

UN MALDIVES RESULTS REPORT 2020



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Foreword

In a year dominated by an unanticipated global pandemic, the Maldives was one of the most heavily impacted countries by COVID-19 in the world. 2020 required all of us to think and act differently, and adapt quickly.

Against this backdrop, I am pleased to present the UN Maldives Annual Results Report for 2020.

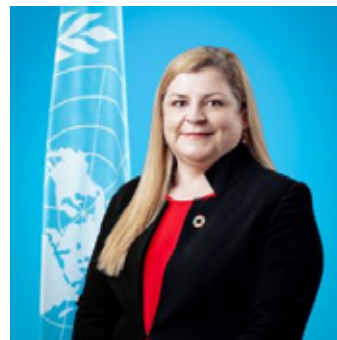
The UN Maldives delivered an agile, robust, and focused support for the people of the Maldives, framed by the UN Socioeconomic Response Framework (SERF) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021). The Framework was developed in July in line with the Government response and recovery measures and plans, and articulates a way forward to address gaps and challenges towards a sustainable recovery.

Generating collective efforts and solidarity in times of unprecedented crisis, the UN supported the Maldives to strengthen health response systems ranging from necessary medical equipment to technical expertise and assistance for emergency preparedness. The UN continued support throughout the year to ensure continuity of essential services and strengthening social safety nets and protection services.

The UN partnered with the Government to mitigate the effects of the lockdown and movement restrictions, ensuring continuity of learning for children across the Maldives by supporting the preparation and training of teachers to adapt to the new normal and for the safe reopening of schools. The UN focused its expertise and efforts to identifying and documenting the economic impact of the pandemic on livelihoods and the adverse effects on micro, medium and small enterprises, the informal sector, and especially on the most vulnerable people in the country, including migrant workers. With this critical data, the UN advocated for support to those most in need, and dedicated our expertise in risk communications to ensure that timely and accurate information was provided to the community on COVID-19 during the crisis.

Our contributions to the response and recovery of Maldives during this difficult year was only possible because of our partnerships with Government, civil society, academia, and a wide range of national and international partners. On behalf of the UN family in Maldives, I would like to express my appreciation to our Government partners, civil society, development partners and the people of Maldives. It is in the most difficult times where our partnerships are tested, and we can confirm the strength and commitment of our partnerships.

Even as we highlight our accomplishments in 2020, we recognize the efforts required in our road to recovery to ensure that we build back better with happier, healthier communities that leave no one behind. The UN reaffirms our commitment to continue supporting the people of Maldives to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for a resilient, peaceful future. I remain optimistic about the positive results which we can achieve, working closely with all in the Maldives who are committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and a better future for all.



Ms. Catherine Haswell

*United Nations
Resident Coordinator in Maldives*

UN Country Team



Photo by: ©Publicity Bureau

• Resident UN Agencies



• Non-Resident UN Agencies



Key Development Partners of the UN Development System in the Country



• Government and Public Institutions

- Attorney General's Office
- Centre for Mental Health (CMH)
- Department of Judicial Administration
- Environment Protection Agency
- Health Protection Agency (HPA)
- Home for People with Special Needs
- Human Rights Commission
- Juvenile Court
- Local Councils
- Local Government Authority
- Maldives Coast Guard
- Maldivian Correctional Service
- Maldives Customs Services
- Maldives Food and Drug Authority
- Maldives Immigration
- Maldives Marine Research Institute
- Maldivian Maritime Law Enforcement Activities
- Maldives Police Services
- Ministry of Arts, Culture and Heritage
- Ministry of Defense
- Ministry of Economic Development
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Environment
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture
- Ministry of Gender Family and Social Services
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Home Affairs
- Ministry of Islamic Affairs
- Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
- Ministry of Transport
- Ministry of Tourism
- Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment
- National Bureau of Statistics
- National Centre for Information Technology
- National Counter Terrorism Centre
- National Drug Agency
- National Institute of Education
- National Social Protection Agency
- Parliament
- Presidential Commission to inquire into Childs Rights Violation
- President Office
- Public Hospitals and Health Centers



• Civil Society

- For Disability Inclusion, technical guidance was received from the following Disabled Persons Organizations:
 - Advocating the Rights of Children (ARC)
 - Beautiful Eyes – for down syndrome
 - Blind and Visually Impaired Society of Maldives (BVISM)
 - Care society
 - Maldives Association of Persons with Disabilities (MAPD)
 - Maldives Autism Association (MAA)
 - Maldives Deaf Association
 - Villijoali
- Hope for Women
- Maldives Red Crescent
- Society of Health Education
- Zero waste



• Private Sector

- Horizon Fisheries,
- Manta Air
- Pharmacies
- Thiba Psychology
- Women in Tech



• State Owned Enterprises

- FENAKA
- Housing Development Corporation
- State trading Organization (STO Medicals)
- Stelco



• Media

- Journalists
- Telecom Providers



• Academia

- Colleges
- Schools
- Universities



• Development Partners and International Donor

- ADB
- IFAD
- World Bank

Chapter One:

Key Developments in the country and Regional Context

The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing global economic crisis, Maldives saw one of the sharpest drops in economic activity globally, as the economy contracted by 30.0% in 2020, which was much more severe than the economic downturns of the 2009 global financial crisis (-6.6%) and the 2004 tsunami (-13.4%)¹. The current development and economic realities of the Maldives are more fragile and uneven than they have been in more than a decade, with the country under high risk of debt distress for the medium term, but also a major spike in unemployment among Maldivians and migrant workers, with women and young people disproportionately impacted. This is coupled with increasing environmental vulnerabilities and social inequalities, with increasing gender inequality, and widening of the gap between the rich and poor, and between the capital and the Atolls.

Because of its high dependency on tourism, vulnerabilities such as loss of employment and loss of wages for both locals and migrants alike have been experienced by small businesses, and resorts having either closed or cut back on staff, with the impact more severe on daily wage earners. The government's longstanding commitment to health and education for all has largely vanquished communicable diseases and illiteracy, but the pandemic has seen the risk of poverty and economic vulnerability re-emerge.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the socioeconomic crisis it has triggered could derail years of national efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The pandemic has exhausted the national budget due to decreased revenues and additional expenditures on COVID-19 response and recovery work resulting from the closure of Maldives' borders and tourism industry to protect the population from the virus.

Consequently, the current level of expenditure by the government on social, health and education sectors are not deemed sustainable in the long run.

Ensuring the stable growth of the economy, and the sharing of its benefits in an equitable manner will be challenged unless the Maldives diversifies its economy, renews efforts for economic and social inclusion of all regions across the country, fosters private sector job creation, builds human capital and skills, and reduce vulnerability by enhancing disaster risk preparedness.

The pandemic highlighted gaps and inefficiencies in social protection systems. Limitations on the inclusion of the most vulnerable, and the absence of social protection for informal and migrant workers demonstrated a serious problem which saw these groups most disproportionately impacted by the severe socioeconomic impacts of the crisis. The pre-existing vulnerabilities of the migrant population in terms of health and socio-economic well-being, including the lack of equal access to basic rights to social protection, health services, and adequate housing worsened during the pandemic. Approximately 60,000 irregular migrants have little-to-no-access to healthcare. Moreover, a large number of migrants are contributing to the informal sector with little to no social protection, and without any coverage under social relief packages.

The pandemic has further exposed the limited reserves and capacity that the country has available to tackle the recovery for a more resilient Maldives, in line with the Government's Strategic Action Plan. In the absence of a meaningful international agreement for supporting countries such as the Maldives to access affordable debt alleviation, and to finance the recovery taking into account a green and inclusive recovery, the country will face significant obstacles in meeting its international obligations.

The entire UN system stands ready to support the Maldives in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the road to recovery ahead. The UN will strengthen its policy support to the government on the economic and social measures to support recovery and establish the conditions for making progress towards SDG achievement. Capacity building and continuous analysis of the situation will complement and reinforce the Government's priorities as identified in the National Response and Resilience Plan (NRRP) to accelerate achievement of Agenda 2030

¹ Extracted from
<https://www.fitchratings.com/research/sovereigns/fitch-downgrades-maldives-to-ccc-05-11-2020>.

Chapter Two:

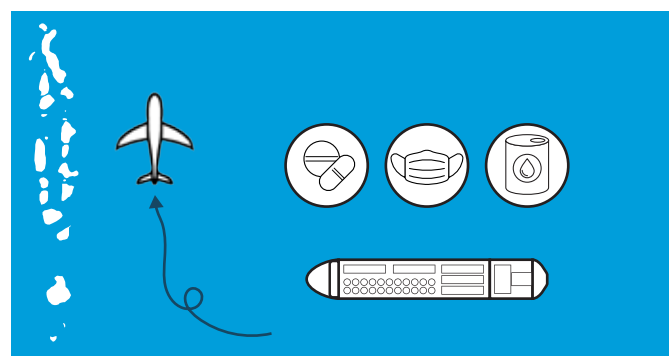
2.1: Overview of the UN Socio-Economic Response Framework

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent global recession lead to disproportionate health and socioeconomic impacts on the Maldives. The sudden halt of international tourism brought an unprecedented economic shock, severely weakening the country's fiscal situation, and threatening economic and developmental gains. Food insecurity has also emerged due to disruptions the pandemic has posed on the global supply chain. The adverse consequences on the social sector and livelihoods have resulted in prolonged learning disruptions for children and large scale job loss.

The UN Maldives has been at the forefront of supporting the government's efforts to recover. Hence, the UN Socioeconomic Response and Recovery Framework 2020-2021 (hereafter the SERF) was developed in alignment with the President's National Resilience and Response Task Force, firmly anchored in national recovery measures, and the Government's Strategic Action Plan (SAP) 2019-2023. The SERF is a living document, based on the outcomes and recommendations of ongoing sectoral and target group assessments and priorities defined by the Government. The UN's SERF therefore has close alignment to the subsequent National Resilience and Recovery Plan 2020-2023, which prioritizes the goals of the SAP for the remaining period of the administration.

COVID-19 has highlighted the underlying vulnerabilities of a tourism-led economic model², which has increased economic growth in the Maldives over the past three decades against the backdrop of a growing migrant population that faces widening inequalities and vulnerabilities, both in terms of income and access to basic services³. Climate vulnerability, such as water insecurity, became an immediate health risk in the atolls has already and forced some islands to depend on emergency water supplies.

The SERF addresses the vulnerabilities of the Maldives as a Small Island Development State (SIDS) with a narrow economic base and a high dependency on tourism⁴; substantial reliance on food, medicine and health equipment⁵, oil imports;⁶ limited local food production; limited fiscal space, reserves, and risk in debt sustainability; climate vulnerabilities and stress on natural resources such as land, water and biodiversity; risks of climate change and disaster induced internal and potential cross-border displacement; a small national workforce with limited skill sets; a heavy reliance on migrant workforce and; geographical dispersion with high costs for service delivery, as well as space constraint, high population density, and limited urban accommodations.



² Defining vulnerabilities in Maldives' development model include lack of macro policy buffers and limited fiscal instruments to mitigate from global economic shocks, risks stemming from lack of inclusion of especially youth and women putting pressure on the labor market, environmental risks due to climate change and exposure to natural disasters, risks associated with water resource management, food security and waste management, World Bank Systematic Country Diagnostic, 2016.

³ Multidimensional Poverty Report 2020.

⁴ Maldives is 3rd the world in vulnerability of tourism dependency after Antigua and Barbuda. UNDP Human Development Dashboard, 2020.

⁵ Maldives relies largely on imported medicine and medical equipment, and the current increase in global demand is delaying the imports of essential medicine and health equipment, WHO Maldives. Reference to SERF 2020.

⁶ The drop in global oil price from average US\$64 per barrel in 2019 to US\$23 in April 2020 reduced the oil import bill, but in 2019, the Maldives spent 8.3% of GDP on fuel import bill. In the long-term, a switch to renewable energy will be a triple win: GHG reduction; new jobs; fiscal space. World Bank, June 2020.

The SERF presents a consolidated response to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Maldives through 31 December 2021. The SERF has therefore replaced the final year of the UNDAF (2016-2020), and for 2021 as an extended year as requested by the Government given the pandemic response. The SERF Joint Work Plan (JWP) became the single overall UN programming framework in the country. The SERF is aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and outlines an integrated support package to protect the needs and rights of those most effected by the pandemic, with particular focus on the most vulnerable groups in the Maldives. The immediate and medium-term strategies are inclusive, transparent, and accountable for human rights compliance. The SERF is guided by national development priorities as contained in the Government's SAP (2019-2023) and complements national response efforts for mitigating the socioeconomic impact of the crisis. The SERF aims to leverage the UN's value with a focus on:

- Promoting a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, using the UN's convening role to consolidate recovery efforts by the government, bilateral and multilateral development partners, CSOs, private sector, academic and media actors;
- Ensuring a human rights-based and gender-sensitive recovery to promote equality, non-discrimination and justice, as well as to address capacity gaps of rights-holders and duty bearers;
- De-coupling growth from carbon emissions and unsustainable consumption, while accelerating commitments to environmental sustainability, nature-based solutions, climate action, and low carbon development, by utilizing UN and other international mechanisms, climate financing and multilateral platforms;
- Supporting adaptation, and digital disruption, by creating a new social contract, an increase in tolerance and peaceful coexistence, and generating more inclusive and sustainable social and economic ecosystems.
- Supporting national level planning, prioritization, and monitoring the progress and impact of recovery measures by strengthening future national planning and SDG alignment; and

- Delivering an integrated UN response, maximizing the resources and expertise of the whole UN development system in support of Maldives' development agenda.

The Maldives' SERF is aligned with the five pillars of the Secretary-General's global UNSERF for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19.



1 HEALTH FIRST:
Protecting health services
and systems during the crisis



2 PROTECTING PEOPLE:
Social protection and
basic services



3 ECONOMIC RESPONSE & RECOVERY:
Protecting jobs, small and medium-
sized enterprises, and the informal
sector workers



**4 MACROECONOMIC RESPONSE AND
MULTILATERAL COLLABORATION**



**5 SOCIAL COHESION AND
COMMUNITY RESILIENCE**



Photo by: ©Kyle Hisham

2.2: Five Priority Areas of the SERF

The UN Maldives Joint Socio-Economic Impact Analysis of COVID-19 was presented to the Government in April 2020. This analysis sets out the projected impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable groups and provides policy recommendations to the Government under each of the 5 pillars of the SERF.

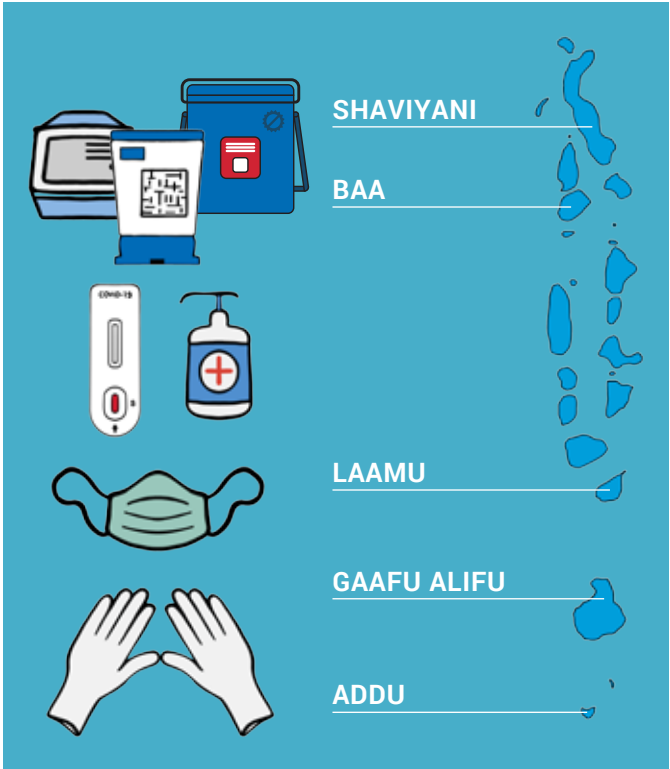
1. Strengthening Health Response, Systems and Capacity (IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, WHO)

Capacity Building to Mitigate the Risk of Health System Collapse:

The Government effectively capitalized on the early global outbreak by focusing on preparedness and planning for the emergency health response. As a result, Maldives was able to delay in the inevitable spread of the virus' local transmission, which enabled advanced logistical arrangements, and community preparation. The UN has been steadfast in supporting the Government's fight against COVID-19, with efforts to conduct risk assessments with the Ministry of Health and to develop plans and procedures for the response and recovery. In efforts to build capacity of the health system to manage severe COVID-19 cases, training was provided to critical care teams. Additionally, assistance was provided to the Government at the early stages of the pandemic to set up points of entry screening in international ports, establish isolation and quarantine facilities, **train and activate 75 Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) and train over 100 health care professionals** in preparation to manage the community spread efficiently given the overcrowding in the greater Male' area. In partnership with the European Union, the UN supported the operationalization of the country's main COVID-19 Medical Facility in Hulhumale'.



Given the centralization of essential services to the capital Male' and the dependency of travel between islands for health care services, support from the UN was provided to upgrade infrastructure and build capacity of healthcare facilities. This included the setup of **2 additional RT-PCR laboratories in the northern and southern regions** and providing **critical equipment to operationalize the ICU facility in 5 regions**.



To strengthen the infection prevention and control measures across the country, the UN supported the establishment and development of in-country testing capacity by providing **over 65,000 testing kits, 25,000 SARS-CoV-2 GeneXpert cartridges for hospitals in 6 atolls** and other essential equipment. The UN assisted the Maldives to protect essential workers by providing **over 50,000 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and 1 million masks** in preparation for reopening of the local tourism sector. In partnership with the European Union, key **healthcare equipment was supplied to prison officers** to avoid the spread of COVID-19 in places of detention. In response to an increase in gender-based violence amid the crisis, the UN ensured **provision of reproductive health supplies to quarantine and isolation facilities**.

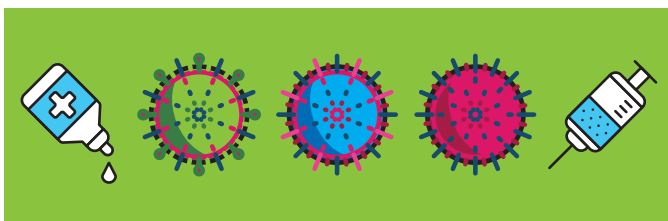


Ensuring Continuity of Lifesaving Essential Services and Strengthening Emergency Preparedness:

UN technical support continued to address the human resource shortages and ensure continuity of essential health services and maternal and child health services. During the lockdown from April to July 2020, the UN supported **mobile medical trips to islands for over 160 pregnant women and over 5000 children who received essential healthcare, including immunization**, through UN supported health facilities. In addition to providing sanitary care products for COVID-19 isolation facilities during the first wave of the pandemic, **over 1000 individuals were reached with information on women's menstrual health through the application – "Siththaa"**, along with distribution of eco-friendly alternatives for menstrual management within 2020. **51 key healthcare providers across the country were trained on infection prevention and control** in partnership with the Maternity Foundation to support pregnant women for a safe and healthy pregnancy.

Nationwide capacity building efforts continued throughout 2020, including trainings on different areas of the COVID-19 response, clinical management and vector control of dengue and chikungunya and awareness programmes across the islands. Taking into consideration the key role of law enforcement officials during the lockdown and implementation of restrictive measures, the UN convened a workshop for police officers on human rights in law enforcement in public health emergencies.

In early 2020, Maldives faced a measles outbreak and the UN **provided over 200,000 measles and rubella vaccines, enabling protection of 2712 people including 743 children,** to support the Government's efforts to contain the outbreak. Over 100,000 people were reached through relevant advocacy and communications on the importance of vaccination. Maldives moved on to attaining a major public health milestone in 2020, as the country was verified for eliminating rubella, making it among the **first two countries in South East Asia Region to achieve measles and rubella elimination ahead of the 2023 regional target.**



Joint efforts with the Government supported an effective response to the mental health crisis that unfolded with COVID-19, by enhancing capacity of the National Centre for Mental Health (CMH) increasing the number of individuals provided with services monthly **from 900 to 1500**. In collaboration with the Maldivian Red Crescent and the Indhira Ghandi Memorial Hospital, **131 females and 69 males across 5 atolls** were trained in psychosocial support services. **Approximately 6000 teachers** have been trained in Psychological First Aid jointly with the Maldives Red Crescent, to better support children to cope with the pandemic. Mental health services reached a **total of 4,012 children and 563 parents and caregivers** with specialized and community-based mental health services and psychosocial support in 2020.



Strengthening Recovery with a focus on Primary Healthcare and Universal Health Coverage:

In efforts to create healthier communities beyond the COVID-19 crisis, the UN supported the Government to develop and launch the nationwide virtual physical activity campaign to encourage healthy eating and active lifestyles during the movement restrictions imposed during the lockdown period. To enable better data collection and utilization in the health sector, the UN provided technical assistance in strengthening of the Health Information System (HIS) and building the technical capacity of the Ministry of Health in terms of data entry and information technology in 2020.

Engagement with the Government continued throughout 2020, to address the migration crisis which was exacerbated during the global pandemic. The UN is providing **technical expertise in the development of the national migrant health policy, coordination framework** and in strengthening access to and inclusivity of basic services for migrant workers.



2. Enhancing Social Protection and Basic Services (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO)

Ensuring Continuity of Essential Services:

In the spirit of leaving no one behind, the UN supported scaled up social protection responses, and ensured continuity of basic services such as food and accommodation, to those affected by the crisis. A total of **691 marginalized families** including persons with disabilities and single mothers were reached with lifesaving emergency food assistance. Assistance was provided to the Government in efforts to ensure temporary shelter and accommodation to **over 300 people stranded in Male' area** due to the lockdown.



Together with the Ministry of Environment, essential water testing kits and co-designing tools for groundwater recharge and rainwater harvesting were provided to **50 communities** to improve water security at island level. An **additional 4550 tons of water storage has been installed in 29 islands**, doubling the water storage capacity. Assistance was provided to the Maldives Meteorological Service for increased water security by providing **6 Automatic Weather Stations (AWS)** under the Green Climate Fund (GCF) project. The UN supported the Government to revise the nationally determined contributions of Maldives to enhance the target of **26% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions**.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions



With the increase in unemployment due to the pandemic, and the reported rise in cases of gender-based violence with the prolonged lockdown, the UN supported provision of free legal aid through local NGOs for 55 survivors of gender-based violence, and over 30 workers on employment matters.



Photo by: ©Publicity Bureau

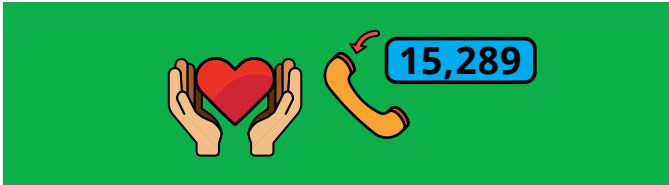
Strengthening Social Safety Nets and Resiliency of Social Service Systems:

COVID-19 hit the most vulnerable the hardest, exposing the fragility of social protection systems and services. With the aim to build back better, the UN continues to support strengthening of related systems. Throughout 2020, the UN provided technical and financial support to the Government to key institutions. This included the Presidential Commission to inquire into Child Rights Violations, to the Juvenile Court, for drafting of key regulations, to the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services and the Maldives Police Service, **to strengthen the functionality and decentralization of their respective helpline systems and to enhance the capacity of over 70 Social Workers** at the Ministry through improved clinical supervision.

At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, an analysis on cases of gender-based violence reported to the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services and the Family Protection Authority was initiated to understand the impact of the pandemic. The UN partnered with the Government to develop a national campaign on preventing sexual violence against children and women and is continuing to support for the establishment of Community Social Groups (CSGs) to prevent and respond to cases of all forms of violence. With the endorsement from the President's Office on establishing Community Social Groups (CSGs), the UN is supporting the drafting of relevant regulations, which aim to enable a long term, sustainable, community-based prevention and response.

As per the analysis of the reported cases gender-based violence and domestic violence during COVID-19 shows an increase in cases from January 2020 (10.9%) to February 2020 (13.2%). However, a decrease was noted from March (8.3%) to May (10.2%) 2020 attributing to the strict

lockdown of Male' City, which could have led to a decrease in numbers reported during this period. With easing of lockdown restrictions, the number of reported cases to relevant authorities started increasing from June 2020 (14.9%) to September 2020 (15.2%)⁷. To facilitate calls for help from victims of violence and vulnerable groups that require assistance joint efforts of UN entities supported the establishment and operationalization of the new social support services hotline (number: 1421) operated by the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services (MoGFSS). According to the Government, **the helpline received 15,289 calls between May 2020 to January 2021.**



In line with the UN’s advocacy efforts, the National Social Protection Agency and the National Bureau of Statistics officially launched the country’s first-ever Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in February 2020. The MPI was critical to enabling evidenced-based policy responses. The Government is currently using the MPI to determine the multidimensional vulnerability of children and their families in the country.

Enhancing Institutional Capacity of Relevant Stakeholders:

To ensure business continuity of essential services, the justice sector agencies were provided with assistance to digitalize their services. **Courts in Male’ and Magistrate Courts in the islands were provided with equipment including 2 higher courts and 5 apex courts, while software was provided to all courts.** The Judicial Service Commission, Employment Tribunal, Attorney General’s Office and the Prosecutor General’s Office were also supported in their digital transformation efforts. Under this initiative, **10 digitized court rooms and digitally connected 500 users in 250 court rooms across the country were established.**

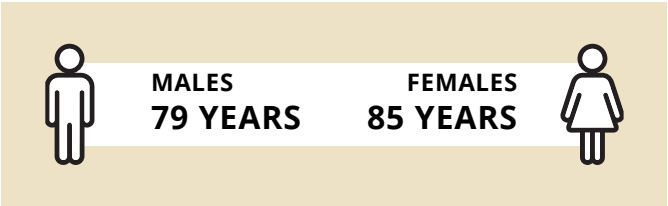
Technical and financial support was provided for the rollout of the new online platform on the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System (CRVS), **supporting trainings on**

⁷ Gender-Based Violence During COVID-19 Pandemic in the Maldives: An Analysis of the Reported Cases
(https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/gbv_analysis_final.pdf)

application use in 5 atolls covering 28 islands. A backlog of 3 years has been updated in 2020, providing and strengthening real time data on births and deaths.

UN technical advice was provided to build institutional and staff capacity of the Prosecutor General’s Office to strengthen the case management structure and introduce the international coding structure of crime statistics reporting.

The UN supported planning for the next round of the Census by providing technical expertise to digitize the census process schedule for 2022. By the end of 2020, maps of Male’ region were fully digitized and census blocks identified. In terms of work with National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), technical support was provided to construct the new set of improved life tables, revealing an **increase in life expectancy of Maldivian males to 79 and females to 85 years.**



conducted trainings on human rights for officers of the Maldives Correctional Service with focus on enforcement, and for civil society with a special focus on international human rights mechanisms in 2020.

3. Ensuring Continuity of Learning (UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF)

Enhancing Capacity for Online Learning:

Schools nationwide were closed abruptly due to the spread of COVID-19 and the greater Male’ area went into a hard 3-month long lockdown from April to June 2020. Considering the lack of preparedness of the education system to adapt to virtual learning and in line with supporting UN global efforts to ensure continuity of learning for children, **a total of 3,885 teachers were trained via UN support, enabling over 54,000 students to learn online. Over 68,000 children were reached through televised lessons.** The UN worked with the Government to identify **95 students with special needs** and provided resources required for home schooling to ensure inclusivity for the most vulnerable.



Supporting the Safe Reopening of Schools:

To facilitate the safe reopening of schools, the UN provided urgently needed Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) supplies to **214 Government schools and 25 healthcare facilities, benefitting a total of 70,000 students and teachers and 1000 health workers and patients.** A total of 44 handwashing stations were also provided to 22 disadvantaged schools across Maldives.

Support continued throughout 2020 to facilitate alternative learning programmes and skills development programmes for young people, however challenges were posed by the global pandemic in ensuring employment following vocational training programmes.



Photo by: ©Publicity Bureau

Strengthening Education Systems:

In terms of technical expertise to strengthen education systems amid and beyond the pandemic, the UN conducted an impact assessment of COVID-19 on education systems, with recommendations shared with relevant stakeholders for ensuring continuity of learning and safe return to schools.

The UN provided technical assistance for the formulation of the Education Bill which was ratified by the Government in 2020 and the Inclusive Education Policy and Strategic Action Plan, paving the way for a more effective, inclusive and resilient education system in the country.

4. Supporting Economic Recovery and Food Security (FAO, IFAD, ILO, IOM UNDP, UNESCO)

Addressing Unemployment and the Impacts on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Informal Sector:

To better understand the impacts of COVID-19 on the economic sector, the UN carried out a socioeconomic response assessment. The results detailed the economic overview, impact of the crisis on employment in the tourism

sector, and the impact of the crisis on MSMEs. Based on the initial findings, the UN supported the Government's formulation of the **Sustainable Economic Empowerment and Development for SMEs (SEEDS) Project** to strengthen food security and local production through incorporation of modern climate-smart practices and build capacity to support the Maldives road to a sustainable recovery.

The UN contributed to securing support from the Government of Japan to the Government of Maldives to support the entrepreneurs in the country to generate greater investments to address and diversify the economy and explore new avenues, contributing to long-term economic growth.

In partnership with the Business Centre Corporation, a series of dialogues aiming to support MSMEs to respond and recover from the impacts of the pandemic were carried out throughout 2020.

The five episodes focused on intelligence and business continuity planning, reducing fixed operating costs to protect solvency, pursuing appropriate financing strategy, maintaining supply distribution channels and market access and transforming business for new and future markets.

The Government is working to address the systematic issues which enable irregularities in the labour market. Technical assistance was provided to the Government to complete Maldivian Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2020 (HIES 2020) and the Salary and Wage Advisory Board in relation to establishing a minimum wage in the Maldives. These measures will be key to regularizing the labour market for Maldivians and migrant workers alike.

Mitigating the Exacerbated Risks on Food Security:

To address challenges related to Maldives' dependency on food imports which has been further impacted by the crisis, the **Maldives Agribusiness Programme (MAP) commenced in June 2020, with an investment of US\$ 12.9 million.** An assessment was carried out with UN support on food security, whilst providing support to strengthen the national capacity to expand production and to introduce new high yielding varieties of traditional crops to the farmers. Support packages were provided to empower **250 small-holder farmers in southern, Laamu Atoll.**

Formulating Solutions for the Large-scale Migration Crisis:

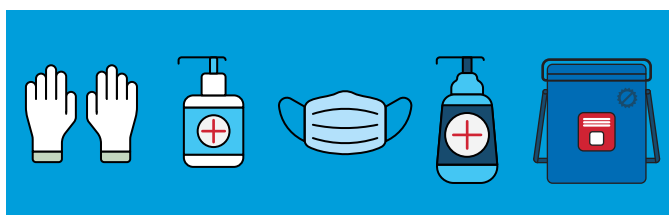
Together with the Maldivian Red Crescent, the UN **advocated for the rights and access to services for the migrant population (comprising close to 150,000)**, including undocumented workers who faced stigma, discrimination, and xenophobia during the pandemic. Migrant workers were disproportionately impacted the virus due to their very poor and congested living conditions.

To better manage and find longer term solutions for the migration issues faced by Maldives, the UN is supporting the Ministry of Economic Development in developing a Migration Policy, Integrated Border Management Strategy, Labour Policy and Labour Market Information System.



5. Advocating for Social Cohesion and Community Resilience (ILO, IOM, UNDP, UNICEF, UNODC, WHO)

Supporting Dissemination of Accurate, Timely Information:



From the very beginning of the pandemic in Maldives, the UN has been an **integral part of the Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) pillar of the Health Emergency Operations Centre**. To improve the health and well-being of the community, the UN has been providing technical and financial support to disseminate accurate information and combat misinformation through communications materials, human resources, and funding.

The UN provided capacity building support to media and journalists in pandemic related reporting, especially for coverage of ethical, child and gender sensitive reporting to

keep the community informed in a timely manner. To enhance the quality of journalism and increase accountability and standards of the sector, the UN also worked with the Maldives Media Council and other media outlets throughout the year.

Assistance to Ensure Continuity of Important Ongoing Processes of Social Dialogue & Democratic Governance:

A social cohesion messaging campaign “**Badhahi**”, aiming to promote tolerance, respect for diversity and national identity was launched in partnership with the Ministry of Home Affairs. The content has had engagement from approximately **4,195 people**.

Technical assistance was provided to the Human Rights Commission of Maldives and the Family Protection Authority to launch the “Rights Side of Life Survey” volume 3 in 2020, in order to understand attitudes, awareness and perceptions of the public on a range of human rights issues in the Maldives. This volume also focused on examining the knowledge, perceptions and prevalence of domestic violence in the Maldives.

Advocating for Community-led Solutions:

As communities are key to flatten the curve, respond to the pandemic and ensure long-term recovery, in partnership with the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment, the Youth Council and Ooredoo Maldives, the 5th social innovation camp “**Miyaheli**” was carried out virtually, in light of the pandemic. Over **70 participants** created innovative ideas to discuss Maldives’ COVID-19 response and recovery efforts themed around education, health, food security and livelihoods and social cohesion.

UN supported the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment (MoYSCE) to conduct the first virtual Youth Camp, with a participation of over 60 young people. Maldives Youth Camp is an annual event hosted by the ministry every year to celebrate the National Youth Day with the aim to promote and enhance youth participation by creating a platform through which young people can advocate on issues related to them. At the camp participants came up with **14 policy recommendations which was then endorsed by the Minister of Youth Sports and Community Empowerment**.



Building institutional capacity for peaceful and just communities:

Support by global and local UN entities to the national response on preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism was provided to national partners towards building more peaceful and just communities. Technical support was provided in the areas of **prisoners' rehabilitation, countering and preventing violent extremism in prisons, capacity building of judges, prosecutors, police and other criminal justice actors**. The UN provided technical support and advice to the Government to the finalization of National Action Plan for Countering Violent Extremism.

Engagement with the Maldivian Correctional Service, Maldives Police Service and related stakeholder included assessing and strengthening national capacities in prisoner's rehabilitation, countering and preventing violent extremism in prisons, and dynamic security. Through the development of assistance tools such as a **Manual for the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners in Maldives, a Prisoner Classification and Risks Assessment Tool, and a Standard Operating Procedure for the Operations of the Special Management Unit**, the UN contributed its expertise towards a long-term, sustainable and transformative shift in institutional capacity.

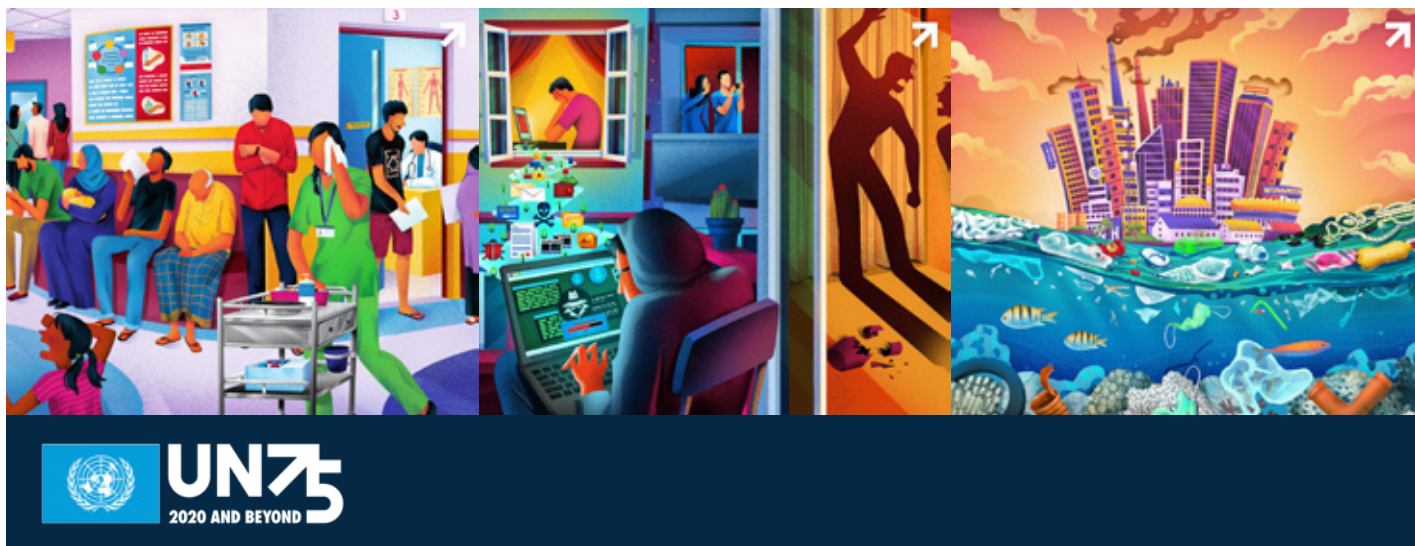
In terms of advancing the expertise of judges, prosecutors, police and other criminal justice actor, a wide range of national and cross-border activities were facilitated and key networks of experts among different States were created, to support joint work towards reaching SDG16.

The UN supported efforts to mitigate human trafficking by helping the Government in strengthening capacity, knowledge and skills of stakeholders on various aspects of victim-centered approach across the four components of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership. The UN is monitoring reported cases of trafficking in persons and have referred two cases in 2020 to Government authorities, facilitating their repatriation and providing essential services such as food, accommodation and medical services.

Together with the Local Government Authority, **108 female candidates contesting for Local Council Elections and the Women's Development Committee's from 3 Atolls** were trained on conflict resolution and leadership.



2.3: Support to Partnerships and Financing the 2030 Agenda.



The UN75 roadmap included 6 broad and diverse public dialogues about the ‘future we want’, bringing together people from across society in a spirit of cooperation and a shared future vision. The campaign supported efforts from the UN and partners for identifying upstream policy support that the government needs in achieving the 2030 Agenda. Activities included government, civil society, schools and academia, community organizations, local representatives, and individual citizens connected in dialogue, to identify common grounds and creative solutions. 2020 also marked the 55 years of membership of the United Nations. Therefore, the UN75 campaign was combined with UN55 celebrations to mark the developmental journey of the Maldives in partnership with the UN as a SIDS country with a strong voice towards climate action, human rights and resilience.

A UN Maldives Joint Communications Plan for 2020 was approved and implemented. Drawing from increased engagement the UN Maldives website was updated and populated with up to date and real time data. The UN Maldives communications were strengthened and systematic to external stakeholders and UN HQ on the pandemic response and normative work. UN joint communications commemorated the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, and Human Rights Day 2020.

The UNCT launched the UN Maldives-Civil Society Forum in May 2020, as a mechanism for creating space for civil society to engage in the 2030 Agenda. The group continues to expand and meets monthly around an SDG theme, and the discussions provide a bridge from civil society to Government and relevant decision makers to provide a more open and inclusive platform for the civil society organizations to share their views and work on various issues. An online learning platform for civil society is in development by UN Maldives, as a result of discussions around the capacity building needs of the CSOs to take forward the Agenda 2030.

The UN agreed on a new vision and approach for the RCO’s support to the UN team for generating a strategic impact on the ground, in line with the UNDS reform. The RCO will provide a one-stop shop whereby the UN and development partners can access SDG programming and policy information, provide real time information on the activities of UN and development actors by sector in the Maldives, and convening of and engaging with government and partners towards progress to achieve the SDGs. The approach was developed in consultation with the UNCT, Regional Directors, Ambassadors, and Donors, Regional and UNHQ, and the Government, and captures the needs and expectations of these stakeholders of the reform, with the objectives aligned to the Management and Accountability Framework.

The two year (2020 – 2022) Joint SDG Fund Project, “Operationalizing the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF)” initiated implementation in mid-2020, following approval by the SDG Fund in June 2020. The project will strengthen the national financial planning and governance of the country, through development of costing exercise on climate finance and social delivery services, followed by the financing strategies, which will support the Government of Maldives, to streamline national budgets, aid coordination, ODA, investments in the most needed sectors in the country, aligned with national priorities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

With collaboration from UNDESA, “2030 Partnership Accelerator”, the Maldives Partnership Landscape Assessment was completed. The global first for this work, the assessment focused on existing and potential partnerships in the country on various thematic areas based on national priorities. The landscape assessment will be a baseline, to further enhance partnerships in the country. Follow up thematic working sessions are planned in 2021, which will add value to further strengthen and create the enabling environment for the Maldives to forge partnerships in the selected focused areas.

To combat the negative health and social impacts of COVID-19 confinement and restrictions, new partnerships emerged to provide high quality Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support by developing innovative technological platforms which improved access to the services for women, children, adolescents, and their families. More than 6000 people were trained on psychological First Aid, and more than 16000 people directly received help, to manage their anxiety, stress, depression, and suicidal thoughts. Partnerships were forged with civil society organizations, Government Ministries, Maldivian Red Crescent, and the health system to ensure services received were through coordinated mechanisms.

As a migrant receiving country for labor, the impact of COVID-19 pandemic was hardest hit by the migrant population. Technical support was initiated to develop a Migrant Health Policy and Coordination Framework and strengthen migration health governance of the Ministry of Health. Through this policy support it will ensure migrants have full and uninterrupted access to high quality health care during and post COVID-19 era.

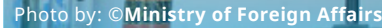
The UN provided technical support to combat trafficking in persons in the Maldives. The key areas of work included the proposed amendment to the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act, supporting shelter for Victims of Trafficking, a baseline study to gauge the information on migration (including Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in the Maldives, development of a communication strategy on counter trafficking, and re-establishment of a toll-free hotline for reporting human trafficking cases. The interventions will equip the relevant partners with victim-based approach knowledge, ultimately better protection of victims of trafficking in the country.

Throughout 2020, the UN supported the Maldivian authorities’ capacities to tackle terrorism and associated threats in line with international standards, principles, and good practices.

In addition, UN supported Maldivian maritime law enforcement agencies, including the Maldives Coast Guard, Police and Customs, through capacity building on maritime interdictions and vessel search operations to disrupt maritime crime, in accordance with international legal instruments and human right standards. This support will improve safety and efficiency during vessel search operations.

Policy advice and technical support was provided to the Government, on international standards on the treatment of people in prisons and places of detention, the Mandela Rules, Bangkok Rules and Tokyo Rules. This included providing trainings and developing national trainers to disseminate the “Mandela Rules” trainings and supplying the Dhivehi version of the rules for all prisons across Maldives.

The UN has supported the opening of the first Special Management Unit in the country, with the objective to classify and segregate Violent Extremist Prisoners (VEPs) from the general population. The goal is towards the individualized rehabilitation of VEPs with the long-term objective to transition and reintegrate VEPs to the general population and reintegrate back to the community. The UN provided technical support in the form of developing policies and tools, and specialized trainings for corrections officers on countering and preventing the spread of radicalization and violent extremism in prison settings. The UN has also been playing a key role in the establishment of a network of experts among different states on countering extremism.



The second project aims to support the most vulnerable people in the Maldives through strengthening psychosocial support services, and the capacity of the Home for People with Special Needs (HPSN) in K. Guraidhoo to provide medical care to residents with COVID-19. The initiative is led by UNICEF and WHO and the funding received for the project was USD 300,000.00 via the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi Partner Trust Fund, Call 1. These efforts will improve accessibility to mental health and psychosocial support in a gender and age-sensitive manner.

On 3 December 2020, the UN launched the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy for the Maldives to ensure country level implementation and reporting on the global UN Strategy and to mainstream the UNCT accountability scorecard on disability inclusion. A series of meeting with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities active in the country were held to identify the key challenges and bottlenecks for persons with disabilities and to find ways to improve disability inclusion by the UN in the Maldives. A review of the UN's operations in the country was conducted to develop a

UN Maldives developed and published common messages on the special situation of migrants in the context of COVID-19, recognizing that the migrants are among the worst affected by the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and those most at risk of being left behind given their employment in hard-hit industries such as tourism, construction and fisheries where arbitrary terminations, furloughs and wage deductions have become commonplace. The UN's messages emphasized the issues that are compounded by their exclusion from social welfare systems and proposed Government stimulus or relief measures, growing stigma and xenophobic attitudes, and

The new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework process was launched with the update of the Common Country Analysis. The CCA identified opportunities, challenges, risks that the Maldives should address in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Consolidating the analytical capacity in the UN Maldives team, this work was conducted in house, led by the RCO with critical expertise from technical specialists from the UNCT. The UNCT SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard was completed in December 2020 and adopted in early 2021.



2.5: Evaluations and Lessons Learned

The year 2020 brought unforeseen challenges to the whole country, with the COVID-19 pandemic launching the UN’s development emergency response. The unique nature of this crisis brought opportunities for learning and innovation. The UN team was able to adjust their regular programming, and switch to an agile emergency response based on a rapid articulation of the SERF. Some key lessons learned include:

1. Data and Monitoring Gaps

The need for monitoring and reporting of results during the COVID-19 emergency revealed the current challenges of the government systems for data collection and use in an emergency. This prompted the realization the need for the UN and the government to improve planning, monitoring and reporting in situations where the programme focus must switch from longer-term policy work to short-term life-saving interventions. This includes the need to support academia and civil society in data collection and analysis. The UN Maldives is analyzing the gaps in data and information and in consultation with the Government and partners supporting the related stakeholders with training for staff and development of data collection tools. In addition, an integrated health information management system with real-time data on service access, coverage and monitoring of essential health indicators is now identified as vital for decision-making. This means that the DHIS-II system being developed, and delayed during the pandemic, once adopted will support the monitoring of health services and responding efficiently and effectively to the future health emergencies.

2. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Implementations

A key challenge to meaningful progress towards SDG achievement remains the focus on a five-year presidential term plan. The UN have advocated for the relaunching of efforts towards a longer-term national development plan, in line with the policy efforts and investment in people, needed to make progress towards the 2030 Agenda and as contained in the SDGs. The UN commenced technical support to the Government for the formulation of a National Planning Act, as a critical foundational piece for this work.

It is envisaged that the law will pave the way for development planning to restart, with a focus on bipartisan political commitment to a shared national vision for Maldives in 2030 and beyond, ensure full integration of development concerns and aspirations of Maldivians through supporting the decentralization of government and decision making to the atoll and island levels, and ensure effective and broad consultations in the implementation and monitoring of development programs with a long term focus.



3. Resources and funding

The UN’s ability to swiftly adopt to emergency programming (while concurrently conducting regular programming) was crucial in meeting the Government’s needs in a continuously changing situation. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, UN entities responded to support the Government’s efforts to ensure continuity of the services via digital means. Most importantly, three joint projects were successfully funded during the year, the first since the conclusion of the LECRED programme in 2018.



Multilateral and IFI Assistance for COVID-19 Response in 2020

UN Agencies	Funding (US\$)	Grant/Loan
FAO	388,000.00	Grant
UNDP	2,176,983.00	Grant
UNFPA	394,584.00	Grant
UNICEF	12,101,909.82	Grant
UNODC	395,258.00	Grant
WHO	7,284,600.00	Grant
Total for UN Agencies	22,741,334.82	

International Financial Institutions (IFI's)	Funding (US\$)	Grant/Loan
World Bank	3,650,000.00	Loan
World Bank	3,650,000.00	Grant
World Bank	5,000,000.00	Loan
World Bank	5,000,000.00	Grant
World Bank	6,400,000.00	Loan
World Bank	6,400,000.00	Grant
World Bank	952,380.95	Grant
World Bank	21,600,000.00	Grant
IMF	28,900,000.00	Loan
Total for IFI's	81,552,380.95	

Regional Banks	Funding (US\$)	Grant/Loan
Asian Development Bank (ADB)	500,000.00	Grant
Asian Development Bank (ADB)	798,000.00	Grant
Asian Development Bank (ADB)	25,000,000.00	Grant
Asian Development Bank (ADB)	25,000,000.00	Loan
Asian Development Bank (ADB)	1,000,000.00	Grant
Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)	20,000,000.00	Loan
Total for Regional Banks	72,298,000.00	

Chapter Three:

3: UNCT Key Focus for the Next Year

The main focus of the UN in the Maldives year 2021 is to shape the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026 for Maldives.

The UNSDCF (2022-2026) will be finalized, and approved, in line with the agreed UNSDCF roadmap. Respective agency country programmes will be developed from the UNSDCF and evolve as the vehicle for implementation of the agreed partnership with Government. The UNSDCF Resource Mobilization Strategy and Communications Strategy will be finalized. To take into account evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CCA will be updated by end 2021. To ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable groups are integrated in the UN's support to the Maldives, a Leave No One Behind assessment will be completed.

The UN will develop a UN Maldives Vision for 2030, which will take a longer-term lens for the UN's vision, strategy, and ways of working towards the critical 2030 Agenda milestone.

A key priority will be to assist the Government's positioning towards UN's COP 26. To advance the climate action, particularly by the young people and women, concerted efforts will be made in creating youth's participation in climate policy dialogues, advocacy, climate education, addressing vital SIDS agenda such as climate and water and food security, blue economy, towards the government's zero carbon target and Nationally Determined Contributions. Assist the Government's initiatives to protect ocean, natural resources, ecosystem including assistance to achieve sustainable waste management and other policy targets including single-use plastic phase out target milestones.

To strengthen sustainable financing for SDGs, the Development Finance Assessment (DFA) launched in 2020, with a focus on integrating climate financing, to ensure effective and innovative investment in the nature and climate resilience will be published. The joint programme for establishing an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) will be launched and implementation begun.

To enhance the integrated response to the needs of the social sector, the Government-agreed social sector review will be launched. Proactive engagement with the Government at all levels will be pursued to capture the greatest potential benefit from the review, and to gain support for implementation of the subsequent recommendations in line with ensuring that no one is left behind.

In order to support better planning and information sharing, a complete sector-wide mapping of current interventions by UN, NGOs and development partners in at least 3 sectors will be conducted. The results of this work will be made publicly available on the UN Maldives website for the benefit of all development partners and will be regularly updated.

The UN Network on Migration in the Maldives will be officially launched, generating more active engagement with the Government for commitments in line with the Global Compact for Migration and other international obligations of the Maldives.

The joint programme funded by the SDG Fund will operationalize the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) in the Maldives.

The capacity to gather and report on evidence-based data continues to be a challenge and cross cutting support for a national data and tracking database, including for UPR indicators, will be needed going forward, in order to support the Government to effectively and efficiently follow up on international human rights commitments:

The UN team will focus on implementation of the BOS agreed in 2020.

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