

Voluntary National Review for the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017

Republic of Maldives

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Preface

The adoption of Sustainable Development Goals is a major achievement in the global effort of moving towards a sustainable future. The 2030 Agenda is an ambitious agenda—more so for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as the Maldives.

Despite the numerous socio-economic and environmental challenges, including the dispersal of population, lack of human resource capacity as well as resource mobilisation difficulties, the Maldives has made significant headway towards sustainable development. As a low-lying island nation, Maldives is extremely vulnerable to climate change impacts. As such, additional efforts need to be made to further substantively integrate climate change into national planning processes.

This report aims to highlight the efforts of Maldives towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, planned programmes and the challenges we face as a small island developing state. Considerable work has already been undertaken by the Government of His Excellency President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, and I wish to thank His Excellency the President, for his guidance and assistance in the efforts towards sustainable development.

While Maldives has made substantial progress in sectors such as education, energy and infrastructure, extensive effort needs to be undertaken to consolidate these gains. It is our hope that the 17 Goals inspire collaboration and corporation both in the international community and among domestic development partners.

I wish to take this opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of Maldives to the 2030 Agenda and our pledge to leave no one behind.

Thoriq Ibrahim

Minister of Environment and Energy

Executive summary

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Maldives will be built upon the successes in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in the country. The thematic focus of the current review will be on the substantive progress the country has made in the areas of health, education, gender, water and sanitation, energy, infrastructure, climate change and marine resources.

As a Small Island Developing State, the Maldives faces significant economic, social and environmental challenges. These are exacerbated by the impacts from climate change and vulnerability to both internal and external shocks. In addition, the geographic insularity coupled with a dispersed population and high transaction costs results in limited potential for economies of scale. Despite these challenges, the country has made substantial progress in eradicating extreme poverty, achieving universal education and health care and protecting terrestrial and marine biodiversity. However, additional efforts must be made in other areas such as empowering women, strengthening mechanisms of governance and justice, minimizing economic disparity and sustainable consumption and production in order to ensure that no one is left behind.

This review will attempt to voice out the challenges faced by a Small Island Developing State such as the Maldives, and the efforts made towards overcoming these challenges through innovation, strategic long term policies and collaborative decision-making processes. Innovation and participation of various stakeholders is critical, especially given the ambitious nature of the 2030 Agenda and the need to prioritize our efforts in the implementation process. In this regard, financing and resource mobilization from national and international development partners is needed to achieve the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Maldives recognises the importance of stakeholder engagement and participation in the substantive realisation of SDGs. To this regard, emphasis has been made to create awareness and engage stakeholders throughout the SDGs process, including implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Focused awareness sessions are planned to be conducted for parliamentarians, local councils, members of the judiciary, NGOs, students and the general public for the third quarter of 2017.

With the completion of stock taking of available data by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), initiating the work of identifying national priorities is currently in progress. National priorities for the SDGs targets will be identified through consultations with implementing agencies and input from civil society and the private sector. A Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) is scheduled for 2017, which will feed into the process of identifying of the national priorities. Corollary to this, the SDGs Division and NBS are undertaking an exercise with relevant stakeholders to identify data gaps and mechanisms to address them. The development of a monitoring framework to report the achievements of the SDGs targets in the implementation process is planned for 2017, pending required technical assistance and financial support.

Long term strategic direction and focused policies will eliminate duplication of work and, in this manner, determine the success of the budgeting and execution of sectoral programs towards SDG implementation.

The lack of technical expertise, particularly in terms of data collection and management, remains a major hurdle in the implementation of SDGs in the country. This is compounded by the lack of

trained staff and necessary materials for data collection and management.

Furthermore, enhanced collaboration across government agencies is required to effectively track and monitor progress on SDGs. The integration of data systems and the institutionalisation of a coherent and holistic mechanism for periodic and regular data collection will be critical. In addition, administrative data already available at different sectors must be strengthened because it can be used for evidence-based decision-making and to avoid the duplication of work and resources. One of the main challenges here is attaining of funds required for the data collection process.

The National Ministerial Coordination Committee, constituted of cabinet ministers, provides overall policy guidance and political support towards the implementation of SDGs in the country. The Ministerial Committee is supported by a Technical Committee on SDGs, which brings together representatives from various government institutions and civil society. Together, the National Ministerial Coordination Committee and the Technical Committee ensure country ownership and broad based participation that will be critical for the successful implementation of SDGs. The SDGs Division at the Ministry of Environment and Energy coordinates work related to the implementation of SDGs plus monitoring and reporting on the implementation process.

The Sustainable Development Goals will be implemented in the Maldives by the agencies, civil society and independent institutions whose mandates align with the targets of the SDGs. The role of the monitoring and reporting body will be to ensure that proper consultation has been carried out with all relevant stakeholders in the implementation process, given the integrated nature of the SDGs. It will also promote the mainstreaming of the SDGs into sectoral policies, plans and strategies while developing a review and follow-up mechanism to provide coherence between line agencies and ensure the integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda in the implementation process.

Unlike the Millennium Development Goals, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals requires strong coordination and cross-sectoral collaboration between the government agencies, development partners, local governments, the private sector and civil society. The implementation of the Agenda 2030 also requires continued political support and commitment as well as broad based participation to drive the national sustainable development agenda forward.

1. Introduction

The Maldives is an archipelago of coral atolls which consists of 1,192 islands located in the Indian Ocean, between 7°6'35"N to 0°42'24"S and 72°32'19"E to 73°14'36"W. The chain is 860 km long and varies between 80 and 120 km in width. For administrative purposes, the country is divided into 20 atolls and the capital Male'. The country's dispersed geography presents unique challenges for financing, capacity building and resource mobilization in coordinating sustainable development activities nationwide.

The population of Maldives increased from 298,968 in 2006 to 338,434 in 2014. The population growth rates declined from 1.69% to 1.65% over the same period. The working-age population (15 to 64 years old) outnumbers young dependents (those under 15 years old) by a 2 to 1 margin. This indicates that the country could be poised to capture the benefits of a first demographic dividend.

Despite the unique challenges facing it as a Small Island Developing State, the Maldives achieved five of the eight MDGs before 2015, making it the first 'MDG plus' country in the South-Asia region. Maldives has seen substantial progress in eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. This demonstrates strong commitments to the social sectors, particularly health and education.

Furthermore, infrastructure development policies emphasizing climate change resilience have been implemented in recent years. This includes the development of safer, environmentally resilient islands and greater commitment to renewable energy sources. Moreover, policies and strategies targeting integrated water management systems and resilient sewerage systems across the country have also been implemented.

Maldives' acute vulnerability to climate change and extreme weather events remains a serious concern, impinging on the sustainable development agenda of the country. To this regard, increased beach erosion, and flooding resulting from tidal swells presents significant challenges. Efforts have been made domestically and the internationally to combat climate change, including forming a national policy and strengthening international partnerships with the aim of combatting climate change globally.

Given that the Maldives' economy and social well-being is inextricably linked to its natural environment, particularly its marine environment and resources, the sustainable management of these resources have been a key priority of the government.

Despite notable progress and achievements in some sectors, more efforts must be made towards achieving gender equality, especially as this is one of the Goals of the MDGs that was noted for slow progress. However, the newly created Ministry of Gender and Family is mandated to protect and promote the rights of all vulnerable groups in the Maldives.

The economy of Maldives has grown rapidly, driven largely by a vibrant tourism industry, with support from fisheries and the service sector. The GDP of Maldives in current prices reached MVR 52.8 billion (\$3.4 billion) and MRV 113,167 (\$7,339) per capita in 2015. Tourism, the highest contributor, represents 23.9% of the GDP. Despite fisheries and agriculture being the main source of income for rural communities, their contribution to the GDP is 1.3% and 1.4% respectively.

Other important sectors include communication, transport, construction, real estate and government administration.

Political reform, such as a multiparty system and the establishment of various independent institutions, has dominated the Maldivian political landscape in recent decades with rapid developments.

2. Methodology

The current review presents the progress towards sustainable development in the Maldives. While all 17 goals are covered in this review, the thematic analysis will focus on how some of these goals contribute to eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a Maldivian context.

This review is mainly based on the guidelines proposed by the UN Secretary General. It deviates from the recommended structure slightly by combining two sections: policy and enabling environment and next steps; and institutional mechanisms and means of implementation. The Sustainable Development Goals Division of Ministry of Environment and Energy carried out the process of developing this Voluntary National Review.

Information and data was collected from sectoral reports as well as national submissions to various international treaties and agreements. In addition to this, information was also gleaned from statistical reports produced by the NBS. Further information was sought directly from sectors specifically for the purpose of this review.

3. Policy and enabling environment

a) Creating ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals

In order to create ownership of the 2030 Agenda, the current focus is on creating awareness of all stakeholders, including civil society organizations, parliamentarians, local councils, and students, in order to engage these actors in the implementation process of the SDGs. Furthermore, lead agencies for various goals have been identified and work has been carried out to sensitize relevant institutions regarding the SDGs. This process includes identifying existing policies and strategies that aligns with the 2030 Agenda and assess how targets could be integrated in sectoral policies and strategies.

Given the catalytic role that civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can play as potential agents of change in the substantive implementation of the SDGs, the Maldives is committed to ensure their full participation in the SDGs process. To this regard, a national forum is being organised which will bring together NGO and civil society actors across the country to discuss mechanisms for contribution and participation. The forum seeks to empower and catalyse action on the ground whilst also promoting the participatory nature of the SDGs.

The Maldives further recognises the importance of engaging with the media and public sphere in promoting the national ownership of the SDGs process. As such, efforts have been made to forge new partnerships and intensify existing ones relating to the media. In this regard, the government

continues to engage with the Public Service Media (PSM) in disseminating information related to the SDGs. Furthermore, a capacity building workshop is scheduled for journalists from various media in order to enhance and develop their skills to report on the SDGs. This will include specific information on how to create, develop and deliver reports and other media content on the SDGs process. Efforts are also underway to develop special programs targeted at the entire Maldivian population.

b) Incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals in national frameworks

One of the main tasks for the year 2017 includes integration of the SDGs into the budgetary process through program budgeting. This work is on-going at the Ministry of Finance and Treasury and will help plan the future activities for the implementation of the SDGs.

Moreover, 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. For instance, the Ministry of Health has developed a National Food Safety Policy (2017-2026) that is in line with SDG 2. In this regard, the policy targets to eliminate hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. Furthermore, it also takes into account other SDGs related to health, poverty, gender equality, water and sanitation, responsible production and consumption, and climate change. In addition to this, the Health Master Plan (2016-2025) is focused on building trust in the national health system, reducing disease and disability among the population and reducing inequalities in access to healthcare services and medicines. The 2030 Agenda is one of the frameworks adopted in developing the Health Master Plan.

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.

In terms of the education sector, it is important to note that the election manifesto of the current administration makes specific provisions for improving access to and quality of education. These include a commitment towards inclusive education, professional skills development for the youth and facilitate opportunities for tertiary education. These provisions contribute directly to the achievement of SDG 4. This is reflected in the Strategic Action Plan of the education sector which is also aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

In the energy sector, the Maldives Energy Policy and Strategy 2016 is the key policy document guiding the development of the sector in the Maldives and is aligned with SDG 7. In this regard, the objectives of the policy include promoting energy conservation and efficiency, increasing the share of renewable energy in the national energy mix, and improving the reliability and sustainability of electricity while increasing national energy security.

The sustainable and sound management of waste constitutes as a significant challenge in terms of protecting human health and the environment. The National Waste Management Policy which was introduced in 2015, recognises these challenges and is geared towards institutionalising appropriate, environmentally sound and commercially viable and sustainable models for waste management in the country. To this regard, it includes targets for waste reduction, recycling and recovery, engaging communities, private sector and other relevant stakeholders, and developing enabling mechanisms for the sound management of waste. Moreover, the Ministry of Environment and Energy is

developing a legal framework to reduce plastic pollution with the aim of reducing marine plastic pollution. This framework will contribute to SDG 14 through reduction of marine pollution, in particular from land based activities and also contribute to protecting the marine and coastal ecosystems.

In the fisheries sector, the Maldives is continuing its engagement with regional and international partners in making the fisheries in the Indian Ocean more sustainable. To this regard, the country has been closely collaborating with the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission by providing data and other necessary information to protect the marine environment as well as eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries in the region.

In water and sanitation, efforts are on-going to provide access to safe drinking water across the country. To this regard, the government manifesto pledges the supply of safe drinking water to all islands, and increasing storage capacity to ensure water security across the country. The Maldives is also implementing an Integrated Water Resource Management approach towards the provision of safe drinking water. This aims at establishing sustainable fresh water management facilities and sustainable groundwater management systems, while concurrently increasing community participation in the development and monitoring of freshwater use. Furthermore, after the ratification of 2008 constitution, which states that safe drinking water supply and sanitation is a basic right for all Maldivians, a number of sewerage projects were launched in the outer islands. As of 2016, 57% of the total population has access to improved sewerage facilities.

c) Integration of three dimensions

The integration of economic, social and environmental aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals is ensured through the National Ministerial Coordination Committee and the Technical Committee on SDGs and its associated thematic sub clusters. Moreover, stakeholder engagements and awareness creation among various agencies and policy makers would assist in integrating the three pillars of sustainable development.

The monitoring and reporting functions for the SDGs are anchored at the Sustainable Development Goals Division at the Ministry of Environment and Energy, which serves as the nodal agency for co-ordination. The Division provides the necessary institutional support to harmonise various efforts and promote synergies in implementing the SDGs.

d) Identifying data gaps

The SDGs Division in close collaboration with the NBS engaged with different sectors during the first half of 2017 with regards to data availability and challenges for SDGs reporting. The objective of this exercise was primarily to identify the data gaps, and develop mechanisms to address those gaps. Through these discussions, the need for strengthening the maintenance of administrative data was identified as a key initial priority. However, all sectors also noted the lack of human capacity and technical expertise as a fundamental impediment in improving the availability and quality of data and statistics. With the completion of a data gap analysis by NBS, establishing a mechanism to fill the identified gaps, followed by the process of identifying national priorities based on this analysis will be the next step forward.

*Note: Refer Annex 2 for the **Data Updates on SDG Indicators: MALDIVES (March 2017)***

e) Development of a Monitoring Framework

Development of a monitoring framework is planned for late 2017. The framework will be developed to monitor and report the achievements of the SDGs and its targets. However, the country requires technical assistance and financial support in institutionalising such a framework.

The development of program budgeting will be crucial to the development of a monitoring framework, as the linkage of budget with the programs and SDGs will be used to track the progress of the actual implementation process. In addition to this, aligning monitoring of the SDGs with that of sectoral plans and other international reporting obligations will require capacity building not only in data collection but also management.

f) Identifying National Priorities

Identification of national priorities for the SDGs and its targets will be made through a process of consultations with implementing agencies as well as input from the civil society and the private sector. A Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) is scheduled for 2017, which will feed into the process of identifying national priorities.

g) Goals and targets

Goal 1 – No Poverty

The proportion of the population living below the national poverty line of MVR 22/day decreased from 21% in 2002/2003 to 15% in 2009/2010. Poverty in islands/rural areas is less compared to the poverty in the capital city. Nearly two thirds of the total population lives in the capital and this leads to inadequate living conditions and increase in urban poverty. The provision of education and health for all the citizens is provided for free throughout the country. Yet, people tend to migrate to the capital for economic activities and for easy access to more quality services. In this regard, the focus needs to be on minimizing the urban-rural gap in quality of service provision and tracking poverty.

Goal 2 – Zero Hunger

Locally produced food items in the Maldives are limited compared to other neighboring countries. From staple goods and daily essentials to more luxury items, nearly everything is imported to Maldives. This makes the country vulnerable to external and economic shocks. Fish is the only source of local produce. Even though some fruits and vegetables are cultivated, these are not produced in adequate numbers for the population's needs. Although there is no absolute hunger in the country, food security is an issue due to the high dependency on imports of staple and daily essentials.

In order to tackle this issue, there is a need for promoting sustainable agriculture in the country. Therefore, encouraging and supporting local agriculture and promoting sustainable agricultural

practices will be critical to enhance food security. In addition to this, educating locals to eat healthy and nutritious food is also a key priority.

Goal 3 – Good Health and Well-being

The health status of the people of Maldives has significantly improved in the past few decades. The Maldives Health Statistics show that during the period of 2006-2015 and infant mortality rate decreased from 16 to 9 per 1000 live births. During this period, under 5 mortality rates also decreased from 18 to 11 per 1000 live births. Maternal mortality ratio has decreased from 69 per 100,000 births in 2006 to 13 per 100,000 births in 2012. The decline of maternal mortality ratio is due to factors such as the wide dispersion of obstetric and other health services to outer atolls, with access to skilled attendants in delivery and provision of antenatal care.

The Maldives has made considerable achievements in the health sector through the provision of universal healthcare. In the past two years, extensive effort has been made to expand the reach of pharmacies with the result that at least one has now been established in each inhabited island. The Maldives is the first country in the South East Asia Region to be awarded certification of elimination of Malaria, Lymphatic Filariasis and Measles. The Maldives is further committed to tackle HIV/AIDS, TB and other communicable diseases whilst grappling to control frequent outbreaks of vector borne diseases such as dengue and chikungunya. Focus is also given to care for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer, thalassemia and mental health.

With the fast changing lifestyle and development, chronic non-communicable diseases are emerging as the main cause of morbidity and mortality in the country. The Health Master Plan 2016-2025 recognizes this as one of the key critical areas that need concerted actions by the government in the coming years.

Drug use has been a growing concern to the society's wellbeing and harmony. According to the National Drug Use Survey Maldives (2011/2012), the prevalence of drug use in Male' and atolls were 6.64% and 2.02% respectively. Factors such as living condition and lifestyle factors such as tobacco use, unhealthy diet or nutrition, obesity, child malnutrition (stunting and wasting under 5 children) and inadequate physical activity is a concern which is addressed in collaboration with schools.

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

The reliance on expatriate workers as healthcare service providers remains a major challenge. There is a further need to enhance the local capacity, including through education and training of medical personnel for the Maldivian health sector. The dispersed islands pose challenges to logistic management, particularly in providing necessary supplies and equipment, assuring quality services and regular maintenance and administration of the service delivery. This also results in considerably high cost to the government.

Goal 4 – Quality Education

Maldives is a country that has achieved universal primary and secondary education. There are a total of 459 schools in the Maldives where 213 are government schools. A total of 88,341 students are enrolled in both government and private schools, where 316 students are enrolled in classes for special needs. The percentage of female and male students enrolled in the schools is approximately equal at 51% and 49% respectively in 2015. This shows that access to education at all levels is not an issue; however, the focus now is on providing inclusive and quality education at all levels. Efforts are underway in providing education for special needs students and to use innovative means though ICT, such as Teacher Resource Centers (TRC) in all atolls/regions to address the challenges faced as a small island developing state.

In order to encourage and increase the number of people pursuing higher education in technical and specialized areas, the government has started to provide tertiary education loans in 2012. Although statistics shows a higher number of students pursuing higher education both in the country and abroad, this increase in number is not reflected in the job market. A skills need assessment is required to identify policy interventions required to generate a technical and skilled workforce for the country.

Goal 5 – Gender Equality

Despite equality in access to education and health services, there are more areas in which gender equality has to be addressed. Statistics shows only 5 out of 85 seats are held by women in parliament. The recent local council results shows only 6% of the elected local councilors were female. The country still has a significant way to go in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly in the areas of participation and leadership in public life. Currently women comprise only 15% in the cabinet, 14% among Ministers of State, 15% among Deputy Ministers and 26% among corporate representation. Although there is a gradual increase in women's participation and recognition in different sectors, their representation in the political field and in decision-making levels still needs further improvement.

Domestic violence is an issue among Maldivians as well as migrant workers. Giving voice to the issue will be the first step in combating the issue. The Domestic Violence Prevention Act 3/2012 is a milestone in this arena. Hence, women and girls empowerment is the main focus in achieving this goal.

The Gender Equality Act 2016/18 seeks to eliminate gender discrimination and establishes the role of government and other agencies in the implementation of the Act. Gender Focal Points (GFPs) have been appointed in line ministries and agencies to mainstream gender concerns.

In addition, Ministry of Gender and Family has created Family Children's Services Centers (FCSC) in the 19 atolls of the country to protect and promote rights of all the vulnerable groups in the Maldives. Since the centers are established in one island of the atoll, it is, however, difficult to cater to the needs of all the islands in each atoll. To address this issue, the Ministry has established a mechanism to cater to all the islands and is now creating Community Social Groups (CSGs) in each inhabited island of the Maldives. Currently, a few islands have CSGs and the impact is positive since it has enabled to empower and encourage participation of the community to address the social problems occurring in the islands.

Goal 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation

Population increase, urbanization and environmental changes including climate change presents a number of challenges to the water security of the country. Due to geographic dispersion of the population, management of water resources and provision of sanitation services in Maldives remains a significant challenge. The high rate of urbanization in islands such as Male' increases the pressures on supply, as well as the risk of water borne diseases.

Approximately 90% of atoll population (including non-administrative islands) uses rain water for drinking purposes in 2014. Hence, there is a need to increase the rainwater harvesting within the country. Currently, Maldives is moving towards an Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) approach to address water insecurity in a changing climate since the country faces difficulty in access to clean water during the dry season especially in the remote islands given the high transportation costs in supplying emergency water. The government has made major efforts to address this issue by increasing water storage facilities in affected islands, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2018.

After the ratification of 2008 constitution stating that provision of safe drinking water supply and sanitation is a basic right for all Maldivians, a number of sewerage projects were launched in the outer islands. By 2014, more than 98% of the atoll households had toilet facilities within their housing units.

Goal 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy

Maldives achieved universal access to electricity in 2008. A high proportion of the fuel imported to Maldives is used for electricity generation and the country depends on imported fossil fuel to meet its energy demands. Solar energy is the most commonly used source of renewable energy at present.

The National Energy Policy and Strategy aims to provide all citizens with access to reliable and sustainable energy services at lowest possible cost, enhance energy security, promote energy efficiency and conservation, and move towards the target of renewable energy based electricity supply. In this regard, in 2014, for the first time all inhabitant islands were provided with 24 hours electricity. However, efforts have to be made towards promoting and providing clean and affordable energy.

To enhance energy security and to achieve a low emissions development, the Maldives has initiated the Scaling-up Renewable Energy Program (SREP), with the aim of transforming the energy sector from being completely fossil based to low carbon energy. Moreover, initiatives including net metering regulation and Bank of Maldives's Green Fund were introduced to strengthen private sector involvement in the renewable energy sector.

Goal 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

The Maldivian economy is heavily dependent on tourism, construction and fisheries, which are the major sources of foreign exchange and government revenue. In 2015, tourism contributed 23.9%, construction contributed 8.5% and fisheries sector contributed 1.3% to the country's GDP. The

GDP growth rate reduced from 6% in 2014 to 3.9% in 2016. Thus, adopting sustainable fisheries and tourism in the country is given importance to achieve long term benefits.

Public administration accounts for the largest employer in the capital, whereas in the outer atolls, the majority of people are employed in the manufacturing, agriculture and fisheries with rapid expansion of the tourism sector, more than a fifth of the employed are engaged in this industry.

In 2014 the unemployment rate is 5.2% of the working population and 9 out of 10 people are employed from the labor force. However, there is an increase in the expatriate labor force that has to be addressed including their living conditions and migration status.

The Government has initiated loan schemes that aim to encourage entrepreneurship in the country. These schemes also provide support and facilitate technical guidance needed for entrepreneurs to launch startups, thus encouraging participation in the labor force through innovative methods. However, more efforts are needed to cater to the growing workforce of the country and to provide decent employment opportunities.

Goal 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Maldives has a thriving and innovative construction industry. Construction is the second largest industry contributing to GDP with 8.5% in 2015. Resilient infrastructure, based on sustainability and using green technology, is one of the major focuses in the country. Infrastructure as an adaptation measure is costly and essential at the same time. Despite the challenges of being a small island nation, infrastructure development across the country has been rapid. Integrating mitigation and disaster risk management into infrastructure through innovation will be a critical need for the future.

Hence, establishing disaster risk and mitigation measures through innovative and sustainable methods are required to be adopted prudently.

Goal 10 – Reduced Inequalities

There is an internal migration within the islands and most of the people migrate to the capital city for education and employment. As a result, two third of the total population live in the capital. Moreover, many expatriates have also migrated to the country over the past few years for employment and are distributed unevenly across the country with the majority of foreigners living in the capital, resorts and industrial islands

Initiatives are undertaken to address the needs of different groups of socially vulnerable people in the country. In 2015, there were a total of 316 students enrolled in classes for special needs. In addition, opportunities are created for the disabled in the job market and safety net mechanisms are in place for the vulnerable groups. Still a lot of measures have to be taken to reduce inequalities to cater for the vulnerable groups.

Goal 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities

Congestion is one of the major issues faced by the people living in the capital Male'. The

government initiative in developing Hulhumale, a reclaimed island within 25 minutes from the capital city is ongoing in order to cater to the growing population of Male'. However, the high cost of developing cities and communities in a sustainable manner is a major concern in the country.

All the services are provided equally to every citizen in all parts of the country taking into account public safety and security, but the improvement of quality of service requires further attention. Hence, population and development consolidation is one of the major policies that the government has initiated in the past years supporting migration to larger islands such as Hulhumale. The aim of this initiative is to provide better opportunities and services in terms of education, employment and healthcare for people living in islands.

People living in islands require access to services as well as employment opportunities. Hence, transportation facilities are required to travel between the islands. The main form of transportation used to travel from one island to another is sea travel. Currently, there are three international airports and seven domestic airports in the country. However, the high cost of transportation remains as a significant challenge.

In 2006, Maldives Transport and Contracting Company Plc., (MTCC) commenced the “Integrated Transport Networks” with the objective of linking the entire country through a well-organized transport network. Over the years, MTCC has increased its capacity and now provides ferry services within the islands and the atolls across the country. As a result, people of the islands have the opportunity for accessing better services. The increased mobility has consequently enhanced the overall wellbeing of communities across the country.

Goal 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production

Despite the high dependence on imported food, agriculture constitutes an important sector for both livelihood and food security. However, reliance on chemical fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides remain a concern in the agricultural sector. In addition to this, amongst other factors, inadequate storage and transportation results in a significant amount of food waste. Interventions to promote sustainable consumption and production in agricultural sector would need to focus on these challenges and issues. Furthermore, a sound management of waste remains a significant challenge, particularly given the dispersed population. Addressing this issue will be critical to substantively realize the goal on sustainable consumption and production.

Fishing constitutes as one of the most important sectors for the country's economy. The pole and line fishing method practiced in the Maldives for centuries is a model for sustainable fisheries, the cleanest and the greenest, whereby each fish is caught individually to reduce by-catch. Yellow fin tuna is the second largest catch in the Indian Ocean and the latest stock assessments shows overfishing of this species mainly due to increasing effort in the Indian Ocean by all countries. However, interim measures have been taken by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) to recover the stocks by introducing catch limits, reduction of drifting Fish Aggregating Devices and reduction of supply vessels.

The tourism sector in the Maldives serves as a model for sustainable tourism. From its very early stages of development, environmental considerations had been integrated to the sector through relevant laws and regulations. The private sector has also been critical in adopting sustainable

consumption and production principles in the tourism sector.

Goal 13 – Climate Action

The Maldives is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to climate change. Of particular concern are the extreme weather events that will significantly impact low-lying coastal marine ecosystems and islands causing beach erosion, and affect biodiversity. Furthermore, salt water intrusion from the extreme weather events can affect the freshwater lenses on the islands which consequently will negatively impact water security in the country.

Maldives has incorporated climate change adaptation and mitigation into sectoral planning and development. The Climate Change Policy Framework 2015 (MCCPF) is the key policy document in this regard.

The effects of climate change on industries such as agriculture, tourism and other industries are of major concern and need to be taken into consideration. Efforts are underway to integrate climate change into development projects. In this regard, the Tourism Adaptation project (TAP) aimed at identifying the climate change adaptation measures that will be required for the tourism sector in the coming years.

In March 2017, a project funded by the Green Climate Fund was initiated to support vulnerable communities in Maldives to manage climate change-induced water shortages during the dry season. The project aims to provide safe water to vulnerable households, introduce cost-effective dry season water supply systems and improve quality of ground water to build long-term resilience.

Goal 14 – Life below Water

Ninety nine percent of the Maldivian territory is comprised of ocean, and fish, especially tuna, is the primary source of food in the diet of any Maldivian.

Pollution, both from land based and sea-based sources are a significant threat to life below water. In this regard, solid waste, untreated sewage, oil pollution and ballast water constitutes as the major sources of marine pollution in the country. The growing amount of waste generated and the lack of sufficient capacity for sound management of waste on the islands is one of the most challenging environmental issues related to life below water in the Maldives. In 2015, a Waste Management Policy was formulated to manage waste in a sustainable and feasible manner. The initiative will establish waste management centers on all inhabited islands by the end of 2018.

As a small island nation in the Indian Ocean, the Maldives has always depended on its rich natural marine resources for the subsistence of its people as well as its economic base. Sustainability of the fisheries sector is the key to ensuring livelihoods, as well as food security in the country. The commitment towards low impact fishing methods demonstrates the long-standing commitment from Maldives to safeguard fish stocks and promote sustainable fisheries. The traditional pole-and-line tuna fishery is highly selective, and produces no by-catch while employing high numbers of fishermen compared to other methods.

Since becoming a member of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission in 2011, the Maldives has been

actively advocating for the sustainability agenda at the Commission. In addition to this, the Maldives currently plays a key role in voicing the concerns of coastal states toward sustainability of the fish stocks, as well as protecting livelihoods of coastal communities throughout the region. Maldives openly advocates stopping licensing fishing fleets from distance water nations and rather concentrate to develop artisanal and local commercial fleets, to empower coastal community.

Despite being a Small Island Developing State, Maldives is taking initiatives to protect its ocean to safeguard life below water. As such, a national campaign to reduce plastics in the Maldives was recently launched focusing on reducing plastics from various sectors and progressively phase out the use of non-biodegradable plastics.

Maldives has a rich marine diversity, with several species that are globally significant. The main threats to biodiversity are the loss of habitats that are associated with harbours dredging, reclamation, and exploitation of resources, climate change, and other human activities. Currently, the Environmental Protection and Preservation Act (Law no. 4/93) provides the legal basis for environmental protection, preservation and conservation in the Maldives.

Maldives has designated 42 protected areas and has successfully achieved in designating Baa atoll as a United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Biosphere Reserve. In this regard, Government of Maldives is committed to expand its marine protected areas and conservation efforts where feasible.

The government is continuously engaging with the tourism sector in promoting environmental protection and stewardship. Given that the house reef of resort islands are highly well managed areas, the government is collaborating with various resorts in examining the modalities in which these areas can contribute to the network of protected and managed marine areas.

Goal 15 – Life on Land

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Goal 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

In recent years, a number of important achievements have been made in promoting democratic governance, rule of law and human rights in Maldives. Overall, important challenges remain, particularly with regard to the development of effective and inclusive governance institutions and processes, consolidation of the rule of law and evolution of an informed civil society.

As part of the political transition, there are ongoing efforts to strengthen the justice sector – the legal framework, capacity development in the institutions, access to justice, and civil society strengthening are all being actively addressed. The Attorney General's Office has been leading the criminal justice reform process in the country including the enactment of the Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code (CRPC). The CRPC details out the procedure to investigate, prosecute and pass judgments on unsuspected criminal offenders. This key legislation would support in effective prosecution and significant reduction of criminal activities.

The Government is also committed towards creating effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. In this regard, the Parliament passed the Right to Information Bill in 2014. The implementation of the Right to Information (RTI) Act would ensure state transparency and accountability encompassing various stakeholders with mandates to serve and inform the public.

With the enactment of this Act, Information Commissioners' Office of Maldives was established in July 2014 as an independent statutory body. In addition, local councils are being empowered to contribute towards strengthening local level planning and development and increasing citizen's engagement for stronger governance institutions.

Goal 17 – Partnerships for the Goals

The SDGs in the Maldives can be achieved through continued political support and commitment and strong coordination among all stakeholders. This requires effort and commitment by the government and state agencies, private sector, development partners, local governments, non-governmental organizations as well as the civil society working in harmony to achieve this immense task.

Partnership with the Public Service Media (PSM), knowledge transfer with the NGOs and civil society are some of the ongoing activities geared towards enhancing the partnerships for the goals. Additionally, information sharing and awareness sessions have been conducted for the State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) to encourage their participation and ownership in implementing the SDGs.

Given the connectivity challenge that geography presents, the proliferation of internet and mobile cellular subscriptions provide an important entry point to reach communities. In fact, mobile tele-density in the Maldives is among the highest in the world: there are 239 mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 people and based on the latest statistic there are nearly 300,000 broadband subscribers. The government seeks to capitalize on this high penetration rate to improve service provisions in areas of health, education and work with telecom service providers and banks to introduce schemes that can enhance financial inclusion for marginalized and remote communities.

Widening the role of private sector in providing services such as education, health, electricity, water and sanitation, transportation, communication and technological services and in infrastructure

development is given importance throughout the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Strengthening the laws and regulations to facilitate and widen the private sector investment in such areas should be emphasized.

It is also important to mobilize additional financial resources through, ODA, concessional loans and through South-South cooperation initiatives. Related to this, capacity building will feature as a key determinant in the success of implementing the SDGs in the country.

Being a small island developing State, the country is vulnerable to environmental shocks. The main challenge is getting funds required for the implementation of the SDGs and capacity building to achieve the Goals throughout the implementation process. In addition, due to the population dispersion; additional efforts have to be made to reach everyone leaving no one behind.

Supported by International Financial Institutions (IFIs), in 2009 the government of Maldives initiated an ambitious and transformational reform towards modern taxation. Key to these initiatives were the introduction of Business Profit Tax (BPT) and Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2011. Furthermore, efforts to strengthen domestic revenue generation a Green Tax levied from tourists and tourist facilities and Remittances Tax imposed on money transferred out of the Maldives by foreigners employed in the Maldives have been introduced.

h) Thematic analysis

In the Maldives, the incidences of poverty is considered low with 7.3% of the population below \$1.90 (PPP) a day and an estimated 15% of the population living below the national poverty line. However, the gap between lower income groups and the affluent is widening. There are considerable socio-economic and sociocultural divides between the urban and rural islands, gender and age groups with access to basic social services.

The Human Development Index (HDI) ranking of Maldives has increased steadily, from 0.599 in 2000 to 0.701 in 2015, placing it 105th and in the high human development category and above average for South Asia. However, once adjusted for inequality, the HDI falls to 0.529 mainly due to the spatial disparity between the capital, Malé, and the rest of the country. This is exacerbated by gender disparity where women living in the outer islands are disproportionately affected when it comes to development outcomes. While gender parity has been achieved in literacy rates, enrollment, and attainments at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, challenges remain, in the areas of women's political, economic, and social empowerment. Women's labor force participation is high, but limited to lower echelons of the economy. Women are slightly more likely than men to be unemployed. Even though there is no gender bias in primary and secondary schooling, girls' access to tertiary and professional education is curbed by beliefs about girls' and women's mobility and primacy of household roles over others.

Geographical characteristics of the country is a major challenge for the government in the provision of essential services. The population is dispersed in over 186 islands with 116 inhabited islands having populations below 1000. For the government, in addition to the high cost associated with service delivery, attracting talented individuals and transporting goods and services from one location to another is a huge obstacle. As per the recent census, the key reasons for internal migration are for education and employment. To cater to the needs of the population, the government is undertaking initiatives to relocate people from smaller islands to regional hubs to enable them to have better access to healthcare, education and transport facilities. Furthermore, to bring an end to the difficulties faced in transporting patients between islands, the government of Maldives has introduced a sea ambulance service.

One of the biggest developmental projects being carried out in Maldives is the development of Hulhumale', in the greater Male' region. In mid-1990s, the idea of creating an artificial island from an existing lagoon and transforming it into a futuristic urban city which would accommodate the excessive population of the central region was conceptualized. The Phase I of Hulhumalé reclamation, consisting of 188 hectares, began on 16th October 1997. Primary developments in terms of the required physical and social infrastructure and residential developments were completed in 2004. The initial vision of the project has broadened to accommodate the growth of the island and now envisions the establishment of higher standards in the quality of living in the Maldives. Phase I and II were planned to be a combination of residential, commercial and industrial components acting as a catalyst to entice broad based investments in the fields of commerce. The island is fortified with sea walls 3 metres above sea level, which is higher than the highest natural island at only 2.5 metres above the sea. In addition to the development of quality healthcare and education in the island, the city, with its upcoming fiber optic network, is designed to incorporate the aspects of a 'Gigabit Community' to provide the required ICT Backbone to achieve the speeds to cater for the regional market.

In the Maldives, fisheries and high-end tourism are the main economic drivers in the country; both of these sectors are reliant on the sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems. Maldives was an advocate for a stand-alone goal on oceans in the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals as the country's prosperity is dependent on conserving and protecting the oceans at a global level.

An innovative tool developed by the government of Maldives call "Keyolhu", a web-based fisheries information system has allows exporters to report fish purchase information and catch areas, and has assisted in tapping into new markets and to keep track of vital data and information necessary for managing the sector.

Maldives has the seventh largest coral reef system within its territorial boundaries and it is estimated to contain approximately 3% of the total coral reef area of the world. At a national level, the Maldives is working to expand, where feasible, its network of protected and managed areas in a sustainable manner. Currently, Baa Atoll in the Maldives has been designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve while a total of 42 areas have been declared as protected.

The contribution of fisheries to the economy is declining, however, it continues to be the only source of food security that the country is self-sufficient in. Rice, wheat flour, fruits, vegetables and other food items are largely or entirely imported. The country balances its food requirements through both domestic production and food imports. According to FAO, it is estimated that Maldives produces less than a tenth of its overall food requirements. Maldives' agriculture is generally characterized by its subsistence nature. The contribution of the agriculture sector to the GDP is significantly lower, however, in terms of economic and social welfare it plays a major role in providing livelihood and employment opportunities for those residing in rural communities.

For the Maldives, climate change and extreme weather events is a reality. In this regard, sea level rise is an imminent threat, where 80% of land is less than 1 meter above sea level with 42% of its population and more than 70% of its critical infrastructure within 100 meters of the shorelines. In 2016, alone over 45 islands faced water shortages due to significant changes to weather patterns, including the hottest dry season recorded in the past 18 years. The unusually warm temperature due to the El Nino resulted in more than 60% of coral reef bleaching, which adversely impacts underwater life and natural resources vital for the economy and livelihood. Building the resilience of the communities in the country is a key to eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in the country.

4. Means of implementation

The existing institutional mechanisms will play a major role in implementing the SDGs in the country. In this regard, government and other state institutions whose mandate aligns with the SDGs will carry out the implementation process, in partnership with relevant stakeholders

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. It is also the role of this Division to advocate for the mainstreaming of SDGs in national policies, plans and strategies. As such, the Division has been carrying out awareness raising sessions for various agencies in order to sensitize agencies, institutions and organizations on the 2030 Agenda.

In order to facilitate and execute 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 towards the implementation of SDGs in the country.

In addition, the Technical Committee for the SDGs implementation was formed at the end of 2016 where all the government offices and state agencies are included to act as focal points from their relevant agencies in providing critical and technical support (refer Annex 1).

For the implementation process to be effective and efficient, long term strategic direction and focused policies will be vital to eliminate the duplication of work. This will in turn determine the success of national budgeting and execution of sectoral programs towards the implementation of the SDGs.

As a small island developing State, Maldives require financial as well as technical support from its international development partners in this regard. The lack of technical expertise, particularly in terms of data collection and management, remains a major hurdle in the implementation of SDGs in the country. This is compounded by the lack of trained staff and necessary equipment for data collection and management. In this support is needed to implement the ongoing National Statistics Development Strategy of Maldives 2010-2019 and to strengthen the legal basis for data collection.

Furthermore, enhanced collaboration across government agencies is required in order to effectively track and monitor progress on SDGs. In this regard, the integration of data systems and the institutionalisation of a coherent and holistic mechanism for periodic and regular data collection will be critical. In addition to this, there is a need to strengthen the administrative data that is already available at different sectors since these can be used for evidence based decision-making and avoid duplication of work and resources.

5. Conclusion

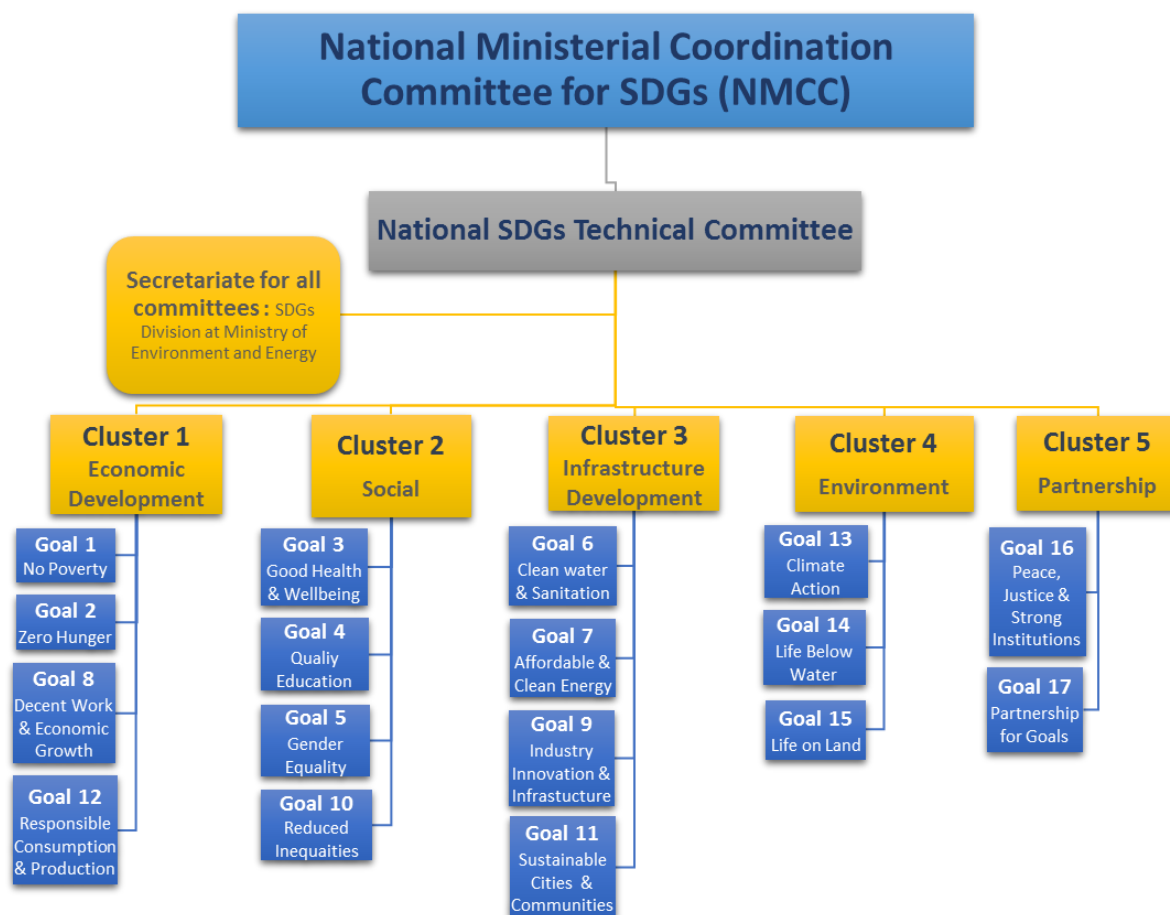
This review analyzed current efforts and planned activities for the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Maldives. In this regard, ongoing efforts target mainstreaming the Goals in sectoral policies and plans by creating awareness and analyzing data gaps were highlighted. Furthermore, identifying national priorities and developing a monitoring framework are key activities scheduled for 2017.

This report also identified challenges faced by the Maldives in implementing Agenda 2030 as a Small Island Developing State. Collection and effective management of data across all sectors is one of the major challenges in the implementation process.

While Maldives has already made some headway in sustainable development in sectors such as health and education, more technical and financial support from domestic and international development partners is necessary to successfully implement the SDGs, particularly given the challenges in capacity development and resource mobilization.

Building upon the success of Millennium Development Goals, Maldives is determined to take the necessary steps to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets. By employing current institutional mechanisms and including all stakeholders – from island communities to government agencies – in the implementation process, Maldives is committed to the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

ANNEX 1 - Coordination Structure

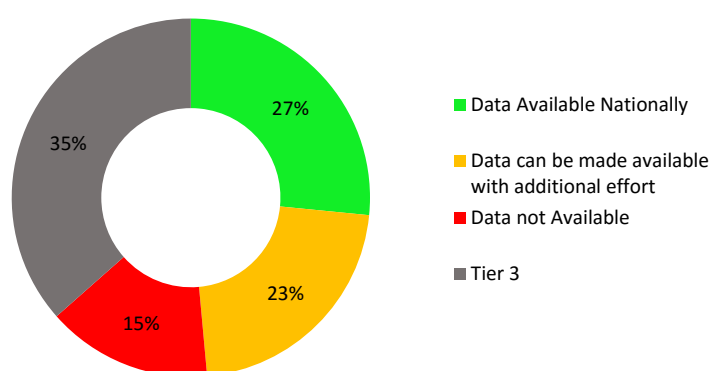


ANNEX 2 - Data Updates on SDG Indicators: MALDIVES (March 2017)

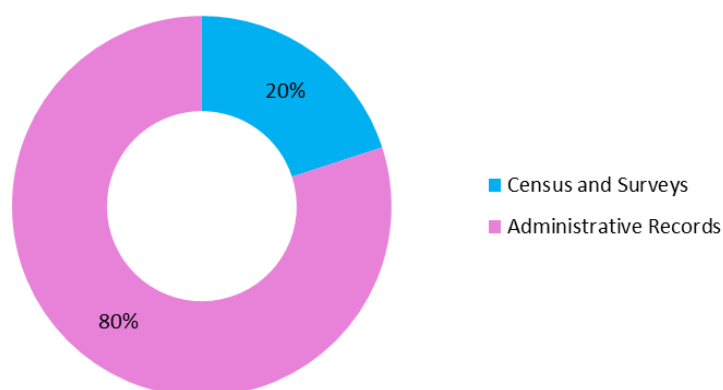
Preliminary Data Review conducted within the National Statistical System

- 64 indicators identified as data being *collected* through the currently ongoing statistical efforts
- 57 indicators identified as data can be collected with *additional effort*
- 37 indicators identified that *so far no mechanism* established to compile data
- 86 indicators identified as Tier 3¹

Current Status of SDG Data Availability:



SDG Data Availability by Source:



¹ 2 indicators are directly *not relevant* to Maldives context from these 86 indicators

**DATA AVAILABILITY STATUS AT
GOAL LEVEL**

Goal 1. No Poverty

4	Data Available Nationally
5	Data can be made available with additional effort
1	Data not Available
4	Tier 3
14	

Goal 2. Zero Hunger

4	Data Available Nationally
3	Data can be made available with additional effort
2	Data not Available
4	Tier 3
13	

Goal 3. Good Health and Well-being

12	Data Available Nationally
7	Data can be made available with additional effort
4	Data not Available
4	Tier 3
27	

Goal 4. Quality Education

7	Data Available Nationally
1	Data can be made available with additional effort
0	Data not Available
3	Tier 3
11	

Goal 5. Gender Equality

4	Data Available Nationally
4	Data can be made available with additional effort
1	Data not Available
5	Tier 3
14	

Goal 6. Clean Water and Sanitation

2	Data Available Nationally
3	Data can be made available with additional effort
1	Data not Available
5	Tier 3
11	

Goal 7. Affordable and Clean Energy

2	Data Available Nationally
2	Data can be made available with additional effort
0	Data not Available
2	Tier 3
6	

Goal 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth

8	Data Available Nationally
5	Data can be made available with additional effort
2	Data not Available
2	Tier 3
17	

Goal 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

4	Data Available Nationally
3	Data can be made available with additional effort
2	Data not Available
3	Tier 3
12	

Goal 10. Reduced Inequalities

3	Data Available Nationally
2	Data can be made available with additional effort
0	Data not Available
6	Tier 3
11	

Goal 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities

3	Data Available Nationally
2	Data can be made available with additional effort
3	Data not Available
7	Tier 3
15	

Goal 12. Responsible Consumption and Production

0	Data Available Nationally
1	Data can be made available with additional effort
1	Data not Available
11	Tier 3
13	

Goal 13. Climate Action

1	Data Available Nationally
2	Data can be made available with additional effort
0	Data not Available
5	Tier 3
8	
<hr/> <hr/>	

Goal 14. Life Below Water

0	Data Available Nationally
2	Data can be made available with additional effort
0	Data not Available
8	Tier 3
10	
<hr/> <hr/>	

Goal 15. Life On Land

0	Data Available Nationally
5	Data can be made available with additional effort
6	Data not Available
3	Tier 3
14	
<hr/> <hr/>	

Goal 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

5	Data Available Nationally
7	Data can be made available with additional effort
5	Data not Available
6	Tier 3
23	
<hr/> <hr/>	

Goal 17. Partnerships for the Goals

5	Data Available Nationally
3	Data can be made available with additional effort
9	Data not Available
8	Tier 3
25	
