

# Maldives



## General Country Profile



Maldives is one of the world's most geographical-ly dispersed countries with 1,192 islands.



Population: 557,426 (Projection 2020).  
Child population (0–17 years): 23 per cent  
18–24 years: 14 per cent (National Bureau of Statistics, Projection 2020).



Sex ratio: 103M:100F (Census, 2014).



Annual population growth rate: 1.65 per cent (Census, 2014).



Infant mortality rate: 8 per 1,000 live births (MDHS, 2015/16).



Life expectancy: 73 for males, 75 for females (NBS, Statistical Yearbook 2019).



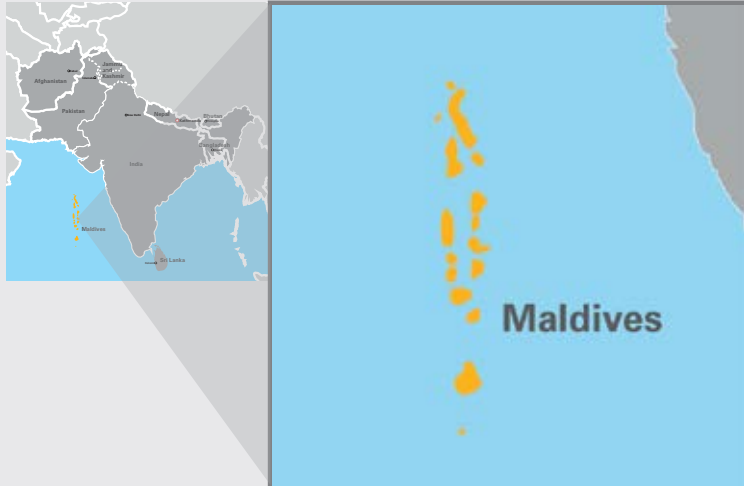
Head Count Ratio (population below the income poverty line): 8.2 per cent (HIES, 2016).



Maldives graduated from Least Developed Country (LDC) status to Middle Income Country (MIC) status on 1 January 2011. It is a Small Island Developing State.



Maldives is the most low-lying country on earth, making it extremely vulnerable to rising sea levels and flooding. The country faces the very real possibility that most its land mass will be underwater by the end of this century.



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## Maldives Key Indicators on Children

Indicator	Value	Year	Source
Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)	28%	2020	MPI Report
Neonatal mortality	11 per 1,000 live births	2016 / 2017	Maldives Demographic and Household Survey (MDHS)
Infant mortality	18		
Under-5 mortality rate	20		
Basic vaccination coverage (12-23 months) <sup>1</sup>	77%	2016 / 2017	MDHS
Population using improved drinking water	47%	2014	Census
Lower secondary school net enrolment	90%	2018	Ministry of Education (MOE)
Higher secondary school net enrolment	45%	2018	MOE
Children experienced emotional or physical punishment	28% boys 19% girls	2009	VAC study



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[1] Source: WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation.



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## Biggest challenges facing children and UNICEF targets for 2016–2020

- **The Maldives has seen significant progress** in all areas affecting children in recent decades, illustrated by the good progress on key indicators. Yet geographical inequalities exist - the 2016/17 MPI shows that while 28 per cent of the population in the Maldives were poor in 2016, 87 per cent of this group live in the remote islands while 39 per cent live in the capital Male'. This inequality is likely to increase as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- High rates of **violence against children and drug abuse among adolescent and young people**. A 2009 Violence Against Children Study indicated that 28 per cent of boys and 19 per cent of girls under age 18 have experienced emotional or physical punishment. It also revealed a clear correlation between youth unemployment, drug abuse and high rates of juvenile crime. Nationally, 15 per cent of children attending secondary school reported that they had been sexually abused at least once, with prevalence rates among girls double that among boys.
- **Quality of education** remains a concern. The average pass rate at lower-secondary level is 51 per cent, the dropout rate among upper middle-school students is 20 per cent, and 25 per cent of all schools do not have adequate WASH facilities, IT or science labs. There are too few qualified teachers. Children with disabilities have inadequate access to educational opportunities (only 52 out of the total 315 schools provide any form of education for children with special needs).
- **Young people** under the age of 24 comprise around 41 per cent of the population, yet they have limited access to career guidance, do not acquire the skills required for a successful entry into the formal economy. There is a general lack of modern life skills and, especially in remote islands, the opportunities for professional development are limited.
- **Malnutrition**, both under- and over-nutrition, and the consumption of unhealthy food and beverages remains an important public health concern. Rates of stunting, underweight and wasting among under-five children were 15, 14 and 9 per cent (MDHS 2016/17), respectively. This needs to be closely monitored in the post-COVID19 pandemic period to ensure past gains are not reversed.
- **Climate change and disaster risk reduction** – the nexus between the effects of climate change such as increasing shortage of drinking water in islands; intensified natural hazards such as rainstorms and floods; and continued destruction of the already fragile natural habitat due to heavy infrastructure development, and limited disaster preparedness capacities are putting children at increasing and multidimensional risk.



## Country Team

- Munir A. Safiaddin, Representative
- Vacant, Deputy Representative
- Shafag Naaz Athif, Operations Officer
- Ibrahim Naseem, M&E Officer
- Catherine Haswell, United Nations Resident Coordinator



## Type of UNICEF programme, presence and partnerships and salient issues

- The Country Programme Document (CPD) 2016–2020 has a total budget of USD 9.2 million (USD 4.2 million regular resources and USD 4.6 million other resources) and has been extended until the end of 2021 with an additional OR budget ceiling of USD 5 million to allow the Country Office to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- UNICEF Maldives has 15 staff members (2 IPs, 6 NOs and 7 GS) with almost gender parity.
- Flagship programmes: prevention of violence against children, child and adolescent health and nutrition, social inclusion, and alternative learning programmes, and skills for young people.
- The country programme is implemented in a middle-income country (MIC) context. Therefore, it combines upstream policy development and downstream community-level support services for vulnerable children and families, including direct engagement to promote positive social change with an additional emergency component in the context of the ongoing pandemic.
- Private sector engagement (tourism, civil aviation industry etc.) is being scaled up by UNICEF to complement programme interventions. Outreach to key National Committees for OR funding is being explored, particularly for the emergency response

