

**Submission from the Human Rights Commission of the
Maldives for the combined fourth and fifth periodic report of
the Republic of Maldives under the United Nations
Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC) Committee pre-
sessional working group meeting**



Human Rights Commission of the Maldives (HRCM)
April 2015

Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|---|
| CSC | Civil Service Commission |
| CTCC | Correctional Training Centre for Children |
| DHS | Demographic Health Survey |
| DTRC | Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Center |
| ETCC | Education Training Centre for Children |
| HPSN | Home for Persons with Special Needs |
| HRCM | Human Rights Commission of the Maldives |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| JJU | Juvenile Justice Unit |
| LRA | Labour Relations Authority |
| MED | Ministry of Economic Development |
| MMA | Maldives Monetary Authority |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| MoHA | Ministry of Home Affairs |
| MoLG | Ministry of Law and Gender |
| MPS | Maldives Police Service |
| MYS | Ministry of Youth and Sports |
| NDA | National Drug Agency |
| NPM | National Preventive Mechanism |
| PO | President's Office |
| SEN | Special Education Needs |

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Introduction

1. The Human Rights Commission of the Maldives (HRCM) was first established under Presidential Decree on December 10, 2003. On August 18, 2005, the Human Rights Commission Act was ratified, thereby making the HRCM the first independent and autonomous statutory body in the Maldives. The amendments brought to the Human Rights Commission Act in August 2006 broadened the mandate and powers of the HRCM, making it compliant with the Paris Principles. With the ratification of the Constitution in August 2008, the HRCM was made an independent and autonomous constitutional body.
2. The HRCM currently holds 'B' status with the International Co-ordination Committee of National Human Rights Institutions (ICC) and is an Associate Member of the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF).
3. In December 2007, the HRCM was designated by a Presidential Decree as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment and Punishment (OPCAT). As prescribed under the OPCAT, the HRCM was designated as the NPM in legislation with the ratification of the Anti-torture Act in December 2013.
4. This report is compiled to underline the issues of concern to CRC Committee on the periodic state report submitted by the Maldivian Government 01st September 2012. To compile this report HRCM requested information from relevant government authorities, institutions. This report takes into account and reflects the information received from few the government authorities that shared information on the efforts taken to implement CRC concluding observations. However, this report was compiled based on the limited information received from relevant stakeholders including government authorities and institutions in addition to in-house monitoring data. The HRCM is currently working to compile the shadow report under this convention.

General measures of implementation

Knowledge of rights (Article 42)

5. The Concluding Observation on CRC was not circulated widely to all relevant stakeholders especially those based in the Atolls.¹ There is a certain degree of awareness among the general population on some of the rights related to children.²
6. The resource constraints faced by MoLG hinders in the conduct of awareness raising programs.³ Although island based FCSCs (Family Children Service Center) have conducted awareness raising activities for students addressing the issue of bullying, schools do not refer to Convention on the Rights of Child.⁴

The committee may wish to ask the government

1. **Actions taken to disseminate the concluding observation to relevant state authorities and especially those in the Atolls.**
2. **Actions taken to raise awareness about the convention and related domestic legislations to rights holders and duty bearers under this convention**

General Principles

Non discrimination (Article 2)

7. As mentioned in paragraph 62 of state report there is discrimination and neglect towards children born outside of marriage to some extent and they remain vulnerable to sexual abuse.
8. Girls and children with disabilities continue to experience limited access to sports facilities.⁵
9. There are instances of unfairness against children based on the political standing of parents or family and academically under achieving students.⁶

The committee may wish to ask the government

1. **Measures taken to eliminate discrimination against children born out of wedlock**
2. **Measures taken to facilitate equal access to sporting facilities**

Survival and Development (Article 6)

10. Article 21 of the Constitution of Maldives guarantees the right to life and the constitution places a duty on the State to protect children. However, there have been many incidents that suggest the State is unable to take appropriate action regarding the issue. Infanticide and cases where infants and children are abandoned in pitiful conditions are prevalent in Maldives. According to the Maldives Police Service, a total of 29 such cases were reported since 2007. Maldivian media reports of many incidents of infanticide and abandonment of infants in the capital city and other islands of Maldives.^{7,8}

| Reported Infanticide Cases between 2007-2015 | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | Total |
| Number of Incidents | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 10 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 29 |

Source: Maldives Police Service, 2015

11. Statistics from Maldives Police Service show that there have been many recorded cases of child abuse and some, whose severity has threatened the life of the child.^{9,10,11} Child abuse including physical, sexual and psychological abuse to children as well as negligence by parents, relatives and by other people is a prevailing and a concerning issue throughout Maldives which the state needs to adequately address and take all measures to prevent.^{12,13}

| Reported Child Abuse Cases (other than sexual abuse) between 2007 to March 2015 | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | Total |
| Number of Child Abuse Cases | 0 | 58 | 59 | 42 | 85 | 174 | 172 | 93 | 81 | 764 |

Source: Maldives Police Service, 2015

12. Children in Maldives specially those living in the capital city and other more populated islands are easily exposed to criminal and gang activities as they live in small, and sometimes congested communities.^{14,15,16} Many gangs in the Maldives have children as its members and they were involved in many of the gang related deaths. Children have been killed or injured in confrontations between the gangs.^{17,18} The authorities have not been successful in taking appropriate actions or steps to prevent child deaths caused by gang activities.

The committee may wish to ask the government

- 1. Measures taken to prevent infanticides and abandonment of children**
- 2. Measures taken to eliminate gang related violence. Developed long-term plans to ensure the security of persons and right to life**

Respect for the views of the child (Article 12)

A culture of including children when making household decisions does not exist.¹⁹ According to an HRCM study conducted on child participation in the Maldives, some of the reasons children think adults do not listen to them is because they are too young to understand, and do not believe in them. Children are not consulted when making plans at an island or atoll level.²⁰

13. Juvenile offender and victims of abuse are consulted commonly when making decisions relevant to them especially if the investigation finds that removing the child from the family/guardian is in the best interest of the child.²¹ During investigations child offenders and victims are also informed of the support services available especially if intensive counseling is required.²²

The committee may wish to ask the government

- 1. Measures taken by the step to realize the intrinsic principle of child participation in the Maldives**

Civil Rights and Freedom

Freedom of Expression(Article 13)

14. HRCM learned through its monitoring visits that most children between 14-18 years have access to internet via mobile phones and other electronic mediums and there have been some incidents of children misusing their access and freedom to use internet.^{23,24} School managements and the whole education system is yet unsuccessful in taking appropriate actions in addressing the issue of cyber bullying.. Furthermore, parents are often unable to prevent children from being exposed to age inappropriate information and pornography, through internet and social media.²⁵

The committee may wish to ask the government

- 1. Measures taken to ensure safe cyber environment for minors and to prevent internet child pornography.**
- 2. Awareness programs in schools to address the issue of cyber bullying and defamation.**

Freedom of Association (Article 15)

15. Freedom of association is guaranteed under Article 30 of the Constitution (2008). However article 6 (b) of Association Act (1/2003) does not permit registration of organizations if the applicants' age is below 18 years.
16. In an assessment conducted by HRCM with the support of UNICEF on "Child Participation in the Maldives" students have revealed that lack of student organization at local and national levels to represent their views, limits the opportunities for them to participation in decisions that affect them.²⁶ Similarly children with special needs have felt that they have very few opportunities to participate in the activities in the society.²⁷ Although children are aware of the existence of youth organizations the lack of opportunity to participate has hindered their involvement in these organizations.²⁸ This report also emphasized that students feel that schools are far too strict on the issue of children's participation in civil society organizations and other such institutions and activities.²⁹
17. Participation in civil society and public activities are largely restricted to children as prior permission from their respective school is required.³⁰

The committee may wish to ask the government

- **Mechanisms in place for children to voice their opinion on issues / programmes that affect their lives.**

Access to Information (Article 17)

18. The ratification of Right to Information Act in 2014 guarantees the right to access information produced, held or maintained by a State Institute to any member of the general public. However, State Media is often accused of being biased and self-censoring the information provided to the general public.^{31,32}
19. Although the state report says that 'Maldivian children are generally knowledgeable in the use of the Internet, and are able to access it readily from both computers and phones', no study or assessment has ever been carried out to gauge the extent to which children have access to internet in the atolls.
20. Access to information through conventional means such as libraries is very limited in the atolls. Most of the school libraries in the atolls lack reference and educational books that help children to develop their thinking.³³ Very few books are available even in the libraries of atoll education centers/schools and most of the available books are limited to a specific age group.³⁴ Most of the schools do not provide internet access for children as most schools lack equipments and resources to provide such access.³⁵

The committee may wish to ask the government

1. **Plans to provide equal access to all age appropriate information to children especially those living in the atolls.**

Family environment and alternative care

parental guidance(Article 5), separation from parents (Article 9), parental responsibilities; state assistance (Article 18)

21. The divorce rate remains high and has seen a further increase in this reporting period. In 2008 for every 100 marriages, there were 42 divorces recorded and this figure rose to 59 in 2013, which shows an increase of 41 percent.³⁶ Maldives being a Muslim country, matters relating to family and marriage law are based on Shari'ah Law. Therefore, a woman after a third consecutive divorce from her husband is permitted to marry her ex-husband only after another man contracted marriage and divorced her. Paragraph 121 of the state report states that "it is often the third divorce that marks the final breakdown of the marriage". Although this is a contributing factor that would increase the divorce rate, there has been no research undertaken to understand the reasons for increase in divorce rate. Anecdotal evidence suggests that mutual misunderstanding, financial problems, domestic violence and extramarital affairs as factors that contribute to marital problems or divorce.³⁷
22. The enforcement of Family Act (4/2000) made divorce without approval and outside court (i.e. verbal declaration of divorce by husband) an offence that would incur a fine not exceeding MVR5000 (US \$324). Meanwhile, recent data does not show an optimistic result, as out of court divorce increased by 40 percent, and divorce petitions by wife increased by 22 percent from 2008 to 2013.³⁸
23. On an average 539 cases of divorce per year concluded in reconciliation which also shows a 31 percent decrease in divorces that concluded in reconciliation from 2008 to 2013.³⁹ It is observed that not all domestic issues faced by couples are brought to the attention of public authorities, thus cases that does get lodged could be a reflection of the severity of cases. For example Maldives Police Service (MPS) looked into an average of 67 cases per year related to dispute between couples.⁴⁰ Most women remain concerned about high divorce rate with limited counseling services for problems with spouse or family.⁴¹ Generally few seek counseling services for marital problems.⁴²
24. The instability of the family impacts mental wellbeing of children, and children from broken families remain vulnerable; face neglect, or show deviant behavior. Most gang members are not children (most are under the age of 25) many first joined while they were in school.⁴³ A number of them joined gangs when their parents divorced or after death of a parent.⁴⁴ Recorded data shows that a 35 percent of average juvenile offenders came from broken homes.⁴⁵
25. Demographic Health Survey (DHS) published in 2009 showed that 71 percent of children under the age of 18 lived with both their parents.⁴⁶ DHS report also stated that 6 percent of children do not live with biological parents, out of which most children belong to the age group of 15 – 17 years (15 percent). As mentioned in the paragraph 121 of state report, this shows children living with parents despite the high divorced rate. Discourse on impact of divorce or disputes amongst couples that affect children needs to be generated and highlighted as it impacts the quality of parenting.
26. The custody of the child is retained with the mother or in few cases with the person to whom custody is entrusted, until the child completes age of 7 years, after which the person whom custody is entrusted can apply for an extension and court has discretion to grant custody of female child till 11 years of age and male child till 9 years of age.⁴⁷ Where the court has ruled otherwise, the child

has the right to live with mother or father once the period of custody is concluded or requisite age of custody is completed.⁴⁸ Article 42 (a) of Family Act stipulates that custody of the child entrusted to the mother is dependent on her marital status, and the grounds upon which she loses custody rights is mother's remarriage and the father remarrying carries no such consequences.⁴⁹

27. Custody cases filed at Family Court remained low, at an average of 197 cases per year from 2008 to 2013.⁵⁰ Thus as stated in paragraph 118 of state report "not all couples that have a child will necessarily bring a custody dispute to court." While most cases were decided in mother's favour (46 percent on an average per year) there was somewhat an equal distribution of custody cases decided in the father's favor and to a third party (on an average 28 percent and 26 percent per year). An assessment done on the *Child Participation in the Maldives* commended on the explicit legal requirement to consider children's views, while highlighting the inconsistency on the basis of their gender.⁵¹
28. Generally there is a negative perception about single mothers and divorced women and society assumes the responsibility of breakup of the marriage on women.⁵² One of the challenges of a single mother without assistance from father after separation include financial difficulties as they find it difficult to seek employment due to childcare responsibilities and dependency on other people and lower quality of life for the child.⁵³
29. An average of 277 cases per year was filed on child maintenance from 2008 to 2013 at Family Court.⁵⁴ While an average 47 cases per year were related to failure to give maintenance/alimony, an average of 16 cases per year was filed to relate to garnishment regarding maintenance/alimony of children. In 2010, government introduced a monthly allowance to single parents of MVR1000 (US \$64) per child up to maximum of three children per family (MVR3000 per family (US \$194.5)). This amount for single parent allowance appears to be arbitrarily set and there are no estimates on how many eligible beneficiaries remain outside the domain of the social protection schemes.⁵⁵ An average of 5228 children per year benefited from single parent allowance social protection scheme.⁵⁶ Comparison of cases on child maintenance/alimony submitted to court, coupled with high divorce rate and number of child beneficiaries of single parent allowance gives an indication of the struggle single mothers endures.
30. Legal guardianship rests with father and in cases where child custody is granted to the mother, father is entrusted to provide child support/alimony payments to the mother which was a minimum monthly amount of MVR 450 per child (US \$ 29). This amount for alimony was considered insignificant by the government authorities as well. Thus in March 2014, government enforced amendments to family regulation which required a father who has more than one child to pay a monthly MVR 1000 (US \$64) per child and if he has one child to pay monthly MVR 2000 (US \$ 129) as child maintenance/alimony. This is a progressive development and presently single mothers who receive child support through court can also apply for single parent allowance.
31. In 2010 government also introduced financial benefits targeting foster child (MVR 1000 (US \$64)) and parents taking care of a foster child (MVR 500 (US \$32)). From 2010 to 2012 an average of 45 children per year benefited from this social scheme.
32. Employment Act (2/2008) guarantees 60 days of maternity leave for females and 3 days of paternity leave is granted to males following birth of a child. During this period maternity leave was the only leave that was inclusive of weekends and public holidays, till Civil Service Commission (CSC)

amended Civil Service Regulation to exclude all holidays from maternity leave in May 2013 which was a positive step. The Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA)(Central Bank) has recently set in procedures to allow for six-month maternity leave with full pay.⁵⁷

33. According to article 45 of Employment Act (2/2008) a mother is entitled to two daily breaks of thirty minutes each to attend to the needs of the child till child is one year. However this provision does not facilitate mothers wishing to continue to breastfeed their child till age of 2 years.
34. Leave specified for paternity and circumcision remain insufficient and this was an issue highlighted by atoll monitoring visits undertaken by the HRCM. Presently article 8 of Employment Act permits male employees three days of paid leave on the occasion of the birth of a child and Article 49 entitles five days of paid leave on the occasion of the circumcision of a child (inclusive of weekends for civil service).
35. One of the pledges of current government's manifesto includes allowing women to work from home. Providentially in 2014, the CSC amended its regulation to allow flexi hour benefit, and to date only Ministry of Health and Ministry of Finance have standardized a procedure for flexi hour application while seven other ministries are working on drafting the procedure.⁵⁸ However there is a need to explore the reasons why this amendment is so popular among women in civil service.
36. There are no state supported child care facilities in the country; although in recent years a number of private child care facilities were founded.⁵⁹ State has undertaken some initiatives to facilitate the establishment of such facilities, but regrettably it was not carried out due to various reasons including budgetary constraints. At present, Ministry of Law and Gender (MoLG) is in the process of finalizing a regulation on Day Care Centers.⁶⁰
37. Family Act (4/2000) allows marriage of minors when the person has attained puberty and the registrar of marriages has the discretion to approve the solemnization of such marriage after considering factors such as physical wellbeing, competence to earn an income and reasons for contracting marriage. Moreover, offences specified in Special Provisions Act to Deal with Child Sex Abuse Offenders (12/2009) do not apply to an adult legally married to a child. There is a 60 percent decline in underage marriage from 2008 to 2013 for both male and females.⁶¹ Additionally Family Court confirms that all such minors had been seventeen years of age and were calculated to be eighteen according to the Muslim (lunar) calendar.⁶²
38. There were reports of unregistered marriages by religious scholars claiming that registering marriages with the courts is un-Islamic and unnecessary.^{63&64} Marriages performed outside court's involvement is considered in contravention of the Family Act and penalty for violation of Family Act is subjected to a fine not exceeding MVR 1000.00 or exile or house arrest for a period not extending 3 months.⁶⁵ State institutions acknowledge this information and raised concerns that children born to such marriages could face serious legal issues and difficulties in accessing their fundamental rights and freedoms.⁶⁶ Government has made efforts to collect data on unregistered marriages including child unregistered marriages in the country.⁶⁷
39. Currently couples getting married are required to complete course on marital responsibilities, presently this is facilitated only in the capital.

The committee may wish to ask the government

- 1. Measures taken to reduce the divorce rate and understand the reasons for the increase in divorce rate**

2. **Measures taken to increase counseling services to couples having marital problems and other difficulties**
3. **plans to increase present maternity, paternity and circumcision leave**
4. **Total number of government ministries that have standardized a procedure to implement flexi hour program and provide statistics on women who have applied to this program**
5. **Measures taken to support establishment of day care centers**

Children in alternative care (Article 20)

40. Provision 11 of Law on Protection of Rights of the Children (9/91) states that particular attention to be given to the rights of orphans and indigent children. It also affirms that for of parents and welfare of children deprived of parents and children without legal guidance should be provided in such manner as is possible at the time.
41. Ministry of Law and Gender (MoLG) has the mandate to oversee functioning of state care centers namely *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa*, *Amaan Hiyaa*, and *Educational Training Centre for Children*. These centers are designated to provide alternative care and secure environment for children deprived of other means of primary care such as orphans, children whose parents are serving a sentence or in state care, etc.
42. The shift in Ministry of Law and Gender's status and continuous realignment from one entity to another during this reporting period impacted operation of the *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa*.⁶⁸ Moreover, overall functioning of MoLG suffered gravely due to staff redundancy program introduced by government in 2011 in an attempt to reduce state expenditure on salaries of civil service. Due to limited staff in MoLG responses to requests made by the shelter were not promptly dealt.⁶⁹
43. Paragraph 124 of state report highlighted that although regulations for alternative and institutional care are not yet endorsed, its practice is in place. While it is accurate to state that regulations and standard operating procedures (SoP) exist in draft for children under state care, implementation of it is far from reality.⁷⁰ The fact that legislative framework for children under state care remains unendorsed for past 5 years or so, simply depicts level of priority state has towards improving welfare of children under state care.
44. A draft on Procedure on Administration of *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa* was shared with HRCM for comments in 2014. This procedure lacks provisions on duration of transfer of a child to state care, following the assessment required to place children under state care, along with sound monitoring and support mechanism to facilitate reintegration of children under state care into society.⁷¹ Additionally procedure is also silent on provision to facilitate families' request to meet their children under state care, provided that it does not disrupt their daily schedule in the best interest of the children.⁷²
45. Gender based discrimination in alternative care was evident during this reporting period. Alternative care settings were not designated for adolescent girls who needed protection, while such arrangement existed for boys. This was an issue highlighted in various constructive dialogue sessions held by HRCM with relevant government stakeholders to oversee implementation status of recommendations of NPM. Prior to 2014, *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa* designated for children under 9 years of age was used to shelter adolescent girls who needed protection.

46. With the establishment of *Amaan Hiyaa* in 2014, 12 adolescent girls aged 12 to 18 who were previously under *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa*, were transferred to this shelter.⁷³ NPM's visit to *Amaan Hiyaa* found that treatment plans formulated for children did not encompass adequate reintegration measures.⁷⁴ Shelter fell short to initiate programs on vocational development, behavior modification and recreation needed for all children in the shelter.⁷⁵
47. *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa* provided shelter to 64 children even though the capacity of 45. Even though most of the children in the shelter come from an abusive environment, there were no individual care plan and progressive assessment reviews undertaken prior to 2014.⁷⁶ However, subsequent counseling sessions provided by MoLG have not shown much positive change in children's behavior and conduct.⁷⁷ One possible reason could be lack of coordination between counselors and care takers.⁷⁸
48. State care arrangements for children with disabilities needs to be strengthened. *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa* lacks an endorsed procedure in dealing with children with disabilities, and care workers are in need of appropriate training to support children with disabilities. Shelter has facilitated arrangements for a volunteer SEN (Special Education Needs) teacher to take classes for children with disabilities.⁷⁹
49. The constraints faced in *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa* and *Amaan Hiyaa* in terms of human resource and capacity remain as a major setback in carrying out necessary functions stated in Minimum Standard for Children's Homes. Quality of services provided in the shelter was affected by the acute shortage of skilled staff along with their intense workload. Paragraph 129 and 132 of state report provides an accurate explanation on impact of low child-to-staff ratio, by stating that staff was unable to provide much care to every child and there have been instances where children under state care, faced further neglect.
50. Considering *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa* was operating beyond its capacity, government felt short to accommodate increasing number of victims of child abuse and neglect. Government has set up 5 safe houses including *Amaan Hiyaa* in Vilimale' to provide protection for DV victims in 2014. Child abuse victims who need protection during the investigation phase would also be provided temporary accommodation in these safe houses. As this concept was developed after MoLG submitted estimated budget for 2014, budget for safe houses in 2014 was not allocated.⁸⁰ Thus safe houses especially those established in the atolls remain not fully operational.
51. Adolescent girls running away from *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa* is also an issue that is frequently picked up media in recent times. In early 2013 police arrested two adolescent girls who escaped *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa* in the middle of the night to socialize with boys. The two girls were held first held at Dhoonidhoo Police Custodial before their transfer to Maafushi Prison. HRCM was unable to obtain information and cooperation required from government authorities during its early stages of investigation. HRCM's visit to Maafushi Prison verified that initially two adolescent girls were kept with two other underage female inmates serving a sentence and later was moved to a detached area in premises of the Prison. This incident was also brought to the attention of Parliament's National Security Committee which highlighted that all concerning authorities neglected their duties and responsibilities to protect rights of these children.⁸¹
52. Since many of the children in *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa* come from unstable family environment, there were accounts of children suffering from behavioral issues. NPM's 2014 visit to *Home for Persons*

with *Special Needs* (HPSN) that provides institutionalized care for geriatric and elderly psychiatric patients, found four adolescent children transferred from *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa* as psychiatric patients who were in fact children with behavioral issues.⁸² HRCM also looked into an abuse case of a minor, institutionalized in HPSN. Presently the case is sent for prosecution following investigation by police.

53. *Education Training Centre for Children* (ETCC) primarily focuses on vocational and educational training for boys aged 9 to 18 years. Although the center was operating under Ministry of Education (MoE) it was shifted to MoLG in 2013 to ensure that its' functioning is in accordance with Minimum Standards for Children's Homes. The center remains closed for renovation since 2013 and children were transferred back to their caretakers. For various reasons parents not in a position to take care of their sons, sent them to this center in collaboration with Gender Ministry and MPS.⁸³ In 2013 center accommodated 30 children aged 10 to 18 years.⁸⁴ It is disheartening to know that many children in the center were not aware by their families' intentions to send them to ETCC.⁸⁵
54. NPM's visit to ETCC in 2013 found neither children's case files transferred with them, nor their initial assessment, medical nor psychological evaluations were undertaken. Although the center focused on vocational programs their quality were not adequate to provide reintegration into society.⁸⁶ The center also felt short to conduct programs that focused on conduct and behavior of children.⁸⁷ NPM also found that while there was no proper monitoring mechanism within the center and supervision efforts by MoE remained poor.⁸⁸ And it was alarming that children in the center were subjected to physical abuse by staff. Appropriate action against the staff was taken when HRCM informed MoE on this matter.⁸⁹
55. HRCM is aware that currently there are three boys accommodated under state care at ETCC although this center has not been formally declared open.

The committee may wish to ask the government

1. **The reason for the delay in strengthening the legislative framework on children under state care.**
2. **The budget allocated and utilized for children under state care (*Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa* (2008 to 2013) and *Amaan Hiyaa*).**
3. **The number of qualified caretakers in institutions supporting children under state care.**
4. **Details of capacity building programs conducted for care takers of children under state care (2008-2013).**
5. **The statistics on the number children accommodated in 4 shelters based in the islands.**
6. **Measures taken to increase psychosocial support provided to all children under state care.**
7. **The present status of accommodating adolescent boys under state care.**
8. **Grounds on which government decided to accommodate 2 girls from *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa* transferred to *Maafushi Prison* in 2013.**
9. **Procedures in place to deal with children with disabilities under state care**
10. **Measures taken to ensure the right to education for children under state care**

Disability, basic health and welfare

Children with Disabilities (Article 23)

56. Access to education for children with disabilities is severely limited in the atolls. Schools throughout Maldives lack resources to accommodate all forms of disabilities and many children with various forms of disabilities are not enrolled in the schools. Most of the visually and hearing impaired children in Maldives do not have easy access to education as most such schools are located in the capital and schools in other islands do not accommodate such children.⁹⁰ Moreover, there are Special Education Needs (SEN) classes in schools of atoll capitals. However, geographical and financial difficulties make it impossible for children in other islands to attend those schools as they will have to travel by sea everyday, which is difficult and not affordable for most parents. Furthermore, many parents refuse to send children with disabilities to school because of the negative societal attitudes towards such children.⁹¹
57. Human Right Commission of the Maldives conducted a National Inquiry on Access to Education for Children with Disabilities during 2012 and 2014. The findings of the pre-visits to the inquiry show that children with disabilities get bullied in schools. It also shows that teachers in general are not given trainings to identify disabilities at an early stage and parents lack awareness too about forms and signs of disabilities. Also, schools are not designed with accessibility to disabled children and toilets are not accessible to physically disabled children and lack resources like trained teachers and educational material for various disabilities.
58. Available statistics show that 5769 children with disabilities benefited from government's welfare system from 2008 to 2014.⁹² According to school statistics published by Ministry of Education a total of 1279 students were enrolled in SEN classes from 2008 to 2014.
59. There is limited knowledge of disability related issues among government staff. The social service workers and counselors working in the Family and Children Services Centers have received only basic training on disability.⁹³ Health Centers in atolls lack equipments and resources necessary to provide adequate healthcare for persons with disabilities and health centers in general lack a system to identify disabilities at an early stage.⁹⁴ However, in 2015, National Institute of Education (NIE) introduced Early Intervention Centre in schools as a nationwide program to identify and provide necessary support for children with special needs.⁹⁵
60. The Baseline Assessment on Activities Addressing Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Disabilities Report) undertaken by the HRCM in 2010 concluded that, one of the major service gaps for people with disabilities is limited access to premises and to public transportation. The assessment further states that the roads, pavements, road signs and traffic lights are not designed as friendly for persons with disabilities. The assessment proposed recommendations to address the issues of accessibility for persons with disabilities, most of which have not been implemented to date. Many public buildings including schools in some islands are still not accessible to persons with disabilities.⁹⁶ Ministry of Law and Gender have made a 'Disability Minimum Standard' under Disability Act 08/2010, in order to make sure that all public buildings are designed in a way that persons with disabilities can have access to them which is yet to be effectively implemented.
61. The few available rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities in the atolls are extremely expensive and cannot be afforded by most parents. Moreover, even these services are not available

in most atolls. Also, there aren't adequately trained persons in most of the public offices, to communicate with persons with disabilities like hearing impaired people.^{97,98}

62. Very few awareness programs have been conducted in the islands to create awareness among the public on the rights of persons with disabilities.⁹⁹ HRCM found out in its monitoring trips that children with disabilities often are not given the opportunities to take part in societal and cultural activities.

The committee may wish to ask the government

1. **Access to public buildings and spaces to persons with disabilities**
2. **Status of implementing 'Disability Minimum Standard'.**
3. **Status of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**
4. **Early identification and intervention initiative for disability, especially during pregnancy and for infants.**
5. **Awareness program designed to address societal attitude towards children with disabilities, to enable respect for the rights and dignity of children with disabilities and combat stereotypes and prejudices relating to children with disabilities.**

Health and Health Services (Article 24)

63. Despite the increase in health care facilities established throughout the country, their quality of service remains poor and most hospitals or health posts are not equipped with proper emergency obstetric facilities and are incapable of doing the most basic laboratory tests and examinations.^{100,101}

64. Regional and atoll hospitals as well as health centers in the atolls lack adequately trained health professionals and most hospitals have one specialist doctor in most demanding areas like pediatrics and gynecology.^{102,103} There are no replacement doctors available if a specialist doctor takes a leave of absence forcing the patient to travel another atoll or regional hospital or to the capital city, which is often very costly and unaffordable to most people.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, it is alarming to learn that survival of premature infants and in some cases, mature infants may not be possible as appropriate neonatal intensive care or resuscitation measures are not available in most of the health facilities.^{105,106}

| Child Deaths (Under 18 years) in Health Facilities | |
|---|-----------------------|
| YEAR | NO. OF DEATHS* |
| 2007 | 79 |
| 2008 | 104 |
| 2009 | 89 |
| 2010 | 100 |
| 2011 | 78 |
| 2012 | 91 |
| 2013 | 66 |
| *Note: These data does not include Abortions and still births and health facilities include Hospitals, health centers and health posts. | |

Source: Ministry of Health, 2015

65. Although, the study *ICPD Beyond 2014, Maldives Operational Review 2012* by Department of National Planning suggests that sex education and access to reproductive health services is absolutely necessary to tackle the issue of high numbers of unsafe abortions and rising infanticide, age appropriate sex education is not provided in schools and life skill programs do not cover the subject.^{107,108}
66. Public awareness on communicable diseases is conducted by Health Protection Agency (HPA) and through public health units in islands and HPA believes that health centers are capable of preventing outbreaks of life-threatening communicable diseases. However, in 2011 there was a Dengue outbreak which reported a total of 2909 dengue cases and also reported the highest number of deaths to date that was reported in a year.¹⁰⁹ There have been dengue outbreaks each year since 2010 and many infants and children died of such outbreaks between 2010 and 2014 and most of them died while been treated at hospitals/health centers. Most common cause of these deaths is communicable diseases and neonatal deaths caused by lack of intensive care.^{110,111,112}

TABLE: NEONATAL DEATH RATE PER 1000 LIVE BIRTHS, 2002 - 2012

| Year | Early Neonatal Death Rate (0-6 Days) | | | Late Neonatal Death Rate (7-27 days) | | | Neonatal Death Rate (0-27 days) | | |
|------|---|-------|--------|---|-------|--------|------------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Total | Male' | Atolls | Total | Male' | Atolls | Total | Male' | Atolls |
| 2002 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 11 | 11 | 12 |
| 2003 | 9 | 3 | 18 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 10 | 3 | 19 |
| 2004 | 9.01 | 6.06 | 11.07 | 0.96 | 1.40 | 0.65 | 9.97 | 7.46 | 11.73 |
| 2005 | 7.22 | 7.73 | 6.82 | 1.08 | 0.41 | 1.62 | 8.31 | 8.14 | 8.44 |
| 2006 | 8.75 | 7.02 | 10.26 | 2.75 | 3.69 | 1.92 | 11.50 | 10.71 | 12.18 |
| 2007 | 6.23 | 5.18 | 7.16 | 0.91 | 1.62 | 0.29 | 7.15 | 6.80 | 7.45 |
| 2008 | 5.89 | 5.38 | 6.36 | 2.15 | 2.99 | 1.38 | 8.04 | 8.36 | 7.74 |
| 2009 | 6.87 | 9.5 | 4.28 | 0.54 | 1.09 | 0.00 | 7.95 | 11.67 | 4.28 |
| 2010 | 6.18 | 6.3 | 6.16 | 1.97 | 2.89 | 0.62 | 8.15 | 9.18 | 6.77 |
| 2011 | 5.71 | 6.52 | 4.12 | 1.11 | 1.76 | 0.00 | 6.82 | 8.27 | 4.12 |
| 2012 | 4.44 | 4.93 | 4.11 | 1.48 | 2.02 | 0.37 | 5.92 | 6.95 | 4.48 |

Source: ministry of health, 2015

67. It is concerning to learn that some parents refuse to give vaccine to their children due to fundamentalist thinking and there have been more than a few recorded cases of such extremists refusing to give necessary vaccines to their children.¹¹³ However, Health Protection Agency believes that the need for mass public awareness on the importance of vaccination is low in the country. Even though there is a legislation under which actions can be taken against such parents, it is not clear how effectively it is being implemented. HPA is faced with challenges in monitoring and assessing the vaccination situation and keeping records of coverage information.

Vaccine Refusals reported from Health Facilities

| Atoll | 2007 | | 2008 | | 2009 | | 2010 | | 2011 | | 2012 | | 2013 | | 2014 | |
|------------------|----------|---|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| SEX | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Male' | | | | | 2 | | | | 1 | 2 | | | | | | |
| Haa Alifu | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | |
| Haa Dhaalu | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Shaviyani | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | 2 | | | | | | 1 |
| Noonu | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Raa | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Baa | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Lhaviyani | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kaafu | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Alifu Alifu | | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | | | | 3 | 4 | | | | 3 |
| Alifu Dhaalu | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Vaavu | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Meemu | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Faafu | | | | | 1 | 2 | | | | 1 | | | | | | |
| Dhaalu | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Thaa | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Laam | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gaafu Alifu | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gaafu Dhaalu | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gnyaviyani | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Seenu | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | |
| Total | 1 | | 2 | 1 | 5 | 5 | | 1 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 |
| Total All | 1 | | 3 | | 10 | | 1 | | 7 | | 9 | | 2 | | 5 | |

Source: Health Protection Agency, Ministry of Health

68. The current universal health insurance scheme *Husnuvaa Aasandha* fails to provide an efficient and adequate service of health insurance in the atolls as most patients face unnecessary delays in the emergency transfer of patients to better resourced health facilities.¹¹⁴

The committee may wish to ask the government

1. Access to adequate healthcare for people, especially children, living in rural areas.
2. Measures taken to provide efficient and reliable health insurance services to every citizen.
3. Availability of age appropriate sex education programs to tackle the issue of high numbers of unsafe abortions and rising infanticide.
4. System established to monitor and assess the vaccination situation and keep records of vaccine coverage.

Adequate standards of living (Article 27)

69. While average household size dropped from 6.7 to 6.2 from 2003 to 2010 the percentage of households living in rented housing increased from 10 percent to 17 percent.¹¹⁵ People living in Male' spend more than half of their income on rent, food and utility services.¹¹⁶ While 24 percent of the population was below the international poverty line USD 2 per day it will have impact on one fourth of the children in the country.¹¹⁷ It is also apparent that poverty and inequality rates across the country affect negatively on child development.¹¹⁸

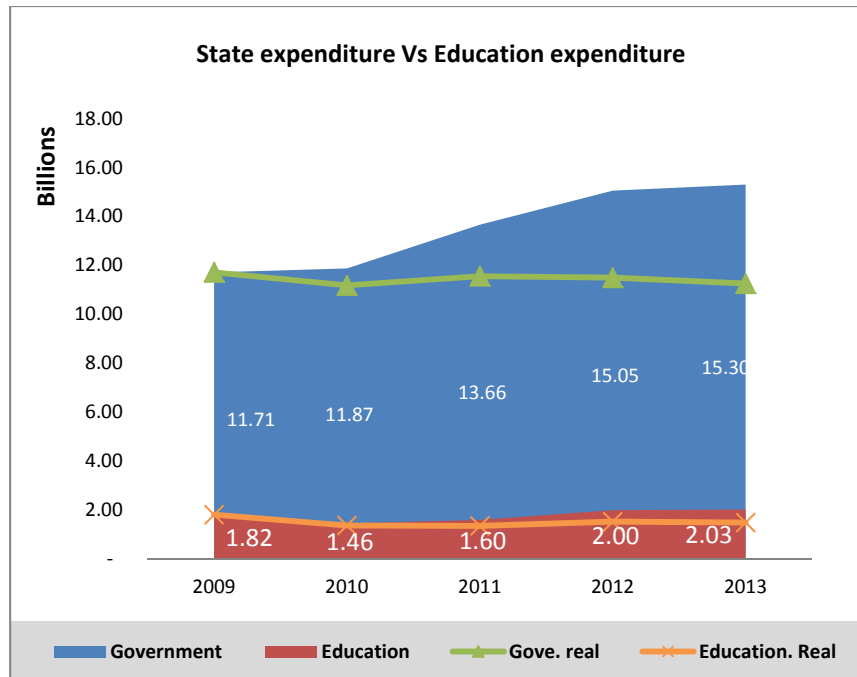
The committee may wish to ask the government

- 1. Measures taken to facilitate equal opportunities for affordable adequate housing, basic utilities and alleviate poverty.**

Education, leisure and cultural activities

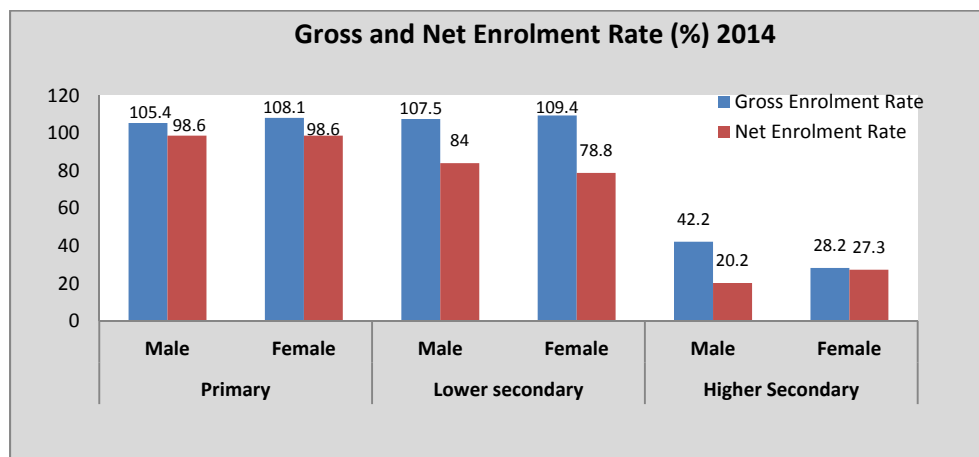
Right to Education (Article 28) and Aims of Education (Article 29)

70. Constitution (2008) entitles right to education without any discrimination of any kind. There are also numerous policy and procedures established by the initiative of Ministry of Education (MoE) to guarantee the right to education to all children living in the country.
71. As mentioned in paragraph 204 of state report schooling from grade 1 to 12 is free for public schools and there are no exam fees, as well as books and stationeries are provided by the government.
72. Nominal government spending and nominal education spending were shown in blue and red colour respectively. It shows that the nominal state expenditure for 2013 is about 3.6 billion more than that of 2009. This is 30.7% increment in comparison to 2009 expenditure. However, when the real figures were computed in relation to the CPI index, the green line represents the result. It shows that although the nominal expenditure had an increment, the real figure did not. It was actually 0.5 billion less than that of 2009. Similarly, the real expenditure for education sector experienced a 3 percent decrease from 2009 to 2013. Government contributes sizeable proportion of its budget on education sector, however bulk of it is spent on recurrent expenditures, thus programs for quality education remain sidelined.¹¹⁹



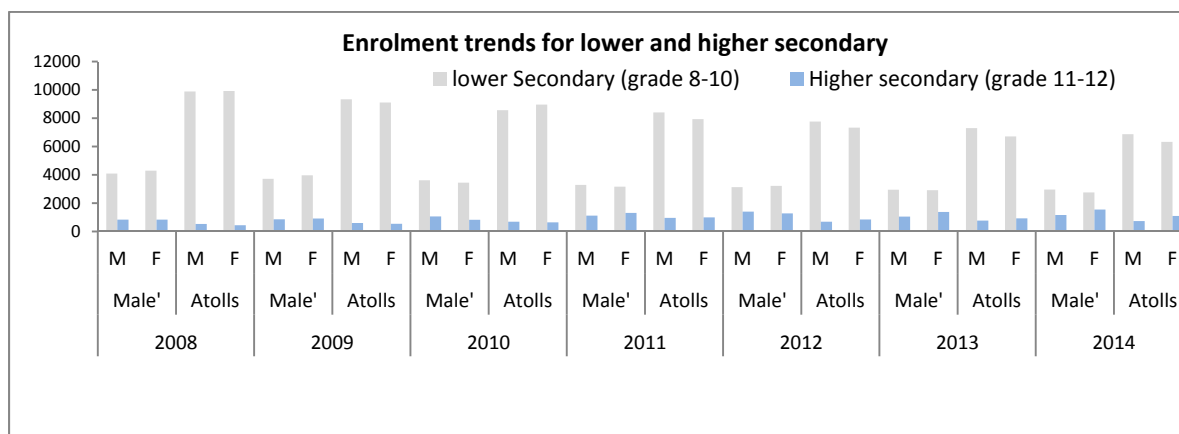
Source: Ministry of Finance and Treasury, information obtained in 2014

73. Provision 37 of Employment Act (2/2008) provides for overtime payment. Conversely teachers' overtime allowance was reduced to a 5 percent of basic salary due to budgetary constraints. As noted in paragraph 222 of the CRC state report, teachers are part of Civil Service and a teacher with a Bachelor's degree earned MVR 8795 (US \$ 570) gross per month including allowances. In the recent years teachers have raised discontent about their pay and limitations imposed on their overtime (OT) allowances. Government announced to increase salary of teachers to more than one third of their basic salaries from 2015 academic year.¹²⁰ During this reporting period issue of teachers OT was brought to the attention of HRCM multiple times by teachers but efforts to resolve this issue remain ineffective.
74. Significant achievements in education include near universal achievement of primary education and there is no gender difference observed in primary and secondary enrolment rates.¹²¹ Gross and net enrolment rates are high for primary. There is substantial difference between gross and net enrolment rates for lower secondary suggesting considerable repetition especially among girls.¹²²



Source: Ministry of Education (2014). *School Statistics 2013*. Retrieved on April 13th 2015 from http://www.moe.gov.mv/assets/upload/STAT_BOOK_2013.pdf

75. There are higher secondary schools established in all atolls except one. There are 56 schools that offer higher secondary education from a total of 458 schools in the country. Facilities for higher secondary education remain limited due to budgetary and logistical constraints, thus student enrolment was awarded on merit basis.¹²³ This is also a consequence of government policy which primarily focused initially on attainment of universal primary education and then development of lower secondary schools while postponing the challenge of higher secondary education for policy consideration at a later date.¹²⁴ The weakness in education sector and low quality of teaching in secondary schools at the atoll level is a key factor that accounts for skill shortage to continue higher education.¹²⁵

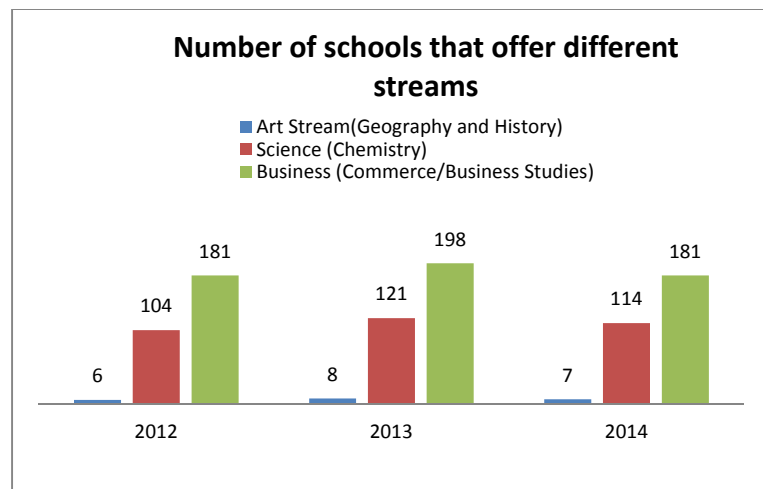


Source: Ministry of Education (2014). *School Statistics 2013*. Retrieved on December 17th, 2014 from http://www.moe.gov.mv/assets/upload/STAT_BOOK_2013.pdf

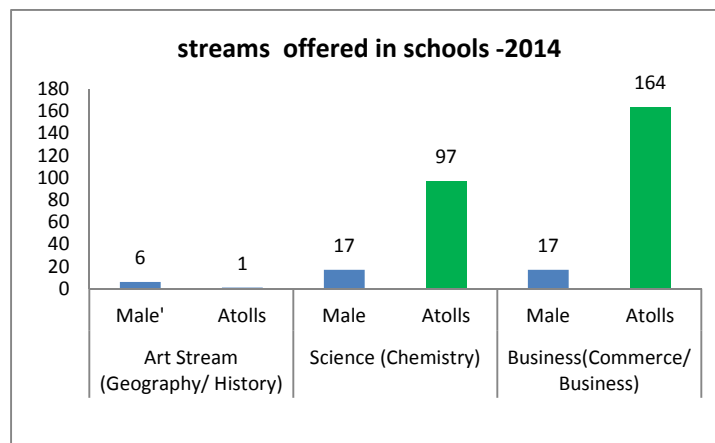
76. MoE maintains school statistics in disaggregated manner and it is published on its website annually. On the contrary, there is no proper system in place to measure indicators such as low attendance and drop-out rates. Secondary data suggests that school drop-outs and low attendance are issues that cannot be disregarded. For instance, cases lodged to Juvenile Justice Unit (JJU) revealed that 61 percent of the children in conflict with the law were not attending school while most dropped out of school when they were in grade 7 or 8¹²⁶. It is also observed that neglect is common among students which discourage them from attending school and it is more common among children from broken families, children living with single parents, children living with relatives as parents are serving prison sentence or children whose parents are into substance abuse.¹²⁷ There is also a growing concern that, with increase in religious conservatism practices, home based education is sometimes preferred by parents leading to restricting girls' access to formal education at school.¹²⁸
77. While low quality of education at all levels remains as a challenge, families continue to migrate to capital city or other islands in search of better educational opportunities.¹²⁹ Low level of learning outcomes for both primary and secondary, coupled with wide regional disparities indicates serious deficiency in performance of education system.¹³⁰ For instance, national assessments of learning outcomes at grade 4 and grade 7 show that learning levels are unsatisfactory.¹³¹ During this period the pass percentage of students who sat for Ordinary Level exams remained low at a national level, although it has shown improvement to some extent.¹³²
78. School based technical, vocational, and education programs are integrated in the national curriculum framework and a policy guide on conduct of these courses needs to take effect. Students can select vocational subjects from grade 8 onwards, if their aptitudes are more towards skill based

subjects.¹³³ However, the pursuit of vocational training and skills are considered as inferior to pursuing an academic degree since white-collar jobs are considered by general population¹³⁴. In the year 2013, 77 courses were conducted in 18 schools (from 325 schools) and a total of 301 students obtained vocational subjects.¹³⁵ The reasons for such low level of conduct of vocational courses include limitation of resources, capacity and institutional mechanisms to oversee the progress.¹³⁶

79. While the state has made remarkable progress in ensuring access to education to all children, children enrolled in lower secondary education in island based schools are in a disadvantaged position to take up science or arts stream subjects due to budgetary constraints. Its efforts to deliver lower secondary education services equally without any discrimination to all children in the country are not ensured; especially those residing in the islands need to be a priority.



Source: Ministry of Education. Information received in 2015



Source: Ministry of Education. Information received in 2015

80. Paragraph 215 of the CRC state report provides an accurate explanation of the situation of school age girls who become pregnant by stating that they will leave school without formally being expelled due to social pressure and fear of being bullied or harassed, concurrently, highlighting gender aspect of it.

81. Bullying in schools remains as an area of concern. So far there has been no national level analysis undertaken to understand the prevalence of bullying in schools.

82. The old curriculum was revised and new curriculum was launched in 2015 beginning of academic year for grade 1-3.

Education for children in alternative care and children in conflict with law

83. According to Maldives Police Service (MPS) a total of 520 juveniles were detained from 2008 to 2014, out of which 31 were females.¹³⁷ Education or vocational programs are not facilitated for children in conflict with the law, who remain in pre-trial detention or serving a sentence in prison. Presently there is no proper mechanism in place to facilitate education for those in conflict with the law. This is concerning as education is an important aspect of their development and reintegration into the society.
84. The mandate of Juvenile Justice Unit (JJU) functioning under Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) is based on the philosophy of restorative justice. JJU in collaboration with Child Protection Unit of the Maldives Police Service (MPS) established *Correctional Training Centre for Children* (CTCC) in 2009. The objective of the center was to provide a formal learning environment to children in “administrative detention” so that they can return to school or assist to acquire necessary skills for a job.¹³⁸ Academic and vocational programs were conducted to 19 boys aged 15 to 18 years accommodated in the centre, who were identified as dangerous with potential of committing a serious offence.^{139,140} Although center is closed for operation since 2013, there is policy discourse on the re-establishment of a similar center in near future.¹⁴¹
85. Children and adolescent girls (under state care) in *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa* and *Amaan Hiyaa* are enrolled in Muhyiddin school in Vilimale’. There were accounts of parents’ disapproval of children from *Kuda Kudhinge Hiyaa* being allowed to attend ‘normal’ school.¹⁴² Children not enrolled in any school or vocational program in the shelter were facilitated one hour of tuition per weekday however, there were no programs conducted for their physical, psychological and educational development.¹⁴³ Shelter also made an arrangement for a volunteer SEN teacher to teach children with disabilities.¹⁴⁴
86. Boys aged 9 to 18 years of age in state care were accommodated in *Education Training Centre for Children* (ETCC). The NPM’s last visit to center in 2013 observed that there were 30 children studying in primary level, while few children were offered lower secondary subjects (English and Math) in the center. Although the center mostly focused on vocational programs to develop necessary skills required to reintegrate them to society, programs were not conducted to the required standard due to lack of resources and capacity issues. Limited staff at the center meant that children during vocational classes were left highly vulnerable to threat of a dangerous accident.¹⁴⁵ This center too was closed for operation in 2013.

Education for Children with Disabilities

87. Disability Act also entitles right to education without any discrimination of any kind. About two years following enactment of the Disability Act, a policy on Inclusive Education (IE) was endorsed by the MoE. IE policy encompasses lot of positive aspects. A major strength of this policy is the focus it had made to all children with SEN and requirement to update it each year to focus on relevant issues.¹⁴⁶
88. The second baseline human rights survey named "Six Years On - The Right Side of Life" conducted by HRCM identified lack of schools for children with special needs, lack of access to education and lack of facilities in existing schools for children with special needs; as an obstacle faced by people with disabilities.¹⁴⁷

89. Authorities are unable to provide an estimate of children with disabilities that remain outside the domain of national disability registry, thus it is difficult to ascertain number of children denied of education rights due to a disability.¹⁴⁸ Available statistics show that 5769 children with disabilities benefited from government's welfare system from 2008 to 2014.¹⁴⁹ While children with mild to moderate disabilities are faced with issues of access to education, those with more severe disabilities like cerebral palsy or autism, often do not attend school at all.¹⁵⁰ Although there are plans for home schooling for such children, it has not been developed yet.¹⁵¹
90. Government initiated the establishment of Special Education Needs Units (SEN) within mainstream schools for children with disabilities with the objective to prepare children for entry into regular classes as far as possible.¹⁵² SEN classes are for students with relatively noticeable support needs who were otherwise not able to participate in education. Selected students were encouraged into mainstream classes in addition to their separate SEN classes, but were not often getting ideal support from mainstream teachers.¹⁵³
91. Presently, a special allowance of MVR 100 (US \$ 6) per working day is allocated for Special Education Needs teachers.¹⁵⁴ Additionally a ratio of one teacher for every 6 children are designated for different categories for example every 6 children, 1 teacher is designated for mild and moderate disabilities and a teacher is designated for every child with severe and profound disabilities.¹⁵⁵
92. Schools are provided with MVR 2500 (US \$162) for the implementation of individual Educational Plan (IEP) to each student with disability.¹⁵⁶ According to school statistics published by Ministry of Education a total of 1279 students were enrolled in SEN classes from 2008 to 2014. While there is a separate class (SEN) established in the capital city for children with visual impairment, hearing impairment and for children with multiple disabilities, the pace of establishment of SEN classes in the Atolls was rather gradual. So far 22 SEN classes were established in 12 atolls to increase accessibility to education for children with disabilities.¹⁵⁷ The issue of access to education for children with disabilities is a disheartening reality faced by many parents specially living in atolls.
93. Many parents of children with disabilities living in islands remain unhappy with the need to move to Male' for education of their children.¹⁵⁸ There have been instances at the island level where parents of children with disabilities are advised by the schools in their community to seek admittance to SEN specialist pilot schools in Male' which focused on that particular disability. For example indication of providing education for children with certain disabilities is considered too specialized for ordinary schools, even though issues raised by admitting these particular children involved quite basic arrangement such as allocation of a ground floor class room or enabling library access for children with physical disability or provide assistance in transmitting of textual information to visually impaired child while requesting for Braille facilities to local schools.¹⁵⁹ The fact that children with disabilities can continue education even if they are overage for a grade is an encouraging attribute. However, SEN specialist schools in Male' had reported pressures on ability to enroll SEN students in their specialist programmes, particularly as many of their SEN students were overage thus vacant positions were not being opened up.¹⁶⁰
94. At present SEN classes offer vocational programs but it is not accredited or examined¹⁶¹. Vocational Education Training schools exist but do not seem have affirmative measures for persons with disabilities.¹⁶² And since opportunities for study after leaving school for children with disabilities are limited, many lose the skills learned in SEN classes.¹⁶³
95. Budgetary issues remain as one of the core challenges to implement the legislative and policy framework that guarantees the right to education for children with disabilities. It is a reality that children with disabilities remain marginalized in the education system due to lack of facilities and academic programs that enable them to develop their full potential. Education system is deficient in trained teachers in this field and most teachers also lack capacity for early detection of children requiring special assistance for learning.¹⁶⁴

The committee may wish to ask the government

- 1. Efforts taken to strengthen the legislative framework on right to education**
- 2. Efforts undertaken to compile the nationwide statistics on attendance rate and school dropout rates of students. Additionally also provide statistics so as to design specific strategies for interventions targeting teachers and management of schools**
 - a. Student attendance rate for primary, lower secondary and higher secondary**
 - b. Student dropout rate for primary, lower secondary and higher secondary**
- 3. Measures taken to increase the availability of different streams without systemic discriminations for students studying in island based schools**
- 4. The details of budget allocated and expenditures for**
 - a. Technical and vocational training from 2009 to 2013**
 - b. Extracurricular activities from 2009 to 2013**
- 5. What measures have been taken to resolve the matters relating to teachers' overtime payment?**
- 6. Measures taken to improve access to higher education**
- 7. Efforts or measures taken to increase the quality of education**
- 8. Measures taken to increase access to education for children with disabilities specially in island based schools**
- 9. Measures taken to guarantee access to education for victims of neglect by caretakers.**
- 10. Statistics of children under state care who are not enrolled in an official educational institute or program.**
- 11. Measures taken to guarantee access to education for children in conflict with the law provide following statistics in a disaggregated manner (2008 to 2013)**
 - Children under house arrest**
 - Children under police custody**
 - Child serving a prison sentence**
 - Children enrolled in drug treatment centers and rehabilitation phase**

Special Protection Measure

Economic exploitation, including child labour(Article 32)

96. Chapter 3 is on Employment Act (2/2008) is employment of minors.¹⁶⁵ Article 6 prohibits the employment of a minor under the age of sixteen except for the purpose of training in relation to such minor's education.¹⁶⁶ The Article makes an exception for children participating, with their consent, in work undertaken by their families.¹⁶⁷ Article 7 of the Employment Act prohibits the employment of a child (below 18 years of age) in any work or employment that may have a detrimental effect on a child's health, education, safety or morals due to the work or job undertaken or the conditions of work.¹⁶⁸ Article 8 of the Act requires parental consent be obtained for employing minors. Article 9 of the Act prohibits the employment of a minor during school hours of such minor and after 11.00 pm at night.¹⁶⁹ Article 10 of the Act required those who employ minors to maintain a register of minors employed containing their names, addresses and dates of birth Article 11 of the act requires a medical fitness test prior to employing minors on vessels and further such tests for continued employment on vessels.¹⁷⁰

97. The punishment prescribed for violation of the provisions of the Employment Act relating to child labour does, however, seem to lessen the gravity of such offences and the harm that such violations could cause to a child (a fine of MVR 1000 – 5000- (64 – 324).¹⁷¹
98. In 2013, Maldives ratified 8 ILO core conventions which includes C182: Worst form of Child Labour Convention and C138: Minimum Age of Convention. Government is yet to publish list of hazardous occupations prohibited by children.
99. There are accounts of household poverty and broken family circumstances that forced children to seek employment in informal sectors and were subject to exploitation.¹⁷² Note also must be made here of the under aged children who migrate to islands other than islands of their birth for educational purposes and are placed in situations where they are forced to work as informal domestic workers in exchange for accommodation and food.¹⁷³
100. Demographic Health Survey (DHS) undertaken in 2009 found evidence of children’s involvement in economic productive labour.¹⁷⁴ The proportion of children between 5-14 years age working at the time this survey was conducted was 34.2 percent. Older children (10-14 years of age) and girls were found more often to work than younger children (5-9 years of age) and boys.¹⁷⁵ It has to be noted that children were performing mostly domestic work: 21.6% for less than four hours a day and 10.6% for four or more hours a day.¹⁷⁶
101. The labour inspections conducted by Labour Relations Authority (LRA) from 2007 to 2013 did not find any cases relating to child labour exploitation.¹⁷⁷
102. A total of 3 cases where children accompanied parents in begging were brought to the attention of HRCM in 2013.

The committee may wish to ask the government

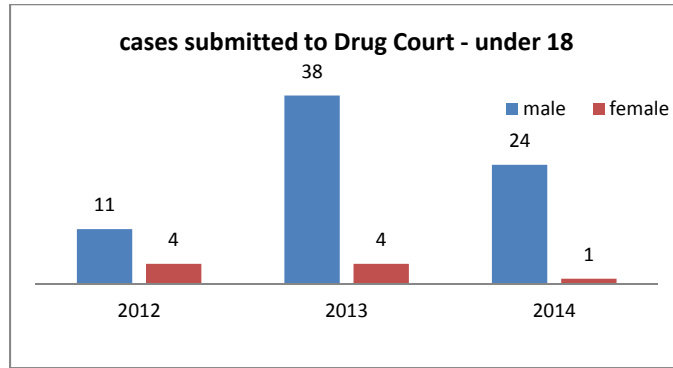
- 1. The measures taken against those who fail to follow the procedures specified in Employment Act in recruitment of children (parental consent, maintenance of register etc)**
- 2. Measures taken to eliminate exploitation of children in begging.**

Illicit use of narcotics drugs and psychotropic substances (Article 33)

103. The enactment of the new Drugs Act (17/2011) brought substantial changes to the legislative framework. This Act provides measures to motivate drug dependent persons to treatment and rehabilitation programmes with a view to reduce or eliminate their dependency on drugs and to facilitate their reintegration into the community as responsible citizens.
104. National Drug Use Survey conducted in 2011/2012 found that majority of drug users belong to age group of 15-19 years, and most of them unemployed and unmarried which could be due to lower age of onset for consuming drugs.¹⁷⁸ The report also noted that considerable population of drug users in the country were IDUs (Injecting Drug User) with a grave possibility of spread of HIV and transmittable diseases.¹⁷⁹ Nearly 40 percent of cases of juvenile delinquent cases submitted to JJU and MPS were related to drug offences.¹⁸⁰
105. Drug related offences were the third most common crime reported to Maldives Police Service.¹⁸¹ It predominantly remains as a male phenomenon; with experimentation, peer pressure, for fun being reasons for initiation of drug use¹⁸². Minors are targeted and exploited in trafficking of drugs.¹⁸³. There are no drug treatment services available during the period of remand and

detention.¹⁸⁴Prevalence of drug abuse along with increase in crime rate places youth at high risk of deviant behavior.¹⁸⁵ Knowledge on understanding dynamics of drug use among females is limited.

106. A Drug Court under this Act was established as a policy shift to take reintegration measures instead of punitive action against small scale drug users while reducing the criminal activity associated with drug dependency.¹⁸⁶ The delays faced in access to criminal records, lack of case management software, limited legal officers and lack of capacity building programs are challenges faced by the Drug Court.¹⁸⁷



Drug Court Annual report 2012, 2013, and 2014

107. National Drug Agency (NDA) has the mandate to implement the policies related to Drug Act and decrease or eliminate the problem of drug trafficking and addiction in the country by providing treatment and rehabilitation for the drug users and working in coordination with all the stakeholder agencies. Presently there is no treatment center for children and no specific treatment plan for children.¹⁸⁸ However, NDA takes special measures for children referred to drug treatment and rehabilitation where as they are often put in community rehabilitation program after an Indicative and Dependence Assessment.¹⁸⁹ The capacity of the Community Service Center is 250 clients.¹⁹⁰

| Drug Court order for <18 cases | 2013 | 2014 |
|--------------------------------|------|------|
| community and rehabilitation | | 5 |
| treatment and rehabilitation | 5 | 2 |
| Methadone maintenance | | 1 |
| Individual treatment | | 6 |
| Community rehabilitation | 10 | |

Drug Court Annual report 2013, and 2014

108. Limited facilities available for rehabilitation and detoxification services make it impractical to accommodate increasing demand for such services. A halfway house is in the process of establishment. NPM’s 2014 visit to the Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Center (DTRC) found that that there were 18 males who were under 18 undertaking the program and juvenile girls were accommodated with adult females.

109. In general very few drug users in the country sought intervention or help from a certified treatment centre.¹⁹¹ From 2008 to 2013 a total of 10 children were enrolled in programs conducted by NDA, while 2 children completed community and after care programs.¹⁹² The reason for the high relapse rate include lack of treatment plan and a center for children, peer pressure from other

substance abusers, lack of job availability, stigma from community and family members and pending court cases.¹⁹³

110. Concurrently many remain pessimistic about the effectiveness of the treatment.¹⁹⁴ Budgetary constraints faced by relevant stakeholders persist to be a rationale for inadequate capacity, functioning of existing facilities, formulation of regulations and human resource constraints faced in providing treatment and psychosocial support for clients and their families. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of concrete efforts made by the state institutions to increase client capacity and to improve existing services.

The committee may wish to ask the government

- 1. Work undertaken to implement Drug Act (17/2011) specially those provisions related rehabilitation and reintegration measures for children**
- 2. Measures taken to increase access and availability of rehabilitation services to children specially those residing in islands**
- 3. Measures taken to establish detoxification centers for female drug abusers.**

Trafficking in Children for exploitative purposes (Article 35)

111. Anti-Human Trafficking Act (12/2013) was enforced in 2013. provisions of this legislation includes prevention of human trafficking, prosecution of perpetrators, prescription of harsh punishments as a deterrent, granting protection and assistance, and protection of victims and cooperating with local as well as international NGOs to combat trafficking in persons. Article 12 of the Act defines the act of trafficking in persons, which covers both domestic and transnational trafficking of persons. The offence of trafficking and exploitation, which is designed to capture, inter alia, servitude (including sexual servitude), slavery, and forced labour, forced begging, forced pregnancy, and organ removal is stipulated in Article 13 of this Act. Article 14 of the Act defines the offence of child trafficking and prohibits all forms of conduct covered under Articles 12 and 13 of the Act. There is a presumption in the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act that no child below the age of 18 can consent to any conduct prohibited under the Act.¹⁹⁵ The provisions related to human smuggling absent in this legislation is reflected in the current legislative agenda of the government.

112. The Articles 18, 19, 20 of Special Provisions Act to Deal with Child Sex Abuse Offenders (12/2009) (Law no: 12/2009), stipulate offences of child prostitution, forced child prostitution, the use and forced use of children in the production of pornographic material, and sexual exploitation of children.

113. The government is yet to endorse all the procedures required under Anti-Human Trafficking Act; namely procedure on victim identification, case management of potential victims, providing protection to potential victims, identification on areas of protection, and completion of services to victims. It is imperative to note that prompt endorsement of these procedures would facilitate speedy implementation of this Act. Time frame specified in this Act to endorse these regulations/standards has elapsed.

114. Anti-Human Trafficking oversight committee to combat human trafficking was established, as specified in the Anti-Human Trafficking Act. This Committee is mandated to advice the President, formulate programs at national level, monitor the implementation of policies and programs, provide

assistance to NGOs working in this field, coordinate with international agencies to acquire technical assistance and facilitate coordination with all stakeholders to create awareness of this issue. MoLG with the responsibility to provide psychosocial support to the victims of human trafficking is not considered as a stakeholder in this committee. Presently, failure to maintain the quorum of the Committee remains as one of the core challenges faced to carry out its mandate.

115. The mandate of anti-human trafficking was realigned from one ministry to another during this reporting period. In 2012, Ministry of Gender, Family and Human Rights had the mandate to strategize the management of Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan. With the enactment of Anti-Human Trafficking law in 2013, the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) was mandated to carry out the function of combating human trafficking issue. However, with revision of the mandate of MYS in June 2014, by the President's Office (PO), the function of combating human trafficking was transferred to Ministry of Economic Development (MED).¹⁹⁶ Additionally, this change is not yet reflected in the aforementioned Anti-Human Trafficking oversight committee established to combat human trafficking.
116. The mandate of Anti-Human Trafficking and victims support was under the Ministry of Gender, Family and Human Rights in 2012, (prior to endorsement of Anti-Human Trafficking Act in 2013) hence to maximize resource constraints faced, ministry decided to share safe house for trafficking victims in the shelter designated for victims of domestic violence.¹⁹⁷ Although this arrangement no longer exists, the Anti-Human Trafficking oversight committee endorsed the Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan in March 2015 which encompasses establishment of shelter for victims of human trafficking and is in process of identifying a location to establish this safe house.¹⁹⁸
117. From 2008 to 2014 MPS investigated 11 human trafficking cases related to minors and a total of 46 cases (inclusive of both adults and minors) were sent for prosecution from 2008 to 2014.¹⁹⁹
118. The fact that LRA has initiated the establishment of Anti-Human Trafficking Unit is a positive development.²⁰⁰ Lack of financial and human resources appeared to be one of the fundamental challenges faced in the establishment of the required institutional mechanisms needed to combat human trafficking.
119. With the support and assistance from International Organization for Migration (IOM) capacity building programs on anti-human trafficking were conducted to all relevant stakeholders dealing with the issue. However, such programmes are not sustained but cannot underscore their importance regularly to facilitate and expedite structural reforms needed to address the issues arising from human trafficking and to combat human trafficking.
120. Former Minister of Gender, Family and Human Rights, Aishath Azima Shakoor in 2013 acknowledged the use of children as in sex work. In her statement on Children's Day (2013) said "The abuse of children is on the rise. Children being used as sex workers, where the children are sent to places as a means to pleasure people and to gain an income from such a trade, this is being practiced in the Maldives today. Both boys and girls are being used in this trade".²⁰¹ The use of females forced into commercial sex work remains as an area that needs a further study.

The committee may wish to ask the government

- 1. Statistics on child victims of human trafficking from 2008 to 2013**
- 2. Statistics on use of children in prostitution (2008 to 2013)**
- 3. Work done to establish the Anti Human Trafficking Unit in Labour Relations Authority**

4. Measures taken to implement Anti-Human Trafficking Act (12/2013) specially the provisions related to providing protection and rehabilitation measures

Sexual Exploitation (Article 34)

121. It has been 5 years since the ratification of Special Procedures for Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse Act (Law 12/2009), and government has fallen short to compile and publish child sexual offenders registry although it is specified under Article 57 of the Act. Although huge numbers of cases are lodged on child abuse, very few gets prosecuted and convicted.²⁰²
122. The issue of children getting re-victimized and continuously abused needs to be addressed and ensure efficiency of systems established to remove the child from the environment of abuse. The limited capacity of the state to accommodate abused children under state care needs to be resolved urgently.²⁰³ Police officers working in atolls are not aware if there is a written procedure put in place to prevent victims of child sexual abuse from further re-victimization.²⁰⁴ HRCM is aware that the authorities sometimes treat victims of sexual abuse as perpetrators.^{205,206,207} The general public has little faith in the system for providing justice and taking appropriate action by the relevant authorities and therefore sometimes abstains from reporting such cases to the authorities.²⁰⁸
123. Child prostitution is an alarming issue faced by children of both sexes in Maldives. This issue is often reported in the media often informed by the police.²⁰⁹ There are reports of children transported to the capital, Malé, from other islands for educational reasons or domestic service being subjected to sexual abuse.²¹⁰ However, it is not clear if any of these cases were prosecuted.²¹¹

The committee may wish to ask the government

- 1. Status of implementing the Special Procedures for Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse Act**
- 2. Actions to prevent children from sexual abuse and child prostitution.**
- 3. Steps taken to prevent re-victimization of sexually abused children.**

Other forms of Exploitation (Article 36)

124. Many gangs in Maldives exploit underage children and involve them in criminal activities to gain monetary and material benefits to the gangs.^{212,213} Some of the most dangerous gangs in the capital utilize children between the age of 7 to 9 years. Those children earn money from gang activities and family members of some of these children encourage them by not questioning them.²¹⁴

The committee may wish to ask the government

- 1. Actions taken to stop children from joining gangs and taking part in gang related criminal activities.**
- 2. Legal actions taken against those who recruit under aged children to gangs.**

Rehabilitation of Child Victims (Article 39)

125. Although child abuse and exploitations occur throughout the Maldives, currently there is no appropriate system laid down to remedy victims of child abuse and exploitation.²¹⁵ Officials working with the children in the atolls as well as parents of child victims are unaware of existence and necessity of such a system. Also, there are no appropriate rehabilitation programs available for child abuse victims.²¹⁶

126. Ministry of Law and Gender believes that the current Child Rights Act (9/91) needs to be changed in order to protect children from abuse and ill treatment, and the ministry is currently drafting a new bill which gives more emphasis on protecting children from abuse and ill treatment within the family.

The committee may wish to ask the government

- 1. Measures taken to implement necessary legislative changes to protect children from all forms of abuse.**
- 2. Rehabilitation programmers for child victims to help the victims to recover and reintegrate into the society**

Juvenile Justice (Article 40)

127. Report published by Juvenile Justice Unit (JJU) under Ministry of Home Affairs show that number of children involved in criminal activities are increasing at an alarming level.²¹⁷ However the state has fallen short addressing the root cause of the problem and taking effective measures to address this issue. There are no correctional facilities for the children in conflict with the law and the rehabilitation programs are mostly one on one session conducted by JJU. Disaggregated data of juvenile delinquents who entered the available rehabilitation programs and return to the society are not maintained.

128. Maldives has adopted restorative justice system in prosecuting Juvenile delinquents and follow basic principles of UN guidelines in administering juvenile justice. Even though juveniles are sentenced, depending on the nature of crime, implementation of the sentence for a minor can be delayed for a set period of time or until they reach 18 years, on condition of substantial changes in behavior.²¹⁸ Although, human resource, rehabilitation and support programs remain limited for proper functioning of a juvenile justice system; the lack of political will along with resource constraints impact addressing these issues.

129. Despite existence of a longstanding moratorium, a regulation on procedures for death penalty was recently introduced and its enforcement for minors is delayed until 18 years of age. The age of criminal responsibility is 15 years and minors can be held for *Hadd* offences. Bills such as Criminal Procedure Code, Evidence Bill and Witness Protection needs to be enacted and state is yet to establish an independent forensic institution to provide accurate information to make an impartial decision on matters concerning administration of death penalty.²¹⁹

130. Status offences such as running away, smoking, hanging out late at night without parents, etc. are seen as an offense by some agencies. Currently, there is no efficient and effective system to deal minors who are involved in status offences and often they end up becoming an offender.

The committee may wish to ask the government

- 1. Status of Evidence Bill, Witness Protection Bill, Criminal Procedure Code and Juvenile Justice Bill.**
- 2. Coordination amongst stakeholders dealing with child abuse and rehabilitation measures of victims.**
- 3. Availability of counseling facilities at educational institutions.**
- 4. Establishment of independent forensic institution**
- 5. Status of abolishing death penalty for minors.**

6. Measures to address status offences.

Detention and punishment (Article 37)

131. Corporal punishment is not prohibited at home, alternative care settings, day care centers, schools and penal institutions. At home most disciplinary measures involve depriving children of TV, playtime etc. Some parents still do employ methods such as beating and tying up their children in order to discipline their children.²²⁰ There are reports of parents giving harsh punishment to children. Presently HRCM is investigating human rights violations of a case of 3 year old boy named Mohamed Ibthihaal who was found dead with serious injuries to his body.²²¹ Disciplinary measures in schools includes: filling up a disciplinary form, suspension, detention (waiting after school), writing lines, and student kept standing/in a corner.
132. Juveniles are mostly arrested for drug related crimes. Other crimes include stealing and vandalism. Police refrain from arresting child offenders unless it is a major crime. On minor crimes such as traffic violations the children are let go after giving advice.
133. Police face difficulties due to lack of female officers when they need to conduct a strip search and seek assistance from the FCPU.
134. There are no real measures in place to detain children away from adult offenders. While they are given separate cells, the cells are all in the same block. There are no separate detention facilities for children under investigation and also serving a sentence.²²²

The Committee may wish to ask the government

- 1. Measures taken to establish detention centers for children**
- 2. Measures taken to address corporal punishment of children**
- 3. Measures taken to prevent child abuse**
- 4. Measures taken to increase human resources and build capacity of caretakers of children in detention, investigating officers and prison officers as duty bearers for children.**

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