



**Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the  
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

**Combined second and third periodic reports of States parties**

**Maldives\***

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\* The present report is being issued without formal editing.  
For the initial report submitted by the Government of Maldives, see CEDAW/C/MVD/1, which  
was considered by the Committee at its twenty-fourth session.

## Ministry of Gender, Family Development and Social Security

### Government of the Republic of Maldives Male'

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## **Forward**

After the submission of the initial CEDAW report in the year 2000, due to various constraints the government of Maldives was unable to prepare the second report before the end of the reporting period. Hence, this is a combined second and third periodic report that reflects the major areas of progress in eliminating discrimination against women in Maldives since the initial report.

This report is organized into two main sections, the first part comprises of an overview of developments during this reporting period towards achieving the recommendations from the CEDAW committee, and a second part consisting of the progress report on each of the 16 Articles in the CEDAW.

The most important development with regards to implementing CEDAW in Maldives this reporting period is the decision to adopt the optional protocol. The paper work is underway to sign and forward it to the CEDAW committee.

The report could not have been compiled without the valuable contributions from all the line ministries and organizations like, the Ministry of Health, Attorney General's Office, Family and Child Protection Unit of the Department of Police Services, Ministry of Justice, Human Rights Commission, UNFPA and UNDP. Their valuable contributions to this report are greatly appreciated.

## **OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS THIS REPORTING PERIOD**

### **Part One**

#### **A. Executive Summary (highlighting new measures and progress in various areas since initial report, especially areas mentioned in CEDAW's concluding comments)**

Since promoting gender equality is a slow process and major barriers to equality are within the fabric of the culture, infiltrating gender concerns into the society is a challenge. However Maldives has seen some very positive changes in promoting gender equality since the submission of the initial report in the year 2000. Major areas of progress are in institutionalizing women' development; building a support service for victims of domestic violence and violence against women (DV/VAW); reproductive care of women and engendering the judicial system.

As part of government efforts towards mainstreaming a Gender Management System has been established and the major structures of the system is already functioning. However we need to strengthen these

structures and provide training for the parties involved in these structures for a more efficient output. Still it is difficult to get the commitment of all the stakeholder agencies and officers in gender mainstreaming because even though there is increased dialogue with regards to gender issues most of it happens to be negative.

A significant amount of work has been done on establishing a rudimentary support service for victims of DV/VAW in Maldives. This is the most overt form of discrimination against women found in Maldives. The major reason behind this is perhaps the negligent judicial system both in the form of legislation and implementation. For example though women's rights has been agreed upon as an area that need greater scrutiny and work there has never been a special legislation formulated to address women's rights. Similarly the absence of a temporary refuge or a support service for such victims plays a major part in upholding this discriminatory behavior towards women.

Most of the work to strengthen action on DV/VAW in Maldives has been on building the human resource base necessary to build a support system. Now social workers have been trained within the community and gender based violence counselor training have been provided to nurses at the main hospital in Male' and other major referral hospitals in the atolls, to act as on the spot counselors for those victims who have been identified by the doctors.

Considerable progress has also been made in the area of reproductive health. A number of surveys have been conducted in assessing the current situation and in expanding access and improving quality of care of RH services. This is an area that the government has been continually working on for the past 2 decades. The rapid decrease in maternal mortality and infant mortality are testimony to the amount of time and resources spent on improving reproductive health. Additional efforts are required to strengthen RH information and services to adolescents and young people although an adolescent health programme and a Youth Cafe' has also been established to provide youth friendly services to adolescents and a life skills development project for the youth is currently underway.

The surveys conducted have identified gaps in these areas and pointed the direction for future action.

Similarly a lot of advocacy and behavior change communication is being carried out on reproductive health by means of leaflets, posters, docudramas and information forums, Many of these initiatives are targeted at the remote atolls.

On the judicial front the Attorney Generals Office is reviewing the criminal justice system for reform and a special focus is given to gender

issues. The consultants have produced a report with a number of recommendations to address the current gender issues in the criminal justice system.

Significant progress has been made on efforts towards eliminating discrimination against women, but it would probably take a lot longer to get a full commitment from everybody involved in promoting gender equality and even longer for everybody to act on it together and mainstream gender concerns.

**B. Response from the Maldives to CEDAW's concluding comments from initial report.**

**1. RESERVATIONS, REPORTING, OPTIONAL PROTOCOL**

**1.1 Principal Areas of Concern and Recommendations of the CEDAW Committee**

*a) The committee is concerned with the reservations of article 7 (a) and 16 entered by the State party to the Convention. It is concerned that the reservation to article 7 (a) of the Convention on political participation supports the retention of legislative provisions excluding women from the office of the President and the Vice-President of the country. The Committee urges the Government to withdraw these reservations and to repeal legislation limiting women's political participation in public life.*

*b) The Committee urges the Government to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention and to deposit as soon as possible its instrument of acceptance of the amendment of article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the time of meetings of the Committee. The Committee requests that the Government respond in its next periodic report to the specific issues raised in these concluding comments. It further request the Government to provide in its next report an assessment of the impact of measures taken to implement the Convention*

*c) The Committee request the wide dissemination in the country of Maldives of the present concluding comments in order to make the people of Maldives and particularly government administrator and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken with regard to de jure and de facto equality for women and for the future steps that are required in that regard. It also requests the Government to continue to disseminate widely, and in particular to women's and human rights organization, the Convention and its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the results of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".*

## 1.2 Action to Date

### a) RESERVATIONS

1.2.1 Informal consultations on questions of changing the relevant article of the Constitution have been held among members of the Gender Equality Council (GEC) in order to advocate a positive change. The president has also recommended to revise article 34 and 52 in his reform agenda proposed to the ‘Special majllis’ (a special body elected by the citizens to reform the constitution).

1.2.2 A series of regional workshops to create legal literacy and encourage women's political participation were held throughout the country.

### b) OPTIONAL PROTOCOL

1.2.3 Administrative and legislative state obligations imposed by the Protocol were studied by the Attorney General's Office and now the necessary logistics to adopt the optional protocol by the Maldivian government is underway.

### c) DISSEMINATION OF CONCLUDING COMMENTS

1.2.3 The Concluding Comments were sent to the President's Office and the Attorney General's Office for information, and guidance on how to structure the implementation process.

1.2.4 The reports of Maldives to the CEDAW Committee, both the official report and the shadow report, as well as the Concluding Comments have been published.

1.2.5 The published report with the Concluding Comments was widely circulated to all ministries and major departments for information/action.

1.2.6 The government has invited a CEDAW expert to visit Maldives and conduct training/information sessions for 90 person, senior government officials, gender focal points, and staff of the former Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Security to:

a) Create awareness of the obligations of the state in ratifying CEDAW and to develop their skills to apply the principles of the Convention in planning for the advancement of women in the Maldives.

b) Provide information on the procedures by which the Convention is monitored by the CEDAW committee at the United Nations level

c) A Draft Plan of Action was developed during this consultation.

1.2.7 A forum on the convention CRC and CEDAW was also held for senior officials of the key stakeholder offices and government ministries by the newly formed Human Rights Commission of Maldives in early 2004.

1.2.7 CEDAW discussed in general at all advocacy workshops by the Ministry of Gender, Family Development and Social Security.

### **1.3 Priority Action Required**

#### **a) RESERVATIONS**

1.3.1 Review and reform all policy, legislation and administrative areas in conformity with the CEDAW Convention.

1.3.2 Remove all reservations to CEDAW.

## **2. LAW, POLICY AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM**

### **2.1 Principal Areas of Concern and Recommendations of the CEDAW Committee**

*d) The Committee regrets that there is an absence of an effective machinery to enforce the rights recognized by the Constitution and claim remedies.*

*e) The Committee is also concerned that the constitutional provisions on fundamental rights do not include non-discriminations on the ground of sex.*

*The Committee urges the Government to incorporate a provision against sex discrimination into the Constitution and to provide for the effective enforcement of fundamental rights.*

### **2.2 Action to date**

#### **d) MACHINERY TO ENFORCE THE RIGHTS RECOGNIZED BY CONSTITUTION AND CLAIM REMEDIES.**

2.2.1 A Human Rights Commission of Maldives (HRCM) was established in 10 December 2003. It is an independent and autonomous statutory body created by a Presidential Decree. HRCM's main objective is to protect, preserve, and promote human rights in the Maldives in accordance with the Islamic Jurisprudence and the constitution of the Maldives as well as regional and international treaties and covenants ratified by the Maldives.

The Attorney General's Office has been conducting consultations on the criminal justice system of the Maldives with two international consultants. One of the key areas of consultation is on gender issues in the criminal justice system and a draft discussion paper has been formulated for the production of a strategic plan for reform of the criminal justice system. One of the major areas looked into was gender concerns in the current criminal justice system and made a number of recommendations for reformation.



e) CONSTITUTION TO INCLUDE NON-DISCRIMINATION ON THE GROUND OF SEX

2.2.2 A National Policy on Women/ Gender Equality has been forwarded to the cabinet for approval. The policy is being reviewed by a special committee appointed by the cabinet before formal adoption of the policy by the government.

**2.3 Priority Action Required**

d) CONSTITUTION TO INCLUDE NON-DISCRIMINATION ON THE GROUND OF SEX

2.3.2 Legally adopt (in the Constitution or through legislation) the definition of “discrimination against women” as specified in the CEDAW, to facilitate and legitimize broader and uniform understanding of the term within the state.

2.3.3 Adopt the National Policy on Women/ Gender Equality.

2.3.4 Monitor application of laws/ law enforcement to identify any gender discrimination.

2.3.5 Incorporate the principles of CEDAW into the national legislation.

2.3.6 Ensure equal access to justice based on the process of substantive equality.

**3. TEMPORARY SPECIAL MEASURES**

**3.1 Principal Areas of Concern and Recommendations of the CEDAW Committee**

*f) The Committee notes that the Government has not yet introduced temporary special measures according to article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention’s to improve women’s access to higher education, decision-making positions and legislative bodies at the national and local levels.*

*The Committee notes with concern that early marriage and domestic responsibilities contribute to high dropout rates for girls.*

*The Committee urges the Government to introduce temporary special measures in a short-term and long-term framework. It request the Government to combine them with public awareness and legal literacy programmes that challenge sexual stereotypes and recognize women’s right to equality. The Committee urges the Government to give priority to developing such programmes in a context where there are high literacy levels in the country.*

### **3.2 Action to date**

3.2.1 Existing gender gaps in women's access to higher education, decision-making positions and legislative bodies have been identified by the Ministry of Gender, Family Development and Social Security. Two advocacy materials have been produced highlighting the existing gender gaps in all areas in Maldives which was widely distributed to all the government ministries and offices.

3.2.2 A certificate course on population, gender and reproductive health is being produced to be taught at the Maldives College of Higher Education.

3.2.3 A project by the name of 'Employment Skills Training Project' is being conducted by the Ministry of Employment and Labour to reduce the gap between employer demand for qualified workers and the supply of appropriate qualified Maldivian labour. One of the major activities of this project is providing vocational trainings for school leavers for identified jobs in the job market. The project aims to provide at least 40% of the training opportunities to females.

3.2.4 Annual career guidance fairs are held for school children by the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports with emphasis on reducing job stereotyping.

3.2.5 To increase self-employment opportunities a low interest loan scheme for women was conducted for the population of Male', the capital island. A similar scheme for the needy is now being conducted by the national bank, Bank of Maldives, for the needy.

3.2.6 A study on knowledge, attitudes and behavior with respect to gender and reproductive health is going to be conducted in 2005.

3.2.6 Three women have completed the leadership training course held in the capital, Male under a special project. The course is a year long course primarily to train people for high positions like the island chief and similar posts. The project will continue to train 3 women for the duration of the project.

3.2.7 Focused sensitization and orientation workshops held for employees and employers of mass media. These were 2 day workshops held primarily focused on the role of mass media in promoting positive images of women and eliminate stereotypical images.

3.2.8 A project on the role of mass media on mainstreaming population, gender and reproductive health is being conducted at the Ministry of Information, Arts and Culture. The local national television and radio stations work under this ministry. Under this project all the programmes and advertisements of the TV and radio are reviewed for sensitivity on the

above mentioned issues and new programmes are being developed to address these issues.

### **3.3 Priority Action Required**

3.3.1 Introduce temporary special measures like an affirmative action or a quota system in a short-term and long-term framework to remove the identified gaps.

3.3.2 Study/examine reasons for existing gender gap.

3.3.4 Gender sensitize all staff of Maldives College of Higher Education as well as in-service teachers both in Male' and the Atolls.

3.3.5 Provide a series of TOT workshops to conduct gender sensitization workshops for teachers.

3.3.6 Provide short training programmes for management staff to promote gender capacity in schools

3.3.7 Provide gender sensitization to all students through curriculum areas.

3.3.8 Provide safe and affordable accommodation for students in islands where secondary/higher education is offered.

3.3.10 Conduct social education/ life skills development programmes for women

3.3.11 Training (on leadership, management, diplomacy) women for higher positions (decision-making level)

3.3.12 Study working practices within government departments for historical and existing discriminatory practices. Based on identified negative practices, plan, adopt and implement, together with NGOs and the private sector, measures to eliminate discrimination.

3.3.13 Provide diplomatic training to more women

3.3.14 Strengthen work experience programmes for students

3.3.15 Introduce labour laws (address issues of safe working environment, working hours, job security, non-discrimination, retirement age, benefits etc.)

## **4. HEALTHCARE AND FAMILY PLANNING**

### **4.1 Principal Areas of Concern and Recommendations of the CEDAW Committee**

*The Committee notes with concern that the health and nutrition of girls suffers after puberty and that maternal mortality and morbidity rates and the mortality rate of girls under age five remain at unsatisfactory*

*levels. The Committee is also concerned that patriarchal and stereotypical attitudes have a negative impact on women's health and nutrition.*

*The Committee calls upon the Government to obtain information on the causes of maternal mortality, malnutrition and morbidity and the under-five mortality rate of girls, and to develop programmes to address those problems.*

#### **4.2 Action to Date**

4.2.1 A 'Reproductive Health Baseline Survey' was conducted in the year 1999 by the Ministry of Health and the final report on the findings was prepared at the latter part of the year 2000. Follow-up survey on reproductive health was also conducted in the first quarter of 2004. The survey findings include 34% contraceptive prevalence rate, a 35% unmet need for all contraceptives, minimal knowledge on sexually transmitted infections (STIs) both by health workers and the general public except for HIV/AIDS, that 85% of births are attended by skilled professionals and that 63% of Maldivians have access to reproductive health services and antenatal care.

4.2.2 The Ministry of Information, Arts and Culture (the national TV and Radio works under this ministry) is conducting a project for the mass media to build awareness on population, gender and reproductive health under which special programmes have been developed to address these issues.

4.2.2 A 'Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey' was also conducted by the Ministry of Health in the year 2002. The findings suggest that reducing fertility should be given special consideration to reduce the effect of past high fertility; that since there is a high number of children under 5 and a high number of women in the reproductive age group maternal and child health interventions should receive special attention; and that enhanced life expectancies and the higher divorce rates imply a need for social support for the widowed and divorced females. The survey findings also include a need for reducing school drop out rates and that educational status is higher among females.

4.2.3 An annual health report is also being produced by the Ministry of Health since the year 1998. These highlight annual statistics and reasons behind infant mortality, maternal mortality rates (a case by case analysis and discussion of maternal deaths), under 5 mortality, and morbidity trends. They also provide information on health services developments.

Maternal death audits have been carried out for every maternal death that occurred since 1997. A consolidated report of all these deaths was published in 2004. Many recommendations from these audits have been

implemented and hence have lead to a reduction in the number of deaths that occur every year.

4.2.4 A reproductive health strategy has been developed and is in the final stages of approval. The strategy was developed with extensive consultations with the government and non-governmental stakeholders relating to reproductive health to address the current reproductive concerns. The strategy is expected to be finalized before the end of this year.

### **4.3 Priority Action Required**

4.3.1 Formulate programmes and projects to address the findings of these surveys and reports.

4.3.2 Consolidate data from different sources into a central database

4.3.3 Strengthen health service provision (Atolls) through mobile team approach

4.3.4 Awareness & education on use of contraceptives

4.3.5 Access to contraceptives

## **5. EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW**

### **5.1 Principal Areas of Concern and Recommendations of the CEDAW Committee**

*The Committee calls upon the Government to obtain information on comparative jurisprudence seeking to interpret Islamic law in harmony with international human rights standards and the Beijing Platform for Action.*

### **5.2 Action to Date**

5.2.1 A project named 'Engendering Legal Framework in the Maldives', has been formulated to address this issue and it is currently being considered for funding by UNFPA. The specific objectives are reviewing the existing laws and customs to identify gender sensitivity and do a comparative study with the legal system of other Muslim countries.

### **5.3 Priority Action Required**

5.3.1 Put in place an effective mechanism to guarantee Constitutional rights and remedies either through legislation or regulation and its' effective application.

5.3.2 Introduce compulsory counseling procedures for social crimes

## **6. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIP**

### **6.1 Principal Areas of Concern and Recommendations of the CEDAW Committee**

*The Committee urges the Government to introduce minimum age of marriage laws and other programmes to prevent early marriage in line with the obligations of the Convention.*

*The Committee is concerned that family laws discriminate against women and notes with concern the high divorce rates, which have an adverse impact on women and children.*

*The Committee urges the Government to enforce the new family law, which tries to address this problem, and to continue its efforts to reform all areas of family law so as to protect the human rights of women.*

### **6.2 Action to Date**

6.2.1 The Family Law introduced on 1st July 2001, states 18 years of age as the minimum age of Marriage with under 18 marriages being allowed as an exception at the discretion of the registrar, based on the present physical development, financial capability and other factors. No Marriages under 18 has been reported since the law came into effect.

6.2.2 This law also tries to address the problem of high divorce and aims to strengthen family by imposing fines in cases of spontaneous divorce by the husbands, as was the practice prior to the Family Law. Divorce is only allowed after exhaustive efforts to reconcile the marriage has been made, and a decision is taken by the Court to approve a divorce. Both husbands and wives now need to go through this procedure to affect a divorce.

6.2.3 An impact analysis research of this family law is currently being conducted by the Ministry of Gender, Family Development and Social Security.

### **6.3 Priority Action Required**

5.3.1 Conduct studies to see whether the principles of Shari'a allow changes with regard to inheritance.

## **7. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

### **7.1 Principal Areas of Concern and Recommendations of the CEDAW Committee**

*The Committee notes with concern the under-reporting of violence against women, including domestic violence and the absence of effective laws and law enforcement and a support system for women victims of violence. It is particularly concerned that violence against women is*

*understood in the community and in the legal system as a private matter rather than as an infringement of human rights and a violation of the Convention.*

*The Committee urges the Government to improve law enforcement measures, enact laws on violence against women, including domestic violence and marital rape, according to general recommendation 19 on violence against women, and work with women's groups to obtain reliable data and provide to the victims of violence. The Committee request the Government to respond to this issue in national plans, based on the Beijing Platform for Action and the Commonwealth Plan of Action. It calls upon the Government to create public awareness on violence against women as an infringement of human rights that has grave social costs for the whole community.*

## **7.2 Action to Date**

Violence against Women (VAW) is a priority area of concern that the Ministry of Gender, Family Development and Social Security (MGFDSS) is currently working on.

7.2.1 Started a database on individual cases of VAW/DV reported to MGFDSS in 2001.

7.2.2 In 2002:

- a) Posters, leaflets and TV/Radio spots have also been produced to create awareness and give more transparency to VAW/DV in Maldives.
- b) A session on DV/VAW has been incorporated into all the gender sensitization workshops.
- c) Two attachments for GAD staff at research institutions working on VAW/DV in Sri Lanka.
- d) Initial training on VAW/DV aimed at setting up a multi-sectoral support system held for Police Officers, Medical Personnel, and officials from the Family Court, NGOs, community activists and former Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Security staff. An outcome of this training was a very comprehensive Action Plan to address VAW/DV in Maldives.
- e) Documentaries/docudramas on VAW/DV in Maldives were also produced.

7.2.3 In 2003 a one-day training on strengthening police action in addressing Violence Against women was conducted by two trainers from the Ottawa Police.

7.2.5 The establishment of a multi-sectoral support system for victims of domestic violence is underway. Currently the focus is on providing the necessary trainings for the staff of stakeholders in this support system like the Ministry of Health personnel, doctors, nurses, police officers, Ministry of Justice personnel, and other community activists like the Women's Development Committees and NGOs.

7.2.6 A project was conducted in the year 2005 to build capacity of the health sector to address VAW/DV in Maldives. The specific activities under the project include:

- a) Focus group discussions with medical personnel in the capital island Male'
- b) Short-term attachment of an international consultant at the national hospital to create a favorable environment so that individuals may be identified as victims of DV/VAW, referred services and receive appropriate, timely and sensitive care.
- c) Gender based violence counselor training workshops for nurses and other health care professionals in the islands

7.2.7 An outcome of the social workers training and the health sector capacity building project is the establishment of a rudimentary support service for victims of VAW/DV. A referral system has been established with the trained social workers, the nurse counselors at the main referral hospital in the capital island and other regional hospitals, and the gender and development section. Informal referral with the Unit for the Rights of the Child, the Family and Child Protection Unit and Society for Health Education, an NGO (for counseling) has also been established with the other referral agencies mentioned above.

7.2.8 Also an information pack on DV/VAW, court procedures on issues like divorce, custody and child support, police procedures and contact information of all the support services available is being produced to be published in early 2005.

7.2.9 A national survey on VAW/DV is to be conducted at the beginning of the year 2005. The survey format and questionnaire has been drawn from the '*WHO Multi-Country Study On Women's Health and Life Experiences*'. The questionnaire has already been translated to the local language and consultative workshops have been held with all the relevant stakeholder offices and agencies to review the translated questionnaire.

### **7.3 Priority Action Required**

7.3.1 Create enabling environment through public awareness, political advocacy, and legal literacy.



7.3.2 Establish a proper multi-sectoral support system to help victims of VAW/DV.

7.3.3 Strengthen the judicial system for greater implementation of the existing laws to support victims of VAW/DV.

7.3.4 Review the judicial system to facilitate the support for victims of VAW/DV.

7.3.5 Strengthen the police in investigating and providing assistance to VAW/DV victims.

7.3.7 Enact law on domestic violence.

## **Part Two**

### **Progress Report on Each Article of the Convention.**

#### Article 1 Definition of Discrimination Against Women

Discrimination against women: distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or the purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

#### **New developments since initial report:**

8 Though the Maldivian government has not repealed the legislation limiting women's political participation, informal consultations have been held with the relevant parties to change this article of the constitution.

#### Article 2 Obligations to Eliminate Discrimination

General policy of non-discrimination as reflected in the constitution; adoption of positive measures; refraining from engaging in any discriminatory activities; modification of laws etc; adoption of social, political, economic and cultural measures to ensure advancement of women; adoption of temporary special measures to accelerate de facto equality including measures aimed at protecting maternity.

#### **New developments since initial report:**

9 The Special Majlis (special body constituted for constitutional reform) that is in charge of reviewing and changing the current constitution, was recently elected by the people of Maldives in the second quarter of 2004. The President's Reform Agenda which was forwarded to the "special Majlis" (elected law reform body) includes these reformations. It is expected that the constitutional provisions on fundamental rights would include non-discrimination on the ground of

sex with minimum reservations to accommodate the Islamic ‘Shari-ah’.

### Article 3 The Development and Advancement of Women

Take all appropriate measures, in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields to ensure the full development and advancement of women.

#### **New development since initial report:**

- 10 The former government body with the mandate to promote women’s development has changed its focus to gender and development, named Ministry of Gender, Family Development and Social Security (MGFDSS) with the focus of mainstreaming gender into all the developmental projects and programmes of the country.
- 11 A gender management system was established to facilitate gender mainstreaming. The main structures of this system are: a) the Gender Equality Council chaired by the President consisting of high officials of all the stakeholder agencies to provide guidance and facilitate the role of the lead agency. b) the gender focal points appointed at all the stakeholder offices and organizations to review and monitor the development projects for gender sensitivity; and c) the lead agency which is the gender and development section of the MGFDSS who would be in charge of overseeing the running and monitoring of this system. The current focus is to strengthen these structures for an effective output.
- 12 The Sixth National Development Plan adopted in 2002 has a special component on promoting gender equality in all areas by mainstreaming gender so that gender issues are considered in the countries national development plans.
- 13 The census of 2000 has been analyzed from a gender perspective by an international consultant. Relevant personnel from the census unit took part in study tours and academic workshops abroad to gain insight into collecting gender desegregated data.

### Article 4 Acceleration of Equality between Men and Women

#### **New developments since initial report:**

- 13 No new developments to report as no temporary special measures have been taken to ensure gender equality.

Article 5 Sex Roles and Stereotyping

Adoption of measures to modify socio-cultural patterns of conduct toward eliminating stereotyped roles for men and women; and ensuring sharing of responsibility in the upbringing and development of children.

**New developments since initial report:**

- 14 Significant increase in the number of women in traditionally men's areas of work like architecture, construction, finance and in the area of tourism.
- 15 Gender sensitization and awareness programmes conducted to officials of various agencies through out the country. Consequently, there is increased dialogue by the general public with respect to gender concerns. There is also greater acceptance of gender issues as legitimate concerns by the general public.
- 16 Specially focused sensitization of the national TV and Radio personnel on gender concerns. Also new TV and Radio programmes developed to increase public awareness of gender issues, male partnership and responsibility.
- 17 A study on knowledge, attitude and behavior (KAB study) with regards to gender and reproductive health is planned to be conducted in 2005.

Article 6 Suppression of the Exploitation of Women

Suppression of trafficking of women and exploitation and prostitution

**New developments since initial report: No new developments to report.**

Article 7 Political and Public Life

Equal rights with men in political and public life.

**New developments since initial report:**

- 18 Three women have been recruited to the leadership course held in Male' for high positions in the islands. This activity is part of a multi-sectoral project (5 year project) by the government on mainstreaming, population, gender and reproductive health. This would be an ongoing recruitment for the duration of the project.
- 19 The new appointments to the cabinet, the parliament and the 'Speical Majlis' includes more women.

Article 8 International Representation and Participation

Equal opportunity to represent governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.

**New developments since initial report:**

- 19 Significant increase in the number of women as part of delegates to international conferences.
- 20 Also significant increase in number of women employed in high positions at the local representative offices of the UN organizations in Maldives such as WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP.

Article 9 Nationality

Equal rights of women and men to acquire, change or retain their nationality and that of their children.

**New developments since initial report:**

- 21 Now children of any age can have their own passports with permission of both parents.

Article 10 Education

Equality in education: career and vocational guidance at all levels, access to same curricula; elimination of stereotypes; scholarship opportunities; access to continuing education; reduction of female drop-out rates; sports and physical education opportunities.

**New developments since initial report:**

- 22 The College of Higher Education data shows that girls enrolling in traditionally male dominated fields like maritime studies, electrical engineering and machining have increased since 2002. The Faculty of Hospitality and tourism Studies data since 2002 show that 48% of the students enrolled in courses at this faculty are girls which could mean that there would be a significant number of girls entering into the tourism sector in the coming years.
- 23 Currently a certificate course on population, gender and reproductive health is being developed for the Maldives College of Higher Education.
- 24 Small or no gender differences in student enrolment rates up to the secondary level. However there are great differences in the number of girls and boys doing higher education.. Government scholarships awarded during the past four years show that only 39% of girls were awarded undergraduate scholarships while, only 38% girls were awarded postgraduate scholarships to do masters and 22% girls got PhD scholarships.
- 25 Vocational trainings are almost exclusively dominated by males except for few courses like the 'safe usage of domestic home appliances course (100% female) and the 'handicraft skilled development fiber

craft course (90% females). During the past decade the number of females enrolled in this type of training has increased from 3% to 13%.

- 26 Even in higher education girls tend to be concentrated in stereotypical fields like the nursing, pre-primary and primary teaching, midwifery, social work and other humanities field.
- 27 No special measures have been taken by the government to increase the number of females doing higher education so far.

#### Article 11 Employment

Elimination of discrimination in all aspects of employment; appreciation of marriage and maternity concerns.

#### **New developments since initial report:**

- 28 Female labour force participation rate is currently half of that of men.
- 29 Employed population by industry and sex still shows that most women are concentrated in sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, and social services provision like education and health. Very few women are found in fishing, tourism, construction, transport and communication sectors.
- 30 The proportion of men and women at the upper decision-making levels of the occupational hierarchy in Maldives show great discrepancies. Only 17% of the female government officials are among the senior officials and only 12% of women are among directors and chief executives. Similarly only 12% and 7% of women are among the department managers and general managers respectively.
- 31 However it is noteworthy that the number of females among the employed population is increasing.
- 32 For the first time women have been recruited by the government to the leadership training course which primarily trains people for high positions in the islands like the island chief and similar positions.
- 33 The Ministry of Employment and Labour is conducting a project to provide vocational training for the school leavers for identified jobs in the job market. The project aims to provide at least 40% of the training opportunities to females.
- 34 A daycare centre for children has also been established by a private party in the second quarter of 2004. A feasibility study was conducted in the latter part of 1998 by the government, which revealed that such a centre would not be feasible for the average population unless

subsidized premises are made available. However, the centre is costly and would not be affordable by the average female worker.

#### Article 12 Equality in Access to Health Care

Equality in the field of health care; access to health care services including family planning; appropriate and free services pertaining to pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period; adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.

#### **New developments since initial report:**

- 34 A number of surveys on reproductive health and multiple indicator cluster surveys have been conducted since 1999. These show high prevalence of anemia among women and especially high among pregnant women. According to the reproductive health base line survey of 1999, only 46% of women took any iron supplements during their last pregnancy and this could be the major reason for the high prevalence of anemia among pregnant women.
- 35 The surveys also show that increased efforts at reducing fertility is required to reduce the effect of high fertility rates in the past, that maternal and child health interventions should receive special attention, the need for social support for the widowed and divorced females and special consideration by the government to reduce school drop out rates in the islands.
- 36 Similarly these surveys also show that there is an unmet need for contraception where women who don't want more children are still not using any modern method of contraception.
- 37 To address these reproductive concerns the national TV and Radio are broadcasting special programmes to create awareness and public discourse on these issues. Also a Reproductive Health Strategy is being developed to address the current RH concerns of the country.

#### Article 13 Social and Economic Benefits

Equal access to social and economic benefits.

#### **New developments since initial report: No new developments to report.**

#### Article 14 Rural Women

Problems faced by rural women and their roles in their families' economic survival including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy; eliminating discrimination against rural women and equality to participate in development planning. Access to health care and family planning and education; participation in self-help groups and community

activities. Access to agricultural credit and other facilities and adequate living conditions.

**New developments since initial report:**

- 38 Three women have been recruited to the leadership course which primarily trains people for high positions in the islands like the island chief and similar positions.
- 39 Workshops on strengthening the work of the Island Women's Development Committees are being held for three atolls each year since the year 2003.
- 40 Ministry of Atolls Development conducted a study on new and old avenues for income generation which also looks into income generation for women in the atolls. The report on this study was officially launched on early September 2004.

Article 15 Equality Before the Law and in Civil Matters

Equality before the law, legal capacity in concluding contracts and administration of property; equal right to mobility and choice of domicile.

**New developments since initial report: No new developments to report**

Article 16 Equality in Marriage and Family Law

Equality rights with respect to marriage and family relations.

**New developments since initial report:**

- 41 Men who wish to forge polygamous unions have to declare their competency in providing for all his wives and children financially before the family court would perform a new marriage. The court would also inform his wife of his wishes and to see if the husband provides for them financially as well emotionally. The court would then decide whether to perform a new marriage based on their findings.
- 42 Although women are allowed to file for divorce on the grounds of violence and other types of abuse, women are granted a divorce in very few cases due to the fact that evidence permissible by court are only confessions from the husband, or two male or 4 female witnesses to the abuse, police reports and to some extent medical records. Forensic evidence and expert witnesses are not allowed. The reforms suggested by the consultants hired by the Attorney General's Office for reviewing the current criminal justice system of Maldives include these changes.
- 43 In child support cases the judge and/or magistrate can order the father's workplace to deduct the child support money and hand it over to the court if the mother complains about non provision. This is now true for both private as well government employees.

## ANNEXE

## Females with one or more children born alive by current age of mother, Census 2000

	1990	2000
	Proportion of females with 1 or + births	Proportion of females with 1 or + births
15 to 19	20%	6%
20 to 24	72%	47%
25 to 29	90%	82%
30 to 34	95%	92%
35 to 39	95%	95%
40 to 44	96%	96%
45 to 49	96%	97%
50 to 54	95%	96%
55 to 59	94%	90%
60 to 64	95%	95%
65+	94%	95%
Not stated	50	41%

## Employed population by Industry and sex, census 1990 - 2000

Industries	1990	
	Male	Female
Agriculture and Forestry	1438	1181
Fishing	11181	317
Quarrying	482	14
Manufacturing	4259	4182
Electricity, gas and water	409	36
Construction	3109	42
Wholesale and retail trade	8332	552
Transport, storage and communication	5024	297
Financing, insurance and business	869	189
Community, social and personal service	8132	3716
Not stated	1623	565



Industries	2000	
	Male	Female
Agriculture and Forestry	1059	1436
Fishing	9181	113
Quarrying	448	25
Manufacturing	4292	6789
Electricity, gas and water	1027	105
Construction	3635	56
Wholesale and retail trade	4810	1048
Hotels and Restaurants	9237	511
Transport, storage and communication	7175	698
Financing, insurance and business	1064	626
Community, social and personal service	9716	8373
Not stated	5707	9114

#### Student Enrolment in Technical Education 1992 - 2002

	Male	Female
1992	97%	3%
2002	88%	13%

#### Student Enrolment in Education by level and sex 1992-2002

	1992		2002	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Pre-Primary</b>	52%	48%	51%	49%
<b>Primary (1-7)</b>	51%	49%	52%	48%
<b>Lower Secondary (8-10)</b>	49%	51%	47%	53%
<b>Higher Secondary (11-12)</b>	65%	35%	55%	45%
<b>Special Classes<sup>1</sup></b>	51%	49%	59%	41%

**Ever married female population by age at first marriage, census 1990 - 2000**

Age at first marriage	1990	2000	
	Number of Females married	Age at first Marriage	Number of females married
Under 13 years	1%		
13 years	3%		
14 years	10%	Under 15 years	6%
15 years	22%	15 years	11%
16 years	18%	16 years	11%
17 years	14%	17 years	10%
18 years	15%	18 years	15%
19 years	5%	19 years	8%
20 years	5%	20 years	10%
21 years	2%	21 years	5%
22 years	1%	22 years	5%
23 years	1%	23 years	3%
24 years	0.40%	24 years	2%
24 years and over	2%	25+	12%
Not stated	1%	Not stated	2%

**Scholarships awarded by the government during the past 5 years**

Level	Male	Female
Diploma	47%	53%
1st Degree	61%	39%
Masters	62%	38%
PhD	78%	22%

**LEGISLATORS, SENIOR OFFICIALS AND MANAGERS BY SEX  
(Census 2000)**

Level	Male	Female
Legislators	63%	37%
Senior government officials	83%	17%
Traditional chiefs and heads of villages	93%	7%
Senior officials of special interest organisations (NGOs)	39%	61%
Directors and chief executives	88%	12%
Production and operation department managers	79%	21%
Other department managers	88%	12%
General managers	93%	7%

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