



Building Climate Resilient Safer Islands in the Maldives

Gender Assessment

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Abbreviation

CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EFA	Education for All
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDI	Gender Development Index
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, and Social and Cultural Rights
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LFP	Labor Force Participation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEE	Ministry of Environment and Energy
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MGFSS	Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services
MLSA	Maldives Land and Survey Authority
MMS	Maldives Meteorological Service
MNPI	Ministry of National Planning and Infrastructure
NDMA	National Disaster Management Centre
NMCC	National Ministerial Coordination Committee
OP-CEDAW	Optional Protocol to UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
PMU	Project Management Unit
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PSM	Public Service Media
SAARC-UNIFEM	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation - United Nations Fund for Women
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
WDC	Women Development Committee

Annex VIII: Gender Assessment and Project/Programme-level Action Plan

1. Introduction

This gender assessment aims to provide an overview of the gender situation in the Maldives, with a specific focus on protecting and increasing the resilience of groups in vulnerable situations, particularly women and children from the adverse impact of climate change on rising sea levels and coastal erosion in Addu and Laamu Atolls, which are main atolls for the project “Building Climate Resilient Safer Islands in the Maldives (hereinafter referred to as “the Project””. The assessment will highlight gender issues that have a bearing on the Project, as well as opportunities to empower women through gender responsive adaptation, mitigation, and risk reduction measures. The assessment is based on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include information collected from the implementation of gender assessment consultation meetings. Secondary sources include research and studies conducted by the Government of the Maldives, donor agencies, multilateral development banks, academia, and civil society. Data gathering activities will focus on:

- (1) Aligning the proposed project approach with the Maldives’s national priorities as reflected in the Seventh National Development Plan 2006-2010 and the Manifesto of the Maldivian Democratic Party – Alliance 2008-2013.
- (2) Synthesizing and building on information obtained and lessons learned from past interventions and gender assessments.
- (3) Engaging women who might be potentially affected by project activities which includes their voice into this assessment, as well as that of other vulnerable groups (the elderly, disabled persons, and the children).
- (4) Formulating gender sensitive project output and outcome indicators.
- (5) Designing mainstreaming and equity activities targeting women which promotes their agency and leadership.

2. Resilience of Communities in Vulnerable Situations in the Addu and Laamu Atolls and their Response to the Increasing Threat of Rising Sea Levels and Coastal Erosion

The Republic of Maldives, one of the small island developing states (SIDS) is located in the Indian Ocean, covering a land area of 298 km² in a territory of over 90,000 km. Thus, it is one of the most geographically dispersed nations in the world, consisting of approximately 1,200 islands within 19 administrative atolls.

The Maldives’s vulnerability to climate change and extreme weather events remains as a serious concern, as a low-lying archipelago, with an average elevation of 1.5 m over the sea-level, where the country has also been identified as one of the most vulnerable to threats posed by climate change and more than 80% of inhabited islands are easily suffered from the serious coastal erosion. Lack of disaster resilience and environmental sustainability is also perceived as threat to development.

While the country has rarely experienced major disasters, with the exception of the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, small-scale and recurrent hazards such as increased rainfall, cyclonic winds, storm surges, saltwater intrusion, coastal floods, and erosions have been causing damages, losses of natural resources, and social entities in the recent years. Over 90% of the islands have been reported to flood annually, 97% are reporting shoreline erosion, and 64% of the islands experiencing erosion reported the issue as severe (Nachmany, et al., 2015).

The Maldives has experienced rapid economic development in the recent years, largely as a result of nature-based tourism, and is now classified as a middle-income country. Fisheries and tourism are two

main pillars of the Maldives’s economy and there are a few manufacturing sectors in this country, wherein almost all kinds of materials are needed to be imported from other countries. Also the scattered islands, consisting in more than 1,000 islands, are also one of the vulnerabilities of the Maldives. Apart from the local populations, tourists, who may lack knowledge of local hazards, are also equally exposed to sudden-impact events in remote resort islands which depend on their own infrastructure (Nguyen, et al., 2016).

The frequencies, magnitude, and ranges of the natural disaster would be increased due to the climate change and global warming. Ocean acidification and sea surface temperature anomalies are also one of the causes to the natural disaster and adverse effects to the natural environment, especially to the vulnerable marine biodiversity. Environmental degradation is another significant issue which increases the communities’ exposure; for example, the expansion of land surface for the population growth has resulted in extensive coral mining and degradation of natural defenses, thus increasing the risks of coastal flooding (UNDRR, 2019)¹.

Therefore, the disaster risk reduction measures should be established especially for all the inhabited islands (187 islands in 2014) and resort islands (128 islands in 2104) in order to tackle with the natural disaster.

3. Comparative Summary of Key Gender Equality Indicators

Key Gender Equality Indicators for Maldives

Table 3.1 Key Gender Equality Indicators for Maldives

(1) Population of Maldives

Type of Population	Total	Male	Female
Total	407,660	230,453	177,207
Residents	402,071	227,749	174,322
Maldivians (Residents)	338,434	171,962	166,472
Foreigners	63,637	55,787	7,850
Non-residents	5,589	2,704	2,885

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2014) Population & Housing Census 2014

(2) Population by age category of Maldives

Type of Population	Total	Male	Female
All ages	402,071	227,749	174,322
0-14	94,613	48,920	45,693
15-24	79,246	45,317	33,929
25-64	211,721	124,756	86,965
over 64	16,491	8,756	7,735

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2014) Population & Housing Census 2014

(3) Other main factors

Items	Data
Life Expectancy at Birth	Female: 74.8, Male: 73.1
%/Number of male or female-headed households	Female: 43.0%, Male: 56.4%, not stated: 0.7%

¹ UNDRR, 2019: Disaster Risk Reduction in Republic of Maldives: Status Report 2019. Bangkok, Thailand, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Items	Data
Infant Mortality Rate (under 1)	8 per 1,000 live births
Mortality rate (under 5)	10 per 1,000 live births
Labour Force Participation	Total: 63.2%, Females: 47.4%, Males: 78.5%
Government employees	Total: 24,883, Females: 13,336 (53%), Males: 11,547 (47%)
Unemployment Rate	Total: 5.21%, Females: 5.91%, Male: 4.79%
Enrolment in Primary Schools	Total: 37,519, Females: 18,271 (49%), Males: 19,248 (51%)
Enrolment in Lower Secondary Schools	Total: 16,434, Females: 8,104 (49%), Males: 8,330 (51%)
Enrolment in Higher Secondary Schools	Total: 6,294, Females: 3,177 (50%), Males: 3,117 (50%)
Enrolment in Diploma	Total: 4,625, Females: 2,917 (63%), Males: 1,708 (37%)
No. of males/ females in Parliament	Total: 87, Females: 4 (5%), Males: 83 (95%) (19 th Parliament) Total: 85, Females: 5 (6%), Males: 80 (94%) (18 th Parliament)
Gender-based Violence (GBV)	

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2014) Population & Housing Census 2014

4. The Gender Context in the Maldives

Compared to most of South Asia, Maldivian women face little discrimination in basic aspects of life such as education, health, and survival; however, gender inequality still exists. Specifically, the Maldives exhibits a classic case of a relatively prosperous country where gender inequalities in basic well-being are largely diminished but where other social and cultural gendered restrictions, especially on women's roles within and outside the home, persist and may be expanding.²

Furthermore, poverty and climate change are interrelated. The poorest and most disadvantaged groups are more liable to depend on climate sensitive livelihoods such as agriculture and fishing which makes them particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.³ In rural areas, these difficulties are compounded by fewer opportunities for work in the formal sector, high rates of illiteracy, restricted mobility, and limited access to resources, services, and decision-making. All of these inequalities combine to diminish their adaptive capacity.

4.1 Gender Inequality Index

Several indices have developed to quantify the concept of gender inequality. The United Nations Development Programme uses the Gender Inequality Index (GII) and Gender Development Index (GDI).⁴

GII presents a composite measure of gender inequality using three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and the labor market. The GII can be interpreted as the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in the three GII dimensions. The Maldives had a GII of 0.360 in 2018 and ranks 81 out of 162 countries assessed.⁵

² El-Horr, Jana, and Rohini Prabha Pande. 2016. Understanding Gender in Maldives: Toward Inclusive Development. Directions in Development. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi: 10.1596/978-1-4648-0868-5. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO

³ Overview of Linkages between Gender and Climate Change, NDP Asia-Pacific Human Development Report 2011. <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/gender/Gender%20and%20Environment/PB1-AP-Overview-Gender-andclimate-change.pdf>

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

⁵ UNDP, 2019: Human Development Report 2019, Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century, Briefing note for countries on the 2019 Human Development Report, Maldives

Table 4.1 Gender Inequality Index for Maldives between 2010 and 2018

Description	2010	2014	2018
Gender Inequality Index (GII)	0.424	0.387	0.360

Source: UNDP (2019) Human Development Report 2019

The Gender Development Index is based on the sex-disaggregated Human Development Index (HDI) which defines as a ratio of women to the men HDI. The GDI, based on the sex-disaggregated Human Development Index, is defined as a ratio of the female to the male HDI. The GDI measures gender inequalities in achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: health (measured by female and male life expectancy at birth), education (measured by female and male expected years of schooling for children and mean years for adults aged 25 years and older), and command over economic resources (measured by female and male estimated GNI per capita). The 2018 female HDI value for the Maldives is 0.689 in contrast with 0.734 for males, resulting in a GDI value of 0.939, placing it into a group of 3 out of 166 countries.⁶

Table 4.2 Gender Development Index (GDI) and Human Development Index (HDI) for Maldives between 2010 and 2018

Description	2010	2014	2018
Gender Development Index (GDI)	0.919	0.930	0.939
Human Development Index (HDI), female	0.635	0.671	0.689
Human Development Index (HDI), male	0.691	0.722	0.734

Source: UNDP (2019) Human Development Report 2019

The Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) of the World Economic Forum examines the gap between men and women in four categories: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. The Maldives records are somewhat larger-than-before gender gap in labor force participation, due to updated data availability, which has led to a fall in ranking despite counterbalancing positive developments such as greater gender parity on estimated earned income and in the share of legislators, senior officials, and managers. Out of 149 countries, the Maldives's rank based on GGGI in 2014, 2018 and 2020 are shown below⁷:

Table 4.3 Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) for Maldives between 2010 and 2018

Description	2014		2018		2020	
	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Economic participation and opportunity	0.590	110	0.622	101	0.518	131
Educational attainment	0.994	58	1.000	27	1.000	1
Health and survival	0.966	125	0.953	144	0.953	147
Political empowerment	0.072	120	0.072	132	0.111	115
Gender Gap Index	0.656	105	0.662	105	0.646	123

* Inequality = 0.00; Equality = 1.00. Source: The Global Gender Gap Report 2014, 2018 and 2020

Source: UNDP (2019) Human Development Report 2019

4.2 Poverty

The proportion of the Maldivian population living below the national poverty line of MVR 22 per day decreased from 21% in 2003 to 15% in 2010⁸.

Unemployment status continues to be higher amongst females except in the administrative islands. The unemployment rate for females in the Maldives decreased from 7.4% (2006) to 5.9% (2014).

⁶ UNDP, 2019: Human Development Report 2019, Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century, Briefing note for countries on the 2019 Human Development Report, Maldives

⁷ World Economic Forum, 2018 and 2020. The Global Gender Gap Report 2018, and The Global Gender Gap Report 2020.

⁸ MEE 2017b, Voluntary National Review for the High Level Political forum on Sustainable Development 2017

Even though unemployment decreased among females, the unemployment rates are still highest for females, especially for females in Male' island, and remained so between 2006 and 2014.

4.3 Health

The strategic framework for the government's National Reproductive Health Strategy for 2014–2018 includes gender equality as a key underlying value and principle.

In regard to maternal health, significant progress has been made in improving maternal and child health services and family planning in the Maldives. The Maldives Health Statistics shows that during the period of 2006-2015 the infant mortality rate decreased from 16 to 9 per 1,000 live births. During this period, fewer than five mortality rates also decreased from 18 to 11 per 1,000 live births. Maternal mortality ratio has decreased from 69 per 100,000 births in 2006 to 13 per 100,000 births in 2012.

Reproductive health needs of young people deserve special attention. As such, a more holistic approach towards access to adolescent friendly health services including reproductive health services is needed. This includes issues of sexual and gender-based violence, sexual diversity, discrimination, relationship issues, and fears and concerns about sex and sexuality.

4.4 Education

The Maldives is also among the few developing countries in the world that had fully achieved all six of the Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015. The government's Education Master Plan 2007–2011/2016 and its Education for All (EFA) mid-decade assessment highlight gender parity and quality of education as the key cross-cutting issues which is important to improve education in the Maldives⁹. Health policy documents recognize health as a human right and mandate health care for all citizens¹⁰.

Literacy rates for women (98.0%) were high and equal to men (97.4%) in 2014. The disadvantages in educational attainment arise at the tertiary level. According to the Population and Housing Census 2014, the sex ratio (males per 100 female) of school attendance across all ages was 104 male to every 100 female, while the ratio among those attending training institutions was 133 male to every 100 female. The ratio of male attendance to other modes of study was lower than females with 75 male to every 100 female. Sex ratio of school attendance across all ages in the atolls was 105 male per 100 female¹¹.

4.5 Political Representation and Decision Making

Household decision making appears to be relatively gender-egalitarian in the Maldives. A national representative sample of married women surveyed by Maldives's 2009 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) found that the husband and wife make most household decisions jointly. However, gender assessment consultation meetings conducted in February to September 2019 reaffirmed that major household purchases are decided mainly by men.

⁹ ADB 2014: Maldives—Gender Equality Diagnostic of Selected Sectors

¹⁰ El-Horr, Jana, and Rohini Prabha Pande. 2016. Understanding Gender in Maldives: Toward Inclusive Development. Directions in Development. Washington, DC: World Bank.

¹⁰ UNDP, 2018: Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update

¹¹ National Bureau of Statistics, 2014: Population and Housing Census 2014

The government is the largest employer in the Maldives and employs two-thirds males while one-third females. However, women make up only 5.1% of island council representatives, only 0.5% of atoll council representatives are women and less than 6% of seats in the national parliament.

Greater efforts are required in increasing women’s participation in political and public life and increasing their representation in decision-making levels. Currently, 4.6% of parliament members are women in the 2020 Local Council Elections, decreased from 5.9% in 2018, and women comprise increased to 28.0% in 2020 from 17.6% in 2018 among the Ministers of State¹².

Table 4.4 Women in parliament Maldives between 2014 and 2020

Description	2014		2018		2020	
	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Women in parliament	6.0%	129	5.9%	141	4.6%	148
Women in ministerial positions	18.0%	61	17.6%	80	28.0%	45

Source: World Economic Forum, 2014, 2018 and 2020

The 2019 amendment to the Decentralization Act 7/2010 allocated quotas for women in City, Atoll and Island councils for the first time. The first elections since this amendment is scheduled for early 2021. This provides an opportunity for elevating the role of women in local level decision making.

4.6 Labor Force

The 2008 Employment Act outlines the provisions for equal access to employment for men and women, prohibits the use of sex or marital status as grounds for dismissal from any job and includes generous provisions for maternity leave. Given that women are more likely than men to be juggling professional and familial responsibility, this provision is especially important for legal equality of employment opportunity for men and women. Other laws provide for women’s participation in cooperatives and women’s representation on corporate boards¹³.

As one of the key aspects of female disadvantage in the Maldives, females in the Maldives receive disadvantages such as (1) female Labor Force Participation (LFP) is lower than men at all ages, (2) women work in less lucrative public sector, while men in more lucrative tourism and fisheries, (3) higher unemployment for women at most ages, and (4) 13% of women, but only 1% of men, do not work because of household chores.¹⁴

At the national level, the education sector employs the highest number of females (68%) and following human health and social works (65%), and manufacturing (60%)¹⁵. Women, especially in the islands are primarily engaged in home-based income generating activities. Nearly half the employed females in the atolls and 40% of employed females in the Male' island fall into the category of home-based own-account workers or contributing family workers.

4.7 Access to Resources

Maldivian men have advantage in ownership and control of household assets in Maldivian families. According to the 2006 Maldives’s Census, only 31.3% of recorded homeowners were women and 65.5% are male sole owners. This statistics is in part due to gender-differentiated property

¹² World Economic Forum, 2014, 2018 and 2020. The Global Gender Gap Report 2014, 2018 and 2020.

¹³ ADB 2014. Maldives—Gender Equality Diagnostic of Selected Sectors

¹⁴ El-Horr, Jana, and Rohini Prabha Pande. 2016. Understanding Gender in Maldives: Toward Inclusive Development. Directions in Development. Washington, DC: World Bank.

¹⁵ National Bureau of Statistics, 2014: Population and Housing Census 2014

ownership rights under Sharia Law that disadvantage women and in part likely reflects that men are the main decision makers about ownership of household assets and other resources.

The Family Law Act (2001) was the first law enacted which specifically relates to gender relations, marriage, and family life. It sets men's right to divorce based on reciting a verbal formula was rescinded.

4.8 Gender-based Violence

Ministry of Gender and Family (2007)¹⁶ reveals the sobering statistic that one in every three Maldivian women aged 15-49 experienced “physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lives, including childhood sexual abuse. Index of child marriage, which shows percentage of women married by age 18, is 4% and indices of violence against women ever experienced with intimate partner and non-intimate partner are 19.5% and 6.2%, respectively, and two of the three indices in “Violence against girls and women” are ranked in “top third” and the rest in “middle third” in the country grouping.¹⁷

Several key legislations including the Gender Equality Act 18/2016, Domestic Violence Prevention Act 3/2012, Sexual Offences Act 17/2014, and Anti-Sexual Harassment Act 16/2014 were enacted to empower women, raising awareness on gender-based violence and provided framework for women's rights and protection of women against harassment, violence, and abuse. However, there are still discrimination against women, gender-based violence and abuse, and lack of women at the decision-making level or in a political position.¹⁸

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

5.1 International Gender Framework

(1) International Commitments to Gender Equality¹⁹

The Maldives became a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) in 1993 and in 2005, the Maldives ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW (OP-CEDAW).

The Maldives is signatory to a number of international instruments addressing gender equality and a party to all major human rights treaties: i.e., International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 1966 (signatory 2006), ICCPR Optional Protocol 1966 (signatory 2006), International Covenant on Economic, and Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR 1966) (signatory 2006).

The Maldives is also a party to the Commonwealth Action Plans on Gender Equality and regional initiatives such as SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and SAARC-UNIFEM Project on the Gender Infobase.

(2) The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)²⁰

The Maldives is committed to the achievement of the MDGs by 2015 and the Maldives achieved five of the eight MDGs before 2015, making it the first 'MDG plus (+) country in the South-Asia

¹⁶ Ministry of Gender and Family, 2007, The Maldives Study on Women's Health and Life Experiences

¹⁷ UNDP, 2018: Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update

¹⁸ UN Women, 2018. Communication Strategy and Action Plan 2019 - 2023

¹⁹ UNDP, 2010, Power, Voice and Rights: A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific Human Development Report , Indicators

²⁰ Sustainable Development Goals Division, Ministry of Environment and Energy. 2017: Voluntary National Review for the High Level Political Forum 2017

region. However, MDG Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women was not achieved and additional efforts and emphasis needs to be placed on SDG Goal 5.

(3) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

A new global developmental agenda, known as the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development, was adopted on 25 September 2015. A Sustainable Development Goals Division has been established at the Ministry of Environment and Energy in May 2016. The division is mandated to coordinate, monitor, and report the implementation process of SDGs in the Maldives. In order to facilitate the implementation of the SDGs in the Maldives, a National Ministerial Coordination Committee (NMCC) was formed to provide policy guidance and feedback from their respective agencies and other areas of knowledge and ensure the integration of economic, environmental, governance, and social aspects in the implementation.

One of the main tasks for the year 2018/2019 includes integration of the SDGs into the budgetary process through program budgeting. Some sectors, namely; education, health, energy, waste management, fisheries, water and sanitation, and local governance, have incorporated the SDGs into respective policy documents and action plans. In local governance, the Local Government Authority has aligned its Five-year Development Plan (2017-2021) with SDGs, which will be implemented by the island councils.²¹

5.2 National Gender Frameworks

(1) Government Structures to Address the Gender Issues

The government structures to address gender issues have shifted multiple times over the last 25 years. A Gender Committee formed in 1979 was declared a Gender Department in 1989 and it grew to be the Gender Ministry in 1993. However, since then, the name of the Gender Ministry, its mandate and its work portfolios have continued to shift (Department of National Planning 2012; Hope for Women 2012). The Ministry of Law and Gender was established in 2014 to be responsible for gender policy²², and renamed to Ministry of Gender and Family. When the new (current) government formed its cabinet on November 2018, they reformed it to the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services (MGFSS)²³.

The general missions of MGFSS are as follows:

- To improve the lives of children, women, elderly and persons with disabilities with programs and services that inform, educate and empower them;
- To provide immediate support and protection to those affected by neglect, abuse and violence; and
- To strengthen legislative and institutional services by cultivating values of mutual respect, peace and equality; and to create and strengthen partnerships with local and international bodies to work towards the rights of vulnerable groups.

(2) National Commitments to Gender Equality

All persons are guaranteed the same rights and freedoms under the Constitution of the Republic of Maldives (2008).

²¹ Sustainable Development Goals Division, Ministry of Environment and Energy. 2017: Voluntary National Review for the High Level Political Forum 2017

²² El-Horr, Jana, and Rohini Prabha Pande. 2016. Understanding Gender in Maldives: Toward Inclusive Development. Directions in Development. Washington, DC: World Bank.

²³ <https://presidency.gov.mv/Government/Cabinet/16> (accessed on March 11, 2021)

Economic empowerment of women, women and environment, special needs and concerns of women, women’s participation in development, temporary special measures/ affirmative action to facilitate women’s equal access to available opportunities, harassment of women and gender-based violence, women and non-traditional non-stereotypical work, women in politics and decision-making, and fundamental freedoms were emphasized as the government’s policy on women and gender equality.

(3) National Gender Equality Policy

The National Gender Equality Policy and Framework for Action (Draft 1) consolidates President Mohamed Nasheed’s women’s policy framework which was announced in the International Women’s Day (2009) statement into public policy. The draft includes recommendations for an effective NWM/ Lead Agency for gender mainstreaming and the tools for gender mainstreaming, and is targeted at realizing change through coherent, focused, strategic, rights-based, and result-oriented action for gender equality.

The policy is founded on the fundamental principle of Equality of All enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Maldives (2008). The purpose of the National Gender Equality Policy is to translate the commitment and vision of President Mohamed Nasheed into coherent public policy directives to translate commitment to action. International commitments of the Maldives are used as a standard of reference and following global good practice models, emphasis is placed on a dual approach to Gender Equality through gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women.

The National Gender Equality Policy (Draft 1) outlines the vision, guiding principles, policy goals, and strategies to attain gender equality in the Maldives.

The vision of the National Gender Equality Policy is a just society where equality of women and men are upheld, women enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms on a basis of equality of men and women, and both women and men are able to realize their full potential and participate in and benefit from democracy and development of both in public and private life.

There are four guiding principles and four policy goals that underlie the vision;

Guiding Principles	Policy Goals
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equality of women and men 2. Recognition that traditional, customary, and cultural practices that negatively affect women and girls are a violation of human rights 3. Recognition that public and private are not separable spheres of life 4. Women’s entitlement to the right of integrity and security of person 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To develop and activate the necessary policy, legislative, and institutional framework for gender equality, so that women and men enjoy fundamental human rights and rewards of democracy on a basis of equality of men and women; 2. To empower women to facilitate their equal access to available opportunities with equal outcomes/ results on a basis of equality of men and women; 3. To cultivate a culture of non-discrimination and respect for women’s human rights, so that women enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field on a basis of equality of men and women; and 4. To eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

(4) Gender Equality Act

Gender Equality Act was enacted on 23 August 2016. The Act delineates provisions of general principle to achieve gender equality in the Maldives, policies to prohibit discrimination based on

gender in Maldives and the duties and responsibilities of the state institutions and other relevant parties to achieve gender equality in the Maldives.

There are nine objectives of the Act;

- (a) To ensure that every person enjoys, without discrimination based on sex or gender, the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Maldives, as provided by Article 17 of the same constitution which determines the rights and freedoms to everyone, without discrimination of any kind, including sex or gender and as provided by Article 20 of the same Constitution which states that every individual is equal before and under the law, and is entitled to equal protection and equal benefit of the law.
- (b) To facilitate all steps towards prevention of discrimination based on gender and prevention of all ideas and practices that promote discrimination between men and women, in conformation with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- (c) To ensure that women enjoy equal terms with men, human rights, fundamental rights, and equal opportunities in their economic, social, cultural, civil, and political life in the Maldives. In conformation with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- (d) To protect human dignity.
- (e) To establish principles of gender equality in the conduct of state institutions, businesses, civil society organizations, employers, other legal entities, and individuals.
- (f) To establish gender equality principles in making social, economic, political and cultural policies.
- (g) To end all forms of violence against women and girls.
- (h) To take special steps to establish gender equality.
- (i) To establish a culture of empowerment, provide equal opportunities, and an enabling environment to achieve results on gender equality.

(5) Decentralization Act (7/2010)

the Decentralization Act (7/2010) was enacted on 2010. The Act and its subsequent amendments ensures the participation of women in decision making in the local islands. Under the Act, local level decision making is delegated to City Councils, Atoll Councils and Island Councils, in which one third of seats are allocated for women following its amendment in 2019.

In addition, the Women’s Development Committees (WDCs) of each island established under the Act will be engaged in project decision making processes to ensure that women’s concerns and priorities are taken onboard. The Act also stipulates WDCs shall be consulted by the local councils in the formulation of local regulations.

6. Gender Issues in Response to the Projected Climate Induced Coastal Flooding Risks in Addu and Laamu Atolls

The specific issues and difficulties that women face in responding to the adverse impacts of climate induced rising sea levels are collected through the gender assessment consultation meetings and public consultation meetings, and recommendations are provided. The following and another Annex (Annex VII) to this proposal will be referred to understand the full results from the stakeholder consultations outlining the human security threats that affect women as a result of climate change.

According to the information collected through the gender assessment consultation meetings in Addu and Laamu Atolls, the human security threats are the most adverse impacts to women, children, and disable persons in case of disaster, because they would not be able to evacuate from their houses due to the fears against the disaster.

6.1 Gender Analysis

The gender analysis undertaken at the onset and design of this project serves as an entry point for gender mainstreaming throughout implementation. The Gender Assessment Consultation Meetings were held at several target islands in Addu and Laamu Atolls during May and December 2019. Results from the consultations are summarized below and the Gender Action Plan is included in full as an additional annex to this proposal.

The gender analysis, through stakeholder engagement and consultation enabled:

- Engagement, development, and input into the design of the “Building Climate Resilient Safer Islands in the Maldives” project and the approach to move forward;
- Demonstration of the need and value of collecting sex-disaggregated data and developing gender sensitive indicators to establish a baseline in which to measure improvements and identify areas of focus; and
- Formulation of actionable recommendations to incorporate into the Gender Action Plan.

6.2 Results of Qualitative Assessments

(1) Stakeholder Engagement

The stakeholder consultations and engagement of women’s organizations promote gender equality at the local as well as the national level. The involvement of women’s organizations in the project design, aided in identifying relevant gender issues within the country’s social context, and implementing and monitoring the gender aspects of the project. The gender assessment consultation meetings were held for each target island and specific issues raised are as follows:

Table 6.1 Schedules of the Gender Assessment Consultation Meetings

Atoll	Island	Target (gender)	Implementation Date	No. of Participants
Laamu	Fonadhoo	Female	September 10, 2019	13
		Male	May 27, 2019	7
	Maamendhoo	Female	May 28, 2019	13
		Male	May 28, 2019	7
	Ishdhoo	Female	September 10, 2019	13
		Male	September 10, 2019	7
Addu	Hithadhoo	Female	May 20, 2019	6
		Male	May 21, 2019	12
	Meedhoo	Female	December 11, 2019	10
		Male	December 11, 2019	7

Source: JICA (2019)

(2) Specific issues raised include:

The followings are the issues raised during the meetings, per project component and/or per mutual issues:

1) Issues related to all/ several component:

- Even in economic organizations, the involvement of men is greater than that of women. It was suggested that the reason could be that women are the primary caregivers in households.

- Women are provided the opportunity legally, but there are barriers which they have to overcome in terms of proving themselves worthy to the public compared with men.

2) Issues related to Component 1:

- Regarding the community-based management of the site, many women and men mentioned that the workload would increase for women in terms of maintaining the cleanliness of the area.
- The Women's Development Committee (WDC) would be most likely to do the work as men would not be interested in doing such work voluntarily.

Box: Main comments from the participants

- *(Female: Maamendhoo) The overall workload of women would increase with the development of the area in terms of managing the cleanliness of the area as women are the people who are actively working in the NGOs responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of the entire island.*
- *(Male: Ishdhoo) The workload for women will be increased due to the proposed interventions.*
- *(Male: Fonadhoo) The Women's Development Committee (WDC) would be most likely to do the work as men would not be interested in doing such work voluntarily, unless it comes in the form of job opportunities. Another suggested solution was that to find interested youth from the island to work on the community-based management of the area.*
- *(Male: Fonadhoo) When it comes to the community-based management of the site, the workload would increase for women in terms of maintaining the cleanliness of the area. Moreover, should the area be appropriate, there would be business opportunities which men would grab. The area could be used for volunteerism and other social work.*
- *(Female: Ishdhoo) Woman will take care of the place (coastal area) more.*
- *(Female: Maamendhoo) The coastal area was previously used as a defecating site, prior to toilets being established at homes. Women are the people who mostly utilize the area to spend time with kids on the beach, but if there is a boat being harbored for maintenance or building, then men would also use the area. So it was agreed that the overall use is equal among men and women.*
- *(Male: Maamendhoo) The political decisions are majorly made by men but that women also have the opportunity and there are some active women in the field.*

3) Issues related to Component 2:

- Due to the coastal erosion, most participants, regardless gender, think that many sandy beaches, coastal roads, and coastal vegetation were eroded away, and now it is difficult for them to go to the coastal areas easily for many purposes: e.g. for men to do fishing and surfing, and for women to walk with children, collect coconuts, and also for conduct traditional medical treatment.
- Women worry about inequality in access to the eroded sites because people with disabilities and people of old age have difficulties accessing the area due to the erosion that has taken place in the area, whilst men think that there are no inequalities in social group accessibility except for people with disabilities.

Box: Main comments from the participants

- *(Female: Meedhoo) Many roads have eroded away. Within the past three years, roads in close proximity have been repaired due to erosion.*
- *(Male: Fonadhoo) The erosion process has been accelerated and that people have only started to care now, and the concern was not observed previously, which resulted in the soil eventually eroding. The people are a lot more aware of the situation that they were years back.*
- *(Male: Fonadhoo) The islanders are faced with many difficulties, mainly due to rain which leads to flooding, erosion and falling of trees in the area as a result.*
- *(Female: Addu): Pebble mining is also a huge reason of the current coastal situation and there still is a huge demand and market for pebbles for the home yards.*
- *(Male: Meedhoo) Due to climate change both gender have had impact from sea bounty such as reef gaining and fishing.*
- *(Female: Ishdhoo) Now we are not able to come from the beach area due to the erosion.*
- *(Male: Maamendhoo) There are no inequalities when it comes to different social groups and all have equal access to the area.*

4) Issues related to Component 3:

- The evacuation plans are not planned, or even planned, they are not well disseminated to the people. Most of participants indicated that the island councils/ disaster management committees are those who would decide how to manage (evacuate) in case of disaster. However, for some islands, information dissemination methods used by the council is not effective.
- Overall, it is difficult for women to evacuate from the home in case of disaster, because they would not be able to move due to the fear, and also they need to take care of children and elders in their houses. On the contrary, it is much easier for men to evacuate from the home even in case of disaster.

Box: Main comments from the participants

- *(Male: Maamendhoo) The authorities, council, disaster management center as well as the government work together in instructing the civilians on how to act during a disastrous situation.*
- *(Female: Maamendhoo) Overall, in the case of a disaster, which can as be as much as king surges which might flood a home, women would find it most difficult to deal with the situation due to the difficulty in managing the fear. Men would find it more easy to deal with the situation and find a way to salvage the belongings and people in the event of a natural disaster.*
- *(Male: Fonadhoo): Regarding the way to set the evacuation procedures of the island, there is no existing evacuation plan, but announcements on how to act are made when the disaster takes place. However, there are some trained personnel in the island.*
- *(Female: Addu) Trainings for disaster management are to be conducted by the Disaster Management Centre of the Maldives. However, despite conducting different training programmes in various islands each week, Addu has never been part of any trainings conducted. The early warning systems were not implemented and utilized properly and the public has no knowledge of how to prepare for bad weather at the least, except for small directions provided by MNDF.*

5) Issues related to Component 4:

- There are no specific issues raised during the consultation meetings for the activities under Component 4.

(3) Considerations from the results of the qualitative assessments to the Project

- Participation of women and other vulnerable groups into decision making is essential for the project initiatives. In order for that, the specific mechanisms to select the participants and make them involve in the decision making are to be examined; e.g. equal numbers between men and women, schedule arrangement of the meetings to make women be able to attend, etc.
- Most of participants to conduct beach cleaning are women and children, and very few men participate at this moment. “Cleaning the island” is considered as the traditional activities for women, however, Island cleaning is no longer perceived to be done as well as before, notably by a few male participants.²⁴ In order to diversify the participants for such activities, proper facilitation to men and promotion of the importance and necessity of such activities are to be conducted.
- As 100% of the population of the Maldives are Muslim, the special attention to the Muslim are to be considered for proper implementation of the Project; i.e. time arrangement of the activities, including meetings, especially during Ramadan period, etc.
- The radical systematic changes, especially in relation to gender equality and women’s empowerment, may cause discontentment among both men and women. Therefore, the gradual mutual understandings among women and men are to be needed to build confidence among stakeholders, including men.
- The WDCs also provide another entry point to take women’s concerns on board, and their role in the project decision making process could be further enhanced. As the strengthening the role of WDCs are one of the mandates of MGFSS, the Project will need to coordinate with MGFSS on the strengthening and involvement of WDCs into the Project activities.

7. Recommendations

(1) Necessary activities for mainstreaming gender into the Project activities

In order for the Project to increase awareness and understanding of the Project and mitigation measures through prior consultation and dissemination, and to secure commitment and accountabilities on all Project-related activities, the following components are included in the Project for mainstreaming gender into the Project activities:

- Conduct of community-level consultations ensuring that all segments of the population, including women, youth, the elderly, and the disabled are equitably represented during the construction stage, as planned in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and Gender Action Plan (GAP).
- Setting of explicit rules in the tendering process to ensure gender equality and equal participation of women in the contracting schemes.
- Establishment of grievance mechanisms, accessible for both women and men, to be able to voice complaints during the Project construction stage.
- Development and implementation of capacity building trainings, processes on information dissemination and awareness raising in relation to gender and social inclusion mechanisms.

²⁴ IFS, 2015, Qualitative Assessment: Perceptions about Women’s Participation in Public Life in the Maldives

- Involvement of national gender-based institutions and organizations as main stakeholders of the Project.
- Development and revision of SEP, as well as gender assessment and GAP, and ensuring equitable representation of women and men in the development of the ICZM plan.
- Ensuring empowerment of women through women-led community organizations, such as Women Development Committees, tasked with shoreline protection and stabilization, cleaning of coasts, creation of coastal green buffer zones, and maintenance of beach and beach vegetation.
- Implementation, during Project implementation, of monitoring activities for the GAP to evaluate qualitatively and quantitatively the gender-specific benefits that can be directly associated with the Project. The results of such monitoring will be incorporated into the Annual Performance Report, Interim Evaluation Report, and Final Evaluation Report.
- Development of qualitative and quantitative indicators to evaluate the achievement of the Project objectives in relation to gender equality. These will include, but not to be limited to: i) equal accessibility between men and women to the Project targets (nourished beach, coastal protection measures, etc.), ii) number of men and women employed from the jobs created by the Project and number of women and men who were trained through the Project, and iii) knowledge management and information dissemination.

Addressing gender dimensions within the project design and implementation, this proposal works to identify and integrate interventions to provide gender responsive and transformative results. As women are key players in managing basic household resources, as caretakers, as well as participants in income generating activities, this proposal seeks to address the cultural, the physical, as well as the information and capacity related obstacles preventing women from being actively engaged in, supporting, promoting, and maintaining the mitigation and adaptation solutions that the project will be implementing, i.e., “Involving them in the transformation agenda.”

It is recommended that the project design will take into consideration gender and social inclusion implications including the level of awareness, accordingly commitment, and accountability of macro and meso-level stakeholders in ensuring the equitable participation by women and other vulnerable groups in the climate resilience processes.

Based on the above, the following recommendations are proffered:

- To conduct micro-level consultations in the hotspot governorates ensuring that all segments of the population, including women, youth, the elderly, and the disabled are equitably represented.
- To develop an awareness raising campaign and messages in relation to gender and social inclusion mechanisms that are contextually relevant to the subject of climate change while being both culturally and gender sensitive.
- To involve the National Gender Machinery as main stakeholder and ensure engagement between NCW, the EOUs, and climate change units in the relevant ministries.

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

(2) Monitoring and Evaluation

Through onset analysis, data has been collated to establish a baseline. This data shall be monitored against the baseline throughout implementation and evaluation. The analysis identified the differences between men and women within at-risk populations. In order to monitor and evaluate progress of the project, the following indicators will be used:

- Quantitative outcomes:
 - Number of women and other vulnerable groups included in project consultations, and community-driven decisions, plans, implementation and M&E on ICZM;
 - Number of women and other vulnerable groups engaged in adaptation and resilience activities;
 - Number of vulnerable women and other vulnerable groups who changed their mindset on coast protection through reached by project project-related capacity development activities and awareness raising;
 - Number of women and other vulnerable groups who will understand the importance of the community-based management and monitoring activities and be involved in the community-based management and monitoring activities; and
 - Number of women and other vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, who will be able to reach to the proposed sites and enjoy the blessings of on accessibilities to the proposed sites.
- Qualitative outcomes:
 - Involvement in community affairs by women and other vulnerable groups as a result of their engagement of women in adaptation, resilience, and other project-related activities in all the component; and
 - Awareness of the economic and social impacts of climate change as reported by women.