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“Plus 5” Review

of the

United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children 2002

and

World Fit for Children Plan of Action

27th December 2006

MINISTRY OF GENDER AND FAMILY

GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Since the United National General Assembly Special Session on Children in 2002, much has changed for the Maldives. This includes huge strides in social, economic and political development, which have transformed Maldivian society into a more modern, and complex one. Together with this sweeping change, the situation of children has also changed and while some aspects with regards to child rights and protection have improved, emerging issues have left other aspects in need of more attention. These aspects are detailed in this report.
- 1.2 Several positive milestones have been achieved since the United National General Assembly Special Session on Children in 2002, and the reports attempts to provide a summary of numerous efforts that have contributed to making this positive difference.
- 1.3 It should be noted that exceptional efforts have been made during the last year to further the efforts on child rights and protection. This is attributed to the current Minister of Gender and Family who has efficiently and effectively turned around the workings of the ministry, in a remarkably short pace of time in a manner in which the limited human resource capacity could be utilized more proficiently.
- 1.4 This report was compiled by considering secondary source data from various reports, studies and surveys, and information from the Combined Second and Third Periodic Report of the Maldives to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. In light of the limited time allocated to preparing this report, and grave human resource constraints faced by Maldives which means that all relevant personnel have prior engagements, wider consultations, as desired, were not possible.
- 1.5 It should however be noted that exhaustive consultations made while preparing the Combined Second and Third Periodic Report of the Maldives to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, and updates provided in this report were made possible through informal consultations with government agencies and members of the civil society. During the short pace of time available, efforts were made to capture and reflect issues as they are.

2. Major National Actions taken for Children and towards the WFFC targets since 2002

2.1 The proposed Seventh National Development Plan lists a number of areas of intervention defining the strategy for the Ministry of Gender and Family to enhance its work on protecting the rights of the child and implementing the Convention. This includes;

- (a) developing institutional frameworks and establishing a multi-disciplinary protection system for children and vulnerable women;
- (b) developing institutional framework and establishing support services for children and families in particularly difficult circumstances;
- (c) supporting the strengthening of the justice and legal system to protect the rights of children and women;
- (d) promoting the health and well being of families;
- (e) promoting policies for the social inclusion of the elderly and people with special needs and safeguarding their well being within the community;
- (f) developing mechanisms to increase economic and socio-political participation of women; and
- (g) mainstreaming gender and child rights concerns.

2.2 Other sectoral plans in the proposed Seventh National Development Plan, including health, education and justice, also include policies and strategies towards protecting and enhancing the rights if children.

2.3 Following the United Nations General Assembly Special Session in 2002, consultative meetings to develop a National Action Plan in line with the World Action Plan were held. The consultations, which included government stakeholders, NGOs and children from different localities, resulted in the Second National 10 Year Action Plan for the Preservation of the Rights of Children.

- 2.4 The Action Plan contains commitment to promote healthy lives, combating HIV/AIDS, education, and protection against abuse, exploitation, violence and armed conflict. While the plan was comprehensive on paper, inadequate follow-up and monitoring meant that it was not taken into account while drawing up sector plans. As a result, much of the child protection work was done in an ad hoc manner.
- 2.5 Further, the context in which the National Plan of Action was formulated has also changed, and the problems that are faced by children today are relatively different, and sometimes more complex than those that existed at the time the World Action Plan and the subsequent National Action Plan were formulated.
- 2.6 A number of programmes and projects towards making the status and situation of children better are being implemented. Several measures were taken to make the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child widely known, including production and dissemination of audio-visual and print material for both adults and children, public discussions on national television and radio on child-related topics, the inclusion of a module on the Convention in all workshops and trainings of the Ministry of Gender and Family across the country, and a sponsoring of a nation-wide quiz programme on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The government recognizes the need for increased awareness, especially on children in vulnerable circumstances, and the same is reflected in the policy, strategy and planning processes.
- 2.7 Further, efforts are being made, with the assistance from UNICEF to holistically address issues of concern. This includes a nationwide multi-media campaign on early childhood with a special emphasis on psychosocial development, child-friendly pre-schools at which a play-based methodology to learning is adopted, introduction of child-friendly playgrounds, development of child-friendly learning environments in primary schools, establishment of teacher resource centers at which teachers are trained in a decentralized manner using a hands-on approach, and where material is developed and information is exchanged, and the development of a system where curriculums are assessed and revised.
- 2.8 Similarly, the health sector cooperates with a number of partners, including UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO to improve the health and nutrition of children. Main focus is given to provision of quality health services including enhancing facilities

available, immunization, developing functional nutrition and child health surveillance systems, capacity building, and development of adequate policies and plans. In addition, community based health and nutrition interventions, prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in mothers and children, reproductive health are also areas in which a considerable amount of work is done. Further, as the tsunami had largely damaged the sewerage facilities and the availability of safe drinking water across Maldives, projects to ensure sustainable access of island communities to safe water and to decrease ground water pollution are also being carried out.

- 2.9 Advocacy programs targeted towards behavior change, and to make duty bearers aware of the rights of children and women are also in progress. Moreover, efforts are also being made to ensure that policies, plans and reports are informed by evidence to promote children's and women's rights.
- 2.10 The Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child (Law 9/91), enacted in 1991, prescribes guiding principles for the Government, parents and community on the rights of the child. While it provides a legal basis for the protection of children in the Maldives, the need to develop a stronger piece of legislation, either to replace or complement it is necessary. In this regard, efforts to lay the ground work for such action, which includes a juvenile delinquency desk review and a review of existing legislation is currently underway.
- 2.11 A detailed review of the application of national laws and Islamic Shariah within the framework of the implementation of the Convention was conducted in 2000, which resulted in the subsequent report "The Application of the CRC in the Republic of The Maldives from the Perspective of Islamic Law". Some of the recommendations in this report, such as foster care are under review with the intent to initiate through an administrative procedure special measures for fostering.
- 2.12 The Family Law (Law No.4/2000) was passed by parliament in December 2000 and came into force in July 2001. It was a vital step forward for the rights of both women and children and particularly for those in situations of family conflict or breakdown. Provisions in the law include raising of the minimum age for marriage for men and women to 18 years, limits the freedom of men to divorce out of court, imposition of legal obligations on men to pay child support and maintenance divorce, and recognition of prenuptial agreements that may, among other things, restrict a man's access to privileges with regard to divorce and polygamy and/or

include a provision on equal access and control over property and finance. A review of the Family Law was undertaken in 2005.

- 2.13 The Regulation on Interrogation Adjudication and Sentencing of Juveniles in Conflict with the Law initially came into force in 1998, with the establishment of a separate Juvenile Court. The regulation was amended in 2004 and in early 2006 to facilitate and further the implement measures of protection. The most recent changes adopt a restorative approach to juvenile justice, and favors rehabilitation and other alternative forms of community based sanctions to retributive sentences. It also makes an effort to establish a correlation between the sentence and criminal culpability where sanctions are necessary. This regulation is meant to be an interim measure until the Juvenile Justice Act, which is part of a comprehensive juvenile justice system that is being proposed. The Juvenile Justice Act will seek to include different non-custodial punishments with detention as a last resort, and will attempt to align the domestic legislation with international standards and best practices. The Juvenile Justice Act will be drafted in 2006/2007.
- 2.14 Further, the establishment of a Juvenile Justice Unit (JJU) has been proposed, and is pending approval. The JJU will provide children in conflict the law with alternative ways through which they take responsibility for their actions, and help rehabilitate and reintegrate children back into society. The work of the JJU will be based on restorative justice principles.
- 2.15 Efforts to establish a cross-sectoral database on child protection is on going. The database will link sectoral agencies, provide a variety of information, and include means to track children, especially child victims, offenders and witnesses.
- 2.16 Work on the first Education Bill and Health Bill are currently being undertaken, and once enacted, the legislation will further strengthen the efforts towards achieving the goals laid in the global action plan.

3 Resource trends for children:

- 3.1 While there is a substantial amount spent on the development of children, budgetary figures are available only in a functional classification, and the budget trends, unfortunately, cannot be disaggregated. However, it should be noted that the budget allocated for some sector budgets, such as education, allocate large amounts of money to children, and focus mainly on them.
- 3.2 The Health Master Plan, 1996-2005, placed emphasis on human resource development. Through national and international trainings, it aimed to replace a large number of the expatriate workers with local staff. Similarly, the education sector invests heavily in training teachers. This reflects the importance given to the provision of quality health and education in the Maldives.
- 3.3 The Ministry of Gender and Family recognizes the need to mobilize funds for both infrastructure development and human resource development in order to achieve its goals for the protection of children. Currently, **25** people are being trained as social workers, and upon return will play an integral part in the decentralization of services of the Ministry of Gender and Family, as they will be based in the newly established Social Protection Service Centers (SPSC) in the Atolls. Targets have been set to establish and start operations in **11** atolls by the end of 2007.
- 3.4 UNICEF is the largest UN contributor to child rights and child protection in the Maldives. Along with WHO and UNFPA, they have played a vital role in supporting child related projects by providing financial assistance, technical input and support to improving human resource capacity. WHO has cooperated with the Government to train health workers and Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) in order to strengthen child and maternal health delivery services. UNICEF has funded teacher training at the Faculty of Education and on-site training in the islands.
- 3.5 The Indian Ocean tsunami meant that the work of the otherwise small UN Country Offices increased considerably due to a significant increase in funding. This led to an expansion of the UN Country Offices itself, and an increase in programme activities.

- 3.6 UNICEF has had the strongest donor response of all UN agencies in child rights and child protection. The resources available for UNICEF programming has expanded to US\$ 57 million by November 2005. Based on re-phasing of the remaining funds from 2005, and taking into account the adjusted structure of the remaining Country Program, there is a total of US\$ 31.9 million for projects during the period 2006-2007. Hence, the total allocation of UNICEF resources for the overall five-year country revised program to approximately US\$ 57.8 million.
- 3.7 Other sources of external funding include bilateral funds from the Japanese government for construction of schools in the Maldives, bilateral funding from the government of India which contributed to the construction of the Indhira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH), technical staff for the hospital and scholarships to train health care workers, bilateral funds from the Pakistani government for training of medical doctors, and additional bilateral funding from the Governments of Australia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Canada. Additionally, the United Kingdom, Singapore and Malaysia have contributed funds towards human resource development, and financial institutions such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank have provided funding for educational development programs and other child related initiatives. The Regional Development Project funded by the UNDP together with Government initiatives are geared towards reducing disparities between Malé and the Atolls.
- 3.8 Despite advances, the current human resource base is still insufficient to meet the needs of the country and fully implement the UNCRC, and the goals set out in the World Fit For Children Plan of Action.
- 3.9 Annex I highlights the budget trends from 1996-2005.

4. Development and use of monitoring instruments to track WFFC/MDG targets:

- 4.1 The geography of the Maldives is unique, with over 1000 islands scattered 90,000 square kilometers. While the Maldivian topography is the greatest obstacle to effectively and uniformly executing monitoring, it is acknowledged that monitoring needs to be more systematic, coordinated and comprehensive to effectively realize the objectives outlined in the World Fit for Children Plan of Action, and other international instruments, such as the CRC.
- 4.2 The Combined Second and Third Periodic Report of the Maldives to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child was submitted in 2006. The process of compiling the report itself was a monitoring exercise, and the information gathered during compilation was invaluable in subsequent planning.
- 4.3 The National Council for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, which constitutes of members from a wide range of stakeholders, monitors the roles of the government, its agencies, and communities in addition to contributing to policy decisions, and raising issues of concern. Further, the Ministry of Gender and Family has undergone major organizational restructuring, in their efforts to further strengthen their role as the main monitor of issues relating to children.
- 4.4 In this regard, the Ministry of Gender and Family is now comprises of;
- (a) The Family and Child Protection Authority, which looks into all legislation related to family and child protection, in addition to coordinating with other stakeholders to build mechanisms of cooperation,
 - (b) The Family and Child Protection Services, which focuses on the provision of social support and rehabilitation services for children and families,
 - (c) The Family and Community Development section, which aims to increase advocacy and awareness on issues affecting children, women and families, including human and children's rights, building a protective environment for children and empowerment of women, and protection of families.
 - (d) The newly formed Planning, Monitoring and Research section, which monitors and reports implementation of international obligations, develops action plans in line with international obligations, works to mainstream

international obligations of CRC and CEDAW into national development action plans, collects data and conducts research as well as prepare periodic reports .

- 4.5 A Multi-Sectoral Working Group on Child Protection, comprising of relevant government agencies, donors, NGOs and service providers was also constituted to ensure greater coordination on matters relating to children. The working group is not functioning effectively at present, and negotiations on means of better collaboration are presently ongoing. This group supports the Child and Family Protection Authority's work in setting up guidelines, procedures for protection and proposals for legal reviews.
- 4.6 Further, as part of the government's reform plan of decentralization, the Child Protection System is being spread to the atolls with the intent to provide children protection services at close proximity and reduce disparities amongst children living in the capital and the atolls. Training of protection workers and the systematic dissemination of information on child rights has been initiated.
- 4.7 The Maldives Human Rights Commission was constituted in 2004, and is a body which has the mandate to promote, monitor, and raise awareness on human and child rights issues, in addition to providing policy advice in drafting legislation and investigating and monitoring of human and child rights violations. It should be noted however, that the commission was re-constituted in November 2006, as a statutory body under the Human Rights Act 2006.
- 4.8 A survey was conducted in 2003, focused on children between ages 11 to 18, to ascertain their perception of respecting and protecting their rights are, both by adults and themselves. The survey also looked into what children considered to be violations of their rights.
- 4.9 While NGOs working on human rights issues were relatively less, if not non-existent prior to 2004, since then, a few NGOs that have taken up issues of human and child rights have emerged. While their full potential is yet to be used and tapped, they have voiced issues of concern around the area of child rights, proving that they are another check to balance the system, and act as a monitor.
- 4.10 It is worth noting that some of the above-mentioned NGOs are run by adolescents, making them an active partner at the implementation and

monitoring stages. Nevertheless efforts need to be geared towards encouraging, educating, empowering and training NGOs to identify and work on human and child rights issues more proactively.

5 Enhancing partnerships, alliances for children and participation:

- 5.1 The first major forum in the Maldives, following the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children in 2002 was one to formulate the “Nation Fit for Children”. The document was the outcome of the recommendations of the National Conference towards the Development of the National Plan of Action for the Decade 2001-2010. Children and parents from across the country participated in the conference, and contributed towards the development of the national plan of action.
- 5.2 Further, the Sixth National Development Plan included the development of a multi-disciplinary child protection system based on community coordination.
- 5.3 Ministry of Gender and Family extended technical supported the ‘Change Makers’ initiative, which was a tool through which child participation was encouraged. The initiative sought to utilise adolescents as advocates for child rights, and establish a support network with a focus to vulnerable children, especially migrant children living away from their parents.
- 5.4 Other efforts to encourage children to participate and have a voice have been by including them as part of various national delegations to international conferences and seminars.
- 5.5 While child participation is on of the key corner stones of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other instruments, it is realised that much needs to be done towards meaningfully utilising the strategy in determining the situation of children, planning and programming, among other things.
- 5.6 Government of Maldives in collaboration with UNICEF continues to work towards child protection. Currently, a large bulk of the efforts is focused towards designing and implementing mechanisms for redress and monitoring, and on behaviour change.
- 5.7 Partnerships have been forged by the Department of Public Health with WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF on various activities. A Multi-sectoral Committee for Integrated Early Childhood Development has also been formulated. Further, community based programmes have assisted in developing and implementing a

holistic IECD strategy, the evaluation of which showed the programme to be of tremendous success.

- 5.8 The education sector has collaborated with UNICEF, UNESCO, JOCV, VSO and the British Council in efforts to deliver quality education in the Maldives.
- 5.9 The National Narcotics Control Bureau (NNCB) and Journey (an NGO) have developed partnerships around aftercare services for addicts, the Ministry of Gender and Family have had strong alliances with WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF. They also work with Child Help Line International, Kelaniya University (Sri Lanka) and the University of New Castle (Australia). Ministry of Gender and Family also does a number of work with the Family Protection Unit of the Indhira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Society for Health Education.

6 Achievement of WFFC Plan of Action and related MDG targets:

Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

- 6.1 Currently, every inhabited island of the Maldives has either a hospital, atoll or island level health centre or health post with health personnel, depending on the islands population. The health system is decentralized and even the least served island has a trained family health worker, who assists inhabitants with delivery. They also assist women with pre and post natal care, and advices them to seek professional assistance in more complex cases. Proportion of women having access to pre and postnatal care is about 91% and 85% respectively.
- 6.2 85% of all deliveries are being attended by skilled attendants. Due to the improvement in the antenatal care during pregnancy, delivery and postnatal care and emergency obstetric care facilities at sub-Atoll levels with improved diagnostic and treatment facilities at regional levels. Between 2000 and 2005, the maternal mortality rate has been sustained at 1 per 1000 live births. The Still Birth Rate has also dropped from 15 per 1000 live births in 2000, to 8 per thousand live births in 2005.
- 6.3 Between 2000 and 2005, the Contraceptive User Rate¹ in the Maldives has remained at 20 and 80, for males and females respectively. Contraceptives are readily available over the counter in pharmacies for married couples.
- 6.4 The continued improvement in health services delivery has led to continued reduction in infant mortality. Presently, Infant Mortality Rate² has dropped from 21 in 2000 to 12 in 2005. Similarly, Child Mortality³ Rate has also decreased from 30 in 2000 to 16 in 2005. A high coverage of over 95 percent for individual antigens was achieved in respect of Expanded Program of Immunization (EPI).
- 6.5 Immunization is available free-of-charge at all islands, and currently, the rate of immunization stands at 95-97%⁴.
- 6.6 In order to prevent childhood disabilities, MR Vaccine (Measles Rubella) has been given free nation wide and achieving coverage of over 80%. Moreover,

¹ Figure denotes usage for the married population only.

² Per1000 live births

³ Per1000 live births, for children under the age of 5.

⁴ Department of Public Health

MMR (Mumps, Measles, and Rubella Vaccine) is planned to be introduced to the regular EPI Program from 2007. However comprehensive services for children born with disabilities remain a challenge to be addressed in the Maldives.

- 6.7 Exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months is promoted in all hospitals/health centers, and health posts, and awareness created on timely weaning and feeding practices, and preparation of nutritious meals for infants using food that are locally available. Moreover, abiding by the international code for breast milk substitutes, the Maldives prohibits promotion of any infant formula under the national food safety regulation. Code for Marketing of breast milk substitutes is promoted and is being enforced through a food safety regulation. Further, the recent Infant and Young Child Feeding Survey conducted by collaborative efforts of the Ministry of Health and UNICEF, revealed 15% exclusive breastfeeding rates.
- 6.8 Nevertheless, malnutrition rates persist, and a quarter of the child population experience stunted growth. 13% of children experience wasting and a 33% of the child population is underweight. Further, as the findings of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey II (2001) revealed, anemia is a major problem among women. The results showed that 50% of women in the reproductive age (15-49) and 56% of the pregnant women were anemic. This is an area where further research and evidence based interventions are needed.
- 6.9 No child has been identified to have HIV/AIDS in the Maldives thus far. There have only a total of thirteen HIV positive cases that have been identified by end of 2005, and there has been no mother to child transmission of HIV.
- 6.10 While accessibility to health services exist, integrated services, especially rehabilitative services for children with special needs is very limited.
- 6.11 Play, sports, recreation, artistic and cultural expression is encouraged among children, and are included in school curricula. Child play areas exist in schools, and community play areas are being further developed with assistance from the government and NGOs.
- 6.12 As per the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey II (2001), 80.5% households have access to sanitary means of excreta disposal. Nevertheless, as the environmental situation of the Maldives is extremely fragile, nearly all islands need to upgrade

or change their sanitation systems as the systems presently in use are cracked or leaking, leading to widespread contamination of groundwater. The situation further deteriorated after the tsunami, and efforts are underway to ensure sustainable access of island communities to safe water and to decrease ground water pollution.

- 6.13 The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey II (2001) also revealed that 76.5% of the households in the country have access to safe drinking water including rain water. Safe drinking water has been provided to 100% of households in Malé, Vilingili and Hulhumale'. However, variations are seen in the accessibility of safe water in the different regions with the lowest in the North region. The use of well water, which is now considered unsuitable for drinking in most parts of the country due to ground water salination and contamination, dropped from 19% in 1995 to 16% in 2001.

Promoting Quality Education

- 6.14 Primary schooling is available in all islands free-of-charge. While there is no legal obligation for children to attend school, or for parents and care-givers to send them, education for children below the age of 16 is greatly encouraged. This is reflected in the fact that Universal access to basic education (grades 1-7) was achieved in 2000. Legislation on the provision of education is currently being drafted, and suggests that primary education be classified as compulsory.
- 6.15 There are no gender disparities in student enrolment rates at the primary and secondary levels. In 2005, girls accounted for more than 49% of the total enrolment in both primary and secondary education. During 2005, the proportion of girls in lower secondary was slightly higher than boys, and stood at 53.2%. The percentage of girls in primary education in 2005 was 48%. During the same year, the percentage of girls enrolled at the higher secondary level was slightly lower with girls accounting for 47.2%⁵.
- 6.16 There are no facilities for children with disabilities at the islands level. However, in Malé, there are special classes designed for children with physical disabilities, where their studies are fully financed by the Government. An NGO, Care Society provides training for teachers as well as running a special education program for children with disabilities.

⁵ Statistical Yearbook 2006, Ministry of Planning and National Development

- 6.17 Continuing education is given more priority, and 4 centers offering continuing education have been established nation-wide. Further vocational training has been identified as a national priority and will be introduced in secondary schools as an optional subject.
- 6.18 The Early Childhood Development program was the biggest program to receive UNICEF support prior to the tsunami disaster. The 2003 “First Steps...Maldives” media campaign (2001/2002) proved to have significant impact on the care givers of children 0-5 years, with improvements in the knowledge and skills in the practices of caring for infant and young children. The expansion of the campaign has been a key factors leading to the increased attention to early childhood development that now exists across the country. By the end of 2006 alone, 70 new preschools will be developed as child friendly pre-schools.
- 6.19 School curriculums are presently being revised to incorporate life skills and civic education. Further, a gender analysis of the primary curriculum is also currently underway in order to identify possible gender biases in the way material is presented to children in schools.
- 6.20 The current draft of the Education Act gives great prominence to governance matters in the education system. It also attempts to increase the ownership of communities to schools, and includes students in the decision-making processes.
- 6.21 Recreational and sports facilities are available in schools. Most schools also hold annual concerts, sports/athletics meets, participate in national competitions.
- 6.22 Attempts are made to harbor interest of students to new technologies. Unfortunately, all schools do not have the facility or the capacity to run such programs successfully. The geography of the country and the lack of network physical layer infrastructure, also hinder development in this area.

Child Protection against Abuse, Exploitation and Violence

- 6.23 Birth registration is required under Law No. 7/92, Registration of Births and Deaths in the Maldives. The legislation requires that applications for birth registration be made within 7 days of the birth of the child.
- 6.24 In the Atolls, birth attendants complete a ‘Birth Attendant Form’, which is submitted to the Island office and a copy is provided to the parents of the child.

Island offices record the birth and pass on the information to the Atoll offices for registration. This data is then forwarded to the Ministry of Health where the National Vital Registration database is maintained. In Malé, applications for birth registration are submitted to the Malé Municipality Office. Hospitals forward information to Ministry of Health to be included in the National Vital Registration database.

- 6.25 Records at the Malé Municipality show a birth registration rate of 99.5 percent for Malé, This was a result of intensive work undertaken by Ministry of Gender and Social Security with the Municipality when the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2001, revealed that only 73 percent of births during the 5 years preceding the survey were registered .
- 6.26 The birth registration project, aimed at building the capacity of Government agencies including Island and Atoll Offices, is continued with the objective of ensuring hundred per cent registration of births in the Maldives.
- 6.27 There has been considerable progress with regards to implementation of preventive and rehabilitative measures for abused, neglected and abandoned children.
- 6.28 Schools are not allowed to use physical punishment as a disciplinary measure, and in the incidence where a student is subjected to such treatment parents are encouraged to report it to the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Gender and Family where the matter will be investigated and addressed.
- 6.29 The Ministry of Gender and Family established a helpline to report child abuse, which was the first point of contact for people in Malé, and a means to receive support and advice for those on other islands. While the helpline has not been operational for sometime, efforts are underway to re-establish this service with the assistance of Helpline International.
- 6.30 A local NGO, Society for Health Education (SHE), also provides a telephone helpline service where members of the community can receive information and assistance on child abuse issues.

- 6.31 Awareness programs have been targeted to students aged 14-16 in Male' on health and social issues, including sex, relationships and sexual abuse awareness Through a UNFPA funded life skills education project.
- 6.32 In 1999, the Ministry of Gender and Family completed an initial round of training for volunteer child protection workers to assist with child abuse cases in the Atolls. Each island in the Maldives currently has at least two child protection workers. These volunteer workers have participated in a five to ten day training course which included topics on the UNCRC, Law 9/91, preventing child abuse, counseling skills and investigation of children-related cases. As the need for permanent protection workers is established, a policy has been approved to train and employ such workers across the country.
- 6.33 A medico-legal form specific to abuse cases has been developed and doctors trained on collecting forensic medical evidence.
- 6.34 Social service managers, who are part of the effort to decentralize provision of a more comprehensive service to children and families, including child protection services to the Atolls, are currently being trained. By mid June 2007, it is anticipated that one manager will be posted per atoll.
- 6.35 The legal framework for protecting children needs to be strengthened. In this regard, the Government plans to draft a Child Protection Act for submission to Parliament in 2007.
- 6.36 Efforts are underway to develop a comprehensive juvenile justice system based on restorative justice. Currently, the cabinet is considering the establishment of a Juvenile Justice Unit to oversee juvenile justice matters. Further, a Juvenile Justice Act will be drafted and submitted to Parliament in 2007.
- 6.37 Forced marriages and female genital mutilation are not reported, and not believed to be in practice. However, there are reports of underage marriages conducted outside of courts. Every known case is investigated and protection provided to the child wherever possible. This is a newly emerging issue in the Maldives and strategies for increasing awareness to ensure that this does not continue have to be found.

- 6.38 A comprehensive multi-sectoral referral system for reported abuse has been designed, and will be implemented with decentralization of social protection services to the Atolls.
- 6.39 Currently, the Ministry of Gender and Family collaborates with the Indhira Gandhi Memorial Hospital and the Family and Child Protection Unit of the Maldives Police Service to provide appropriate care and services to victims of abuse.
- 6.40 Children without parental care are housed in two institutions. Vilingili Children's Home, which accommodates orphans, abandoned children, and child victims was opened in late 2004 and houses children below 13 years.
- 6.41 The Education and Training Center for Children in Maafushi accommodates delinquent and neglected boys between the ages 8 and 16. The children
- 6.42 School children, their parents, and community stakeholders are made aware of the ill effects of drug abuse, and on detection of abuse. A Children's Rehabilitation Center was established, and started to function during 2007. However, it is currently not operational, as the numbers of children reported for drug abuse are fewer than anticipated and concern over the best methodology for their rehabilitation is still under discussion.
- 6.43 Fortunately, children are not exposed to armed conflict in the Maldives.
- 6.44 The Labour Regulation stipulates that children over the age of 14 may be employed in non-hazardous jobs. The Rules Governing Government Employment stipulates that a person below the age of 16 shall not be recruited into the civil service. Moreover, where the child is 16, the child can only be employed in what is classified as a non-hazardous job. The minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces is 18. The proposed Labour Law also suggests the minimum age for employment as 16.
- 6.45 Pornography, including child pornography, is strictly prohibited and law also prohibits any sexual activity outside of marriage for all persons. However, reports of internet sites that carry photographs of Maldivian children have been recently reported.
- 6.46 Awareness on mother-to-child HIV/AIDS infection is systematically carried out.

- 6.47 The national school curriculum will be reviewed in 2007, and efforts will be made to include sex education, including information on STIs in the same. Information on HIV/AIDS is currently in the curriculum.
- 6.48 Maldives does not have a national poverty line. However, analyses based on the theory of poverty dominance reveal, that the proportion of people earning less than a dollar a day has been halved between the years 1997 and 2004.
- 6.49 The following was published by the Ministry of Planning and National Development in the Millennium Development Goals, Maldives Country Report 2005. It reflects the overall progress of Maldives towards achieving the MDGs.

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger



Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education



Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women



Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality



Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health



Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases



Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability



7 Summary of lessons learned and initiatives undertaken since 2002 for accelerating the progress:

- 7.1 Two of the biggest impediments to achieving targets planned are the geography of the country and limited human resource. While geography cannot be altered, human resource capacities need to be boosted considerably, to counter child rights and protection issues. The reality though is that the population of the country is 270,101⁶ of which approximately 60% is below 25 years.
- 7.2 While collaboration between stakeholders working with and for children have increased in the past year, cooperation needs to be further strengthened at all levels. This will not only assist in planning, implementation and execution of projects and services, but will facilitate a Mutli-sectoral approach to dealing with issues concerned.
- 7.3 There is an urgent need to increase the role of health and education personnel on child rights and protection, especially since there is a general lack of understanding of the complexities involved.
- 7.4 Communities need to be informed of preventive, protective and rehabilitative measures to ensure they are understood and welcomed. Further, their capacities build to ensure sustainability of initiatives through greater participation.
- 7.5 Transport within the Maldives is extremely costly, and proves to be a major obstacle to conduct out reach activities to island populations. An adequate, efficient and cost-effective transport mechanism will make services more accessible to people.
- 7.6 A National Seminar on Child Rights and Protection is being planned for 2007. This will be the event at which strategies to address child rights and protection issues will be drawn. One of the outcomes of the seminar is a National Plan of Action, which will steer the efforts of all stakeholders to achieve common goals, and facilitate greater cooperation between key partners.
- 7.7 The first Health Act and the Education Act are currently being made, and the legislation, once passed will enshrine people's right to education and health. The

⁶ Maldives Population and Housing Census 2006 - Preliminary Results (Ministry of Planning and National Development)

legislation will also impose obligations on the government to reach key goals outlined in it, including, but not limited to the provision of compulsory primary education.

- 7.8 In addition, a Juvenile Justice Act and a Child Protection Act have been proposed for drafting in 2007. The Juvenile Justice Act will aim to divert children in conflict with the law from the formal justice system by using restorative justice principles. The Child Protection Act will have the overarching objective of protecting children, including victims of all forms of violence and abuse. The Act is hoped to address the shortcomings of the existing legislation, in terms of force and effectiveness.
- 7.9 A Social Service System is being designed for the country, and once complete, will be a means of support for people, especially vulnerable groups, including children and their families.
- 7.10 A referral system to report abuse has been designed by the Ministry of Gender and Family. This system will come into force in 2007 with the opening of the Social Protection Service Centers at the atoll-level. These centers are part of the decentralization plan of the Ministry. A telephone helpline, with the assistance of Helpline International will also be set up.
- 7.11 Awareness is believed to be one of the key tools to advocate for behavior change, and a number of awareness programs targeting various groups in different parts of the country, ranging from child right, protection, juvenile justice, education, health and safe water and sanitation have been planned for 2007.
- 7.12 Plans for 2007 also include establishing a decentralized and multi-sectoral database system for child rights monitoring, and capacity building of staff to effectively maintain it.
- 7.13 Further, there are plans to further develop the existing multi-sectoral database for child protection as part of the referral system.
- 7.14 A Juvenile Justice Unit, to divert children in conflict with the law, will be established, and restorative justice practices such as the introduction of community conferencing for juveniles is planned for 2007. This will be reinforced

by the capacity building of officials at the Family and Child Protection Unit at the Maldives Police Service, on child friendly procedures.

- 7.15 Programs aimed at children themselves include recovery and reintegration programs such as drug awareness, peer education prevention program on substance abuse and HIV/AIDS for adolescents in school to supplement existing life skills initiatives, strengthening after care and vocational services for addicts, child abuse prevention campaign for all forms of abuse, implementing community based prevention/early intervention and recovery services for children, including for children most at risk, and scaling up the community based rehabilitation initiative for children with disabilities.
- 7.16 There are further programs planned by the health sector to ensure that children enjoy a healthy lifestyle. This includes sustained implementation of the EPI program and the introduction of MMR (Mumps, Measles, and Rubella Vaccine) to the regular EPI Program from 2007. Further, efforts to deliver quality health services to the island communities, including trained professionals, will be carried out.
- 7.17 Efforts with regards to improving nutrition will also be carried out. This includes information dissemination on nutrition, and the provision supplements, including Vitamin A, iodine and other micronutrients to school children. School children across the country are also provided with de-worming tablets.
- 7.18 Education focuses on early childhood development, and the provision of child-friendly pre and primary schools. This includes provision of services, training teachers and the school administration to best utilize this new methodology. The education program also focuses on reviewing curriculums.
- 7.19 During the period 2006 to 2008, the Ministry of Gender and Family also plans to develop mechanisms and training programs through existing training institutions on gender awareness and child protection, conduct research into the situation of women and children, with a focus to gender based violence, improve data collection for managing services for children, and child protection, and establish databases to monitor incidences of gender-based violence and other gender related issues. The plans also include development and strengthening of a multi-sectoral support system to protect rights of children and vulnerable women, creation of systems to ensure children are heard and their opinions

considered in decision-making processes, development of the central child protection system with a view to decentralization, development of systems to coordinate, monitor and evaluate child protection services, and advocacy on eliminating beliefs, attitudes and practices that reinforce violence against women.

- 7.20 In order to develop the institutional framework and establish support services for children and families in especially difficult circumstances, there are plans in place to develop alternative care for women and children who are unable to remain with their families, to promote support services for families and children to ensure easy access to services, to build professional capacity to provide services to children and families in need, to encourage CBOs and NGOs to participate in providing support for vulnerable children and families, and to coordinate inter-ministerial intervention in providing services to children with special needs.
- 7.21 To support the justice and legal system to protect the rights of children and women, plans to conduct a legal review to identify and address gaps in the law from a rights perspective, promotion of the use of forensic evidence, expert opinions and victim and eye witness statements in cases of alleged abuse, development of a community based support system to divert young people from criminal behavior, and drafting of domestic legislation to correspond with CEDAW are planned.
- 7.22 Furthermore, as a measure to promote health and well being of families, development of mechanisms to effectively implement and enforce laws relating to families, promotion of family socialization in accordance of the values of society, conducting research on issues pertaining to the family, publicizing information on the work and services of the Ministry of Gender and Family, promotion of marriage counseling through CBOs and NGOs and provision of guidance, monitoring and evaluation of family counseling services have been proposed.
- 7.23 Plans to mainstream gender and child rights concerns have also been designed. These include strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Gender and Family, capacity building and strengthening structures of the Gender Management System, monitoring implementation of CRC and CEDAW, building regional and

international partnerships and promoting the collection and the utilization of gender disaggregated data for policy formulation and resource allocation.

Functional classification of central government expenditure (In million Rf)
1996-2001

Particulars	1998			1999			2000			2001		
	1996	1997 (Prov.)	1998 (Budget Est.)	1997	1998 (Prov.)	1999 (Budget Est.)	1998	1999 (Prov.)	2000 (Budget Est.)	1999	2000 (Prov.)	2001 (Budget Est.)
Total expenditure and net lending	1 707.2	1 933.4	2 073.8	1 934.4	2 219.8	2 299.8	2 055.3	2 481.8	2 482.7	2 519.7	2 776.0	3 327.8
Total expenditure	1 694.8	1 937.1	2 072.3	1 938.1	2 218.3	2 298.8	2 115.9	2 468.3	2 562.9	2 508.2	2 819.9	3 373.3
Public services	606.8	804.4	812.7	766.2	904.2	849.1	799.1	1 141.1	939.5	1 074.7	1 139.3	1 279.9
General administration	362.4	408.3	461.6	429.2	482.1	466.0	428.8	564.1	548.6	547.6	665.0	844.7
Public order and internal security	244.4	396.1	351.1	337.0	422.7	383.1	370.3	577.0	390.9	527.1	474.3	435.2
Environmental protection												
Social services	575.7	745.5	938.8	750.0	937.6	952.6	993.7	1 002.6	1 200.0	1 022.9	1 143.2	1 275.3
Education	246.6	319.4	464.0	318.4	421.2	434.1	432.1	441.2	539.5	450.8	501.7	601.1
Health ¹	190.8	222.4	244.6	212.0	222.7	239.8	224.2	278.2	296.1	259.4	286.7	318.3
Social security and welfare	47.8	49.5	65.4	66.5	61.9	54.1	71.3	73.6	64.6	70.0	97.9	70.1
Community programmes	90.5	154.2	164.8	153.1	231.8	224.6	266.1	209.6	299.8	242.7	256.9	285.8
Economic services	431.3	300.3	225.6	334.8	280.7	396.5	241.5	223.0	322.9	311.9	436.9	702.1
Fisheries and agriculture	83.1	28.6	20.0	21.8	12.6	22.4	22.0	19.0	25.1	23.2	38.0	89.9
Transportation	140.8	177.8	132.8	217.2	208.1	218.7	159.1	152.8	147.0	215.6	251.3	447.5
Communication	41.9	42.1	2.1	34.7	1.9	6.0	2.3	4.3	5.4	22.3	5.0	45.5
Tourism	17.7	20.2	15.8	23.9	16.3	15.5	15.8	22.8	26.3	22.9	26.0	29.2
Trade and industries	9.9	10.3	5.1	8.1	6.4	7.1	6.3	5.4	7.3	7.0	5.6	6.2
Electricity	137.9	21.3	49.8	29.1	35.4	126.8	36.0	18.7	111.8	20.9	111.0	83.8
Interest on public debt	81.0	86.9	95.2	87.1	95.2	100.6	81.6	101.6	100.5	98.7	100.5	116.0
Net lending	12.4	-3.7	1.5	-3.7	1.5	1.0	-60.6	13.5	-80.2	11.5	-43.9	-45.5
Memorandum item:												
Foreign-loans disbursements	258.7	302.8	205.8	257.3	320.9	331.0	248.2	201.1	198.7	207.6	302.4	753.6

Source: Ministry of Finance and Treasury.

¹ Expenses for water and sanitation is included in the health sector

Functional classification of central government expenditure (In million Rf)

2000-2005

Particulars	2002			2003			2004			2005				
	2000	2001 (Prov.)	2002 (Budget Est.)	2001	2002 (Prov.)	2003 (Budget Est.)	2002	2003 (Prov.)	2004 (Budget Est.)	2003	2003 (% share)	2004 (Prov.)	2004 (% share)	2005 (Budget Est.)
Total expenditure and net lending														
Total expenditure	2 739.9	2 912.9	3 320.8	2 912.1	3 334.2	3 829.5	3 135.7	3 529.2	3 789.7	3 551.9	100.0	3 758.1	100.0	4 742.9
Public services	1 164.5	1 215.8	1 234.2	1 088.1	1 105.8	1 270.3	1 029.8	1 186.3	1 344.2	1 204.9	33.9	1 279.7	34.1	1 799.1
General administration	715.6	777.9	785.0	624.2	656.3	803.7	610.5	680.1	774.0	650.9	18.3	754.0	20.1	1 029.4
Public order and internal security	448.9	437.9	449.2	463.9	449.5	466.6	396.3	480.9	540.2	532.1	15.0	494.6	13.2	726.1
Environmental protection							23.0	25.3	30.0	21.9	0.6	31.1	0.8	43.6
Social services	1 140.5	1 147.5	1 492.0	1 198.3	1 570.0	1 778.8	1 532.8	1 648.7	1 715.5	1 667.6	46.9	1 746.8	46.5	1 985.3
Education	541.2	534.0	597.2	515.6	589.8	698.5	636.8	717.0	720.3	723.6	20.4	736.6	19.6	970.0
Health ¹	376.2	368.0	394.8	400.5	412.9	519.7	415.9	496.2	556.6	363.3	10.2	423.9	11.3	533.4
Social security and welfare										141.3	4.0	162.1	4.3	168.7
Community programmes	223.1	245.5	500.0	282.2	567.3	560.6	480.1	435.5	438.6	439.4	12.4	424.2	11.3	313.2
Economic services	328.5	435.7	467.7	509.2	516.5	645.6	436.6	559.4	583.2	544.2	15.3	596.8	15.9	818.5
Fisheries and agriculture	47.7	22.9	31.1	39.3	26.3	34.8	17.9	21.5	31.4	26.2	0.7	31.4	0.9	94.0
Transportation	166.2	224.6	327.0	305.9	368.4	503.3	306.3	419.6	410.9	430.1	12.1	412.4	11.0	421.3
Communication	4.5	33.2	12.5	33.2	6.8	14.3	8.1	14.1	41.9	17.2	0.5	41.5	1.1	105.0
Tourism	27.7	29.4	29.9	31.4	32.8	40.0	35.9	37.5	52.5	34.9	1.0	61.4	1.6	116.6
Trade and industries	6.1	5.2	5.6	4.7	4.6	8.6	5.0	21.8	27.8	5.8	0.2	40.3	1.1	49.9
Electricity	76.3	120.4	61.7	94.7	77.6	44.6	63.4	44.9	18.7	30.0	0.8	8.8	0.2	31.7
Interest on public debt	106.4	113.9	126.9	116.5	141.9	134.8	136.5	134.8	146.8	135.2	3.8	134.8	3.6	140.0
Net lending										-163.7		-192.8		-106.7
Memorandum item: Foreign-loans disbursements										594.1	16.7	609.5	16.2	640.8

Source: Ministry of Finance and Treasury.

¹ Expenses for water and sanitation is included in the health sector.