

Gender Assessment

FP007: Supporting Vulnerable Communities in Maldives to Manage Climate Change-Induced Water Shortages

Maldives | UNDP | B.11/11



**GREEN
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Gender Assessment, Action Plan and Budget

Maldives:

I. Introduction

This assessment aims to provide an overview of the gender situation in Maldives, identify gender issues that may be relevant to the project, and to examine potential gender mainstreaming opportunities. The assessment was conducted as a desk review, based on available studies by the various organizations working on gender issues in Maldives. The assessment was based upon available data from studies conducted by the Government of the Republic of Maldives, donor agencies, and multilateral banks, and includes:

1. Undertaking a desktop review and aligning approaches in this proposal with the national priorities of the Republic of Maldives.
2. Incorporating information and lessons learned from past studies and assessments on gender in the Maldives from the Government of the Republic of Maldives, the United Nations, civil society organisations, and multilateral development banks.
3. Conducting stakeholder consultations and engaging women affected by the project and incorporating all points raised; and
4. Integrating gender considerations in the project indicators, targets and activities, identifying women as leaders and decision-makers.

II. Existing gender inequality in the Maldives

The Maldives is committed to the principle of gender equality through numerous national and international commitments. The Constitution of the Maldives (2008) guarantees equality between men and women, and gender mainstreaming has been adopted as national policy to integrate gender perspectives in policy, planning and budgeting. Gender roles and responsibilities are defined within a unique cultural framework. Gender identity is mediated through social positioning along the lines of religious, socio-economic status, and the urban versus outer island divide. Women are not a homogenous group and thus do not always share the same constraints and opportunities to participate in public life. Despite progress at the national level, women remain under-represented in the political and economic spheres.

Even though equal rights of women and men are enshrined in the constitution, significant barriers for women's participation in public life remain.¹ While Maldives' global ranking on gender equality has improved, gender gaps persist. Gender equality has been boosted by an increase in the ratio of girls attending primary education, higher female enrollment in tertiary education and an increase in the percentage of women holding ministerial positions (which rose from 7 percent in 2011 to 21 percent in 2012). Women's political representation is very low, with women holding a mere 6 per cent of seats in the national parliament and of local councilor positions respectively, and 2 of 15 positions in the Cabinet. Women's unemployment rate was 31% in 2010. In 2010, 55 percent of women over 15 were found to be participating in the labor force, as compared to 76 percent of men over 15. Opportunities for women to work outside the home are limited. Lack of access to resources and isolation continue to frustrate women's participation in the economy. While the major reason given by both women and men for being unemployed was that they were unable to find suitable employment, 22 per cent of women cited household chores as a

¹ "Women face legal obstacles to their participation in development in some areas including with respect to property rights, inheritance and provision of legal evidence". (2010 National MDG Report)

reason, and another 3 per cent objection from family members—thus, family factors affect a significant number of women but none of the men surveyed. Across all sectors and industries, women’s mean monthly income is lower than that of men. Women also continue to face legal obstacles in terms of property rights, inheritance and provision of legal evidence. The share of female-headed households in the Maldives is amongst the highest in the world.

Despite the challenges faced, both women and men at national and local levels remain steadfastly optimistic and committed to the increased participation, representation and influence of women in public life.

Gender Inequality Index

Through the years, several indices have developed to quantify the concept of gender inequality. The United Nations Development Programme uses the Gender Inequality Index (GII) and Gender Development Index (GDI).² GII is a composite measure that shows inequality in achievement between women and men in reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market while with a measures achievement in human development in three areas: health, education, and command over economic resources. The GDI considers the gender gaps on human development between men and women.

The Maldives had a GII of 0.283 in 2013 and ranks 49 out of 155 countries assessed.³

The Gender Development Index based on the sex-disaggregated Human Development Index (HDI) defines as a ratio of women to the men HDI. The Gender Development Index measures gender inequalities in three basic dimensions of human development: health (measured by women and men’s life expectancy at birth); education (measured by women and men’s expected years of schooling for children and mean years for adults aged 25 years and older); and command over economic resources (measured by women and men’s estimated Gross National Income (GNI) per capita).⁴

The GDI value (2013) is 0.936 with a ranking of 0.936 out of 147 assessed.⁵

The Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) of the World Economic Forum examines the gap between men and women in four categories: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival; and political empowerment.⁶ Out of 142 countries, the Maldives rank based on GGGI in 2014 is given below⁷:

Description	Score	Rank
Economic participation and opportunity	0.590	110
Educational attainment	0.994	58
Health and survival	0.966	125
Political empowerment	0.072	120
Gender Gap Index 2014	0.656	105

* Inequality = 0.00; Equality = 1.00. Source: The Global Gender Gap Report 2014

² United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Report. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-4-gender-inequality-index>.

³ <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr14-report-en-1.pdf>

⁴ p. 156-157 <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr14-report-en-1.pdf>

⁵ p. 178 <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr14-report-en-1.pdf>

⁶ World Economic Forum. The Global Gender Gap Report 2014 Country Profiles.

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR14/GGGR_CountryProfiles.pdf

⁷ <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/economies/>

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) developed the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), a composite index that scores countries (i.e., 0 to 1) on 14 indicators grouped into five sub-indices: discriminatory family code, restricted physical integrity, son bias, restricted resources and assets, and restricted civil liberties to measure the discrimination against women in social institutions across 160 countries. There is currently no SIGI value listed for the Maldives with the OECD.⁸

Poverty

In the Maldives, 15 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line.⁹ For women, lower incomes, in addition to restricted control of assets and resources, are exaggerated areas for concern for female-headed households. Over half of all households in the Maldives female-headed households (Ministry of Planning and National Development 2007).¹⁰

Rationale behind the high percentage of female-headed households is due to the high rate of male migration for employment and while benefits exist in regards to remittances, female-headed households are shown to be at a disadvantage compared to those with a male present. (ADB 2014; Ministry of Planning and National Development 2004)¹¹ Female-headed households in the atolls (one in three), fall below the national poverty line.¹²

Health

In regards to maternal health, significant progress has been made in improving maternal and child health services and family planning in the Maldives. This progress has positively impacted infant, child and maternal mortality.¹³ The most recent figures from the ADB (2016) show that for every 1,000 live births, seven die before their first birthday¹⁴.

Areas of continued concern lay behind the unmet requirements for contraception, with lack of access an issue. Adequate access to health services in times of emergency due to complicated pregnancies, due to inability to utilize transport results in an additional risk for women and children.

According to the *Women in Public Life in the Maldives Situation Analysis* (UNDP 2011), other challenges 'faced by women that affect their reproductive health include: domestic violence and abuse, lower financial security due to broken marriage, lack of assistance from men during pregnancy due to men working outside their islands, and the role of women as caretakers of children and the elderly'.¹⁵

⁸ OECD. Social Institutions and Gender Index 2014. Country Profiles <http://www.genderindex.org/>

⁹ <https://www.adb.org/countries/maldives/poverty>

¹⁰ Understanding Gender in the Maldives World Bank
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/448231467991952542/pdf/105635-PUB-Box394887B-PUBLIC-PUBDATE-5-8-16.pdf>

¹¹ Understanding Gender in the Maldives World Bank
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/448231467991952542/pdf/105635-PUB-Box394887B-PUBLIC-PUBDATE-5-8-16.pdf>

¹² Understanding Gender in the Maldives World Bank
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¹⁴ <https://www.adb.org/countries/maldives/poverty>

¹⁵ Women in Public Life in the Maldives Situation Analysis
http://www.undp.org/content/dam/maldives/docs/Democratic%20Governance/Women_in_Public_Life_Report.pdf



Education

In urban areas, compared to rural areas, girls are more likely than boys to be in school. Female attendance outnumbers males in both primary and secondary school enrolment (primary school: 97 per cent female, 96 per cent male, Secondary school: 71 per cent female, 67 per cent male). In addition, girls fare as well as or better than boys through secondary school. In poorer, rural areas, however, girls are at a disadvantage and many islands are too small to accommodate higher education facilities (UNDP, 2011).

Literacy rates for women are high and equal to men at 97 per cent. Disadvantaged in educational attainment arise at the tertiary level, whereby cultural expectations regarding young women living away from home for study impact upon the numbers of females able to attend.

Political participation and decision-making

The Maldives Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is 76, however the under-representation of women reflected in seats held by women in national parliament and other decision making bodies is indicative of the challenges to gender equality and women's empowerment still faced in the country. Gender discrimination exists in the realm of public service and politics with only 15 per cent of legislator, senior official and managerial positions are held by women.¹⁶

The government is the largest employer in the Maldives, and employs two-thirds males and one-third females.¹⁷ Women comprise of 6.5 per cent of parliamentarians (5 women of a total 77 seats) and hold 14 per cent of Ministerial positions. Women are starkly under-represented at the local level. Currently, of the fifteen Atoll Councillors, no women hold the position. Of a total 167 Island Councillors there are only two female Island Councillors.¹⁸

Labour force

Labour force participation varies in different Atolls. In male-headed households, employment stands at 84 per cent, contrasted with female-headed household employment levels of 47 per cent (UNDP, 2011). Traditionally women played a significant role in the economy of the country. Currently, women dominate the informal sector with almost 90 per cent working as self-employed home-based workers. The government is the largest employer in the Maldives, and employs two-thirds males and one-third females.

At the national level, the education sector employs the second highest number of females. In particular female employees are more prevalent than males in the primary and tertiary levels. Only 13 per cent of tourism sector employment is taken up by females. While female employment has risen at a rapid rate, the female unemployment rate continues to be almost three times higher than males. The unemployment rate for female adults in 2009 was three times that of males (UNDP, 2011).

Women, especially in the islands are primarily engaged in home-based income generating activities. Nearly half the employed females in the atolls and 40 per cent of employed females in Male' fall into the category of home-based own-account workers or contributing family workers.

¹⁶ Women in Public Life in the Maldives Situation Analysis

http://www.undp.org/content/dam/maldives/docs/Democratic%20Governance/Women_in_Public_Life_Report.pdf

¹⁷ Maldives: Gender and Development Assessment. Asian Development Bank <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/32235/gender-and-development-assessment.pdf>

¹⁸ Women in Public Life in the Maldives Situation Analysis

http://www.undp.org/content/dam/maldives/docs/Democratic%20Governance/Women_in_Public_Life_Report.pdf

Positively, women are paid equally to that of that of men holding the same position, however inequality persists in relation to equal opportunity. The Human Rights Commission Maldives (HRCM), despite provisions in the constitution and the 2008 Employment Act, demonstrated there were no policies in place that provide equal opportunities for women’s employment. These barriers to this equal opportunity are manifested through - absence of childcare facilities for example – resulting in difficulty for women to remain employed after they had children.¹⁹

Access to resources

Isolation negatively affects access of access to resources, which therefore affects women’s participation in the economy. In addition to limits to employment opportunities for women (particularly in the atolls), there are areas where women face continued legal obstacles to their participation in development, including with respect to property rights, and inheritance. Challenges also exist in women’s participation in decision-making, with women under-represented in local and national government, and particularly so in policy making positions.²⁰ Inheritance favor men and are defined in terms of the relationship status to that of the deceased, with an added assumption that men will care for the needs of women.²¹

The Family Law Act (2001) was the first law enacted which specifically relates to gender relations, marriage and family life. It sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for both men and women and strengthens the rules on polygamous marriages. In addition, men’s right to divorce based on reciting a verbal formula was rescinded.

Gender-based Violence

Violence against women is a serious problem in the Maldives and not acknowledged widely enough within the legal system. Recent Government reports estimate that one in three Maldivian women aged 15-29 had experienced some form of physical or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime.²² While beneficial legislations were adopted, consisting of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act, 2012; and the Sexual Harassment Prevention Act and Sexual Offences Act, 2014, significant improvements remain to be seen²³.

III. Legal and Administrative Framework Protecting Women and Protecting Gender Equality

International Commitments to Gender Equality

The Maldives became a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) in 1993 and the CEDAW Optional Protocol in 2006. Reservations include Article 7 (a) and Article 16.

¹⁹ Women in Public Life in the Maldives Situation Analysis

http://www.undp.org/content/dam/maldives/docs/Democratic%20Governance/Women_in_Public_Life_Report.pdf

²⁰ Maldives: Gender and Development Assessment. Asian Development Bank <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/32235/gender-and-development-assessment.pdf>

²¹ Maldives: Gender and Development Assessment. Asian Development Bank <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/32235/gender-and-development-assessment.pdf>

²² Maldives: Gender and Development Assessment. Asian Development Bank <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/32235/gender-and-development-assessment.pdf>

²³ Presentation of Ministry of Law and Gender representative at UNDAF Maldives Strategic Planning Retreat, 28 January 2015

- Article 7 (a) “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies.”

- Article 16:”*The Government of the Republic of Maldives reserves its right to apply article 16 of the Convention concerning the equality of men and women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations without prejudice to the provisions of the Islamic Sharia, which govern all marital and family relations of the 100 percent Muslim population of the Maldives.”*

The Maldives is signatory to a number of international instruments addressing gender equality and a party to all major human rights treaties, with the exception of the Conventions on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families.

Civil & Political Rights

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 1966 (signatory 2006)
- ICCPR Optional Protocol 1966 (signatory 2006)

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR 1966) (signatory 2006)

The Maldives is also party to the Commonwealth Action Plans on Gender Equality. ²⁴

IV. Gender Issues in Water Sector

Data reveals that 73 per cent of women control the household budget, and over 95 per cent of the respondents reported that women have a say on the expenditure of the household. Responsibilities for fetching water from public taps and wells is more or less evenly split between men and women, but with slightly more responsibility falling on women. This has two implications: First, piped water system will profoundly improve women’s and men’s lives by removing the drudgery of collecting water from wells and taps and freeing time for education, children and other economic, social and cultural activities. This supports the investment proposal for a piped water supply as part of the IWRM solution. Second, women, who are largely responsible for bringing up children and would experience firsthand the impacts of ill health from polluted ground water supplies could be important agents for change to support a safe and affordable service delivery system and associated tariffs. Women are particularly affected due to their family roles in cooking, washing, bathing children and house cleaning. Complaints of skin irritations and infections are also common²⁵. These issues have reduced the use of historically important groundwater as a potable water source in the islands, though it is still used for non-potable uses such as bathing, clothes washing and toilet flushing. The household surveys conducted for this investment will track the effects of the IWRM system on health and productivity. As such, the project directly contributes to SDG agenda in Maldives, more concretely will help achieve Goal 6 fully by ensuring availability and sustainable management of water

²⁴ Women in Public Life in the Maldives Situation Analysis

http://www.undp.org/content/dam/maldives/docs/Democratic%20Governance/Women_in_Public_Life_Report.pdf

²⁵ WHO, 2015



and sanitation for all. The project will considerably contribute towards climate change goal 13 as well as the goal 5 on gender equality.

V. Recommendations

Gender analysis

The gender analysis undertaken at the onset and design of this project acts as an entry point for gender mainstreaming throughout implementation. Results from the consultations are detailed below in the [Stakeholder engagement](#) section and [Gender Action Plan](#) and are included in full as an additional annex to this proposal.

The gender analysis, through stakeholder engagement and consultation enabled:

- Engagement, development and input into the design of the project and the approach moving forward;
- Demonstration of the need for gender-disaggregated data and indicators to establish a baseline in which to measure improvements and identify areas of focus; and
- Establishment of recommendations to incorporate into the Gender Action Plan.

Project design and implementation

Addressing gender dimensions within the project design and implementation, this proposal works to identify and integrate interventions to provide gender responsive and transformative results. As women are key players in this project, this proposal seeks to address their concerns.

Prior to implementation of water infrastructure investments on each individual islands female-headed households will be identified and documented as project beneficiaries. All household surveys will be gender disaggregated. At all Island and Atoll meetings an equal participation of women will be demanded. Meaningful and well planned community engagement with households and island authorities to get their participation will be essential to making the integrated system work effectively, especially in the context of willingness to pay for the system; community engagement will be facilitated through the existing Island Council mechanism, including through such representative community groups as women’s development committees that have mandate to provide inputs into the island development plans and individual projects; Women’s development committees will be used to voice women’s specific needs in water at the household level, use of their traditional methods of harvesting and promote their roles in household “willingness to pay” surveys and related decisions. Since water scarcity directly affects women by adding to their daily chores, they will more willingly secure family earnings for a reliable freshwater supply; furthermore, a dedicated water task force at each Island Council will serve as a platform for participatory decision-making for an entire project duration and beyond.

The island and atoll-specific baseline studies will analyze in detail the women-specific water issues and the opportunities of women’s empowerment through the solutions (e.g. stewarding groundwater, household level maintenance and promotion of water efficiency at a household level).

The secondary data from past and ongoing water projects in Maldives that can be used to establish baseline and in setting targets to address gender equality particularly on access to training, and other benefits.

The project design and implementation will take into consideration the following gender implications:



Annex XIII (b) – Gender Assessment

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- Specific strategies to include / target female-headed households;
- Differing conservation incentives faced by women;
- Identification of gaps in gender equality through the use of sex-disaggregated data enabling development of a gender action plan to close those gaps, devoting resources and expertise for implementing such strategies, monitoring the results of implementation, and holding individuals and institutions accountable for outcomes that promote gender equality.
- Advocacy and awareness is adjusted to most effectively reflect gender-specific differences. Strategies used in the project are then tailored, taking into account such differences;
- Inclusion of a Gender Specialist position / provision of advice within the project to implement gender related activities.

During project implementation, qualitative assessments will be conducted on the gender-specific benefits that can be directly associated to the project. This will be incorporated in the annual Project Implementation Report, Mid-Term Report, and Terminal Evaluation. Indicators to quantify the achievement of project objectives in relation to gender equality will include men and women who had access to affordable solutions, number of men and women employed from the jobs created by the project, training opportunities, knowledge management and information dissemination.

Stakeholder engagement

The stakeholder consultations and engagement of women's organizations promote gender equality at the local as well as the national level. The involvement of women's organizations in the project design, aided in identifying relevant gender issues within the country's social context, and implementing and monitoring the gender aspects of the project.

Monitoring and evaluation

Through onset analysis, data has been collated to establish a baseline. This data shall be monitored against throughout implementation and evaluation.

The analysis identified the differences between men and women within at-risk populations. In order to monitor and evaluate progress of the project, the following indicators can be measured:

Quantitative outcomes:

- Female-headed households as beneficiaries;
- Improvements in health and well-being;
- Improved livelihoods;
- Business development services component targeting rural women entrepreneur groups.

Qualitative outcomes:

- Opportunities to generate additional income. Women are more likely to respond to incentives that address their family's basic needs, such as better health and nutrition, linking to the project;
- Time-saving for women as a result of lower hours in labour required for agricultural and water management practices prior to the implementation of the project;
- Contribution to improved self-esteem and empowerment of women in the community;
- Expanded involvement in public and project decision-making as a result of initiation of women into active participation in income generating activities;



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- Support for training and educational activities which may include activities related to climate change, agriculture, leadership, business, finance, entrepreneurship and decision-making, thereby enabling empowerment and involvement (or increased involvement) of women to participate with confidence in community meetings;
- Effectiveness of awareness raising.



I. Gender Assessment Stakeholder Engagements

Maldives:

Date:

Venue:

Time:

Target population:

Target location/s:

General gender issues in the target districts

Information obtained through the discussion