

# **Maldives NGO Shadow Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women**

*Hope for Women*

*Maldives*

*7<sup>th</sup> November 2019*



**Acknowledgment:**

A number of stakeholders and individuals contributed their time and support to make this report possible. We are grateful for the assistance and support provided by UN Women for the production of this report. We also thank the government and non-governmental organizations as well youth and women's groups who provided invaluable information and insight to the issues addressed in this report. Finally, and most importantly, we are thankful for the staff at Hope for Women for their incredible support and assistance during the preparation of this report.

**Maldives NGO Shadow Report to the  
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2019**

Project Team Leader – Aneesa Yoosuf, Riyan Private Limited  
Team Member – Fathimath Salva

Report prepared for Hope for Women by  
Aneesa Yoosuf  
Consultant  
August 2019 – November 2019

Supported by UN WOMEN

© Hope for Women, Maldives, November 2019

Hope for Women  
M. Kulunuvehi, 6D  
Buruzu Magu  
Malé  
Republic of Maldives  
[hope@hopeforwomen.org.mv](mailto:hope@hopeforwomen.org.mv)  
Registry No: T/2010/08/04 (January 2010)

## Contents

List of Figures .....	3
List of Tables .....	3
Abbreviations and Acronyms .....	4
Introduction.....	6
Hope for Women.....	6
Report Preparation .....	7
The Report Structure.....	7
Current Country Context: Political, Legal & Social .....	8
Part I.....	10
Commentary on The State Responses to The Concluding Observations of The CEDAW Committee and Updates on The Progress .....	10
Article 1- Definition of Discrimination Against Women .....	10
Article 2 – State’s Obligation to Eliminate Discrimination .....	13
Article 3 –Development and Advancement of Women .....	14
Article 4- Acceleration of Equality Between Men and Women .....	15
Article 5 – Sex roles and stereotyping .....	16
Article 6 – Violence Against Women .....	17
Article 7 and 8 – Political Participation and International representation .....	23
Article 9 – Nationality.....	27
Article 10 – Education .....	27
Article 11 – Employment.....	29
Article 12 – Health.....	35
Article 13 – Economic and Social Life.....	37
Article 14 – Rural Women .....	37
Article 15 – Equality before the Law.....	40
Article 16 – Marriage and Family Relations.....	45
Part II .....	49
Critical Issues of Concern.....	49
Lack of alternative narrative on radicalized views on women in Islam.....	49
Endorsement of child marriages and increase in the number of undocumented marriages .....	50
Lack of harmonized guidelines on procedures relating to DV cases and lack of support system for DV victims .....	50
Lack of political commitment to implement legislations already in place and lack of monitoring mechanisms.....	52
References.....	53

## List of Figures

Figure 1.Changes in the Representation of Female Parliamentarians from 2000 to 2019.....	25
Figure 2.Percentage Representation of Men and Women in Political Senior Positions in the Government, 2019 .....	26
Figure 3 Percentage of employed persons in the informal sector by sex and locality, 2016 .....	30
Figure 4. Reasons for not seeking a job and being outside the labor force by sex .....	33
Figure 5. Percentage of Men and Women Age 15-49 Who Agree That a Husband is Justified in Beating His Wife for Specific Reasons .....	42
Figure 6. Number of Domestic Violence Cases Reported to Police 2013-2018 .....	43

## List of Tables

Table 1. Gender Gap in Labor Force Participation Rate, 2006, 2010, 2016 .....	32
Table 2. Offenses Against Women 2015-2018.....	44

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

AGO	Attorney General's Office
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CMDA	Capital Market Development Authority
CO	Concluding Observation
DJA	Department of Judicial Administration
DV	Domestic Violence
DVPA	Domestic Violence Prevention Act
FADiP	Fisheries and Agriculture Diversification Programme
FCSC	Family and Children's Service Centers
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FPA	Family Protection Authority
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GEL	Gender Equality Law
HFW	Hope for Women
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
HPA	Health Protection Agency
LGA	Local Government Authority
MDP	Maldives Democratic Party
MED	Ministry of Economic Development
MEDeP	Mari culture Enterprise Development Project
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoFMA	Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture
MoGFSS	Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services
MoH	Ministry of Health
MP	Member of the Parliament
MPS	Maldives Police Service
MPAO	Maldives Pension Administration Office
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NDA	National Drug Agency
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSPA	National Social Protection Agency
NWM	National Women's Machinery
PGO	Prosecutor Generals Office
PO	President's Office
SAP	Strategic Action Plan
SHE	Society for Health Education
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SRH	Sexual Reproductive Health

TM	Transparency Maldives
TSM	Temporary Special Measures
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VP	Vice President
WDC	Women's Development Committee

## Introduction

Maldives ratified the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* in 1993 with reservations to Articles 7(a) and 16. Since then, Maldives has also ratified the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW, on 13th March 2006. The adoption of the new Constitution in 2008, where women are now able to run for office of the presidency, have facilitated the removal of the states' reservation to article 7(a) of the convention.

The Government of Maldives submitted its 4th and 5th combined Periodic Report to the CEDAW committee in December 2012. The Committee's Concluding Observations (CO's) for the 4th and 5th report was issued in March 2015. The 6th Periodic Report by the state was submitted to the committee in April 2019 focusing on the updates between 2013 and 2018.

This report is prepared by Hope for Women (HFW), with support from UN Women, as a shadow report for the 6th periodic state report submitted to the UN CEDAW committee by the government of Maldives.

## Hope for Women

Hope for Women is a Non- Governmental Organization (NGO) working for gender equality and women's rights in the Maldives. The NGO was originally registered on 19th January 2010 under the Maldives Association Act (Law No. 1/2003). With almost a decade of experience since its establishment, the team at HFW aims to:

- Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the Maldives.
- Protect and promote women's rights as reflected in moderate and liberal interpretations of Islam
- Promote measures that would make women self-reliant and empowered through policy dialogue with key stakeholders
- Support the work of civil society organizations and state institutions that work towards gender equality and equity.
- Encourage youth participation in protecting and promoting women's human rights.
- Ensure that the state authorities fulfill the commitments enshrined in the international and regional conventions to which the Maldives is a party.

This report is the second shadow report submitted by HFW to the UN committee on CEDAW. The first report was submitted following the 4th and 5th periodic state report on CEDAW in 2012.

## Report Preparation

The report is prepared with consultation from all relevant stakeholders including government and non-governmental organizations as well as independent youth and women's groups. Consultations meetings were held with the central government institutions and individual bodies in the capital Male', as well as institutions and independent groups in L. Fonadhoo. L. Fonadhoo is the capital island of Laamu atoll, located in the south of Male' and is considered as one of the well-established islands within the atolls.

Following the individual consultation meetings, a validation workshop was held in Male' for the relevant government and non-governmental institutions and the final findings were shared and validated before finalizing the report.

## The Report Structure

This report is developed alongside the sixth periodic state report on CEDAW, prepared and submitted to the CEDAW committee by the Maldives government in April 2019.

This report is divided into two main parts, Part I and Part II. The report begins with a brief introduction of the country's current context, including political, legal and social areas. The numbering of the paragraphs will begin from the section on current country context at page number 8.

Part I of this report will provide a direct critical commentary on the state's responses to the committee's concluding observations for its 4th and 5th periodic report as well as other updates on individual articles provided by the state in the 6th periodic report. This part of the report is organized in order of article numbers of the convention. Issues raised, observations and concerns are discussed for each article providing a critical analysis of the information provided in the state report.

Part II of this report re-emphasizes on the critical areas of concern. Some of these issues are new and emerging while others have been a concern for a long period of time but has been neglected by the state. Hence through this shadow report, HFW aims to bring these issues to the attention of the committee as well as to the state.

Attempts have been made to provide substantial recommendations for the issues raised in part I and part II of this report from the perspective of an NGO.

The final section of this report includes a list of references and resources that were used for the preparation of this report.



## Current Country Context: Political, Legal & Social

1. During this reporting period, Maldives has experienced significant political, legal and social changes including two presidential elections, one in 2013 and another in 2018, and one parliamentary election in 2014. A further parliamentary election has also been conducted in early 2019.
2. The most recent presidential election was held on September 2018 which ended the presidency of the then elected president Mr. Yameen Abdul Gayyoom after his first 5-year term since November 2013. The current president Mr. Ibrahim Solih represented a coalition of the joint opposition parties including Maldives Democratic Party (MDP), the Jumhooree Party, the Adhaalath Party and former president Maumoon Abdhul Gayyoom's supporters. The current presidential term will continue until 2023.
3. President Yameen Abdul Gayyoom's presidency lasted from November 2013 to November 2018. In his 5-year term as the president, three different Vice Presidents (VP) served the country. The first VP, Mr. Jameel was removed by the parliament for treason in 2015<sup>1</sup> and the second VP, Mr. Adeb was also removed by a no confidence vote by the parliament following his arrest related to an assassination attempt on President Yameen<sup>2</sup>. Vice President Adeb still remains in the custody of the Maldives Police Service (MPS) for multiple accusations of corruption and illegal activities conducted during his time as the VP.
4. During the reporting period, there have been a number of arrests, court cases and jail sentences against key politicians, public figures and members of the judiciary.
5. In 2015, former President Mr. Nasheed was sentenced to jail for 13 years on terrorism charges for ordering to arrest a superior court judge in 2012<sup>3</sup>. There was a lot of political unrest during this process as President Nasheed's supporters protested on the streets of Male'. The government was also under fierce pressure from different countries and international institutions calling to conduct a fair and just trial for president Nasheed. He was cleared of all the charges by the court when president Solih, who is also from the same

---

<sup>1</sup> The Guardian, 2015, "Maldives Sacks Vice President for Treason", <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/22/maldives-government-sacks-vice-president-treason-mohamed-jameel> Accessed: 6th November 2019.

<sup>2</sup> BBC News 2015, "Maldives Vice- President Adeb arrested over 'bomb plot'", <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34625558> Accessed: 6th November 2019.

<sup>3</sup> The Guardian, 2015 "Maldives ex-president Nasheed jailed for 13 years on terrorism charges" <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/13/maldives-ex-president-nasheed-jailed-13-years-terrorism-charges>, Accessed: 6th November 2019.

political party as president Nasheed, was elected as the president in 2018. President Nasheed now serves as the speaker of the Maldives Parliament.

6. The Former President Mr. Yameen has also been charged with corruption and money laundering and his court cases are still ongoing.
7. With the election of the new President and formulation of the new government in 2018, the existing National Women's Machinery (NWM) were restructured to form the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services (MoGFSS). The Ministry's mandate has expanded to include provision of Social Services with the acquisition of the National Social Protection Agency (NSPA) and the National Drug Agency (NDA) into its mandate.
8. Several important changes have also been brought into the judicial system during this period, including the appointment of two female justices to the supreme court of the Maldives. This is the first time a female justice has been appointed to the highest court of the country since its establishment in 2008, and it marks a remarkable milestone in the efforts towards gender equality in the Maldives. To double this advancement, the newly elected Parliament in 2019 approved a female deputy speaker to the parliament, who is now the second ever-female deputy speaker of the Maldives Parliament.
9. During the reporting period, a number of new laws and amendments to the existing laws have been brought in order to strengthen and improve the legal system of the country. Some of the important laws that came into effect during this period include Gender Equality Law (GEL), Sexual Offenses Act, Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Abuse Act, Penal Code of Maldives and amendments of the Family Act. With the new government elected in 2018 and the new parliament elected in 2019, the country is still undergoing rapid advancement in its legislations in terms of new laws and regulations as well as amendments to the existing legislations.

## Part I

### Commentary on The State Responses to The Concluding Observations of The CEDAW Committee and Updates on The Progress

#### Article 1- Definition of Discrimination Against Women

#### **Issues raised, observations and concerns**

10. Following the recommendation by the Committee **to ensure the incorporation of the Convention into its domestic legal system in order to make its provisions directly applicable and enforceable by the courts**, paragraph 18 of the State Report mentions that the main strategy used by the government to ensure this, is through revision and/or adoption of national legislation and regulatory frameworks that creates obligations with the national laws to uphold CEDAW provisions. Following this, the Article 17(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Maldives is given reference. While this Article explicitly says that no citizen should be discriminated from rights with ‘sex’ as a factor among others, this article existed in the Constitution even before the Committee recommended this CO.
11. In response on the CO to **expeditiously adopt the Gender Equality Bill and ensure that it includes a definition of discrimination in conformity with article 1 of the Convention, encompassing both direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres, as well as the principle of gender equality in line with article 2 of the Convention**, paragraph 20 of the State Report correctly acknowledges that while there is no explicit definition of gender discrimination provided within the Constitution, the GEL is enough to bridge this gap. This statement is true as one of the main objectives of the GEL is to ‘facilitate all steps towards prevention of discrimination between men and women, in conformation with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women’<sup>4</sup>. This shows the weight given to the Convention by the main legislation to ensure gender equality in Maldives, and can be regarded as a groundbreaking achievement to eliminate gender discrimination in the country.
12. However, consultations for this report revealed that the implementation of the new Law is poor. While the Gender Equality Policy has been endorsed by the government, the Gender Action Plan which is supposed to come under the GEL is still pending. Furthermore, as stated in the paragraph 20 of the state report, under the new law, a complaints mechanism to address acts of gender discrimination has to be established in all public and private institutions. Even though this complaints mechanism is clearly detailed with the implications of not implementing it, there is currently no proper mechanism to monitor

---

<sup>4</sup>GoM, 2016 “Gender Equality Act” 2016, page 2 and 3

this. Under GEL, MoGFSS has the authority to take actions such as publicizing information on such entities, and levying a fine of MVR 25,000 (approximately USD 1,600) at the maximum on the institutions that fail to establish the complaints mechanism as stipulated under this Act. The ministry reports to have done some level of monitoring at the beginning; however, the efforts are currently on hold due to other priorities in regards to the implementation of the Act including the Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan that needs to come under the Act. The ministry has been reported of just 2 cases under this mechanism in 3 years, which is very low, even though informal reports of such incidents are commonly observed in the media. Therefore, it can be argued that even though the law is there, the implementation of it is very poor.

13. On the CO calling to **conduct a systematic gender review of its legislation as part of the ongoing legal reform with a view to bringing it in full compliance with the Convention and ensuring that all discriminatory provisions, including family and criminal law provisions, are repealed or amended**, the state report mentions of a Legal Audit of all law and regulatory frameworks from a human rights and international obligations' angle by the Attorney General's Office (AGO) that was supposed to begin in late 2018. Information received from the AGO for this report highlighted that AGO undertook the task of amending laws that govern institutions, to ensure their independent functioning. The laws to which amendments have been proposed are Law Number 4/2007 (Audit Act), Law Number 5/2007 (Civil Service Act), Law Number 8/2008 (Election Commission Act), Law Number 9/2008 Prosecutor Generals Act) and most significantly Law Number 6/2006 (Human Rights Commission Act). The proposed amendments have been submitted to the Parliament for approval.
14. Even though proper legislations are currently in place that will address a lot of issues with regard to gender discrimination in the Maldives, the implementation of these legislations are observed to be poor as noted by many of the stakeholders. This directs to a lack of commitment and sensitivity at policy and political level. During a recent debate in a parliamentary session regarding a report that largely received criticism due to its portrayal of some of the tenets of Islam and the Prophet Mohammed (saw), one of the parliament members described gender equality as an act against Islam<sup>5</sup>. An online article on the issue reported that the Parliament member in his exact words said "*Jinsee hama hama kamah govaalaa meehun naththaalan jehey: Member of Parliament (MP)*" which translates to, "people who calls for gender equality should be discarded of". He went on further to describe people who call for gender equality as '*kathuru fani*' (Termite). This statement was not addressed or challenged by any of the Parliament members in session, or by any institutions or even the media. This shows the lack of sensitivity and importance given to

---

<sup>5</sup> Sun Online, "Jinsee hama hama kamah govaalaa meehun naththaalan jehey: MP Nasheed", <https://sun.mv/125425>  
Accessed: 1st November 2019

the matter, not just amongst the MP's but the state as a whole. Even though this particular MP is an independent MP, the fact that the majority party who also runs the government did not challenge this statement can be noted as a lack of dedication or sensitivity to the issue.

15. While implementations of the new legislations are poor, some of the new policy initiatives to promote gender equality and equal participation also lacks practicality and fails to provide holistic solutions for the issues.
16. For instance, extending the maternity leave for 6 months of paid leave for mothers and 1 month of paid leave for fathers was one of the pledges of the current government during their campaign, which was in fact implemented during the first 100 days<sup>6</sup>. Even though the objective behind this is noble and will in fact positively impact the proper healing of the women after child birth and also strengthen the family bonding, there has been some unintentional drawbacks to this that have been observed. While the policy mandates government institutions to provide women with 6 months paid maternity leave, it fails to provide the employer the opportunity to hire temporary staff to match the work demands. This could unintentionally discourage employers from hiring women or be encouraged to giving preference to men over women despite having the same qualifications and experience. As a result, the advantage that this policy seemingly gives to a lot of women also can be a factor in women being discriminated in the hiring process.
17. In the year 2014, the government introduced flexible working hours and flexibility to work from home for pregnant women and women with children under 3 years of age<sup>7</sup>. The new policy was applicable to civil service employees and a new civil service regulation was also introduced to implement the policy. Although the intention of this is noble where by women who do have childcare options can still work from home and also at flexible hours, the fact that this option is given only to mothers is stereotypical and may lead to discrimination from employers in the hiring process. Furthermore, the policy being limited only to women also promotes stereotypical sex roles of women being in charge of childcare and household chores.

## **Recommendations**

---

<sup>6</sup> PO, 2019 "President Solih announces the implementation of 6 months paid maternity leave", <https://presidency.gov.mv/Press/Article/20794>, Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Minivan News - Archive, 2014 "Flexible working arrangements introduced for mothers in the civil service", <https://minivannewsarchive.com/news-in-brief/flexible-working-arrangements-introduced-for-mothers-in-the-civil-service-76866>, Accessed: 6<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

18. Ensure full implementation of GEL
19. Establish a monitoring system for the complaint mechanism to address acts of gender discrimination.
20. Increase targeted awareness and capacity building sessions and sensitization sessions for Parliamentarians.
21. Ensure that new initiatives by the government and other stakeholders provide a holistic solution to issues and do not further encourage stereotypical gender roles.

## Article 2 – State’s Obligation to Eliminate Discrimination

### **Issues raised, observations and concerns**

22. On the CO calling to **‘strengthen the status and structure of the newly restructured Ministry of Law and Gender and provide it with adequate decision-making powers, to enable it to develop sustainable policies and programs aiming at achieving gender equality in a comprehensive manner and to effectively coordinate gender mainstreaming at all levels’** the state report fails to comment on how this CO was addressed during the reporting period. Paragraph 25 of the state report accurately discusses the challenges in terms of budget, human resources and limited understanding and collaboration amongst stakeholders in strengthening the Family and Children’s Service Centers (FCSCs) under the ministry, who is largely responsible for the gender equality commitments in the atolls. Same issues apply to the Women’s Committees (WDC) who was largely observed as mostly standstill committees for namesake during the reporting period.
23. While these challenges has remained the same over a long period of time, with the new government in 2018, the mandate of the MoGFSS has now expanded to include social services and have acquired NSPA and NDA into its mandate. This raises the concern of burden to the ministry given that the ministry has always expressed concerns over lack of capacity, resources and budget to properly address the gender equality commitments. At the same time, this change has arguably given the ministry a more cohesive and collaborative way to deal with cases that often fall under the mandate of 3 separate institutions, as per the previous setup. Positive implications to this has already begun as, the cabinet recently passed the motion to increase the maximum ceiling of the Single Parent Allowance from MVR 3,000 to MVR 10,000 (approximately USD 190 to USD 650) for families under the poverty line, and also recommended that the Ministry have the authority to declare the 'Income Threshold' of single-parent households based on the individual situations. The decision also included an additional clause allowing single parents of children with special needs to receive both the allowance for housing a child with special

needs as well as the Single Parent Allowance<sup>8</sup>. This can be regarded as a huge achievement that would have taken months if this were dealt with two ministries before. Larger implications to this change are yet to be seen.

24. Gender Equality is identified as one of the subsectors under the Good Governance Sector in the newly formed Strategic Action Plan (SAP) of the present government and the MoGFSS is given the mandate and lobbying power to achieve this within the current presidential term<sup>9</sup>. The government has identified 7 subsectors for Good Governance, along the lines of Rule of Law and Judicial reform, National Security and Public Safety, Eliminating Corruption, Accountable State, Independent Institutions and Public Service Reform, and Foreign Affairs; Gender Equality being given equal importance to these speaks volumes regarding the current government's commitment to this area. SAP identifies gender equality as a governance issue and therefore believes that the way to achieve this is "through increasing women's representation in decision making, minimizing sexual harassment, domestic violence, eliminating barriers for women to participate in economic activity including cultural barriers by promoting shared care work and household responsibilities"<sup>10</sup>. The SAP outlines clear strategies, along with actions and timelines to achieve all this, with various ministries given responsibilities to lead these actions that falls under their mandates and identifies the MoGFSS as the lead agency to oversee this subsector. Therefore, policy wise, the ministry is given all the power it needs to achieve gender equality and gender mainstreaming at all levels.

### **Recommendations**

25. Ensure the full implementation of SAP.

### Article 3 –Development and Advancement of Women

#### **Issues raised, observations and concerns**

26. In response to the CO that calls upon the state to **allocate sufficient and sustainable human and financial resources to the national machinery for its effective functioning in all areas of women's empowerment and to enable it to provide systematic training to staff and officials of other Ministries to ensure that the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations are sufficiently known**, the state fails to directly address the observation in the report. However, it has to be noted that the current

---

<sup>8</sup> PO, 2019 "President reviews Single Parent Allowance Program with Cabinet recommendations", <https://presidency.gov.mv/Press/Article/22442>, Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

<sup>9</sup> PO, 2019 "Strategic Action Plan 2019 -2023", <https://presidency.gov.mv/sap>, Accessed : 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

government's SAP, discusses these issues and has outlined strategies and actions to tackle them, such as the strategy to Empower WDCs with a time line and responsible agencies identified including the AGO, Ministry of Finance (MoF) and Local Government Authority (LGA) who is the parent body of Island Councils, under whom the WDCs are supposed to function. Therefore, the progress on this is yet to be seen however it looks promising.

27. The state report also pledges to increase the national budgetary allocation, and improve the technical capacities of staff which seems to be moving in the right direction as the proposed budget allocated for MoGFSS for the year 2020 has a significant improvement with the budget of approximately 65 million MVR in 2020 compared to approximately 30 million MVR in 2019<sup>11</sup>. While this increase could be due to the acquisition of NSPA to the ministry's mandate, it is yet to be seen how this budget will get scrutinized and endorsed by the Parliament.
28. On the CO calling upon the state to **Establish impact assessment mechanisms for the Gender Equality Policy to ensure that it is adequately monitored and evaluated in order to inform further policies**, no direct response is observed in the state report.
29. As per the MoGFSS, the Gender Equality Policy has now been endorsed by the Cabinet and it is currently being translated to Dhivehi to be posted on the gazette, which is where all official laws, policies, announcements etc. of the government is posted for the public.
30. Under strategy to ensure effective implementation of GEL under the SAP, the first action is to endorse and implement the National Policy of Gender Equality. This action is supposed to be implemented in the year 2019, and Presidents Office (PO) is identified as one of the implementing agencies. Therefore, once the policy starts implementation, the monitoring of this should be observed.

### **Recommendations**

31. Ensure the full implementation of the Gender Equality subsector under Good Governance under SAP.
32. Expedite the implementation of the Gender Policy.

### Article 4- Acceleration of Equality Between Men and Women

#### **Issues raised, observations and concerns**

33. On the CO recommending to **include a legislative basis for the adoption of temporary special measures in the Gender Equality Bill and implement temporary special**

---

<sup>11</sup> MoF, 2019 "ofeesthakuge kharadhu", <https://budget.gov.mv/office-expenditure>, Accessed: 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019.



**measures in various forms, such as outreach and support programs, quotas and other proactive and results-oriented measures aimed at achieving substantive equality of women with men in all areas, especially in economic, political and public life, where women are underrepresented; and to use these measures to address the disadvantages and inequalities faced by women outside of Male and in remote islands, by migrant women, women with disabilities and women heads of household,** paragraph 30 of the state report correctly reports of the Temporary Special Measures (TSM)s established under the Ministry of Economic Development, to significantly increase the number of SMEs owned by women, women's business start-up capacities, and women SME owners' access to loans. However, currently there is no monitoring mechanism established to evaluate the success of such loans and the extent to which women benefits from such programs.

34. Paragraph 31 of the state report also mentions that amendments brought to the Corporate Governance Code in 2014, which now mandates all Board of Directors to have a minimum quota of 2 female members. However, it is again unclear if the targets set in this plan have been achieved at all if any.

35. According to paragraph 28 of the state report, efforts were also made to establish TSMs among political parties to increase women's leadership and correctly acknowledge that no success has been achieved so far. This issue is further discussed under the Article 7 of this report.

### **Recommendations**

36. Conduct impact assessments on the impact of TSMs established under Ministry of Economic Development (MED).

37. Monitor the implementation and impact of quotas under the amended Corporate Governance Code.

### Article 5 – Sex roles and stereotyping

#### **Issues raised, observations and concerns**

38. On the Committee's CO **to tackling the gender norms and subsequent stereotypes which lead to all forms of gender-based discrimination, including harmful practices,** the state report discusses the challenges with regard to perceptions amongst men and women especially with regard to traditional stereotypes.

39. Paragraph 38 of the state report correctly reports of the sensitization efforts since the adoption of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act (DVPA) in 2012, whereby DV is now an understood term in Dhivehi language as '*Geveshi Aniya*', which is directly translated to Domestic Violence. This could arguably be the result of various awareness-raising

activities on the DVPA conducted by different stakeholders over the years, especially by the MoGFSS and Family Protection Authority (FPA). However, this level of commitment is yet to be seen for the GEL in terms of awareness raising efforts amongst the public, which could be one reason why gender equality is still regarded by many as a taboo and anti-Islamic subject.

### **Recommendations**

40. Promote gender equality and include the input and contribution of religious scholars to correct any false beliefs among the public on this matter that is associated with Islam.

### Article 6 – Violence Against Women

#### **Issues raised, observations and concerns**

41. Regarding the CO on the committee urging the state party to **adopt specific legislation, within a clear time frame, to criminalize marital rape without any exemptions**, there has been some improvement in this front in terms of new legislations. However, the issue is largely associated with Islam and recognizing marital rape as a crime is seen as anti-Islamic by some highly respected clerics in Maldives as marriage itself is regarded as consent for sex.
42. The Sexual Offences Bill that is accurately recognized in the state report as the first legislation whereby marital rape is recognized as a crime under 4 different circumstances; was passed by the Parliament in 2014. The MPs who voted for this bill was largely condemned by a well-known cleric from the Maldives Fiqh Academy<sup>12</sup> which as the state report mentioned, is a statutory body to publish public preaching (*Fatwaa*) on religious matters. Another comment by this same scholar have recently resurfaced in the social media, whereby he seemed to imply that marital rape is a way to reinstate marriage under the Shari'ah. This matter is further discussed under Article 15 of this report.
43. This issue remains controversial to date similar to other issues that seemingly has religious aspects tied to it with limited scholars available to conduct targeted awareness on the topic. As a result, it remains debatable if marital rape without any exemptions will ever be criminalized in the Maldives.
44. On CO calling upon the state to **ensure the effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act, including by allocating adequate financial resources for the implementation of the National Action Plan, and establish mechanisms to ensure that**

---

<sup>12</sup> Minivan News Archive, 2014 “Fiqh Academy VP condemns Sexual Offenses Bill for conditional criminalization of marital rape”, <https://minivannewsarchive.com/society/fiqh-academy-vp-condemns-sexual-offenses-bill-for-conditional-criminalisation-of-marital-rape-74565>, Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

**law enforcement officials respond to and investigate complaints regarding violence against women, and that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished;** the state report highlights that this is one area where key advancements have been made during the reporting period. However, this advancement mostly refers to the establishment of the FPA that has come into effect with a direct mandate to implement DVPA and the awareness raising campaigns that have been conducted on DV by various stakeholders. While these are important tasks, the report still lacks information on the actual implementation of the Act whereby perpetrators are prosecuted and punished and victims receives the protection and support required in such cases. While acknowledging the establishment of FPA, which has undoubtedly helped to give DV the attention at a state level, the purpose of this establishment would be fully achieved only when justice is provided to the victims.

45. A notable case in this regard was the case of 37-year-old woman, who was allegedly a victim of marital rape among other forms of physical and sexual abuse, who died in December 2015. According to media reports, the victims was first treated at her local Island Hospital for various injuries and was urgently referred to Indhira Gandhi Memorial Hospital in the capital city Male' for further treatment where she succumbed to her injuries<sup>13</sup>. Before she died, she reportedly told doctors that her ex-husband Shah has physically and sexually assaulted her after they had separated. MPS reported in their investigation that they found evidence that corroborated her claim and her autopsy report also noted evidence of physical and sexual assault. This case received wide attention in the public and justice for the victim was called upon widely from the public. Her ex-husband was charged with 4 acts of offense, which included marital rape, a reckless act leading to the death of a person, and negligence leading to the death of a person and the possession of pornographic material, which was discovered, on him during the police investigation. Despite the evidences presented, the Criminal Court acquitted him from all charges, after a closed-door trial during March 2019. This received strong resistance and criticism from the public towards the Criminal Court and the Maldivian Judiciary as a whole. Shortly after the verdict from the Criminal Court, the case was appealed to the High Court by the Prosecutor Generals Office (PGO) in April 2019, stating that some of the evidences that were presented was not reviewed by the Criminal Court before concluding on a verdict. The case hearings have quite recently begun in the High Court<sup>14</sup>. There have been allegations by the general public that the reason why Shah was acquitted was due to his connections in the Criminal Court and the Maldivian Judiciary. How this case unfolds will certainly set precedence in Maldives for cases of marital rape and assault, which falls under the Maldives DVPA.

---

<sup>13</sup> The Edition, 2019 "State appeals case on Ziyadha Naeem's death", [edition.mv/news/10015](http://edition.mv/news/10015), Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Raaje.mv, 2019 "Ziyadha's death case: appeal hearings commence", [back.raaje.mv/64540](http://back.raaje.mv/64540), Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

46. During the consultation meetings, it was understood that there is a serious lack of response and collaboration from the health sector in terms of implementing the DVPA. In 2014, a “*Health Sector Response to Gender Based Violence (GBV) – National Guideline on Providing Care and Prevention for Health Care Providers*” was developed, in order to enhance the health sector response to implement obligations required under the DVPA<sup>15</sup>. This guideline aims to provide all categories of health staff, especially, doctors, nurses and primary health workers as first point of contact of GBV victims, to identify abuse, provide appropriate care and referral to other services such as counseling, police or legal support<sup>16</sup>.
47. However, the implementation of this guideline and DVPA within the health sector is reported as challenging due to high turn over and difficulties in maintaining health sector professionals in the islands. The majority of the health professionals in the Maldives, especially in the atolls, comprises of foreign workers and due to high turnover among the staff, the MoH is unable to continuously train and/or retain the trained staff on national laws and guidelines. As a result, there is a serious lack of knowledge and understanding among the health sector professionals on national laws, regulations and policies that they must adhere to. Based on the discussions with FPA and MoH, it was understood that there is extremely limited number of referrals received from the health service facilities in the atolls with just one atoll hospital currently using the referral system.
48. While this is a huge challenge faced by the health sector at the moment, the failure to respond and provide the required care and support for victims of DV and GBV, can and have caused irreplaceable losses to the health and wellbeing of people and families. One such incident is the case of 37-year-old victim of DV, previously discussed on paragraph 45 of this report, which shows negligence from the Maldives health sector on DV and GBV cases. The victim reportedly saw a health professional at the atoll hospital in her resident island, days after the abuse<sup>17</sup>, however, the doctor at the atoll hospital failed to recognize and/or report the case as DV and GBV to the concerned authorities. Instead, she was asked to travel to Male’ for immediate medical treatment resulting in an extremely delayed care and support.
49. The consultations further revealed that the implementation of DVPA is also poor within the justice system. For one, the judicial system still lacks the required regulations that need to be developed under the DVPA on the claim that the existing regulations fulfill the purpose of the required regulations. As a result, there are no harmonized regulations and guidelines within the court system on addressing DV cases resulting in discrepancies in

---

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Health (MoH) 2014, “Health Sector Response to Gender Based Violence (GBV) – National Guideline on Providing Care and Prevention for Health Care Providers”.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> The Edition, 2019 “State appeals case on Ziyadha Naeem’s death”, [edition.mv/news/10015](http://edition.mv/news/10015), Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

procedures between the courts, especially in the magistrate courts in the atolls. For example, there are differences in understanding the definition of protection orders, act of violence, domestic relationship and situations where a protection order or an immediate protection order should be granted. Furthermore, there is also inconsistency in the duration of a protection order if and when it is granted.

50. Such differences in understanding of key concepts and procedure exist due to the lack of trainings and capacity building programs delivered for the judges, especially for those in the magistrate courts within the atolls. During the consultation meetings conducted for this report as well as during the validation workshop, it was highlighted that the magistrate court judges are not given proper training on new laws, including the DVPA, which has been in effect since 2012. The mandate to provide trainings for the justice sector currently lies on the Maldives Judicial Administration Academy, which was established in 2015 under the supreme court of the Maldives. Since the establishment of the academy, trainings and awareness programs for the justice sector can be delivered only through the academy, which was a key concern, raised by other stakeholders including the FPA.
51. Following the committee's CO to **put in place an effective system to monitor and evaluate the implementation, effectiveness and impact of the new legislative framework and collect disaggregated data on the number of prosecutions and convictions of perpetrators;** paragraph 54 of the state report claims that significant investments has been made by FPA to harmonize the collection of administrative data on DV cases but fails to discuss how this helps to measure the effectiveness and impact of the DVPA through its implementation. FPA has rolled out two DV prevention strategies since DVPA came in effect, along with Monitoring and Evaluation tools for each strategy. However, consultations with FPA revealed that currently there is no centralized database across different stakeholders as each stakeholder follows their own reporting formats and coding, indicating a lack of harmonized data collection process among the stakeholders. It was also understood from the meetings that FPA experiences shortage of budget issues every year where most of its budget is spent on administration and not much on programming.
52. In reference to the CO to **enhance women's awareness of their rights and disseminate information on the remedies available to claim violations of their rights,** while there have been fragmented efforts to disseminate information by various stakeholders, more work needs to be done, especially to generate an alternative narrative to address the ongoing debates and discussions on women's rights in Islam.
53. On the CO to **Provide systematic training to judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officials, especially the police, and lawyers on women's rights and ensure that the Convention, the Committee's general recommendations and its jurisprudence under**

**the Optional Protocol are sufficiently known and applied by the judiciary and that they are made an integral part of all capacity-building programs;** it was understood from the consultation process that currently there are no systematic plans to conduct trainings and capacity building as recommended. Paragraph 133 of the state report highlights that key agencies in the sector namely, PGO, AGO, FPA and MoGFSS have conducted a considerable amount of training and capacity building programs for the sector on the recommendations. However, during the consultation meetings for this report it was understood that each institution has their own individual training programs, which lack consistency and coherence across the material. As a result, it can be argued that the efforts on this front are fragmented.

54. Following the committee's CO to **strengthen the effective implementation of the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act, including by enhancing capacity-building efforts for law enforcement and border patrol officers in order to increase their ability to identify potential victims of trafficking;** paragraph 55 of the state report accurately reports that the prosecution of cases under the Anti-Human Trafficking Act has begun since the Act came into force in 2013. However, currently there are no regulations developed under the Act and the few numbers of cases that has come to the PGO under this Act since 2013 raises the question if it is indeed implemented.
55. In response to the CO that calls upon the state to **allocate adequate human, financial and technical resources to the Government Oversight Committee, as well as for the implementation of the National Action Plan against Human Trafficking;** paragraph 56 of the state report highlights that despite the government adopting various measures to efficiently deal with cases of human trafficking, Maldives was downgraded to the Tier Two Watch list in the 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report of the US Department of State. The state report however fails to discuss the reasons for the downgrading. During the consultations for this report, it was understood that while there is a Government Oversight Committee on anti-human trafficking, meetings between the members are non-existent within the last two years. While there is a National Action Plan against Human trafficking, it is unclear who is the parent body of the action plan. Hence no institution seems to take ownership of it and work for the implementation and monitoring of this Action Plan.
56. With regard to the CO calling on the state party to **establish appropriate protocols aimed at early identification and referral of, and assistance and support for victims of trafficking, especially migrant and rural women; and develop mechanisms for the investigation, prosecution and punishment of trafficking offenders;** the matter is not discussed in the state report. According to FPA, there is currently no protocol to identify and deal with cases of human trafficking. The DVPA does give protection to some foreign workers if a case involves DV. Reportedly, Ministry of Economic Development has a safe house in Male' and victims are placed there when the cases are processed. However, except

for basic services such as food and shelter, no other service or rehabilitation is provided for these victims.

57. Following the committee's CO to **collect statistical and disaggregated data on the extent and magnitude of prostitution and undertake a study to assess the root causes of this phenomenon, giving particular attention to risk factors linked to the tourism sector, migration and drug trade;** and the committee's CO to **Develop measures aimed at preventing exploitation of prostitution of women and girls, in particular migrant women and those involved in drug trade, and establish rehabilitation programs for women and girls in prostitution, including shelters, exit programs for women who wish to leave prostitution and alternative income-generating opportunities,** it was observed during consultations with stakeholders that such cases are handled like a normal violence case and decisions would depend entirely on the case, rather than an approach specific for prostitution cases. Most of such cases falls under human trafficking and foreign women who are caught in prostitution is often deported to their native country.
58. Following the committee's CO to **ensure the full implementation of the laws criminalizing female genital mutilation and bring perpetrators to justice;** the state report fails to address the issue in the report suggesting no progress in the matter. During consultations with various stakeholders for the purpose of this report, it was observed that there are no reported cases of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) even though such cases surface in the public every now and then. FGM by its definition would classify as a case of violence against women as well as a health issue, however, female circumcision is considered as a religious matter in the Maldives, therefore, the general public need to be made aware of the difference. As per the MoGFSS, the ministry used to include religious scholars on such awareness sessions, however the lack of availability of scholars and funding was noted as an obstacle to continue such programs.

### **Recommendations**

59. Adopt measures to ensure the full implementation of the DVPA.
60. Develop measures for effective collaboration between all stakeholders dealing with cases of DVPA to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice and victims are given the support and justice needed.
61. Adopt mechanisms to understand the frequency of FGM in Maldives and increase the level of awareness on this from a religious and health perspective.
62. Develop proper protocols to deal with cases of prostitution and identify the root cause for it, along with rehabilitation for women engaging in prostitution.
63. Ensure the proper implementation of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act.
64. Establish a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the National Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan.

65. Increase efforts to raise awareness on women's rights and remedies available to protect their rights.

## Article 7 and 8 – Political Participation and International representation

### **Issues raised, observations and concerns**

66. In response to the CO that calls upon the state party to **take measures to increase women's representation in the judiciary, in particular as judges and court officials**; the state has made notable progress on this by appointing two females as Supreme Court Justices, which is a first for Maldives<sup>18</sup>. Whilst Maldives has had female judges in the past, this was the first time that female judges were appointed to the Supreme Court since its establishment in 2008. Considered as a historic day in Maldives for women in Judiciary, the Parliament passed this decision with 62 votes out of 87 seats. Despite the two judges being qualified enough and having worked as judges in the Civil Court and the High Court before; their nomination to the Supreme Court by the President received strong discontent and resistance from religious scholars, clerics, and the political opposition. This decision was heavily condemned on social media whereby clerics argued that Islam prohibits women from serving as judges. Hence, President Solih and his administration must be commended on sticking with their decision to go ahead with the appointment for such a good cause, despite all the resistance and loss of support from many religious scholars and clerics to the administration.
67. With regard to the CO that recommends the state party to **intensify its efforts to sensitize political parties on the nature and scope of temporary special measures with a view to familiarizing them with the concept of temporary special measures**; the state notes of efforts made to secure TSMs around women's leadership with little success; however, does not specify what kind of efforts were done. During the consultation meetings with the ministry, it was understood that a quota paper was developed in 2015 and was discussed in the previous cabinet although there were no official decisions made.
68. Following the committee's CO to **conduct awareness raising activities for politicians and community leaders, in particular men, as well as the general public on the importance of women's full and equal participation in leadership and decision-making with a view to eliminating social and patriarchal attitudes**; it has to be noted that even though there has been some form of awareness raising activities done on the subject, the efforts are very much fragmented across different stakeholders with a lack of common message being delivered.

---

<sup>18</sup> PO, 2019 "President appoints two new Supreme Court Judges",  
<https://presidency.gov.mv/Press/Article/22054> Accessed: 17th November 2019.



69. According to the Maldives Democracy Survey conducted by Transparency Maldives (TM) in 2015, “gender equality” remains a major issue of concern in the country<sup>19</sup>. According to this study, majority of Maldivians (54%) believe that “men make better leaders than women”<sup>20</sup>. While this was an improvement of 7% from the same survey conducted in 2013, the survey also revealed that Maldivians generally support women filling a number of leadership positions such as members of the parliament and members of the local councils. However, the limitation still remains in women filling in as the President of the country as only 39% of Maldivians agree that a woman could serve as the president of the country. Consequently, a lot of work still needs to be done in order to increase awareness on the benefits of women’s participation in the public life and in leadership.
70. Additionally, there is a strong movement and effort to disseminate information on radical views of women in Islam that counteracts the work done to increase women’s participation in leadership. Furthermore, the consultation meetings for this report indicated that none of the government authorities so far has been able to conduct any awareness raising sessions and sensitizing sessions on gender equality and women’s rights for the members of the parliament.
71. With regard to the recommendation to **increase the role and visibility of women in politics with a view to translating their engagement into leadership roles, targeting in particular current and potential women candidates, and provide incentives for political parties to nominate equal numbers of women and men as candidates**; it has to be noted that despite all the awareness raising programs conducted by different stakeholders over the years, women at the policy level are decreasing year by year. The decreasing number of women parliaments since the year 2000 evidences this<sup>21</sup>. The table below shows this in more detail:

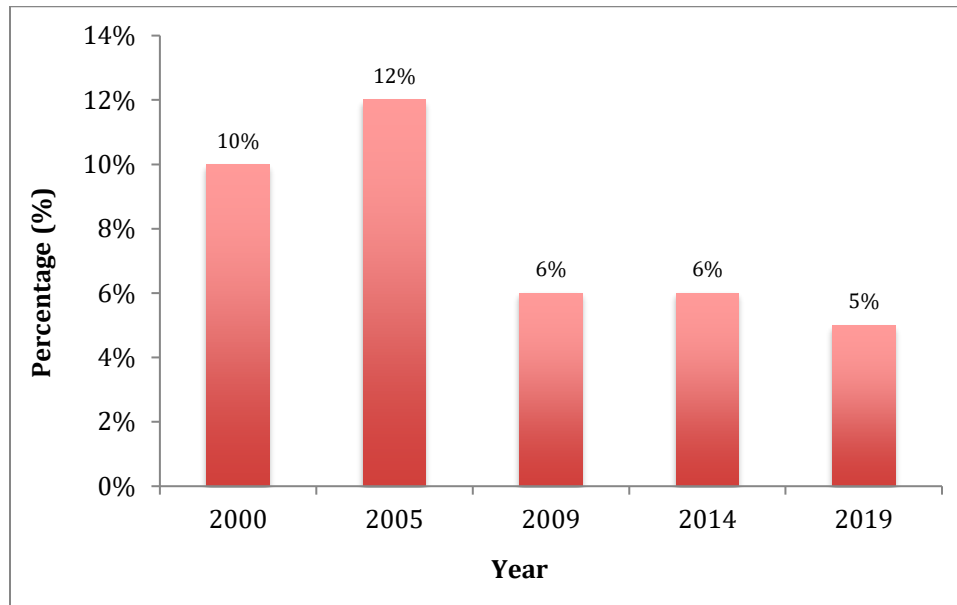
---

<sup>19</sup> TM, 2015, “A Trouble Future For Democracy”.  
<http://transparency.mv/files/media/6dca8a9f7beda482335bb654b88020f7.pdf> Last Accessed: 17th November 2019,  
page 42.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Hope for Women 2019, “Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the Maldives, May 2020 (36th session),  
page 6.

Figure 1. Changes in the Representation of Female Parliamentarians from 2000 to 2019



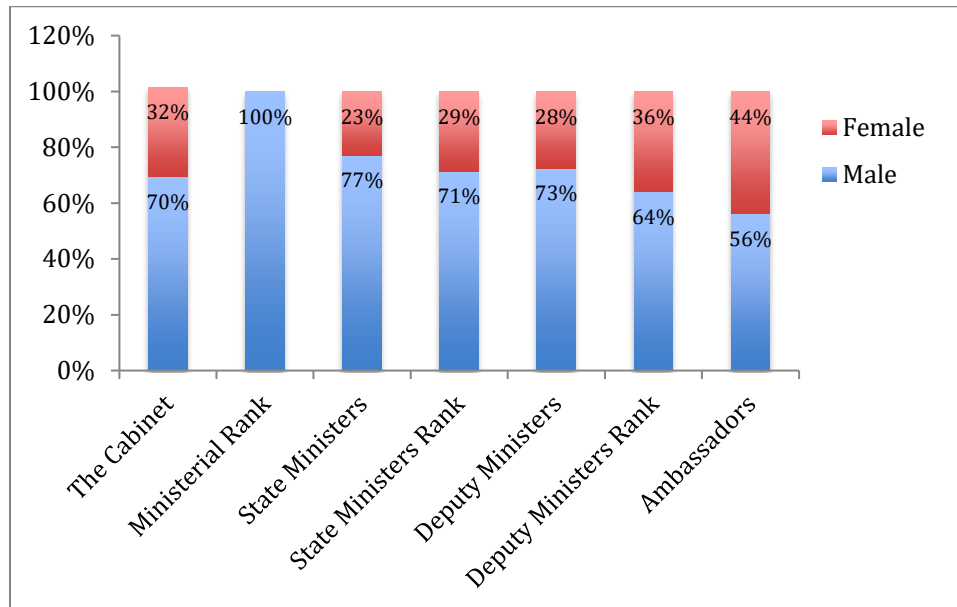
Source: HFW, "Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the Maldives, May 2020 (36th session),

72. As per the rates shown in this table, the representation of women in the Parliament which stood at 10% in the year 2000, has now decreased to 4.6% in 2018. However, it is worth noting that the current Deputy Speaker of the Parliament is a female, who was appointed to this post with a staggering 76 votes<sup>22</sup>, which is 11 more than the number of seats held by the ruling party MDP.

73. The table below summarizes the representation of women in senior political positions in the current government. While the number has increased over time, it has to be noted that the total number of political positions in each government has also increased, however the proportion of women, in the total number has not increased significantly.

<sup>22</sup> The Edition 2019, "Deputy Speaker Eva chairs parliament, second woman to do so", <https://www.edition.mv/news/10986>, Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

Figure 2. Percentage Representation of Men and Women in Political Senior Positions in the Government, 2019



Source: Hope for Women, “Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the Maldives, May 2020 (36th session),

74. Following the CO that recommends to **adopt programs to provide financial resources, technical advice on campaign management, targeted capacity building, mentoring on leadership and negotiating skills for women who aim to access public positions;** the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in collaboration with Transparency Maldives conducted some awareness raising programs to empower women and MoGFSS was also a part of the awareness raising sessions. During consultations for the purpose of this report, it was noted that there is lack of capacity and confidence amongst women to contest in elections. In the most recent Parliamentary Elections that was held in early 2019, only 23 women out of total 302 candidates<sup>23</sup> were women. Out of these 23 women contested, only 4 won the seats while men filled the remaining 83 seats.

75. Under the current SAP, the government has detailed action points that includes setting national policy targets to ensure representation of women in key decision-making levels; build capacity of individuals to take up political and leadership roles in the public sphere; conduct regular advocacy through dialogues with political parties to set targets for increased numbers of female candidates in local and national elections ; and also to create

<sup>23</sup> The Commonwealth, “Maldives Parliamentary Elections 6 April 2019”, [https://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/MaldivesFinalReport\\_13-06-19.pdf](https://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/MaldivesFinalReport_13-06-19.pdf), accessed 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

a conducive environment to facilitate women's election campaign process, including campaign finances. It is yet to be seen how all these materializes into action.

76. In response to the CO that calls upon the state to **adopt and implement temporary special measures in the form of quotas, with benchmarks and specific timetables, to increase the representation of women, including in decision-making positions, in the People's Majlis, in Government positions, in the judiciary and in all local governance bodies at atoll and island levels;** as per the MoGFSS, no temporary measures were undertaken during the last council elections. The ministry claims to have raised these concerns to the LGA. However, no action was taken. With the next council elections coming up in a few months, it is yet to be seen if and how this issue will be addressed.

### **Recommendations**

77. Adopt TSMs to increase participation of women at policy level.
78. Ensure the full implementation of all the action points detailed out on gender equality under the Good Governance subsector of the SAP.

## Article 9 – Nationality

### **Issues raised, observations and concerns**

79. Regarding the committee's CO on the recommendation for the state party to **revise its nationality laws in order to remove discrimination against foreign women who have children with Maldivian men out of wedlock with regard to the transmission of nationality,** the state report accurately states that Maldivian men and women have full and equal rights to pass their nationality to their children, regardless of the nationality of the other parent.
80. However, this does not seem to be an accurate response to the committee's CO, which specifically refers to cases of discrimination against foreign women who have children with Maldivian men out of wedlock. The current legal system does not allow any child born out of wedlock to a foreign woman and a local man to be registered as a Maldivian.

### **Recommendations**

81. Conduct high-level discussions between stakeholders to address the issue of giving Maldivian nationality to children born out of wedlock for a foreign woman and a Maldivian man.

## Article 10 – Education

### **Issues raised, observations and concerns**

82. On the committee's CO which calls upon the state to **provide free school transport and economic assistance for girls, especially in rural areas and on remote islands, and promote their access to higher levels of education, as well as reduce school drop-out due to, inter alia, engagement in domestic work, early marriage and/or early pregnancies;** it has to be noted that statistics on the school drop-out rates due to early marriage and/or early pregnancies is not available, however depending on the number of such cases that gets reported in the media, this rate is expected to be low; especially for primary grades.
83. The state report accurately reports of the enrolment trends for both boys and girls nationwide in Maldives, which is corroborated by the statistics released by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 2018<sup>24</sup>. More number of girls continues to choose to go into higher secondary education when compared to that of boys. This seems to be no difference in this when compared between Male and Atolls, as per the statistics released by the MoE.
84. On the committee's CO calling upon the state party to **formulate re-entry and inclusive education policies enabling pregnant girls, young mothers and married girls under the age of 18 to remain in or return to school and ensure that such policies are disseminated to all educational establishments, as well as among parents and communities;** the state reports that the MoE works with the school to ensure that girls who become pregnant while still in school completes her secondary education up to age 16 years old. However, some case studies conducted on this suggests otherwise. In one of the cases explored, a girl who fell pregnant at 15 years old reported that she was not offered any option to complete her studies after she got pregnant; not while pregnant and not even after. Whilst there is no known legislation or policy hindering girls in such situations to go back to school after childbirth, the social and cultural practice is that school is effectively over for girls once they become pregnant. Therefore, girls in these situations have no support, and are victimized even further due to having extremely limited employment options, as they did not finish school.
85. On CO calling on the state to **encourage women and girls to choose non-traditional fields of education and careers, in particular technological and science subjects, such as environmental and engineering studies which are particularly relevant in the State party;** the state report fails to address this CO directly. However, indirectly it does report on the curriculum revisions carried out in order to tackle gender stereotypes and negative gender norms, and also on the efforts to revise pedagogical approaches through gender norms that negatively impacts the advancement of both genders and mentions that the MoE will continue to monitor the teachers' perceptions on issues of gender norms. However, it

---

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Education, 2018 "School Statistics 2017",  
[https://www.moe.gov.mv/assets/upload/STAT\\_BOOK\\_2018.pdf](https://www.moe.gov.mv/assets/upload/STAT_BOOK_2018.pdf), page 5.

does not mention how this monitoring will be done. Given that women continue to choose fields that are considered more traditional and stereotypical to women, largely in comparison with nontraditional sectors; it is apparent that much work still needs to be done on this area.

### **Recommendations**

86. Establish an enforceable policy that has to be followed by all stakeholders involved, to ensure that girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy, early marriage or other unforeseeable circumstances, are given the opportunity to complete secondary education and monitoring mechanisms are put in place for this.
87. Formulate strategies to encourage women and girls to choose non-traditional fields of education and careers, perhaps via targeted activities starting from the primary grade levels.

### Article 11 – Employment

#### **Issues raised, observations and concerns**

88. Responding to the **CO to design and implement public policies to extend social protection coverage to women in the informal economy and self-employment women;** paragraph 81 of the state report argues that due to limited budget and national revenue the achievement of this recommendation was hindered. Such a response is unacceptable coming from the state with no clear indication on how they plan to attend the issue and shows a lack of interest and commitment to the issue.
89. The key social protection scheme for the working population in the country is the Maldives retirement pensions scheme currently administered by the Maldives Pension Administration Office (MPAO). Maldives retirement pension scheme is open for any individual to register, contribute and benefit from the scheme, which allows self-employed and people working in the informal sector to contribute and benefit from the scheme as well.
90. According to Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2016, 35% of the total employed population of the Maldives was working in the informal sector in 2016<sup>25</sup>. The overall figure for persons in the informal sector shows a higher percentage of women than that of men (40% of women compared to 31% among men)<sup>26</sup>. While in Male', the trend is seen to be reversed with more men in the informal sector than women, the percentage of women working in the informal sector in the atolls is remarkably higher than that of men

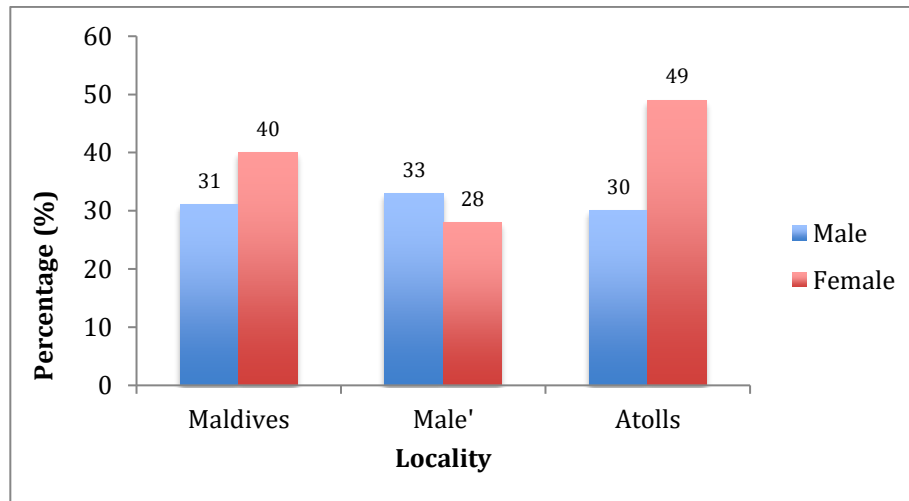
---

<sup>25</sup> NBS, 2016 "Household Income & Expenditure Survey, Statistics Release III: Employment" 2016, page 48

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

with 49% of women compared to 30% of men<sup>27</sup>. See figure 1 below for percentage of employed persons in the informal sector by sex and locality.

Figure 3 Percentage of employed persons in the informal sector by sex and locality, 2016



Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), HIES 2016,

91. While registration of the employees in the Maldives retirement Pension scheme for people working in the formal sector is mandatory on the employer, the registration and participation for the informal sector is optional. Furthermore, the process of registration in the retirement scheme for the informal sector is currently not user friendly or accessible.
92. Up until the beginning of 2019, in order to register under the Maldives retirement pension scheme, interested persons working in the informal sector had to fill in a registration form uploaded on the MPAO website and submit to the head office in Male'. MPAO has recently started the registration process through other means including a mobile application and through the national bank's online banking system. However, this process is still not quite accessible and user friendly to women working in the informal sector in the islands, as often times they lack access to the internet or most might not use the online banking services at the bank
93. There is also a limited amount of awareness work done on the importance of saving and taking part in the retirement pension scheme. Furthermore, the current old aged pension scheme where the government provides MVR 5,000 (approximately USD 324) for every citizen above the age of 65 years directly contradicts the efforts made to increase participation in the retirement pension scheme. Due to the old age pension scheme, which is provided to everyone above the age of 65 years, the current mindset of the general population is that the government will take care of them and that they will automatically

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

receive financial assistance from the government, once they are 65 years old, irrespective of their contribution towards a retirement pension scheme.

94. As a result, there is no incentive or motivation in the informal sector to voluntarily take part in the retirement pensions scheme. This was confirmed during the consultation with the MPAO, as there are only a handful of people from the informal sector currently registered in the retirement pension scheme. Furthermore, out of the few who have registered, there is none who regularly contributes to the pension scheme.
95. With reference to the CO on **taking measures to enhance awareness among women employees, including migrant women, about the provisions of the Employment Act, in particular on sexual harassment, and about remedies available to protect their rights**, the state have not provided much update on this in the report submitted to the CEDAW committee. The consultant's team for this report was also unable to meet or obtain information from Maldives labor Relations Authority who is the current parent body for the Employment Act as well as in charge of the expatriate workers.
96. According to the NBS, there are a total of 114,981 expatriate workers residing in the Maldives, out of which 10,228 are females<sup>28</sup>. It has to be noted that this is not an accurate representation of the number of expatriates residing in the country, as there are thousands of illegal migrant workers who the government is currently giving the opportunity to get legally registered in the country.
97. According to NBS, half of the female expatriates work in Male' city, as domestic workers, and the majority of the remaining works in tourist resorts in the central atolls<sup>29</sup>.
98. Currently there is limited documentation on the violence or exploitation of female migrant workers in the country. However, exploitation of female migrant workers in regard to sex trafficking<sup>30</sup> and sexual harassment<sup>31</sup> has been long identified in the country, through media reports and other means and calls for urgent attention.
99. Most migrant workers in the country are not aware of their rights and protection entitled to

---

<sup>28</sup> NBS, 2016 Expatriate Employment by Nationality and Sex <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/nbs/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HIES-Report-2016-Employment-Update-6112018-1.pdf>, Accessed: November 5th 2019

<sup>29</sup> NBS, 2016 Expatriate Employment by Locality <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/nbs/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HIES-Report-2016-Employment-Update-6112018-1.pdf>, Accessed: November 5th 2019

<sup>30</sup> US State Department, 2019 "Trafficking in Persons Report: Maldives: <https://mv.usmission.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/212/2019-Trafficking-in-Persons-Report-Maldives.pdf> Accessed: November 5th 2019

<sup>31</sup> Maldives Red Crescent, Strategic Plan 2019-2030, p4 <https://redcrescent.org.mv/beta/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/MRC-Strategic-Plan-2019-2030.pdf> Accessed: November 5th 2019



them under the employment Act or any other Maldivian law<sup>32</sup> and can be considered one of the most vulnerable groups residing in the country. They are extremely vulnerable to exploitation due to their large number (documented as well as undocumented), their negative experience in the judicial system of Maldives, language barriers, lack of awareness on Maldivian laws and regulations and difficulties faced on seeking legal counsel<sup>33</sup>. These are some of the reasons that prevent them from reporting abuse and exploitation as well.

100. With reference to the CO to **address obstacles preventing women from entering the labour market, by implementing measures to promote the reconciliation of family and work responsibilities of women and men**, it has to be noted as discussed under article 1 of this report, that the state has made some progress in this area, however more needs to be done to ensure the initiatives are holistic and provides a total solution to the issues. Paragraph 74 of the state report highlights on the government’s decision to extend paid maternity leave from 60 days to 6 months and paid paternity leave from three days to one month. While this initiative is in the right direction, the policy lacks a holistic solution to the system, as there are no alternatives for the employer to hire short-term replacement for staff on maternity leave. Such policies cause risk in creating a bigger issue where employers are indirectly encouraged to hire more males than females.

101. The table below summarizes labor force participation rate for males and females based on the HIES reports for 2006, 2010 and 2016. The overall labor force participation rate for women have declined by 10% between 2000 and 2016<sup>34</sup>. Additionally, the gender gap between the labor force participation rates has increased over the 10 year period from 18% in 2006 to 21% in 2010 and 33% in 2016<sup>35</sup>.

*Table 1. Gender Gap in Labor Force Participation Rate, 2006, 2010, 2016*

	2006	2010	2016
Male	70%	75%	75%
Female	52%	54%	42%
<b>Gender Gap in LFPR</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>33%</b>

*Source: NBS, “HIES, Statistics Release III: Employment” 2016, & NBS, “HIES Findings 2009/2010”, 2012*

102. Furthermore, 72% of the working age population who are economically inactive is women (HIES 2016)<sup>36</sup>. This should be of great concern for the state party and measures need to be undertaken to increase labor force participation of women by addressing the reasons for them

<sup>32</sup> HFW, 2019 Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the Maldives, May 2020 (36th session)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> NBS, “Household Income & Expenditure Survey, Statistics Release III: Employment” 2016, & NBS, “Household Income & Expenditure Survey Findings 2009/2010”, 2012

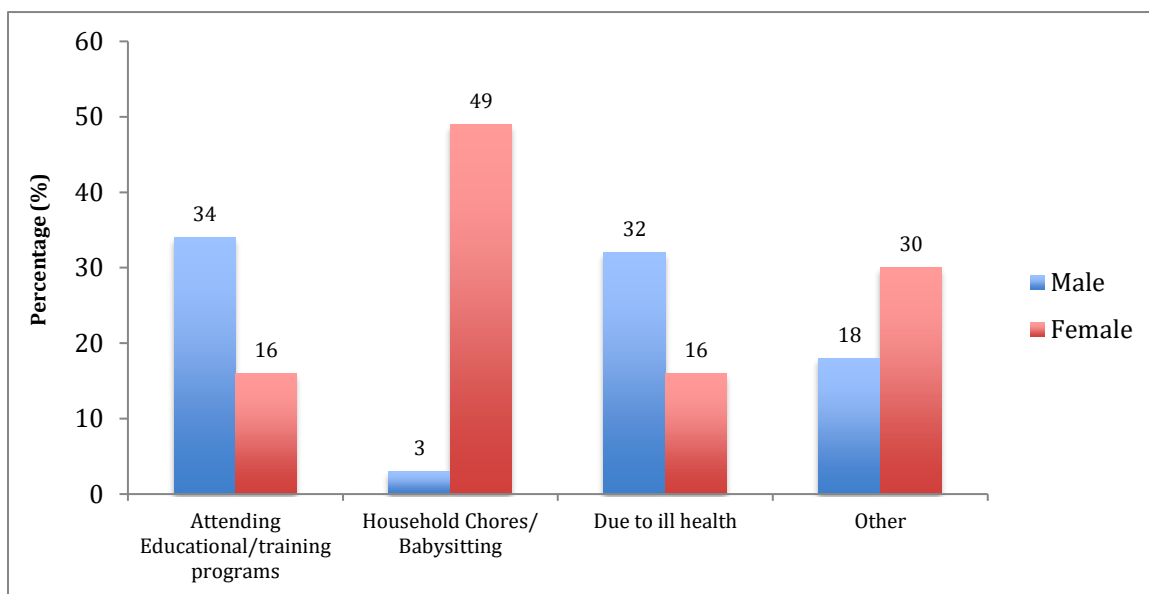
<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> NBS, “Household Income & Expenditure Survey, Statistics Release III: Employment” 2016, page 93

to not take part in economic activities.

103. According to HIES 2016, the main reason why women do not seek a job and not take part in the labor force is due to their responsibilities towards household chores or babysitting (49%)<sup>37</sup>. Another more recent publication by the NBS show that 13% of women were unemployed due to family responsibilities, whereas only 4% of men gave the same reason for being unemployed (NBS 2018)<sup>38</sup>. This is also evident from the labor force participation rate by age where labor force participation rate peaks at 20-24-year age group for women and then starts to decline, coinciding with the child rearing age group for most women in the country<sup>39</sup>. This also reflects on the gender imbalance in the time spent on domestic chores where women spent around 6 hours per day compared to 3hrs per day by men <sup>40</sup>. Figure 2 below summarizes the most recent HIES data on reasons for not seeking a job and being outside the labor force by sex.

Figure 4. Reasons for not seeking a job and being outside the labor force by sex



Source: NBS, HIES 2016

104. As mentioned on the state report paragraph 83, challenges also lie in the availability of quality and affordable child care services in the country which ultimately hinders women from taking part in the labor force or return to the workforce once they start a family or have a child. While there is a serious lack of quality and affordable child care services in the country, there are no state run or state subsidized childcare facilities currently

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., page 94

<sup>38</sup> NBS, “Women in Maldives 2018”, 8th March 2018

<sup>39</sup> NBS, “Household Income & Expenditure Survey, Statistics Release III: Employment” 2016, page 40

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., page 14

established in the country. In addition to that, as mentioned in the state report paragraph 83, in a country where the majority of the families live in extended family set ups, there is a lack of systematic care for the elderly which again adds on to women's unpaid and care work inside the house, limiting time available for paid work.

105. With regard to the CO on **providing sex-disaggregated data on women's position in the labour market and reduce the gender pay gap, including by addressing occupational sex-segregation and enforcing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value**; it should be noted that occupational sex segregation still remains as a major issues in the country and the overall pay gap still exists.
106. As mentioned in the state report paragraph 83, the gender pay gap remains high in the Maldives reflecting on the high inequality between men and women in the labor market. According HIES 2016, women's overall monthly income is MVR 7,510 (approximately USD 487) and that of men is MVR 11,977 (approximately USD 776)<sup>41</sup>. The gender pay gap is linked to the occupational segregation in the labor market which still remains as a key challenge. Additionally, more women are also centered around stereotypical "female oriented work" such as in education and health sector.
107. On the Committee's CO to promote opportunities for women to seek employment in the tourism sector, paragraph 82 of the state report highlights some of the key challenges for lack of females employed in the sector. However, it fails to provide any information on future plans to mitigate the challenges and to improve women's employment in this sector. Policy changes and development of new policies focusing on family friendly concepts in the tourist resorts could promote and improve female employment in the sector.

### **Recommendations:**

108. Ensure existing and new family friendly employment policies are designed in a holistic manner where it provides solutions for both employee and employer
109. Ensure social protection schemes such as retirement pension scheme are extended to informal sector and that the processes are user friendly and accessible for the informal sector
110. Provide affordable, accessible and quality child care services to cut down on women's time spent on child care work so that more women can join the workforce
111. Conduct mandatory awareness raising sessions for expatriate workers on laws applicable to them
112. Improve monitoring mechanism on living conditions and life of migrant workers and

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., page 21

ensure legal actions are taken against abuse and exploitation of migrant workers

113. Develop family friendly employment policies to encourage and increase female participation in the tourism sector employment

## Article 12 – Health

### **Issues raised, observations and concerns**

114. In regard to the CO on **taking steps to expedite the adoption of the Maternal and Child Health Bill**, there has not been any such bills submitted to the parliament during the reporting period nor is it currently listed in the government's legislative agenda for 2018-2023. Further to that, the state report also does not mention any update on this bill.
115. Addressing to the CO to **increase access to obstetric health services for women, including pre- and post-natal services, in all atolls and islands of the State party, in particular for rural women, by ensuring effective access to universal health insurance and by increasing the number of skilled health-care personnel**, paragraph 89 of the state report mentions that pre and postnatal care are only available in the atolls hospitals and in Male' which means pregnant women from other islands in the atoll have to travel across the sea to the atoll hospital or to Male' for post and prenatal care. This includes for regular checkups or consultations when a complication arises, any investigations during and post pregnancy, as well as for delivery and postnatal care. This puts pregnant women in high risk while crossing the sea, especially during bad weather and rough seas. Furthermore, the cost incurred for pregnant women and their families for travelling and lodging away from home are not covered under any insurance schemes. As a result, it incurs extra expenses for families residing in islands other than the atoll capital and Male'. Additionally, it also causes a lot of inconvenience and discomfort for pregnant women to travel across the seas and also be staying in rented accommodation especially in Male' where the rooms are small and often times unhygienic.
116. At present, there is also a serious lack of postnatal services and support available in the country. A lot of new mothers experience issues with postpartum mental health, however, there are no such services or support available within the health service sector at the moment. With the increase in the number of nuclear families living alone, more support needs to be provided in terms of mental health issues after birth and other issues related to postpartum care.
117. Furthermore, according to the National Reproductive Health Strategy 2014-2018, the provision of primary health care has declined in the country<sup>42</sup>, which in turn reduces the availability of health care services in the islands and has resulted in under-utilization of

---

<sup>42</sup> HPA, National Reproductive Health Strategy 2014-2018, page 2

skilled community based public health workers.

118. Paragraphs 94 and 95 of the state reports addresses the CO to **ensure age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including information about available contraceptive methods and family planning, in order to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and early pregnancies and remove restrictions applied in practice by health care personnel to unmarried girls.**
119. Paragraph 94 of the state report highlights that the National Family Planning guideline is non-discriminatory, and facilitate easy access to services. However, consultations for this report revealed that family planning services were not available to unmarried youth and adolescents, especially in the atolls.
120. Paragraph 95 of the state report further states that MoE has rolled out an age-appropriate SRH curriculum across the country, however, it was understood from the consultation meetings that the programs are not properly implemented in schools. It was noted that the teachers are not properly trained on delivering the scope of SRH mentioned in the curriculum. Furthermore, the content is not properly delivered as some teachers are uncomfortable in covering certain topics and there is no monitoring mechanism currently established to evaluate how much of the content is delivered to the students.
121. According to the National Reproductive Health Strategy 2014-2018, a high percentage of Maldivian young people practice high-risk behavior<sup>43</sup>. It further stipulates that 11.6% of the youth between the ages of 18-24 years are engaged in premarital sexual activities<sup>44</sup>. While premarital sex is high among the youth, knowledge about fertile period is low as 49% of women and 47% men<sup>45</sup> were not aware of the fertile period for women when asked about it.
122. High prevalence of premarital sex and lack of information on fertility also means lack of knowledge on contraceptive methods among youth indicating a dire need to improve awareness raising effort on sexual reproductive health and family planning in the country.
123. In regard to the CO to collect data and **conduct research on the prevalence of unsafe and illegal abortions, disaggregated by age and geographical location**, no such research on the topic has being conducted in the country since 2010 and the state has failed to provide an update to this recommendation in its report submitted to CEDAW committee.

## **Recommendations**

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., page11

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

124. Ensure prenatal and postnatal care services for women in each island through mobile health clinics
125. Extend postnatal care to raise awareness on postpartum mental health issues and provide support for new mothers and their families.
126. Ensure full delivery of SRH content in school curriculums
127. Conduct research on unsafe and illegal abortions in the country

## Article 13 – Economic and Social Life

### Issues raised, observations and concerns

128. With regard to the CO on **developing positive measures to ensure that women equally benefit from all social schemes in place in the State party, and, in particular, increase the participation of women, including self-employed women, in the Retirement Pension Scheme**, reference is made to the updates and discussions on article 11 of this report.

### **Recommendations:**

129. Ensure easy access to registration process for Maldives Retirement Pension scheme targeting people in the informal sector including the self-employed population
130. Increase awareness among people working in the informal sector and self-employed on the importance of taking part in the retirement pension scheme
131. Ensure policies on pension schemes are harmonized and not in conflict with each other

## Article 14 – Rural Women

### **Issues raised, observations and concerns**

132. Regarding the CO to **increase the authority, mandate, and capacity of the Island Women’s Development Committees and provide it with adequate resources, including the reinstatement of allowances for its members, to enable them to become operational and effectively discharge their mandate in advising island councils on the integration of a gender perspective in all development plans and policies at island level, and establish coordinating mechanisms between the committees and island councils**, information from LGA revealed that since September 2013 MoF have set a sitting allowance of MVR 125 (approximately USD 8) per member per attended general meeting up to a maximum of 4 paid general meetings per month. It is the responsibility of the council to allocate budget from the government finance to give the sitting allowance

for WDC members.

133. This allowance rate is extremely insignificant compared to WDCs mandate and allowances given to other such committees and board members elected and nominated in the country. Furthermore, many WDCs experience issues in obtaining this allowance from the council due to lack of finances in the councils and slow financial approval process. In addition to the lack of financial incentives to implement their mandate, and manage their administrative work, many WDCs do not receive enough support and cooperation from their councils. There is also a lot of ambiguity and lack of awareness among WDC members and the general public on the mandate of the committees.
134. WDCs also face several obstacles to engage in income generating activities due to legal issues and certain permissions not being provided by state authorities. Additionally, while the committees are allowed to own property, conduct business activities and manage assets and finance of the committee, information received from LGA stated that WDCs are currently not able to gain approval to operate a bank account.
135. As a result of challenges mentioned above and due to lack of interested candidates, WDCs are not elected in many of the islands, and several of the elected WDCs remain inactive. According to LGA, currently there are 182 elected WDCs, out of which only 65 are considered active. The processes of re-electing members that step down from posts are reported to be slow as well. There is also a serious lack of training opportunities for WDCs to learn and grow as an important development partner of the country.
136. In responding to the CO to **ensure that rural women participate in decision-making processes affecting the management of natural resources at the community level, including through the Island Women's Development Committees**, paragraph 120 of the state report refers only to the efforts to increase women's participation in disaster management. While this is a great start and important issue for women to be trained in and be part of, there are also other key decision-making processes in the management of natural resources at the community level that women should play a key role in. These include development of any infrastructure services such as harbors, roads, resource allocation of nearby islands and land plots within the islands for income generating activities as well as provision of key services in the islands including health, education and social protection.
137. In the past, Women's Committees have played a huge part in the overall development of the islands including infrastructure development as well as provision of social services and economic activities. However, the current set up has decreased women's participation in the overall development of the nation. As paragraph 115 of the state report highlights, the regulation, oversight, and monitoring of all services still remains at the central government level.

138. In response to the CO to **adopt long-term policies to increase rural women’s access to income generating opportunities, including through credit and loans, and to develop rural women’s entrepreneurial skills, particularly in agriculture and in the fishing industry**, paragraph 121 and 122 of the state report discusses two key projects: the Fisheries and Agriculture Diversification Programmed (FADiP) and Mari culture Enterprise Development Project (MEDeP).
139. Paragraph 122 of the state report discusses MEDeP, an initiative by the government to expand livelihood opportunities and reducing vulnerability through enhancing income and employment especially for women and youth<sup>46</sup>. While a minimum 30% of the beneficiaries of the program were required to be females, 40%<sup>47</sup> of the loans were given to women. The beneficiaries of the project, including the women went through a series of capacity building programs as well<sup>48</sup> which are all positive initiatives and due credit should be given.
140. However, while both these projects have been focused in just one atoll (Laamu atoll), consultations with the beneficiaries revealed that the outcome of both projects have not been very successful and they have not been able to acquire any economic benefit from the projects. According to the annual progress report for the MEDeP project, because of the challenges caused due to the economic model used in the sea cucumber pilot project, none of the beneficiaries of the loan were able to generate any income within the 1.5-year project period<sup>49</sup>.
141. As recommended by the committee, the government needs to invest in long term economic plans, for a wider population of women across the nation.

### **Recommendations**

142. Strengthen the authority and mandate of WDCs
143. Ensure the mandate of WDCs are clear and understood by all government and non-government organizations as well as the general public
144. Ensure WDCs have finances to implement their mandate and be engaged in other economic and social activities
145. Ensure WDCs are a crucial part of the decision-making process of utilizing natural resources of the islands

---

<sup>46</sup> MoFMA, 2019 “Annual Progress Report- Mariculture Enterprise Development Project - PMU, page 5

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., page.23

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., page 20

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., page. 27



146. Invest in long-term economic development plans, for a wider population of women across the nation.

## Article 15 – Equality before the Law

### **Issues raised, observations and concerns**

147. On the committee's CO on Expediting the **adoption of pending Bills before Parliament aimed at strengthening the State party's administration of justice**, it was understood during the consultation period that the child rights bill and the juvenile justice bill are still in the committee stage at the parliament. Paragraph 128 of the state report states that the child rights bill was submitted to the parliament for approval over a year ago, on 2nd July 2018 and the Juvenile Justice Bill was submitted on 5th March 2019. However, according to the Maldives People's Majlis Website (Parliament Website), the two bills were submitted to the parliament on 19th August 2019<sup>50 51</sup>.
148. It has to be noted that the priority given to strengthening the country's justice system in terms of social protection is still extremely low in the parliament. For instance, the first ever child protection Act - Law number 9/91 has been in existence since 1991 which is massively outdated and inefficient in providing protection to children in the current environment. The law also lacks several requirements of international child protection laws and standards. While this has been the case for over two decades, the Child Rights Bill was in the development process for a long period of time.
149. The Evidence Bill mentioned in paragraph 129 of the state report and Legal Aid Bill mentioned in paragraph 131 of the state report, are currently included in the government's legislative agenda for 2018-2023<sup>52</sup>. However, so far none of the two has been submitted to the parliament.
150. Paragraph 127 of the state report mentions an amendment to the Judicature Act. This amendment, among other things, allowed increasing the number of justices at the Supreme Court. Paragraph 129 state report mentions that under this amendment, two new branches of high court were established in the atolls. However, the allocation of human resources and funding for these branches are questionable as three of the judges who were placed in

---

<sup>50</sup> Maldives Parliament, 2019, "Juvenile Justice Bill"

[https://majlis.gov.mv/storage/action\\_files/310/N1KawR7nEuDT2LlxeaZ13je8fyMICfIK6lOK7mf4.pdf](https://majlis.gov.mv/storage/action_files/310/N1KawR7nEuDT2LlxeaZ13je8fyMICfIK6lOK7mf4.pdf)  
Accessed: 4th November

<sup>51</sup> Maldives Parliament, 2019, "Child Rights Bill"

[https://majlis.gov.mv/storage/action\\_files/306/0igb7tYSALSKld4ig0P2tWdbQZzNZH03gZqA4Ky5.pdf](https://majlis.gov.mv/storage/action_files/306/0igb7tYSALSKld4ig0P2tWdbQZzNZH03gZqA4Ky5.pdf),  
Accessed: 4th November

<sup>52</sup> AGO, 2019 "Government's legislative agenda 2018-2023" <http://agoffice.gov.mv/v4/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Governments-Legislative-Agenda-2018-2023.pdf> Accessed: 4th November 2019.

the southern branch were temporarily transferred to Male' in 2018 to clear backlog of cases at the main branch in Male' for over a period of 6 months<sup>53</sup>. Furthermore, only 2 branches in atolls are not sufficient to provide services across the rest of the atolls.

151. Regarding the CO on **removing evidentiary requirements which discriminate against women and ensuring the equal consideration and weight of women's testimonies as witnesses**, the state has not provided any update on the efforts made on this front and the situation remains the same.
152. Regarding the CO on **strengthening the independence of the judiciary, establishing legal remedies that are expeditious and accessible for women, and ensuring, through adequate regulations and procedures, that women reporting violations, especially in cases of violence, are treated in a gender sensitive manner at all stages of judicial proceedings**, it is observed that the state report again have not attended to this CO confirming that there has not been any major progress in this front.
153. One of the biggest challenges in terms of ensuring gender equality and protection of women's rights in the country, as discussed under the Article 6 of this report, is the increase in radical views on women's rights in Islam. Women are being flooded with a lot of biased information and individual opinions of religious scholars through *Fatwaas* as well as through social media and other means. While there is a serious lack of monitoring and verification of such *fatwaas*, such activities have worked against the state's efforts to increase awareness on gender equality, protect women's rights and the overall empowerment of women.
154. One recent case, as discussed under article 6 of this report, relates to a question asked by a public member to a religious scholar on whether sex without consent with his ex-wife could be used as a means of reconciling their marriage (within the first three months of divorce, in which period the divorce is not yet permanent). This was asked from a religious scholar in a Viber<sup>54</sup> group with hundreds of people and the response from the scholar was that yes, it can be used to reconcile their marriage. A screenshot of this conversation from the Viber group was circulated on the Internet across several social media platforms. Even though his response was directly contradicting to local laws, regulations, and international instruments, none of the authorities came out to address the issue, or clarified the information for the public. Such neglect in addressing serious issues on women's rights and protection is on the rise and there is a serious need to proactively create an alternative narrative for women's rights in Islam.

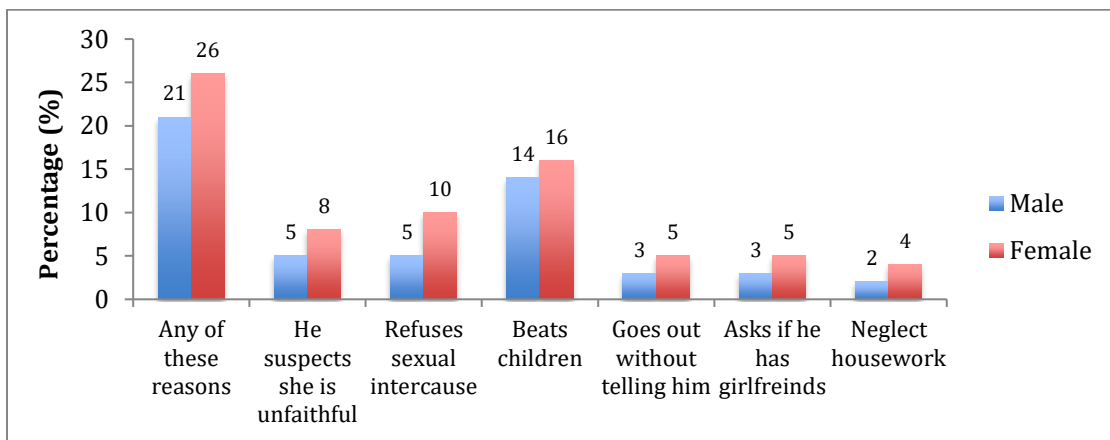
---

<sup>53</sup> The Edition 2018, "Judges of High Court Southern Branch to return to Addu City, <https://edition.mv/news/4961> Accessed: 4th November 2019

<sup>54</sup> Instant messaging application

155. According to Maldives Demographic Health Survey 2016-2017, 26% of Maldivian women age 15-49 believed that a husband is justified to beat his wife in at least one of the 6 circumstances given in the survey<sup>55</sup>. The same survey also reported 21% of men who believed that they could beat their wives for at least one circumstances given. It is alarming to see such a high percentage of the population still believes that wife beating is acceptable, it is even more shocking to see that the percentage is lower for males compared to that of women, indicating that domestic abuse is accepted by more women than men. This shows repeated failure of the state in increasing awareness on women’s rights and inability to monitor and regulate the information disseminated to public on women’s rights in Islam.

Figure 5. Percentage of Men and Women Age 15-49 Who Agree That a Husband is Justified in Beating His Wife for Specific Reasons



Source: MoH, 2018, Maldives Demographic and Health Survey 2016-2017

156. Furthermore, the current regulations and procedures for women to report violence and seek protections are not user friendly or hassle free for most victims of abuse. For instance, acquiring a Protection Order under the DV act through the court system is complex, lengthy and inconsistent. The application procedure for a protection order is lengthy with complicated forms to be filled out along with several other documents that need to be submitted. While a person in a violent domestic relationship trying to escape the situation will not be in a mental state to fill out forms and request for documentation, none of the government institutions are able to submit these forms on behalf of the victim.

157. Additionally, as discussed under Article 6 of this report, there is no harmonized guideline or procedure established across the law enforcement agencies, especially among the courts, for granting or assisting victims to seek a protection order. For instance, there are discrepancies among the agencies (courts, police, FPA) in understanding the need for a protection order in certain circumstances, or discrepancies in ranking certain cases of DV in terms of urgency. Further to that, there is a serious lack of understanding of DV act

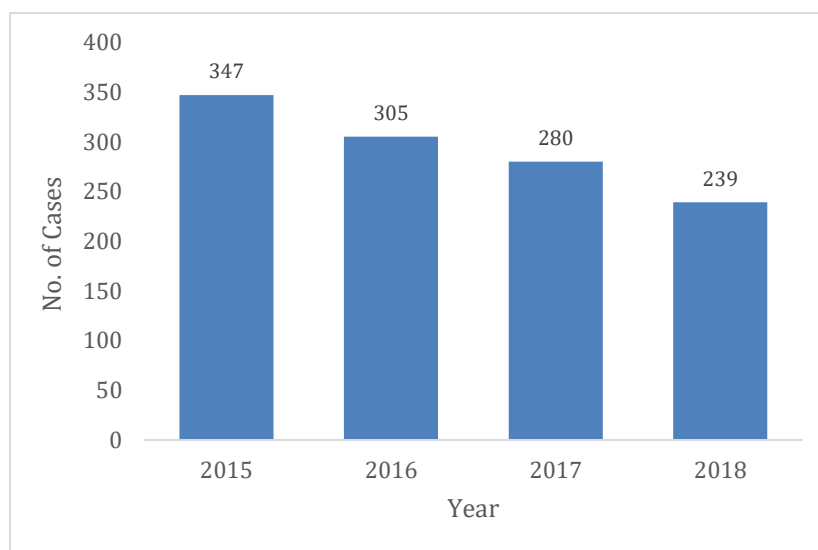
<sup>55</sup> MoH, 2018, Maldives Demographic and Health Survey 2016-2017, page 202

among the atoll magistrate courts justices, which is where the majority of the population resides. Additionally, once a Protection order is granted, there is an additional court procedure the victim must go through in order to get a court order for the police to enforce the protection order.

158. There are also significant delays in the justice system in prosecuting offenders and protecting victims. For example, in the case of domestic violence, often times the victims are sent back to their homes where the perpetrators reside and the victim is dependent on the perpetrator for shelter, finances and other means. Currently there are no properly operational safe homes in the atolls where victims of domestic violence can stay for protection. Consultations with MoGFSS and other stakeholders revealed that even though the state has identified few safe homes in the atolls, they are currently not operational, and do not have any human or financial resources to properly run a safe home. Along with that and the lengthy processing of the cases submitted to police and courts, there is a serious lack of public confidence and trust in the justice system in the country.

159. The figure below summarizes DV cases reported to MPS between 2015-2018. As can be observed from the figure, the total number of DV cases reported to MPS during this period is on the decline. One reason for this could be, as mentioned in the paragraph 124 of the state report, the result of a decline in public trust and confidence in the judiciary due to lengthy case process and public perception on the lack of fairness in the justice system.

Figure 6. Number of Domestic Violence Cases Reported to Police 2015-2018



Source: MPS website, 2019

160. The table below summarizes cases referred by MPS to PGO on the number of offenses

made against women between 2015 and 2018. It has to be noted here that MPS only refers cases to PGO once they acquire enough evidence and documentations to prosecute a case. Hence, the total number of cases reported to MPS will be higher than the figures below.

Table 2. Offenses Against Women Referred to PGO by MPS, 2015-2018

Year	Total No. of cases	Prosecuted	Declined	Convicted	Acquitted
2015	78	53	25	28	11
2016	32	24	8	3	5
2017	23	18	5	6	1
2018	10	9	1	0	5

Source: Maldives PGO, 2019

161. According to the table, while the rate of prosecution has increased over the period from 68% in 2015 to 78% in 2018, the percentage of cases that ended in convictions more or less declined from 35% in 2015 to 9% in 2016 and from 26% in 2017 to 0% in 2018. Furthermore, the percentage of acquitted cases more or less increased for the period from 14% in 2015 to 16% in 2016 and from 4% in 2017 to 50% in 2018.
162. On the Co to **de-criminalize and abolish the imposition of flogging as a sentence for consensual sexual relations outside marriage**, as stated in the paragraph 135 of the state report, flogging is still passed on by the lower courts including the magistrate courts. However, it has to be noted that as mentioned in the state report paragraph 135, any flogging sentences passed by a lower court on sexual relations outside marriage are now appealed by higher courts up to the Supreme Court and often are annulled.
163. In 2013 a flogging sentence and house arrest was passed against a 15-year-old girl for having extra marital sex with her boyfriend<sup>56</sup>. The girl was also reportedly raped by her stepfather on multiple occasions. Adhaalath Party, one of the political parties then declared that the 15-year-old deserved the sentence, as it is the punishment for fornication in the Islamic law<sup>57</sup>. On another case as recent as January 2019, a magistrate court in Lh. Naifaru sentenced a mother of 5 to death by stoning for fornication<sup>58</sup>. Even though both cases were appealed and annulled by the higher courts, it is vital that the judicial system across the whole nation has the same understanding and interpretation of laws to ensure such

<sup>56</sup> Amnesty International, 2013 “ Maldives: Girl rape victim to be spared outrageous flogging sentence”, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2013/08/maldives-girl-rape-victim-be-spared-outrageous-flogging-sentence/> Accessed: 4th November 2019

<sup>57</sup> Minivan News, 2013 “15 year-old rape victim deserves flogging for separate crime of fornication: Adhaalath Party”, <https://minivannewsarchive.com/politics/15-year-old-rape-victim-deserves-flogging-for-crime-of-fornication-adhaalath-party-53861> Accessed: 4th November 2019.

<sup>58</sup> Maldives Independent, 2019 “ Maldives top court quashes death by stoning verdict for adultery” <https://maldivesindependent.com/crime-2/maldives-top-court-quashes-death-by-stoning-verdict-for-adultery-143374> Accessed: 4th November 2019

sentences are not passed.

### **Recommendations:**

164. Expatiate the adoption of pending Bills before Parliament and ensure full implementation of the Acts once they are approved.
165. Monitor the current religious discourse on women's rights in Islam and ensure there is an alternative narrative for to counter any negative information on women's rights and protection.
166. Improve the performance of the justice sector in delivering services and ensure cases relating to violence against women and family issues are dealt with in a harmonized and consistent manner across different stakeholders.
167. Ensure that the judicial system across the whole nation has the same understanding and interpretation of laws

## Article 16 – Marriage and Family Relations

### **Issues raised, observations and concerns**

168. On the committee's recommendation to **withdraw its reservation to article 16, paragraph 2, within a clear timeframe, and to review its reservation to article 16, paragraph 1, with a view to fully withdrawing it**, the state report in its paragraph 137 mentions that a cabinet paper was put forward by MoGFSS in 2015 to remove reservation on article 16 (1) (b), (e), (f), (g), and (h) as well as full removal against article 16 (2). However, the proposal to remove these reservations was not successful in 2015. During the consultations for this report, it was highlighted that the ministry has again started discussing the issue with the president's office. It was understood that the ministry does not have a clear timeframe to remove the reservations and as mentioned in the paragraph 137 of the state report, the proposal must be approved by the parliament once the cabinet passes it. While the current government has been running for almost a year and the fact that it has a super majority in the parliament, the approval of such proposals should not take long to proceed, if the necessary attention and priority is given to such issues.
169. Referring to the CO on to **ensure that in exceptional cases of under-18 marriages, the age limit is set at 16 years and that court authorization is required in all such cases**, paragraph 138 of the state report explains the new amendment to the regulation on Family Matters, which requires the family court to obtain special permission of the supreme court of the Maldives for marriage application from a person under the legal age of marriage

along with a clearance of the case from MoGFSS. Since the passing of this amendment in 2016 the Supreme Court have not approved any such applications. However, it has to be noted that this new amendment could increase the number of unregistered and under aged marriages, which is already an issue in the country. This is also validated in the state report paragraph 146 where it states that there is a general belief in the country that marriage under the age of 18 years is permissible “if the girl’s physical development and family’s economic situation allows”. The same paragraph on the state report also states that with the new amendment, there is a risk of increase in undocumented and under age marriages as conservative beliefs prevails in the country.

170. On the committee's recommendation on **taking steps to facilitate the procedure to register marriages in rural and remote areas and enforce the mandatory registration of all marriages, including through sanctions**, it has to be noted that the issue of unregistered marriages are still on the rise, though there are no mechanism to monitor and record this information. Additionally, there has been cases of some religious scholars preaching to endorse and performing out of court marriages, and have claimed that these are private issues and out of court marriages need to be recognized in the legal system as long as they meet the minimum Shariah requirement for marriage<sup>59</sup>. The family court has raised concerns over the issue of unregistered marriages in 2010<sup>60</sup>, and in April 2014, the chief judge at the family court, Mr. Hassan Saeed stated that *fatwas* claiming that the registration of marriages at the court is unnecessary and un-Islamic and are causing serious issues. He also highlighted on the need for an official state institution to issue *fatwas* in the country<sup>61</sup>. However, so far there has been no progress to this end and the issue on unregistered marriages is on the rise while such unmonitored and unregulated radical religious preaching continues in the country.

171. With regard to the CO to **take measures to discourage polygamy with a view to prohibiting it**, paragraph 145 on the state report points to efforts to limit polygamy and to ensure children within such marriages receive child allowances. According to the state report the new system has established a minimum income of approximately USD 975 in order for any men wanting to marry more than one woman. In addition to that, the new system also forfeits application to marry more than one wife if there are pending child allowance to be paid. The state report, however, fails to explain how this information are

---

<sup>59</sup> Maldives Independent 2016 “ Supreme court approval required for underage marriage”, <https://maldivesindependent.com/society/supreme-court-approval-required-for-underage-marriage-126645> Accessed: 5th November 2019

<sup>60</sup> Maldives Independent, 2016 “Supreme court approval required for underage marriage”, <https://maldivesindependent.com/society/supreme-court-approval-required-for-underage-marriage-126645> Accessed: 5th November 2019

<sup>61</sup> Minivan News Archive 2014, “ Fatwas against registering marriages a huge challenge: Family Court Chief Judge” <https://minivannewsarchive.com/politics/fatwas-against-registering-marriages-a-huge-challenge-family-court-chief-judge-83630>. Accessed: 5th November 2019

verified through the court system and how the implementation of the new system is established in the country. Additionally, during the consultation process it was understood that validation of the minimum income of USD 975 is not mandated in the magistrate courts in the atolls where the majority of the Maldives population resides.

172. A recent circular released on July 2019 by the Maldives Supreme court raised concerns over lack of verification by the magistrate courts in providing child allowance by men who applies for polygamous marriage<sup>62</sup>. The lack of a verification and monitoring process of this new system is evident from this circular where the supreme court has further instructed the lower courts to verify whether the husband is providing regular child support (financial) and to get a statement(s) from existing wife before approving a polygamous marriage<sup>63</sup>. According to the statistics from Department of Judicial Administration (DJA), 196 polygamous marriages were registered in 2018, out of which 84 were registered in magistrate courts and 112 registered by the family court in Male<sup>64</sup>.
173. The restrictions applied through this new system combined with a lack of monitoring mechanism again opens up rooms for increase in the number of unregistered marriages.
174. Paragraph 144 of the state report discusses the introduction of the new divorce regulation aiming to reduce the number of divorces in the country. According to the new regulation, a fine between MVR 1,000 –5,000 (approximately USD 65 - 324) is applied on the husband if he divorces the wife out of court. While the number of divorces between the 2014-2018 is seen to have declined<sup>65</sup> the percentage share of divorce out of court is still high. According to the annual report published by Family Court in 2018, majority (51%) of the divorce cases registered at the court in 2018 were out of court divorces<sup>66</sup>.
175. Reference is made to CO to **expedite the adoption of the proposed amendments to the Family Act and include guarantees to equal distribution of marital property upon divorce**, the paragraph 141 of the state report mentioned that amendment brought to Family Act in 2016 now allows for the distribution of matrimonial property upon divorce. However, this only applies if the couple has established a prenuptial agreement stating the

---

<sup>62</sup> Maldives Supreme Court, 2019: circular no. 2019/03/SC, 29th July 2019  
<https://www.supremecourt.gov.mv/uploads/3/circullar/2019-03-sc.pdf> Accessed: 4th November 2019

<sup>63</sup> Maldives Supreme Court, 2019: circular no. 2019/03/SC, 29th July 2019  
<https://www.supremecourt.gov.mv/uploads/3/circullar/2019-03-sc.pdf> Accessed: 4th November 2019

<sup>64</sup> DJA, 2018 “Statistics of the Judiciary 2018”  
<http://judiciary.gov.mv/viewer.html?file=/documents/Download/jstatistics2018.pdf> Accessed: 4th November 2019

<sup>65</sup> DJA, 2018 “Statistics of the Judiciary 2018”  
<http://judiciary.gov.mv/viewer.html?file=/documents/Download/jstatistics2018.pdf> Accessed: 4th November 2019

<sup>66</sup> Family Court 2019, “Annual Report 2018” <http://familycourt.gov.mv/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/ANNUAL-REPORT-2018.pdf> Accessed 4th November 2019.



division of land and assets prior to entering into a marriage. Additionally, it does not ensure equal distribution of the marital property as mentioned in the CO, instead is left for the couple to decide and agree on the pre-nuptial agreement. So far there have been only a handful of prenuptial agreements done in the country and consultation with the family court revealed that there has not been any case with distribution of matrimonial property in the country.

176. There is a lack of awareness on the need and benefit of establishing prenuptial agreements before marriage, especially in the islands. As stated in the paragraph 141 of the state report, the government has failed to raise awareness on the matter, especially in the island communities. Discussions with young women for this report revealed that there is a serious lack of understanding among girls on the benefits of such an agreement. One of the most common concerns among youth to come up with such an agreement is the fear of being accused of not trusting and not loving the husband to be.
177. Paragraph 141 of the state report also mentions the need for premarital counseling and highlights that the government is currently preparing a comprehensive package to deliver such information for the pre-marital counseling sessions. While this will be a review of the existing pre-marital training program, this could provide an avenue to increase awareness on prenuptial agreements and other laws and regulations on protecting women's rights, especially within a marriage and a family.
178. The existing pre-marital training program currently lacks proper monitoring of its content and delivery. A woman who attended a pre-marital training session in 2010 revealed that the scholar who delivered information on marriage in Islam gave detail description of how the husband could hit and or punish the wife. This included detailed description of how high the man's hand could be lifted and where he can hit the wife. When the issue was raised during the consultation for this report with the family court, the court officials agreed that the previous programs were not monitored and some of the experts who come to deliver information gets carried away in delivering the content. Hence the new pre-marital counseling package that is currently being developed by the state must ensure a content that is within the laws and regulations of the country as well as abides by the international instruments and best practices.

### **Recommendations**

179. Monitor unregistered marriages and provide sanction against such cases
180. Ensure the new premarital counseling program abides by the laws and regulations of the country as well as follows the international instruments and best practices and monitor the delivery of the program by different experts.

181. Ensure information on the prenuptial agreements and other relevant laws and regulation are provided in the pre-marital counseling sessions for both genders.
182. Monitor and ensure the full implementation of the new regulations and rules on approving polygamous marriages

## Part II

### Critical Issues of Concern

#### Lack of alternative narrative on radicalized views on women in Islam

183. As discussed in various sections of this report, there is a lot of resistance and discontent from radicalized religious groups on efforts to promote gender equality and women's rights.
184. One such case was the extend of resistance and criticism the government faced when two female justices were appointed to Maldives Supreme court this year. As this was the first time a female justice was appointed to the supreme court since its foundation in 2008, it can be marked as remarkable step towards gender equality and improvement in women's participation in political and judicial system of the Maldives. However, the extent of opposition and resistance generated against the decision raises concern over the impact of efforts done to improve gender equality and promote women's rights in Islam.
185. Efforts to increase acceptance of different forms of violence against women including marital rape and beating wife is another key issue that needs to be attended in an Islamic viewpoint. As discussed in the previous parts of this report, information normalizing different forms of violence against women are being disseminated to the public through religious clerics. While some of this information directly contradicts with the national laws and regulations as well as international instruments, none of the state institutions are able to clear such misinformation to the public or take any measures against such actions.
186. Dissemination of such information promoting violence against women with no proper monitoring mechanism and clarification from the state, cause great impact on people's beliefs and actions. This is evident from the recent Demographic Health Survey (DHS) of Maldives which showed a high percentage of men and women agreeing that there could be one or more reasons why a husband can hit his wife. What is even more shocking is that the percentage of women who believed the same is higher than that of men.

#### **Recommendations:**

187. Increase efforts to provide awareness raising programs on women's rights in Islam
188. Monitor dissemination of unlawful information on women's rights in Islam and ensure

appropriate measures are taken against such acts

#### Endorsement of child marriages and increase in the number of undocumented marriages

189. As discussed under article 16 of this report while the new amendments brought to the Family Law and the new rules on approval for polygamous marriages, are positive changes in the right direction, these can risk an already existing high number of unregistered marriages to escalate further.
190. There have been recent discussions by religious scholars on endorsing and also performing out of court marriages on the claim that marriage is a private matter and should be recognized by the court system if it fulfills the minimum Shariah requirements for marriages. There is a serious lack of alternative discussions to address radicalized Islamic views on such topics as well as lack of strategic efforts to increase awareness to combat conservative thinking around the issue.
191. Paragraph 146 of the state report also highlights on the facts that conservative beliefs regarding marriage still exists in the community, especially in the atolls and the new changes could lead to an increase in unregistered and under age marriages.
192. Currently there is no mechanism to monitor such unlawful marriages; hence it is difficult to maintain records of such incidents or to take any action against such acts.
193. Any children that are born to undocumented marriages will have challenges in meeting their rights within the local legal system, as they will be considered as children born out of wedlock.

#### **Recommendations:**

194. Monitor unregistered marriages and provide sanction against such cases in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations of the country
195. Increase efforts to raise awareness on the laws and regulations around marriage and family life and ensure such information are delivered to everyone entering a marriage on a mandatory basis, through the pre-marital counseling program.

#### Lack of harmonized guidelines on procedures relating to DV cases and lack of support system for DV victims

196. During the consultations for this report, it was understood that there is no harmonized guideline or regulations established across the court system for granting or assisting DV victims to seek a protection order. There are also discrepancies among the agencies (courts, police, FPA) in understanding the need for a protection order in certain circumstances, or discrepancies in ranking certain cases of DV in terms of urgency. Additionally, once a

protection order is granted, there is an additional court procedure the victim must go through in order to get a court order for the police to enforce the protection order.

197. One of the reasons for such discrepancies, especially among the court system is due to lack of trainings provided for the judges, especially for the magistrate court judges, on new laws and regulations, including DVPA. As a result, there is a lack of understanding among the magistrate courts on key concepts of DVPA which results in failure to properly implement the law, hence failure to provide the necessary support and justice for the victims.
198. Health sector response to DV and GBV is also extremely weak with poor coordination and referral between other key agencies. According to statistics from the FPA, only 2% of the DV cases referred to the authority between 2014 and 2018 came from the health sector. Consultations for this report revealed challenges that exist in retaining trained health professionals, especially in the atolls where majority of the Maldives population resides. As previously discussed in this report, majority of the health professionals working in the Maldives are foreigners, resulting in a high turn over rate. Consequently, retaining professionals who are trained on the local laws and regulations is seen as a huge challenge to the health sector.
199. There is also a serious lack of support system currently established especially in the atolls, to cater for women experiencing violence. For example, in the case of domestic violence, due to the lack of functional safe homes in the atolls, the victims are often sent back to their homes where the perpetrators reside and is dependent on the perpetrator for shelter, finances and other means. Consultations with MoGFSS and other stakeholders revealed that even though the state has identified few safe homes in the atoll, they are currently non-operational, as they do not have any human or financial resources to properly run a safe home in the islands. As a result, victims are subjected to more violence and revictimization during the process with prolonged court cases and delayed justice if at all.

### **Recommendations:**

200. Ensure all regulations and guidelines required under DVPA are developed and implemented across all relevant agencies.
201. Increase efforts to train and raise awareness on DVPA and other related laws and regulations among magistrate courts, health sector professionals and other key agencies.
202. Improve health sector response to DV and GBV.
203. Strengthen the referral system for DV and ensure there is harmonized guidelines and procedures that are followed across all authorities concerned.
204. Ensure full implementation DVPA in a time efficient manner including the provision of

required support and care for the victims during court process.

#### Lack of political commitment to implement legislations already in place and lack of monitoring mechanisms

205. During the reporting period, there has been considerable progress in the endorsement of new legislations which arguably gives a lot of weight to many of the COs that the committee has called upon the state party to implement. However, most of these legislations are poorly implemented, if at all. One of the key challenges in implementing the new laws and policies is the lack of political commitment in terms of allocating proper human and financial resources for the implementation of such laws and policies.
206. This also raises concern on the lack of monitoring mechanisms for these legislations, whereby the actual impact of having these legislations in force cannot be measured in order to make improvisations.
207. Therefore, this points to a change in the system that needs to happen soon, in order to ensure that legislations in force are fully implemented in the most efficient manner, to achieve the gender equality commitments bestowed upon the state party.

#### **Recommendations:**

208. Ensure political commitment to enforce the new laws and policies by providing sufficient human and financial resources to the relevant agencies.
209. Adopt mechanism to ensure the efficient implementation of legislations in place for gender equality whereby institutions are held accountable for failure to implement laws.
210. Establish monitoring mechanisms to ensure that commitments by different stakeholders under various legislations are followed through.

## References

- AGO, 2019 “Government's legislative agenda 2018-2023” <http://agoffice.gov.mv/v4/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Governments-Legislative-Agenda-2018-2023.pdf> Accessed: 4th November 2019.
- Amnesty International, 2013 “Maldives: Girl rape victim to be spared outrageous flogging sentence” 21 August 2013, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2013/08/maldives-girl-rape-victim-be-spared-outrageous-flogging-sentence/> Accessed: 4th November 2019
- BBC News 2015, “Maldives Vice- President Adeeab arrested over ‘bomb plot’”, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34625558> Accessed: 6th November 2019.
- DJA, 2018 “Statistics of the Judiciary 2018” <http://judiciary.gov.mv/viewer.html?file=/documents/Download/jstatistics2018.pdf> Accessed: 4th November 2019
- Family Court 2019, “Annual Report 2018” <http://familycourt.gov.mv/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/ANNUAL-REPORT-2018.pdf> Accessed: 4th November 2019.
- GoM, 2016, “Gender Equality Act”
- Hope for Women, 2019 “Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the Maldives, May 2020 (36th session
- HPA, National Reproductive Health Strategy 2014-2018,
- Maldives Times, 2018 , “Cleric apologizes for marital rape comment”, <https://maldivestimes.com/cleric-apologises-for-marital-rape-comment/>, Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.
- Maldives Independent, 2018, Cleric Under Fire for Marital Rape Answer, <http://maldivesindependent.com/society/cleric-under-fire-for-marital-rape-answer-135288>, Accessed 1st November 2019.
- Maldives Independent 2019 “Female Judges nominated to Supreme Court over opposition from clerics” , August 24th 2019 <https://maldivesindependent.com/politics/female-judges-nominated-to-supreme-court-over-opposition-from-clerics-147483> , Accessed: 4th November 2019.
- Maldives Independent 2019 “Maldives top court quashes death by stoning verdict for adultery” January 7th 2019, <https://maldivesindependent.com/crime-2/maldives-top-court-quashes-death-by-stoning-verdict-for-adultery-143374> Accessed: 4th November 2019
- Maldives Independent, 2016 “Supreme court approval required for underage marriage” September 21 2016, <https://maldivesindependent.com/society/supreme-court-approval-required-for-underage-marriage-126645> Accessed: 5th November 2019

Maldives Parliament, 2019, “Juvenile Justice Bill”

[https://majlis.gov.mv/storage/action\\_files/310/N1KawR7nEuDT2LlxeaZ13je8fyMICfIK6lOK7mf4.pdf](https://majlis.gov.mv/storage/action_files/310/N1KawR7nEuDT2LlxeaZ13je8fyMICfIK6lOK7mf4.pdf)

Accessed: 4th November

Maldives Parliament, 2019, “Child Rights Bill”

[https://majlis.gov.mv/storage/action\\_files/306/0igb7tYSALSKld4ig0P2tWdbQZzNZH03gZqA4Ky5.pdf](https://majlis.gov.mv/storage/action_files/306/0igb7tYSALSKld4ig0P2tWdbQZzNZH03gZqA4Ky5.pdf),

Accessed: 4th November

Maldives Red Crescent, 2019 Strategic Plan 2019-2030, p4 <https://redcrescent.org.mv/beta/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/MRC-Strategic-Plan-2019-2030.pdf>

Accessed: November 5th 2019

Maldives Supreme Court, 2019: circular no. 2019/03/SC, 29th July 2019

<https://www.supremecourt.gov.mv/uploads/3/circular/2019-03-sc.pdf> accessed 4th November 2019

Minivan News - Archive, 2014 “Flexible working arrangements introduced for mothers in the civil service”,

<https://minivannewsarchive.com/news-in-brief/flexible-working-arrangements-introduced-for-mothers-in-the-civil-service-76866>, Accessed: 6<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

Minivan News Archive, 2014 “Fiqh Academy VP condemns Sexual Offenses Bill for conditional

criminalization of marital rape”, <https://minivannewsarchive.com/society/fiqh-academy-vp-condemns-sexual-offenses-bill-for-conditional-criminalisation-of-marital-rape-74565>, Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

Minivan News, 2013 “15 year-old rape victim deserves flogging for separate crime of fornication:

Adhaalath Party, February 28 2013, <https://minivannewsarchive.com/politics/15-year-old-rape-victim-deserves-flogging-for-crime-of-fornication-adhaalath-party-53861> Accessed: 4th November 2019.

Minivan News Archive, 2014 “ Fatwas against registering marriages a huge challenge: Family Court

Chief Judge” April 27 2014 <https://minivannewsarchive.com/politics/fatwas-against-registering-marriages-a-huge-challenge-family-court-chief-judge-83630>. Accessed: 5th November 2019

Ministry of Education, 2018 “School Statistics 2017”,

[https://www.moe.gov.mv/assets/upload/STAT\\_BOOK\\_2018.pdf](https://www.moe.gov.mv/assets/upload/STAT_BOOK_2018.pdf)

MoF, 2019 “ofeesthakuge kharadhu”, <https://budget.gov.mv/office-expenditure>, Accessed: 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

MoFMA, 2019 “Annual Progress Report- Mari culture Enterprise Development Project - PMU,

MoH, 2018, Maldives Demographic and Health Survey 2016-2017

MoH 2014, “Health Sector Response to Gender Based Violence (GBV) – National Guideline on Providing Care and Prevention for Health Care Providers”.

NBS, 2016 “Household Income & Expenditure Survey, Statistics Release III: Employment” 2016

NBS 2016 Expatriate Employment by Nationality and Sex,

<http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/nbs/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HIES-Report-2016-Employment-Update-6112018-1.pdf>, Accessed: November 5th 2019

NBS 2016 Expatriate Employment by Locality <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/nbs/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HIES-Report-2016-Employment-Update-6112018-1.pdf>,

Accessed: November 5th 2019

NBS, 2012 “Household Income & Expenditure Survey Findings 2009/2010”, 2012

NBS, 2019, “Women in Maldives 2018”, 8th March 2018

PO, 2019 “President Solih announces the implementation of 6 months paid maternity leave”,

<https://presidency.gov.mv/Press/Article/20794>, Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019

PO, 2019 “President reviews Single Parent Allowance Programme with Cabinet recommendations”,

<https://presidency.gov.mv/Press/Article/22442>, Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

PO, 2019 “Strategic Action Plan 2019 -2023”, <https://presidency.gov.mv/sap>, Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

PO, 2019 “President appoints two new Supreme Court Judges”, <https://presidency.gov.mv/Press/Article/22054>  
Accessed: 17th November 2019.

PSM news, 2019 “State Budget 2020: USD 103.5 million allocated for local councils”,

<https://psmnews.mv/en/59466> Accessed: 4th November 2019.

Raaje.mv, 2019 “Ziyadha’s death case: appeal hearings commence”, [back.raaje.mv/64540](http://back.raaje.mv/64540), Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

Sun Online, 2019 “Jinsee hama hama kamah govaalaa meehun naththalaan jehey: MP Nasheed”,

<https://sun.mv/125425> , Accessed: 1st November 2019

The Commonwealth, 2019 “Maldives Parliamentary Elections 6 April 2019”,

[https://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/MaldivesFinalReport\\_13-06-19.pdf](https://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/MaldivesFinalReport_13-06-19.pdf), accessed 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

The Edition 2018 “Judges of High Court Southern Branch to return to Addu City , 17th January 2018.

<https://edition.mv/news/4961> Accessed: 4th November 2019

The Edition, 2019 “Deputy Speaker Eva chairs parliament, second woman to do so”,

<https://www.edition.mv/news/10986>, Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

The Edition, 2019 “State appeals case on Ziyadha Naeem’s death”, [edition.mv/news/10015](http://edition.mv/news/10015), Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.



The Guardian, 2015, “Maldives Sacks Vice President for Treason”,  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/22/maldives-government-sacks-vice-president-treason-mohamed-jameel> Accessed: 6th November 2019.

The Guardian, 2015 “Maldives ex-president Nasheed jailed for 13 years on terrorism charges”  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/13/maldives-ex-president-nasheed-jailed-13-years-terrorism-charges>, Accessed: 6th November 2019.

TM, 2015, “A Trouble Future For Democracy”.  
<http://transparency.mv/files/media/6dca8a9f7beda482335bb654b88020f7.pdf> Last Accessed: 17th November 2019

US State Department 2019, trafficking in Persons Report: Maldives <https://mv.usmission.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/212/2019-Trafficking-in-Persons-Report-Maldives.pdf> Accessed: November 5th 2019