

## Introduction

Welcome to the very first issue of The Good Governance Advocate, the newsletter of the new Integrated Governance Programme of UNDP Maldives. We hope you find these periodic updates on the work of UNDP Maldives on Democratic Governance, useful and informative.



Youth group perform cultural music to welcome visitors to the NGO Forum, supported by UNDP Maldives.

## IGP - A Programme to Strengthen Institutions and Empower People

The institutions and the people of Maldives need strengthened efforts and support to continue on its journey towards consolidating democracy and development.

Launched in August 2012, the Integrated Governance Programme (IGP), developed by UNDP Maldives together with national partners, seeks to seize the current opportunity to deepen democracy in the Maldives through strengthening institutions and empowering people.

The goal of the IGP is to build a resilient and peaceful democratic society through effective and accountable governance institutions for enhanced service delivery at national and local levels, improved social cohesion and strengthened capacity of civil society to meaningfully participate in the public life.

The programme seeks to achieve the following three coordinated programme results:

- Result 1:** National and local level institutional capacities strengthened to ensure transparency and accountability and for supporting democratic consolidation and processes.
- Result 2:** Equitable access to justice increased and rule of law strengthened through support to the justice and security sector and promotion of human rights.
- Result 3:** Enabling environment created and strengthened for enhanced social cohesion through inclusive and participatory decision making and development.

The programme will also announce small grants to assist in medium-term capacity building and development of NGOs.

The programme will not only maximize complementarities and synergies through an integrated approach, but will ensure the close coordination of mutually reinforcing activities, in order to achieve the greatest impact which will shape the lives of the people of the Maldives for the better. This will be evident in how the programme will have a single Board and three technical committees, overseeing the projects.

We are pleased to ring in the New Year by highlighting some of the important work that has been undertaken under each pillar since the inception of the programme this year, with contributions from donors, and in partnership with national stakeholders and partners. We would like to thank our partners for making this programme possible.

Happy holidays and all the best for 2013!

Best wishes,  
UNDP Maldives

PROJECT	AMOUNT US \$
Result 1: National and local level institutional capacities strengthened for improved transparency, accountability and democratic processes	1,177,085.00
Result 2: Equitable access to justice increased and Rule of Law strengthened through support to the justice sector reform and promotion of humanrights	1,440,184.00
Result 3: Enabling environment created and strengthened for enhanced social cohesion through inclusive and participatory decision making and development	1,978,667.00
Programme management	875,863.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,471,739.00</b>

### Donors

Government of Federal Republic of Germany, AusAID (Australian Agency for International Development), Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, UNDEF (UN Democracy Fund), UNDP Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF), US Department of State, UNDP Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery and European Union

## Forum for Women Councillors held to develop women leaders

Women councillors took part in a forum organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with the Local Government Authority (LGA), which seeks to provide a platform for discussion, networking and experience sharing for women community leaders representing 26 islands across the country.

Facilitated under the Integrated Governance Programme area of UNDP, the three-day forum aims to strengthen the knowledge base of women councillors in good governance and democracy. It will support leadership, communication and negotiation skills, and facilitate linkages for experience sharing and

sion-making, and recognizing them as equal contributors to society.

“Not realizing the full potential of women in public life is simply a loss that the country cannot afford at this critical stage of development and transformation. You have overcome various structural and cultural challenges to be in a position of influence as a local councillor. In order to help you continue this legacy and help you change your community and the country, forums like this one are critical to provide a platform for peer support and mentoring,” said, Azusa Kubota, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, addressing the participants of the forum.



networking amongst the women councillors. With the overarching objective of raising profiles of and empowering women councillors, the forum was a first step in increasing women's participation in decision making and public life.

Despite progress made at the national level, women remain underrepresented in the political and economic spheres. Women are a stark minority at the local level – 56 out of the over 1000 local councillors are women, and often they are the only woman councillor in a council.

The Chief Guest of the ceremony, His Excellency Mohamed Waheed Deen, Vice President of the Maldives said that the nation could not go forward without inclusion of women in deci-



“People in my island have this assumption that from a religious and social perspective, having a woman heading things will lead to no good. This is difficult for me to hear, but it will not stop me.”

– Aishath Naazly, President, Rasgetheem Council.



Women preparing a feast. Traditional roles of women, as just belonging in the kitchen, are slowly changing.

The Forum for Women Councillors follows the UNDP supported leadership skills building training for women targeting the first council elections, following which 46% of the women who participated in the training were elected to council seats. In collaboration with the Government of Maldives and partners, UNDP remains committed to supporting and advocating a greater role for women in public life.

## Women as Leaders



Aishath Naazly, President of Rasgetheem Island Council

When Aishath Naazly first attended a workshop (supported by UNDP in collaboration with a coalition of NGOs and the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives), targeted at women councillors a few years back, she had just started campaigning for a seat in her island's Council. “Now, we are elected, and are attending this forum with responsibilities on our shoulders,” says Naazly, a participant at the recent UNDP-organized Forum for Women Councillors.

“At that first workshop, I got inspiration for my campaign slogan ‘Empowering Women’, which led to me contesting with 17 others on my island, majority of them men, and coming in first in the polls. Now I am President of the Island Council,” says a beaming and determined Naazly.

Naazly says that one of the most important lessons learnt at the Forum for Women Councillors is to be more assertive and to say no when the occasion calls for it. “In the forum we learnt that contrary to popular belief held by our communities,

we can contribute on the same level as men. It has shown us the way to go forward, even with the challenges we face,” says Naazly, who is grateful for the support she receives from her husband, as well as her fellow council members as she carries out the demanding and complex responsibilities as the President of the Council.

She also appreciates the opportunity presented at the forum to properly connect with not only women council members from across the country, but the Local Government Authority actors, opening up the avenue to maintain more productive networks with these key actors in the long run.

At the forum, the councillors agreed to activate a Facebook group to connect all the women councillors. They hope that this would eventually lead to the formation of an association.

Naazly, who prior to attending the forum had just wrapped up discussions at her council on a proper building code to maintain Rasgetheem island's facade, is intent on passing on the knowledge she has acquired at the forum to her community, and educate them on the significant and essential role women can play in development.

“There are still people who think that a woman's work and role is not valid. I am here to change that,” the mother of one says.

## *Forum for NGOs held in the Maldives*

In November 2012, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), assisted the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) in hosting the NGO Forum in Meedhoo Island in Raa Atoll, which brought together civil society actors from across the nation.

The sessions were structured to enable participants to focus efforts on venturing into capacity building, NGO mobilisation and coordination.

"This has been a valuable experience sharing exercise. I am learning to stand my ground

Funadhoo Island, also President of the island's Women's Development Committee.

Following the NGO Forum, commitments were made to look into re-establishing the NGO advisory committee to the Registrar of NGOs with UNDP's technical support, establishing awards for outstanding NGOs, establishing an NGO development unit in MoHA, and holding the forum as an annual event. UNDP will also



Official inauguration ceremony of the NGO Forum.

The forum proved to be an inclusive national platform for NGOs to think and strategize on matters of mutual interest, and to unite in their diversity, in pursuit of a collective agenda of engagement with government and other development actors.

"We have participation from over 60 NGOs. This in itself is an enormous networking opportunity and has led to constructive discussions," said Abdullah Shareef, a participant from Meedhoo Island, who is also the President of one of the island's leading NGOs, Meedhoo Jamiyyathul Salah. Shareef expressed his happiness at the community spirit displayed by the people of his island in organizing the event, and expressed hope that this exemplified to visitors how communities can work together, in spite of rising political and social tensions.



Friendly camaraderie between two NGO representatives during a festive evening.

and make women's voices heard, and this has proven to be the ideal avenue for everyone to work together in an environment of mutual respect," said Fathimath Zaeema, from NGO Women Enhancement from Laamu Atoll

assist in setting up an NGO Portal, which will connect NGOs across the country, and develop a repository of information pertinent to the sector.

## Maldives Symposium on Promoting

## Right to Information

A symposium on Right to Information (RTI) with international and local experts was organized in October, led by Transparency Maldives in coordination with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The symposium was held under the project signed earlier in the year with funding from the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) on Right to Information, which aims to promote accountability within all branches of the state, through strengthening the national access to information.

The symposium aimed to create awareness of RTI among policy makers, facilitate sharing of experiences and international best practices, and create demand and culture a deeper



Elections Commission stall providing information to the public at a UNDP-supported event.



appreciation for RTI targeting public officials, civil society and the media.

The themes centered around:

- Right to Information and Democracy - the importance of RTI in democratic governance and history of RTI in the Maldives,
- Administering an RTI regime - the practical aspects of administering an RTI regime, appeal processes, redress mechanisms, archiving and challenges faced,
- Local Governance and RTI - the importance of building relationship between democratic participatory governance and the role of RTI in



local governance and how it can empower rural and vulnerable communities, and,

- Proactive Disclosure - and its features in a good RTI regime

Honourable Abdulla Shahid, Speaker of the Majlis (parliament), in his keynote address assured all the participants that the Right to Information Bill will be passed before the end of the parliamentary session in December.

Transparency Maldives also organized a number of advocacy events to better utilize the presence of the international experts, including sessions with parliament committees and media appearances.

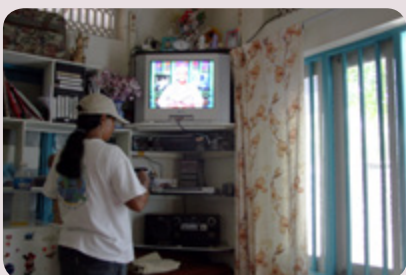
## Launch of the awareness campaign on Broadcast Code of Practice

In December 2012, UNDP collaborated with the Maldives Broadcasting Commission to host an event, "Broadcast Code of Practice Awareness Evening", to promote knowledge and understanding around the Broadcast Code of Practice.

At the launching ceremony, the President of the Maldives Broadcasting Commission alluded to the need for public support as the Commission undertakes its lawfully mandated responsibility of monitoring broadcast content. A mechanism has been set up to generate public feedback, towards highlighting issues related to on-air content. The Commission noted that action will be taken accordingly in rectifying these issues through dialogue with the relevant broadcasters.

Participants of the event included high level officials from the government, independent commissions, NGOs and other relevant institutions.

UNDP is supporting Maldives Broadcasting Commission to conduct awareness activities around the Code of Practice developed by the Commission. Under this support, apart from hosting the awareness meeting for stakeholders, the Commission will produce television and radio spots, and a booklet on the Broadcast Code of Practice that will be distributed nationwide.



Television on in a Maldivian household.

## Theatre promoting dialogue, understanding and uplifting spirits of communities

Kolhufushi Island in Meemu Atoll was among the most affected during the 2004 tsunami, with inhabitants living in temporary housing even today.

The unfortunate twist of fate and dire living conditions mean the islanders are faced with daily frustrations and struggles. Many of them remain aggravated by the lack of progress made in terms of reconstruction of the island and the inadequacies and humiliation of living in tiny, temporary homes. This is coupled with many migrating to the capital Male' which has left the island community even more devoid of human capital and, particularly tragically, left with the perception of a lost generation. The people are also concerned over how they've become less friendly and self-absorbed; with the island community divided into two factions.

Both factions were represented at a workshop held to facilitate the community-based theatre (CBT) technique in Kolhufushi Island, an exercise which brought a little hope to this depressed community.

CBT is designed to promote community-based, grassroots and people-led dialogues on sensitive community issues and conflicts. It brings people from all walks of life together to openly discuss problems, and promote the inclusion of and respect for multiple perspectives around the same issues. The concept builds upon the intellectual, emotional and creative resources of participants, increases self-confidence, self-awareness and self-worth, and validates individual stories and experiences.

CBT was introduced in the Maldives with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as part of a comprehensive pilot initiative in 2011. In total, two months of intense CBT trainings, workshops and performances were carried out in Male' and islands, and a total of three outreach activities were organized on three different atolls: Thaa, Meemu and Haa Dhaalu Atoll. The main objective of the activities was to introduce CBT on the islands, test its usefulness and validity as a dialogue promoting tool and to explore some of the problems and conflicts present on the islands.

In Kolhufushi Island, the two-day CBT workshop was followed by a playback theatre performance held at the only school on the island. A total of 22 participants, ranging in ages 19 to 58 participated in the activities.

"Finally, after 8 years, we were able to share our stories with each other"



A CBT performance

Through this activity the community was presented with the opportunity to look at some of the current situations creating conflict on the island. Not surprisingly, most of their comments were related to the aftermath of the tsunami. When asked to make theatrical images of how they would wish the future to look like on the island, the participants aspired to return to a "normal life, as it was before the tsunami - a life where people smiled at each other, and a life where people can live in peace, with proper housing, education and employment."

During the theatre exercises, some of the participants used their experiences to tell their personal stories of what happened to them and their families during the tsunami. Many of them had experienced death in the family or were forced to help others who had lost someone close. "After 8 years, I finally felt I could share what happened during those days. It hurts to tell these stories, but I also feel better finally doing so," one of the male participants shared with the group. Another affirmed her belief that the people on the island will eventually overcome their difficulties and create a better future for themselves and their community.

## *Dreams from the Youth* the Youth Leadership Programme

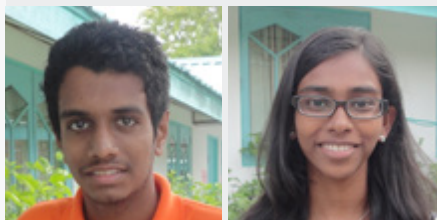
**They came from very different worlds, but left with a common vision and shared goals following the Youth Leadership Programme.**

Adam Yaish, 16, attended school in Thoddoo Island, in the North of the Maldives, and Shanaz Mohamed, 19, goes to university miles away in Malaysia. Yet when they met at the Youth Leadership Programme (YLP) a few months later in Bandos Island Resort in the Maldives, the platform acted as the catalyst that tied together their shared vision: to change the perception about youth as being idle and incapable, by doing something about it.

"Youth are often considered as being too young to stand up, voice out or contribute positively to our societies. I feel the youth are not taken seriously, or as a priority. We have to change that. It will be hard, but we have to try," says Yaish. He adds that the YLP has created the avenue for the youth to develop critical skills such as personal development and leadership skills, which would come in handy when participants ultimately take on the daunting tasks of making a difference in their communities when they leave the programme. Both participants agree that the programme has helped develop many skills they lacked, such as the confidence to speak publicly, and to be more assertive.

Organized by NGO Democracy House in partnership with the Institute of Governance and Development, and the People's Majlis along with UNDP and UNFPA, the third Youth Leadership Programme mentored 40 participants from across the country who were selected to take part in the three-week programme.

The participants learnt about cultural awareness, civic education, democratic principles and functions of the parliament through a series of parliamentary education sessions. "At the parliamentary session, one of the MP's encouraged us to write out our thoughts, so that he could consider them in the Education Bill," Shanaz excitedly notes. The YLP also focused on key societal issues such as child protection, gender inequality, conflict resolution, human



people who are different from us." She is determined to teach her young cousins not to discriminate people based on their disabilities, or where they come from.

Adam Yaish (left), and Shanaz Mohamed (right), participants at the Youth Leadership Programme.



Information sessions for the participants.



rights, extremism and intolerance of minority groups. UNDP staff also participated in these sessions as resource persons to present and discuss topics such as environmental management and conflict prevention.

While Yaish found the session on reproductive health very refreshing and informative, Shanaz adds that "I have realized that you don't have to necessarily start this big NGO and undertake several projects to make a difference, but it can start with small things like saying 'thank you', and being kind to

Yaish and Shanaz observed that the programme was an eye-opener, considering the exposure from activities such as the field trip to the military training island, where they learnt self-defense tactics, and especially the visit to Guraidhoo Special Care Centre, the primary residence for the country's elderly. "It prompted us to reflect on the human side of things," says Shanaz.

Shanaz says that no matter where she is in the world, she will take back the lessons she learnt at the YLP with her, and try to make that small difference which would matter. "I have met so many dedicated people, heard so many inspiring stories. I have learned never to give up," adds Yaish.

## Roundtable Conference on Strengthening the Local Governance System in the Maldives



"Maldives needs strong local government to continue on its democratic path. The conference is a start to achieving these goals, and we hope the conversation will be continued at the national level

even after the conference".

Andrew Cox, UNDP Resident Representative



Harbourfront of Naifaru Island.

The Roundtable Conference on Strengthening Local Governance System in the Maldives was held on Wednesday, focusing on the decentralization process, with emphasis on fiscal decentralization. The conference was organised by the Local Government Authority (LGA), in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Targeted at senior policy makers from line ministries, the President's Office and other key stakeholders, the conference identified current gaps and needs, challenges, and international best practices with regard to strengthening the local governance system and fiscal decentralization. Facilitated by consultants and experts from LGA and the Commonwealth,

the sessions helped map the way forward, and looked for consensus between policy makers on key issues relating to the decentralisation process in the Maldives.

"Strengthening Local Democracy and Governance Project plays an important role not only in strengthening capacity of local councils and LGA, but also plays a major role in assisting local councils in building relationships with other mediating institutions. Through these relationships, local councils can solve problems, promote citizen responsibility, and build trust in the central government," said the CEO of LGA, Dr. Ahmed Shukury.

The roundtable conference follows an earlier forum held in 2011, and is taking place almost two years since the local elections. Councils still face challenges and there is limited opportunity for dialogue between councillors, line ministries and LGA.

This year's focus was on fiscal decentralization, with a draft fiscal formula that can be used to allocate the national budget to local councils, being developed with assistance from UNDP.

"Maldives needs strong local government to continue on its democratic path. The conference is a start to achieving these goals, and we hope the conversation

will be continued at the national level even after the conference," said Andrew Cox, UNDP Resident Representative.

"Ensuring that local government receives adequate and equitable resources to enable it to deliver effectively is one of the 12 principles which the Commonwealth has adopted in its endorsement of the Aberdeen Agenda: Commonwealth principles on good practice for local democracy and good governance, and we welcome the opportunity to explore practical and workable models for successful implementation in the Maldives," said Carl Wright, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum.

Speaking on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Local Government Adviser Dr Munawwar Alam said that effective fiscal decentralisation is an essential part of decentralisation, but it must be reinforced with the development of adequate capacity at the local level through training for officials and councillors to ensure that the financial decisions that councils take on behalf of the community are responsive and accountable.

## Forum on Local Governance and Community Mobilization and Atoll Councillors Forum held

Two years since the first local council elections, councils established in the Maldives still faces challenges; no proper mechanisms have been established for community consultations and there is limited space for dialogue between councillors, line ministries and the Local Government Authority (LGA) - created to monitor, regulate and build the capacity of local councils.

A discussion forum, facilitated by LGA with support from UNDP, was held to generate ideas and arrangements to further strengthen the local governance system. The forum centered on local governance and community mobilization with discussions revolving around inclusive participation, accountability, and institutional coordination.

There were three key objectives to the discussion forum, facilitated by a panel of experts on local governance, with participation from key stakeholders, among them representatives from the government, councils, independent commissions and civil society:-

- To identify different participatory development practices that would increase community mobilization, including the engagement of vulnerable groups.
- To discuss approaches to increase accountability between local councillors and their community, and,
- To identify coordination challenges between the different tiers of government and possible recommendations to overcome this issue.

UNDP and stakeholders hope that through this exercise, councils, line ministries and institutions will be better exposed to the concept of the participatory development approach, and communities will be more encouraged to engage in the planning and decision making processes.

In December 2012, UNDP also supported the hosting of the first Atoll Councillors Forum, to share experiences towards strengthening decentralization processes and increasing operational effectiveness of councils.



Discussion at the local Governance and Community Mobilization Forum.



Participants at the Atoll Councillors Forum.

Participants at the forum included Presidents of City and Atoll Councils, board members of LGA and policy level representatives from ministries.

## Forums on the Justice Sector Held

UNDP assisted in hosting three justice sector forums in November 2012.

### Forum 1 & 2: Discussion on International Law and Human Rights

The first two forums were focused on International law, human rights and relevance of these tools within the Maldivian context. These two forums were targeted for NGOs and lawyers. The forum was conducted by a visiting professor at the Maldivian National University's Faculty of Shari'ah and Law.

### Forum 3: Discussion Session on Community Mediation

In November there were a total of 4 consultants working under the Rule of Law and Access to Justice result area of UNDP's Integrated

Governance Programme. As this allowed for a meeting of the minds, a justice sector discussion forum was organized. The forum was attended by practicing lawyers in the country, court officials, the Secretary-General of the Supreme Court, the Deputy Prosecutor General and senior officers from the Maldives Police Service. The Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP, and consultants from other UN agencies attended the session.

The main discussion in the forum was based on a presentation given by a consultant for UNDP who was undertaking a study on Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms in the Maldives.



## Outcome Evaluation on Engagement and Partnerships with Civil Society

A validation meeting to share and get feedback on the key findings and recommendations of the Outcome Evaluation on Engagement and Partnerships with Civil Society was held on December 19, 2012. In addition to civil society organizations, key Government agencies including Ministry of Home Affairs, Local Government Authority, Ministry of Finance and Treasury, Human Rights Commission of the Maldives and Ministry of Gender, Family and Human Rights participated in the workshop. Important feedback for improving the content of the study, as well as some recommendations on strategizing UNDP's work on civil society development for sustainable results and impact was made by the participants.

# Hello | from the Governance Team at UNDP Maldives



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