Maldivian women and children from war zones.

After a long-term absence of a long-term development plan in the country, the Government formulated its Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for 2019 – 2023 to operationalize the government pledges and vision that highlights the state's targets towards socio-economic growth in the Maldives. While it reflects many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it does so with a limitation of 2023, and without a grounding in the necessary tradeoffs and complexity of tackling sustainable development in line with the 2030 timeline for achieving all 17 SDGs.

In June 2019, the Government organized a Maldives Partnership Forum 2019 "Investing in a Resilient and Sustainable Maldives" to expand on the Government's Jazeera Raajje (Island Nation) concept, discuss the Government's development priorities, and seek partnership and investment for the development agenda and plans. This is the fourth edition of a Maldives Partnership Forum, with the last one being held in 2009. It was an important platform for discussion between the Government of the Maldives and its bilateral and multilateral partners to consider themes ranging from inclusive, and sustainable development – blue economy, decentralization, to improving social outcomes and judicial reform. It attracted a wide range of partners enthusiastic about the Government's reform agenda.



Maldives' engagement with the UN, regional, and international mechanisms also increased during the year. After nearly six years, the country received two Special Rapporteurs of the Human Rights Council. Symbolizing the Government's resolve to actively engage with the international community, President Solih, addressed the UN General Assembly. It had been seven years since a Maldivian head of state had participated in the General Assembly. In addition, Maldives took active steps to re-join the Commonwealth.

Economic prospects are promising. The GDP growth rate is expected at 5.7% by the end of the year but is anticipated to be picked up to 7.5% in 2020, stemming from tourism and tourism related sectors such as transport, communication, wholesale and retail trade, and also from the construction sector after the slowdown experienced this year. Inflation rate was 0.1% on average this year and is expected to rise to 1% in 2020. One main contributor to the inflation rate was rent, which has increased by 4.71% from April 2018 to April 2019. Foreign currency reserve is expected to stand at USD 626 million by the end of the year but is projected to increase to USD 818.8 million in 2020. Public debt is estimated to stand at 59% of GDP by the end of the year and expected to decline to 58.4% of GDP in 2020. The budget deficit of MVR 5.7 billion is to be financed through foreign loans, sale of treasury bills in domestic market, and from USD 300 bond in international financial market.

The Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA) revealed that Government reserves dropped by approximately 13% between April and September. In April, Government reserves were recorded at USD 778 million and currently stands at USD 530.8 million. A decrease of USD 80 million was experienced in both August and September. In 2019, the greatest increase in Government reserves was experienced in February with a peak amount of USD 938 million.

A record budget of MVR 37.5 billion (USD 2.44 billion) was prepared, which, according to the government, aims to achieve the pledges of the "Jazeera Raajje" manifesto and the goals identified in the SAP. It is estimated in 2019 that the Government would receive MVR 29.9 billion (USD 1.94 billion) as revenue and grants in 2020, of which tax revenue constitutes the major item. The estimated budget balance for 2020, as projected in 2019, is a deficit of MVR 5.7 billion (USD 0.37 billion) A total of MVR 10,181.4 million (USD 661.24 million) is allocated for planned public sector investment programs.

The Maldives ends the year 2019 with signs of hope for human rights and human dignity. The state has opened 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.



### 3. Results of UNDAF implementation in 2019

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



The development of the first Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) Strategy was done with the support from UN Maldives and the joint effort from the agencies has ensured that the strategy is coordinated and comprehensive so as to leave no one behind.

With persistent lobbying, technical support and leveraging on UN's strategic convening role, the Child Rights Act and Juvenile Justice Act was passed by the parliament, a significant milestone to ensure that realization of all rights of children of the Maldives.

The Education Sector Plan (2019 – 2023), providing a strategic road map for provision of education in the Maldives was endorsed with UN and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) providing technical support. Capacity of youth in selected locations were increased in civic participation, community dialogue through social innovation camps.

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

In preparation for the national “Year of Public Health” which is 2020, the UN supported the revitalization of the public health system. A high-level Public Health Conference was organized and attended by more than 150 stakeholders from various institutions. The conference highlighted the need for increased investment in preventive health care, and a focus on public health and mental health of young people.

The UN provided extensive support to build institutional capacity of the immunization programme, following the concerning findings from the 2016/17 DHS on the significantly reduced immunization coverage from 93 percent in 2009 to 77 percent in 2016-17. Important steps were taken by the UN Maldives with support from UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) towards building the national capacity on Expanded Programme for Immunization (EPI) as well as to assess the current cold chain system. A regional joint cold chain maintenance training and Effective Vaccine Management (EVM) training was conducted in 2019 benefiting eight Ministry of Health (MoH) staff, which was followed by a comprehensive assessment of the vaccine and cold-chain management. In addition, the UN conducted a review of the EPI, which identified gaps in the system, process, and cold chain, and made recommendations for further improvement. In order to assess the demand-side of vaccine hesitancy, the UN supported an assessment on the current perceptions and acceptance of routine child vaccines, and a comprehensive communication strategy and action plan were drafted for joint rollout in 2020. The findings from the EVM assessment and training are to the foundation for new efforts to enhance the immunization programme in the Maldives.

In collaboration with the UN Maldives, the Health Protection Agency (HPA) launched the Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) strategy. A new mobile app ‘Yagooth’ was also launched to raise the profile of and spread accurate information about healthy eating habits on infant and young child feeding practices (IYCF) amongst mothers and fathers, reaching a total of 1,965 caregivers. The tech-for-development approach of the information app was complemented with specific training for health workers in various remote islands of knowledge on healthy infant and young child feeding practices. The UN and partners were able to reach the caregivers of over 1,500 children aged 0-23 months with counselling in IYCF practices, contributing to improved infant feeding practices in targeted remote islands. A total of 447 girls and 208 boys in schools were reached, in partnership with a local NGO on improving nutrition and oral hygiene in selected schools. The project focused on obesity and overweight prevention, through nutrition literacy and increased awareness especially on the importance of reduced intake of sugary drinks and processed food items.



The UN supported the Safe Space program in partnership with Society for Health Education (SHE) reaching 540 young people and provided sexual, reproductive health information through these sessions. The mobile application Siththaa launched in 2018, formed the basis of a comprehensive package to deliver the information. Thus far, 3555 downloads of Siththaa has been recorded. In addition, 28 young peers were trained in partnership with SHE and Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment. These peers would have the capacity to reach out to young people for SRH information. The UN established partnership with Six Senses Laamu for the first time to create a market demand for menstrual cups. This was achieved through the UN's strategic partnership with Zero Waste Maldives, a young and innovative organization in the Maldives, working on eliminating single-use plastic through its line of products and advocacy and Society for Health Education (SHE). The information on menstrual cups was delivered by Zero Waste Maldives after a session on menstrual health and the female reproductive system. 179 young women and girls aged between 12-34 years received the information while 107 young people received cups as an alternative eco-friendly substitute for plastic-based menstrual products. The UN plans will run further sessions in Male' to create further market demand for menstrual cups to raise awareness on menstrual health and break the taboo around SRH.

In an effort to revitalize Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) in Maldives a Train the Trainer (TOT) was delivered. A rapid assessment on Early Childhood Development activities in the country was conducted to identify gaps and areas for improvement. A rapid assessment of status of implementation of adolescent health and school health programme was conducted to understand the current situation and identify activities to further strengthen the programmes.

The UN continues to support integrated surveillance for newborns and birth defects data entry. Maldives has been sharing data in SEAR Newborn and Birth Defects (NBBBD) since 2016, covering 12 atolls and the central regions. In 2019 training was conducted to roll out the birth defects surveillance to the remaining 8 atolls in the country, including the introduction of the still birth surveillance form, and training focal points on the WHO application of ICD-10 to deaths during the perinatal period: ICD perinatal mortality (ICD PM) and still birth review and response.

The biggest achievement in the area of immunization in 2019 was the roll out and implementation of the nationwide HPV vaccination campaign and introduction of HPV vaccine to the routine programme.

The Maldives achieved another major milestone in Public Health with the achievement of validation of Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis. The UN supported a workshop on finalizing the national HIV-STI prevention minimal service package and conducted training and build capacity on HIV/STI prevention package for Key Affected Populations (KAP). Focal points from all atolls were trained.



In partnership with Maldives Red Crescent, the UN launched the Red Ribbon festival aiming to create awareness on Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and World Aids Day (WAD) among migrant workers, and with Journey, a community-based NGO in reaching community outreach programmes in hotspots.

A Hepatitis Resurvey Mission and development of survey protocols and documents was supported for Serosurvey implementation including the procurement of the test kits and consumables. Extensive support was provided to strengthen the National Hepatitis Programme, including supporting development of national treatment guidelines for Hepatitis B and C, and a National Action Plan for Viral Hepatitis. A ToT was held for the treatment of viral hepatitis targeting clinicians across the country. World Hepatitis Day was marked by the announcement of Hepatitis Technical Advisory Group and Youth Ambassador for Hepatitis. Treatment services were made accessible through the National Insurance scheme, and an advocacy video was developed and screened to raise awareness of Hepatitis.

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

Significant progress was made to strengthen evidence-based policy making with the completion of the first-ever Education Sector Plan in 2019, through UN and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) technical support. Some progress was made on equity in education this year through the UN's support to revise and update the inclusive education policy, which is now available but yet to be implemented. With the UN supported analysis of the most disadvantaged schools across the country, the Ministry of Education (MoE) determined that 20 percent of all schools (affecting a total of 9,371 students) are not meeting the national minimum Child Friendly Schools Standards, and efforts are now ongoing to identify and mobilize adequate resources to address the shortfalls.

The UN supported MoE to improve the Education Information Management System by creating an alert system at MoE level to ensure schools are regularly entering essential student and school data. MEMIS strengthening also includes monitoring participation of children with disabilities. A Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in schools' module was included in the MEMIS and while reporting on this indicator is not yet fully functional, schools are currently entering the data into this module to generate reports in 2020. Parents were also given access to MEMIS to view attendance and achievement data for their children, thereby increasing the use and functionality of the MEMIS.



With the Government's decision to delay the start of Health and PE and Social Studies, the delivery of the Computer Science Engineering (CSE) components through the school system has not progressed in 2019.

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

The President ratified the Child Rights Protection Act and the Juvenile Justice Act on the 20th November 2019 - World Children's Day and the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). These two Acts represent a major transformation of child rights and justice system for children and young persons in the Maldives and their ratification culminates in the success of over 10 years of UN advocacy and sustained engagement with the Attorney General's Office, Parliament, civil society and the Presidents' Office. Under the new law, a child is defined as any person under the age of 18, and children are not permitted to marry until the age of 18. Vaccination has been made mandatory. The new law also envisions improvements in the overall child protection system, including special provisions for social welfare and other service providers.

The Juvenile Justice Act is based on restorative justice principles promoting rehabilitation and diversion and emphasizes juvenile crime prevention and rehabilitation. It also sets the minimum age of criminal responsibility at 15 years, and states that no child is subject to capital punishment.

The UN continued collaborations with the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services (MoGFSS) on the rollout of community child protection mechanisms as an important element of a decentralized child protection mechanism. Community Social Groups (CSGs) were established in an additional 16 islands, thereby reaching 33 per cent of all inhabited islands. This was made possible as a result of strong advocacy and technical support combined with leadership from the MoGFSS and the guidance of the multi sectoral Technical Working Group (TWG) at central level who led the roll-out of the CSGs at island level. The CSGs play a complementary role to the formal child protection system in providing a coordinated response, and in the prevention of violence against children in remote islands involving key community members. The UN played a key role in providing technical support and assistance in the continuous rollout of the CSGs, training 36 focal points from 19 atolls including three women and 33 men, in local CSGs. Their role will be further formalized along with the implementation of the Decentralization Act in 2020.

The UN supported building capacity of social workers and Police Investigating Officers to further strengthen their response to cases of violence against children and juvenile offenders. On-the-job training of 55 investigating officers from selected islands benefitted



an estimated 200 children thus far. The UN is playing a key role in strengthening the alternative care system for children who may need to be removed from their families. The UN initiated the audit of the two state run homes and also continued its advocacy to move towards more family centered options as an alternative to the current homes. In light of the UN Resolution on Child Rights of December 2019 (A/RES/71/177) on children without parental care, continued policy dialogue on how to find real alternatives to institutional care will be required.

A national celebration on the occasion of World Children's Day was also held in collaboration with key partners, reached over 3,294 students, 3,530 parents and community members, and 30 local guest house operators across Maldives. Key messages around the prevention of child abuse, sexual exploitation, and violence against children had a special meaning during the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Twenty young girls and boys were given the opportunity to discuss with the Speaker of Parliament and the Human Rights Committee on issues related to child rights. Seven buildings across the capital Male were lit up in blue lights in solidarity with child rights.

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

The UN supported the National Drug Agency to finalize the "substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation services for adolescents", in order to increase access to treatment services for young drug users. Further, the UN supported to sensitize health sector staff (in selected islands) and NGOs in those islands to provide outreach services to at risk young people, including drug users.

#### 3.1.5 Output 1.5. Increased opportunities for skills development (UNICEF, UNDP)

The first ever non-formal education policy was drafted by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and UN to establish learning and skills development systems for young out-of-school children and adolescents which included a pilot alternative education programme initiated by the UN and the Maldives Red Crescent.

The UN supported the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment to conduct a Youth Leadership Programme, where 33 youth (22 girls, 11 boys in Addu City) were educated to become youth leaders, spearheading initiative addressing social issues in their communities, acting as agents of change. The camp increased participant's understanding in human rights, gender equality, governance, environment sustainability, with emphasis



on cultural, heritage and diversity. Regional Youth Co Lab initiatives included 18 young people (including 8 with disabilities), providing a platform for creating solutions for an inclusive and accessible environment for all.

Similarly, a sports camp "Vaane" was conducted which utilized sports as a transformative activity where girls of 15-17 years accessed safe public space and developed social network with empowered women to realize their full potential as future leaders. The sessions had supports, life skills, gender and social norms as well as career guidance.



### 3.2 UNDAF Outcome Area 2: Gender

The UN carried out activities to support gender mainstreaming. Men and women were included in consultations and trainings to ensure that mitigating Gender Based Violence in mainstreamed in the government national documents.

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

During the stock take review in 2018, all outputs were reviewed, and decisions made whether to continue them or put-on hold during the UNDAF cycle. This decision was made formally through the UNDAF Steering Committee based on the justifications of changing government and partner priority, limitations of time and resources for implementation or re-strategizing of some of the actions for better implementation. To this end decision was made to halt the implementation of this output in the current UNDAF cycle.

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

2019 was the first year that the Government of Maldives has submitted the CEDAW State Report on time. With the submission of the 6<sup>th</sup> CEDAW State Report, it opened various avenues to raise women's rights issue such as the Shadow Reporting, taking part in the Beijing Review and Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

Support was provided to the Human Rights Commission of Maldives (HRCM) and the Family Protection Agency (FPA) to conduct the "Right Side of Life" survey to determine the extent of awareness among the general public about human rights, r attitudes towards human rights issues, and awareness of the existence of the HRCM. The 2019 survey included a new section on assessing public's perception on Gender Based Violence (GBV), awareness on GBV and the role of key institutions in addressing these issues. This study will also help prioritize future human rights promotion and prevention of all forms of gender-based violence while also identifying areas for further research.

The UN also supported finalization of the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP). The NHRAP will support the government to address human rights concerns to create a culture of respect for human right as well as setting up a mechanism to ensure the state's human rights obligations are translated to practical, measurable and progressive actions.

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

The UN partnered with the Attorney General's Office to draft the first Civil Procedure Code. This Code will be instrumental in harmonizing the rules and standards that courts follow when adjudicating civil lawsuits and guaranteeing fair and equal justice for all groups. In order to ensure accessible justice to the most vulnerable in communities including women, the UN partnered with Maldives Legal Institute to provide capacity building trainings for community paralegals in selected islands in provide legal aid to their communities. The final findings will be shared with the Attorney General's Office and the Bar Council of Maldives for nationwide rollout.

Support was also provided to the Family Protection Agency (FPA) to finalize the National Action Plan (NAP) on Prevention of Domestic Violence. The NAP provides the framework for strengthening multi-stakeholder coordination to the response on prevention of domestic violence in the Maldives.



### 3.3 UNDAF Outcome Area 3: Governance



The UN supported strengthening of the local governance framework, and successfully advocated to include a 33% reserved seat for women in local councils. The UN reviewed the governments reform policies to ensure alignment with international best practices and advisory support on the constitutional review process. Policy advice was provided to strengthen the legislative framework through the drafting of the Civil Procedure Code. To ensure engagement of youth, women and vulnerable groups, the UN provided knowledge and skill building sessions through Social Innovation and Youth Leadership Camps and film-making workshops. The UN also supported the new administration to finalize its five-year Strategic Action Plan (SAP).

Several important policies and guideline related to health were drafted, with some finalized and launched during 2019. A significant achievement in the area of controlling Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD), was the implementation of graphic health warning and ban of single- stick cigarettes in Maldives. A significant achievement was the Maldives Demographic and Health Survey, which provides critical gender disaggregated data which

would provide information for evidence-based policy making and important information for reporting on SDG indicators. Patient safety is a high priority with different tools developed to access patient safety at different levels. Capacity building and advocacy efforts continue under different all health programmes.

### 3.3.1 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)

The UN supported the President's Office, the Attorney General's Office (AGO) and Local Government Authority (LGA) to finalize amendments to the Decentralization Act. Support was provided to LGA to organize the National Conference for City and Atoll Councils which is held annually to facilitate knowledge exchange, networking and to better understand the day-to-day challenges faced by the councils and Women's Development Committees (WDCs). At the local level, the UN in partnership with LGA built the capacity of island councils, atoll councils and WDCs in selected islands of Noonu, Raa, Baa, Lhaviyani, Alif, Dhaalu and Meemu Atoll with sessions on localizing and aligning development targets with those outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As part of ongoing initiatives to strengthen the legislative framework, the UN partnered with the Attorney General's Office (AGO) to draft the country's first Civil Procedure Code. The enactment of this legislation will guarantee rights to a fair and equal trial. The draft was submitted to the parliament in November 2019.

The District Health Information System (DHIS2) was piloted in Baa Atoll and the national end user training for the focal points was conducted in August 2019. The Health Information Bill and IT Standards and Policies were drafted during the year 2019, which will help to further strengthen health information regulations in Maldives. Health information management in-service training resource materials were developed for IT staff. In 2019 the Noncommunicable diseases (NCD) risk survey and System for Thalidomide Education and Prescribing Safety (STEPS) was initiated in collaboration with Maldives National University (MNU). These surveys supported the generation of data for evidence-based policy making. The UN also collaborated with MNU to conduct a study on trans-fat landscaping which would provide evidence to develop a mechanism for trans-fat elimination in the country. A market study is also underway to analyze the effects of Sugar-Sweetened Beverages (SSB) tax which was imposed in 2017.

Recommendations on population dynamics were provided to the Ministry of National Planning and Infrastructure (MoNPI) and National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) through policy



papers on Promoting Population Dynamics for Sustainable Development in Maldives, Maldivian Population and Sustainable Development Goals: A Brief Appraisal and National Transfer Accounts. These technical papers provided tools to influence the Strategic Action Plan. Implementation of the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Strategy is reflected in the SAP launched on 1 October 2019.

Several opportunities to promote the ICPD@25 were held. One notable event was the World Population Day function, in the presence of the President and the Vice President of Maldives. The ICPD@25 national report was launched through the Statistics Maldives website. A high-level delegation participated at the Nairobi Summit, making eleven important national commitments were made by the delegation including the Minister of National Planning and Infrastructure, Society for Health Education and the Maldives National Youth Council supporting the Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

UN Maldives supported strengthening of the national statistical information systems for evidence-based policy making and decision making through transforming the MaldivInfo database into a data-for-all platform with an accompanying mobile application. The UN successfully supported the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) to revamp the MaldivInfo platform by adapting it to the SDGs and bringing it up to the latest technological standards. As a result of the transformation, data on children are now easily accessible on the MaldivInfo database which is now a data-for-all platform. The next important step will be to update the national SDG indicators to make monitoring appropriate for the country context, and to link MaldivInfo to other administrative data sources such as the education information management system and the health data information system and more. This would provide real-time important data and allow for efficient analysis utilizing key data sources.

MaldivInfo provides recent information on key child indicators and SDGs that are used for programmatic reference and changes. This is also being used as the main source of data to assess the situation of women and children in the Maldives for the development of the new country programme document of Maldives. Maldivinfo also provides dashboard information on key thematic areas providing information on key thematic indicators which are the main sources of information to carry out thematic analysis.

There was a delay in submission of the Maldives' first report on the ratified fundamental conventions of ILO. The Ministry of Economic Development requested the UN to provide technical support in connection with reforms to labor law and regular reporting on these ratified ILO Conventions. The UN supported MED to engage an expert with knowledge and experience in this area to support this work.



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

The National Action Plan (NAP) on Prevention of Domestic Violence was developed in partnership with Family Protection Authority (FPA) with the objective of strengthening multi-stakeholder coordination to the response on prevention of domestic violence in the Maldives. The UN is supporting the FPA to review NAP and align it with national priorities of the government including the Strategic Action Plan.

The UN also supported the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment to conduct the Youth Leadership Programme from 3-7 September 2019 where a total of 33 youth (22 girls and 11 boys) aged 16-25 years from various islands of Addu City were educated and supported to become youth leaders, spearheading initiatives addressing social issues in their communities and acting as key agents of change in their communities. Moreover the 'Vaane' Camp was also held in H.Dh. Kulhudhuffushi, where 25 young girls aged 16-25 were educated and empowered to combat gender stereotypes using football as a medium.

The first National Action Plan on Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism has been developed by the National Counter Terrorism Center with technical assistance from the UN, through a consultative process with the key stakeholders including national partners, NGO's and religious scholars. The NAP focuses on consolidating the efforts of PVE in the country and prioritizing and strategizing the countries response to PVE through a holistic, coordinated and evidence-based approach.

The UN in partnership with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) and Hedayah organized a two-day training for NGOs and government agencies on the basic concepts of PVE and international best practices on PVE. Following the training, 13 NGOs from both Male' and Addu City were given the opportunity to submit concept notes around the broad theme of reducing vulnerabilities of youth and women to violent extremism and three NGOs - Meedhoo Ekuveringe Cheynu, Nalafehi Meedhoo and Mulimathi United - were selected to partner with the UN and implement the proposed initiatives in their island. The UN completed an in-depth study on the role and influence of women in radicalization and violent extremism in the Maldives and root causes unique to women which increases their vulnerability to radicalization and extremism. The initial findings of the study indicated that women aspire participate more in public life and believes they can play a key role as peacebuilders and agents of change in their communities.



### 3.3.3 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 UN in partnership with Attorney General's Office and other key stakeholders further re-fined the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) which focuses on the commitments and interventions in promoting and protecting human rights, as well as mechanisms in ensuring that the national and international human rights obligations are translated to practical, measurable and progressive actions to improve the situation of human rights in Maldives. The NHRAP currently in its finalization stage will be rolled out from 2020 – 2025 with the National Steering committee monitoring the implementation of the plan. The third "Rights Side of Life: Human Rights Survey" was commissioned in 2019, to evaluate the perception and awareness on human rights in the Maldives and to assess the human rights situation in the country and evaluate the extent to which progress has been achieved in this area. When published, the study will support efforts to prioritize future directions in policy, legislation and programming for human rights promotion and prevention of domestic violence, gender-based violence and sexual gender-based violence, while also identifying areas for further research.

The UN conducted a training where 15 youth participated in the art of short film making and producing shorts films that delve deep into understanding the dynamics of Bangladeshi labor migration and the positionality of Maldivian communities when it comes to the social integration of Bangladeshi migrants. This activity aims to foster understanding and tolerance between our communities and bridging the gaps between Maldivians and Bangladeshi migrant communities. Under the theme of "Migrant Lives", the short films focused on an interweaved set of subthemes that unpack varying aspects of migration and migrant lives. These subthemes are, understanding the factors that draw migrant workers to the Maldives, prejudice faced by migrant workers, the visible forms of discrimination that follows. Finally, the series explored how, we, as a society can move forward and bridge the gaps between our communities. The films were screened via social media and other public platforms, to create and encourage discussions on these migrant issues and to bridge the gap between Maldivian and migrant communities. By raising awareness on the issues faced by our migrant communities, the films intend to foster tolerance and social cohesion within different communities that call Maldives their home.

To strengthen the field of health research a Health Research Policy was developed, and national health priorities were identified. The UN worked to establish equitable health services for migrant population where discussions were initiated with stakeholders. Additionally, to support implementation of a Human Resource for Health Action Plan a



National Health Workforce Accounts Online Platform (HRH e-registry) was developed and hosted in IT department of Ministry of Health.

A major milestone was reached when the Government of Maldives, with UN's support, finalized the first-ever Maldives Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in 2019. The MPI will be an important policy tool to reduce inequalities by investing scarce resources where the needs are greatest and to further strengthen the social protection systems in the Maldives amongst other.

The Maldives took an historic decision to establish its first ever minimum wage threshold and system. This decision is in alignment with the ideals enshrined in ILO's Declaration and pursuant to the Employment Act, 2008 (Act No. 2/2008) on 26 May 2008 where the need for the introduction and implementation of a minimum wage system and the right for collective bargaining for all workers in the Maldives is outlined for action. The Ministry of Economic Development subsequently sought technical expertise of the UN towards this end. A technical team of ILO experts together with the active participation of a tripartite Salary and Wage Advisory Board (SAWAB) of the Maldives finalized this technical report in December 2019 for submission to the Ministry.

A Migration Health Technical Committee was established to guide the development of a national migration health policy and the introductory Technical Committee Meeting took place. Issues discussed in this meeting included, among others, topics to be covered by the eventual health policy. Throughout the reporting period in different meetings/consultations with technical drive by IOM, UN in Maldives continued discussing issues that migrants face in the Maldives.

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

In response to the high number of Influenza and Dengue cases in the country, Tamiflu was procured for adults and children. Testing capacity was strengthened in IGMH in addition to supporting IEC materials for awareness campaign.

The National Action Plan for Health System of NAPHS was developed which is mainly base on IHR Action Plan of the country. UN continues to support HERP and RRTs at regional and atoll levels to strengthen emergency response.

Radiation Assessment in Healthcare facilities was conducted. Two other areas closely repeated to International Health Regulations is Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) and Food Safety. Under the recommended actions of the National Action Plan for AMR, UN facilitated a consultancy to develop a National AMR Stewardship guideline and conducted trainings



for doctors and other target groups from hospitals in Male'. National AMR Policy and National AMR Regulation has been developed. Maldives Food and Drug Authority launched the National Food Policy which strengthened the Food Safety program. The UN is supporting MFDA to send food samples for testing in a laboratory abroad, to test for antibiotics residue, heavy metal and pesticide residue in prepacked food as well as locally grown food. A MFDA laboratory capacity was strengthened by conducting much needed refresher training. A database for food establishment is under finalization stages which would enhance the surveillance of Food Borne diseases.

As support to institutionalize National Health Accounts, Global Health Expenditure Database (GHED) figures for Maldives was updated for December 2019 and National Health Accounts 2015-2017 report was finalized with disease specific health expenditure.

To strengthen national multisectoral policies and plans to prevent and control non communicable diseases (NCDs), the NCD action plan was reviewed and a revised action plan was drafted. A major achievement in the area of NCD is the implementation of regulation of Graphic Health Warnings and the regulation on ban of single-stick cigarettes. The UN continues to advocate with the MOH/HPA to implement the PEN protocol which is the most effective intervention for NCD control. A mobile PEN application has been launched and can be used by all levels of health professionals to implement PEN protocol in all levels of health facilities. The UN continues to support advocacy and awareness sessions on NCDs. As part of the multi sectoral approach to address NCDs, the UN is working with Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education to develop an action plan for physical activity including physical activity guidelines for different age groups. Ten sets of outdoor gyms were handed over to the Government). With the support of the UN, National Multi Sectoral Action Plan on Road Safety was launched by the Vice President in the presence of senior government officials, and a road safety campaign was conducted to mark road safety week.

The National Mental Health Center was established at IGMH by the President while the First Lady launched the nationwide mental health campaign. The UN is supporting drafting of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, code of ethics for mental health practitioners and SOPs for National Mental Health Center.

A ToT on family planning was conducted following the master training organized to address the unmet need for sexual and reproductive health. A rapid assessment of status of implementation of adolescent health and school health programme was also conducted to understand the current situation and identify activities to further strengthen the programmes.

Ministry of Health (MoH) Quality Standards were launched, and mobile app and web-based platform was developed to contribute to strengthening quality of care services. A National Patient Safety Committee was formed by Minister of Health. A National Blood policy was developed, and standard treatment guidelines were developed for 47 out of 70 priority



conditions. Patient safety framework was finalized, and trainings were conducted. Essential medicine list was revised and the regulation on herbal medicine was reviewed. A review was also conducted on the implementation of National Medicine Policy.

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



National institutions now recognize Sexual Reproductive Health and addressing Gender Based Violence in humanitarian programmes is important and identified gap. Currently at least one person in each atoll has been trained and draft documents including assessments developed for endorsement.

The UN's support in 2019 extended to the institutional capacity building of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA); inclusion of climate resilience building, particularly from child and gender point of view in the Strategic Action Plan (SAP 2019 – 2023) of the Government, engaging adolescents and youth to build their knowledge and adaptive capacity to climate change through focused

trainings in four island communities, supporting the Ministry of Environment to implement a national behavior change campaign to reduce single-use plastic items, to reduce of the negative impacts to the environment and people's health and promote drinking more water for a healthier living and to engage children to reduce single-use plastics, and provided reusable, BPA-free water bottles to all grade one students throughout the country in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

The UN's support has been extended in areas of health care waste management, occupational health, air quality and air pollution, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Green and Climate Smart Hospital and Climate Change. Key technical documents such as policies and strategies have been developed in this area with the UN's support. And implementation of activities and projects were carried out as per the workplan with Ministry

of Health and Ministry of Environment. The targets and activities targeted for 2019 were completed as planned.

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

The Maldives were selected as one of the five target countries in the Asia Pacific region for the European Commission financed project “Capacity Building for Environment Data Sharing and Reporting in support of a Shared Environmental Information System-SEIS” implemented by the UN. Under the scope of this project UN sought to build the capacity of the target countries for data and knowledge sharing by ministries and other relevant agencies at the national level to support and streamline Standard Operating Environment (SoE) and other assessment and reporting processes. In 2019 representatives from the Maldives participated in the regional workshop “Environmental Data Knowledge Sharing, Capacity Strengthening and Strategic Pathways Workshop” which was successfully held in Bangkok in July.

Experiences from the country were included in the regional lessons learned report focusing on lessons learned on sharing and using data in support of reporting and assessment processes in Asia Pacific. This report is partly based on the outcomes of other activities implemented in the region as part of the project, including the country reports, as well as on the responses to a questionnaire shared with country representatives (including from the Maldives) as well as with a number of experts with relevant expertise.

UN also supported the Ministry of Environment in the conceptualization of a database aimed at facilitating the data collection on indicators relevant to the environmental aspects of the SDGs.

### 3.4.2 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)

The National Guideline for Occupational Health and Safety was developed by the UN. Support was provided to the Maldives National University (MNU) to review the course content for Establishment of bachelor’s degree in Occupational Health and Safety in the Maldives.

The Health Care Waste Management Strategy and Policy has been developed and endorsed. The UN has supported procurement of 13 autoclaves for atoll/regional hospitals based on



the results and lessons learnt from the Low Emission and Climate Resilient Development Programme (LECRd) Health Care Waste Management Pilot Project.

The UN also supported the development of the Communication Strategy for the National Awareness Strategy on Water and Sewerage and "Fenfahi campaign". Additionally, the GLAAS 2019 survey was also completed, and World Water Day celebrated to raise attention to the importance of access for all.

The Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) training for the participants of Health Care Facility (HCF) was conducted with the support from WaterAid. The Health National Adaptation Plan was also been developed with the support from UN and its currently, going through the endorsement process of the government.

Several MoU's were signed between the Ministry of Health (MoH) and relevant ministries for Vector Control, namely the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Defense, Local Government Authority, Atoll and island councils. The Vector Control handbook was developed, and the entomology lab is being established with the assistance from the UN. A Vector Control campaign was carried out alongside "Saafu Raaje Campaign" which was launched by the President, with vector control and entomology trainings have been conducted in Gnaviyani and Seenu Atoll. Trainings have been conducted for construction companies. Vector field assessments have been carried out in Villingili and Hulhumale'.

Support to develop the Green and Climate Smart Hospital Policy and Strategy and the Hospital Vulnerability Analysis report, in collaboration with Health Care Without Harm, was delivered. The UN is supporting procurement and installation of solar panels in three health facilities of the Maldives.

ToT training of air quality and air pollution conducted with support from experts from WHO CC Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research in Chennai and the Environment Protection Authority (Australia). A Situation Assessment on air quality issues in the Maldives was completed with the aim to strengthen technical capacities and plans in the Maldives to address air pollution and its impact on health. The Maldives has also become the first country in WHO SEARO to join the BreatheLife Campaign. BreatheLife implementation plan has been launched by the Vice President, Minister of Health and Minister of Environment.



### 3.4.3 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)

Partnership between the Society for Health Education and the UN to build Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) and Gender Based Violence (GBV) capacity and readiness at the national level was strengthened. Technical guidance was provided to integrate SRH and GBV in the Health Emergency Operation Plan (HEOP). These recommendations were integrated through the draft Reproductive Maternal Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) strategy.

A total of 36 service providers (5 men, 31 women) were trained from across the country on SRH Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP). With this training (complemented by the MISP training conducted by SHE), there will be at least one health sector focal point trained in each atoll across the country. Furthermore, 34 service providers (4 men, 30 women) were trained across the country on GBV. The training focused on coordination and preparedness was attended by all relevant sectors. In addition to training service providers, a half day coordination session was conducted for senior management of key government and UN agencies to discuss the way forward in addressing the overlooked function of protection in NEOP and to reflect and collect feedback on the coordination mechanism worked on by the technical staff.

The UN in partnership with MoGFSS and NDMA have drafted a concept note for the Protection and Inclusion Emergency Support Function in the NEOP as well as the assessments templates of NDMA have been reviewed from an angle of protection and inclusion to ensure necessary information is collected through the initial assessments. The draft will be taken into consideration during the NEOP revision process. Furthermore, the TOR for the GBV sub-cluster working group has been drafted and shared with relevant stakeholders. UNFPA is identified as the co-chair for the GBV sub-cluster.

The UN continued its support to the institutional capacity building of NDMA through a dedicated national consultant who supported the organization on the institutionalization of climate resilience building, particularly from child and gender point of view, into central and sectoral policies, particularly the Government's Strategic Action Plan which determines the work areas for the next 4 years. The support was instrumental in positioning the NDMA as the pivotal organization to guide all national development programs on embedding climate resilience.



Together with the Ministry of Environment, the UN developed a toolkit to create the awareness of adolescents and young people on climate change and environmental protection, with a focus on creating youth climate advocates. 159 children and young people from the four islands – H. Dh Makunudhoo, N. Kudafari, G.A. Vilingili and S. Hithadhoo learned about climate change in the national context, understood how exacerbated disaster risks stem from a changing climate and how they can mobilize for climate action particularly as advocates calling for climate action and working with their communities through potential innovative projects to reduce the impacts of climate change at the island-level.

After the awareness sessions were conducted, a youth group from S. Hithadhoo have been identified by the Ministry of Environment to be part of the new volunteer-warden program for the Addu Nature Park, as the group has the right knowledge to be actively engaged in protecting their environment

The UN supported national authorities to implement a national behavior change campaign to reduce single-use plastic items, to reduce of the negative impacts to the environment and people's health. Together with the Ministry of Environment, fabric shopping bags produced by the UN were distributed to more than 1300 households in the islands – F. Nilandhoo, Dh. Rinbudhoo, V. Fulidhoo, G.Dh. Gemanafushi, Lh. Naifaru, and H.A. Dhiddhoo. This initiative was meant to support the existing and upcoming initiatives by the island communities to entirely stop using single-use plastic bags and items.

To promote drinking more water for a healthier living and to engage children to reduce single-use plastics, the UN provided reusable, BPA-free water bottles to all grade one students throughout the country in partnership with the Ministry of Education. Through the initiative children were engaged as agents of change to help change the behavior of their families and communities by leading a pioneer shift away from the ubiquitous plastic bottles to reusable water bottles. The UN-led study on the effects of climate change on children (2017) showed that children were very concerned about increasing plastic pollution, especially how it damaged the marine ecosystem we are so reliant on.

The UN has provided support to the Government of Maldives to strengthen coordination mechanism and development of No-Objection Procedure for Green Climate Fund (GCF) Projects. Support included development of the NDA Manual and the no objection procedure as well as developing strategic framework for engagement with the GCF.

Continuously supported the operation of National Ozone Unit under the Institutional Strengthening for the operation of National Ozone Unit, Phase X for 2019-2020. HCFC Phase-out Management Plan (Tranche 4) were implementing from 2018-2020 with 2 training workshops for customs and servicing technicians respectively; Assisted the assessment of and preparation for the Kigali implementation under the Enabling Activities project for HFC phasedown.



## 4. Results in cross-cutting areas

### 4.1 Gender Equality

Gender equality is a significant aspect of all data collected and analysis made in all technical recommendations. For example, the NTA for the first time looked at costing time use, which clearly shows the impact on women's domestic and informal work they do as a challenge for gender equality

The Vaane Camp at selected regional atolls focused on empowering young women thereby increasing representations and participation of women in the public sphere. In-depth study on the role and influence of women in radicalization and violent extremism in the Maldives and root causes unique to women which increases their vulnerability to radicalization and extremism, will support the UN and national partners in designing and implementation of interventions focusing on prevention of radicalization and violent extremism in the Maldives.

The Maldives Demographic and Health Survey was launched in February 2019 contained gender disaggregated data which gives critical information on gaps in health situation and accessibility of services for vulnerable groups including women and children.

The UN also ensured gender sensitivity and inclusivity in the newly passed Acts. The UN played an instrumental role in the development of a section on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation from a child and gender perspective in the SAP.

For maternal and nutrition work by UN and HPA, feedback from 12 pilot sessions for awareness around infant and young child feeding practices showed that different approaches are required to increase attendance of fathers in the information sessions.

Interventions aimed to empower women to meaningfully participate in the public sphere through community and national level interventions.

The 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.

The UN made special efforts for universal access to reproductive health and rights to bring to the decision-making tables on population dynamics including the international migration.



## 4.2 Human Rights

All activities of the UN in Maldives take the stand to uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) principles.

Development of National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) focused on promoting and protecting human rights. In addition, the third “Rights Side of Life: Human Rights Survey” was implemented in 2019.

The social insurance scheme 'Aasandha' provides much needed health insurance for the citizens of Maldives. However, the migrant population is not covered under the insurance scheme. In order to ensure Universal Health Coverage, it is important to ensure accessibility to health services for all. The UN has initiated discussions with relevant stakeholders to address migrant health issues in a holistic manner.

The UN designed 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. The 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.

UN provided inputs to UPR review highlighting the SRHR context in the Maldives. The UN also especially focused on universal access to reproductive health and rights to bring to the decision-making tables on population dynamics including the international migration.

The Child Rights Act heavily aligns with the CRC, and the Juvenile Justice Act strongly considers the rights of the children in conflict with law.

## 4.3 Sustainable Development Goals

The UN agencies submitted a proposal to the SDG Joint Fund “Reducing Vulnerabilities and Increasing Participation of all in the Maldives” led by UN Women, with UNDP, UNICEF, UNODC, UNFPA and WHO as participating agencies. Agencies worked together to identify the root causes of vulnerabilities in the Maldives, assess the gaps in the social protection and take a holistic approach to design policy as well as service interventions that could be up scaled at nation level to attain productive, healthy & safe communities that are contributing to the society. Although unsuccessful, the work on a new Joint SDG Fund proposal has brought the UNCT closer and created a conducive environment for working together. UNCT is looking forward to collectively develop a proposal for the second call from SDG joint fund.



An SDG Communication Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2023 was published at the beginning of the year.

SDG related awareness and advocacy sessions were conducted in two schools in the capital Male' (Billabong High International School and Muhyiddhin School) reaching 955 students to mark the UN Day. Staff from the UN team went on two Radio programmes by Dhivehiraajjeyge Adu (Public Radio) to provide more advocacy related SDGs reaching out to nearly 4000 people. In addition, for the first time in recent history, the Head of Resident UN Agencies gave a joint interview on TVM 75.0 programme reaching close to 2000 people.

## 5. Challenges in 2019, 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 2019. Below are some of the challenges faced in 2019 and the proposed strategies to overcome and recommended ways forward.

### 5.1 Human Resources Gaps and Weak Institutional Capacity

The human resources capacity within the government persists as a key constraint on the working with the government, and turn affects the efficiency of programme implementation.

Even though the Maldives is an Upper Middle-Income country with strong indicators in general health and a supportive government, there is space to improve upon sustainability of the initiatives. Further support is required to building the requisite institutional capacities of duty bearers to improve their capacity to implement desired social change. Additionally, institutional capacity building should be supported in concert with other partners working together. The need for targeted services for non-married and high risk/vulnerable groups potentially through expanding Siththa application for provision of services through NGOs and pharmacies needs strengthening in the future.

UN faced challenges to integrate CSE through school system. A decision from the government to delay the start of health and PE and Social Studies in Key Stages 4 and 5 meant that after the integration of CSE components in the actual delivery of the subject was pending. This is also linked to the first challenge and hence concerted effort is needed to have a conducive socio-cultural environment to proceed with advocacy in this area.

The need to build further capacity at the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services pose a challenge to lead the implementation of the Gender Equality Act. The UN needs further work with the Ministry to formulate innovative mechanisms, such as forming civil society



advisory groups, to strengthen the sectoral ministries to mainstream gender and review obstacles within the government to address systemic challenges for women.

The capacity of central level national programmes are critical in implementing activities. Hence, it is very important to ensure there are enough trained staff at HPA, MOH and MOE to coordinate and support implementation of activities. As there are many policies and strategies in each area, continuous support over the couple of years would be needed to make an impact nationwide. It may take some time to observe the impacts of the interventions which maybe limited currently to areas of projects implementation. Extensive input is required in terms of mobilizing resources since the Agenda 2030 is extensive and requires a coalition of partners to fund and finance to achieve the SDG targets and beyond.

## 5.2 Changing Political Environment

The incoming Government led to change of high-level management and policy makers in all sectors and ministries requiring time for the new officials to understand the programmes, needs, priorities, and increased need for close and strategic advocacy.

With the high-level advocacy in 2019, it demonstrated the positive results attained through consistent and continued engagement with key stakeholders. Key achievements include the passing of many important new legislations and significant progress on previously passed policies and strategies for the advancement of child rights across the Maldives. This illustrates the importance of building trust and consistent engagement and has further motivated the Maldives team to build internal capacity on strategic advocacy and communication in 2020.

The UN supported the Ministry of Gender, Family, and Social Services with the continued rollout of the Community Social Groups (CSGs) to strengthen community child protection mechanisms. While the CSGs continue to be established in various islands, progress was slower than anticipated due to challenges at both national and sub-national levels.

Limitations in resources allocated to the different line ministries, capacity issues and accountability mechanisms has led to hindrance in 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. The UN needs to work with the People's Majlis and other relevant state bodies to increase accountability of state institutions. Furthermore, the public will benefit from increase in the awareness on laws and policies to demand greater accountability from duty bearers. The Sexual Offences Act of 2014, Sexual Harassment and Abuse Prevention Act of 2014 is one such legislation that requires to be further budgeted and enforced in its implementation.



## 5.3 Data Management and Monitoring

Overall, the UN faced several challenges with regards to obtaining data from the government. There are bureaucratic challenges across line ministries to share information, resulting in difficulties for the UN entities to obtain the information from the ministries. Furthermore, there is scope for improvement in the updating process for the national registry.

The UN encountered significant challenges in identifying out-of-school children (OoSC) and adolescents particularly the identification of OoSC girls for the alternative learning pilot. There is a lack of reliable official data on this target group, as schools do not record these cases in the Maldives Education Management Information System (MEMIS). This will be an important element to strengthen in the MEMIS which is also supported by UN. UN and Villa College observed that residential programmes are more effective than vocational training programmes in the young people's community as most at-risk young people are more likely to respond when daily influences and distractions are removed.

Similarly, due to lack of a health information management, data on Health and Nutrition is not collected on a timely manner.

## 5.4 Coordination and Joint Efforts

Coordination between ministries and between the UN can benefit from improvement. It is important to note that one such area for improvement is to establish a national multi-sectoral working group on Gender/GBV given the high prevalence of GBV and other gender issues in the country. Critical functions can be implemented with additional human resource capacity from other country offices during emergency situations. UN agencies need to increase joint up efforts, minimize working in silos, and increase complementary of the work. Furthermore, it is crucial to have discussions with all the relevant stakeholders when working on joint activities.

## 5.5 Changing Social and Cultural Context

Social cultural context towards more conservative narratives makes it challenging to address the people who are in different social contexts. Maldives continue to face challenges on socio-cultural norms, particularly amongst young people with changing religious conservatism and increase of migrant workers. On the one hand these norms influence behavior of health service providers and on the other hand the population pose several risky behaviors.

Sensitivity on issues relating sexual and reproductive health and gender stereotyping requires a progressive discourse to support both the issues from a religious perspective. Concerted effort from all UN Agencies is needed to ensure the narrow space for the dialogue remain open.

In 2019, a few Maldivians with Anti-vax views started social media (Viber, Facebook, Twitter) propaganda based on questions around vaccine safety. The UN monitored the posts and identified themes, and with stakeholders developed Vaccine communication and demand generation plan. And intensified awareness and positive communication on vaccines and its safety. The UN lobbied to include a clause addressing this in the Child Rights Act.

Through the work carried out in 2019 to engage adolescents and young people to build their adaptive capacity to climate change, it was found that such community-based programmes must be paced adequately to allow for effective ideation to occur especially if innovative solutions are to be developed with young people to implement in their communities. One key learning point from the initiatives the UN led with the government to reduce single-use plastics, was to ensure a proper monitoring system was established together with the target communities and national authorities to track changes in individual and community behavior towards reducing single-use plastic items.

## 5.6 Lack of Local Experts in Technical Areas

All UN entities and partners continue to face the challenges of finding local experts in different technical areas related to health. Often international consultants need to be hired to support different programmes or to develop different policies and guidelines. Although international consultants are technically reliable they often do not understand the local context which proves challenging at times. The way forward is to continue capacity building efforts in different areas to develop local experts.

The Minister of National Planning and Infrastructure is supportive of ICPD Agenda and requires strong analytical programmatic support by national partners to link with the planning processes. This calls for provision of long-term technical support in the area of population and development in order to be relevant and effective. The need to partner with academic institutions and pursue international and south to south partnerships to support its capacity building initiatives to deliver courses on population and development must continue to be explored. These capacity strengthening interventions should be focused on building the requisite skills necessary to effectively play the basic institutional role

