Comprehensive Study of the Maldivian Civil Society
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Fareeha Shareef
FJS Consulting Pvt Ltd
Foreword

The civil society makes essential contributions to the realisation and development of democratic societies. As key actors promoting development at the local and national level, civil society organizations’ (CSO) roles are pivotal in policy formulation, safeguarding rights, articulating interests, and delivering social services. CSOs advocate for accountability and transparency of the political system, enhancing efficiency and participation in public affairs, and strengthening the rule of law.

It is for these reasons that there is increasing recognition of the role of CSOs for good governance and socio-economic development. The Constitution of the Maldives broadly provides the rights and freedoms for the formation and augmentation of CSOs. The Act on Decentralization of the Administrative Divisions of the Maldives (Decentralization Act) also identifies CSOs as potential partners of local councils for service delivery and development activities, and explores various approaches to improving the organizations’ capacity to operate effectively in the country. The need for the growth and empowerment of CSOs has never been greater.

The Maldives has over 1200 registered civil society organizations. Despite their large number, the CSOs face many issues that hinder their functioning and expansion of their role. Although CSOs had been included in planning and implementation of various national and local development initiatives in the past, it was only through the Decentralization Act that the CSOs were legally recognized as partners in service delivery, development planning and implementation. CSOs should be facilitated to build their capacity and resources to be effective partners at local and national levels. The current public opinion of the level of independence and autonomy of CSOs from external influences has to be improved to facilitate CSOs to better represent the voices of their communities. This report - a comprehensive situation analysis of CSOs - is based on the premise that CSOs are fundamental to democratic change and practices; it aims to be a guide to facilitate the development of CSOs in the Maldives.

This report provides in depth analyses of several key aspects that should be addressed to facilitate the growth of the civil society sector. This includes the necessary revisions that need to be brought to the Associations Act (2003) to be in line with the Constitution of the Maldives (2008). It also includes valuable recommendations for the categorization of CSOs that facilitates the growth of smaller community based ‘generalist’ CSOs as well as the national level ‘specialist’ CSOs. The report highlights the current limitations of CSOs in operations, capacity gaps and limited availability of funds. The report provides insight into the opportunities for improving the public confidence in CSOs and the key concerns that should be addressed when decentralizing the regulation and monitoring of CSOs. The information in this report would be very useful for policymakers and other stakeholders with an interest in developing civil society in the Maldives. Indeed, many of these key areas can be initiated by the Ministry of Home Affairs, the mandated government body for regulating, monitoring and facilitating CSOs.

I hope this report will be useful for all stakeholders, from donors to CSOs, to address the current limitations of the civil society sector, and strengthen CSOs to be key actors in governance, national development and as a voice for the marginalized and vulnerable.

Hassan Afeef
Minister of Home Affairs
Executive Summary

The study was commissioned to provide a complete situation analysis of the civil society sector in the Maldives. Its intention is to describe the nature of the civil society sector in the Maldives, identify cross-cutting issues faced by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the Maldives and to highlight gaps and areas of concern in the present Associations Act. Its purpose is for the Government of the Maldives and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to deepen current understanding of the operating civil society sector, and following that, to establish meaningful regulation of the sector, enable the strengthening and development of the civil society sector, and to harness the potential of the civil society sector to contribute to the country’s development and promote the wellbeing of its population. To ensure a comprehensive oversight in keeping with the diversity and reality of citizen activism in the Maldives and to capture its substantial potential, a broader focus on ‘civil society sector’ and ‘civil society organisation’ (CSOs) have been adopted in addition to the more conventionally understood term NGOs.

The objectives of this study are: to provide an overview of the civil society sector in the Maldives; to deepen understanding of the role, operations and principles of CSOs in the Maldives; to develop a criteria of categorisation of CSOs in the Maldives; to illuminate the challenges of administration, regulation and governance in the sector; to make recommendations for the strengthening and future direction of the sector.

The methodology for this study comprised four main components – firstly, a review of national legislative, policy and constitutional documents relevant to the civil society sector and of conceptual and academic literature on the sector from the Maldives and elsewhere were completed. Secondly, a content analysis of the registration documents of all registered organisations (N=587) in four selected atolls - i.e. Haa Alif, Kaafu, Faafu, Gaafu Dhaal - and in Male’ was carried out. The third component was a series of purposive in-depth interviews conducted with a smaller number of selected CSOs (N=70) from the four atolls and fourthly, a second set of interviews were conducted with selected stakeholders such as members of the public, island council members, government officials, political party representatives and donor representatives (N=37). The interviews for the second and third components were conducted either via telephone or in person. Six islands (two in Male’ atoll and four in Gaafu Dhaal atoll) were visited by the research team during the course of this study.

The initial plan was to interview two individuals per CSO; namely, a member of the Board of Governance or of the Executive Committee (i.e. providing strategic leadership and possessing authority) and a project officer (i.e. having experience of organisational operations and activities and of delivery of activities). However, the majority of organisations did not have this level of division of operations and provided a single expanded interview which covered all necessary topics. The total number of CSO respondents were 80; 54 men and 3 women from the islands, and 10 women and 13 men from Male’.

Apart from the CSO respondents, stakeholders from Male’ and key figures from each of the selected atolls were also interviewed. Stakeholders were selected for the study from relevant governmental departments, development donor agencies and independent commissions, and political party representatives. An interview was also conducted with the MOHA NGO Registration and Monitoring Unit in order to better understand the administrative and procedural concerns of those who currently administrate and regulate the sector. Figures from the atolls included island council members, the former island chief, a police official, and two selected members of the public. These were selected from the most prominent and populous island in each of the four atolls.

The interviews covered the following topics: national administrative procedures; perceptions of organisations’ role; organisational structure and internal governance; programmatic aspects; principles of organisations and challenges to their credibility; income and funding sources; collaborative ventures and partnerships; and access to technical resources.
Constitutional, Legal and Policy Framework for the Civil Society Sector

The review of the Constitution of the Republic of Maldives indicated that Articles 30b, 27, 29, and 23 provide the overall rights and freedoms underpinning the existence, purpose and operations of the civil society sector: the right to form associations; the freedom of thought and of communicating opinions and expressions; the freedom of acquiring and imparting knowledge; and the right to undertake measures to achieve economic and social rights. Articles 35 and 67 place responsibilities and obligations on the civil society sector, on their conduct and purpose: the community is obliged to meet the entitlement of children, the young, the elderly, and the disadvantaged to special protection and special assistance along with the State and the family; and all citizens have the responsibility and the duty, amongst others, to contribute to the well-being and advancement of the community, and to respect and protect the rights and freedoms of others, to foster tolerance, mutual respect and friendship among all people and groups. Two constitutional limitations are placed on the sector: prohibiting political activity for the civil society sector as well as activities contradictory to Islam. Articles 42 and 43 provide protections to the civil society sector in that these articles guarantee a fair hearing, fair administrative action and the right of appeal in determining whether a CSO has acted unconstitutionally or illegally. The review shows that the Constitution provides a sufficient framework for the civil society sector.

The review of the Associations Act of 2003 showed clear place for improvement. Firstly, although clearly stated in Article 13a, the legal status of associations appears little or mis-understood by a wide variety of people and agencies. Whilst Article 21 states that CSOs may run businesses or business activities, there are no further explanations on the powers and limits of powers for such businesses or business transactions. These vaguenesses have caused uneven treatment of CSOs on the part of government authorities, banks or other business companies, and have also impeded CSOs from registering networks in their legal sovereign capacity. Secondly, the definition of the associations, societies and non-profit organizations appear to be circular in the Act; i.e. those who are registered as such are defined. There is a strong call for a clearer definition of associations in order to enable clearer categorisation and classification of organizations. Literature suggests that the law regarding the formation and operation of CSOs should be clear, simple, straightforward, and widely disseminated. Countries which have allowed the possibility of registration under different kinds of acts have seen a fragmentation of the field, a poorer level of coordination, and higher demands on those who administrate the sectors to keep track of the situation and implement the regulations.

Thirdly, Article 3 specifies that government authorities have a duty to aid, encourage and assist CSOs, yet this is poorly specified and provided for in the Act in terms of governance, state administration or budgetary considerations. There is no national budgetary allocation, although both the National Strategy Action Plan and the recently enacted Decentralisation Act specifies the obligations and responsibilities of national and local government to engage with CSOs (and citizens), and finally, the powers, responsibilities and limits of power of the Registrar are not adequately specified in the Act. There are no conditionals on the eligibility of the post.

The review indicates that the Decentralisation Act is explicit in its description of the responsibilities and powers of the local government with regard to the civil society actors. It also clearly depicts the role of civil society in local governance and mentions CSOs alongside companies and other development agencies as an equal partner of the state. Article 2 states that local government bodies are required to enable citizens to decide how best to address their priorities, challenges and issues in accordance with democratic and accountability principles and to empower them by making space for their participation in improving their economic, social and cultural standards of living. Article 3e states that island councils are answerable to their citizens as much as to the atoll councils. Article 23v requires councils to work for development and for peace and security within and between these communities.

Articles 8b, 23b, and 41b require local government bodies to invite and involve citizens in consultations and discussions on issues of development, planning, policy decisions and make it mandatory to seek their opinion on these matters. Articles 73 and 74 conditions councils to include and partner with private companies, associations and co-operatives in delivering services and implementing development projects. Articles 10 and 21 require local government bodies to use the powers and responsibilities given to them for the benefit and wellbeing of the citizens in their administrative area, and to prioritise community interest or self- or institutional interest. Article 110 requires councils to conduct an annual meeting at which the annual report, budget and audit report of the previous year are shared with citizens and Article 118 requires decisions made by the council to be publicly announced. These measures support accountability to the public and make the functioning of these bodies transparent. The powers and responsibilities vested in councils should be carried out in accordance with the principles and values enshrined in the Constitution and reiterated in the Act. Article 141 states that the principle of non-discrimination in either resource distribution or service provision must be upheld.
The Employment Act review revealed two gaps in the Act’s applicability to the civil society sector. The Employment Act governs the relation of employment between the state and employee, and between the private sector and employee. It does not mention the civil society sector – though employment by ‘amilla faraiyihah’ i.e. a reference to ‘private entities’, could be taken to include this sector as well. The Act also does not make any reference to volunteers and interns who may be formally contracted in any of the three sectors.

The review of the National Strategic Action Plan 2009-2013 showed that the NSAP provides clear support for the development and engagement of the civil society sector in local and national development efforts in the Maldives and in the promotion of the wellbeing of the citizens of the country. The vision outlined in the NSAP identifies that an equitable, secure, sustainable and peaceful foundation for democracy requires a flourishing and responsible civil society, an accountable government, a mature culture of politics, and a socially-responsible and innovative private sector. That civil society is envisioned as a real partner in national development and governance is evident from the document. The Plan highlights how the civil society sector can contribute to the wellbeing of its citizens and to national development, how it can hold to account public and private sectors and how it can ensure that government and political parties adhere to constitutional responsibilities and democratic principles. It also notes the importance of equipping citizens with the capacities to play this role effectively and productively, and that organized collective citizen efforts would be useful means by which to hold government accountable and participate in development efforts.

Categorisation of Civil Society Organisations

The diversity of organisations was reflected in the different terms that organisations used to name themselves; for example, as (non-governmental) organisations, associations, networks, councils, federations, alliances, councils, forums, trade unions, professional associations, jamiyya, cheynu, gulhun, industrial associations, chambers, societies, clubs, centres, and co-operatives. All these terms were in use amongst Maldivian CSOs. Categorisation of the civil society sector should be made for the purposes of helping to identify organisations and the work they do, to better direct resources and capacity building efforts, and to improve coordination and networking efforts, rather than for the purpose of regulating the sector.

A closer examination of the different terms used showed that the use of these terms did not correlate in any consistent form with the structure, operations, functions or purposes of the organisation as were described in the registration documents or the interviews. They were used in a fairly random and interchangeable manner. A lot of work would have to be done in order to re-align the civil society sector in line with this type of terminology, and it is likely to prove unpopular. On the other hand, international classificatory systems consider other aspects such as the areas of work, target groups and functions or purpose to differentiate types of organizations. The following dimensions were utilized in this study; a) area of work, b) target group, and c) function. It would have been useful to include the fourth dimension of geographical coverage and location, but this information was not always available from the data. Because the stated purposes of the CSOs were broad, the organisations tended to fall into more than one of the different groups in each classification.

There were 25 main areas of work evident amongst the objectives supplied by the organisations in the registration documents. Most organisations worked in more than one area, showing high-levels of multi-sector engagement amongst CSOs. Only 22% (N=129) of the organisations expressed a desire to work in one sector alone; 114 of these were based in Male’. This group of uni-sectoral organisations was made up of three types; a) professional and industrial organisations, b) special interest groups, and c) employees of a particular company or office. A further 148 organisations had identified two areas of work in their objectives. 39% of the organisations had objectives that belonged to between 3 to 7 areas whilst 11% had objectives that fell into 8 to 16 areas.

The multi-sectorality of most organisations raises the issue of generalist and specialist organisations. Generalist organisations are taken to mean those that are – or intend to be – involved in a number of different areas; their wider range means that they are more likely to have general knowledge of the various areas on which they focus. Specialist organisations, because of their focus on a fewer range of areas of work (most often one or two) tend to develop a specialised and deeper knowledge of the area that they engage with.

Generalist organisations tended to be bound to an island or to a particular community, and were keen to promote its overall development and advancement. Their wider range of objective meant these organisations were well-placed to utilise a wider range of strategies, apply to a larger pot of available funding and resources, and to respond to a community’s changing set of needs. The generalist trend particularly reflects the broad range of development needs in communities outside of Male’; this makes having such a wide focus a holistic and perhaps therefore more relevant
Each type of organisation — that is, **specialist and generalist** — have its advantages and disadvantages. They should best be understood as a reflection of the different needs of different contexts. Specialist organizations were much more constrained in their ability to be responsive to a community’s broader and changing set of needs. They were much more likely to have professional and technical resources at their disposal and possess in-depth knowledge of a subject matter. They are much more motivated to lead on those issues, to design and deliver services and campaigns, and to shape public policy and stimulate public discourse. Specialist organisations are more likely to seek to set the agenda on a particular issue than generalist ones.

The 25 areas of work included: sports, music, arts and leisure activities; social development, volunteerism, service and peacebuilding, economic and business development, employment and income generation; education, training and learning improvement; (sustainable) development; empowerment of vulnerable groups; environment protection, climate change response and wildlife protection; healthcare and healthy lifestyle promotion; profession, sector and industry promotion; building people’s skills, character, capacity and conduct; religiosity and religion; Maldivian culture, heritage and history; civic engagement and participation; prevention of drug use and drug trade; welfare to deprived groups or individuals; human rights; equity, social justice and inclusion; good governance and democracy; safe and protective environment; infrastructure development; disaster and emergencies response; media and journalism; bilateral and regional relations; science and technology; and wellbeing and quality of life improvement. Each of these areas of work also made up of a cluster of sub-areas of work.

The **21 target groups** identified in this analysis were as follows: potentially skilled sportspersons; youth; citizens of a specific island or atoll; all citizens/general population; people in difficult circumstances, poor people, widows and orphans, unemployed; relevant offices/authorities, policymakers and decision-makers; women; children/schoolchildren; members of organisations; people with a long-term or chronic illness; workers and employees; adults and children with a disability and their families; elderly; adult and children survivors of violence; parents; musicians and artists; journalists; other organisations; former drug users and recovering addicts; teachers and educators; and prisoners, former prisoners and detainees. Most organisations had more than one target group, not surprising given the wide range of work areas to which they subscribed.

It was noted that service provision to particular groups was considerably lower in proportion than those who targeted general population or specific island communities. Less than 5% of CSOs stated their intention to provide rehabilitative or support services to people in need, such as people with a disability, former drug users and survivors of violence, and these were predominantly based in Male'. This could serve to further distress these groups or to sensationalise and victimize them further. It is essential that working with particular groups of people is done in a manner in which they are not isolated from the social context in which the group and sub-group are embedded, but rather that work is done whilst taking into account the specific dynamics of their overall context. Categorisation of CSOs by target groups can help us to understand the civil society sector in terms of its strengths and gaps, as indicated. It can also help CSOs identify others who are working on similar issues and link up to them in order to strengthen their approach through debate, discussion and reflection.

A third way to analyse the categories of the civil society sector was by examining the various activities that the organisation expected themselves to undertake in order to achieve their objectives, or rather, what has been stated by organisations about how they would go about meeting their objectives. **Ten functions** were noted: development and advancement; community-level advocacy and awareness-raising; recreational activities; knowledge production; capacity building; service provision; resource distribution; policy-level advocacy and activism; structural change efforts; and coalition-building and networking.

**Operations of CSOs in the Maldives**

Most CSOs are made up of an **apex executive committee**, typically comprising of 8-15 members, headed by a President or Chair, and each with specific responsibilities. In the majority of CSOs, these were position elected by vote amongst the membership. The committees met regularly, especially during times when busy with implementing activities. However, it was difficult to achieve quorum for meetings, because many of committee members were based in Male’, travelled frequently or were abroad for studies. The size of general membership in CSOs varied enormously; membership comprised of those who expressed an interest in and had applied to become a member. The general membership was often consulted in the Annual General Meetings, and was involved in the election of Executive Committee members. The criteria for membership were characterised by a spirit of openness and inclusivity in general, with most
stating that anybody could apply.

Most CSOs did not have a separate board of governance and the functions of governance and management were both placed within the executive committee. This is not recommended institutional practice. Many organisations were initiated by a group of young people with a vision to develop their community or to meet the needs of other young people or vulnerable groups. Some organisations had formed in response to the perceived gaps in this sector. Only two CSOs noted that their organisation had been formed by an external figure. Despite this low number, there were a number of allegations that CSOs were regularly formed by political groups, especially just before elections for political purposes. While such practices do appear to be part of the sector, it is important to bear in mind that the first two formations of CSOs comprise the greater part of the civil society sector.

The study indicated that all the 25 areas of work noted earlier were applicable to the sector, as can be discerned from the information provided by the CSOs in their interviews. Two additional target groups (to those identified earlier) were noted here – namely volunteers and persons from a particular sector or industry. Seven of the eight functions (with the exception of the overarching one of ‘development and advancement’) were identified within the sample as well.

Needs assessment and strategy design was done on the basis of informal means – such as own observations, community perceptions or in response to community support rather than on formal and systematic means of assessment (e.g. needs assessments, research, etc.) and interventions were designed accordingly. This impacted the quality of strategy development and intervention design. Most CSOs lacked access to information, data and research on the issues and they possessed insufficient subject knowledge in relation to the problems they were seeking to address. Partly, this is because CSOs do not have access to existing studies and have little space in which to conduct their own research. It was also difficult for CSOs to get statistics on relevant subjects from the respective government authorities and departments. CSOs would also benefit from having access to subject-related knowledge. This would help them understand and analyse the data they receive better, be able to reflect on the particularities of their own context in relation to others, and to devise a suitable programme of action.

Half of all the surveyed CSOs are in the habit of preparing an annual programme of activities which they intend to carry out that year. However, only a little more than a quarter was in the habit of preparing a budget, even an activity-based one if not an annual one. A third of CSOs stated that they carried out an audit, and these were mostly internal audits.

CSOs seemed very well-organised and active in conducting their activities. They had found the necessary resources and worked together with different groups to ensure that events and competitions were successful. But capacity building activities were more difficult to sustain and conduct on a longer-term basis though some CSOs had managed this. Service provision was one of the least undertaken and complicated ventures. Attempts to address issues of infrastructure and more structural issues were often challenging.

Only 0.7% of those involved were employed in the sector. The remainder of those who provided their time and efforts did so on a voluntary basis. Most CSO members had secondary school education (Gr. 6 to 10) or O’ Level passes. Because many CSOs were started by a group of young people with a shared mission, they had not yet built up capacities in institutional development and management or understood issues of institutional governance. Most specialist input related to their activities came from outside the CSO. They sought information from the internet, and hence they had few opportunities to discuss or critically reflect on broader concepts, theories, knowledge and skills related to development in general or their specific areas of work. 61.4% of CSOs had no one with the technical competence of accounting and book-keeping.

More than two-thirds of CSOs stated that they had had access to training in the last year; such as NGO and project management and subject-related training. Many stated that regular specialist input for the activities was difficult to access. The needs for training on NGO management and on fund-raising as well as subject-related knowledge and strategy-related training were emphasised. The voluntary nature of the sector means that young people are likely to predominate in the sector and will continue to require greater accompaniment and support. Greater professionalization of the sector (formalising employment, increasing the number of skilled staff) on the other hand is likely to lead to higher costs associated with salaries and fees, and negatively affect volunteerism in the sector. This issue has to be looked at more carefully.

The current way of working in the Maldives (high levels of volunteerism, own fund-raising efforts) avoids some of the problems and criticisms associated with CSOs in some other contexts and countries – e.g. heavy dependence on na-
CSOs differed widely in their income levels for the past year, with some not having any income at all, and others raising funds over MRF 300,000.00. The most common modes of fund-raising for CSOs were through membership fees and own fund-raising activities. These amounts were often sufficient for organising annual events (sports competitions/activities, Eid festivities, etc.), or for a capacity building programme such as organising a teacher to prepare students for national level examinations. Apart from the fees, most income of organisations was very much in the style of one-off donations, or they were raised in relation to a specific activity to be carried out by the organisation. This certainly had some implication on the scope and scale of work which CSOs could undertake, especially if they were doing such work as voluntary work. Because the average reliable income for an organisation was in the range of MRF 10,000.00 to 25,000.00 per year, most island-based CSOs would not be able to deliver much more than 2-3 self-funded low-cost activities per year.

Almost a quarter of organisations had a membership fee, a fee structure, and charged fees per year or per month. Where incomes were low, generally so were the fees charged, and there was more reliance on well-off members donating to the CSO as circumstances demanded. A third of surveyed CSOs carried out their own fund-raising activities. Members would donate the proceeds of three days’ fishing every month, for example, or offer services such as house-painting or cleaning and then donate the payments to the organisation. Individual donations tended to be an occasional source of income, with amounts ranging from MRF 5,000.00 to MRF 50,000.00. Quite a few organisations mentioned the difficulty of convincing the general public to donate to their cause; as the number of CSOs per island increased, the amount of funds they were able to raise reduced.

The general amount for donations from businesses was in the range of MRF 15,000 to 30,000.00. They were made for particular activities rather than on-going support for capacity-building, for example. Sponsorship was given mostly in the form of purchasing the materials for the planned activity (uniforms, books, or trophies) or in kind (providing transport, helping with printing materials, etc.). Most island-based organisations had not received any external funding in the last year. Some organisations stated that the difficulties in accessing such sources of funding were three-fold; namely, organisations lacked knowledge about availability of funds, they lacked the skills to prepare good-quality proposals and budgets, and thirdly, the special permits required for taking on external funding meant delays and that funding went elsewhere as a result. The functioning of CSOs also depended on two other crucial forms of support and goodwill. Most CSOs were run from within the space of personal homes of one of the founders or members. Secondly, CSOs functioned on the support and goodwill of its members, who generously donated time and effort in relation to the management of the CSO, and the execution of its planned activities.

Ethics, Credibility and Public Confidence in the Civil Society Sector

Half of the interviewed CSOs had some form of a code of conduct or set of guiding principles (i.e. ‘sulookee min’gaddu’), but sometimes this was confused with their governing regulations (i.e. hingaa gavaidhu). The main guiding principles identified by CSOs were: being law-abiding; conducting work that is beneficial to the public and the nation; subscribing to internationally recognized standards of competence in their areas of work; being non-discriminatory and inclusive; being non-conditional; being transparent; being compassion-driven; maintaining sustainability; engaging in inclusive decision-making; prioritizing the interests of the target group before institutional or self-interest; and functioning within the organizational mandate. Additionally, they also noted the importance of being non-political, supporting democratic governance, and respecting human rights.

Independence and autonomy of CSOs would ensure that services and activities stay focused on the needs and interests of the target groups, that CSOs play their crucial role of holding local and national governments accountable to their citizens; and would help to improve public confidence in and credibility of the civil society sector. The credibility of many CSOs has been undermined by allegations that they were influenced by external bodies, such as political parties, political candidates, or donors and sponsors. For this reason, CSOs noted that they have a responsibility to demonstrate their credibility.
18.6% of CSOs noted that they had some experience or knowledge of the problem with regard to influence by donors and sponsors. 48.8% of the CSOs noted that they had some experience or knowledge of the problem with regard to influence by political parties and figures. Influence from political parties and figures were said to happen in various ways, from having NGO resources allegedly utilised to extend the political mileage of some candidates to favouring members and beneficiaries based on political alliance, and having NGOs established or funded just prior to an election in order to espouse political views and propaganda. These incidents have been attributed to the lack of alternative (and politically-neutral) funding. The political transition in the Maldives calls for controls to ensure that the three sectors of state, private and civil society (as conventionally represented as a triangle) remain separate and do not collapse into one another. The ability to maintain such separation would be in keeping with the development of a mature and responsible civil society sector.

Given that any area of work has multiple and diverse approaches as well as sometimes conflicting stances, it is important for different CSOs to be able to work constructively in their chosen field of work, and to be able to demonstrate empirically the effectiveness and relevance of their particular strategies and interventions in achieving their goals. Where differences such as these exist, there might be tendencies for growing conflict and hostility between CSOs and different opinions about what types of activities are harmful or beneficial to society. In such a climate it is conceivable that organisations might make various allegations about one another’s conduct and approach.

CSOs also showed concern with conflicts and disagreements that were likely to arise between the government, various state bodies and CSOs. Given the current transitional state of the country, it is no surprise that conflict with the state remains a key concern of CSOs. The main opinion was that it would be important for the CSOs to have the necessary space in which to carry out their activities as long as these were within the law and constitution of the Maldives. It was recognized that the mandates of some CSOs, especially those that perform watchdog functions, were likely to bring them in antagonistic relationships to the state, other public bodies, private sector entities or even other CSOs.

On the whole, respondents noted that their family and friends supported what they did, and that the general community viewed their activities in a supportive manner. Nonetheless, most respondents felt that it was important to improve the way that the general public saw civil society organisations, and that there was a need to do so. What was particularly strong was the perception of lack of public accountability within the civil society sector. Some CSOs who participated in the survey explained that recent corrupt and compromising incidents in their communities had led to growing suspicion and derision towards all CSOs in those islands.

The circulating allegations of lack of independence, of rampant corruption and of ineffectiveness were said to have undermined the credibility of the Maldivian civil society sector, and had also affected the willingness of the public and of the private sector to contribute to the sector and give general and financial support to their activities. For this reason, respondents noted the importance of ensuring accountability and transparency.

**Regulation and Decentralisation of the Civil Society Sector**

Countries aspiring to a democratic framework of governance should establish regulations that will protect the civil society sector from arbitrary state power whilst enforcing CSOs to operate transparently, accountably and ethically. The Regulations cover various components, including the registration process, the broad assessment criteria for approving aspects of CSOs (such as names, mottoes, logos, the governing regulations, etc.), appointment of the executive committee, the annual reporting process, amongst others.

Approvals are required from the MOHA for the following processes: name, logo, motto, symbol, flag and colour of the CSO (and any subsequent changes to these) to ensure that there is no overlap or space for possible confusion with an existing well-known national or international CSO; purpose and objectives of CSOs (and any subsequent changes to them) to ensure that they are in line with accepted functions of CSOs in the constitution and the law; governing regulations (or the Articles of Association) of CSOs (and any subsequent changes to them); annual reports, annual accounts and audit reports of CSOs (within 30 days of being passed by members at the AGM); appointment (re-appointment and renewal) of the executive committee (within 30 days of being appointed); plans to seek or acquire any foreign funding; plans to start business ventures; and winding up and termination of CSOs.

There are 25 items in the governing regulations of the CSOs, as stipulated in the Act and Regulations. Article 5 of the Act lists 18 items that should be included in the governing regulations. A further 7 items are included in Article 18 of the Associations Regulations. There are some discrepancies between the Association Act and Associations Regulations, most particularly pertaining to the need for a Maldivian ID card in registering an as-
The purpose of this study is to examine the Maldivian civil society sector. Some CSOs found it hard to understand what were exactly meant by the stipulations and more importantly, their interpretation. The main issues arose in terms of interpretation and clarification. CSOs found the process of accessing information fairly easy and straightforward. However, the main issues arose in terms of interpretation and clarification. The annual report is meant to include annual income and expenditure, details of CSO governance (‘jamiyya hin’gi goiy’), and the activities conducted that year. Reports that failed to meet the criteria were not accepted until the amendments were done, and the CSO had paid the fine. Along with the annual reports, CSOs are expected to submit audited accounts. It should be noted that Article 30 of the Act states that the auditors should not accept the documents until the amendments are done, and the CSO has paid the fine. The annual deadline for CSOs to submit their annual reports is before the end of March of each year, and within 30 days’ of having been approved at the AGM. The annual report is meant to include annual income and expenditure, details of CSO governance (‘jamiyya hin’gi goiy’), and the activities conducted that year. Reports that failed to meet the criteria were not accepted until the amendments were done, and the CSO had paid the fine. Along with the annual reports, CSOs were expected to submit audited accounts. It should be noted that Article 30 of the Act states that the auditors should be approved by the government.

Most CSOs utilised the website as their first source of information. CSOs found the process of accessing information in this way fairly easy and straightforward. However, the main issues arose in terms of interpretation and clarification; some CSOs found it hard to understand what were exactly meant by the stipulations and more importantly, their purpose.

The process for approving foreign financial assistance includes: CSOs sending their proposals or proposed activity to the Ministry together with details of the organisations from which they were seeking funds. After the Registrar peruses the documents to ensure that they are in line with the Maldivian laws and relevant regulations and that they do not contravene Islam, the proposal is sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Should the Foreign Ministry wish to get a further opinion, they might send it to the Department of National Planning. The comments and feedback are then sent to the MOHA. However, this process was not always clear to CSOs.

Penalties for CSOs include: a fine of MRF 500.00 for not adhering to the regulatory requirements such as not submitting the reports; de-registration if not submitted documents for 2 consecutive years; and a fine or imprisonment for conducting an unregistered association.

There were almost equal division of opinion about whether or not to decentralise the system of regulation and administration of the sector. The reasons given for island level administration included: ease of access and having equitable access to the state; knowledge of context and CSOs; and efficiency, i.e. reducing the various delays that occur as a result of distance and the lack of communication. The reasons given for retaining administrative and regulatory powers at the centre were: competence, i.e. the technical and professional understanding that needs to underpin the administration of a newly emerging sector such as the civil society sector; the potential for influence, partiality and corruption that are said to occur more easily in small(er) communities because of existing social relations and lack of independent oversight; and lastly, the need to have consistency in laws and regulations for the civil society sector.
Each of these needs underpin a particular aspect of increased democratisation of the country – ensuring equitable access to all citizens and bringing them closer to the decision-making process (regardless of their geographical location) is one of the fundamental drivers of the decentralisation process. On the other hand, eliminating undue state interference and minimising political influence in how the civil society sector functions is a key aspect of strengthening democratic space and upholding the rule of law (over that of politics or state domination) in the country.

Recommendations

The reform of the Associations Act should consider the following points: clarify the legal status of CSOs; strengthen the definition of CSOs to focus on what they do for their purpose and with their profit; specify the legal provisions for financial assistance for and state interaction with CSOs and indicate a national budgetary allocation; re-assess the need for an executive committee and instead promote the (independent) board of governance as governing body; specify the powers, responsibilities and limits of the power of the Registrar of Associations and specify conditions and eligibility for the post; include procedures and safeguards on the investigation of alleged or suspected cases of illicit or unconstitutional activity by CSOs; incorporate procedures for appeals of administrative action and decisions; prohibit political funding of CSOs and the appointment of politically active persons (i.e. political party representatives) into executive positions of CSOs or as board of governance members; ensure that CSOs are protected from the exercise of arbitrary state powers. The implementation of the requirements and provisions of the Associations Act, even in its current form, should be strengthened.

The revision of Associations Regulations should consider the following: specify that founders retain legal responsibility and authority for the CSO any time there is no formally appointed board of governance or executive committee; revise the identification needed for individuals (ID cards, passport numbers) and companies/associations (registration numbers which specify they have a legal status) as sufficient evidence of legal capacity for registration; reconsider the auditing requirements so that they are in line with practical arrangements; require disclosure of sources and amounts of funding; introduce suitable graded penalties for CSOs; and include procedures on how to deal with conflict between the state and CSOs.

The categorisation of the civil society sector should be purposeful and facilitate organisations to grow and shape in a fluid manner that reflects changing needs. The tagging of CSOs should allow for easy reference and targeted interventions by interested groups. It should be done on the basis of the following four dimensions: a) area of work, b) target group, c) function and d) geographical coverage and location, (using the categories identified through the study). An electronic database of CSOs should be developed by the MOHA, using this four-dimensional categorization to tag the CSOs, and should be available on the web and updated every six months for use and consumption by CSOs, community members and other agencies.

Capacity building of CSOs should focus on: becoming familiar with all laws, regulations and policies relevant to the sector, their areas of work, and target groups; the different functions of CSOs in a democracy, including holding national and local governments accountable; developing capacities in needs assessment, strategy development and intervention design; understanding issues of institutional governance and development, NGO and project management, and financial management; subject knowledge related to their areas of work, target groups and functions; monitoring and evaluation of their effectiveness; and developing critical and evaluative skills that would help CSOs understand how to interpret and analyse the information they access via web or print and how to relate the information to local contexts. Handbooks that detail a) the processes for approval, b) the full list of 25 items in the governing regulations of CSOs, c) the full reporting process and its related conditions and guidelines d) NPO institutional models and viable systems of governance and e) sample institutional policies could be prepared and issued by MOHA. Access to empirical information, national statistics and existing research reports should be made easier for CSOs (e.g. making them available online, or translating them to Dhivehi).

Consider setting up development studies courses (both class-based and distance learning programmes) at the newly established national university. These courses could include both academic and practical components, and should be in line with recognized international standards. These could include offering development studies programmes, both short- and long-term project management courses, human rights and governance courses, mental health and psycho-social support service courses, or those focusing on women, youth or children’s studies.

The MOHA website should be improved to include a website-based email inquiry option, so that CSOs can make online queries on matters that confuse them or need clarification. The website should also include: information on available funding; different resource materials and websites for further information on NPO governance and institutional develop-
ment; and links to other websites which have relevant laws and regulations for the civil society sector. It could also start linking up to other resource materials on the areas of work relevant to CSOs.

The capacities of the MOHA NGO Registration and Monitoring Unit should also be improved with staff becoming well-versed in the democratic justification and space for civil society sector, governance of the sector, and rationales for regulations. It would also help if they were familiar with the different areas of work undertaken by different CSOs.

The governance and management of CSOs could be improved by: separating the functions of governance and management by appointing an independent (and skilled) board of governance who has the function of oversight; improve planning and management processes in the CSOs; improve auditing capacities and accessibility in the sector; and developing articles in the governing regulations that help ensure independence from influence by donors or politicians, and on conflict of interest. CSOs should be open and cooperative to fair and independent inquiries and investigations in case of alleged or suspected illicit or unconstitutional activity. CSOs should also learn to communicate effectively with other CSOs, state, companies and the public, by relying on negotiation, evidence-based explanations and adhering to civil discourse.

The following recommendations are made with regard to the funding for the sector: including an allocation for the civil society sector in the national budget; having clear criteria for CSOs to apply for the allocated budget; reserving part of the budget for capacity building of sector and CSOs; reserving part of the budget for new, emerging or under-funded areas of work or target groups; establishing a private-public fund; provide incentives for contributions from companies and individuals; help CSOs generate their own funding; helping CSOs find physical office space to operate from; and finally setting up a regularly updated database of approved external funding sources.

Recommendations regarding the code of conduct and guiding principles are as follows: internal monitoring of adherence to guiding principles and ethical conduct; appointing a member to review CSO conduct and make sure they are in line with the principles; raising awareness amongst staff and members on these principles and how to adhere to them in their everyday work; seeking professional and technical support; and involving target groups and members in assessing CSO work. The study identified 14 guiding principles used by different CSOs to guide the ethical integrity of their work.

The following measures are important in order to maintain credibility and public confidence in the sector: using agreements with donors and sponsors that limit their influence but also outlines the responsibilities of the CSO; adhering to organisational objectives, procedures, policies and principles in all CSO activity and operations; refusing funds from political parties and figures; refraining from engaging in political activities; appointing a member to oversee and ensure political and donor independence in CSO activities and operations; improving financial capacities of members in book-keeping and accounting; having transparent processes of expenditure, resource distribution and beneficiary selection; publicising annual reports, expenditures, and sources of income; provide regular updates of activities; preventing misuse of resources within CSOs; ensuring documentation and record-keeping in CSOs; having transparent decision-making processes; and reporting back to funders, donors and target groups on activities carried out.

It is important to ensure that the three sectors of state, business and civil society are kept separate. Recommendations to do include: refrain from appointing politically active figures to the CSO; ensure activities are carried out in a non-political manner; have separate regulations for political parties and register foundations and associations set up by political parties or figures under the Political Parties Act (which is currently under formulation); and raise public awareness about the role of the civil society sector in a democracy and its contribution to society.

It is recommended that decentralisation and regulation of the sector take place as follows: registration facilities should be available at island level and at central level; a national registry should be maintained and a certificate of registration issued by central government; de-registration should happen at central level only following set procedure; information should be available at island level and via an updated revised website; permits, approvals and other documents should be available from the central and island levels depending on whether it is a decentralised issue or not; the regulatory framework should be set by the central government in consultation with the sector, local governments and the public; complaints and grievances could be managed at island level; annual reporting could be done at both island and central levels; monitoring of organisational compliance to regulations should happen at island level - such monitoring should strictly be on compliance and not content of CSO programming; and investigation of illicit or unconstitutional activity should take place at central level, with other independent officials involved as necessary (e.g. auditors, police, ACC). Finally, island councils should also help CSOs to access information from central government agencies (Ministries, Police, Courts, etc.) or independent commissions (HRCM, ACC) on aspects such as national and international policy, national and other statistics, or other matters.
The report also makes some general recommendations in relation to **future research areas and improving access to information, knowledge and dialogue**. Further research is recommended in relation to four major topics; a) the gender dimensions of the civil society sector with a view to understanding current disparities, b) assessment of needs at island-level on the social, political and economic issues in order to design suitable strategies and effective interventions, c) examination of causative and contributory factors in relation to the identified social, economic and political problems and d) the efficacy or effectiveness of current interventions into important areas of work and with different target groups so as to gain a better understanding of what works, what does not, with whom and why. Access to empirical information, national statistics and existing research reports should be made easier for CSOs. Agencies and organisations that conduct research and generate knowledge should be encouraged to make these available online and to translate these documents into Dhivehi as much as possible. Increasing opportunities for debate and dialogue within the sector, and between academics, practitioners and policy makers on the important areas of work targeted by CSOs is essential.
1. Background

The study was commissioned to provide a complete situation analysis of the civil society sector in the Maldives. Its intention is to describe the nature of the civil society sector in the Maldives, identify cross-cutting issues faced by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the Maldives and to highlight gaps and areas of concern in the present Associations Act.

The purpose of this study is for the Government of the Maldives – represented by Ministry of Home Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to deepen current understanding of the operating civil society sector in the Maldives, and following that, to establish meaningful regulation of the sector, enable the strengthening and development of the civil society sector, and to harness the potential of the civil society sector to contribute to the country’s development and promote the wellbeing of its population. In more concrete terms, the findings of the study are intended to be utilised in the reform of the Associations Act, the development of a Directory of NGOs and the formulation of a Code of Conduct for the civil society sector as initial steps towards achieving the broader goals.

In undertaking this attempt, the Ministry of Home Affairs and UNDP recognise

- the out-dated nature of current legislation and the need to update it in a responsive and meaningful manner following the democratic changes to the country and the 2008 Constitution
- the lack of clarity surrounding the role of the civil society sector
- the need to better understand the capacity of the sector
- the potential of the civil society sector to contribute positively to the development of the country and its citizens, particularly to deepen democracy and foster civic engagement, and
- the need to provide an enabling environment on which the civil society sector can flourish and achieve its full positive potential for the country and its citizens

The terms of the study were to conduct a survey with not less than 5% of registered organisations¹ and to conduct field visits to one atoll apart from Male’ atoll. The research team was originally directed to non-governmental organisations as the main representative group constituting the civil society sector in the Maldives. A preliminary analysis of the types of organisations registered with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) under the Associations Act indicated a diverse and vibrant range of initiatives which could not be easily captured by the term ‘NGO’². The focus on NGOs failed to take into account other forms of citizen mobilisation and organisation that exist in the Maldives – for example, various clubs and associations, self-help groups, those interested in advancing professional standards or development of a particular sector – which do not easily fit the NGO model. Yet these are all legitimate ways in which concerned individuals have mobilised and organised themselves to take collective action on issues they felt importantly about and all are registered under the Associations Act.

To ensure a comprehensive oversight in keeping with the diversity and reality of citizen activism in the Maldives and to capture its substantial potential, a broader focus on ‘civil society sector’ and ‘civil society organisation’ (CSOs) have been adopted to include examples of the above in addition to the more conventionally understood term NGOs. Given the dynamic and evolving nature of the civil society sector in the Maldives, this report also identifies the emerging trends and the evolution of the sector and considers these in its recommendations.


The **objectives** of this study are:

- to provide an overview of the civil society sector in the Maldives;
- to deepen understanding of the role, operations and principles of CSOs in the Maldives;
- to develop a criteria of categorisation of CSOs in the Maldives with a view to strengthening the legislation and creating an enabling environment;
- to illuminate the challenges of administration, regulation and governance in the sector;
- to make recommendations for the strengthening and future direction of the sector.
2. Methodology

The study comprised four main components – firstly, a review of national legislative, policy and constitutional documents relevant to the civil society sector and of conceptual and academic literature on the sector from the Maldives and elsewhere were completed. Secondly, a content analysis of the registration documents of selected organisations was carried out. The third component was a series of purposive in-depth interviews conducted with a smaller number of selected CSOs from four atolls across the Maldives and fourthly, a second set of interviews were conducted with selected stakeholders such as members of the public, island council members, government officials, political party representatives and donor representatives. The interviews for the second and third components were conducted either via telephone or in person. Six islands (two in Male’ atoll and four in Gaafu Dhaal atoll) were visited by the research team during the course of this study.

2.1 Review of Key Documents and Relevant Literature

The national policy, legislative and constitutional documents consulted in the course of this study include the:

- Constitution of the Maldives 2008
- Associations Act 2003
- Decentralisation Act 2010
- National Strategic Action Plan 2008 to 2013
- Employment Act 2008 and the
- Business Profit Tax Act 2011

In addition, the study collected and reviewed documents relevant to the civil society sector in the Maldives, including recent reports on the sector, capacity assessments of selected organisations and donor project reports related to the civil society sector. The methodology used for collecting these documents included personal approaches to identified sources of documents such as key NGOs working on these issues and web searches on the homepages of relevant Ministries, NGOs and donor agencies.

2.2 Sample Organisations and Survey Respondents

Table 2.1: Registered CSOs in Maldives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population of CSOs registered at MOHA as at Feb 2011</th>
<th>1,121</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>of which Male-based organizations</td>
<td>449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which other island-based organisations</td>
<td>672</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.1 Selecting CSOs for content analysis

The criteria for sample selection were designed to ensure representation of different geographical locations and the diverse types of civil society organisations in the Maldives. Four atolls were selected from the northern, central and southern locations of the country, i.e. Haa Alif, Faafu, Kaafu, and Gaafu Dhaal. The selections were checked to ensure
a well-balanced demographic, economic and socio-political representation. The registration documents of all CSOs in these four atolls were reviewed and subjected to a preliminary content analysis, in the second component. This analysis helped to categorise the CSOs according to type, purpose, sector and size of organisations. This analysis also helped to identify the strategies and functions employed by CSOs, and some of the principles and ethics advocated for in their statement of purpose.

### 2.2.2 Selecting CSOs for in-depth interviews

The observed diversity of this analysis informed the first selection of organisations for the third component of this study, i.e. the in-depth qualitative interviews. The selection was based on the categories that emerged from the preliminary analysis. It was anticipated that a proportion of CSOs from this first selection would no longer be active. For this reason, an additional list of 25 CSOs was drawn up so that inactive organisations could be substituted with another that was the closest match possible in the category of the first selection. Three to five attempts were made to contact each organisation. When this list was exhausted, island councils were asked to provide the names and contact details of any known active CSOs. The final number of CSOs included in the study was 70 (i.e. 6.2% of the population of CSOs). See Table 2.2 for a breakdown of the sample.

#### Table 2.2: Breakdown of CSOs surveyed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atoll</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No: of registered CSOs</th>
<th>No: of CSOs surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haa Alif Atoll</td>
<td>Northern, large</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faafu Atoll</td>
<td>Central, small</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaafu Dhaal Atoll</td>
<td>Southern, large</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaafu Atoll</td>
<td>Central, large</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male’</td>
<td>Capital island</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 70 (i.e. 6.2% of all CSOs)

### 2.2.3 Administering the interviews

The methodology used to identify and interact with the respondents included the following steps:

1. Contact details and names of persons associated with the selected organisations were obtained through the island council offices, and from networks known to the research team and other reference documents.

2. The person was contacted and informed of the on-going study and invited to participate in the study, or to suggest the names of other relevant persons from the organisation. Details of the interview, its duration and main topics, were discussed with the potential informant, and an appointment for the interview made (if interested). If requested, the interview schedule was emailed to the respondent ahead of the appointment for reference and preparation.

3. Most of the interviews were conducted via telephone – all of those in Haa Alif and Faafu atolls and a proportion of those in Gaaf Dhaal and Kaafu Atolls, and some of those in Male’.

4. The data collection period lasted one month, from mid-May to mid-June 2011.

5. In the case of the field visit, the interviewers travelled to the selected islands having set up some of the interviews and approaching the rest in person or via phone once on the island following the same protocol as

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4. with the exception of one category in the ‘area of work’ – i.e. bilateral and regional relations.
above. Some of the respondents from selected organisations were in Male’, and arrangements were made to interview them on the return.

6. Interviews typically took 1 to 1.5 hours for completion. On some occasions, organisational documents were sent to the interviewers for clarification and further information after the interview. These were also used in the analysis.

2.2.4 CSO Respondent Details

The initial plan was to interview two individuals per CSO in order to obtain the most comprehensive possible understanding of the organisation. The two individuals would be a member of the Board of Governance or of the Executive Committee (i.e. providing strategic leadership and possessing authority) and a project officer (i.e. having experience of organisational operations and activities and of delivery of activities). However, the majority of organisations did not have this level of division of operations and provided a single expanded interview which covered all necessary topics. See Table 2.3, 2.4 & 2.5 for details.

Table 2.3: Details of CSO interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No: of CSOS providing 2 interviews</td>
<td>10 NGOs x 2 = 20 interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No: of CSOs providing single expanded interview</td>
<td>60 interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of CSO interviews</td>
<td>80 interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The details of these 80 respondents are provided below:

Table 2.4: Breakdown of interviewees by gender and age group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>Haa</th>
<th>Alif</th>
<th>Faafu</th>
<th>Gaaf</th>
<th>Kaafu</th>
<th>Male’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29 yrs</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39 yrs</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49 yrs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59 yrs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69 yrs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.S*</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Not specified

The details indicate that the majority of respondents were young men, especially in the islands. In contrast, there was equal representation of men and women respondents in Male’. Two of the 3 women who participated from the islands were responsible for CSOs that focused on women, and both of them were older – in their forties – compared to the typical respondents of this study. A brief review of the registration documents (which showed the names of the founders and of the current Executive Committee members) showed that women were indeed less represented in the sector; if not an organisation focusing specifically on women, there were often only one or two in the positions of women development officer, the administrative assistant or the secretary. This finding is in keeping with other studies which have shown that women in the islands were active participants in the development of the island, but were under-represented in positions of leadership and authority5. At the same time, the very low number of women respondents from the islands in this survey suggests that women might face particular challenges and constraints in influencing the sector. This finding requires further research.

Interestingly, a review of the registration documents showed that a considerable proportion of CSOs registered as having a focus on women’s advancement and development were formed by men, and had men in positions of authority. Whilst it is heartening that these men support efforts for women’s development, it is also important that women themselves participate more actively in leading these organizations as well. Not surprisingly then, one of the women-focused CSOs in this study were formed by a locally well-known man and handed over to a group of women to run. The woman interviewed noted that the CSO was not very active, as the members did not have the time to run the organization and the President was out of the country.

Table 2.5: Breakdown of interviewees by positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>TOTAL (N=80)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board Director/Member</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President / Raees / Chair</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President / Naib Raees</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founder</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Director / Director / Masoolveriya / CEO</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Director / Asst Executive Director</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Committee Member / Director (specific programme area) / Advisor</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager / General Secretary / Treasurer / Organising Secretary</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer / Coordinator</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Assistant / Administrative Secretary / Assistant to CEO</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.5 Stakeholders and Key Informants

Apart from members of CSOs, stakeholders from Male’ and key figures from each of the selected atolls were also interviewed. Stakeholders were selected for the study from relevant governmental departments, development donor agencies and independent commissions. Interviews were also conducted with members from the main political parties. The interviews covered their opinions on the role of CSOs, key aspects of the governance and functioning of the sector and their experiences of working with CSOs. An interview was also conducted with the MOHA NGO Registration and Monitoring Unit in order to better understand the administrative and procedural concerns of those who currently administer and regulate the sector. One very – possibly the most – important stakeholder group was missing from this sample. That is, the individuals, families and community groups who were assisted, empowered or otherwise helped by the work of CSOs in the Maldives. Consultation with these groups was not included in the scope of this study (as this was not part of the TOR); however having a platform for service users, target groups and beneficiaries to be able to have their say is a crucial component that needs further exploration. Their input would be a decisive one on the role, impacts and contributions of CSOs.

Figures from the atolls included island council members, the former island chief, a police official, and two selected members of the public. These were selected from the most prominent and populous island in each of the four atolls. In addition to matters pertaining to initiatives and the operations of CSOs, the interviews covered the situation and context of these islands with regard to existing social, economic and political realities, history, main economic activities, demographics, and any other social and community issues. These interviews were also used to triangulate data collected through interviews with CSOs.

Table 2.6: No of stakeholder and key figure interviews

| No: of stakeholders interviewed | 17 interviews |
| No: of key figures interviewed | 20 interviews |
| Total number of interviews | 37 interviews |

The findings of this study are based on the content analysis of a total of 587 registration documents and the quantitative and qualitative analyses of a total of 117 in-depth interviews with CSOs, stakeholders and key figures (i.e. 80 CSO interviews and 37 stakeholder and key figure interviews).
2.2.6 Questionnaire Development

Prior to drafting the questionnaires, discussions were held with members of the Project Steering Committee of those who commissioned the study. Clarifications were made about the purpose of the study, what the findings would be used for, and how they would be used. Priority areas for the study were determined and the list of topics of study was generated.

Following these consultations, four questionnaires, covering the relevant topics, were developed – one for each type of respondent: namely, project officer, director or board member, stakeholder and key informants. The questionnaires were shared with members of the Steering Committee, and following their approval, translated into Dhivehi. The questionnaires were then piloted with selected respondents, and necessary amendments made. Once the overall applicability of the questionnaires was ascertained, they were sent to the Department of National Planning, Ministry of Finance for final approval. The questionnaires consisted of 39 major questions, comprising 120 parts. Please see annex for the set of administered questionnaires in English and Dhivehi.

2.2.7 Topics of Study

The interviews covered the following topics:

- **National Administrative Procedures**: Procedures and regulations regarding registration, approvals, reporting and monitoring, provision of assistance and grants, and potential for decentralising regulation and administration and which to retain for central authorities

- **Perceptions of organisations’ role** and contribution to society and feedback on experiences of working with CSOs

- **Organisational structure** and internal governance: these included clarity of objectives/purpose, management processes and record-keeping, human resources management (incl. knowledge of internal governance issues), and financial resources management (incl. overall income and sources)

- **Programmatic aspects**: these comprised of current activities, modes of implementation, relationship to members/target group/service users, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge management (technical competence; external inputs)

- **Principles** of organisations, and challenges to their credibility and public image

- **Income and funding sources**, and financial limitations

- **Collaborations and Partnerships**: such as relationship with government and public bodies, partnerships with other organisations or networks, relationship to other civil society sector actors, including media, relationship with private sector (also independence), relationship with donors, relationship with general public/membership criteria/scale of openness to public, and relationship with political parties

- **Access to Technical Resources**: these included trained and qualified staff, requirements (administrative, professional competence, management) and training opportunities available in relation to requirements.

2.2.8 Treatment of Data

The interviews were written up and submitted for review. Further clarifications were made, where necessary. The data was then entered into a worksheet and subjected to quantitative analyses for comparative statistics regarding category, function, income, membership size, source of funding, and other measures. The data was also qualitatively analysed through profiling and classification, and the construction of relevant case studies.
2.2.9 Discussion of Methodological Limitations

1. Self-reported narratives

The study is mainly based on self-reported narratives provided by CSOs and on opinions provided by stakeholders and other key figures. It is expected that organisations may, to some extent, attempt to downplay negative aspects and promote positive ones. One way of addressing this issue was to provide key informants from selected islands with the space to comment on the role of CSOs in the island, identify active CSOs, and to comment on both positive and negative issues relating to local CSOs. In addition, CSOs were also asked with whom they partnered, on which activities, and their own experiences of working together with other CSOs. Together with the descriptions provided by the CSOs on their own activities, this provided some means of verifying the data collected.

Triangulation amongst these different sets of data demonstrated that there was a satisfactory level of reliability in the data provided. Active CSOs were mentioned by key figures at island level and the types of activities they mentioned were similar to those mentioned by the CSOs themselves; moreover, some activities that CSOs mentioned that they had collaboratively conducted were verified when their collaborators (independently interviewed) also described the same activities and mentioned by name those CSOs they had partnered with in order to carry these out.

A surprising amount of frankness on the part of CSOs was encountered in the survey and this was helpful to understand the dilemmas, challenges and potential risks that face CSOs in carrying out their activities — and seemingly minimised the extent to which CSOs portrayed themselves only positively. These CSOs (i.e. those who did agree to participate in the study) were quite willing to acknowledge when they had been inactive for some time, share their own shortcomings and failures (e.g. being unable to raise any funds to carry out activities or being unable to hold regular meetings with Executive Committee members or general membership), recognise how dependence on external funds compromised their independence, and admit their general lack of capacities in book-keeping and accounting. At the same time, it must be noted that these issues were mainly faced by those CSOs who were fairly ambitious in their objectives — those aiming to change the conditions of living for their chosen target groups or attempting to influence policy or bring about structural change. Those CSOs who concentrated on generating recreational and association activities for their own membership tended to suffer less from the same challenges.

2. Sample Bias

It is important to also understand that the rather positive image of CSOs that emerged from this study contradicts the disdain and cynicism that some parts of society seem to hold about the sector. As this report indicates, such public disdain towards CSOs seems to be unwarranted and needs revising; many CSOs are actively engaged in activities that are beneficial to the public. Nonetheless, this positive image can be partly contributed to the final sample of this study. The 30% who chose not to participate in the study are also part of the sector; and their reasons for refraining from the study suggest some basis for accusations that many registered CSOs are inactive or that they lack transparency. These CSOs (not altogether a small proportion of the population of CSOs, as suggested by these numbers) are likely to influence public opinion. Data from this group of CSOs would have undoubtedly helped to provide a more balanced representation of the sector as it currently stands. The implications of this sample bias were kept in mind during the analysis.

The methodology (of first selecting a list from the registered organisations rather than immediately approaching CSOs known to be active) allowed us to some insight into the percentage of organisations that were registered but which might be no longer active. Table 2.7 below gives the total number of organisations contacted and reasons for exclusion from study. Thirty percent of all organisations contacted did not result in an interview. The reasons were varied; a) they were said to be inactive, b) they did not pick up any calls or the numbers provided were disconnected meaning that it was impossible to get through this group at all, and c) they were contacted but demonstrated their unwillingness or inability to participate either by stating so at the point of first contact or by failing to show up for the interview at the initial or follow-up appointments and failing to respond to attempts to set up an interviews despite saying they would be interested to participate. Some might have indeed been too busy to participate despite their good intentions.

The questions asked of the researchers and the statements given by some of those contacted suggested that much of the avoidant behaviour of this third group was driven by anxiety. Despite repeated reassurance that this was not a state monitoring exercise nor that information regarding individual organisations would be made publicly available, the larger...
proportion of this group was not available at the appointed time despite agreeing to be interviewed; they had switched off their phones or they would not pick up the phone. Some made appointments to be interviewed in person but did not show up for the interview at the chosen times. When respondents stated that they would like to participate but that they had been too busy or something unexpected had happened at the time, another attempt was made to reschedule the meeting but if they still were not available, no further attempts were made to interview them.

Table 2.7: Participation level of CSOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atoll</th>
<th>No: of CSOs in the survey</th>
<th>No: of CSOs contacted</th>
<th>Could not get through</th>
<th>Said to be inactive</th>
<th>Unwilling or unable to participate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haa Alif Atoll</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faafu Atoll</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaafu Atoll</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaafu Dhaal Atoll</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male’</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This aspect of the research process provided some useful information. Some of those who were unwilling to participate seemed to be no longer active and appeared reluctant to admit this to the researchers – perhaps out of fear or embarrassment. A few stated that they were reluctant to share information about the CSO even in a confidential study (though they did not say why). These research experiences confirmed a prevailing perception of the civil society sector: that a proportion of CSOs seem not to be actively pursuing their stated objectives. However, this statistic should not be allowed to overshadow the fact that four out of every five organisations contacted did agree to participate in the study and did so willingly, and in most cases enthusiastically.

3. Telephone interviews

63.7% of the interviews were conducted via telephone. Despite its advantages in offering greater geographical coverage within limited resources, the lack of face to face interaction reduced the non-verbal and social data that could be derived in a face to face interview and provided limited opportunity in which to see the respondent in their real situations. Respondents were also generally keen to end the interview and did not offer as much detail as when the interviews were face to face. Nonetheless, telephone interviews were not significantly shorter than the others, and there were no major differences in the quality of information obtained in each type of interview.

4. Representation of Direct Stakeholders

As mentioned earlier, the main group not included was those who had been or are direct beneficiaries and target groups of CSOs. This gap limits our ability to make a judgement on the effectiveness of the civil society sector. Assessing effectiveness of the sector was not one of the given objectives of the study, and therefore this aspect has been excluded from the study. Such a study would certainly help further understanding of the value and contribution of CSOs; however, there are a number of ethical constraints around the issue of accessing these groups. Confidentiality would limit the option of accessing this group through CSOs. Some individuals or families might be reluctant to be identified. Any such research should be careful not to exploit vulnerabilities or raise unrealistic expectations about the benefits of participating in the research (for example, increasing the chances of accessing wanted aid or assistance).
3. Constitutional, Legal, and Policy Framework for the Civil Society Sector

3.1 Constitution of the Maldives

3.1.1 Freedoms and Rights

The Constitution of the Maldives explicitly allows its citizens the freedom to form associations and societies under clause b) of Article 30. The clause states that:

Everyone has the freedom to form associations and societies, including the following: 1. the right to establish and participate in any association or society for economic, social, educational, or cultural purposes; and 2. the right to form trade unions and to participate, or not participate in their activities (Article 30.b).

Further constitutional tenets bolster this basic freedom (see Articles 27 and 29), which provide for the freedom of expression – i.e. the right to freedom of thought and the freedom to communicate opinions and expressions (in a manner not contrary to any tenet of Islam) and the freedom of acquiring and imparting knowledge. Article 23 includes citizens as well as the state in the right to undertake the achieving (through reasonable measures) of the economic and social rights due to the citizens and residents of Maldives.

3.1.2 Responsibilities and Obligations

Article 35, which emphasises the entitlement of children, the young, the elderly and the advantaged to special protection and special assistance, invokes the community alongside the family and the State in meeting this entitlement. Article 67 places upon every Maldivian citizen the responsibility and the duty, amongst others, to respect and protect the rights and freedoms of others, to foster tolerance, mutual respect, and friendship among all people and groups, and to contribute to the well-being and advancement of the community. These articles indicate the necessity for citizens of the country to undertake, whether jointly or singly, action to protect the well-being of – and advance the conditions of living for – fellow citizens and other residents of the Maldives. Taken together with Article 30.b., these articles lay the foundation for organised collective citizen action while imposing two constraints (elaborated below).

3.1.3 Constitutional Limits on Associational Life

Firstly, the establishment of associations and societies is clearly separated in the Constitution from that of political parties, and the purposes outlined for associations and societies omits explicit political activity, which is taken to be the province of political parties (see Article 30.a.). This separation reflects the widespread distinction of CSOs from political parties; CSOs do not, unlike political parties, seek to capture state power nor do they seek to govern. For this reason, political parties are not recognised as CSOs and regulation pertaining to political parties and any entities set up by political parties to further their agenda needs to be separately formulated.

Nonetheless it must be noted that this limitation does not prevent associations and societies from fairly and knowl-
edgeably commenting on, criticising or advocating for particular policies, regulations and legislative measures or from demanding particular courses of action from the state, the government, political parties or the various independent commissions, especially insofar as they pertain to achieving the specified purposes of their organisations. These are commonly understood to be public policy activities and are a key component of CSOs’ ability to engage in matters of public significance. In this sense, CSOs can have decidedly political influence, although they may not exercise or seek state power. As per recommended international practice, CSOs are generally discouraged from and ideally legally prevented from ‘engaging in electioneering activities, such as fund-raising and/or campaigning for political parties or candidates’ and definitely not participate as a political party or candidate.

The second requirement relates to the freedom of expression and communication. The Constitution requires that opinions and expressions communicated to others be not contrary to any tenet of Islam associated with the Sunni school of thought in Islam, to which the Maldives is constitutionally bound. In determining whether a CSO has acted unconstitutionally or illegally, it is entitled to fair administrative action and a fair hearing as guaranteed by Articles 42 and 43. As such, a CSO has the right to appeal any administrative decisions that it has breached the constitution or law, or even reverting to a court of law for a fair hearing, if required.

NGOs should be understood to be a more formalised and current-day version of the associations and societies permissible within the Constitutional framework. The freedoms, rights, responsibilities and protections in the Constitution provide a sufficient framework for the functioning of civil society organisations in the Maldives, within the specified limits.

3.2 Associations Act 2003

The Associations Act of 2003 is the main legal instrument for the operationalization of CSOs in the Maldives and is an improvement on the previous Associations Act of 1982 in many respects. The Act stipulates that all associations register with the MOHA (Article 2), and failing to do so could incur severe penalties (Article 37.b). It makes provisions for the incorporation, management and winding up of associations; the duties of government authorities; the parameters and contents of governing regulations; the naming and registration of associations, issuance of certification and cancellation of registration; and the alteration of names and governing regulations. It provisionally defines the functions and limits of associations. The Act also demarcates the responsibilities for financial management, accountability and fund-raising; the responsibilities and powers of the founding members and the executive committee; and the necessary procedures in cases of proven abuse of legal entity or fraud.

Despite its greater coverage and scope, this latter Act has been increasingly noted for its inadequacies, shortcomings and even hindrances with regard to its allowances for the optimal functioning of CSOs. Frustrations have arisen from the rapid advancements and growing sophistication of the civil society sector of the Maldives in recent years. These advances have outstripped the provisions made for in the Act, and it is seen as no longer able to fulfil the needs and demands of the civil society sector. The following is a summary of the prevailing criticisms and recommendations for reform from the Civil Society Forum Report (2010). See the Report distributed by the Ministry of Home Affairs for more detailed discussions on these themes.

3.2.1 Clarifying the legal status of associations

The Act has been criticised for its lack of clear legal status granted to associations within the Maldives. Although Article 13.a. of the Act specifies that an association acquires legal status and Article 21.a. states that CSOs may run a business for fund-raising purposes to achieve its mandate, there are no further explanations on the powers and limits of powers for such businesses or business transactions. The lack of clarification is particularly problematic because it

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10 Protecting the civil society sector at this level means that courts of law are also well-informed on the rights of CSOs, and the rationale for protecting civil society space in a functioning democracy.
12 MOHA (2010).
13 Legal entities possess the legal capacity to enter contracts or agreements, assume obligations, incur or pay debts, sue or be sued in its own right, and to be held responsible for its actions.
means that CSOs, in some instances, have not been recognised as a separate legal entity. The vagueness of this section of the Act has meant an uneven approach on the part of government authorities to permitting business acts by associations or societies. Some CSOs have found it relatively easy to gain permission to acquire property or engage in business actions whilst others have had difficulty to open bank accounts in their names (because banks have sometimes required attestation by the MOHA) or register vehicles or other equipment in the name of the organisation.

This has also contributed to the impediments faced by CSOs which seek to form membership based as CSOs rather than as individuals. Additionally, this may have been one reason for the above-mentioned negative experiences of some CSOs. The registration documents indicate that the more professional or legally-savvy CSOs have been able to, to some extent, circumvent this difficulty by explicitly incorporating some of these legal capacities into their statement of purpose; thereby gaining a semblance of officially sanctioned legal existence (for example, some organisations have included that they would ‘in order to achieve their objectives, be able to acquire, buy, or rent land, buildings, goods and services, and are entitled to these sorts of rights and privileges’). However, such statements by CSOs themselves typically exclude two important components of legal existence; those of suing and being sued, and of being held responsible for their actions. This situation, overall, is not tenable and requires a slight revision of the Act to make it more explicit, and to raise awareness of this to other companies, government agencies and businesses in the Maldives.

### 3.2.2 Strengthening the definition of CSOs in the Act

Firstly, many groups have pointed out that there is confusion and lack of clarity brought about by the inadequate and vague definitions in the Act of ‘associations and societies’ and ‘non-profit organisations’. Article 39.a. provides a rather circular definition, where all associations, parties, and clubs registered as a business organisation or a non-profit organisation with a charitable purpose are defined as such.

Some argue that this lack of definition has caused some confusion about which types of entities are eligible for the status, and consequently diluting the gravity of work done by prominent CSOs. It is also claimed that this lack leads to inadequate legal and regulatory provisions for complex organisations, especially those that seek public benefit, and trivialises the efforts of serious development and protection work undertaken by some organisations. For example, island-level sports clubs have the same status and are subject to the same regulations as those who engage in nationwide work on issues of human rights, prevention of arbitrary detention or torture, sector development or the promotion of equity. There is a strong call for a clearer definition of associations as well as for the categorisation and classification of organisations – e.g. federations, clubs, associations, unions – in a way that would enable a clearer view of their status and purpose.

International recommendations favour ‘clear, simple and widely disseminated laws and regulations supporting uniform and general application setting conditions for the existence of CSOs as independent legal entities’. This means that it is generally the case that a range of laws and regulations do apply to CSOs; for example, International Centre for Non-Profit Law notes that different laws and regulations may be applied to CSOs with regard to their general life-cycle, the fiscal regulation of CSOs, governing the state and civic sector relations, and regulating public participation. Here, the focus is more on the different aspects of CSO functioning rather than on different types of CSOs. Where different types of CSOs are recognised in law and separately regulated, these are most commonly those groups of NGOs known as QUANGOs (quasi-nongovernmental organisations) and GONGOs (government-organised nongovernmental organisations). These are government-funded organisations that function independently of government, and in that sense are not strictly CSOs.

The other distinction that is sometimes acceptably applied to non-profit non-state organisations is that of whether they are trade unions, co-operative societies, public trusts, and non-profit companies. These have been variously included and excluded from the definition of CSOs because they may distribute profit amongst themselves (co-operative societies) or may focus on self-interest rather than public benefit (trade unions), although the latter is also known to benefit

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14 MOHA (2010)
16 See ICNL & UNDP (2009)
17 Public trusts (or foundations) are associated with property (or funds) that have been left in trust for public benefit, and are often regulated separately under a Trusts Act. Non-profit companies are often regulated under the Companies Acts in different countries, but this has been sometimes criticised as causing unnecessary bureaucracy and complications. See Sen, S. (1993) Defining the Non-Profit Sector — India. Working Papers of The John Hopkins Non-comparative Sector Project no 12 edited by L.M. Salamon & H.K. Anheier, Baltimore: The John Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies and PRIA & CCSS (2001) Legal Framework for Non-Profit Institutions in India. Working Paper No 2. Paper published by Centre for Civil Society Studies.
a wide group of people. See for further examples the series of working papers prepared by the Centre for Civil Society Studies on the legal frameworks of over 25 countries. However, apart from these distinctions, CSOs seemed to be registered under one law in most places, for example the Charities Act 2006 in the UK or the Societies Registration Act 1860 in India (the latter of which has been variously amended during the twentieth century and applied at individual states level).  

Studies that have commented on the existence of multiple acts under which different types of CSOs register note that this tendency has contributed to, rather than clarified, the confusion and fragmentation of the sector.18 Countries which have allowed the possibility of registration under different kinds of acts have seen a fragmentation of the field, a poorer level of coordination, and higher demands on those who administrate the sectors to keep track of the situation and implement the regulations.20 For this reason, it is recommended that the regulation stays straightforward and simple, easy to adhere to, and easy to implement. Despite being categorised together under one law, CSOs may – depending on their functions – be subject to a range of laws and regulations such as those to do with taxation and import duties, with healthcare, social assistance and education, with land registration, local government, and with finance and audit related laws. Since one law cannot cover all these areas for CSOs, they will be required to familiarise themselves with the aspects relevant to them.

It is important that the purpose and function of the organisation is examined more closely in determining where it belongs. A legal entity that provides health services may belong to the state sector, private sector or the civil society sector, depending on to whom it is associated, whether it makes profits and what it does with them, and who is the primary recipient of benefit. Media groups are another entity who can be associated with any of these sectors, depending on how they are constituted, by whom and for what purpose. For example, the for-profit motive of most media groups in Pakistan meant that these were excluded in their definition of civil society groups in the CIVICUS study.21 Foundations or associations (which are not political parties but have explicit political party links) may be best served by being regulated separately, under laws and regulations pertaining to political parties and perhaps having some functions (such as service provision and resource distribution) restricted.

3.2.3 Specifying the obligation on provisions for CSOs and state interaction with CSOs

A duty to aid, encourage and assist non-profit organisations is imposed on all government authorities in this Act (see Article 3 of the Act), yet this duty has been poorly specified in terms of governance, state administration or budgetary considerations.22 There is very little assistance provided to associations and societies – monetary or otherwise, although political parties enjoy the privilege of a budgetary allocation. It has been variously put forward that a similar allocation for civil society organisations should be made in the National Budget. This could be made available to civil society sector applicants on a fair and competitive basis. The criteria for distribution of this budgetary allocation, as suggested by civil society actors, emphasises high-achieving organisations that fulfil all legal and regulatory requirements.

State Funds: In response to this demand, the Government of the Maldives is in the process of setting up a grants system for CSO applicants. That well-governed high-functioning organisations are the best candidates for such funding is generally agreed upon. However, a cautionary note needs to be sounded here. Just like small and medium enterprises require an incubation and support period in order to grow strong, so do CSOs. Were only established organisations to be exclusively funded, the competitive space for civil society organisations would become limited, to the final detriment of the sector. Equally importantly, failure to support less well established or weak-functioning CSOs will inadvertently discriminate against those CSOs based outside of the capital. This will have the effect of increasing geographical inequity. Perhaps a smaller part of the allocation should be set aside to strategically finance new and emerging civil society initiatives, especially in those areas where other financing is difficult to obtain, while the bulk of the allocation is used to co-fund relevant projects of established organisations. Part of the available funding could also be used to support systematic capacity building of the civil society sector.
A Private-Public Fund for the Civil Society Sector: Recognising the current strains on the National Budget, some have also suggested an alternative means by which to bolster the funds set aside by the state for the civil society sector. For example, socially responsible business organisations could either make regular donations to or allocate part of their Corporate Social Responsibility funds to a Civil Society Fund which, it was suggested, could be set up for the purpose of supporting the sector. Provisions for a national budget allocation and for the civil society fund (if set up) are currently lacking in the Act.

Despite these suggestions to make legal provisions for corporate contributions to the civil society sector, one study has indicated a strong reluctance on the part of companies to give money to NGOs. The reluctance stems from widespread perceptions of many NGOs as incompetent at best and fraudulent at worst. The lack of accountability and suspicions of politicisation were frequently mentioned in that study as dissuading factors for corporate contributions. For these reasons, corporations preferred to engage in direct philanthropic engagement rather than dealing with NGOs. This approach can have some drawbacks – while helping deprived or disadvantaged individuals in a piecemeal fashion, such assistance does little to bring about structural or policy change for vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. This is a common criticism of many Corporate Social Responsibility related activities by the private sector. Many good CSR activities intend to have a positive social impact structurally and policy-wise and it is a space where civil society sector and the corporate sector could intersect meaningfully.

Incentives to encourage private sector and individual contributions to CSOs: A number of measures could be utilised to encourage companies to contribute to CSOs. Governance and operationalization of CSOs should be strengthened in order to rebut these widespread negative perceptions. Article 15.a.3 of the Business Profit Tax Act 2011 exempts any body, association, public institutions which are approved by the Monetary Inland Revenue Authority (MIRA) and established for the promotion of Islam, relief of the poor, medical relief, or educational or any other object of similar general public utility. The Act, which was enforced in July 2011, also introduces for the first time in the Maldives profit tax on companies for businesses; regulations are currently being drafted. The proportion of profit which corporations donate to CSOs or to a specified Civil Society Sector Fund could be made tax-exempt. Companies could have the liberty to tag for which civil society sub-sector (for example, good governance, peacebuilding, infrastructure development, people with disabilities, etc.) or geographical location (at atoll or island level, for example) that their contributions should be utilised. Ensuring that the fund is managed by a politically independent (perhaps even with involvement of an international actor) would mean that companies are more likely to overcome one of their primary concerns regarding politicisation, low accountability and poor governance.

3.2.4 Specifying the powers and responsibilities of the Registrar

Another point of suggested improvement is to more clearly specify the powers and responsibilities of the Registrar of Associations, and include further conditionals on the eligibility for the post. In particular, the political independence of the registrar as well as of the executive committee members of the CSOs was seen as an important aspect of protecting the sector from undue political influence and of securing public and corporate confidence in it. For these reasons, civil society actors have suggested that the registrar should not be a political appointee, and correspondingly, that members appointed to the executive committee or the board of management should not be leaders or administrative officials of political parties.

The Act currently indicates that the power lies with the Registrar of Association and on some cases with the Court to cancel the registration of an association who has breached the conditions laid in the Act. The need to specify clearer procedures in cases of alleged or suspected fraud, corruption or misuse of powers, was highlighted by CSOs in the Forum Report. There is little in the Act to provide for a mechanism of appeal or to ensure that the registration of an association has been unduly or unfairly cancelled. Given that the Articles 42 and 43 of the Constitution guarantees the right to a fair hearing and fair administrative action, it is imperative for the Act to provide a means by which organisations accused of fraudulent, corrupt, abusive, illicit or unconstitutional conduct can demand a fair hearing and the opportunity to clear and protect their name. Equally, the State needs effective and reliable means by which to investigate and conduct inquiries where allegations or suspicions of misconduct on the part of associations and societies occur.

23 MOHA (2010)
26 MOHA (2010)
27 MOHA (2010)
3.2.5 Strengthening implementation of the Act

One of the strongest criticisms of the Act has been its relatively poor implementation. The Act imposes on associations the conditions of reporting on financial management and programmatic work, auditing and avoidance of the misuse of powers. The Act also clearly states that those organisations which do not perform these functions will be de-registered in two years’ time. However, in practice a certain level of indifference prevails with regard to monitoring and enforcement of these conditions. Failure to impose these conditions has harmed the growth and development of the civil society sector. Public and corporate confidence in associations and societies are diminished consequently, and organisations are sometimes accused of lacking good governance and accountability.

Finally, other less common suggestions for the reform of the Associations Act include ensuring that the property and funds belonging to an organisation be distributed to another civil society organisation with similar purposes or another organisation of the same island or atoll, to waive the duty imposed on items imported for the development of islands, and for the drafting of a separate Act for the functioning and regulation of trade unions in the country. Additionally, it has also been commented that the Act would be strengthened by incorporation of decentralised regulation of associations and societies, although there has not been much discussion on how best to carry this out.

3.3 Decentralization Act 2010

The decentralization process was identified as a key tenet of securing democratic governance in the Maldives. The Decentralization Act represents the legal document pertaining to this process. Article 2 of the Act notes the decentralization of state administration is to enable island citizens to decide amongst themselves how best to address their priorities, challenges and issues in accordance with democratic principles and with the purpose of further ensuring accountability. The Act explicitly states that decentralization is intended to (and that it will help) empower citizens by enabling and making space for their participation. It also points out that decentralization could be a means by which the economic, social and cultural standards of living are improved for citizens because governance and decision-making with regard to everyday important matters will take place closer to the community. Article 3.e. reiterates the point that whilst island councils are answerable to atolls councils which in turn are answerable to the Local Government Authority, the island councils are equally answerable and accountable to the citizens of that island.

3.3.1 Emphasis on consultation with citizens, citizen groups and associations

Articles 8.b., 23.b. and 41.b. which describe the powers and responsibilities of the atoll, island and city Councils, respectively, require these bodies to invite and involve citizens in consultations and discussions on issues of development, planning, policy decisions, and make it mandatory to seek their opinion in these matters. Article 23.v. requires councils to work for development and for peace and security within and between these communities. Articles 73 and 74 conditions councils to include and partner with private companies, associations and co-operatives in delivering services and implementing development projects. The listed Articles reiterate the importance of civil society engagement in governance and development at local levels, in both individual and collective form.

3.3.2 Clear provisions on accountability to citizens

Article 10 states that the powers and responsibilities given to the councils should be used for the benefit and well-being of the citizens in the administrative area for which the council is responsible, and this point is later reinforced in Article 125 which require council members to prioritise community interest over self or institutional interest. Article 110 emphasises the accountability to citizens and realises their right to information on issues of governance by requiring councils to conduct an annual meeting at which the annual report, budget, and audit report of the previous year are shared with interested citizens, while Article 118 support transparency by requiring decisions made by the council to be publicly announced. Although the term civil society is not specifically mentioned in the document, the repeated references within the Act to the involvement of and consultation with citizens strongly calls for engagement by those

28 MOHA (2010)
individuals and groups who are interested in holding local and central government accountable – which includes CSOs. These are also opportunities for those interested in engaging in policy-making and decision-making and serves to feed information and opinion to policy makers in a structured manner. There are a number of explicit references to private companies, associations and co-operatives which clearly include CSOs.

3.3.3 Calls for fair and non-discriminate engagement with citizens and CSOs

The powers and responsibilities vested in councils are considerable. They are allowed to raise funds for the purposes and development priorities identified at local levels and to encourage and direct investment. They are also allowed to set up and administer council funds in order to develop the areas for which they are responsible. This means that councils are in a position to raise and distribute funds to partners with the aim of achieving their objectives and can also call for applications from CSOs as much as from private companies or co-operatives. However such activities (as all others carried out by the council) should be in accordance with the principles and values enshrined in the Constitution and reiterated in the Act. For example, the principle of non-discrimination in either resource distribution or service provision must be upheld (Article 141), and councils are required to function both transparently and fairly. It can be argued that CSOs too have a responsibility to ensure their own independence and maintain an autonomous identity (see Chapter on Ethics, Credibility and Public Image for further details).

The Decentralization Act clearly makes space for the involvement of the civil society sector. In fact its insistence on consultation and on transparent, fair council procedures helps to empower communities and individuals. Because the issue of decentralization is explored in greater length in the study, a separate chapter that analyses preferred modes of regulation and administration at local and central levels is provided in this report.

3.4 Employment Act 2008

The Employment Act was included in this study because it was repeatedly mentioned as a key legal document for CSOs despite the fact that most of those engaged in the sector were volunteers. A significant number of people in the Maldives have heard of the Act. This might have been why this Act was widely quoted as applicable to the sector.

Two main considerations are apparent in relation to employment within the civil society sector. The Act explicitly states that it governs employment by the State and by the private sector/entity, but does not mention the civil society sector. For all purposes, the latter phrase ‘private sector/entity’ could be taken to include employment within the civil society sector, but is not clear. Secondly, there has been much legal review of the Act in recent years and the lack of provision in the Act for volunteers and interns – both of whom are a key component in the functioning of the civil society sector – has already been noted. It is possible to strengthen the Act to ensure that volunteerism is encouraged or at the very least that volunteers and interns are entitled to some protection and recognition – for example, the possibility of being reimbursed for agreed-upon expenses, leave entitlement – and recognise the legal position on written contracts between volunteers and interns, and employers. Any revision of the Employment Act should also make it easy for CSOs to access professional foreign expertise when necessary.

3.5 National Strategic Action Plan 2009-2013

The role of civil society in contributing to the formation of the development priorities of the Maldives and in validating the National Strategic Action Plan (NSAP) is well-recognised. The proposed framework of the Action Plan highlights human rights, civil liberties and freedoms as central principles and emphasizes the importance of empowering people ‘to follow their dreams without reticence’ and of enabling the ‘civil society to flourish’. The vision outlined in the NSAP identifies that an equitable, secure, sustainable and peaceful foundation for democracy requires a flourishing and responsible civil society, an accountable government, a mature culture of politics, and a socially-responsible and innovative private sector. That civil society is envisioned as a real partner in national development and governance is evident from the document.
Equally, the Action Plan highlights many arenas in which civil society may play an active role and contribute to promoting the wellbeing of its citizens and to national development. It:

- suggests that there is a role for civil society in holding to account both public and private sectors, and in ensuring that government and political parties adhere to constitutional responsibilities and democratic principles.
- recognises the importance of equipping citizens with the capacities to participate productively and critically in social, economic and political life and to do so in an organised and formal fashion as much as in their individual capacity as citizens.
- emphasises that national human resource development, national resource development and management, private sector growth and government initiatives and policies will benefit substantially from the guidance, inputs, and challenges of civil society groups.
- recognises the role of civil society in supporting decentralization efforts, but most importantly, once decentralization has taken place, in holding local government accountable. In fact, it explicitly states that the ‘decentralization programme envisions increased local participation in decision-making through social, political and economic empowerment at the local level’ (see NSAP, p160). In other words, decentralization is intended to increase civil society activism and engagement at local levels.

The document indicates that groups of like-minded and interested citizens would – and indeed should – organise themselves to advise, comment or challenge policies and practices inimical to their or others’ wellbeing. Although not explicitly stated, it is assumed that civil society organisations are formed when such groups formally register themselves as a collective for a stated purpose of this nature, and that such organisation confers the special advantages of strategic collective action. This space for citizens to organise themselves and take action on issues of importance to democracy, to their wellbeing and for national development is constitutionally protected – through the articles on freedom of association, expression and communication mentioned earlier.

3.6 Recommendations

- The review showed that the Constitution provides a sufficient framework for the civil society sector.
- The review suggested that the Associations Act required the following reforms:
  - clarify the legal status of CSOs, specify their powers, responsibilities and limits with regard to their businesses and business transactions, and make these provisions widely known to other companies, government agencies and the public in the Maldives.
  - strengthen the definition of CSOs by focusing on what they do with their profits, their independence from the state, and their purpose and function.
  - retain a singular focus on the sector with all associations registered under the Act, yet requiring them to act in line with other relevant laws and regulations, such as those to do with taxation and import duties, with healthcare, social assistance and education, with land registration, local government, and with finance and audit related laws. CSOs are required to familiarize themselves with the aspects relevant to them.
  - specify the legal provisions for financial assistance for and state interaction with CSOs. Some of these may perhaps be included in the Act during reform to include both national and local governments.
  - The budget set up for the civil society sector should be made available to applicants on a transparent, fair and competitive basis for well-governed high-functioning CSOs and to co-fund their relevant projects and initiatives. A proportion of the funds should be used to support systematic capacity building of the sector, strategically finance the institutional development of start-ups (i.e. new and emerging civil society initiatives), and to provide assistance in those areas of work or target groups where other (global, corporate or development) financing is difficult to obtain.
A Private-Public Fund for the sector could also be established with government funds being supplemented by corporate or private contributions. To encourage donations by corporations and private individuals, these donations could be made tax-exempt. Reducing perceptions that the funds are being used politically, an observer of international status (in addition to other carefully selected members) could be appointed for the management of Fund. Companies could also be given the liberty to tag which ‘area of work’, ‘target group’, ‘function’ or ‘geographical location’ their contributions should be utilized for; although they should not be allowed to indicate a particular CSO.

The powers, responsibilities and the limits of power of the Registrar of Associations should be more clearly specified, and the post should not be politically appointed.

Similarly, the members appointed to the executive committee and the board of governance should not be leaders or administrative officials of political parties.

There should be clearer procedures specified for the state’s investigation of alleged or suspected cases of illicit or unconstitutional activity and for the de-registration of a CSO, which involve more than the discretionary decision-making powers of the Registrar.

There should also be clearer procedures on processes of fair administrative action, investigation and appeal to administrative decisions on penalizing CSOs on illicit or unconstitutional grounds.

The implementation of the requirements and provisions of the Associations Act, even in its current form, should be strengthened.

The review indicates that the Decentralisation Act is explicit in its description of the responsibilities and powers of the local government with regard to the civil society actors. It also clearly depicts the role of civil society in local governance and mentions CSOs alongside companies and other development agencies as an equal partner of the state. Only one recommendation is noted, i.e.

CSOs need to be made aware of their role not only as partners of local government but also of their watchdog functions in ensuring that the government is held accountable for the governance of their administrative areas.

The Employment Act could be strengthened by:

- ensuring that volunteerism is encouraged or at the very least that volunteers and interns are entitled to some protection and recognition
- acknowledging the legal validity of contracts between volunteers and organisations

The National Strategic Action Plan provides clear support for the development and engagement of the civil society sector in local and national development efforts in the Maldives and in the promotion of the wellbeing of the citizens of the country.
4. **Categorization of Civil Society Organizations**

This chapter presents four different sets of classifications of the CSOs and examines their frequencies in the selected sample of study. This examinations was conducted on the registration documents submitted by CSOs in four atolls to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) (N=587). The focus of data examined here are the statement of purpose which they provided to the MOHA outlining the objectives of the CSO – what it is that they wanted, or intended, to do.

One of the main questions put forward by stakeholders was whether it would be possible to make a classificatory system based on the terms used in the names of various organisations as an indication of their structure, purpose and function. It was suggested that a relationship between these two aspects could provide a fairly straightforward means of classification and potentially ease the tasks of distinction and regulation. Moreover, there was a strong desire on the part of some organisations to classify the sector in a way that would help them locate themselves in relation to others and consolidate their positions in the sector. Whilst it is undoubted that clarity within the sector is an urgent need, CSOs need to be clearer about why classification is needed, what purpose it would serve, how it would be used, who it would include or exclude and on what basis, and what advantages and disadvantages might be conferred on organisations and for the sector by different systems of classification.

The sector was examined in terms of four categories: terminology used by CSOs to name themselves, areas of work (i.e. the focus of work), target groups, and functions of the civil society sector in the Maldives. One of the major challenges to these different classifications was the diverse and complex nature of organisations; because the objectives were broad, the organisations tended to fall into more than one of the different groups in each classification, except for terminology. But in this latter section, terminology turned out to be a fairly meaningless form of categorisation because of the random and interchangeable manner in which the terms were used by most CSOs. For this and other reasons, other ways of categorisation were explored; namely, areas of work, target groups and functions.

### 4.1 **Terminology**

The diversity of organisational forms was reflected in the different terms that organisations used to name themselves; for example, as (non-governmental) organisations, associations, networks, councils, federations, alliances, councils, forums, trade unions, professional associations, industrial associations, chambers, societies, clubs, centres, and cooperatives. All these terms were in use amongst Maldivian CSOs as well as can be seen by in Table 4.1; the word ‘jamiyya’ generally means any of following; association, organisation or society.
Table 4.1: Terminology used in CSO names

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4.1.1 Random and interchangeable use of terminology within the sector

A closer examination of the different terms used showed that the use of these terms did not correlate in any consistent form with the structure, operations, functions or purposes of the organisation as were described in the registration documents or the interviews. Although the terms such as federations or foundations were used in the names, this could not be taken as a reliable indication of the type of organisation it was or what it did or what form it took. In all other categories, there were distinct overlaps and inconsistencies. A federation or association for example could consist of membership by organisations (the NGO Federation or the Maldives Association of Tourism Industry – the latter of which includes both companies and individuals) or solely by individuals (for example, the Bodybuilding Federation of the Maldives or the Association for the Advancement and Solidarity of Hoarafushi). Organisations termed as chambers, alliances, and networks were based on individual, and not organisational, membership.

An examination of the purpose, functions and operations of the organisations by terminology also did not reveal any particularly outstanding differences. Some ‘sports clubs’ for example worked on issues ranging from human rights to disability and governance apart from a focus on sports, whilst other ‘sports clubs’ lacked any focus on sports. In other words, while some organisations perhaps used these terms to try and reflect an actual aspect or characteristic of the organisation, others tended to use these terms rather interchangeably or randomly. At times there was an indication that a certain term was used in order to form a particular attractive-sounding acronym rather than indicate anything of its structure or method of operation; for example, Foundation for Environment and Humanitarian Integrity – FEHI (meaning green in Dhivehi). This meant that the sector was complicated with regard to the use of terminology as a means of differentiating organisations.

4.1.2 Challenges of re-aligning sector along lines of terminology

A lot of work would have to be done in order to re-align the civil society sector in line with this type of terminology, and it is likely to prove unpopular. Firstly, organisations would need to be persuaded to change not only their names,
but also understand the distinctions in terms of their structures and functions for any scheme of classification based on such terminology. There might be some resistance and disagreement to this. Secondly, if any classificatory term carried more weight (in terms of prestige, authority or power), was subject to less regulatory terms or was, otherwise, seen as a more ‘attractive or desirable’ form of organisation, this would easily distort the sector as more organisations designed themselves along these lines rather than based on suitability for purpose. For examples, if foundations were seen to enjoy particular privileges it is likely that more people would be tempted to design themselves as a foundation rather than simply an association.

4.1.3 Commonly used international classification systems

Terminology of the type noted here has not been commonly used in international classification systems to classify and organise the civil society sector. Other aspects such as the areas of work, target groups and functions or purpose were more often taken into account.

The Civil Society Index (CSI) has been used to assess the status of civil society in a country and the index measures four dimensions – structure, environment, values and impact. It has been applied in a number of different contexts and has contributed to the development of classificatory systems in different countries. The typology that has emerged from these studies has focused variously on a) focus of work, i.e. what area of work the CSO focuses on – e.g. human rights, advancement of their own (communal, professional or economic) identity and interests, strengthening democracy, and/or the social and legal empowerment of a vulnerable or disempowered group or community, b) location of work – whether urban or rural, c) membership structure – whether comprising of individuals or organisations, and d) place of origin – i.e. whether a national or international NGO.

With regard to the location of work, this distinction is not clear in the registration documents, although the island to which the CSO is associated could be used to determine this more directly. However, because some CSOs work not only on the island to which they are associated in the registration documents but also elsewhere (though not always indicated in the documents), a categorisation on this aspect could not be undertaken for this study. As noted before, there are no organisations whose membership comprise entirely of CSOs to make the distinction; although there are some organisations whose members are a mix of organisations or companies and individuals, and one whose entire membership is CSOs. For this reason, categorising between umbrella organisations and others was also not a sufficiently explanatory method of categorisation. The fourth category – country of origin – could have been applied, but given that there are only a handful of CSOs in the Maldives whose place of origin is elsewhere, this would have contributed little to understanding the larger number of CSOs whose place of origin is the Maldives. For this study, the first method of classification, i.e. area of work, was utilised as the first dimension of analysis.

Area of work is also used in other classification systems such as the International Classification of Non-Profit Organisations (ICNPO) which is based on an analysis of 35 countries from the North and South. The ICNPO uses a 12-item categorisation system. These are: culture and recreation; education and research; health; social services; environment; development and housing; civic and advocacy; philanthropic intermediaries; international; religious congregations; business and professional, unions; and other. However, this system conflates two different dimensions – for example, an international organisation (as marked by ‘place of origin’) – one category of identification – could also be classified in another of the given category – e.g. environment (i.e. an area of work). The categories for the dimension of ‘area of work’ in this study were allowed to emerge from the data itself (the conceptual terms used by the CSOs themselves), rather than imposing the above-mentioned ICNPO categories on the CSOs.

In addition, keeping in mind that the point of categorisation of CSOs was intended to enable capacity-building and coordination of CSOs through the development of directories and databases as well as the strategic and more effective direction of resources, two other dimensions were also included in this study; that of target groups (e.g. whether a CSO targeted youth or women in its focus of work, for example) and that of functions (i.e. what types of work were undertaken by the CSO within its areas of work and broadly to whom were these directed). These different dimensions of categorisation are discussed below.


33 Salamon, Sokolowski, & List (2003)
4.2 Areas of Work

There were 25 main area of work evident amongst the objectives supplied by the organisations in the registration documents. Most organisations worked in more than one area, showing high-levels of multi-sector engagement amongst CSOs. Organisations were unlikely to have worked in all the areas that they had included in their objectives since the objectives often set out in the statement at the onset were more visionary and actual implementation depended on the resource availability and capacity of the organisations. This study distinguished the areas of work in the Maldives based entirely on what concepts CSOs used to describe their work and how these clustered together.

The analysis shows ‘areas of work’ is a useful means of categorising CSOs. It is useful for effectively targeting CSOs for the purposes of capacity building, coordination and addressing structural under-funding issues. For example, if a particular area is seen as important for nation-building but appears to be underfunded or not sufficiently represented in the sector then resources could be directed towards this area. Such a categorisation will also allow CSOs working in the same area of work to collaborate and discuss their approaches and efficacy, and to learn from one another. Furthermore, this form of categorisation will also help to analyse the sector in terms of the ‘spread’ and intensity of coverage of the different types of work being undertaken within the sector in the Maldives. Because it is desirable that the sector changes in response to the changing context and needs of the Maldives, it is recommended that such a categorisation not be made legally enforceable since the effect of such an act would tend to ‘box’ in CSOs and limit their potential for growth and responsiveness.

Only 22% (N=129) of the organisations expressed a desire to work in one sector alone; 114 out of the 129 were based in Male’. This group of uni-sectoral organisations was made up of three types; a) professional and industrial organisations, b) special interest groups, and c) employees of a particular company or office.

a. Professional organisations in the uni-sector group include examples such as the Maldives Medical Association, Certified Practicing Accountants of Maldives and the NGO Federation. The objectives of such organisations tended towards furthering the authority, respectability and credibility of their field of work and improving the professionalization of their members. They sought to increase competency and standards amongst their members and to obtain formal recognition and privileges with a view to develop the profession or industry.

b. Special interest groups attracted its members based on a shared special interest or experience and sought to expand the services, rights and entitlements available to the members of that group. These organisations also worked on raising awareness and interest amongst the public on the skills and needs of the particular group with a view to improving acceptance, affinity and popularity of cause. The Martial Arts Association of Maldives, Maldives Deaf Association and Tiny Hearts of Maldives are examples of these.

c. The final uni-sector group tended to be employees of a particular company or office who got together to provide support and assistance to each other as well as to engage in recreational activities, and to compete in inter-office sports and games competitions. The Bank Employees Association of Maldives, the Prison Officers Recreation Club and the Police Club belong to this latter group.

A further 148 organisations had identified two areas of work in their objectives. The majority of these organisations were primarily sports, leisure and recreation-oriented, but they had also pledged to participate in social development activities or to assist during and after situations of disaster or emergency on the basis of needs or request by government authorities or development agencies. Some of the organisations who had identified sports and recreation as a primary activity, had also indicated that, for them, sports and recreational events at community level were actually a means of achieving another objective – that of improving harmonious and peaceful social relations in what they increasingly saw as divided and conflict-ridden communities or that of promoting health and healthier lifestyles within the population. 39% of the organisations had objectives that belonged to between 3 to 7 areas whilst 11% had objectives that fell into 8 to 16 areas.

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4.2.1 Generalist and specialist CSOs

The multi-sectorality of many of these organisations raises the issue of generalist versus specialist organisations. Generalist organisations are taken to mean those that are – or intend to be – involved in a number of different areas; their wider range means that they are more likely to have general knowledge of the various areas on which they focus. Specialist organisations, because of their focus on a fewer range of areas of work (most often one or two) tend to develop a specialised and deeper knowledge of the area that they engage with. There seems to be a fairly even split in the proportion of generalist and specialist civil society organisations in the Maldives (50% each). Of greater interest is the spread or distribution of these organisations – with the greater proportion of specialist organisations in Male’. Very few specialist organisations were to be found in the four atolls selected for this study.

Generalist organisations tended to be bound to an island or to a particular community, and were keen to promote its overall development and advancement. This typically meant attracting, undertaking or aiding a wide range of projects and initiatives which the organisations deemed as relevant or important, from infrastructure projects to HIV prevention initiatives. Their wider range of objective meant these organisations were well-placed to utilise a wider range of strategies, apply to a larger pot of available funding and resources, and to respond to a community’s changing set of needs. The generalist trend particularly reflects the broad range of development needs in communities outside of Male’; this makes having such a wide focus a holistic and perhaps therefore more relevant approach to their specific contexts. It could also be attributed to the relative lack of access to professional and technical resources at island level, making it in fact difficult to develop a specialist outlook on a particular topic. Generalist organisations based in Male’ tended to be those which were committed to an island outside of Male’, for example, the Villingilli Association for Social Harmony and Improvement or the Addu Raiyithunge Jamiyya. Many of the sports-oriented clubs in Male’ also tended to be multi-sectoral because they were keen to provide their assistance to (though again not lead) other development initiatives and social projects, if and when required.

Specialist organisations, on the other hand, were much more constrained in their ability to be responsive to a community’s broader and changing set of needs. They would also have comparatively limited access to available funding as their specialist focus would render them ineligible. On the other hand, they were much more likely to have professional and technical resources at their disposal and possess in-depth knowledge of a subject matter. Perhaps for this reason, they appeared to be much more motivated to lead on those issues, to design and deliver services and campaigns, and to shape public policy and stimulate public discourse. In this sense, specialist organisations are more likely to seek to set the agenda on a particular issue than generalist ones. Specialist organisations in Male’ have been described earlier in this section.

Only 15 organisations outside of Male’ concentrated on one or two areas; most of these were farmer or fisheries organisations keen to develop this industry within their islands or atolls or those only keen on sports development and participation amongst its members. Each type of organisation – that is, specialist and generalist – have its advantages and disadvantages. They should best be understood as a reflection of the different needs of different contexts. It should also be noted that some generalist organisations had gained a reputation on a particular issue or topic and functioned as a specialist one.

4.2.2 ‘Areas of Work’ by frequency

The table below shows the frequency of areas of work as identified by the different organisations in the different atolls and in Male’. The most frequent four areas of work in each atoll appear in bold.

As can be seen from the Table 4.2, the most common objective was to participate in and organise sports, arts, leisure and recreational events followed by the intention to participate and initiate social development and economic development activities and to expand education, training and learning opportunities. 19% of the organisations identified environment protection as one of their objectives, 7% were said to be involved in human rights work and only 5.8% in good governance and democracy issues. These figures however did not reflect aspects of impact and influence. As can be felt in the civil society sector in the Maldives, a relatively small number of passionate and committed organisations in select areas of work were actively contributing to and significantly shaping the discourse on civil society sector in the Maldives. Most of the areas of work were amalgamations of two or more elements or areas of work. These are examined in greater length in the following sections.
Table 4.2: ‘Areas of Work’ frequency table

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<th>Rank</th>
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<th>%</th>
<th>Faafu (N=16)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=47)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=37)</th>
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<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Bilateral and Regional relations</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Science and Technology</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Wellbeing and Quality of Life Improvement</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Treemap 4.1: Areas of Work

- **45.1%** Social Development and Peacebuilding
  - 1.2% Science and Technology
  - 5.4% Sports, Recreation and Leisure
  - 5.1% Infrastructure Development
  - 8.9% Drug Prevention
  - 22.5% Education, Training and Learning
  - 8.9% Media and Journalism
  - 10.7% Civic Engagement
  - 5.8% Governance and Democracy
  - 1.4% Bilateral and Regional Relations

- **21.6%** Development
  - 19.4% Environment Protection, Climate Change and Wildlife Protection
  - 19.4% Healthcare and Healthy Lifestyle Promotion
  - 5.3% Safe Environment
  - 14.8% Religiosity and Religion
  - 18.6% Professions, Sector and Industry Development
  - 13.1% Culture, Heritage and History

- **7%** Human Rights
  - 15.7% Building People’s Skills, Character, Capacity and Conduct

- **1.2%** Science and Technology

- **8%** Welfare Assistance to the Deprived
  - 21.6% Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups
4.2.2.1 Sports, Music, Arts, Leisure

The popularity of sports and games amongst organisations was attributed by a number of respondents to the way such events and activities attracted wide interest and support amongst members and communities.

Social benefits of Sports, Music Arts and Leisure activities: Sports were seen as a healthy and enjoyable way of occupying the time of young men and women, engaging their interest, eliciting their talents and bringing communities together in a festive amiable manner. Competitions (between schools, islands, atolls, and even nations) also allowed young people to meet others whom they would normally not have a chance to do so, make friends and expand their networks. Engaging in sports competitions was a way in which to gain honour and recognition for one’s school, island or nation. It also tended to emphasise a single identity (being from a particular island, for instance) and minimise other differences (such as political affinity or differences over interpretations of religion). These characteristics of sports and games activities meant that they were a key site of social action and that a number of (generalist) organisations used them to build feelings of camaraderie and unity within groups.

Well-resourced and structured: Additionally, the field of sports has a well-developed structure and systems both within the Maldives and globally. The Ministry for Youth and Sports, and national and international associations for sports, provided considerable funds and resources for sports activities, which could be tapped into relatively easily.

Table 4.3: Sports, Music, Arts, Leisure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Sports development; Playing and participating in sports; Sports ethics and standards promotion; Organising and promoting sports events; Promotion of contemporary and traditional games</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Kulhivarukurieruvun adhi e’ron’gun kuriah dhiumuge furusath hoadaah ithurukurun; Kulhivar kulhimaahl kulhivar mubaaraathathakugai baiver-ivun; Anti-doping campaign hin’gun; Kulhivarugai samaalukan dheyn jehey saalamathhee fiyavalhuthakah heyluntherikuruvun; Kulhivar mubaarath beyyun adhi ithurukurumah masa’kai’kuruun; Zamaanee adhı sagaafee kulhivar kulhe aalaaadhiihuruvun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Playing music, Organising music shows, Opportunities to exhibit the work of Maldivian artists and introduce these to the Maldivian public; Build acting skills for film and theatre; Organise drama and theatre shows; Increase technical skills for filming</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Musik kulhumaal’ Musik show beyyun; Dhivehi Artistunnah e’meehunge masai’kai kurieruvu- mashaaai aan’munnah tha’aaraf kurumuge furusaththu hoadaai’i’iheey fulhaakurun; Filmu adhi thamseelu kulhumuge hunaru ithurukurun; Thamseelu show beyyun; Filmkurumaal’i negumugai gengulhenjehey hunaru ithurukurun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Literature and literary activities; Promotion of literary activities; Promotion of linguistic knowledge and grammar; Increase awareness of different Dhivehi dialects</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Il’meek adhı adhabee ro’ngun kuriah’dhiun; Bahuge adhabhiyaaththai hamatha un’gainnaadhee kurieruvun; Dhivehi baturuvathakah heyluntherikurun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Development of entertainment activities; Development of hobby and recreational activities

In Dhivehi: Munifoo filuvumuge dhairafthaa khoko kurieruvun; eki hobbythakaai thaafaathu recreational harakaithah kuriervun

Historical perspective: However it is also important to understand the ubiquity of sports development as an objective amongst CSOs from a historical perspective. The state strongly discouraged the formation of citizen groups for a period of time, only gradually allowing associational life on restricted terms. Discussion on any themes with overtly political themes could attract adverse attention from the state with possibly serious repercussions. However, activities in the recreational and leisure sphere, and especially sports and games, were deemed to be innocuous and therefore those who were interested in associational activities often included a component on sports. When drug abuse increased as a social problem in the Maldives, a main explanatory proposition was that drug abuse was driven by the lack of recreational activities to occupy the attention of young men and women. Attention on the need for exercise and healthy lifestyles also increased during this period of time. Thus, the many varied uses of sports particular as a social and health tool meant that organisations signed up to conduct sports activities in an instrumental manner.

Unlike sports and games, the other fields in this area of work were comparatively less well-developed although there were more concerted efforts recently to organise and develop these better. However, the resources available for sports and games simply do not exist at similar levels in these fields. Moreover, these activities tended not to hold interest beyond a comparatively fewer number of individuals, and it was seen as much more difficult to raise enthusiasm and participation amongst the wider community in the same way that sports and games do. For this reason, the other fields in this area of work were driven by the interest of individuals and groups who were keen to share and communicate their passion for a particular literary, leisure or recreational with like-minded others.

Social Development, Volunteerism, Service, and Peacebuilding

This area comprised those objectives which purported to achieve a social aim. Social objectives were the second most common amongst organisations and reflected a strongly felt need in general. Organisations spoke about their worries concerning increasing tensions and hostilities within communities. In fact, improving social relations (building peace, becoming compassionate and merciful, promoting unity) was the main set of objectives in this area (62% of organisations identified this as one of their objectives). Organisations also identified the importance of improving the acceptability of volunteer and socially-minded activities since it was not always easy for young people or social activists to explain to their families and friends why they spent time and effort on something which was not necessarily economically active. It was recognised that developing an island or community especially in a resource-poor context required the concerted efforts of many people, not all of whom could be economically rewarded. Yet organisations complained that not only was there a dearth of such interest amongst community members, there was also relatively little encouragement for such activity.

Lack of clarity of the term ‘social development’: One of the drawbacks of this area of work was its lack of clarity about what was meant by social development (‘ij’timaaee tharaggee’), social activities (‘ij’timaaee harakaai’) or social services (‘ij’timaaee hidhmayy’). It was not quite clear to what organisations referred to in this category of activity or whether any activity (because it benefited society) could be construed as a social development exercise or a social service. Some conceptual clarity in this area would certainly help the area of work to develop more strategically. The lack of clarity could also be attributed to the political history of the Maldives. Social activities were viewed with greater suspicion than sports; yet given that many were desirous of engaging in the development of their island and community and that economic policy and initiative was closely and firmly guarded by the central government, social development offered an alternative option if undertaken with caution.

This cautionary note is evident in the following types of phrases which are frequently used to qualify the work done under this category: ‘sarukaaruge kamaa behey faraiththakuge mashvarage mathin... nuvatha irushaadhuge dhashun’ (in accordance with discussion and directives from the relevant government authorities), ‘sarukaaraai gulhigen’ (together with the government), and ‘sarukaaran hingaa eki eki programme thakugai baiverivegen’ (by participating in the different programmes conducted by the government). It is likely that the term social development was kept deliberately vague in this context.
### Table 4.4: Social Development, Volunteerism, Service and Peacebuilding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Development, Volunteerism, Service and Peacebuilding</th>
<th>TOTAL (N=265)</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=28)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=12)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=35)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=31)</th>
<th>Male (N=159)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Social development; Social consciousness-raising; Social activities; Social and community services development</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: ijthimaaee tharaggee; ijthimaaee gothun kuri e’run; ijthimaaee roothu aalaa kurun; ijthimaaee harakatha; ijthimaaee adhi mujuathamah dhey hith’mayy’tha fulhaakoh tharaggee kurun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Promoting the spirit of volunteerism, social service and community assistance; Participating in others’ social and development activities; Working together with other organisations</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Volunteerismge roohu aalaakurun; hiley saabahah masaai’kaikurumah loabi’kurun; Jamaa’atha e’heevun ithurukurun; meehun’nah e’heetherivun ithurukurun; ijthimaaee adhi rah’ tharaggee kuriervumah behey’ hara-kaaithakugai ba’iveruvun; rashuge verinnaai ehen jamiyy-athakai eku masaai’kaikurun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Promoting desire to serve the country and nation</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Gau’mah hidhmai’kurumuge roohu aalaakurun; gau’maa medhu fahuru verivun; gau’meer roohaa aalaakurun;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Building peace and harmony in society; Building a compassionate, caring and respectful society; Promoting unity and networking within society, amongst youth and associations’ members; Resolving social conflicts and problems constructively</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Hamajehisul’haverivun; sul’haveri mujuthama’eh gaaimu kurun; loa baiy ekoverikanmathee gaa’imvafayvaa mujuthama’eh gaaimkurun; ekaku anekake oagaatherivun/ alhaalun/ ih’thiraamkurun; raiyyithunge eh’baivanthakan aalaakurun; raiyyiithunge eh’baarulun ithurukurun; gaa’ikan badhahikurun; ijthimaaee eh’baivanthakan gaa’im kurun; gul-hun aalaakurun; ijthimaaee massala halu’kurun; ijthimaaee balimadukan madhukurun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factors influencing social development: More importantly, there was also a sense of limited understanding as to what was causing the perceived breakdown of social relations in communities. Many competing and contradictory explanations existed, ranging from the rapid politicisation of communities to the impacts of modernisation or those of external influences (whether from the individualised and ‘self-centred’ forms of ‘western’ social organisation or from the more orthodox and inflexible forms of religious influence which tended to divide communities). Perhaps all these factors play a role to a certain extent, but narrow understandings also limited the range of responses to the issues of peace-building and conflict mediation in the country and the various communities where these were seen as important. More research, analysis and dialogue on these issues by interested organisations would help refine strategies of intervention and produce successful results.

#### 4.2.2.3 Economic and Business Development; Employment and Income Generation

This area of work consisted of those objectives which had a distinct economic aspect to them. The three main fields which comprised the area include economic development and economic resource management, promotion of industry and productivity, and employment and income generation. See the table below for more information.
**Table 4.5: Economic and Business Development; Employment and Income Generation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic and Business Development; Employment and Income Generation</th>
<th>TOTAL (N=151)</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=14)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=7)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=18)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=18)</th>
<th>Malé (N=94)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Economic development; Sustainable economic resource management</strong></td>
<td>70</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Ig'thisadhee haalath ran'galhu kurun; ig'thisadhee gothun kuri e'run; dhemehettini'vi gothe'gai ig'thisadhee vasela'i'ththa beyunkurun</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 Support to economic groups and activities (farmers, traders, fisheries and those in the tourism sector) Promoting (specific or overall) business and industries; Promoting national productivity: Lobbying for business and property rights; Promote investments</strong></td>
<td>73</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Masverikamuge/ dhandu/verikamuge/ mari-culturege viyafaariya'vi industry tharaggee kurun; viyafaarikurumugai dhaaira tharaggee kurun; raajjeyge ufe'dhuntherikan ithurukurun; viyafaari veringe hagguthah libigathun adhi rakhkaatherikurun; viyafaareegi eki dhun'iraal fulhaakurun adhi investkoh kurieruvun</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Income generation and increasing employment:** One of the key concerns in this area was to do with income generation, improving employment and self-sufficiency amongst the general population, but most especially the desire for employment and productive occupation of young people’s time. This reflects a prevalent perception that young people are reluctant to engage in occupation, preferring instead to live on the incomes of their parents. The lack of vocational and technical skills were also seen as a major impediment to productivity and some efforts were done to teach skills such as welding, carpentry, wiring and plumbing, sewing and entrepreneurship skills to young people. Engaging in income generation activities such as micro-credit schemes and small business development amongst women also seemed to be a significant objective amongst organisations. Personal financial management skills and the promotion of savings schemes were also identified as key skills which are currently underdeveloped amongst the population. Another area that requires further analysis is that of encouraging young people and women to participate in income generation and formal business activities. However, previous studies show that this field of activities require much more capacity building and strategic interventions in order to become effective. Women play the greater role than men in manufacturing industries in the Maldives but these industries are low-income, technology-poor and informal, so that even if capacities in these areas are built up, the broader legislative and economic context might not bring about the intended results. Market research into entrepreneurial ventures, access to markets and technology, and financial acumen seemed to be crucial yet overlooked aspects of income generation, small business development and livelihoods promotion. Development-related research in other contexts has consistently shown that poor understanding of issues and challenges can result in ineffective and poorly designed interventions.

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35 HRCM (2009)  
**Industry and investment promotion:** A second key element in this area of work was that of promoting industries, attracting investments, and of industry-related organisations seeking to acquire entitlements and privileges to certain industries. Many associations and societies were keen to expand and develop their industries and to gain technical knowledge, skills and resources relevant to that field. Fishermen’s unions, farmers’ societies, construction industry groups, and tourism associations unsurprisingly formed the bulk of those who subscribed to these objectives. However, the majority of organisations who had such objectives were to be found in Male’ (i.e. 28 of 41), suggesting that industry development efforts in the atolls and islands were still relatively underdeveloped. It is hoped that the recent decentralisation act will help stimulate self-initiated economic development in the atolls, and such organisations where they exist could play a key role in guiding and shaping economic policy and programmes at atoll level.

### 4.2.2.4 Education, Training and Learning Improvement

The education, training and learning area of work was fairly straightforward. The objectives included the finding of resources to strengthen educational capacities and facilities at community level, improving schools, expanding training and learning opportunities for adults, youth and children and to promote the spirit of and love for education amongst the younger generations[^38]. The figures for this area are available in Table 4.2.

Apart from the issue of improving educational, training and learning opportunities for all groups, special emphasis was given in the objectives within this area to meeting the needs of and mitigating the vulnerabilities of school-children who migrate to other islands (including Male’) for educational purposes. Along with the intention to support this group of school-children, it was frequently mentioned that a more ideal situation was to have such opportunities and facilities closer to their home islands, and that the efforts to achieve better educational systems in islands was to reduce the need for children to migrate for education. At the same time, it was recognised that for youth and adults, there would be on-going need for scholarships and other financial aid were they interested in seeking higher education. Organisations were keen not only to provide such opportunities but also to provide information and support to interested individuals in identifying and applying for available scholarships.

### 4.2.2.5 (Sustainable) Development

The (sustainable) development area of work comprised those organisations who had objectives directed towards developing a specific geographic territorial area, whether the island, ward, atoll or nation. It was again unclear what exactly the term ‘development’ referred to, but broadly it seemed to include those aspects of economic, social and infrastructure development presented elsewhere. As can be seen from the table below, only very few organisations subscribed to the objective of developing an atoll; most were committed to island development suggesting that the sense belonging to a particular island (i.e. island-based identities) were (unsurprisingly) more strongly developed than that of an atoll-based identity. This might change as decentralisation stimulates atoll-level discussions on development choices and trajectories. However, there is also a need for organisations and perhaps also other entities to develop more strategically an atoll-level consciousness. Such disparities are also evident from the preponderance of organisations in Male’ with objectives for national rather than island development. It might be that the insular quality of most islands resulted in many organisations seeing their own role in national development to be more limited. Most of the organisations in Male’ who aimed to develop islands were referring to a specific island other than Male’, either naming particular islands (e.g. the Kanduhulhudhoo Island Development Society) or referring to rural development (e.g. Society for the Environmental and Rural Development or Mission for Island Development). It was explained to the researchers that such organisations were strategically constituted in Male’ because of the greater access to available financial and technical resources, of being able to lobby powerful groups more effectively and of the ability to direct both resources and information to the islands these organisations intended to develop.

[^38]: In Dhivehi, the objectives read as ‘thau’leemee haalath ran’agalhukuru; thau’leemah loabi’kurun; thaula’meege dha’raa kun’eruvun; thaula’leemee nizam ran’agalhu kurun; thaula’leemah bey’nunvaa vaseelaiththa gaaim’kurun; (fashaa/ medhumadhrasee/ mathee) thaula’leemee and thamreenuge furusaththah bodethimeehunnaai zuwaanunnah adhi kudhinnah ithuru’koh dhinun; thaula’leemee ron’gun kuri’ah dhinun; thaula’leemee roohu dhiruvun; thaula’leemee jeleh binaakurun’.
Table 4.6: (Sustainable) Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Sustainable) Development</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>Haa Alif</th>
<th>Faafu</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal</th>
<th>Kaafu</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Development of island</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Rah’tharagee kurun; rashah fa’idhaakuraa ron’guthakugai hidh’maa kurun; ra’dheme’ hettinivi tharaggee ge roohu uffe’dhun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Development of ward</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Avah’ tharaggee kurumah masai’kai kurun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Development of atoll</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Atholhu kurieruvumah masa’kaikurun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Development of nation</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Gaumu’ge tharaggee ah masai’kaikurun</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2.6 Empowerment of vulnerable groups

A large proportion of organisations (21.6%) were keen to empower specific groups which were identified as lacking the necessary skills, resources and opportunities to participate equally in society and to contribute equally to the development of the island or country. These groups were seen to require concerted efforts and encouragement in order to enable their participation in society. Groups identified in this area of work included women, youth, children, and the elderly. Some groups were also seen as requiring additional interventions (such as therapeutic, support or rehabilitation services or anti-stigmatising campaigns) in order to fully reintegrate into society. These vulnerable groups of people included people with disabilities, former drug users and those in the process of stopping their use of drugs, ex-prisoners, and survivors of violence or abuse.

For figures in this area of work, please see Table 4.2. Additional information is available in the following section on target groups.

4.2.2.7 Environment Protection, Climate Change Response and Wildlife Protection

Environmental protection is a key sector in the Maldives, generating much public discourse and garnering national and international attention in relation to these issues. The objectives in this area of work fell predominantly into areas: namely, the objective of protecting the environment through various measures to combat climate change and human impacts, and that of protecting wildlife and endangered species. There is much support for these areas of work given that environmental issues and management of the natural resources of Maldives play a significant role both in the economy and in the everyday lives of its citizens. Generally, however, the main form of this area was of raising awareness on the need for environmental protection – more specific objectives on what would protect the environment seemed to be the province of a few specialist organisations.

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Footnote:
39 In Dhivehi, these objectives included the following: ‘an’henun adhi zuwaanunnakee mujuthamau’ge tharaggee ah’takai masai’ka/kurumuge gaabilkan libilayyvaa mouhun-nahvumah eheethe’irivun; haassa’ ehee ah beynunvelayyvaa meethuninah mujuthamau’gai baiverivumah furusathoo hoadhaidhun adhi e bai meethuninah dhiriilhumah adhi tanuvaa’h beynunuyvaa saaman ah hoadhaidhun; rashuge adhi gaumuge tharaggeegai an’henun adhi zuwaanin hahakii fahrii’irivaa minvaro ifthorkorumumah; mujuthamau’gai ah’henunge adhi zuwaanonge hissaa ifthorkorumah masai’ka/kurun; jismaanee adhi jinsee haanikkah libilayyvaa kudhinnah adhi meethuninah eheethe’irive furusathoo hoadhaidhun; mujuthamain ekahe’irivetee meethun (maasthuvaathakethi beynun kumuguge sabeethu nisu’!) kuh kumuguge sufathu ban’juhku kumahtahku dhoo’ko’taaliyvaa meethun). ‘an’buraa mujuthamau ah geni’ mujuthamau’gai baiverivumah furusathoo ehaimeehunnah hoadhaidhun’.
Table 4.7: Environment Protection, Climate Change Response, and Wildlife Protection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Environment Protection; Sustainable Energy Use and Generation; Sustainable water use and conservation; climate change and global warming response; Love for environment; Environmental awareness; Environmental protection; protection of land and marine wildlife; protection of endangered species; adopting eco-friendly practices and technology; Conservation of water and energy</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Thimaavettah laabi’kurun; thimaaveshi himaayai’kurun; thimaavettahkuraa asaru’thah dhiraasaa-kurun; thimaavesheege haalath dhene’gathun; thimaavettah heylyntheri’kurun; thimaavesheege massala hallu’kurumah masai’kai kurun; thimaavettah kuraa nell’un madhukurun; gud-hurathee vaseelia’ththa rakkaatherikurun adhi dheme’hettun; ecology; green building; energy conservation; recycling; carbon neutral; organic living; dhuniye’hoonuvun; kan’daai farthakaai falhu rah’kaatheri kurun; abaadhee rayvun</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2.8 Healthcare and Healthy Lifestyle Promotion

A common area of work was that of the developing healthcare and health services, increasing the health of people and promoting healthy lifestyles. Some of these organisations (especially those based in islands outside of Male’) appeared to be primarily concerned with issues of public health and promoting recommended hygiene and healthy practices. They work together with government authorities in accordance with national health policies and regulations. There was also a frequent recognition of the dangers of certain diseases such as AIDS and preventing these were seen as an important part of the work of these organisations. These initiatives generally fell into the category of primary and secondary healthcare interventions. Tertiary care was not commonly referred to, except for a smaller proportion of organisations who were concerned with the availability of general healthcare facilities and with building the capacities of healthcare service providers at island level.
### Table 4.8: Healthcare and Healthy Lifestyle Promotion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Healthcare and Healthy Lifestyle Promotion</th>
<th>TOTAL (N=114)</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=15)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=3)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=16)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=8)</th>
<th>Malé (N=72)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Promoting and protecting traditional medicine</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Dhiveibeyskurumuge dhaairaar kuri aruvaar rah‘kaatherikurun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Health services development; Promotion of health, wellbeing and health lifestyles; Prevention of dangerous diseases; Developing healthcare professionals and service providers; Provision of health information and instruction; Provision of treatment; Reducing discomfort and negative effects associated with chronic illness</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Sih’hee ron’gun insaaneet vaseelaiththah ithuru-kurun; sih’hee ron’gun meethun binaa kurun; fa’idhaa huri kaanaa beynunkurun; balin rakkaatherivun; sih’hee dhaai’raa kuri eruvun; sih’hee gothun dhuha heyovun; nurakkah theri balithakun salaama’vun salaama’kurun; sih’hee ron’gun ku- riah dihun; dhuha heyokan ithuru kurun; sih’hee irushaadhu dhinun; bali’meethunah faruvaar foarukoh dhinun; baleeghe nuran’galhu asaruthad madhu kurumah masai’kai’kurun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Family health and wellbeing; Family planning; Sexual and reproductive health; Maternal care</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: aai’lee dhuhaheyokan dhemehehette’vun; aai’laa reyvun; jin’see adhi dharima’vumuge sii’hath ran’galhukurun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A considerable proportion of organisations in Male’ which had a health-related objective focussed on a particular topic and sought to raise awareness on these issues, for example, Maldives Kidney Association or HIV Intervention for Youth and Adolescents. Others were concerned with improving the delivery of services and quality of healthcare in the islands. The objectives of some sports organisations also included improving the health of the general population. Despite its significant impacts on general health amongst men and women, young people and children, family health and other issues related to family planning, sexual and reproductive health, and maternal care was the province of only a few organisations in the islands.

#### 4.2.2.9 Profession, Sector and Industry promotion

Promoting a particular profession or industry, its standards and systems was most common amongst organisations in Male’, with 105 of the 109 organisations operating in the capital.

The objectives of these organisations were to do with improving professional conduct and the competencies of its members, ensuring adherence to the standards of service within that particular profession. Strengthening the existing systems and governance of that area of work was also a priority concern. They were also concerned with raising its profile amongst the public. In addition, many of these organisations were keen to promote positive attitudes to developing technical and professional skills. See Table 4.2 for the figures for this area of work.

#### 4.2.2.10 Building People’s Skills, Character, Capacity and Conduct

There was considerable attention given to building people’s skills and capacities, especially those of young people, and to shaping their character and conduct. This area comprised of two different elements.

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40 In talking about the objectives of these organisations, the following was mentioned in Dhivehi: faannee ah’laagu harudhanaa fen’varakah ge’na’vun; faannee roo’hu aalaa kurun; faannee ginthee kanda e’thun; faannee nitoam furhama kurumah masaikai kurun; (vaki) faannee’ kuri e’ravun; faanne’verin uf’e’dhithun; is’taraafahakhuun.
Table 4.9: Building People’s Skills, Character, Capacity and Conduct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building People’s Skills, Character, Capacity and Conduct</th>
<th>TOTAL (N=92)</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=4)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=19)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=48)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Becoming/making people who are active, take initiative, are self-confident, responsible, participating, motivated, sociable, forward-looking, and useful to society</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Heevaagi meehakah vun/hedhun; amil’la nafisah ithu- baaru kuraa meehakahvun/hedhun; zim’maa dhaaru meehakahvun/ hedhun; bi’veriva meehakah vun/hedhun; is’nagaa meehakah vun/hedhun; kuri’ah dhimume roohu ashaaa genne’vun; kuri’erumah hi’ssaa vaa meehakahvun; ke’run huri meehakah vun; gulhun’theri akathun; mujuthama’ah beynuntheri meehakahvun</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the number of organisations who see this as a worthy objective, the importance of acquiring good conduct, good habits and good character is evident. At the same time, it was possible to build a picture of the ideal citizen who it was seen would be able to drive forward the development of the community and of the country. Although these were included as objectives of the organisation, it was not quite clear what interventions would or should be carried out in order to achieve them. This area may require further debate and dialogue amongst interested organisations.

4.2.2.11 Religiosity and Religion

Close to 15% of the organisations in Maldives had an objective pertaining to the promotion and protection of religiosity and religion. In particular, these objectives included promoting love for the Islamic religion, promoting habits and rituals in keeping with the Islamic faith, increasing religious knowledge, and promoting and protecting the religion. Some of the organisations with such objectives were also concerned with the provision of social services and welfare to those in need. A considerably smaller number of these organisations (9 from 87) aimed to improve the facilities for people to engage in religious practice, for example, building mosques or conducting Quran classes.

4.2.2.12 Maldivian Culture, Heritage and History

This area comprised the objectives pertaining to the promotion and protection of Maldivian culture, heritage and history. This included the revival of some cultural practices, promoting love of Maldivian history, protecting heritage sites and buildings and protecting indigenous skills and knowledge. See Table 2.1 for more details.

4.2.2.13 Civic Engagement and Participation

This area of work comprised of two main areas which would help citizens to participate fully in the political life of the country, namely by raising political awareness and increasing policy participation and by promoting the rule of law, raising awareness of legal matters and ensuring access to legal aid. The breakdown of these is provided in greater detail below:

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41 In Dhivehi, these objectives read as: ‘islaamee rivethi aadhaakaadha thakah heylun’therikurun; dheenee roohu aalaakurun; dheenee kanthaththa kurieruvun; dheenee dhaa’laa’laa kurieruvun; dheenee heylyntherikinan ithurukurun; dheenuge usoolothakah ith thiraam kurun; dheeneegotha’ai egogothaa aaj’aal laagu behe’l’lun; dheen himaa’yai kurun; maaloofda’ai izkuru boroofu kiyevun; miski’yi binaakurun; dheenee ehl baayvanthankan dhenee heylun’; islaamee uhu’vaytherikan ithurukurun; dheenah huru’maajkoh hitthun’.

42 In Dhivehi, these objectives were: sagaafai’y kurieruvun; sagaafai’y dhiruvun; thaareehaa’i tharika ah loothikurun; asaaree thanthansa’i kan’kan himaa’yai kurun adhi’ huruma’i ko’h hitthun; vaaruutha hunaru rah kaathenikurun.
Table 4.10: Civic Engagement and Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic Engagement and Participation</th>
<th>TOTAL (N=63)</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=4)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=0)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=5)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=1)</th>
<th>Malé (N=53)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Raising awareness of and preparation for political activities and the political arena; Promote participation in policy response and contribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Siyaasee mai’dhanaan siyaassee harakaai’thakah heyluntherikurun; siyasath nimmumugai faadukiyya harakaatterive hiyaaluufahukurun</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Raising awareness to the rule of law and to legal matters; promoting the rule of law; Promoting awareness of the legal aspects of a modern multi-democracy; providing legal aid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Gaanoonee heyluntherikan ithurukurun; gaanoonee gothun zamaanvee multi-democracy ah heyluntherikurun; nufbarey-meehunnah vakeelehe eheetherikan hoadaahdhunun</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This area appears to be still in an emergent phase in the Maldives despite the recent political transitions of the country. The majority of organisations concerned with these issues are based in Male, with only 10 of the 63 scattered across the other islands from the four atolls selected for this study. Of particular importance is the low number of organisations concerned with ensuring affordable or free legal aid to persons in need; only 3 of the 23 organisations would offer this service and these were only based in Male.

4.2.2.14 Prevention of Drug Use and Drug Trade

Concerns with drug use and drug trade dominate much of the public discourse in Maldives, and it continues to be an issue with significant impact on the lives of many in the country. However, a surprisingly low proportion of organisations (8.9%) have the prevention of drug use and stopping the drug trade as an explicit objective, amongst the four atolls included in this study. Those who were concerned with this issue stated that their objectives were to help their communities, families and the young people of these islands to stay away from drugs and that they would work against drug use and to prevent the trade in drugs in their communities.43

See Table 4.2 for details of the distribution of these organisations across the different sites.

4.2.2.15 Welfare to Deprived Groups or Individuals

This area, to do with provision of welfare and welfare to deprived groups and individuals, was quite straightforward. It consisted of identifying particular groups and individuals (such as the poor, those who are struggling to make ends meet, or those in particularly difficult situations) and aiming to provide the necessary assistance and welfare to meet their needs.44 In empowerment of marginalised groups, the focus was on improving the social standing of these groups (part of which meant improving their material condition). In the area of assistance and welfare, the main focus was on meeting the material needs of the identified groups and individuals.

4.2.2.16 Human Rights

The area on human rights comprised of those organisations whose objectives included the promotion and protection of human rights (7% overall). In addition to the broader framework of human rights, these included protecting the rights of a wide range of different groups such as women, youth, children, people with disability, workers and journalists.45 Interestingly, many of the organisations who were keen to empower individuals or disadvantaged groups did not

43 In Dhivehi, these objectives read as: mas’thuvaathakethin dhunufelivun; mas’thuvaathakethin salaamaiyvun adhi salaamaiykurun; mas’thuvaathakechchaa dhekolhah masaikalikurun.
44 In Dhivehi, objectives included: ‘fageerunnaai haalugai jehifaiyvaa meeheevunnah eheevun; dhiri ulhumah dhathikan boduvelaiyyaah meeheevunnah eheefoarukoh dhinun; eheetherikan beynunvefaavaa meehunnah vevunu minvarakah eheetherivun’.
45 The main Dhivehi phrasing of this area of work was as follows: insaanee hagguthah rahkaatherikoh kurierun; insaanee hagguthakai behey valueethath kurieruvun; insaanee hagguthah himaayaiyy kurun; anhenunge/ zuwaanunge/ kudakudhinge/ nukulhedhemeethunghe/ masaikathumeehunge/ adhi noosveringe hagguthah rahkaatherikoh kurieruvun nuwatha libigathun.
always utilise the human rights framework or language to do so, choosing instead to focus on the ways these groups were excluded from society – for example, as a lack of capacity or skills to participate equally in society rather than a lack of rights which inhibited their ability to participate in society. The latter formulation which fits into the rights-based framework includes the analysis of the more structural aspects of social organisation and regulation – for example, the lack of building access for people with mobility issues or the lack of adequate maternity leave protection in the private sector – which may hinder equal participation.

4.2.2.17 Equity, Social Justice and Inclusion

The promotion of concepts such as equity, social justice and inclusiveness amongst citizens comprised a separate area consisting of 6% of organisations who included these objectives in their mandate. Gender equity, socio-economic equity, recognition of the different dialects in Dhivehi language, and notions of a fairer society where island communities were more or less equitable in terms of access to basic services formed parts of this area. Valuing diversity and promoting the tolerance of differences and different opinions amongst individuals and between communities was also included as one of the objectives falling into this sector46. Of the organisations who stated at least one of these objectives in their mandate (N=35), 16 focused on gender equity and 15 on socio-economic equity in society. 11 of these organisations also included social justice as one of their objectives.

4.2.2.18 Good Governance and Democracy

Considering the nation-wide focus on issues of good governance and democracy, still only a relatively small proportion of organisations (approximately, 6%) aim to work on issues of governance, accountability, transparency and promoting the rule of law amongst state and other entities, and to promote democracy within the country. Not surprisingly, the majority of these organisations are based in Male', the capital with only a handful in the islands of the four atolls selected for this study working on similar issues.

It should also be noted that this area experiencing a rapid proliferation. Table 5.5 in the next chapter shows that activities described by the surveyed CSOs as falling under this category is almost double of the figure noted here (i.e. the figure has risen from 5.8% to 11%).

Table 4.11: Good Governance and Democracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Governance and Democracy</th>
<th>TOTAL (N=34)</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=1)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=0)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=6)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=1)</th>
<th>Malé (N=26)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Promoting good governance, transparency and accountability; working against corruption; promoting rule of law amongst government</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Dhivehi: Sarukaaruge adhi gaamu’ge oofesthakugai hingga kanthatha adhi hingga gothuge mauломaathai nin’maa nimmun nimm’gothuge mauломatathu aan’munnah haamakoh dhinun; kamaabehyfararu’iltha zin’maadhaarukuruvun; kamaabehyfarara-athakah hiyaalaai massala hushahelhumah faseyhakurun; siyaas-athaaai gavaa’idhu harudhanaakurumah baarualha e’heeve adhi lafaadhinun</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Promoting Democracy (practices and culture); Protecting freedoms and independence</td>
<td>In Dhivehi: democracy hirmaayajiy kurun; democracyge sagaafaiy ashagneevun; democracyah ahuluverikuruvun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2.19 Safe, Secure and Protective Environment

Another emerging area of work was on issues of safety, security and protection (5%). These included addressing is-

46 In Dhivehi, the objectives read as: e’hen raifythunnekey eft badha’in hanahama hagguthakaa hidualiyitha hoathethi dhinun; mujuthama’ge harakaat thakugai e’hen raifythunney eft varah baiverivun ithurukurun; aan’munnah eft’safeh gaai dhiri ulhumuhumah furoshathu hoathethi dhinun; hanahama gothheh gaai dhiri ulhumuhumah adhi kuri ensoyume furoshattahat hootha’dhinun adhi libibeythun ithurukurun; mujuthama’egai hunnah hiyaalaai nazaringa thulaathakaa horumay ko’h nhilun; kon’ine bae’hege agu vazakurun; dhiruuluhumuge fenuro eft varakurun nuwadha hunnah thulaathu madhukurun.
sues of abuse, cruelty and crime and working to promote an environment free from such incidences. All organisations except for the two based in Gaaf Dhaal atoll were based in Male’, which is reflective of the growing concerns in the capital with regard to crime rise and the prevalence of abuse as well as formerly prevalent concerns with torture and cruelty in prisons. However, apart from a commitment to these issues, it is unclear how these organisations hope to tackle them in addition to raising awareness. Research on these issues as well as debates and discussions on the best intervention strategies are thought to be of considerable use to this area.

4.2.2.20 Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure development was a distinct area of work, focussing on issues such as the provision of safe water and sanitation systems, establishing required levels of street-lighting, provision of appropriate mechanisms of garbage disposal, provision of electricity and ensuring a clean environment.

4.2.2.21 Assistance and Rehabilitation following Disasters and Emergencies

Following the Tsunami of December 2004, it is not surprising that a number of organisations had included the objective of service and assistance during and after disasters and emergencies, although this number was surprisingly low (2.7%). Perhaps many organisations were able to meet the needs of the post-disaster scenario through broader and more general objectives of social development, rights-bases assistance or of welfare assistance to people in need.

4.2.2.22 Media and Journalism

A few organisations (9 of a total of 587) focus on the objective of protecting and promoting media and journalism in the country, although more organisations utilise media as a strategy for achieving their objectives. Those concerned with the promotion and protection of media were particularly concerned with protecting the rights, freedoms and independence of journalists and of media outlets.

4.2.2.23 Bilateral and Regional Relations

This area comprised of organisations whose objectives were to improve bilateral relations between Maldives and another country of choice (for example, Japan, India, France or China) or to improve relations within the South Asian region. All 8 organisations in this area were based in Male’. The objectives included improving trade relation, social and cultural exchanges, and linguistic and literary activities between the identified countries and the Maldives.

4.2.2.24 Science and Technology

Objectives related to improving scientific and technological knowledge in the Maldives were the province of just 7 organisations, 6 of which were based in Male’. The only organisation outside of Male’ who noted the importance of promoting technological skills and knowledge in the island was an organisation based in Gaaf Dhaal atoll. Given the focus on education, it is interesting that science does not have a more prominent focus, which would be of assistance to those students and adults in island communities who are concerned with achieving well in school examinations and developing professional careers.

4.2.2.25 Happiness, Wellbeing and Quality of Life Improvement

The area of work on happiness, wellbeing and quality of life improvement was notably the smallest, although it could be argued that this could be subsumed under the more general heading of social development. However, the specific attention on the concepts contained here sufficed it as a distinct category. Only 6 organisations included this aspect.

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47 Objectives pertaining to this area of work read in Dhivehi as: rah’kaatheri maa’hauleh uffe’dhun; kuh madhukurun; jismaanee, nafsaanee adhi/nuvatha jinsee haanikkah hulle vun/madhukurun; jismaanee, nafsaanee adhi/nuvatha jinsee haanikkah in salamaal‘/kurun; amiyyatavenikamun rahi kaathathun kurun.

48 These objectives were expressed in Dhivehi as: umranaa gothun kurieruvun; rah’kaatheri boa’fen gaaimkurun; faahaanaage nizam gaaimkurun; magu alikurun; asaase buhth/mal’thah looru/koh dhinun; saafu thaahiru maahau’leh uffe’dhun.

49 In Dhivehi, the objectives included read as: kul’li haadhisaathakugai/ gudh’rathee museebaathuthakugai/ kul’li nurah’kaatheri haalathuthakugai/ bodethi kaarisaathakugai e’heevun adhi/nuguuthakugai inaa/i/thah ibigathumah nuvatha hoadaa/thuhunah masai’kaikurun.

50 In particular, the objectives included: noosvenikamuge dhii/raa ah e’hee foarukurun; noosvenikamuge hagguthah rah’kaathathun kurun.

51 In Dhivehi, the objectives read as: sarathadhhe gaumuthakakai raajjeaai/ vakigaumakaai raajjeaai dhemedhoo ig/thisadhe, i/thinaaee, sagaatee adhi/tathuruvenikamuge gothun badhahikurun; dhegaumuge bas dheterahaath tha’raafukurun; dhegaumuge raajjeaai/yu’hekkothunah meanfuge/kunudhununah salaaalakurun.

52 The objectives in Dhivehi read as: ufaa faagathiken mathee dhii/uthey bayakah hefthun; aan’hu haalathaah dhii/uthumu haalatha ran’gaathukurun; en/menge laabayaai’ manata ah masahkaikurun.
in their mandate.

### 4.3 Target Groups

The data from the registration documents was also examined in terms of the target groups that were explicitly specified in the organisational objectives. Most organisations had more than one target group, not surprising given the wide range of work areas to which they subscribed. Many others had not specified a particular target group and in this case these organisations were not included in the analysis. It is likely though that many island-based organisations who had not specified a target group meant the citizens or population of that particular island, and this might have applied to some CSOs in Male' as well. It is also likely that Male'-based CSOs who had not specified a target group could have meant all Maldivian citizens and residents, as some seemed to have a national focus. Were these numbers to be inferred and included, the target groups of ‘citizens’ specific to an island’ and ‘all citizens’ would undoubtedly become much larger in comparison to the others. What is also excluded here are those instances where organisations referred generally to the public (‘aan’ mun’) in their objectives because it was not strictly clear whether these meant the general public of the Maldives (i.e. all citizens or the general population) or of that island.

Table 4.12 gives a detailed breakdown of the target groups specified by organisations.

An interesting point from the table is the considerably low proportion of services targeted for people who are in need, for example, people with a disability, former drug users and survivors of violence each have less than 5% of organisations providing services for them and these are predominantly based in Male’. While prevention and campaigning on these issues appear to be common in comparison (see Table 4.2), services for those who have experienced of these situations and need additional support to recover appear to be minimal. For example, there are 8.9% of CSOs who work to prevent drug abuse and the drug trade, yet only 1.2% of CSOs seem to specifically working with those who have drug-related problems. This is likely to create a disjunction where issues are highlighted as a problem (for example, violence against women and children or the dangers of drug abuse) but there are few avenues for help for those who have experience of such events. This could create a deep sense of anxiety, isolation and frustration amongst those highlighted as problematic or victimised groups. In some cases, it might also serve to sensationalise or stigmatise them in a way that impedes rather than assist their recovery and reintegration.53

Categorisation of CSOs by target group can help to understand the civil society sector in terms of its strengths and gaps, as indicated. It can also help CSOs identify others who are working on similar issues and link up to them in order to strengthen their approach through debate, discussion and reflection. At the same time, a strong focus on the identified target groups can have its downsides. Studies have shown that extensive targeting and highlighting a particular group (whilst illuminating their particular dilemmas and difficulties) can also strengthen or create a distinct social identity in a way that is unhelpful for their own recovery.54 For example, child survivors of sexual abuse might be highlighted to such an extent that this label becomes a distinct part of their own self-identity. Problematically, in some cases, the targeting of a group may be done in such a way that it separates them from their natural social context and relations, as has been sometimes criticised in work with children elsewhere.

These are potential risks of relying singly on target groups as a dimension of categorising work of CSOs (or any work for that matter). It is essential that working with particular groups of people is done in a manner in which they are not isolated from the social context in which the group and sub-group are embedded, but rather that work is done whilst taking into account the specific dynamics of their overall context.

---


Table 4.12: Target group frequency table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Potentially skilled sportspersons*</th>
<th>199</th>
<th>33.9</th>
<th>35</th>
<th>92.1</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>18.8</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>38.3</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>35.1</th>
<th>130</th>
<th>28.9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Citizens of a specific island or atoll</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>All citizens/General population</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>People in difficult circumstances; Poor people; Widows and orphans; Marginalised people; Unemployed</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.8</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>10.9</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Relevant offices/authorities; Policymakers and decision-makers</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Children; Schoolchildren</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Members of organisation</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
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<td>13.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>People with a long-term or chronic illness</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Workers and Employees</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Adults and children with a disability and their families</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>13.1</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>8.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Adult and child survivors of violence</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>4.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Musicians and Artists</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Journalists</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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<td>Other organisations</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Former drug users and recovering addicts</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Teachers and educators</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Prisoners, former prisoners and detainees</td>
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<td>0.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
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<td>33.7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* people who show talents at sports or games
Treemap 4.2: Target Groups

- 20.1% Citizens of a Specific Island or Adult
- 3.1% Parents
- 16.3% All Citizens of a Specific Island or Adult
- 1.5% Other Organisations
- 6.6% Children, Schoolchildren
- 3.2% Adults and Citizens with Disability and/or Family
- 33.9% Potentially Skilled Sportspersons
- 24% Youth
- 3.2% Workers and Employees
- 0.3% Science and Technology
- 7.5% Women
- 4.6% Members of Organisation
- 7.7% Relevant Offices / Authorities, Policymakers and Decision-makers
- 10.2% People in Difficult Circumstances, Poor People, Widows and Orphans, Marginalised People, Unemployed
- 2.7% Musicians and Artists
- 3.1% Elderly
- 3.1% Former Drug Users
- 1.2% Other

Not Specified: 33.7%
4.4 Functions

A third way to analyse the categories of the civil society sector was by examining the various activities that the organisation expected themselves to undertake in order to achieve their objectives. In other words, what did they see themselves doing to achieve their goals? This section looks at what has been stated by organisations about how they would go about their meeting their objectives. Different strategies were discernible in the registration documents submitted to the Ministry of Home Affairs. The functions were determined through an analysis of the combined stated purpose of the activity, the activities they intended to employ and the broad group towards whom these were deployed. These formed the basis for the eight main functions identified below.

The eight functions consist of: community-level advocacy and awareness-raising; service provision, resource distribution; policy level advocacy and activism; structural change efforts; knowledge generation and capacity building; recreation and associational activities; coalition-building and networking; and development and advancement. Here too organisations tended to engage in a diverse set of function. However the most popular was the very broadly termed ‘development and advancement’ function. It is likely that organisations which posed this as their main function also undertook many activities from the other categories, although they did not state this explicitly in their objectives.

4.4.1 Development and Advancement

Describing their main functions to be the development or advancement of a particular group or community or area of work was the most common category amongst organisations. This was a catchall phrase – vague and yet straightforward – about the intentions of an organisation. What they intended was the gradual improvement of the state of things or persons, i.e. to bring about what could be identified as progress or growth. In practice, this category is an umbrella term with many CSOs utilising the functions specified in the following sections in order to advance or develop the focus areas of their work.

Their function was the development or advancement of the identified groups (youth, women, the citizens of a stated island) or the state of certain area of work such as human rights or the environment. The ideas of development and advancement were captured by the terms ‘thurageekurun’ or ‘kurieruvun’. Closely related to this were attempts to enliven revive or nurture a particular area of work (e.g. ‘dhiruvun’, ‘dhiruvaa aalakuurun’) or to enrich it (i.e. ‘mus-sandhiikurun’ or ‘thanavaskurun’). Falling into this category were also strategies to increase available opportunities or to seek to increase the availability of opportunities to develop or advance for the identified groups or areas of work (i.e. ‘furusthu hoadhaidhinun nuvaththa ithurukurun’) or protecting (the wellbeing) of certain groups or a particular area of work from deterioration and harm (i.e. ‘rah’kaatherikurun’). Organisations also mentioned attempting to shelter or give protection to these groups or areas of work (i.e. ‘himaayai’kurun’) or to strengthen them (‘harudhanaa kurun’). Some organisations included the efforts of seeking international experience (‘bainal agwaamee thajribaa hoadhun’) as part of developing and advancing a group of persons. In particular, this category of functions required organisations to take initiative and act upon (i.e. ‘isve’ harakaatherivun’) or to enable (i.e. ‘kure’veanye’ goiththah hoadhaidhinun’) the development and advancement of the situation of the identified individuals, groups or area of work.
### Table 4.13: Categorisation by Functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>TOTAL (N=587)</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=38)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=16)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=47)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=37)</th>
<th>Malé (N=449)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Development and Advancement</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Community-level Advocacy and Awareness-raising</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Recreational Activities</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Knowledge Generation and Capacity Building</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Service Provision and Resource Distribution</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Policy-level Advocacy and Activism</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Structural change efforts</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Coalition-Building and Networking</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comprehensive Study of the Maldivian Civil Society

Tree map 4.3: Categorisation by Functions

- 19.6% Service Provision and Resource Distribution
- 6.8% Structural Change Efforts
- 40.2% Community-level Advocacy and Awareness-Raising
- 58.6% Development and Advancement
- 21.3% Knowledge Generation and Capacity Building
- 8.5% Policy-level Advocacy and Activism
- 21.3% Recreational and Associational Activities
- 3.2% Collaboration Building and Networking
4.4.2 Community-level Advocacy and Awareness-raising

The second most prominent set of functions was aimed at influencing and changing the attitudes, values and actions of the general community and its individual members. Organisations endeavoured to shape public opinion, sentiment and understanding on particular issues in various forms. Where they saw people deviating from acceptable or desirable norms, organisations intended to remedy or correct such behaviours (‘islaah kurun’). Organisations also attempted to increase or revive the consciousness, tendency or spirit (i.e. ‘roohu ithuru kurun, roohu alaakurun’) towards issues such as volunteerism, sociality and affability, or sports. Becoming more open-minded to difference or developing a humanitarian attitude was also mentioned by a few (‘thfaathuthah dhenegeathun’, ‘sikundi hulhuvaalun’). In addition to the more commonplace awareness-raising functions (‘heyluntherikurun’), organisations included a variety of strategies and activities that served this function. These strategies included attempting to inculcate (i.e. ‘asha genn’evun’) a positive emotion (oftentimes love or appreciation) for a particular area of work such as religion, the environment or education or towards some groups such as the elderly or children. Included in these were also attempts to inculcate a sense of conviction about the benefits of democracy or the tenets of Islam. In addition, such functions also included appealing to or pressuring communities and individuals (or particular groups amongst them such as youth) to protect their environment or to refrain from drug abuse (‘baaru’elhun’, ‘ilthimaaskurun’). One of the main functions that many organisations highlighted was that of deepening or strengthening connection and relations between members in the community (‘gulhun badhahi’kurun’, ‘ekuverikan badhahi’kurun’).

In order to bring about this change in attitudes, values and actions, organisations identified the importance of advising (e.g. ‘lafaa’dhinun’ or ‘naseyha’dhinun’), informing (i.e. ‘angai’ dhinun’) and instructing (‘irushaadhu’ dhinun’). Some organisations utilised strategies such as the production of leaflets, newsletters or magazines (‘leaflet adhi noosmajalla nerun’), or to provide opportunities for debate and discussion (‘mashvaraakurun adhi mashvaraakurumah furusathu hoadhun’), marking a certain event or a day in order to publicise a certain issue (‘munaasabathu faaahagakurun’). These set of activities related to this function was almost invariably directed at the public, communities, individuals or certain groups (such as youth).

4.4.3 Recreational Activities

Recreational activities were also a frequent function of organisations. Here the focus was on the members of the association itself and the purpose was to provide an enjoyable, stimulating and productive environment and to organise activities along these lines for or by the members. They were often colleagues (employees of an office, for example), like-minded individuals who share an interest (those who enjoy e-sporting or sugar-craft for instance), or friends who decided to get together and participate in other organised events such as sports competitions. The strategies utilised in relation to this function included to play in sports events and competitions or playing for enjoyment (‘mubaaraithakugai baiverivun’, ‘mubaaraathugai vaadhakurun’, ‘kulhivaru kulhun’). Musically minded groups were inclined to produce albums or to organise and play in music events (‘audioalbum video thayyaarukurun’, ‘showbaavvaa baiverivun’). Others were likely to organise a variety of events that matched with their own interests such as camps, dramas and plays, exchange programmes, and art or handicraft exhibitions. Sometimes, such organisations went beyond the merely recreational in order to engage with the community on social terms, but here too the focus was on the group working together and assisting or helping out on-going programmes or supporting a certain community activity often in a social-minded or voluntary spirit (‘hin’gaa faraaiiththakah e’heetherivun, eh’baarulun dhinun’). These included taking part in the programmes organised by the government or other organisations (‘hin’gaa programmethakugai baiverivun, adhi harakaai’therivun’).

4.4.4 Knowledge Generation and Capacity Building

A fourth set of functions was perhaps more technical in nature, concerned as it was with generating knowledge about a certain issue or building capacities and competencies amongst selected groups. The main strategies involved in generating knowledge were research and the collation of information and statistics (‘dhiraasaakurun’ ‘mauloomaath eh’kko belehettun’, ‘thaafaas hisaabkurumaai belun’) and the production, translation and distribution of resource materials (‘fothaai leafletaai majallaa shaai’u kurun’, ‘kamaa behey foiiytha tharjamaakurun’, ‘kamaa behey audioalbum video thayyaarukurun’). The function of building capacities and competencies amongst selected groups (i.e., ‘meehun binaa
kurun’, ‘fanneemehun kurieruvun’) involved a wider variety of strategies; namely, introducing, teaching and training the relevant subject matters (‘tha’aarafkurun’, ‘kiyavaai dhinun’, ‘dhaskh’o’dhinun’, ‘thamreenu kurun’), organising and conducting (‘raavaa hin’gun’, ‘beyvvun’) courses, training programmes, classes, seminars, lectures, conferences, and exhibitions, and the issuance of certificates (‘certificate dhookurun, behun’). Closely related to this are the activities of setting curriculum and standards of conduct (‘mugarraru hedhun’, ‘fannee ah’laagu kan’daelhun adhi harudhankaくるun’), ensuring standards of safety and protection (‘kanthathakugau himeney salaamatheekanthath kurun’) and working towards improving the standards of conduct and safety (‘fenvaru rangalhuku kurun’).

4.4.5 Service Provision and Resource Distribution

The provision of services and the distribution of resources was another area of function. It was concerned with closer engagement and interaction with selected individuals or groups (i.e. to serve them, ‘hiddhmai’kurun’), and purported to meet their needs, ease suffering and promote wellbeing (for example to help those without means of adequate income). The purpose was to assist or to provide assistance (‘e’heevun’, ‘e’heetherivun’, ‘e’heetherikan foarukohdhinun’) in any of the following ways: practically, technically, financially or materially, in private capacity or in spirit of religion (i.e. ‘ama-lee’, ‘fannee’, ‘maalee’, ‘faruheedheenu’, or ‘islaamee’). To this end, organisations aimed to organise and implement services and programmes (‘programmeraavaa hin’gun’).

The most straightforward strategy in this regard was the provision of treatment to people with illnesses or health problems (‘faruvaadhinun’) and attempts to reduce the adverse effects of illness on individuals and their families (‘ba-leeg nurangalhu asaruthah madhukurun’). These attempts involved helping people to directly obtain or acquire the necessary services, information and materials such as equipment or medicine (i.e. ‘saamaanu/mauloomaath/faruvaa hoadhaidhinun’). Organisations might also choose to help people find opportunities to acquire the relevant necessities if they were not in a position to help them directly (‘faruva/mauloomaath/libeynegothah hamajessun’ or ‘khooodumah furusathu hoadhaidhinun’). In more dire cases of illness, organisations might try to raise the funds or privately fund those who are seeking treatment to go abroad or seek specialist help within the Maldives (i.e. ‘amilla haradhugaaai raajjeyn beyrah foanuvun nuvatha male’ah foanuvun’). Service provision included the attempts to rehabilitate groups who were marginalised from society (for example, ‘mujuthamah an’buraa gena’un; ‘mujuthama aai ahu-luverikurun’) or to provide counselling to those in need (‘counselkurun’).

Resource distribution is evident in those instances where scholarships (to seek education elsewhere) are provided. It is, perhaps most clearly, evident in the distribution of funds and other resources for income generating activities or for other purposes.

4.4.6 Policy-level Advocacy and Activism

The sixth set of functions was to do with influencing and pressuring policy- and decision-makers, government authorities, and legislators to take action on a particular issue. Organisations also sought to acquire rights, entitlements and privileges (‘haguthah, inayal’ta hoadhun’) in those areas or for those groups which they saw fit. The strategies included providing opinion and expressing voice and sentiment (‘hiyaalu hushahelhun’, ‘adu thakaai shooruthah ivvaai’dhinun’) and by bringing issues to their attention (‘samaalukamah gena’un’). Organisations also sought to pressure those in authority and responsibility by attempting to make public or transparent issues of governance or decision-making (‘dhefuhfennah gotahah haamakurun’, ‘nimmaa nimmun nimmigoi haamakurun’). Organisations also tended to seek out public opinion (i.e. ‘hiyaalu hurineygoi hoadhun’) where relevant, voice desire for reform (‘islaahaa govun’) and to take steps to remedy or appropriately correct the relevant policies and regulations (‘ekasheegenvaa fiyavalhun elhun’).

4.4.7 Structural Change Efforts

This function, one of the less popular, was concerned with effecting structural change with regard to a certain issue or relating to development or the empowerment of a certain place or group. One purpose was to seek to establish mechanisms, facilities or systems or an enabling environment (‘inthizaam nuvatha nizaam nuvatha vaki maahaule’ n- nuvatha ‘vaaselaalatha gaa’imikurun’) in order to ensure the development of a place, an area of work or a group. Another was to seek to remove obstacles or reduce hindrances (‘huras naththaalun’, ‘dhathi filuvaaidhinumah masaalakaikurun’) and to resolve difficulties problems (‘dhathitha nuvatha massala thah hallu kurun’) in relation to the issue, place or
group. Organisations described their work as attempting to join opportunities and services to the relevant groups (i.e. ‘furusaththakaai hidhdhmai beyunvaa faraathaai gulhuvun’) and to create the opportunities and possibilities for these groups to go forward or the area of work to advance (‘magufahi kohdhinun’, ‘magu thanavaskohdhinun’).

4.4.8 Coalition-building or Networking

The least common function was that of coalition-building and networking, i.e. to have strong alliances and effective coordination amongst the sector organisations to address a particular issue. While many organisations were willing to work with others on delivering and assisting in the delivery of services or in the organisation and implementation of events, few noted their work to be that of building alliances, networking and coalition-building (i.e. ‘e’hen jamaaathaai gulhi, eh’baarulun’).

4.5 Recommendations for categorisation of CSOs

- The analysis of the data and a review of international literature indicated that terminology relating to the name of the organization was not a meaningful way of categorizing CSOs.

- This study recommends against having strict demarcations and categories into which CSOs are forced to fit themselves. CSOs must be allowed to choose themselves the different categories to which they belong and that best represent their work and objectives, whether they want to belong to multiple areas of work, functions or target a number of groups. This will encourage the sector to grow and to shape as needed by the changing context and priorities.

- Instead the following dimensions are recommended:
  - a) area of work, b) target group, and c) function. This will categorise the sector for effective referencing and targeting but not for legal purposes. In addition, a fourth dimension of d) geographical coverage and location should be included in classifying the sector.

- In addition, we recommend that:
  - the 25 main areas of work identified in this study are used by CSOs to indicate those which are part of their own objectives
  - CSOs familiarize themselves with the sub-areas of work: and with any national or local laws and regulations that pertain to their particular area of work.
  - the 23 target groups are used by CSOs to indicate towards whom their work is directed.
  - work be done to encourage more (supportive, rehabilitative and protective) services for those in need especially in the islands.
  - CSOs familiarize themselves with any national or local laws and regulations that pertain to their particular target groups (such as children, or people with drug abuse problems).
  - the 8 function categories are used for categorization purposes (and expanded along the lines suggested in the following chapter).

- Categorisation of the civil society sector should be made for the purposes of helping to identify organisations and the work they do, to better direct resources and capacity building efforts, and to improve coordination and networking efforts, rather than for the purpose of regulating the sector. Hence,
  - it is recommended that an electronic database be maintained by the MOHA to direct its capacity building efforts,
- the suggested electronic key-tags are: a) area of work; b) target group; c) function, and d) geographical location or coverage.

- these four dimensions (along with their explanations) could be made available via the web. The application form should include the pre-determined lists so that CSOs can indicate all relevant items that apply to them.

- the database could be updated every six months for public use and consumption.

This recommended approach has the following advantages and uses:

- It will help promote networking and debate amongst different CSOs, as well as help direct capacity building efforts.

- An analysis of the information in the database would help MOHA to identify under-active or emerging areas of work in the Maldives, and direct the necessary support and funding to these.

- Members of the public or donors who are interested in knowing CSOs in their particular geographical location who specialize in a particular area of work or who focus on a particular target group or provide a particular function could use the database to locate these CSOs.

- This system would also help with formulating and ensuring adherence to specifications of conduct and competence. For instance, if an organisation works with vulnerable groups, they might be subject to particular codes of ethics to ensure protection and safety of these groups. Similarly those who engage in service provision and resource distribution might be required to show that they adhere to certain principles such as refraining from discrimination or conditionality of aid.

- These standards of conduct and competence in relation to various functions could be made available to the public so that they know what to expect from organisations and could raise issues or complaints when they see organisations fall short or fail to deliver on these standards.
5. Operations of CSOs in the Maldives

This chapter presents the operations of CSOs in the Maldives, and aims to provide a succinct picture of how they are formed, how they function, the general constraints they experience and their sources of funding. It is intended to provide a close-up view of the organisations in contrast to the broad-scope view of the sector in the last chapter. Greater details are provided about activities conducted by organisations, their experience of forming partnerships, and the challenges of organising and delivering these activities. The data is drawn primarily from the in-depth interviews of the 70 organisations selected from the four atolls.55

5.1 Organizational Structure

5.1.1 An Apex Executive Committee

Executive Positions: The typical structure for CSOs was that of an entity comprising an apex Executive Committee (i.e. ‘hingaa committee’), responsible for the direction, management, representation, planning, organising, coordinating and conducting of all activities related to the CSO. The Executive Committee generally comprised of 8-15 members, with the range including a minimum of 3 members and a maximum of 26 members. See table below. The Committee was headed by a President (‘raees’), with one or two Vice Presidents (‘naib raees’) or Deputies, and a number of Directors or Officers, each of whom were assigned one area of work, such as human rights, social development, sports development, cultural affairs, educational affairs or administrative functions such as finance, administration or media. An Executive Director or CEO was, in some cases, appointed to oversee the work of the Directors and to operationalize the vision and decisions of either the overall Committee or, in a few instances, those of the President in particular. In some CSOs, the founders were in charge at the time of the interview either because they were still in the early processes of forming, they did not intend to grow any larger, or because they were undergoing a re-structuring process.

Except for one or two instances, the positions for the Executive Committee were elected through a voting process by the general members of the organisation or by the other members of the committee. This took place – for the most part – at the Annual General Meeting. The posts were held for 1-3 years before re-election was held.

It was noted with some frustration by a few CSO respondents that some of their key Executive Committee members were involved in more than one organisation at a time. They alleged that this had led to their organisation being less active than possible, and also that these members directed resources to their favoured organisation. However, it was possible to interview some CSO respondents who were associated with more than one CSO; and their view on this issue was that they had taken up positions in another CSO because the other one was inactive. It was also likely that well-respected and influential persons on the Committee tended to get elected into Executive positions by the general membership as a form of showing respect and trust. This meant that they were overstretched and could not give the necessary support to all the organisations.

55 A cautionary note must be added here. Since only 18 of the 449 registered CSOs were selected from Male’ for this study, it would be important to keep in mind that the sample is unlikely to be representative of the majority of CSOs from Male’; the figure represents only 4% of all CSOs registered in Male’. For comparison, consider that 26% of registered CSOs from Haa Ail, 62.5% of those from Faafu, 43.8% of those from Gaafu Dhaal, 29.7% of those from Kaafu Atolls were included in the study.
### Table 5.1: Size of Executive Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of Executive Committee members</th>
<th>No of NGOs (N=70)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 5 members</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10 members</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 15 members</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20 members</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 25 members</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 – 30 members</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Committee Meetings:** As the table below shows, the Executive committees had met a considerable number of times in the last 6 months. Those CSOs currently busy with on-going activities met once a week or fortnight to work out the progress of their activities; others had met at least once a month. However, it was stated that these meetings did not include all members of the Executive Committee, and that quorum (as specified in the regulations) was rarely reached. While this did not impede day-to-day activities, it had a negative effect on management and governance issues as it was difficult to amend the governing regulations in order to make the CSO more effective.

The difficulty in reaching quorum was because members were absent from the island as they were in Male’ for work, study, or business; and so missed meetings. One CSO was unable to state whether the Committee had met or not because all the key members were in Male’. Having members in Male’ was vital for obtaining resources and information for the CSOs (see section on Human Resources and Competence below), however it did have a negative effect on aspects of management and governance as described here. In fact supporting this statement by the respondents, the research team conducted a considerable number of the interviews for island-based CSOs in Male’ because the Executive committee members were based there.

### Table 5.2: No of executive committee meetings held by CSOs last six months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of meetings held last six months</th>
<th>TOTAL (N=70)</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Male’ (N=18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No meetings held</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 5 meetings</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10 meetings</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 15 meetings</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20 meetings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 25 meetings</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 25 meetings</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5.1.2 A Note on Boards of Governance

There were only five CSOs amongst the respondents who had a separate board (sometimes made up of the general membership), to whom the Executive Committee members were accountable for their overall management of the CSO (4 of these 5 were in Male’). This meant that the Executive Committee was generally only answerable to themselves on a regular basis – and that there was no oversight of the management of the organisation.

Organisational governance and internal accountability have been recent topics of focus for non-profit organisations. The recommended practice has been to separate the functions of governance and management; i.e., to have a separate (non-paid independent) board of governance or trustees, whose functions are to ‘set policy, exercise oversight, and

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provide strategic direction in the areas of mission, values, resources and outreach.\textsuperscript{57} It is said that separating these two areas minimises conflicts of interest, and ensures that the CSO functions with the interests of the public foremost, and not those of the management or staff. Transparency International has highlighted some of the conflict of interest issues in governance of NGOs in Bangladesh, including issues such as not having transparent financial accounting procedures, having relatives on the board, or lacking a conflict of interest policy.\textsuperscript{58}

### 5.1.3 General Membership

**Size:** The size of general membership in CSOs varied enormously; the range was from 6 to 600. General membership comprised of members of the public who expressed an interest in and had applied to become a member of that CSO. The procedure seemed fairly straightforward with most CSOs indicating that they had a simple registration form to be filled out. Becoming a member made one eligible for access to the various activities and opportunities organised by the CSO. Some CSOs especially those in islands with a small population simply stated that everybody on that island was considered members.

**Fees and categories of membership:** A little more than a third charged an annual fee for membership. These will be examined in greater detail in the section on Financing and Sources of Funding below. A few CSOs had various categories of membership; these included Gold members, Silver members, Institutional members, Associate members, Honorary members, Resource members, General or Ordinary members, etc. Those who had this system charged different fees for different categories, but criteria for how these categories were differentiated were not discussed in this study.

**Role of membership:** The general membership was often consulted in the Annual General Meetings, and was involved in the election of Executive Committee members, but many CSO respondents expressed an opinion that the membership should be better included in or privy to the decision-making process of the Executive Committees. Some CSOs noted that the greater proportion of their membership was relatively inactive, with all coordination and other responsibilities for CSO activities undertaken by the Executive Committee. However, participation in such activities, when they took place, was high.

**Table 5.3: Size of general membership of CSOs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of members</th>
<th>No of NGOS (N=70)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 15 members</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 30 members</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 45 members</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 – 60 members</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 – 75 members</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76 – 90 members</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 – 100 members</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;101 and &gt;200 members</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;201 members</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.1.4 Membership Criteria: Openness and Inclusivity

The criteria for membership were characterised by a spirit of openness and inclusivity in general, with most stating that anybody could apply. Some stated that all Maldivians above the age of 18 years could apply for membership. Two organisations specified that only youth (i.e. those below 30) or women could join. Most had never excluded or rejected an application for membership (only 3 CSOs had had to reject applicants or dismissed members).


Depending on their mandate and preference, a few organisations (i.e. not more than 12%) had further stipulations; namely that members should not have had records of a criminal offence. In organisations that worked on prevention of abuse and violence, it was specified that members should not have been accused or convicted of sexual or domestic violence. However one of these organisations also further stated that if members understood the person to be remorseful and sought to rectify the past wrongs, membership would be cautiously considered. Five organisations specified criteria in relation to drug use, stating that members could not be active users, or generally suspected to be users.59

### 5.2 Forming Organizations

#### Table 5.4: How organisations were formed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth with a mission</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to gaps</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External formation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5.2.1 Young Like-Minded People with a Mission

Many organisations were initiated by a group of young people keen to develop and advance their island or to engage other young people in exciting and productive activities. The reasons given were the lack of development in their community, reducing potential adverse impacts of unoccupied and ‘loitering’ youth such as an increase in drug use and criminal activities and providing space and opportunities to allow the talents and skills of young people to flourish, especially in relation to sports. In some cases, these three reasons were inter-related; low development of the islands was associated with increased levels of frustration amongst youth and it was stated that such frustration was likely to manifest in anti-social or apathetic behaviours.

In a few cases, the founding youth had in fact envisioned their associations whilst still in school. Some had particular ideas about how to operate their organisation, for example, they were aware of the prevailing view of CSOs as corrupt and they wanted to challenge this idea by running one transparently and in line with community aspirations. Others were mindful of the reputation of CSOs as politically biased; their ambition for their organisation is to demonstrate independence in addition to effectively reaching its goals. In other cases where registered organisations had long become inactive, a group of current generation youth revived these, by taking over the name and functioning of such defunct organisations.

#### 5.2.2 Responding to Perceived Gaps in the Sector

Some organisations had formed in response to the perceived gaps in this sector. They mentioned that there was little done in an area which they saw as important for the social benefit or particular area of interest, and the organisation was formed to respond to this. In the islands, this was particularly expressed as dissatisfaction with the high focus on sports, especially when little was done to promote public understanding or addressing pressing social issues, economic development or engage youth more effectively. These CSOs felt that they had something concrete to offer the community and the sector. Other organisations were formed by individuals who wanted to do something quite concrete for the community (such as building a mosque or promoting the fisheries sector) and required a more formal structure in order to carry this out. It was mentioned that forming CSOs was often encouraged because it was seen as one way of engaging in the above activities in a responsible and effective manner.

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59 Discrimination against former users reflect one of the issues identified by some CSOs who work with recovering and former drug addicts, who note that reintegrating back into society is problematic.
5.2.3 Formed by External Figures

Two of the CSO respondents noted that their organisation had been formed by an external figure, and then handed over to them. In one case, this was stated to be a politically influential figure and that the CSO continued to receive funds from that source. The organisation was keen to seek other funding sources but stated this to be a difficult task to achieve. A second case involved a women’s organisation which had been formed by a locally well-respected figure and then handed over to a group of women to run; however there had been some difficulties in attracting funds and therefore the CSO was relatively inactive. These issues highlight some of the difficulties encountered in third-party formations of CSOs.

Despite the low figure of this type of formation, it has been occasionally alleged that CSOs were regularly formed by political groups, especially just before elections in order to disperse resources but also to acquire equipment and vehicles that could be used for election or personal basis. This was mentioned by some CSOs as a criticism that they have sometimes encountered; and some also levelled such criticisms against some other CSOs (see chapter on Ethics, Credibility and Public Image for a more detailed discussion of this issue).

While such practices do appear to be part of the sector (and the proportion of these are likely to be under-reported by CSOs), there are definite examples of CSOs who were formed on their own initiative and with sincere intentions to serve their community. It is important to bear in mind that such groups are common and may in fact form the greater part of the civil society sector.

5.3 Areas of Work, Target Groups and Functions

The statements regarding objectives and the descriptions of their activities were used to understand whether the categories supplied in the earlier chapter were relevant to the final selection of CSOs included in the study.
5.3.1 Areas of Work

Table 5.5: Areas of work of the surveyed CSOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Work</th>
<th>CSOs selected for in-depth survey from given population</th>
<th>All registered CSOs in selected atolls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL (N=70) %</td>
<td>TOTAL (N=587) %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sports, Music, Arts, Leisure</td>
<td>25 36.2</td>
<td>317 54.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Social Development, Volunteerism, Service and Peacebuilding</td>
<td>17 24.6</td>
<td>265 45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Economic and Business Development; Employment and Income Generation</td>
<td>8 11.6</td>
<td>151 25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Education, Training and Learning Improvement</td>
<td>11 15.9</td>
<td>132 22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (Sustainable) Development</td>
<td>17 24.6</td>
<td>127 21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups</td>
<td>9 13.0</td>
<td>127 21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Environment Protection, Climate Change Response, and Wildlife Protection</td>
<td>10 14.5</td>
<td>114 19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Healthcare and Healthy Lifestyle Promotion</td>
<td>4 5.8</td>
<td>114 19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Profession, Sector and Industry Promotion</td>
<td>6 8.7</td>
<td>109 18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Building People’s Skills, Character, Capacity and Conduct</td>
<td>6 8.7</td>
<td>92 15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Religiosity and Religion</td>
<td>5 7.2</td>
<td>87 14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Maldivian Culture, Heritage and History</td>
<td>5 7.2</td>
<td>77 13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Civic Engagement and Participation</td>
<td>3 4.3</td>
<td>63 10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Prevention of Drug Use and Drug Trade</td>
<td>6 8.7</td>
<td>52 8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Welfare to Deprived Groups or Individuals</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
<td>47 8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Human Rights</td>
<td>6 8.7</td>
<td>41 7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Equity, Social justice and Inclusion</td>
<td>3 4.3</td>
<td>35 6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Good Governance and Democracy</td>
<td>8 11.6</td>
<td>34 5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Safe and Protective Environment</td>
<td>5 7.2</td>
<td>31 5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Infrastructure development</td>
<td>3 4.3</td>
<td>30 5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Disaster and Emergencies Response</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
<td>16 2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Media and Journalism</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
<td>9 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Bilateral and Regional Relations*</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>8 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Science and Technology</td>
<td>2 2.9</td>
<td>7 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Wellbeing and Quality of Life Improvement</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
<td>6 1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* CSOs from this group were not included in this study, which accounts for the lack of representation here.

No revisions to ‘areas of work’ category: The table above shows that, with the exception of CSOs engaged in bilateral and regional relations which were not contacted at all, the remaining 24 of the 25 ‘areas of work’ were represented amongst the 70 CSOs finally included in the survey. A note of caution should be sounded here against concluding that the distribution of frequencies of ‘areas of work’ for the CSOs in the survey shown above represents the actual distribution of areas of work in the sector.60 The analysis conducted on the registration documents is a more reliable representation, given the size of the sample. What can be safely concluded here is that the noted ‘areas of work’ are indeed sufficient for the purposes of categorisations, and do not require any revision. No ‘areas of work’ outside the ones previously identified were noted from the respondents’ descriptions of their activities and objectives.

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60 For such an assertion, the sample size would have to have been at least 187, according to Bartlett et al (2001) or close to 240, according to Zemke & Kramlinger (1982). Either size would have meant doubling or even tripling the resources and time taken for this study. The sample selected for the in-depth survey was intended to provide a closer view of the CSOs. The analysis of the registration documents is a more reliable one to provide an overview of the sector.
5.3.2 Target Groups

Table 5.6: Target groups of the surveyed CSOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>CSOs selected for in-depth survey from given population</th>
<th>All registered CSOs in selected atolls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL (N=70)</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Potentially skilled sportspersons*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Youth</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Citizens of a specific island or atoll</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 All citizens/ General population</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 People in difficult circumstances; Poor people; Widows and orphans; Marginalised people; Unemployed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Relevant offices and authorities; Policymakers and decision-makers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Women</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Children; Schoolchildren</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Members of organisation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 People with a long-term or chronic illness</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Workers and employees</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Adults and children with a disability and their families</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Elderly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Adult and child survivors of violence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Parents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Musicians and artists</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Journalists</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Other organisations</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Former drug users and recovering addicts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Teachers and educators</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Prisoners, former prisoners and detainees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Volunteers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Persons from a particular sector &amp; industry (e.g. fishermen)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Not specified</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* people who show talents at sports or games

Two additional target groups identified: The target groups covered in the previous chapter were all noted in this analysis as well, with the two new target groups specified; i.e. volunteers and persons from a particular sector or industry. It is suggested that the list of target groups are revised to include these two groups as well.

5.3.3 Functions

The functions were determined from the list of activities which the organisations mentioned as having been undertaken by them over the course of the last year. As expected, development and advancement was not encountered as a particular activity, although many of these activities were carried out with the intention of advancing or developing a certain group of people or the state of things, places and services.

In the analysis, the eight functions noted in the previous chapter were expanded, by separating out ‘knowledge production and capacity building’ as well as ‘service provision and resource distribution’. The list below includes 9 functions,
with the exclusion of ‘development and advancement’ as a function. It is suggested that the functions’ categories be revised to comprise of ten items – the expanded list of nine given below plus the overarching category of ‘development and advancement’.

It was also possible to develop some insight into the level of activity demonstrated by CSOs over the past six months. A total of 182 activities were carried out by the 70 CSOs selected for this study. These included 27 community-level awareness raising events in topics ranging from heart disease to democracy, 18 sports competitions, 5 Quran recitation competitions, 21 training programmes in a range of skills from youth leadership to open-source software technologies, establishing 3 pre-schools, and building extended networks on issues such as drug prevention or democracy in different parts of the country. Table 5.7 shows a quick summation of these categorised by their functions.

### Table 5.7: Summation of CSOs categorized by their functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=26)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=24)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=60)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=13)</th>
<th>Male’ (N=69)</th>
<th>Total (N=182)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community-level advocacy and awareness-raising activities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational and associational activities</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge production activities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building activities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service provision efforts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource distribution efforts</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy level advocacy and activism efforts</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural change efforts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition-building and networking efforts</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSOs reporting no activities for last six months</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4 Designing and Implementing Activities

The organisation and implementation of the planned activities required persistence and innovation on the part of the CSOs, especially given their limited human and material resource (see sections below on human resources, competence and financing). Yet, as Table 5.7 shows, over 182 activities were conducted over the past six months, all aiming to benefit the public in some manner. How did organisations decide on these activities, what challenges did they face in delivering them, and what are the implications for the long-term development of the sector with regard to the project management aspects noted here? This section briefly explores and reflects on these questions.

5.4.1 Needs Assessment, Strategy Development and Intervention Design

Informal needs assessment methods and simple strategy development: The responses to questions regarding needs assessment and strategy design indicated that most of the organisations identified the need for particular activities through informal means – based on their own observations, community perceptions or in response to community support – rather than on formal and systematic means of assessment (e.g. needs assessments, research, etc.), and designed them accordingly. Not surprisingly, interventions were designed on a face-value basis, with few attempts to undertake a broader context or problem analysis. Such an analysis would have helped CSOs to better understand what factors contribute to or cause the needs or problems they identified. The lack of a needs assessment for recreational activities might not be so problematic, but for those who were interested in social or economic issues, such information would be a crucial component of strategy development and intervention design.

Studies have indicated that situations are oftentimes far more complex than they seemingly appear, and a systematic analysis of the problem situation and the context in which they are embedded would ensure that the right issues are being targeted. Without this, there is a real danger that straightforward responses may do little or not enough to address the identified needs or issues. For example, it has been commonly assumed that people engaged in behaviours that are high-risk for HIV infection because they lacked knowledge about the disease and its means of transmission,
or that low employment rates amongst youth stemmed from an ‘unproductive’ mind-set amongst youth. Equally, low income generation was associated with lack of skills in income generation or livelihood activities such as sewing or lacquer work or farming techniques.

Yet studies looking at employment for example have identified a range of issues from the legislative framework, as well as educational and economic policy issues which have contributed to low employment rates amongst youth.61 A simple awareness-raising session on work or a capacity building programme to develop skills amongst youth is not likely to address the complex issues surrounding this complicated topic. CSOs need to reflect on exactly how their activity will contribute to the issues, and to be able to gauge how effective a particular cause of action is likely to be. This brings us to the second closely related point in relation to needs assessment and strategy development.

Lack of access to information, data and research and insufficient subject knowledge: Most CSOs lack access to information, data and research on the issues and they possess insufficient subject knowledge in relation to the problem they are seeking to address. Partly, the problem lies in that even existing studies which explore these issues are not easily accessible or available to CSOs who need them to design and plan their activities. Reports produced are often in English, or many CSOs are unaware of their existence at all. This problem was also brought up during this study as well, with some CSOs remarking that they are aware that studies of a similar nature are done frequently but that they are unlikely to ever see the outcome even if they participate or otherwise contribute to these studies.62 Many expressed a wish to know the outcomes of this study, both in terms of the results and impact on policy reform.

CSOs stated that information was also not easily available meaning that it was difficult to get statistics on relevant subjects from the police office, gender ministry or the justice juvenile unit. National statistics on health, social and legal matters should be easily available to the public and themselves, according to the opinion of these respondents. Ensuring availability of empirical information will be a crucial aspect of developing organisations and ensuring effective design of activities. Research has been strictly regulated in the Maldives; data collection by CSOs for their identified purposes is difficult and often discouraged. At the same time, it is important that any effort to encourage research is accompanied by capacity building on research methods and ethics to ensure quality and to prevent any inadvertent or intentional harm to participants. An alternative would be to make existing and future studies (carried out together with skilled researchers) more widely available and accessible to interested CSOs, such as through investment in translations or online and multi-media materials.

CSOs would also benefit from having access to subject-related knowledge (see section on human resources and competence below). A CSO that would like to prevent drug use in their community would need to know something specific about the nature of different drugs, the risk factors for drug abuse, or about the addictive qualities of particular drugs. This would help them understand and analyse the data they receive better, be able to reflect on the particularities of their own context in relation to others, and to devise a suitable programme of action.

5.4.2 Management and Planning

Table 5.8: No of CSOs preparing annual programmes, budgets and conducting annual audits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepared annual programme</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared annual budget</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared activity-based budget</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducted annual audit</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 5.8, half of all the surveyed CSOs are in the habit of preparing an annual programme of activities which they intend to carry out that year. The rest stated that they decided on an activity based on their on-going observations as well as the suggestions of the President. However in all cases, they stated that the final decisions on what should be carried out that year were made by the Executive Committee through discussion and approved by the

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61 HRCM (2009); FJS (2011)
62 Such extractive research methods have often been criticised from a social action research point of view, which would seek that mutual benefits are achieved for both researcher and the researched, from the study (see for example, Smith, L.T. (1999) Decolonising methodologies. New Zealand: Zed Books, Ltd and University of Ontago Press.

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majority. In a fewer number of CSOs, the general membership was also informed of the intended programme and their approval and opinion were sought as well. However, only a little more than a quarter was in the habit of preparing a budget, even an activity-based one if not an annual one. A third of CSOs stated that they carried out an audit, although in almost all the island-based CSOs, this was said to be an internal audit, and only 3 CSOs in Male’ stated that they did an external audit.

5.4.3 Activity Implementation and Delivery

When it came to actually delivering the activities which they had decided to undertake, CSOs seemed very well-organised, meeting sometimes several times a week in order to design and execute the activity in question. Successfully organising the sports and music events required organisations to supply or acquire all necessary items, to identify people who would participate in these activities, support their training and preparation if necessary, to seek the services of a referee and judges for the event, and to manage the administrative responsibilities related to the coordination and organisation of these events. In preparing for these activities, organisations worked together with interested members of the public, relevant ministries (such as Ministry for Sports), officials from the island and atoll offices, and other relevant CSOs (Football Association of Maldives, the Volleyball Association) from Male’ who could provide specialist input. Workshops, courses and training programmes, on the other hand, were comparatively more difficult to organise and implement. These required selecting suitable people for the programme (most were aimed for around 25-70 participants), linking up with relevant institutions in nearby atolls or from Male’ who would be able to provide specialist input, and arranging travel for and hosting the resource persons for the duration of the course, supplying the materials for the programme (stationary, hand-outs, etc.), and in some cases organising the certification of the course. The duration of the programme (a one-day workshop in contrast to a 3-month certified course) dictated the level of involvement and costs for an organisation. In conducting these activities, organisations collaborated with a wide range of institutions, including Ministries (e.g. Education, Sports, Health, etc.), companies such as Dhiraagu, academic institutions such as the Maldives Polytechnic or Arabiyya School, independent institutions (for example, the Human Rights Commission and the HD. Hanimaadhoo Hydroponics Systems), other CSOs (e.g. Journey, MDN, etc.) and international and bilateral agencies such as UNDP, UNODC and AUSAID.

Service provision was one of the least undertaken and most complicated ventures. It required that skilled personnel were based in the island or otherwise regularly available and accessible. CSOs tended to try and build capacities of selected people on islands, e.g. human rights defenders or counsellors, but one of the many challenges was retaining trained people on islands and ensuring their availability for service provision. This was difficult without necessary structural support in the island (for example, a safe inexpensive place to deliver services from, supervisory and technical support, etc.).

5.4.4 Some Notes on Impact and Sustainability

Most recreational and associational events brought large numbers of people from the community together, from 100-200 people for some sports or Quran recitation competitions to over 500-600 people for fairs and other such events. As anticipated, the events were recognized to have brought the community together, increased positive social relations, and provided a point of focus for the community for some period of time both before and after these events. These events were comparatively easy to find funds for, as sponsors and donors were often willing to provide support in the form of prizes, refreshments, or travel on behalf of the participants.

Although not investigated in great detail here, it was noted that the nature of the capacity building events were mostly one-off events introducing a topic to a group of people, but often not going in-depth or dealing with the associated aspects of a capacity building programme. Participants were likely to get a teaser or introduction into a particular topic rather than sustained capacity building or follow-up support. In this respect, the chances of developing substantial or real competencies in these issues may be small – and this could be a source of frustration for some people. Regular and quality inputs seemed an impossible, although necessary, goal. Because capacity building efforts were often short in duration, and they did not have access to regular supervisory or technical support, service providers might not always be as effective in addressing problems or resolving issues as they wanted to be; this reduced both their credibility in the eyes of the community as well as their own sense of job satisfaction – both of these affected the sustainability of

63 This is in line with recommended practices for NGO management (see Wyatt, M. 2004)
such programmes.

In addition, these capacity building were not always linked to efforts to strengthen service provision. For example, helping people to identify child sexual abuse did not link up to services to help children who had been abused. Training on business skills did not always translate into better marketing opportunities at island level or to building knowledge of global market forces and their impact on local businesses, for instance. Capacity building of this type helped people understand issues and problems but did not always aim to help them gain ground in addressing them. In addition, two difficulties were noted especially with regard to capacity building efforts; finding venues for such programmes was difficult – if space was found, it sometimes lacked the necessary furniture. Persuading resource persons to travel to and reside in these islands for the duration of the course was also difficult.

With regard to service provision, the main noted challenge was sustaining services on islands for longer periods of time. Trained persons were also often the better educated and more mobile section of the island population, which meant that those whose capacities were built were more likely to leave the island in search of better prospects. Moreover, it was also the case that working on socially sensitive issues with particular groups caused some difficulties, especially on small island populations. Some organisations mentioned that they found it difficult to initially gain trust amongst the target groups and their family members to provide the services, and even when they did, community perception of these groups and the organisations that provided services for these groups was often stigmatising. It was important to remain stalwart in the face of such disapproval and continue service provision without getting discouraged.

5.4.5 Resource Acquisition

Finding sponsorship for these types of events was not particularly difficult. However, some mentioned that sponsors who promised funds did not come through at the last moment and members were required to make additional (and rather substantial) contributions of their own in order to implement the proposed activity. In general, events tended to cost less than others (in terms of time and effort), especially if resource persons could be found on the island (e.g. someone with refereeing skills) and persuaded to volunteer their services. A few organisations noted that their islands lacked public spaces for hosting such events. Their efforts were constrained by sports venues not meeting the requirements of particular sports (for example, the football pitch not being big enough).

Attempts to address issues of infrastructure and more structural issues such as the one described above were often quite challenging. Nonetheless, where there was an identified need, organisations tended to take on the challenge. For example, while general awareness-raising could be done to prevent fly-tipping and littering, there remained the very real issue of what to do with collected refuse. Finding a means of environment-friendly and sustainable garbage disposal required inputs technically and materially. These organisations mentioned that it was difficult to access and gain the cooperation of relevant government agencies and departments with regard to this issue. Also those who were promoting these structures were not always technically skilled to deal with the demands and responsibilities associated with such structural development – for example, lacking adequate resources and skills to continue providing teaching services once a pre-school had been established.

These are just some of the issues highlighted by the CSOs in discussing the delivery of activities, however the space to explore this issue in-depth was limited in the study, and more research and discussion is recommended in order to come to more conclusive findings.

5.5 Human Resources and Competence

5.5.1 Volunteers, Employees and Members

Table 5.9 indicates that only 0.7% of those involved in the sector through the CSOs involved in this study were paid for their services. The remainder of those who provided their time and efforts did so on a voluntary basis, either because they were an executive member, founder or general member, or because they volunteered their services anyway. Some of them, especially in Male', were employed elsewhere and worked for the CSO in their free time in the afternoons, evenings and weekends. Others devoted time to the CSO activities when they could and based on their interest. Not all
general members were active, according to the respondents. Usually only 10-15 people were active on a regular basis in organising and coordinating activities.

Perhaps because work was done on a primarily voluntary basis, there appeared to be very few formal contracts or agreements between the organisation and its members with regard to the work that was being assigned or undertaken. According to the CSOs, this sometimes led to disappointment, as people who agreed to take on certain responsibilities subsequently defaulted and this was one of the reasons cited as to why activities did not always quite go according to plan. In addition, as family and work responsibilities piled up, time that could be devoted for voluntary work on a regular basis was also likely to be affected. Nonetheless, most reported they were happy with the involvement and support from their members for their activities.

Table 5.9: Volunteerism, employment and membership of CSOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Member</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10 CSOs)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10 CSOs)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21 CSOs)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11 CSOs)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18 CSOs)</th>
<th>TOTAL (N=70 CSOs)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Members/ Founders</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members TOTAL</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>1345</td>
<td>5140</td>
<td>87.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee paying</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non fee paying</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1825</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>1302*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Volunteers TOTAL</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees TOTAL</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL number of persons stated to be in sector through the surveyed CSOs</td>
<td>1,094</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>2,121</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>1,581</td>
<td>5,910</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* one CSO reported 600 members (many members had signed up because it was associated with seriously ill children)

5.5.2 Capacities and Competencies of Human Resources

Table 5.10: Capacities and Competencies of Human Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1 to 5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6 to 10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Level passes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A’level passes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree and higher</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the respondents, most of their members had secondary school education (Gr. 6 to 10) or O’ Level passes (see Table 5.10). Only 10 CSOs had members who had mostly A’level passes or tertiary education. Additionally, given that most CSOs in the islands started out as a group of young people with a shared mission, it is unlikely that they would have yet had the chance to obtain much work experience. As a result, CSOs members were unlikely to have capacities of institutional development and management or understanding issues of institutional governance. This may be the reason why NGO management and organisational development was stated to be one of the key areas of additional training required (see Table 5.15).

Most specialist input related to their activities came from outside the CSO, as most were also inexperienced in subject-related knowledge. In a few cases, they noted that they had some regular access to a person with specialist skills. This
was often facilitated for them through their members who were already in Male’. Respondents also stated that they sought information from the internet. In this context, it is unlikely that CSO members would have the opportunities to discuss or critically reflect on broader concepts, theories, knowledge and skills related to development in general or their specific areas of work. This means that capacity building within the CSOs is an area of urgent attention to support them in achieving their goals.

### Table 5.11: Use of specialists in CSOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Resource</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-house discussion / no need for specialist support</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house expertise</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External expert input</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet/ television</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island office / service providers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other NGOs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone calls/fax</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When organisations required subject-related specialist input, they tended to directly contact relevant people in the related field; these included lawyers, ministry officials, sports association officials, teachers and other organisations. Table 5.11 indicates that the most common form is irregular specialist input. Partly, this stemmed from CSOs receiving subject-related training on a project-specific topic, for example training in relation to a research survey that they were contracted to do, or farming training in relation to an income generation project they were expected to deliver. These were one-off affairs very similar to the types that they themselves were engaged or able to deliver to those who participated in their CSO activities. Expectedly, regular access to specialist input was only available in Male’.

Table 5.12 describes another important aspect of competency with regard to CSOs, i.e. technical competence with regard to accounting and book-keeping. The situation is less than ideal, to state the least. A few of the CSOs that stated there was someone with experience in accounting in the organisation often described the persons as having an O’Level pass in accounting. Others simply stated that the person had not received any formal training but that they had some experience of book-keeping, although they were unable to specify the nature of such experience.

### Table 5.12: Access to accounting/ bookkeeping expertise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Availability of accounting expertise</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have someone with accounting experience</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t have someone with accounting experience</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>61.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5.5.3 Access to Training

In response to questions about training, more than two-thirds of CSOs stated that they had had access to some form of training in the last year (see Table 5.13). Institution-related training focused primarily on NGO and project management. These programmes were organised by bodies such as MOHA and the Youth Ministry. Subject related training (for example, stress management or counselling training for a CSO delivering support to people in distress or software training for an IT capacity building CSO) were more often offered by other CSOs or by donor agencies.
Table 5.13: Type and no: of trainings received in the last 12 months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Training</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NGO and project management</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject related</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No training in last year</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many CSOs (particularly those in the islands) stated that specialist input for the activities was difficult to access. See Table 5.14. They did not know whom to contact for help, and sometimes those whom they contacted did not have the time or resources to spare in order to help them with their activity. Some specialists were willing to discuss matters over the phone but few would travel to an island in order to help a CSO to develop competencies and capacities in a particular area. Recent efforts by some CSOs to establish networks and an on-going relationship were mentioned positively. Because access to specialist inputs and training was difficult, some organisations had contacts in Male’ because this helped them to build the necessary supportive networks which could direct resources and input to their organisation.

Table 5.14: Accessibility of specialists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessibility to specialists</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, easy to access specialists</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, difficult to access specialists</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difficulties with accessing specialist inputs meant that some organisations did their own research through consultations with organisations from other islands and atolls and through the internet. The programmes were often one-off short-term events with little or no space for follow-up training and minimal, if at all, opportunities for mentoring and accompaniment in institutional growth.

5.5.4 Required Training

CSOs also described what kinds of training they required in order to build further capacities: the needs for training on NGO management and on fund-raising were emphasised. See Table 5.15 below. Strategy related training refers to those trainings which help CSOs employ a particular strategy to better achieve their purposes. For example, how to engage the media to raise better awareness of family planning or domestic violence or how to best design effective training and capacity building activities are examples of strategy-related trainings.

Table 5.15: Training needs identified by CSOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Training</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fund-raising</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Development/ NGO management</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance training</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject related</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy related (TOT, CB, Media)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5.5 Challenges to Long-Term Development of the Sector

Substantial reliance on volunteerism: This review of the human resources of the civil society sector in the Maldives revealed the extent to which the sector draws on voluntary services to function. Their passionate commitment to the sector is evident by the activities they have undertaken and the intention to continue their work on this basis. Most CSOs requested funds and training, in order to deliver their services better and more widely, or on a sustained basis, but few raised the issue of remuneration for services. This is certainly commendable, and the spirit of volunteerism which exists and has existed need to be protected and nurtured.

Improvement of capacities and competencies in sector: Readily recognisable was the need to improve capacities and competencies in the sector in relation to a) organisational development and management, b) subject-related knowledge and c) financial management and sustainable fund-raising. It is nonetheless important to recognise that there is considerable experience and knowledge of key issues in the Maldives, but even so the chance to develop critical reflective skills, a broader understanding of key issues and undertaking analytic and evaluative exercises with relation to the activities conducted would be beneficial to most CSOs. Specialist CSOs were more likely to have in-depth understanding of an issue. However, specialist CSOs were mostly based in Male’ (as mentioned earlier) and consequently, those who lived and worked in Male’ might not always be familiar with the on-going context and issues of other islands.

The dilemmas of professionalising the sector: Because the sector is driven by voluntary work, some additional aspects will need to be considered. There is likely to be high turnover, because as people establish families and require higher levels of income (or in the current global economic downturn, work even harder to maintain the same standard of living), they will have less time and resources to devote to voluntary activities. So young people are likely to predominate in the sector (in contrast to skilled or older persons) and will require greater accompaniment and support. To retain skilled personnel, some form of remuneration (or at the very least, out-of-pocket expenses) for services need to be paid. Efforts also have to be made to build capacities in the sector and to professionalise it – such as providing opportunities for further study. This is a sensitive issue, as greater professionalization of the sector is also likely to lead to higher costs associated with salaries and fees; this would happen because people would require to be paid for their knowledge and time – in turn, people might become less likely to volunteer their services and this would also be detrimental to sector.

The dangers of projectising CSO work: The dangers of ‘transforming a cause of social change (and movement or a civil society initiative) into a project with a plan and timetable and fixed budget’, underpinned with the needs for reporting and showing results, have been well-documented. The inadvertent outcome may be to distort, dis-empower, de-legitimise and fragment civil society initiatives and movements. The current way of working in the Maldives (high levels of volunteerism, own fund-raising efforts) avoids some of the problems and criticisms associated with CSOs in some other contexts – e.g. heavy dependence on national or international NGOs, or developing a relief or entitlement mentality.

Certification and development of professional standards: In the interests of long-term development of the sector, and to improve capacities and competencies, it is recommended that the professional standards both for competence and for conduct are developed in relation to the sector. Enabling the certification of civil society sector workers in their respective fields will contribute greatly to developing the necessary human resources for social, economic and political work. One example would be to consider setting up development studies courses (both class-based and distance learning programmes) at the newly established national university. These courses could include both academic and practical components.

Given this overall context, the volume of work done by CSOs to organise and deliver different activities for the benefit of different societies and communities was indeed commendable and represented dedicated work by considerable numbers of people. Many institutional start-ups were composed of young people with not much more than ideals, vision, enthusiasm, and commitment.

64 See Jad, I. (2010), p198
65 Jad, I (2010)
5.6 Collaborative Work and Partnerships

More than a third of CSOs had partnered with another organisation in order to conduct a particular activity. In general, they appreciated the importance of such collaborative work and it seemed most popular in relation to recreational activities, in addition to work that focused explicitly on coalition-building and networking. However, when those who had engaged in such collaborative work were asked how easy it was to collaborate, and what the relationship between CSOs were in general, the answers revealed a somewhat unclear picture. Recreational or some socially organised activities such as cleaning the island or tree-planting were generally perceived to be an easy collaborative work, but other functions of engagement were less easy.

Half of those who had experienced a collaborative venture or partnership noted that managing such alliances and collaborative ventures was difficult especially if the organisations were based in the same island. When partnerships concerned complex activities (such as social development activities etc.), political affiliations of CSOs sometimes influenced the partnership or alliance adversely. Even some of those who had found such collaborations useful and important (and even fairly easy) referred to the impact that increasing politicisation of communities have had on relationships between existing CSOs; politics had soured community relations, they noted. Organisations which tended to be strictly apolitical were uncomfortable with and unsupportive to those whom they saw as having a direct political affiliation, whilst those who were primarily political tended to not work with those who had different political affiliations. For this reason, many felt the importance of doing ‘peacebuilding’ work, i.e. improving social relations and harmony within a community, and they restated the importance of organisations remaining non-politically aligned in order to retain credibility with society.

Table 5.16: Collaborative work by CSOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incidence of Collaboration</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, have collaborated with other CSO on activities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, have not collaborated with other CSO on activities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Competition between organisations for scarce resources were also said to cause significant hostility. Some complained that when invited to an event, other CSOs on the island may choose not to attend. Limited knowledge and skills on how best to deal with growing competition seemed to be a recurring problem, according to respondents. When there were fewer CSOs, for example, public donations and contributions were easier to secure, but where more than one CSO had formed (and especially where these were politically aligned), funds were more difficult to obtain for everybody. They also noted that communication and transport difficulties between islands meant that organisations from the same atoll that focused on similar issues found it difficult to maintain close(r) relationships, even if they wanted to. In direct contrast, people spoke about relationships between members of different organisations as being very good, signifying that generally the competition between organisations did not affect everyday social relations.

5.7 Income, Sources of Funding and Material Support

CSOs differed widely in their income levels for the past year, with some not having any income at all, and others raising funds over MRF 300,000.00. Table 5.17 shows the reported levels of income for CSOs. Most CSOs received less than MRF 50,000.00 last year. The most common modes of fund-raising for CSOs were through membership fees and own fund-raising activities; generally these raised funds of MRF 10,000.00 to MRF 25,000.00 (the full range was from MRF 2,500.00 to MRF 25,000.00). These amounts were often sufficient for organising two or more annual events (sports competitions/activities, Eid festivities, etc.), or for a capacity building programme such as organising a teacher to prepare students for national level examinations.
Organisations that received larger amounts were often conducting projects and activities outsourced by donors and other CSOs in the country, or were able to raise public or private-sector funds for their causes. The latter were those CSOs whose target groups were seriously ill adults or children, or people with disabilities and their families, where public sympathy was often prevalent. CSOs dealing with groups such as recovering addicts or victims of violence, for example, were less likely to be able to raise funds from public members and more likely to depend on project funds or other forms of donor assistance for their programmes and activities.

Table 5.18 shows the main sources of funding for CSOs. These included membership fees, occasional member donations, own fund-raising activities, individual donations (from the public), business donors and sponsorships, and external funds. As can be seen, comparatively fewer organisations had access to foreign aid or funding from other Maldivian organisations.

### Table 5.17: Level of earnings by CSOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount (MRF)</th>
<th>Haa Alif (&lt;i&gt;N=10&lt;/i&gt;)</th>
<th>Faafu (&lt;i&gt;N=10&lt;/i&gt;)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (&lt;i&gt;N=21&lt;/i&gt;)</th>
<th>Kaafu (&lt;i&gt;N=11&lt;/i&gt;)</th>
<th>Male’ (&lt;i&gt;N=18&lt;/i&gt;)</th>
<th>Total (&lt;i&gt;N=70&lt;/i&gt;)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MRF 1 to 50,000 per annum</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRF 50,001 to 100,000 per annum</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRF 100,001 to 150,000 per annum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRF 150,001 to 200,000 per annum</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRF 200,000 to 250,000 per annum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRF 250,001 and above</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No income</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from the fees, most income of organisations was very much in the style of one-off donations, or they were raised in relation to a specific activity to be carried out by the organisation. This certainly had some implication on the scope and scale of work which CSOs could undertake, especially if they were doing such work as voluntary work. Because the average reliable income for an organisation was in the range of MRF 10,000.00 to 25,000.00 per year, most island-based CSOs would not be able to deliver much more than 2-3 self-funded low-cost activities per year.

#### 5.7.1 Membership Fees

Almost a quarter of organisations had a membership fee and a fee structure based on category of membership. Some charged fees per year and others per month. The membership fees ranged from MRF 5.00 per month (i.e. MRF 60.00 per year) to MRF 5,000.00 per year. Generally fees tended to be around MRF 100.00 per month. Where incomes were low, generally so were the fees charged, and there was more reliance on well-off members donating to the CSO as circumstances demanded, for example, some had given amounts ranging from MRF 1,900.00 to MRF 15,000.00 for organising various community events and activities. Where no fees were charged at all, members were nonetheless
expected to contribute individually to planned activities.

5.7.2 Organisational Fund-Raising

A third of surveyed CSOs carried out their own fund-raising activities. Members would sometimes undertake to donate the proceeds of three days' fishing every month, for example, or offering services such as house-painting or cleaning and then donating the payments to the organisation. In this way, some CSOs had raised amounts of MRF14,000.00 or MRF 32,000.00. One had run a small café for a month earning MRF 18,000 for the organisation. Since the introduction of a government allowance for cleaning the island, organisations sometimes took up this work earning MRF 1,500 per day of work each month. Prior to the allowance, women of the island had done this work for free. Hence, some CSOs convinced these women to work on behalf of the organisation and donate their earnings.

5.7.3 Individual Donations

Individual donations tended to be an occasional source of income, with amounts ranging from MRF 5,000.00 to MRF 50,000.00. Some CSOs stated explicitly that they did not want to reveal the sources of such funding. At least one respondent mentioned that such funding came from politically-related sources. Although individual donations were mentioned as one source, quite a few organisations mentioned the difficulty of convincing the general public to donate to their cause. They had to approach a number of people before they were able to secure funds. This meant that they could do only limited activities each year and only when they were able to convince enough people to contribute some amounts. Some CSOs also mentioned that as the number of CSOs per island increased, the amount of funds they were able to raise, not to mention the willingness of public members to donate, correspondingly decreased.

5.7.4 Business Donors and Sponsors

Donations from businesses ranged from MRF 10,000.00 to MRF 150,000.00. The general amount was in the range of MRF 15,000 to 30,000.00. Donations were made for particular activities (often festival or sports-related) rather than on-going support for capacity-building, for example. Sponsorship was given from amounts ranging from MRF 3,000.00 to MRF 60,000.00, and was mostly in the form of purchasing the materials for the planned activity (uniforms, books, or trophies) or in kind (providing transport, helping with printing materials, etc.). Both business donations and sponsorship were easier to obtain in relation to issues that were less controversial (e.g. prevention of drug use rather than supporting rehabilitation efforts of former drug users) and which allowed space for advertising (sports competition, award ceremonies, etc.).

Finding support from businesses was not always easy. Once again, the ability to raise money from businesses seemed to correlate with the general economic situation of the area. Businesses in islands where the economy seemed in better shape were more likely to donate money or provide material help to support community activities. In other areas, respondents noted that although the relationship with businesses was generally good, they were reluctant to fund CSO activities. In these cases, one or two businesses had given materials in kind (rather than money) worth up to MRF 50,000.00.

5.7.5 External Funding

Most island-based organisations had not received any external funding in the last year. In some other cases, organisation had undertaken project work for UNDP, and had received up to MRF 300,000.00. On one occasion, the government had made a contribution after the organisation had completed the construction of a jetty. In this case, the government reimbursed the members for an amount of MRF 30,000.00. Some organisations stated that the difficulties in accessing such sources of funding were three-fold; namely, organisations lacked knowledge about availability of funds, they

67 A previous study on CSR by FJS (see FJS report 2010) indicated that such reluctance stemmed from suspicions that CSOs misused funds (some businesses reported that they gave money but were never subsequently told what was done with it, for example). Improving transparency and accountability would help with this.
lacked the skills to prepare good-quality proposals and budgets, and thirdly, the special permits required for taking on external funding meant delays and that funding went elsewhere as a result. One organisation stated that receiving external funding was made complicated by difficulties of opening and accessing a bank account. Some smaller organisations mentioned that they had not tried to get such assistance at all, since they were able to carry out the activities they intended from the amount raised by their own fee charges and those from donations and sponsorships, as and when necessary.

5.7.6 Other Forms of Support and Goodwill

The functioning of CSOs also depended on two other crucial forms of support and goodwill. Most CSOs were run from within the space of personal homes of one of the founders or members. This meant that all meetings were hosted there, and the CSO documents (relating to activities, accounts, etc.) were also stored there. While the generosity and goodwill associated with these were noted, some respondents brought up the difficulties of operating from within the personal home of someone.

Because most work is done in informal spaces and manner, it is difficult to build up institutional capacity. To attract funds, one needs to show that documentation is maintained (that means stationery, files, forms, cupboards to store them, etc.). They also need to have regular meetings, and host events, and have regular internet and computer access to look at funding availabilities, and develop make acceptable quality proposals. More importantly, the Associations Act requires CSOs to maintain their accounts and documentation for a period of five years – in this regard only, office space is crucial (Article 27). Office space for CSOs is essential but this is lacking in both the islands and in Male’. Some have suggested assigning a room in a public building for CSO activity in the islands. Male’-based organisations spoke about how high rents made space difficult to get – and affected their level of activity.

Secondly, CSOs functioned on the support and goodwill of its members, who generously donated time and effort in relation to the management of the CSO, and the execution of its planned activities. Notably, no CSO respondent mentioned the issue of salaries for staff or remuneration for their services, indicating that a strong commitment to voluntary work prevailed. These inputs (although not identified as income or material benefit) should also be recognised as a fundamental part of what makes possible the functioning and operations of CSOs.

5.8 Recommendations relating to CSO Operations

- The main issue with organization structure is the lack of a board of governance with the function of oversight. Therefore it is recommended that;
  - CSOs separate the functions of governance and management; i.e., to have a separate (non-paid independent) board of governance or trustees, whose functions are to ‘set policy, exercise oversight, and provide strategic direction in the areas of mission, values, resources and outreach’.
- These lists of areas of work, target groups and functions should be used to identify the function and purpose of CSOs. It is recommended that
  - Volunteers and persons from a particular sector or industry be added to the list of target groups identified earlier.
  - The eight functions be expanded to ten, by separating the categories of service provision and resource distribution, and knowledge production and capacity building.
- Activity design and implementation can be improved in a number of ways. These include:
  - Capacity building in needs assessment, strategy development and intervention design is essential.
  - Planning and management (in regards to annual programming, budgeting and auditing) are areas where CSOs need additional capacity building support.
● Ensuring availability of and access to empirical information and national statistics to improve effective
design of activities.

● More research and discussion is recommended in order to come to more conclusive findings on the
efficacy of activities

● Translation to Dhivehi of reports in English, or at least a summary of the report to be made available in
Dhivehi.

■ There are key areas of improvement in relation to the human resources and competence in the sector. It is
recommended that,

● The positive aspect of volunteerism in the sector must be retained; yet this should be coupled with build-
ing human capacities and the professional standards for competence and conduct in the sector.

● Accompaniment (longer-term capacity building exercises) of new and small CSOs may be one means of
ensuring institutional development and management capacities. Equally appointing skilled and retired
persons onto the board of governance would help bring regular specialist input to CSOs.

● Building capacities in institutional governance, institutional development, NGO and project manage-
ment, and financial management is key to sustaining and developing the sector. Equally, attention
should be given to building capacities of subject knowledge.

● Consider setting up development studies courses (both class-based and distance learning programmes)
at the newly established national university. These courses could include both academic and practical
components, and should be in line with recognized international standards. These could include offer-
ing development studies programmes, project management courses, human rights and governance
courses, mental health and psychosocial support service courses, or those focusing on women, youth
or children’s studies.

● Handbooks and other resource materials for CSOs should be developed and made widely available.

■ The efforts of CSOs to raise their own funds through membership fees and other efforts should be commend-
ed. Their low level of dependency on external funds increases their capacity for independence from external
influences; and makes their efforts more self-reliant and responsive to the community. At the same time, it
places a constraint on their scale of activities. It is recommended that:

● Extra funding for the sector or helping CSOs improve their own capacities for fund-raising be increased
in order to scale up the amount of work that is currently being done by CSOs.

● Helping CSOs to find and establish the physical space in which to operate is also a key component.

● At the same time, improving the capacity to access additional external funding (in a transparent and
well-regulated manner) would also be useful.
6. Ethics, Credibility and Public Confidence in the Sector

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a brief discussion of issues pertaining to the principles, ethics and values of CSOs. Ethics are important to the civil society sector because it is founded on the premise of non-self-interest. The main purpose of CSOs is intended to be public benefit, and to this purpose they are expected to put the benefit of other groups above their own institutional or individual interest. Because of this reason, CSOs are often judged more critically than other sectors (such as the private or state sector) if their ethics and values are seen to have become compromised. This is closely linked to the issue of credibility, i.e. the quality of being judged as trustworthy and reliable, or in other words, gaining public confidence in the sector. This brings us to the issue of public confidence in CSOs, i.e. how CSOs are generally seen and judged by the public. These three aspects are discussed in this chapter.

6.2 Ethical Framework of CSOs

Almost all organisations revealed something of their guiding principles in the formulation of their objectives, as could be seen from the registration documents. The various declarations indicated that CSOs in the Maldives were indeed very aware of their ethical responsibilities and obligations to society and its citizens; and that they strove – at least in the formulation of their objectives – to articulate these as much as possible. Indeed, in the in-depth qualitative interviews too, respondents were clear about what CSOs should pay attention to in terms of its principles and values: they should work in accordance with the law, constitution and religion; they should treat their members and target groups with respect, dignity and appreciation; they should work in a way that promotes harmony and unity; they should be sensitive to local concerns and treat people with respect and dignity (for example, asking parents for permission to work with their children with disabilities or present them publicly, and being sensitive about how the importance of condom use and needle exchange are discussed in island communities); that the wellbeing of vulnerable individuals and of the community should take precedent over institutional or personal needs and interests; that they should be fair and equitable to all citizens in the community; and that they should be non-political.

6.2.1 Guiding Principles of Work

The main guiding principles, as expressed through filed documentation and interviews, are discussed below.

**Law abiding:** The vast majority of CSO preceded their statement of purpose by pledging to remain within the framework of laws of the country and of the religion (for example, ‘islaam dheenaai raajjeyge gaanoonaa gavaaidhu huddha kuraagothuge mathin/ thabaaveh’thibe/ hilaafunuvaa gothah/ thandhey en’me fulhaa dhaa iraa eh’gai’) whilst carrying out their work.

**Beneficial to the public or the nation:** Other qualifying statements which set the main criteria for deciding the direction of their work were as follows: for the benefit of the country (i.e. ‘gaumah fai dhaa kuranivi gothakah’); the benefit of the community (i.e. ‘mujuthamau ah fai dhaa huri gothakah’).

**Subscribing to international standards:** Organisations stated that their work should subscribe to internationally recognised standards of competence in their chosen areas of work (i.e. ‘bai’nal agvaamee mingandu thakah fethey gothah’).

68 Although this non-self-interest is often taken to mean a no-profit motive, recent research also indicates that many who chose to work in the sector are also guided by intrinsic motivations of serving the community, promoting wellbeing, and of working to benefit disadvantaged or vulnerable groups (see for example, Serra, D., Serneels, P. & Barr, A. (2010) Intrinsic motivations and the non-profit health sector: Evidence from Ethiopia. CSAE: Unpublished draft.)
Non-Discriminatory and inclusive: Organisations were also keen to be as inclusive as possible – and not to discriminate or exclude different groups. This was reflected in the phrase, ‘for people of all ages and for both the sexes’ (i.e. ‘hurihaa umureh’ge dhe jinsuge meehunnah’) when referring to whom their activities and services would be directed.

Non-conditional: There were also phrases which indicated that organisations had imposed upon themselves certain conditions in the delivery of their services; these included refraining to use any undue influence in providing services (e.g. ‘naajaaizu nufoozeh beynun nukuraane kamaa eku hidhmai’y foarukoh dhinun’) and without making any action compulsory for those who sought the services (e.g. ‘vaki kameh sharuthu nukoh hidhmai’y foarukoh dhinun’).

Transparent: Some mentioned the importance of ensuring that their work was sincere and transparent (i.e. ‘thedhuveri koh, haama koh, dhefuh’fennah gothah’) and that their work was equitable and inclusive (i.e. ‘hurihaa faraathakaai hamahama usoolakun kanthah thah kurun’). Improving accountability and answerability to the CSO membership base and to its target groups was stated as a fundamental responsibility and principle for CSOs.

Compassion-driven: Other organisations provided statements of intention about the way in which they would work with people; these phrases referred to providing a friendly supportive environment (i.e. ‘rah’maiy theri maahauleh’gai’), a protective environment (i.e. ‘rah’kkaatheri maa hauleh’gai’) or to provide services in a compassionate manner (i.e. ‘oagaa theri kamaa eku’) for its service users and members.

Sustainability: This also included a concern with the sustainability both of their services and of the area of work in which they were engaged (for example, ‘ran’galhu gothugai dhemehe’ttey beedhaa akun’, ‘dhemehettinivi tharaggee ge usooluge mathin’).

Inclusive decision making: In addition, they noted the importance of including members and their target groups in organisational decision-making processes. This included clearly informing the members and target group representatives of the on-going activities and plans, updating them on the progress and impacts, and providing them with the space to give feedback and opinions on the planned activities, delivery methods, and programmatic approaches.

Prioritise interests of target group or membership before institutional or self-interest: Some interviewees stated that they had observed a negative tendency for Executive Committee members to seek advantages and opportunities for themselves at the expense of other members or of those whom they represented. A CSO needed to fulfil the expectations of its membership base and of its target groups, except where capacity building of the Committee would help to fulfil the objectives of the CSO.

Functioning within the organisational mandate: Sticking closely to its stated objectives and mandate, and striving to fulfil these duties, was seen as an important principle for organisations. For this reason, many respondents also highlighted that monitoring and assessing the impact of one’s work – to see whether and to what extent they fulfilled the objectives – should be part of a CSO’s responsibility to its membership and target groups and therefore was – or ought to be – a guiding principle of work.

6.2.2 Code of Conduct

Given this articulated interest in the ethical conduct of CSOs, it was interesting to note that half of the interviewed organisations stated that they had some form of a code of conduct or set of guiding principles (i.e. ‘sulookee min’gaddu’) which they paid attention to in their work. However, a closer look at what these were indicated that for most of the organisations who stated that they had a code of conduct, this was sometimes confused with their Governing Regulations or the laws and constitution of the country (i.e. 28.0% of those who stated yes). The remainder noted the following issues as part of their code of conduct: consulting with members prior to decision-making; board-committee discussions prior to decision-making; being non-conditional and inclusive; being fair, equitable and transparent; abiding with religious edicts; working within the organisational mandate; being non-political; supporting democratic governance; and respecting human rights. Yet all those interviewed were of the opinion that such a document would be a necessary and helpful one for CSOs.

Given Fox’s (2010) close linking of transparency and accountability, it is important to put the question to CSOs whether they would like to include accountability (i.e. ‘jawaabudhaaree vaa gotha massaikai’kurun’) in a code of conduct, if such a document were to be drafted.
Table 6.1: Availability of Code of Ethics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of availability</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, have a code</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, don’t have code</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2.3 Monitoring Ethical Conduct

All respondents indicated monitoring the conduct of CSOs as an important aspect of the sector. An internal mechanism was seen as the most popular option. That is, most were of the opinion that CSOs should take it upon themselves to review whether their activities were being conducted in a manner that complied with their principles, and that they should frequently consult with their members, target groups and other members of the public as necessary in order to ascertain and confirm this.

There were numerous ways in which CSOs could seek to monitor and assess their conduct, according to respondents. Proposed suggestions included appointing a member of Executive Committee specifically to implement such reviews, project officers and coordinators should be made aware of and reminded of the importance to adhering to these principles in their work, members and target groups should be involved in assessing the work of the CSO in this aspect, and Executive member and project officers should seek advice from professional and technical persons to ensure they were within the law and constitution in delivering the services. An important component would be consultations with the members and target groups of the CSO. A governance board would also go a long way towards achieving this objective. Those who referred to an external influence referred to having selected members of the public included in the assessment and monitoring exercises.

Table 6.2: Monitoring of ethical conduct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appoint someone or a committee (within the organization or from the Executive Committee)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A separate board should oversee this</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Committee should have an internal mechanism/procedure for overseeing this</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public consultation (with members and those targeted for services and activities)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3 Maintaining Independence

All respondents (N=80) stated that maintaining independence and autonomy (e.g. ‘amillavanthakan’, ‘minivankan’) was important for the sector. Independence would ensure that services and activities stay focused on the needs and interests of the target groups and the membership base. It would also help ensure that CSOs play their crucial role of holding local and national governments accountable to their citizens. Many respondents pointed out that failure to maintain independence had been one of the main reasons for the low level of public confidence and the decreasing credibility of the civil society sector.

The credibility of many CSOs has been undermined by allegations that CSOs were not driven by its own intentions to achieve its stated purposes but rather by the machinations of external bodies, such as political parties, political candi-

70 The sample size for this group was all CSO respondent interviews, which as stated earlier, included 80 individuals.
dates, or donors and sponsors. Under such circumstances, it becomes possible to cast doubt on the pro-social motivations of the CSO and instead portray the organisation as self-interested or more problematically, simply a front for other (less altruistic) purposes. For this reason, it was pointed out that CSOs have a responsibility to demonstrate their credibility by adhering closely to their objectives and ensuring that they work in accordance with their stated principles.

6.3.1 Independence from Donors and Sponsors

Respondents acknowledged the difficulties of maintaining independence and of minimising influence if CSOs were receiving funds or sponsorships – however, they noted that in these cases it was always possible to negotiate with donors and sponsors or compromise with them in a way that did not deviate from the stated objectives of the CSO nor violate its principles. The best protection was to have explicit organisational policies and clear mechanisms and procedures relating to this issue, so that it was possible to have upfront negotiations and discussions with the donors and sponsors.

The responsibility for flagging this issue and devising ways of managing the issues was said to be primarily with the Executive Committee or Board members. Suggested strategies included:

- Insist on signing a donor/sponsor agreement which limits their decision-making capacities and influence with regard to activity implementation (where necessary to maintain independence) (20.3% of respondents mentioned this.)
- Strictly adhere to objectives and principles in all interactions and decision-making within the organization (21.6% respondents mentioned this).
- Developing an internal policy on how to manage donor relationships and specifying limits
- Build CSO capacities to generate own funding as much as possible to reduce dependency on external funding
- Build CSO capacities to better negotiate with donors and sponsors and reach an acceptable compromise on relevant issues
- Assess each activity according to its suitability for donor and sponsor influence and be transparent about such influence.

Whatever measures were taken to ensure independence, those responsible for project implementation should be familiar with such protocol and report to the Committee on all aspects of implementation, according to the respondents.

Table 6.3: Perceived influence from donor and sponsor on CSOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Influence</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=25)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=23)</th>
<th>Total (N=80)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, this has happened/this has been known to have happened</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, this has not happened/this has not been known to have happened</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>63.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3.2 Independence from Political Groups and Parties

There was higher reported incidence of political influence on CSO objectives and activities than from donors (See table 6.4). All respondents noted that it was important to maintain independence and refrain from allowing political groups and parties from influencing one’s organization. Such influence were said to happen in various ways, from having NGO resources allegedly utilised to extend the political mileage of some candidates to favouring members and beneficiaries based on political alliance, and having NGOs established or funded just prior to an election in order to espouse political
views and propaganda. These incidents have been attributed to the lack of alternative (and politically-neutral) funding. The following quotations from respondents provided some insights into the reasons for the seemingly high level of political party influence in civil society activity.

- ‘It is difficult for us to avoid such situations because we are always in need of funding to conduct activities and only the politicians are mostly available in terms of funding’
- ‘We do not have much of a choice because the political figures provide job opportunities for the people (so it is difficult to refuse them)’
- ‘For people in the islands, this is sometimes a problem. They don’t know where to get funding from, and towards elections, they are offered administrative costs (’hin’gumuge haradhu’) from political figures.’
- ‘Sometimes it is not a party as such, but party-affiliated individuals who push such influence during elections. Also many political figures are working in CSOs.’
- ‘Even some businesses in the Maldives are highly politicised, and accepting funding from them could also compromise the independence.’

### Table 6.4: Perceived influence from political groups and parties on CSOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Influence</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=25)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=23)</th>
<th>Total (N=80)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, this has happened/this has been known to have happened</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, this has not happened/this has not been known to have happened</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some suggested ways to limit or negate political influence in CSOs included:

- Do not accept funds from political parties or political figures. This was the most popular strategy (25.3% mentioned it).
- Establish an internal policy which clearly stipulates independence from political party influence/interference. (22.8% of respondents mentioned this.)
- CSOs should not engage in political activities (such as campaigning or electioneering or supporting a ‘colour’. (20.2% mentioned this.)
- Include articles into the Associations Act and Regulations prohibiting political funding of CSOs, or the appointment of political figures into executive positions of CSOs or as board members.
- Be transparent about political funding (if you are accepting funds from political figures).
- Specify limits to influence by political parties on CSO activity and affiliation (if accepting funds).
- Build capacities to refute political influence (by being able to generate own funding or to negotiate with politically influential figures).

### 6.3.3 Impact of Democratic Transition on Civil Society Sector Development

From the previous discussion, it is possible to note the on-going impacts of democratic transition in the Maldives. Given the earlier lack of space to participate in the political arena, there is a current transition in the Maldives where people are trying to figure out where they stand. For instance, many people with strong political views, who would perhaps have liked to have been politically active, would have prior to the political transition in the Maldives instead gravitated...
towards the civil society sector (because space for explicitly political activities was limited).

Following the adoption of political democracy, they would now be interested to transit to the political arena with the intention of strategically implementing their ideas, whilst some of those who were in politics would now prefer to become active in the civil society arena whilst retaining some of their old political affiliations. In that sense, it is not surprising that there have been a number of cross-over incidents and a considerable overlap between the civil and the political (or the political and the corporate) at this point in time in the Maldives.

Convention presents the ‘three sectors’ – the political, the corporate and the civil – as separate social categories; nonetheless, these different sectors are not as mutually exclusive as they are generally perceived, imagined or presented to be.71 People do travel from one to the other type of sector and some try to exist simultaneously in both or even all three spaces. In fact, some respondents pointed out that one of the current difficulties was that political figures were already involved in CSOs. Controls are required to ensure that these categories (insofar as they exist) do not collapse into one another, to restrict conflicts of interest, and to maintain the democratic space. The ability to maintain such separation would be in keeping with the development of a mature and responsible civil society sector.

Respondents have pointed a number of such control actions that could be taken by civil society actors to ensure their functional and visionary independence. These include:

- Not appointing actively political figures (i.e. persons who are in leadership positions in political parties or persons who are political appointees in the current government) onto the Executive Committee or any future board of governance (current members should resign if they take up such a political position or would need to resign from the political positions to continue being in a governance or management position in the CSO).
- Having relevant clauses in the Governing Regulations and any policy documents to minimise political party influence and to maintain independent image of CSO
- Assign the responsibility of overseeing the CSO’s independence from political influences to a member of the Executive Committee
- Refrain from actively supporting a political party: however CSOs could comment on, agree with or challenge the merit of government policies or proposed political party policies and manifestos preferably on the basis of empirical evidence or clearly articulated reasoning and not on party lines: CSOs especially would be required to comment if these policies and manifestos have foreseeable positive or negative impacts on or implications for the areas of work associated with those CSOs
- Refrain from using funds from political parties and figures: if there is a donation from a politically active figure, this should be transparently documented and the details of how this donation was used made public
- Being careful in how activities are designed and implemented and making sure that these are as free from explicit political influences as possible – for example ensuring that selection of beneficiaries is not based on political affiliation

6.4 Managing Conflicts and Disagreements

Another area highlighted in this study was that of how to manage conflicts and disagreement both within the sector and also between the sector and the state or the government. Given that any area of work has multiple and diverse approaches as well as sometimes conflicting stances, it is important for different CSOs to be able to work constructively in their chosen field of work, and to be able to demonstrate empirically the effectiveness and relevance of their particular strategies and interventions in achieving their goals. For example, some of those who seek to prevent drug-related injuries and adverse health effects might support needle exchange or methadone programmes whilst others strongly object to these; similarly, differences of opinion and belief exist within other areas of work too, notably about issues of governance or exact interpretations of religious edicts72. Where differences such as these exist, there might be tenden-

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72 Given that there are different schools of thought or allegiance even within the Sunni school of Islam.
cies for growing conflict and hostility between CSOs and different opinions about what types of activities are harmful or beneficial to society. In such a climate it is conceivable that organisations might make various allegations about one another’s conduct and approach.

6.4.1 Importance of Communication and Dialogue

Respondents were asked about how such differences, disagreements and conflicts could be best managed by the sector. They provided a number of different answers. These are described below:

**Table 6.5: Methods of conflict management**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=25)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=23)</th>
<th>Total (N=80)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication, dialogue and debate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide information (evidence and rationale to justify course of action)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority decision</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask for involvement by others (community groups, different government agencies, affected individuals, independent institutions, etc.) to comment on and mediate differences of opinion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Civilised and mature dialogue**: The most frequently recommended strategies were increasing the space for and the commitment to engage in communication between disagreeing and/or conflicting CSOs. The proportion of those who espoused communication and dialogue as the suggested means of resolving conflicts and disagreements is heartening from a point of view of a healthy and dynamic democracy. Communication between organisations could take the many forms of negotiation, discussion, and debate. Respondents also noted the importance of keeping the discussions mature and civilised, away from explicit political support, and to refrain from making personal attacks. Gaining an understanding of the different positions from which people were coming from would also make for better communication and constructive management or resolution of difference. Some suggested that being able to accept that others might disagree with one’s position and being open to new learning was fundamental to this process. Furthermore, some respondents pointed out that continued freedom of expression was a key element to maintaining the process of communication and dialogue.

**Evidence-based information provision**: The second most frequent strategy involved basing explanations on evidence and rationale, pointing out the beneficial (and/or adverse) effects of some strategies, and explaining reasons for choice of action. This choice highlights the need for CSOs to undertake assessment and evaluation of their work more seriously, and to be informed of international, national and local literature and research in relation to their chosen topics and course of action.

**Expansion of space for discussion**: The third most recommended option was of expanding the number of people involved in discussion and providing the space for the opinions and experiences of ALL affected groups and stakeholders to participate in the discussion. Beneficiaries, supporters of a particular choice of action, and those who object to it should be allowed the space to communicate their standpoints on the issue, best along the lines of what was suggested above. Conducting research on the positions that people take, and basing it on empirical evidence would be a key element to this process. It was pointed out that an intervention or activity should not be shut down prematurely before its positive aspects could be demonstrated; this stand reinforces the responsibility of CSOs to implement an activity sensitively and strategically, with the consent of those whom they work — and within do-no-harm principles. At the same time, this also means that the state needs to be cognizant of their responsibility to allow a CSO activity to take place within constitutional limits and guarantees until its merits and acceptability have been adequately demonstrated.
While CSOs agreed that there had been some instances where they had disagreed with the approaches or activities of other CSOs, they showed more concern with conflicts and disagreements that were likely to arise between the government, various state bodies and CSOs. For example, in attempting to strengthen current policies and practices in any area of work, CSOs are likely to have to work together with and sometimes challenges current policies and practices in government and amongst independent authorities. In working on issues directly relevant to the state – for example, in advocating for good governance, promoting the rule of law, curbing corruption, protecting human rights, or strengthening democratic political culture – some CSOs will inevitably play the part of watchdog or whistle-blower. Even in the more innocuous areas of work such as environmental protection or empowering people with disability, CSOs and state or government bodies might sometimes have disagreements and require a process for seeking and building consensus.

Great concern over potential conflicts with the state: Given the current transitional state of the country, it is no surprise that conflict with the state remains a key concern of CSOs. The main opinion was that it would be important for the CSOs to have the necessary space in which to carry out their activities as long as these were within the law and constitution of the Maldives. Any allegations against CSOs of unconstitutional or illicit activities by any agency of the state should require evidence and not be based on arbitrary decisions by state powers. Moreover, the process should follow those of a fair hearing. It was suggested that unchecked powers of the state to regulate or inhibit the civil society sector would diminish their ability to hold governments accountable, lobby for reforms to law and policy, and pinpoint failures or wrong-doing by the state when necessary. Such powers could also be used by political figures in charge of government bodies or Ministries to advance their own political agendas and curb challenges or different views to their own. It was recognized that the mandates of some CSOs, especially those that perform watchdog functions, were likely to bring them in antagonistic relationships to the state, other public bodies, private sector entities or even other CSOs. Where the function of the organisation is to advocate, campaign, research and inform, some of these activities will necessarily take on a political element. The regulations imposed by the state should ensure that these do not unduly discriminate against or limit the ability of organisations to carry out these functions as necessary and in a principled, equal and fair manner. This may become equally important when there are multiple legitimate sources for defining and determining what is desirable and appropriate for the country and for a community, given that communities are heterogeneous and pluralistic in their opinions, identities and experiences. The legislation has to be clear about the rights and responsibilities that the civil society sector enjoys. Moreover, the onus of responsibility is on the government to ensure that it does not unduly limit any productive public discourse that cannot be explicitly demonstrated to be unlawful. Perhaps it was this recognition that prompted the palpable concerns amongst CSOs about having regulated but adequate space for manoeuvring.

Those who felt that there was no need for further regulations, or for regulations at all, stated that there seemed to be adequate and sufficient regulations and laws already. For some, the main issue was that of communication (see above) and they displayed a confidence that dialogue, communication and compromise would be sufficient to manage such conflicts and disagreements.

Table 6.6: Perceived role of regulations on conflict management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived need for regulations</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=25)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=23)</th>
<th>Total (N=80)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, we need regulations and procedures for conflicts and disagreements</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, we don’t need regulations or procedures for conflicts and disagreements</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responsibilities for CSOs in Conflict Management: The rights and protections stated earlier by the CSOs with regard to conflict management with the state should be granted together with key responsibilities. Firstly, CSOs need to be open to the idea of fair investigation and inquiry procedures where such allegations exist – for this reason they need to maintain documentation of their processes and transactions. Secondly, they need to work mainly within the objectives outlined in their statement of purpose – or else this could be construed as the organisation failing to be transparent. Thirdly, they have a responsibility to inform the relevant authorities about their work – to the extent necessary – and to
abide by any existing regulations – although the state should not interfere with or direct activities unless they are shown to be illicit or unconstitutional.

6.4.3 Dealing with State-CSO Conflicts and Disagreements

Respondents were in favour of regulation with regard to conflicts between CSOs and the state but not so much in relation to conflicts between CSOs.

Table 6.7: Perceived role of regulations in resolution of conflicts between CSOs and the state

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Role of regulations</th>
<th>Total (N=80)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need regulations and laws to protect CSOs from arbitrary state power</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to set up procedures and processes for how to deal with such situations</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily community consultations to decide whether the activity is justified or not (with affected persons, communities and specialists)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek mediation and protection (for example, with specialists or police)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow state or government edicts as they have final say (e.g. ministry, island council, etc.)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No regulations or procedures</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Laws to be specific about protections for CSOs from exercise of arbitrary state power: Those who espoused the need for further regulation stated that laws needed to be clearer and more specific about the protection afforded to CSOs from undue or arbitrary interference as long as they were within the law and constitution and that the courts (and not a state body) would need to decide on whether a CSO is within or outside the province of the law and constitution. This would ensure that the rule of law prevails over that of politics.

Procedure to deal with conflict and to promote conflict mediation: Others were of the opinion that existing regulations and laws were adequate, but that they could be strengthened by a set of principles and procedures on how the issues could be settled constructively. Some suggested that there should be an independent advisory group or specialists who could mediate in such situations and help CSOs and the state come to a good constructive resolution. In any case, the underlying issue was one of respecting differences of opinion, and seeking an evidence-based way of coming to a resolution.

Discussions with communities, affected persons and specialists: A third position was of involving those who have been affected by certain issues (e.g. lack of public support for people with disabilities, or people affected by drugs, etc.) to share their concerns and experiences with the larger public. Also, it would be important to seek the broader opinion of professionals and specialists who may hold diverse views in the areas of disagreement and conflict.

Those who supported the state’s right to assert its authority during conflicts and disagreements put forward another set of arguments: that the government was the elected body and that people should obey the superior authority of government. This position, although an arguably controversial one, was also supported to various degrees by those who asserted that the state was the leading authority on all issues concerning the citizens. Governance theories and concepts however recognize the state to be one (amongst other) actors in ‘a wider cooperative network’.

6.5 Ensuring Credibility and Public Confidence

Almost all respondents noted that the communities with whom they worked with saw them in a positive manner. It was important that CSO activities were perceived and accepted to be aimed at public benefit (or the benefit of vulnerable and deprived groups in the community) rather than for personal gain (especially material gain) or profit. On the whole, respondents noted that their family and friends supported what they did, and that the general community viewed their activities in a supportive manner. Nonetheless, most respondents felt that it was important to improve the way that the

general public saw civil society organisations, and that there was a need to do so. Respondents noted that the responsibility for their public image was primarily with CSOs themselves, followed by the government and media.

Table 6.8: Community’s view of CSOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View</th>
<th>Total (N=80)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community views CSOs positively/ they are supportive</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community views CSOs negatively/ they are critical</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What was particularly strong was the perception of lack of public accountability within the civil society sector. Some CSOs who participated in the survey explained that recent corrupt and compromising incidents in their communities (e.g. of one CSO member running away with the donated funds, another CSO was accused of using NGO resources to campaign politically and another one was said to have used NGO resources for personal use) had led to growing suspicion and derision towards all CSOs in those islands. This had halted community support for CSOs and CSO activities.

Some shared a prevailing and escalating sense amongst the public and amongst potential donors (such as businesses and individual donors) of a strong mistrust in the civil society sector. The reasons mentioned included increasing competitiveness amongst CSOs, instances of corruption, the presence of a number of inactive CSOs within the sector, and growing disagreements and conflicts of opinion. Many respondents shared some suggestions on how to improve credibility of and public confidence in the sector.

6.5.1 Improving Credibility and Public Confidence in the Sector

Table 6.9: Improving credibility and public confidence in the sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested action</th>
<th>Total (N=80)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase the number of activities done by CSOs</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance responsiveness to community needs and issues</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise public awareness about the role of the civil society sector and its contribution to society</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure transparency of CSO activity and operations</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase public engagement in civil society sector</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve efficacy and efficiency of CSOs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (expert input, media engagement, work more with government etc.)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally the most important element, according to the majority of respondents, was to increase the number of activities carried out by CSOs. The second was to ensure that these activities corresponded to actual on-going public concerns and the real needs of certain groups – in other words, improving responsiveness of CSOs yet without compromising the credibility of CSOs by engaging in politics. This point also corresponds to the issues raised earlier of maintaining independence from external agendas.

Another important point raised was that of raising public awareness along two lines, a) the important role of a civil society sector in a democratic state and b) information about the actual on-going contributions of CSOs to Maldivian society. With regard to the first point, there is increasing global recognition that neither the state nor the market alone would be able to solve the interrelated social economic and environmental issues of our time, but rather that the third force – represented by the people themselves – is necessary to counterbalance the powers of the state and market. In the same way that the first and second sectors are for the most part, organized and collective themselves, so too the third sector would function best in the form of organised collective action (i.e. CSOs). The commitment and passion of the people to the causes they espouse stem from their own experiences, concerns and observations and this is what

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74 FJS (2010)
75 Salamon, Solowski, & List (2003); ActionAid Nigeria & DevNet (2007); Jad (2010); Chaudhoke (2010). These authors also argue that the separation of these three sectors can be misleading – rather they should be understood as mutually constituting one another.
makes the civil society sector critical to the process of democracy. The role of the third sector here is to bring to the attention of fellow citizens and policymakers issues that may have been overlooked or disregarded. Equally importantly for a country recently embracing democratic political principles such as the Maldives, collective citizen action can help ensure that non-democratic practices do not develop in the political arena. At their best, citizen actions of these sorts help build capacities for people to participate in social and political processes, integrate disadvantaged and marginalised groups into the civic process, and inject thought-provoking dialogue and debate into the public discourse, and act for the public good.

6.5.2 Ensuring Accountability and Transparency

The fourth point raised by the respondents related to ensuring accountability and transparency of this sector. This is important because, just as those of the state and the market, are not without its inherent dangers, the powers available to the civil society sector can also be misused by its actors. For example, some CSOs can promote not just thought-provoking dialogue but the discourse they introduce may be vituperative and vitriolic; they may choose to promote hatred instead of harmony; or they may seek to limit, rather than facilitate the participatory potentials of groups of fellow citizens. Similar to allegations sometimes made of state and private sector entities, CSOs too may siphon funds for personal benefit or utilise these to buy support from disadvantaged people. Therefore, regulations of the civil society sector can reasonably include requisite criteria for registration and deregistration, basic structures of internal governance, the regular auditing and publication of accounts, demonstration of independence of action, and measures to limit exercise of undue influence or the abuse of powers.

Common assumptions about the relationship between these two elements are that transparency generates accountability, but the evidence for this is neither strong nor straightforward. Fox (2010) proposes a different question: he asks, ‘under what conditions can transparency lead to accountability’? Transparency, he notes, is clear information available to the public rather than just data or statistics. This means that CSOs need to process the data that is available, understand what this means and present the status, current institutional behaviour, and its implications to both the institutions under examination, and the general public. In order to be confident of accountability, he presents the notions of a) answerability, i.e. the demand on institutions to provide answers for their decisions and impacts, and b) sanctioning, compensation or remediation, i.e. the means by which institutions are enforced to maintain the standards they are supposed to. He also cautions that a balance needs to be achieved between transparency and surveillance.

The circulating allegations of lack of independence, of rampant corruption and of ineffectiveness were said to have undermined the credibility of the Maldivian civil society sector, and had also affected the willingness of the public and of the private sector to contribute to the sector and give general and financial support to their activities. For this reason, respondents noted the importance of ensuring transparency. In light of Fox’s arguments above, it is important to bring in aspects of accountability into the picture as well. Moreover, it highlights that improving this aspect of its image is also a responsibility of the sector itself.

Equally important was a means for organisations to prove whether accusations of illicit or unconstitutional or corrupt behaviour were false or not and thereby restore their reputation if wrongfully accused. Without such a mechanism, it was difficult to deal with accusations of corruption, especially where there was growing competition between organisations. Certainly during the interviews, it was possible to experience instances of such accusation, where sometimes an organisation would name another, accusing them of falsifying accounts, theft and other forms of misuse of NGO resources. For this purpose, the importance of fair investigation and inquiry would be important, as would be independent and purposeful accounting audits. Needless to say, where such an accusation is shown to be true, CSOs would need to be subjected to penalties.

76 The social professional analysts may knowledgeably comment on adverse aspects of government policy or demonstrate these through research. The activists can resist and protest against structural discrimination or overt prejudices and seek to re-align society in more equitable and fairer ways at national and local levels. Citizen groups can act as local watchdogs to ensure transparent and accountable practices at local levels. (See Chandhoke, 2010 and also Feher, Kirkorian, & McKee, 2007).
77 In this role, CSOs can ensure the lines between political parties and the state are not blurred, they can resist the development of an irresponsible pluralism, and they can be vigilant against any dysfunctionality of public service institutions. See also Aiyede, E.R. (2003) The dynamics of civil society and the democratization process in Nigeria. Canadian Journal of African Studies. Volume 37 Issue 1 pp1-27.
78 These possibilities for CSOs exist not just in the Maldives, but are recognised to be potential dangers of any unregulated sector. The works of Pointer, & Orkiloff (2009) as well as Ostrower, F. (2007) recognise this potential and make suggestions on how best to avoid the misuse of powers by CSOs.
The suggestions made by the CSOs resonated with recommendations that have been made elsewhere to improve the framework of governance in the civil society sector. They included:

- Improving the capacity of members in financial management and in promoting transparency: the lack of capacity in these aspects was a serious impediment to the credibility of the sector. Training activities in simple book-keeping, internal controls and accounts management would be very useful.

- Establishing a conflict of interest policy. Conflict of interest policies are increasingly common (and in some cases required) of CSOs in order to ensure that the public interest is served. However, it is unlikely that conflict of interest policies have yet been developed by the majority of CSOs in the country. Conflict of interest policies would ensure that people who are responsible for the direction and management of the CSO do not have any conflicting or vested interest in its transactions and direction. Although, in a small dispersed society like Maldives it would be complex to formulate and enforce conflict of interest policies, they would help CSOs to focus on its primary interest of serving the public and not the institutional, private, state, or corporate interests.

- Having a transparent non-discriminatory process for selecting beneficiaries for resource distribution and service provision.

- Publishing/publicising annual reports of strategy, activities, expenditures and sources of income: even if organisations were unable to professionally publish their annual reports and accounts, they could do so by preparing a poster of these aspects and having them posted in a public space, either at a social community centre or at the island office, etc.

- Giving members and communities regular updates of activities.

- Developing policies preventing personal use of resources by members of CSOs: this is an important aspect of governance which will help CSOs be consistent and keep to the rule on issues of personal use of resources by CSO members.

- Making decision-making of Executive Committee transparent.

- Having relevant documents and data (accounts, reports, etc.): poor record-keeping and documentation seriously undermines the ability of CSOs to be accountable and transparent. Keeping minutes of meetings, proper accounts and books, and sufficient reporting on their activities would be an important place to start. This would also ensure that should an accusation of corruption be made, an investigation can be conducted and then they would be able to demonstrate to themselves and others the validity (or invalidity) of such an accusation.

- Having a thorough monitoring and evaluation process.

- Reporting back to funders, sponsors, and donors on activities carried out: CSOs often failed to report back to those who funded their activities, especially when they were private individuals or companies, about the completion of the activity. This was resented by some, and opened the space for doubt about the truthfulness of CSOs. Having a report-back mechanism would be useful to countering this.

### 6.6 Recommendations

- All respondents indicated monitoring the conduct of CSOs to be an important aspect of the sector. It is recommended that:
  - the stated list of guiding principles be adopted into the sector code of conduct.
  - CSOs adopt the following methods to ensure that they are abiding with the code: 1) appointing a member of Executive Committee to implement such reviews; 2) making project officers and coordinators aware of and reminded of the importance to adhering to these principles in their work; 3) involving members and target groups in assessing the work of the CSO; 4) seeking the advice of professional and
technical persons; and appointing a board of governance.

■ To maintain independence from donor influence, it is recommended that CSOs:
  ● Have a donor/sponsor agreement which limits the donors’ involvement in decision-making by the CSO and influence with regard to activity implementation.
  ● strictly adhere to organizational objectives, procedures, policies and principles in all interactions and decision-making within the organization.
  ● Develop an internal policy on how to manage donor relationships and specifying limits.
  ● Build their own capacities to generate own funding as much as possible to reduce dependency on external funding.
  ● Build their own capacities to better negotiate with donors and sponsors and reach an acceptable compromise on relevant issues.
  ● Ensure that those responsible for the organization and the activity should be familiar with the relevant protocol and should report back to and consult with the committee and the board (of governance) on these matters.

■ To maintain independence from political parties, it is recommended that CSOs:
  ● Refuse funds from political parties or political figures.
  ● Have relevant clauses in the Governing Regulations and any policy documents to minimise political party influence and to maintain independence of CSO.
  ● Establish internal procedures which clearly stipulate independence from political party influence/interference.
  ● Refrain from engaging in political activities (such as campaigning or electioneering or supporting a ‘colour’: however CSOs could comment on, agree with or challenge the merit of government policies or proposed political party policies and manifestos preferably on the basis of empirical evidence or clearly articulated reasoning and not on party lines: CSOs especially would be required to comment if these policies and manifestos have foreseeable positive or negative impacts on or implications for the areas of work associated with those CSOs.
  ● Assign the responsibility of overseeing the CSO’s independence from political influences to a member of the Executive Committee and to the Board of Governance.
  ● Include articles into the Associations Act and Regulations prohibiting political funding of CSOs, or the appointment of political figures into executive positions of CSOs or as board members.
  ● Build capacities to refute political influence (by being able to generate own funding or to negotiate with politically influential figures).
  ● Be familiar with the relevant protocol in order to report back to and consult with the Executive Committee and the Board (of governance) on these matters.

■ Respondents have pointed out a number of such control actions that could be taken by civil society actors to ensure the functional and visionary independence of the three sectors of state, corporate and civil society. These include:
  ● Not appointing actively political figures (i.e. persons who are in leadership positions in political parties or persons who are political appointees in the current government) onto the Executive Committee or any future Board of Governance. Current members should resign if they take up such a political position or would need to resign from the political positions to continue being in a governance or management position in the CSO.
● Being sensitive to the political context and ensuring political neutrality in designing and implementing. – for example ensuring that selection of beneficiaries is not based on political affiliation.

● Having separate regulations for political parties and foundations set up by political parties and figures, so that these are seen to be separate from the civil society sector.

The following recommendations are made to deal with situations of conflict and disagreement between CSOs and between the state and CSOs:

● increasing the space for and the commitment to engage in communication between disagreeing and/ or conflicting CSOs. Communication between organisations could take the many forms of negotiation, discussion, and debate.

● basing explanations on evidence and rationale, pointing out the beneficial (and/or adverse) effects of some strategies, and explaining reasons for choice of action.

● expanding the number of people involved in this discussion consisted of providing the space for the opinions and experiences of ALL affected groups and stakeholders to participate in the discussion.

● Any allegations against CSOs of unconstitutional or illicit activities by any agency of the state should require evidence and not be based on arbitrary decisions by state powers. Moreover, the process should follow those of a fair hearing.

● Laws should be specified indicating the protections for CSOs from exercise of arbitrary state power.

● Procedures should be outlined on how to deal with conflict between the state and CSOs, and ways of promoting conflict mediation should be strengthened.

● Such rights and protections for CSOs should be granted with the responsibilities that CSOs need to be open and cooperative to the idea of fair investigation and inquiry procedures where such allegations exist. They also have a responsibility to inform the relevant authorities about their work – to the extent necessary – and to abide by any existing regulations – although the state should not interfere with or direct activities unless they are shown to be illicit or unconstitutional.

There was recognized need to improve credibility and public confidence in the sector. Recommended strategies include:

● Increasing the number of activities done by CSOs.

● Enhancing the responsiveness of CSOs to community needs and issues.

● Raising public awareness about the role of the civil society sector in a democracy and its contribution to society.

● Ensuring transparency of CSO activity and operations.

● Increasing public engagement within the sector.

● Improving the efficacy and efficiency of CSOs.

● Engaging the media.

● Increasing expert input into the sector.

● Working more often with the government.

Improving transparency and accountability of the sector was also a key priority area. Recommendations include:

● Improving the capacity of members in financial management and in promoting transparency: training
activities in simple book-keeping, internal controls and accounts management would be very useful.

- Establishing a conflict of interest policy.
- Having a transparent non-discriminatory process for selecting beneficiaries for resource distribution and service provision.
- Publishing/publicising annual reports of strategy, activities, expenditures and sources of income. Even if organisations were unable to professionally publish their annual reports and accounts, they could do so by preparing a poster of these aspects and having them posted in a public space, either at a social community centre or at the island office, etc.
- Giving members and communities regular updates of activities.
- Developing policies preventing personal use of resources by members of CSOs.
- Making decision-making of Executive Committee transparent.
- Having relevant documents and data (accounts, reports, etc.): poor record-keeping and documentation seriously undermines the ability of CSOs to be accountable and transparent.
- Having a thorough monitoring and evaluation process.
- Reporting back to funders, sponsors, and donors on activities carried out.
7. Regulation and Decentralization of the Civil Society Sector

This chapter explores practical questions regarding the regulation and decentralisation of the sector. Civil society sector regulations are generally intended to protect citizens and CSOs and are necessary in order to increase and maintain confidence in the sector. In countries that aim to establish a democratic framework of governance, regulations for the sector are intended to protect the civil society sector from arbitrary state power whilst enforcing CSOs to operate transparently, accountably and ethically. ICNL (1998) notes a lack of sufficient regulations pertaining to the civil society sector is as problematic as there being too much restrictive regulation. The latter cripples the civil society sector whilst the former opens up the space for fraud and corruption. The balance between too much and too little regulation is a fine one, and requires careful and constant attention by both state and civil society.

For this reason, it is important to have a closer look at the administrative and regulatory processes to which the civil society sector is subject, and by which they are governed. The legal aspects of governance were covered in Chapter 3, whilst this chapter, especially in the first part, relates to the administrative and regulatory processes in place in the Maldives. This chapter looks in closer detail at the registration and reporting processes, and the challenges of administrative encounters between MOHA and NGOs. The chapter also looks at the difficulties in regulation that the current regulatory mechanisms pose both to the Ministry and to organisations in the sector as reported in interviews with the MOHA and with the survey respondents. ICNL (1998) states that even countries, which have a facilitating constitutional and legal framework, can nonetheless severely constrain the civil society sector through the regulations and administrative procedures they set up.

The second part of this chapter examines the question of decentralising the regulation of the sector in actual practice. As noted in Chapter 3, the momentum for decentralisation is now underway following the enactment of the legal framework and local elections held in February 2011. The regulatory processes are broken down into its distinct elements and examines each in relation to respondents’ opinions on whether these should be decentralized or not, and why or why not. The different elements examined here include registration, reporting, monitoring, provision of information (on legal, fund-raising and institutional queries), management of grievances and complaints, and the investigation of alleged fraud or corruption. The data for this chapter are drawn from stakeholder and key figure interviews and from the 70 organisations selected from the four atolls.

ICNL (1998) provides some guidelines for the process of decentralising regulation of civil society. They note the importance of having little or no overlap in the functions carried out by the central and local governments. They also point out that concerns around power and competence are inevitable when there are two levels of government; central government authorities are more likely to possess competence although the impulse might be to devolve power as much as possible. ICNL (1998) recommends that the emphasis should be on competence because it helps to ensure a properly functioning civil society sector, while decentralising to the extent possible without compromising quality. These issues have been considered in formulating the recommendations for this chapter.

Furthermore, the issue of decentralising administration and regulation of the sector is discussed in greater detail in section 3.
7.1 Knowledge and Perceptions of Legal & Regulatory Requirements for CSOs

The question asking CSOs what government laws and regulations applied to them was intended to assess CSOs’ knowledge on this matter. See Table 7.1 below for details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal instrument</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associations Act</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Act</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associations Act and regulations</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All laws</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other legal regulations relevant to activity carried out</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not aware / Don’t know</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only one CSO considered the recent constitutional framework as applicable to CSOs. This may have been a result of the phrasing of the question as the Constitution is not perceived to be either ‘a law’ or ‘a regulation’. As discussed earlier, the constitution imposes certain legal obligations on them (for example, those of being non-discriminatory and of refraining from fostering intolerance) and offers them rights and protections (e.g. of their fundamental right to form associations or of being able to appeal unfair administrative decisions). This is an important facet that requires further discussion and awareness-raising within the sector and amongst the public for two reasons. Firstly, since the political transition in 2008, there might still be some arenas where people are unsure of the democratic rationale on which the civil society sector’s rights and protections are based, especially since there was previous closer scrutiny by the state. The need and value of such a sector, its freedoms and rights as well as its responsibilities and obligations need to be more widely circulated, discussed and debated in order for individuals to reflect upon and internalise these principles and practices. This would help CSOs to reflect on their own role in society and function accordingly. Secondly, members of the public (and CSOs) need to know that the civil society sector too is constitutionally required to uphold their obligations (i.e. of acting in the best interests of its citizens, promote tolerance, protect the rights of fellow citizens, and practice non-discrimination).

A proportion of respondents stated that all laws of the country were applicable to them. While technically true, such a broad statement could be generally unhelpful for CSOs to know which tenets of the law they had to pay particular attention to, and against which their performances could be assessed.

The relatively rarer but more accurate observation that the regulations relevant to implemented activities were also applicable to CSOs raised an important point. That is, CSOs would need to know any laws and regulations that exist in relation to an area of work relevant to their objectives and activities (e.g. human rights, environment, health services or social services, education, etc.). Similarly, if there were particular laws and regulations applicable to certain groups (such as children, youth or prisoners), CSOs would be expected to be familiar with them as well. This acknowledgement raises the level of responsibility for CSOs; they would be required to comply at least with the existing standards and obligations in their focus of work and in relation to their target groups in addition to the law and regulations pertaining to associations.

As noted earlier, the flagging of the Employment Act as a relevant one is interesting, given that only 0.7% of the personnel in the sample were actually employed through formal arrangements. The remainder works in the sector on a voluntary basis, which is not currently governed in the Employment Act.

7.2 Associations’ Regulations: Current Procedures and Challenges

This section draws primarily from an examination of the regulatory documents and interviews with the MOHA staff. It provides an important additional perspective on the actual practice of regulating the sector. The Associations’ Regula-
Comprehensive Study of the Maldivian Civil Society

The Maldivian government has issued new regulations (‘jamiyyaathakaa behey gavai’dhu’) to further regulate the sector in accordance with the Associations Act. The Regulations cover various components, including the registration process, the broad assessment criteria for approving aspects of CSOs (such as names, mottoes, logos, the governing regulations, etc.), appointment of the executive committee, the annual reporting process, amongst others. In particular, the regulations extend and detail the provisions made in the Act, and give some insight into the administrative elements involved in regulating CSOs.

7.2.1 Approvals given by MOHA

CSOs did not always seem clear of when and which kinds of approvals were necessary in order to be in compliance with the legal requirements. The list below shows that regulations require MOHA approval of the following:

1. Name, logo, motto, symbol, flag and colour of the CSO (and any subsequent changes to these) to ensure that there is no overlap or space for possible confusion with an existing well-known national or international CSO
2. Purpose and objectives of CSOs (and any subsequent changes to them) to ensure that they are in line with accepted functions of CSOs in the constitution and the law
3. Governing regulations (or the Articles of Association) of CSOs (and any subsequent changes to them)
4. Annual reports, annual accounts and audit reports of CSOs (within 30 days of being passed by members at the AGM)
5. Appointment (re-appointment and renewal) of the executive committee (within 30 days’ of being appointed).
6. Initiatives to seek or acquire any foreign funding
7. Plans to start business ventures
8. Winding up and termination of CSOs

7.2.2 Challenges Faced in Implementing Governing Regulations of CSOs

25 items in the CSO Governing Regulations in two separate documents: The Associations Act states that each CSO should have its own governing regulations (Article 4). Article 5 of the Act lists 18 items that should be included in the governing regulations. A further 7 items are included in Article 18 of the Associations Regulations. These 25 items are assessed by the MOHA prior to approving a CSO’s governing regulations. However, at present the fact that these items are separated in two documents may sometimes be confusing to CSOs.

Discrepancies between Act and Regulations for Associations: MOHA has noted a number of gaps which require revision in the regulations. For example, they have noted that the Associations Act and the Constitution of the Maldives state that anybody could start an association, however the regulations ask specifically for the Maldivian National ID card in order to submit an application (Article 3.a.), which consequently restricts application to only Maldivians, although some foreign nationals have also wanted to start CSOs. In one case, a founding member who was foreign was accepted on grounds that the other members were Maldivian. This is constitutionally and legally possible but contravenes the Associations’ Regulations, and continues to be an issue of discussion.

Periods when there is no discernible legal authority for the CSO: MOHA has also noted that, because of the way the Associations Regulations are worded, there are some periods of time when there is no discernible authority. For example, the Executive Committee has to be appointed by the founders within 6 months of the registration of the CSO until which time the founders carry legal responsibility for the CSO (Article 15.a. and c./Associations Act). Once they are appointed, the Executive Committee carries legal responsibility for the CSO. Executive Committees are to be appointed for a specified term (Article 18.a/Regulations), and CSOs are expected to appoint a new committee before the term expires (Article 21/Regulations). However this does not always happen and once the term for the Committee lapses and

85 personal communication, June 2011
if no members have been appointed (or re-appointed)\textsuperscript{86}, it is not clear to whom the legal responsibility for the CSO falls. This has made it difficult for the MOHA to hold the CSO accountable.

### 7.2.3 Registering CSOs

**Procedure:** The registration process comprised of the following main steps:\textsuperscript{87}

1. Picking up the application form from the Ministry or download the form from the Ministry website.

2. Submitting the completed application form with the required documents: ID card and copy, police reports which are not older than 3 months; a signed letter of consent from the owner of the premises where the CSO intends to set up office; and proof of not having a criminal record for the past 5 years, and 2 copies of governing regulations.

3. The submitted application is lodged and goes to the entry, where the following are checked to see if they are within the constitution and law of the Maldives, and in accordance to the Associations regulation; namely, the name of the CSO, the objectives of the CSO, and the Governing Regulations of the CSO.

4. Once all documents are decided to be in order, the CSO is registered and a certificate of registration is issued.

**A MOHA perspective on causes of delays in registration:** If there were no problems with the submitted documents, then registration could be a one-day procedure. However, the process generally took around 15 days – this was because there were commonly errors and omissions in the submitted documents.\textsuperscript{88} When there were such problems, applicants were required to make the necessary corrections before registration could take place. This correction process was made difficult on a number of levels, and resulted sometimes in longer procedures than anticipated by either the CSO or MOHA. Documents had to be sent back to the applicant. However, MOHA frequently encountered a situation where incomplete addresses and contact details were provided by the CSOs, making it difficult to contact them once the problems are detected in their applications. For these reasons, the staff noted, they often had to wait for the applicant to return or contact them first, which could take some time. If possible and requested by the applicant, the Ministry staff would sometimes help in making the necessary corrections or in advising CSOs on making amendments. Different staff members were responsible for different regions of the Maldives and the CSOs which functioned in those areas, and they would sometimes provide assistance via phone.

**A CSO perspective on the registration process:** The majority of respondents found the process relatively easy, especially if they had a representative in Male’. Of those who noted the process was difficult; the following issues were mentioned. Travelling to and staying in Male’ was costly. When they did go to Male’, it was more likely to be only for a day or two in order to get the registration done; however when the process took longer than that, the registration process became costly because of issues of finding accommodation, meeting daily expenses and other such aspects. Other difficulties indicated by them included: that it was a long and not-easy to understand process; that they had been unable to contact the relevant officials; that documents were being sent back and forth several times because information provided was said to be incomplete or inadequate; or that the post never having arrived from the Ministry (presumably because the given addresses were wrong, as had been stated by MOHA). Some CSOs noted that their difficulties arose from not having any Male’-based representatives.

For these organisations, the most effective means of follow-up to queries was to show up at the MOHA for discussions. For this reason, respondents sometimes had to travel to and from Male’ on a number of occasions and this was a costly venture. Organisations also noted that the documents that they were required to submit also favoured those CSOs who could spend more time in Male’ – police reports and criminal records were more easily sought from the headquarters in Male’, and sometimes it was not clear whether those from island-based authorities were sufficient for the purposes of registration.

Two incidents were notable. In one instance, the former katheeb, i.e. island chief, had refused to allow them to register

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\textsuperscript{86} One area of lack of clarity was regarding the specified term for Executive Committees. MOHA spoke about this in terms of one year duration, whilst most CSOs mentioned that they re-appoint the committee every two years.

\textsuperscript{87} A description of the process shows exactly where delays could occur. The Ministry website does not collate information in the same way therefore the full list of documents required for submission with application is not easily available.

\textsuperscript{88} MOHA, personal communication, June 2011
and their registration had only taken place after he had been changed, and in the other, the island council had impeded their registration process over differences of opinion as to the activities intended to be carried out by the CSO.

### Table 7.2: Perceived easiness of the registration process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Level of Ease</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy to register</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not easy to register</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7.2.4 The Executive Committee

A minimum of 3 members should be appointed for the Executive Committee, within 6 months of registration (Article 20/Regulations & Article 15/Act). The appointment process should take place in accordance with the conditions and procedures laid out in the Governing Regulations. One of the key concerns of the MOHA based on their observations of and interactions with CSOs at the time of registering the members for the Executive Committee was the seeming lack of knowledge regarding the specific responsibilities, roles and purpose of executive committee members. According to MOHA, in addition, those who came to register the organisation or file the names of the Executive Committee for approval sometimes tended to cross off names from the list during discussions with the Ministry staff without any consultation either with the person named or any other identified members on the committee. This lack of consultation raised MOHA suspicions that CSOs did not have a due process for appointing Executive Committee members.

### Table 7.3: Methods and frequency of elections of Executive Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of election</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elected by voting (no timeframe specified)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected annually by voting amongst members</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected every two years by voting amongst members</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected every three years by voting amongst members</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others: elected by CEO; Executive committee members nominates one another; Proposes own name based on interest and accepted by committee</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7.2.5 Annual General Meetings

Although no particular Article deals with this point in either the Act or the Regulations, the procedures outlined for the CSOs require that an Annual General Meeting (AGM) is held within 6 months of registration in order to appoint the Executive Committee, and within one year in order to approve the annual reports, annual accounts and audited report of the CSO prior to submission of the same to MOHA. Organisations that registered towards or after March generally would need to have two AGMs in that year, as they would have to have one to approve the Committee and the Governing Regulations and later on to approve the annual report. The Ministry noted that this was one reason why organisations failed to send in their reports on time – as it was difficult for CSOs to gather the members of the Executive Committee for AGMs in time to approve the reports.

Similarly, although not stated in either the Act or the Regulations, MOHA noted that the appointment of the Executive Committee was to take place formally in the presence of a Ministry representative. In islands outside of Male’, this representative is typically a high (non-political) official of the island selected by the Ministry. This was the source of...
some frustration for MOHA, because CSOs tended to cancel or postpone the General Meeting after the representative had been selected, meaning the process of selection had to be re-started. In some cases, according to MOHA, the selected representative was connected to the CSO in some way although this may not be known to the Ministry, leading to issues of conflict of interest. This was however difficult to avoid from afar – what would be required, according to MOHA, was someone who knew the respective island communities and their social relations better. In addition, it was acknowledged that AGMs were generally hard for CSOs to hold because a significant proportion of the members of the Executive Committee tended to be away in Male’ or on work.

7.2.6 The Annual Reporting Process

The annual deadline for CSOs to submit their annual reports was before the end of March of each year, and within 30 days’ of having been approved at the AGM (Article 28/Act and Article 28/Regulations). The responses from CSOs suggest, however, that about a third of CSOs did not know of this – rather, one recommendation from an organisation had been to have a specified due date for the submission of annual reports. The annual report was meant to include annual income and expenditure, details of CSO governance (‘jamiyya hin’gi goiy’), and the activities conducted that year. Many registered CSOs did not submit the required reports, and those that did not always cover the stated topics or meet the given requirements. Partly this maybe because of the difficulty of having the AGM approve the annual report (given that having a quorum was difficult). The failure to send annual reports results in a fine of MRF500.00 for each year that reports are not sent (Article 37.a./Act).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Level of Ease</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Male’ (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy to meet reporting requirements</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not easy to meet reporting requirements</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reports that failed to meet the criteria were not accepted until the amendments were done, and the CSO had paid the fine. Along with the annual reports, CSOs were expected to submit audited accounts. According to the Ministry, this latter requirement was very poorly adhered to by CSOs. Even large and relatively capable CSOs, including those primarily composed of companies and professionals with ready access to accountants and auditors, rarely submitted their accounts and generally did not submit audited accounts of their organisation to the MOHA. Indeed, only a third of CSOs stated that they conducted an audit in this study and these were mostly internal audits. Article 30 of the Act states that the auditors should be approved by the government; however, currently there are only three auditing firms that are licenced by the Auditor-General and these are all based in Male’.

In general, the annual reporting process was said to be easy by almost half of respondents, although some noted that the quorum for members at the AGM was commonly not reached. A significant number (20%) also reported that it was not an easy process. Interviewees also suggested ways in which it could be improved; one was the development of some guidelines on reporting, and the other was the provision of some feedback or acknowledgement that the reports had been sent in due time. Clear standards for annual reports and timely (positive and negative) feedback would help improve the quality of reporting. Some organisations did not have the capacity to produce annual and financial reports; and there are no clear guidelines on acceptable methods of auditing. Such acknowledgement of receipt would be useful for CSOs to show that they were adhering to their legal requirements and improve the credibility of the sector in general. Only a few organisations reported that they had not prepared their annual reports. The reasons given for these were the lack of office space and equipment (they assumed that the report need to be typed and printed); and secondly, they had not been able to get the necessary quorum at the AGM to sign the report. Given the statistics supplied in the Civil Society Forum Report, the number of CSOs who had not sent annual reports is likely to be higher than have been reported here.

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90 MOHA, personal communication, June 2011
91 MOHA, personal communication, June 2011
92 The report notes that out of the 209 CSOs who applied to participate in the Forum only 47 complied with the regulations, i.e. around 22.5% (MOHA 2010).
7.2.7 Access to the MOHA for Information

The Associations Act and the Associations Regulations are available on the Ministry website, and the responses suggest that most CSOs utilised the website as their first source of information. CSOs found the process of accessing information in this way fairly easy and straightforward. However, the main issues arose in terms of interpretation and clarification; some CSOs found it hard to understand what were exactly meant by the stipulations and more importantly, their purpose. There were no clear mechanisms for clarification on the website, so most CSOs formulated their registration documents and Governing Regulations as they saw fit – leading to many errors in application. Copies of the Associations Act and Regulations, and a sample copy of the Governing Regulations for Associations are presented to CSOs during the registration process; but at this point, the first draft of the Governing Regulations would have already been presented.

Table 7.5: Modes of accessing information from MOHA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet/ Website</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In person</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island office</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A large proportion of respondents noted that they called the MOHA directly either for first-time information or further clarification. The efficacy of this step varied considerably. Some noted that there seemed to be no difficulty in asking for information in this way. Others noted that phone communication was not easy; they were not sure who to contact sometimes and sometimes staff could not always answer their questions, or explain the justification for a certain part of the Governing Regulations or Associations Regulations. Visiting in person was seen either as very difficult if based in another atoll or as very easy if there was a proxy member already in Male’. Yet, if they came to the MOHA, their queries were often attended to.

Furthermore, it was pointed out that public information on available funding, whether from the state, by international agencies or under bilateral agreements, was scarce. Organisations believed strongly that a better mechanism for ensuring equitable distribution of information on available funding should be made available – whether through a web-portal, regular announcements or distribution through island and atoll councils.

Finally, it was recommended that a handbook of operations (or an operational manual) be developed to guide CSOs. In addition to the relevant legal and regulatory requirements, the handbook could focus on different institutional models, viable systems of governance, issues of institutional management and necessary institutional safeguards to ensure legal, technical and financial accountability. The handbook could outline some relevant or desirable institutional policies such as financial and accounting policies, policies on the use of NGO equipment and resources, and policies relating to human resources.

7.2.8 Approving Foreign Financial Assistance

MOHA described the following procedure to approve foreign financial assistance: CSOs send their proposals or proposed activity to the Ministry together with details of the organisations from which they were seeking funds; after the Registrar peruses the documents to ensure that they are in line with the Maldivian laws and relevant regulations and that they do not contravene Islam, the proposal is sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Should the Foreign Ministry wish to get a further opinion, they might send it to the Department of National Planning. The comments and feedback are then sent to the MOHA.

Yet for many CSOs, the process did not seem to be transparent; it was unclear what criteria were being used to as-
sess foreign assistance, and what information could be provided by the organisation in order to speed up the process involved. In some cases, the delays of approving the foreign assistance meant that the organisation chose to re-direct their finances. The situation is made further confusing by the fact that in practice the set-out procedures are not always strictly adhered to. Interviews with donor agencies have indicated that some CSOs get directly funded by bilateral and multi-laterals through projects that have not gone through the MOHA or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the same time, some CSOs do not divulge the sources of their funding, even when these funds come from abroad.

Overall, the situation with regard to external sources of funding is unclear and leads to gaps in properly and effectively managing the sector. If the measures recommended with regard to proper auditing and reporting were followed, the information on sources of funding would be clearer, both to the government and to the public. The publication and distribution of annual reports (by placing on websites etc.) which disclose source of funding for CSOs must be encouraged, as recommended below.

A suggestion to address the issue of approving sources of foreign assistance was to have a fairly public database or list of approved foreign agencies; if funds were to come from one of these then a CSO would not need to apply further for approval. If a CSO were to seek funds from an agency not yet on this list, then it would be important for the agency to undergo the vetting process and be placed on the approved list. A disclosure requirement for the source of funding is important to gauge the amount of funds that come in to the country. Moreover, a more transparent and faster process for vetting these is required. In this way, organisations themselves could supply some of the information regarding the criteria about the sources of funding making it easier for the Ministry to investigate them. Building capacities within the Ministry to carry out these functions would again be of great importance.

7.2.9 Relationship between CSOs and MOHA

According to the MOHA, documents submitted (such as the registration application, annual reports and the Governing Regulations) were often poorly drafted and written. They were in need of corrections, both editorial and substantive. The MOHA staff attributed these to CSOs finding it difficult to understand the documents and sometimes not reading them at all. Moreover, staff noted that there were also problems when they tried to explain the regulations (particularly those pertaining to the Governing Regulations) to CSO; they would not listen to what was said or they would refuse to accept that some of the required documents had not been submitted. Similar frustrations were observed amongst the CSO respondents towards the MOHA.

MOHA noted that some CSOs seemed to have difficulties in opening bank accounts but that they were often unable to help in these instances. In their opinion, banks appeared to have inconsistent policies with regard to opening accounts for CSOs. They might sometimes ask for the original of the Governing Regulations and at other times, only a photocopy. In other instances, they would ask for the Governing Regulations to be attested by the Ministry. CSOs sometimes requested help from the Ministry in these circumstances but there was little that they could do, as there were no relationship between the MOHA and the banks on these matters.

Not surprisingly, strong emphasis was laid on improving the relationship between the MOHA and CSOs by both the government and the CSOs interviewed. According to the respondents, the responsibility lay mostly with the CSOs themselves. It was also stated that the government should implement their laws and regulations in relation to the CSO sector, whilst CSOs themselves should strive to have their own organisational affairs in order. One recommendation was to increase the interaction and dialogue between the government and the CSOs; the recently constituted Advisory Committee would in fact be one mechanism by which to improve such understanding. Strengthening the independent aspects of such a committee was emphasised – perhaps by having independent observers on the Committee. The need to assess the overall status of the civil society sector and its contributions to the development of the country and the advancement of the wellbeing of its citizens was also mentioned. It was thought that such a mechanism would help to ensure the credibility of the sector. Moreover, its positive impacts on the country would come to be better valued.
7.2.10 Penalties

The MOHA noted that whatever the infringements of regulatory requirements, the only penalty for CSOs (apart from de-registration) was a fine of MRF 500.00 (Article 37.a.)\(^93\). Thus, even if the annual reports and accounts were more than one year late in submission, CSOs were fined this sum. There was also some difficulty in trying to demand fines from CSOs, when they fail to adhere to the legal requirements. Apart from the difficulties of contacting organizations because of incomplete contact details, etc., CSOs were also reluctant to pay their fines. For example, as soon as a CSO was fined, they tended to request de-registration. However, de-registration was only allowed after any due fines were collected.

The main criteria for de-registration was if they failed to submit reports for two consecutive years or if they failed to adhere to the law and constitution; de-registration however was at the discretion of the Registrar. This was seen as problematic and a fairer and clearer procedure was recommended as well. MOHA also noted there was no real process by which to ascertain if a CSO was conducting criminal or illicit activities.\(^94\) A particular problem that has caused some difficulty for MOHA staff has been when persons suspected or known to be part of violent or criminal gangs in Male’ applied to form CSOs. They stated that such applications were also approved if the documents were in order, but at the same time, felt uncomfortable to endorse the formal institutionalisation of these groups. Such activity potentially brought further disrepute to the civil society sector.

7.3 Decentralising Elements of Regulation and Administration

There was a strong lobby for having the regulatory powers and processes moved closer to home for the CSOs. The MOHA too noted that such a process would not only be fairer but also more practical for the purposes of the administration and regulation of the sector. A considerable proportion of those respondents who answered this question were of the opinion that the administrative and regulatory elements should operate at island or atoll levels. The proportion to retain these elements were slightly larger, but as can be seen from the table below, this was because of the larger number of respondents from Male’ who proposed to retain the central focus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Locations</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>38.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atoll</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Island-level administration and regulation of CSOs was proposed mostly for reasons of easy access but also because some felt that the centre was too far away and would not have a good working knowledge of the context and issues at island-level. Moreover, those who advocated for island-level regulation noted that dealings with CSOs could be more easily done if closer to the organisations (‘gaathun masaikkai balaalan faseyha vaanethee’). Current experiences of delays and difficulties of communication would be eliminated. These proponents also argued that the efficiency of the sector overall would therefore improve. The low number of proponents for atoll-level administration is interesting and perhaps a remnant of the strong centre or island focus. The regional (or atoll) level focus for regulation is a more recent phenomenon and it may be that respondents were less confident of how the system would work.

On the other hand, for those who proposed the central government as the most suitable site for administration and regulation of the sector, it was precisely this ‘closeness’ which posed problems in addition to concerns of the capacity to deliver on these responsibilities. In particular, it was thought that the smallness of the community and the increasing political rifts within, could compromise the neutrality with which such administration and regulation should occur and could endanger the work of CSOs. It was said that the political inclination of individuals (and the CSOs or island councils which they represented) was increasingly a factor in social relations. This was one of the most frequent concerns,

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93 MOHA, personal communication June 2011
94 MOHA, personal communication June 2011
and one that cannot be easily dismissed given that some CSOs already seemed to have felt the dynamics of politics influencing decisions being taken place at island level regarding CSO activity.

Further concerns were that of possible increased space for corruption, bribery or collusion. If powers were only concentrated at island- or atoll-level without any oversight from the central government or from an independent institution or authority, the chances of corrupt behaviour between CSOs and elected officials at island and atoll level were noted to be higher. Finally, it was put forward that that the regulation of CSOs is a nationwide matter, (unlike issues of garbage disposal mechanisms or investment decisions which are the province of atoll and island councils) and therefore the regulation (if not the administration) should take place at the centre.

The criteria driving the opinion on where best to place the administration and regulation of the sector constitute the following dimensions:

- **Access** - the need to have more equitable access to the administrative and regulatory processes of the sector. As has been noted on several occasions throughout this report, the physical distance between islands and the centre has been one of the main factors contributing to the difficulties of registration, seeking information and clarifying issues, submitting annual reports, etc.

- **Knowledge of context and CSOs** – equally, it has been pointed out that the lack of knowledge about the context and the CSOs has also contributed to difficulties in monitoring whether CSOs are currently active, defunct or whether they comply with the legal requirements and regulations.

- **Efficiency** – the various delays on the part of CSOs and on that of MOHA that have been noted in this report are likely to be reduced, and the efficiency with which the sector is administrated is likely to increase were these processes brought closer to the islands.

- **Competence** – administrating and regulating the sector requires competence, not only in matters of registration and creating a database but also in understanding the place of CSOs in a democracy, the potential of the sector, and other technical aspects such as evaluating proposals, overseeing financial management and advising on specific areas of work. Incompetence in these areas could easily damage the growth of the civil society sector, which is an important element in a newly democratized country such as the Maldives. At present, the central government is largely in possession of the human resources that could deliver these services.

- **Potential for influence, partiality and corruption** – this relates to the effect of small communities on issues of administration, regulation and monitoring. Many respondents noted that the smaller the community, and the further away from the oversight of the central government, the greater potential there was for partial treatment based on a number of factors from political affiliation to family relationships.

- **Consistency in laws and regulations for civil society sector** – Given that the sector has nationwide implication, it was noted that consistency in the laws and regulations for the sector across the country would be important. Whilst priorities may be set by the island and atoll councils and CSOs invited to work along these lines, having legal disparities or regulatory differences for CSOs within the country has the potential to undermine the democratic setting.

**Division of Labour in Decentralising the Sector:** Each of these needs underpin a particular aspect of increased democratisation of the country – ensuring equitable access to all citizens and bringing them closer to the decision-making process (regardless of their geographical location) is one of the fundamental drivers of the decentralisation process. On the other hand, eliminating undue state interference and minimising political influence in how the civil society sector functions is a key aspect of strengthening democratic space and upholding the rule of law (over that of politics or state domination) in the country.

Table 7.7 shows a breakdown of respondents’ main reasons for proposing a central-focused or an island-focused administrative and regulatory system for the sector. As can be seen, there is fairly equally divided opinion on the issue. It points to the validity of both sets of arguments.
Table 7.7: Breakdown of respondents’ main reasons for proposing a central-focused or an island-focused administrative and regulatory system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Competence</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Potential for political influence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Potential for corruption, favouritism or nepotism &amp; partiality</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consistency in laws, regulations and standards for all CSOs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ease of Access</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Knowledge of context and CSO</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Efficiency</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such an equal division of opinion was anticipated, and therefore, the study also proposed a number of different elements of administration and regulation and asked respondents on where best to place these processes. As can be seen from Table 7.8, this resulted in the respondents proposing a division of labour between the central and local levels of government.

Table 7.8: Decentralization of different function of administration and regulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Island</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Atoll</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Not specified</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registering CSOs*</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of information and advice to CSOs Atoll</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining permits, approvals and other legal documents</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the regulatory framework and the association regulations</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of complaints and grievances</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring organisational adherence to regulations</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation of suspected cases of fraud or corruption</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaising with other agencies and institutions</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* De-registering to be retained at central government authority level

7.3.1 Registering and De-registering CSOs

Registration: The opinion was clearly on having this process available at the island-level. Respondents were adamant that organisations should not find the process made more difficult for them on the basis of their perceived political alignment or links, or in relation to any criticism made of government policies or practices; equally the space for bribery and corruption should be limited. Another concern was that the registration process should be uniform across the nation, and not based on different island-based criteria. Despite these conditionals, there was a vociferous and valid argument that the process should be made easier for those who do not reside in Male’. Those who favoured the process to be managed at atoll-council level believed that building the necessary capacities at atoll-council level would be less costly and easier to achieve.
Table 7.9: Decentralisation of the registration process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Location</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Island</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atoll</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ability to officially register an organisation and bring it into being is linked to the fundamental freedoms and rights of association and collective action, and is a matter of Constitutional concern. For this reason, the processes around these should be in a form to ensure and safeguard the associational right to form and exist; all Maldivians regardless of location should be able to equitably and easily access the registration process; and finally, that criteria for formation of an association indeed cannot vary across the country.

Perhaps a two-tier process around this issue would help – focal points at island or atoll councils could accept and process the application forms for registration, and police reports and court records issued at island level should be acceptable for this purpose. These registration documents would need to be sent on to the MOHA, and be entered into a national register of associations, and the organisation issued with a certificate of registration from the Ministry. However to safeguard against the possibility of a highly politicised process and to ensure that there are as minimal obstacles to the formation of associations (in accordance with freedoms and rights granted in the Constitution), it should still be possible for organisations to register directly with the NGO Administrative Section at the MOHA and be issued with the relevant certification.

De-registration: Closely linked to this issue is also that of de-registration of an organisation. The powers to shut down an organisation or suspend its registration should not be taken lightly. Respondents to this study generally were of the opinion that it would be important to de-register or at least suspend the registration of those organisations who were defunct or inactive. Because of the considerable power this process bestows, it is suggested that de-registration powers are retained at central level, with the Ministry evaluating those organisations who have not adhered to their legal requirements.

A fair-minded policy and procedure for this process needs to be formulated. Perhaps those who have failed to submit their annual reports and accounts for two consecutive years could be issued with a warning, and then suspended if adequate documents are not submitted in a further six months. De-registration could occur one year after suspension, if an appeal has not been made by the organisation to revert their suspended status. This procedure would bridge the gap between the current indefinite registration status even of defunct organisations and being too heavy-handed with new start-ups, where it might take some time for institutional governance and management systems come into place.

7.3.2 Provision of Information and Advice to CSOs

With regard to the provision of information on the registration process, as well on other legal and administrative matters, the first port of call for organisations was the internet and the relevant websites. The greater majority of respondents were keen to have adequate mechanisms for access to clarification on points of administrative and legal matters at the Ministry-level rather than at island-council level, because they thought that the island councils would lack the capacity and expertise to provide the necessary information and advice in these cases. An adequately trained focal point at island or atoll council level would certainly address some of these concerns.

Another possibility worth exploring is having an email query system or a webpage dealing with frequently asked questions on the website itself. This would help to link people directly to the Ministry. In addition, relevant guidelines, codes of conduct or other regulatory and information documents could be made available from the island and atoll council offices to those who are interested.
### Table 7.10: Decentralisation of information provision to CSOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested location</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Island</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atoll</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
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<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 7.3.3 Obtaining Permits, Approvals and Other Legal Documents

Central government was favoured for this process. It is likely though that some of the permits and approvals which had previously been granted by central authorities would now be possible to process at island or atoll council level, especially in those areas where powers have been delegated to these entities. For example, island and atoll councils are now in charge of leasing public land and buildings for use by other entities. In addition, the recent delegation of powers covers such diverse areas of work such as social protection services, provision of infrastructure and services in garbage disposal, environmental protection, healthcare services, pre-school education, prevention of domestic violence, and protection for those who have suffered violence, special assistance to the disabled and to the elderly – all of these areas are ones in which CSOs seemed to be quite active.

In these areas, the CSOs could seek permits, approvals and other documents from local governments, however they also need to be aware of national policy and technical developments in these areas quite independently of what is being proposed by the island councils so that they can knowledgeably guide island and atoll policies and practices, collaborate with them in providing these services and/or challenge them where appropriate. This would help the civil society sector to fulfil expectations that they would (along with individual citizens and private companies) hold island councils accountable to fulfilling their obligations, and participate in helping them do so. Thus, it should be clear to CSOs that they should not only depend on information provided by island councils on these matters but rather have access to diverse opinions and debates so that they can make an informed decision. Many also felt that island and atoll councils required capacity building prior to being able to issue permits and approvals for work in the designated areas.

A recent phenomenon – with potentially significant implications – was mentioned with regard to the recent powers granted to island council. Some CSOs alleged that their activities had been stopped by island councils (i.e. approval withheld). This would be a detrimental development to the democracy of the country, should it be true. An activity of a CSO should only be halted were it proven to be illicit or unconstitutional in a court of law. Although no information was supplied on what these activities had been, the respondents indicated an unfair political bias operating at the level of the island councils. These incidents, isolated as they might be, underlines the importance for CSOs to be independent and well-protected from the powers of the island councils if they are to play the important role in holding local government accountable. Without this protection for CSOs, there is a space for excessive politicisation and bureaucratisation of local spaces and communities to take place quickly and without any safeguards.

### Table 7.11: Decentralisation of granting permits, approvals and other legal documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested location</th>
<th>Haa Alif (N=10)</th>
<th>Faafu (N=10)</th>
<th>Gaaf Dhaal (N=21)</th>
<th>Kaafu (N=11)</th>
<th>Malé (N=18)</th>
<th>Total (N=70)</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
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7.3.4 Establishing the Regulatory Framework

The majority of respondents stated that this should be done by the Ministry in consultation with the CSOs from across the country. Contributions from atoll, city and island councils should be sought as well. The main reason given for this preference was that the framework and regulations for the sector should be consistent nation-wide. The few who cited the appropriateness of the local council in establishing the regularity framework and regulations noted that the island and atoll councils were now in the phase of developing master plans for development at island and atoll level. Their point was that the priorities given in these plans would have bearing on what sources of funding and partnerships might be available for CSOs in these regions. Nonetheless, even those who preferred regulations to be designed and established at island council level stated that the legal expertise was lacking here and that councils would require input from the centre on this issue. As a result there was indisputably stronger agreement that the broader principles, practices and protections for the sector should be set at MOHA level.

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7.3.5 Management of Complaints and Grievances

With regard to the general management of complaints and grievances either against or amongst CSOs, the preference was for the island councils to mediate and handle these complaints and grievances in line with national laws and regulations, and where appropriate (i.e. not allegations of illicit activity, fraud or corruption, where an independent or central authority should be brought in – see 6.3.7).

The respondents saw the role of the island councils in listening to and attending to these complaints and grievances, and mediating between the conflicting parties with a view to reaching an acceptable settlement or resolution of the matter. Moreover, it was thought that the local councils would be well-placed to understand the context of the island communities and would be able to bring prior social relationships to bear on the matter in a constructive and just manner. It was also pointed out that in such cases of complaint and grievance, a quick investigation and clarification of the matter might be necessary to ensure that conflicts and tensions do not escalate in a manner that is detrimental of the community.

However, it was noted that such mediation skills should be further developed amongst the council members. It was recognised that professional development in this field, and a familiarity with the tools and techniques associated with this type of work, as well as a thorough understanding around mediation would also be important. Thus, those who proposed the Ministry stated that their main concern in the case of this process was the lack of existing capacities at island council level.

A third suggestion, that of the independent group, felt that the matters of complaint and grievances should rather involve an independent body established at atoll council level, or rather that independent persons appointed by the atoll council. This would further ensure that the complaints and grievances are settled justly and fairly; and that there would be less space for corruption.
### 7.3.6 Monitoring Organisational Adherence to Regulations

According to the majority of respondents, CSOs should have the option of submitting the annual reports and audited accounts to island councils as well as submitting them directly to the Ministry. This would make the process much easier for CSOs, and would promote compliance with the existing standards. Nonetheless, it was also said to be advisable for CSOs to maintain copies of the reports and accounts that they submit to the island council offices.

There should also be no approval process for the reports and accounts to be received or accepted at island council level because, it was said, of the possibility of political biases and influences. The technical expertise to do so might also be lacking at island council level. The reports should be assessed in terms of their compliance with the relevant guidelines and then passed on to the Ministry. It was clear in this sense that the monitoring is not an evaluation of the effectiveness of the CSO’s activities or of the technical content of a CSO’s programming, but emphatically on a CSO’s compliance with legal requirements and regulations.

An additional option would be to encourage CSOs to make these reports and a brief summary of their accounts publicly available. This would allow inter-organisational learning and would also increase compliance and accountability amongst CSOs. Moreover, their work could be assessed by those who are the target groups of their work and other stakeholders. These would be the best groups to judge the beneficial impacts of the work done by the CSO. It should also be recognised however that some CSOs whose work is socially sensitive might be required to keep some of the work they do confidential, for example when working with child victims or victims of violence.

### 7.3.7 Investigation of Suspected Cases of Fraud or Corruption

The preference with regard to investigation of alleged or suspected cases of fraud or corruption was to have as much an independent body and personnel involved as much as possible. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) was mentioned by some as the main body who should oversee and guide the process of such an investigation; and indeed there seemed to be a number of cases lodged at the ACC at the time of the study. However, these were mainly cases in Male’; and once again there did seem to be a bias with regard to issues of access. Perhaps investigations at island and atoll level could involve someone from the ACC, to ensure independence and technical quality.

Additionally, it was pointed out that independent auditors and the selected representatives of the police might also need to be involved. These suggestions indicated concerns with this type of work being solely done by the Ministry, where some felt that it would still be difficult to separate politics and social connections from influencing the outcome, and that these factors might skew the results of the inquiry.
It was very clear from the responses provided that many felt this particular area of work to be too sensitive and technical to be conducted only at atoll or island level. Political biasness, the difficulty of following strands of investigation in small-knit communities, the social tensions that would arise from such an investigation and the lack of resources and skills to carry out such an investigation were all given as reasons as to why the island and atoll councils would be unsuitable for such work.

Table 7.15: Decentralization of investigation of suspected cases of fraud or corruption

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7.3.8 Liaising with Other Agencies and Institutions

A final area of assessment was of how to decentralise liaising with other agencies and institutions. As discussed before, CSOs sometimes found it difficult to access information from central government (Ministries, Police, Courts, etc.) on aspects such as national and international policy, national and other statistics, or other matters. An overwhelming majority thought that it would be best to have such responsibility at local level. If an electronic database of CSOs is made available, copies of this could also in future be available from the island council offices, thereby enabling CSOs to contact and discuss with other CSOs in other parts of the country doing similar work.

Table 7.16: Liaising with other agencies and institutions

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7.4 Recommendations

- Recommended revisions to the Associations Regulations and recommendations for improving the implementation of regulations:
  - The regulations should specify that founders retain legal authority and responsibility for the CSO in case of any time when there is no formally appointed board of governance or executive committee.
  - That only Maldivian ID cards are acceptable as registration documents should be removed as it hinders, more than facilitates, the formation of CSOs. Some form of identification for individuals (ID cards, passport numbers) and companies/associations (registration number which specify they have a legal status) should suffice for the purposes of registry. This would also enable the registration of umbrella organisations or organisations-based networks.
  - Production and distribution of a Handbook by MOHA that details a) the processes for approval, b) the full list of 25 items in the governing regulations of CSOs, c) the full reporting process and its related conditions and guidelines d) NPO institutional models and viable systems of governance and e) sample institutional policies. Upgrade the MOHA website to include a website-based email inquiry option so that CSOs can make online queries on matters that confuse them. The website should also include: information on available funding; different resource materials and websites for further information on NPO governance and institutional development; and links to other websites which have relevant laws
and regulations for the civil society sector.

- Auditing is an important part of ensuring accountability, yet there is very little capacity in the Maldives currently to carry out this task. Because auditors are required to be approved by the government, this leaves very little space for CSOs to actually adhere to the regulations. It is recommended that this matter be given careful consideration.

- The process of approving foreign financial assistance could be made more transparent. The criteria being used to assess foreign assistance and details about what information could be provided by the organisation in order to speed up the process could be shared. Given the lack of implementation of regulations and monitoring, this would require wide consultation and re-thinking of current procedure.

- Additionally, a database of approved sources of foreign assistance could also be made available. If funds were to come from one of these sources, then a CSO would not need to apply further for approval. If a CSO were to seek funds from an agency not yet on this list, then it would be important for the agency to undergo the vetting process and be placed on the approved list.

- It is recommended that source of funding be disclosed.

- Recommendations include the introduction of graded penalties for different forms of non-compliance with legal, regulatory and constitutional requirements, together with fair processes of appeal for administrative decisions. Severity of the non-compliance issue would also need to be taken into account.

There was a strong lobby for having the regulatory powers and processes moved closer to home for the CSOs. However there was an equally strong lobby for retaining central regulation and administration of the sector. A closer examination of the various elements of administration and regulation resulted in findings making the following recommendations:

- Registration of CSOs should be made available at island-level, although the procedure and requirements should be decided at central level. However capacity building is necessary so that officials who undertake this duty would be able to review and comment on the registration documents to see if they are in order and to make constructive and enabling choices with regard to the CSOs. Once accepted, the details need to be sent for entry into the national registry and issuance of the registration certificate. However to safeguard against the possibility of a highly politicised process and to ensure that there are as minimal obstacles to the formation of associations (in accordance with freedoms and rights granted in the Constitution), it should still be possible for organisations to register directly with the NGO Administrative Section at the MOHA and be issued with the relevant certification.

- Because of the considerable power the process of de-registration bestows, it is suggested that de-registration powers are retained at central level, with the Ministry evaluating those organisations who have not adhered to their legal requirements. A fair-minded policy and procedure for this process needs to be formulated.

- With regard to the provision of information, the greater majority of respondents were keen to have adequate mechanisms at island-levels. An adequately trained focal point at island or atoll council level would certainly address some of these concerns, and would also be able to attend to registration as noted above. Relevant guidelines, codes of conduct or other regulatory and information documents could be made available from the island and atoll council offices to those who are interested.

- The website of MOHA should be upgraded to include an email query system or a webpage dealing with frequently asked questions.

- The obtaining of permits and approvals for matters apart from the registration and reporting process should be retained at central level. Following decentralization though, some permits and approvals which had previously been granted by central authorities would now be possible to process at island or atoll council level, especially in those areas where powers have been delegated to these entities.

- Although CSOs seek permits and approvals from island level on decentralized issues, they also need to be aware of national policy and technical developments in these areas quite independently of what is
being proposed by the island councils so that they can knowledgeably guide island and atoll policies and practices, collaborate with them in providing these services and/or challenge them where appropriate.

- Establishing the regulatory framework should be done at central level by MOHA in consultation with the CSOs from across the country. Contributions from atoll, city and island councils should be sought as well. The main reason given for this preference was that the framework and regulations for the sector should be consistent nation-wide.

- With regard to the general management of complaints and grievances, the recommendation is for island councils to mediate and handle these complaints and grievances in line with national laws and regulations, and where appropriate. The respondents saw the role of the island councils in listening to and attending to these complaints and grievances, and mediating between the conflicting parties with a view to reaching an acceptable settlement or resolution of the matter. However, it was noted that such mediation skills should be further developed amongst the council members.

- According to the majority of respondents, CSOs should have the option of submitting the annual reports and audited accounts to island councils as well as submitting them directly to the Ministry. This would make the process much easier for CSOs, and would promote compliance with the existing standards. Nonetheless, it was also said to be advisable for CSOs to maintain copies of the reports and accounts that they submit to the island council offices.

- The monitoring activities of the island council should be strictly in relation to CSOs’ adherence to regulations. The reports should be assessed in terms of their compliance with the relevant guidelines and then passed on to the Ministry. Monitoring should not be an evaluation of the effectiveness of the CSO’s activities or on its programming and approaches, as this is a technical matter. The emphasis here should be on compliance and not content.

- It would also be important to encourage CSOs to make their annual reports and a brief summary of their accounts publicly available. This would allow inter-organisational learning and would also increase compliance and accountability amongst CSOs.

- Investigation of alleged or suspected cases of fraud or corruption should be guided by officials from the centre. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) was mentioned by some as the main body who should oversee and guide the process of such an investigation. Additionally, it was pointed out that independent auditors and the selected representatives of the police might also need to be involved.

- Island councils should also help CSOs to access information from central government agencies (Ministries, Police, Courts, etc.) or independent commissions (HRCM, ACC) on aspects such as national and international policy, national and other statistics, or other matters.
8. Summary of Recommendations

8.1 Reform of Associations Act

- In drafting the Associations Act the following should be considered:
  - Retain a singular focus on the sector with all associations registered under one Act, yet requiring them to act in line with other relevant laws and regulations, such as those to do with taxation and import duties, with healthcare, social assistance and education, with land registration, local government, and with finance and audit related laws.
  - Clarify the legal status of CSOs by specifying their powers, responsibilities and limits with regard to their businesses and business transactions, and make these provisions widely known to other companies, government agencies and the public in the Maldives.
  - Strengthen the definition of CSOs by focusing on what they do with their profits, their independence from the state, and their purpose and function.
  - Specify the legal provisions for financial assistance for and state interaction with CSOs, by reference to the Constitution and the Decentralisation Act as well as making a national budgetary allocation for the civil society sector.
  - Include articles prohibiting political funding of CSOs, or the appointment of political figures into executive positions of CSOs or as board members.
  - Introduce clear procedures on processes of fair administrative action, investigation and appeal to administrative decisions on penalizing CSOs on illicit or unconstitutional grounds.
  - Ensure that any allegations against CSOs of unconstitutional or illicit activities by any agency of the state should require evidence and not be based on arbitrary decisions by state powers. Moreover, the process should follow those of a fair hearing. The Act should specify the protections for CSOs from exercise of arbitrary state power.
  - Specify clearly the powers, responsibilities and the limits of power of the Registrar of Associations, and ensure the post is not politically appointed.
  - Introduce clear procedures specified for the state’s investigation of alleged or suspected cases of illicit or unconstitutional activity and for the de-registration of a CSO.

- The implementation of the requirements and provisions of the Associations Act, even in its current form, should be strengthened.

8.2 Revision of Associations Regulations

The following recommendations are suggested in revising the Associations Regulations:

- The regulations should specify that founders retain legal authority and responsibility for the CSO in case of any time when there is no formally appointed board of governance or executive committee.
- The form of identification required for registration should include ID cards and passports for individuals and
certificates of registration for companies and associations. The stipulation in the association regulations that only Maldivian ID cards should be removed as it hinders, more than facilitates, the formation of CSOs.

- Auditing requirements need to be brought into line with what is possible in the Maldives, given that only a handful of auditors have been licenced by the Auditor-General's Office.

- A disclosure requirement for the source of funding is important to gauge the amount and source of funds that come to CSOs as well as into the country.

- Introduce graded penalties for different forms of non-compliance with legal, regulatory and constitutional requirements, together with fair processes of appeal for administrative decisions. Severity of the non-compliance issue would also need to be taken into account.

- Procedures should be outlined on how to deal with conflict between the state and CSOs, and ways of promoting conflict mediation should be strengthened.

### 8.3 Categorisation of CSOs

Categorisation of the civil society sector should be made for the purposes of helping to identify organisations and the work they do, to better direct resources and capacity building efforts, and to improve coordination and networking efforts, rather than for the purpose of regulating the sector. The following are the recommendations to facilitate this process:

- Avoid having strict demarcations in which CSOs are forced to fit themselves. CSOs must be allowed to choose the different categories to which they belong and those that best represent their work and objectives. This will encourage sector to grow and shape as needed by the changing context and priorities.

- The categorisation of CSOs should be done on the following four dimensions: a) areas of work, b) target groups, c) functions and d) geographical coverage and location.

- **The 25 main areas of work** identified in this study should be used in the categorization: 1) sports, music, arts and leisure activities; 2) social development, volunteerism, service and peacebuilding; 3) economic and business development, employment and income generation; 4) education, training and learning improvement; 5) (sustainable) development; 6) empowerment of vulnerable groups; 7) environment protection, climate change response and wildlife protection; 8) healthcare and healthy lifestyle promotion; 9) profession, sector and industry promotion; 10) building people's skills, character, capacity and conduct; 11) religiosity and religion; 12) Maldivian culture, heritage and history; 13) civic engagement and participation; 14) prevention of drug use and drug trade; 15) welfare to deprived groups or individuals; 16) human rights; 17) equity, social justice and inclusion; 18) good governance and democracy; 19) safe and protective environment; 20) infrastructure development; 21) disaster and emergencies response; 22) media and journalism; 23) bilateral and regional relations; 24) science and technology; and 25) wellbeing and quality of life improvement. A final option of ‘other’ should be included to allow the sector to identify new areas of work.

- **The 23 target groups** identified in the study should be used for categorization: these are, 1) potentially skilled sportspersons; 2) youth; 3) citizens of a specific island or atoll; 4) all citizens/general population; 5) people in difficult circumstances, poor people, widows and orphans, unemployed; 6) relevant offices and authorities, policymakers, and decision-makers; 7) women; 8) children/schoolchildren; 9) members of organisations; 10) people with a long-term or chronic illness; 11) workers and employees; 12) adults and children with a disability and their families; 13) elderly; 14) adult and children survivors of violence; 15) parents; 16) musicians and artists; 17) journalists; 18) other organisations; 19) former drug users and recovering addicts; 20) teachers and educators; and 21) prisoners, former prisoners and detainees; 22) volunteers; and 23) persons from a particular sector or industry.

- **The 10 functions** identified in the study should be used for categorization: namely, 1) development and advancement; 2) community-level advocacy and awareness-raising; 3) recreational activities; 4) knowledge production; 5) capacity building; 6) service provision; 7) resource distribution; 8) policy-level
advocacy and activism; 9) structural change efforts; and 10) coalition-building and networking.

- The geographical coverage and location should be done at national, atoll and island level, so that CSOs can indicate where they intend to work.

- Establish a mechanism whereby all existing and new CSOs can be categorised eventually as per suggested categories. The information on the four dimensions of the categorisation can be distributed effectively using the web.

- The new registration form should include these pre-determined lists (using the Dhivehi terms identified in the study) so that CSOs can indicate all relevant items that apply to them.

- An electronic database of CSOs should be developed by the MOHA, using this four-dimensional categorization to tag the CSOs.

- This public database of CSOs should be available on the web and updated every six months for use and consumption by CSOs, community members and other agencies.

### 8.4 Capacity Building of CSOs and MOHA

Recommendation to build capacity of CSOs:

- CSOs should familiarize themselves with any national or local laws and regulations that pertain to their particular area of work, as well as any national or local laws and regulations that pertain to their particular target groups.

- CSOs need to be made aware of their role not only as partners of local government but also of their watchdog functions in ensuring that the government is held accountable for the governance of their administrative areas.

- Capacity building of CSOs in undertaking needs assessment, strategy development and intervention design is essential. Provide training to CSOs in accessing and utilising empirical information and national statistics to improve effective design of activities.

- Building capacities in institutional governance, institutional development, NGO and project management, and financial management is key to sustaining and developing the sector. Accompaniment (longer-term capacity building exercises) of new and small CSOs may be one means of ensuring institutional development and management capacities.

- Handbooks that detail a) the processes for approval, b) the full list of 25 items in the governing regulations of CSOs, c) the full reporting process and its related conditions and guidelines d) NPO institutional models and viable systems of governance and e) sample institutional policies could be prepared and issued by MOHA

- Attention should be given to building capacities of subject knowledge. This could involve linking up CSOs who work on similar topics, having handbooks and other resource materials on subjects which they work on would be important.

- Set up development studies courses (both class-based and distance learning programmes) at the newly established Maldives National University. These courses could include both academic and practical components, and should be in line with recognized international standards. These could include offering development studies programmes, project management courses, human rights and governance courses, mental health and psychosocial support service courses, or those focusing on women, youth or children’s studies.

- CSOs’ capacity to monitor and evaluate their efficacy and efficiency would be important to ensure that the sector has a demonstrable and significant impact.

- Increase awareness of CSO on national policy and technical developments to guide island and atoll policies and practices, collaborate with them in providing these services and/or challenge them where appropriate.
Recommendations to build capacity of MOHA:

- A website-based email inquiry option should be included in the website, so that CSOs can make online queries on matters that confuse them. The website should also include: information on available funding; different resource materials and websites for further information on NPO governance and institutional development; and links to other websites which have relevant laws and regulations for the civil society sector.

- The capacities of the MOHA NGO Administration Unit should be improved with staff becoming well-versed in the democratic justification and space for civil society sector, governance of the sector, and rationales for regulations. It would also help if they were familiar with the different areas of work undertaken by different CSOs.

- A proportion of the funds allocated for civil society sector should be used to support systematic capacity building of the sector, strategically finance the institutional development of start-ups (i.e. new and emerging civil society initiatives), and to provide assistance in those areas of work or target groups where other (global, corporate or development) financing is difficult to obtain.

8.5 Strengthening the Governance and Management of CSOs

The following are the recommendation to strengthen the governance and management of CSO:

- Separating the functions of governance and management in CSOs; i.e. to have a separate (non-paid independent) board of governance or trustees, whose functions are to ‘set policy, exercise oversight, and provide strategic direction in the areas of mission, values, resources and outreach’.

- Appointing skilled and retired persons onto the board of governance would help bring regular specialist input to CSOs.

- Strengthening planning and management (in regards to annual programming, budgeting and auditing)

- Revising the situation with regard to auditing requirements. Auditing is an important part of ensuring accountability, yet there is very little capacity in the Maldives currently to carry out this task. Because only few auditors are approved by the government, there is very little space for CSOs to actually adhere to the regulations.

- Having relevant clauses in the Governing Regulations and any policy documents to minimise political party influence and to maintain independent image of CSO

- Establishing internal procedures which clearly stipulate independence from political party influence/interference.

- Establishing a conflict of interest policy.

- Increasing the space for and the commitment to engage in communication between disagreeing and/or conflicting CSOs. Communication between organisations could take the many forms of negotiation, discussion, and debate. Expanding the number of people involved in this discussion consisted of providing the space for the opinions and experiences of ALL affected groups and stakeholders to participate in the discussion.

- Granting CSOs rights and protections from arbitrary state power along with the stipulation that CSOs be open and cooperative to the idea of fair investigation and inquiry procedures where such allegations exist. They also have a responsibility to inform the relevant authorities about their work – to the extent necessary – and to abide by any existing regulations – although the state should not interfere with or direct activities unless they are shown to be illicit or unconstitutional.

- Retaining the positive aspects of volunteerism in the sector and coupling these with building human capacities and the professional standards for competence and conduct in the sector.

- Developing an internal policy on how to manage donor relationships and specifying limits.
8.6 Funding of CSOs

Possible options for increasing access to funding:

- Setting up a state budget for the civil society sector which should be made available to applicants on a transparent, fair and competitive basis for well-governed high-functioning CSOs and to co-fund their relevant projects and initiatives.

- Establishing a Private-Public Fund for the sector, with government funds being supplemented by corporate or private contributions. To encourage donations by corporations and private individuals, these donations could be made tax-exempt. Reducing perceptions that the funds are being used politically, an international observer could be appointed (in addition to other carefully selected members) for the management of Fund. Companies could also be given the liberty to tag which ‘area of work’, ‘target group’, ‘function’ or ‘geographical location’ their contributions should be utilized for; although they should not be allowed to indicate a particular CSO.

- Encouraging efforts of CSOs to raise their own funds through membership fees and other efforts. Their low level of dependency on external funds increases their capacity for independence from external influences; and makes their efforts more self-reliant and responsive to the community.

- Investing in CSO capacities to generate their own funding and to access additional external funding. For example, greater exchange of information between Maldivian CSOs and successful international CSOs could be encouraged in order to facilitate self-sufficiency.

- Ensuring that CSOs disclose their sources of external funding in their annual reports and make these publicly available.

- Making the process of approving foreign financial assistance more transparent. The criteria being used to assess foreign assistance and details about what information need to be provided by the organisation in order to speed up the process should be shared.

- Making available a database of approved sources of foreign assistance. If funds were to come from one of these then a CSO would not need to apply further for approval. If a CSO were to seek funds from an agency not yet on this list, then it would be important for the agency to undergo the vetting process and be placed on the approved list.

- Facilitating common office space and facilities where CSOs can operate cost effectively. See recommendations in NGOs Forum Report 2010 for examples on how to achieve this.

8.7 Code of Conduct

The following guiding principles should be adopted into the sector code of conduct:

- being law-abiding;
- conducting work that is beneficial to the public and the nation;
- subscribing to internationally recognized standards of competence in their areas of work;
- being non-discriminatory and inclusive;
- being non-conditional;
- being transparent;
- being compassion-driven;
- maintaining sustainability;
● engaging in inclusive decision-making;
● prioritizing the interests of the target group before institutional or self-interest;
● being non-political;
● supporting democratic governance;
● respecting human rights;
● and functioning within the organizational mandate.

CSOs should adopt the following methods to ensure that they are abiding with the code:
● appointing a member of Executive Committee to implement such reviews;
● making project officers and coordinators aware of and reminded of the importance to adhering to these principles in their work;
● involving members and target groups in assessing the work of the CSO;
● seeking the advice of professional and technical persons; and
● appointing a Board of Governance.

8.8 Credibility and Confidence in the Sector

■ Increase independence from donors through:

● Having a donor/sponsor agreement which limited their decision-making capacities and influence with regard to activity implementation.

● Building CSO capacities to better negotiate with donors and sponsors and reach an acceptable compromise on relevant issues.

● Building CSO capacities to generate own funding as much as possible to reduce dependency on external funding.

■ Increase professionalism through:

● Strictly adhering to organizational objectives, procedures, policies and principles in all interactions and decision-making within the organization.

● Increasing familiarity of those responsible for the organization and the activity with the relevant protocol and to report back and consult with the committee and the Board (of governance) on matters that compromise independence of CSOs

■ Establish independence from political influence through:

● Refusing funds from political parties or political figures.

● Refraining from engaging in direct political activities: however CSOs could comment on, agree with or challenge the merit of government policies or proposed political party policies and manifests that fall into their areas of work and preferably on the basis of empirical evidence or clearly articulated reasoning rather than simply endorsing a party line.

● Assigning the responsibility of overseeing the CSO’s independence from political influences to a member of the Executive Committee and to the Board of Governance.
● Building capacities to refute political influence (by being able to generate own funding or to negotiate with politically influential figures).

■ Widely publicise work of CSOs through:

● Engaging the media and working with the government in showing the work of CSOs and how they contribute to national and community development and protection.

● Publishing/publicising annual reports of strategy, activities, expenditures and sources of income. Even if organisations were unable to professionally publish their annual reports and accounts, they could do so by preparing a poster of these aspects and having them posted in a public space, either at a social community centre or at the island office, etc.

● Giving members and communities regular updates of activities

■ Ensure transparency and accountability of CSOs through:

● Improving the capacity of members in financial management and in promoting transparency. Training activities in simple book-keeping, internal controls and accounts management would be very useful.

● Having a transparent non-discriminatory process for selecting beneficiaries for resource distribution and service provision.

● Developing policies preventing personal use of resources by members of CSOs.

● Making decision-making of Executive Committee transparent.

● Having relevant documents and data (accounts, reports, etc.). Poor record-keeping and documentation seriously undermines the ability of CSOs to be accountable and transparent.

● Having a thorough monitoring and evaluation process.

● Reporting back to funders, sponsors, and donors on activities carried out.

8.9 Separating the State, Corporate and Civil Society Sectors

Following are recommendations for ensuring separation of state, corporate and civil society sectors:

■ Not appointing actively political figures (i.e. persons who are in leadership positions in political parties or persons who are political appointees or elected officials in the current government) onto the Executive Committee or any future board of governance. Current members should resign if they take up such a political position or would need to resign from the political positions to continue being in a governance or management position in the CSO.

■ CSOs to ensure activities are designed and implemented in a manner free from explicit political influences – for example ensuring that selection of beneficiaries is not based on political affiliation.

■ Having separate regulations for political parties and foundations/associations set up by political parties and figures, so that these are seen to be separate from the civil society sector.

■ Raising public awareness about the role of the civil society sector in a democracy and its contribution to society
8.10 Decentralisation and Regulation of the Sector

The table below shows the recommendations for decentralising function of regulation and monitoring of CSOs.

Table 8.1: Summary of Recommendations for Decentralization of functions of Regulation and Monitoring of CSOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Island Level</th>
<th>Central Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registering CSOs</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deregistering CSOs</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of information and advice to CSOs Atoll</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining permits, approvals and other legal documents</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the regulatory framework and the association regulations</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of complaints and grievances</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring organisational adherence to regulations</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation of suspected cases of fraud or corruption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaising with other agencies and institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Registration of CSOs should be made available at island-level, although the procedure and requirements should be decided at central level. Registration details need to be sent for entry into the national registry and issuance of the registration certificate.

- Safeguard against the possibility of a highly politicised process by ensuring that there are minimal obstacles to the formation of associations (in accordance with freedoms and rights granted in the Constitution) and allowing organisations to register directly with the NGO Administrative Section at the MOHA and be issued with the relevant certification.

- To minimise arbitrary de-registration it is suggested that this function is retained at central level, with MOHA. A fair-minded policy and procedure for this process needs to be formulated.

- Establish adequate mechanisms at island-levels to facilitate information provision to CSOs. An expert focal point at island or atoll council level would address this. Relevant guidelines, codes of conduct or other regulatory and information documents could be made available from the island and atoll council offices to those who are interested.

- Island councils should help CSOs to access information from central government agencies (Ministries, Police, Courts, etc.) or independent commissions (HRCM, ACC) on aspects such as national and international policy, national and other statistics, or other matters.

- The website of MOHA should be updated to include an email query system or a webpage dealing with frequently asked questions.

- The obtaining of permits and approvals for matters apart from the registration and reporting process should be retained at central level.

- Regulatory framework should be formulated at central level by MOHA in consultation with the CSOs from across the country. Contributions from atoll, city and island councils should be sought as well.

- Island councils should mediate and handle these complaints and grievances in line with national laws and regulations, and where appropriate. Mediation skills should be further developed among council members.

- CSOs should have the option of submitting the annual reports and audited accounts to island councils as well as submitting them directly to the Ministry. This would make the process much easier for CSOs, and would promote compliance with the existing standards. Nonetheless, it is also advisable for CSOs to maintain copies of the reports and accounts that they submit to the island council offices.

- The monitoring functions of the island council should be strictly limited to CSOs’ adherence to laws and regula-
Monitoring should not be an evaluation of the effectiveness of the CSO’s activities or on its programming and approaches since this is a technical matter.

- It is important to encourage CSOs to make their annual reports publicly available. This would allow inter-organisational learning and would also increase compliance and accountability amongst CSOs.

- Investigation of alleged or suspected cases of fraud or corruption should be guided by officials from the centre. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is a possible institution who can oversee and guide the process of such an investigation.

### 8.11 General Recommendations

These are general recommendations following from the study which focus on the issues of future research areas and access to knowledge and information.

- Given the unequal numbers of men and women who participated in the study (especially from the islands) and the indication that women are less represented in positions of authority and leadership in the civil society sector, further research on the gender dimensions of the civil society sector is recommended.

- Further research on needs assessments in relation to the social, political and economic issues that CSOs attempt to address are needed. This will ensure that they have the necessary information to come up with suitable strategies and effective intervention specific to the island contexts.

- Research is also needed to consolidate information on the causative and contributory factors related to these different social, political and economic problems that people face in the Maldives. Currently competing and contradictory explanations exist. Better understanding will ensure that the most salient and significant factors are targeted as necessary.

- One of the issues not covered in this research was that of efficacy of the interventions. Careful studies documenting and analysing the process and outcomes of various interventions should be undertaken. These will help CSOs to understand what works, what does not, and why in relation to the area of work and target groups they focus on.

- Access to empirical information, national statistics and existing research reports should be made easier for CSOs. Agencies and organisations that conduct research and generate knowledge should be encouraged to make these available online and to translate these documents into Dhivehi as much as possible.

- Increasing opportunities for debate and dialogue within the sector, and between academics, practitioners and policy makers on the important areas of work targeted by CSOs is essential.
9. References


Comprehensive Study of the Maldivian Civil Society


