



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

# Maldivian Women's Vision Document

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# Executive Summary

While the current Constitution of the Maldives guarantees equal rights to Maldivian women and men, cultural, structural and other barriers prevent women from fully participating in their communities and utilising the opportunities and benefits equally with men. Women are particularly underrepresented in decision making, as evident from the fact that very few women are in positions of leadership in various state and Government institutions.

The objective of the compilation of a Maldivian Women's Vision document is to bridge the information gap between women and decision makers, and to present the concerns and aspirations of women at personal, community and national levels. This document can serve as a useful tool that can be used to reflect women's needs and priorities in designing and implementing policies and programmes at national and local level.

The compilation of the document was done through two stages. Consultations were first held with women from the atolls and Male' to get an understanding of the general perceptions of the concerns and aspirations of women. The information gathered was subsequently compiled into a survey form that was filled by women in Male' and selected islands to obtain the top 10 concerns and aspirations of women at personal, community and national levels.

The main issues facing the country were reflected in the concerns and aspirations of women, such as limited access to quality education and health facilities, housing

shortage, limited employment opportunities and high drug use and crime. There were also issues highlighted that were more specific to women, such as violence against women and gender discrimination. Women also expressed concern about the politicised state of the country and issues of governance such as lack of transparency and accountability of elected representatives and institutions, and many women aspired for a more united nation, with increased integrity of institutions and leaders.

In order to address the concerns and achieve the aspirations identified at personal level women recommended self-development through awareness, education and action, becoming an example of the change that was desired through personal actions, and being an active agent to bring about change in their communities. At community and national level, women overall recommended state and Government institutions to be closer to the people and be aware of, and base decision making on peoples' needs and priorities. Women also envisioned a culture of dialogue and discussion to be established among the people, the leaders and institutions, as well as within institutions and political bodies.

With women constituting half of the population of the country, it is essential for the voice and vision of women to be equally represented and their experience of accessing opportunities are taken into account in the decisions relating to the development of their communities as well as in planning the future development of the nation.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Status of Women in the Maldives

Considerable progress has been made in achieving gender equality in the Maldives. However, cultural, structural and societal barriers exist that prevent women from fully participating in their communities and utilising the opportunities and benefits equally with men. Gender is also one of the major areas where Maldives is lagging behind in terms of achieving the Millennium Development Goals<sup>1</sup>.

According to global studies and statistics, inequalities between women and men stem from unequal access to resources and opportunities that are essential for development such as education, employment and a say in decision making. These are important to overcome cultural and structural challenges that exist for women in most societies. The Global Gender Gap Index, introduced by the World Economic Forum, also reflects a considerable gap between men and women in economic participation and opportunity and political empowerment.<sup>2</sup>

The Maldives has made substantial progress with regards to the Human Development indicators such as life expectancy and education. This is also reflected in some corresponding gender indicators such as access to primary education. Maldives achieved near universal primary education and primary school net enrolment rates from 2001-2012 is approximately 99 percent<sup>3</sup>. Net enrolment rate in lower secondary level also rose from 37 percent in 2000 to 81 percent in 2012<sup>4</sup>. No gender differences in school enrolment at these two levels have been observed. However, differences start to emerge when higher secondary and vocational or technical education is considered, due to restrictions on mobility that women more generally have to experience, and this in turn affects their tertiary education prospects. From 2001 to 2005, 39percent of nationally and internationally funded undergraduate scholarships, 38percent of post-graduate scholarships and 22 percent of doctorate scholarships were awarded to girls<sup>5</sup>.

Another area where significant gains in terms of gender indicators have been achieved is health. Maldives has attained the 5<sup>th</sup> MDG of reducing maternal mortality, and currently has the lowest Maternal Mortality Rate in South Asia<sup>6</sup>. Maldives also has the highest percentage of babies delivered at a health facility and delivered under the supervision of skilled attendants<sup>7</sup>. However, differences in access to health facilities due to geographical and socio-economic factors exist. It is also important to note that contraceptive prevalence rate is not only low but is declining whereby the rate was 42 percent in 2000 which reduced to 35 percent in 2009. While adolescent and teenage pregnancy rate is currently low in the Maldives compared to other countries of the region, the increase in the promotion of more conservative religious views in relation to women and family life, encouraging early marriage and prohibiting modern forms of contraception pose challenges in sustaining or reducing the current contraceptive rates<sup>8</sup>. Other challenges such as high rates of

divorce, sexual abuse, domestic violence and lower financial independence also affect women's access to health.

Women traditionally played a significant role in contributing to the country's economy, taking up food processing in the fisheries sector, participating in agriculture and traditional construction materials such as rope and thatch making<sup>9</sup>. However, the emergence of tourism and mechanisation of the fishing industry resulted in a shift in income generating opportunities from inhabited islands to resorts and industrial islands. Women became disadvantaged as a result to access these opportunities due to mobility restrictions. Currently, women are mostly employed in the informal sector and in the government civil service<sup>10</sup>. The unemployment rate of females remain quite high, with 23.68 percent for females and 7.9 percent for males in 2009, and this in turn reinforces their dependent status on males. Other challenges facing women in the employment sector include harassment at workplaces and lack of adequate and affordable child care facilities for working mothers. However, in a recent development, the Civil Service Commission introduced a provision in its regulation that allows pregnant women and mothers to be able to have flexible working arrangements including working from home options in the government sector.

Women's participation in political life remains considerably low in the country. While previously women were barred from contesting for Presidency, the Constitution adopted in 2008 removed the restriction preventing a woman serving as President. In the last local elections held in 2014, there were 1084 elected as councillors, out of which only 59 were women. This is an increase of a single female councillor from the first local council election in 2011<sup>11</sup>. Similarly the current Parliament has 5 female Parliamentarians out of 85<sup>12</sup>. Under the Decentralisation Act, Women's Development Committees were elected in the islands to advice on the incorporation of women's interests and needs in local development planning and initiatives. However, they remain under resourced and lack opportunities to be a part of the decision making process which is done in most cases by an all-male island council.

In addition to geographical and structural barriers, the disparities in access to opportunities between women and men can be attributed to societal attitudes and expectations. The Women in Public Life Situational Assessment<sup>13</sup>, which looked at knowledge and attitudes of people towards participation of women in socio-economic and political life, found that participation of women is strongly affected by the perceived role for women in the communities. The kind of occupational choices that a woman makes is often influenced by the male members of her family. A general lack of acceptance among both women and men, on women becoming active in politics, lack of support of family, limited experience and access to finance, and harassment were cited as reasons for women not choosing to join politics in the assessment.

## 1.2. Institutional framework for promoting gender equality

The Constitution of the Maldives<sup>14</sup> guarantees equal treatment of men and women in guaranteeing the rights and freedoms stipulated in the Constitution, and tasks the Government of ensuring these rights and freedoms are protected.

The first entity to work for the promotion of the rights of women was formed in 1979 as a Committee, which was changed to a Department in 1989 and consequently established as a Ministry in 1993<sup>15</sup>. The name, portfolios housed under it and mandate of the Gender Ministry has undergone various changes over the decades under different Governments. This has posed various challenges in sustaining the gender advocacy and mainstreaming work, as the shifting mandates, changes in budget allocations and transfer of staff made it difficult for the Ministry to be consistent in its implementation of policies and programmes.

Since the new Government came into place in 2013, the Gender Division is housed within the Ministry of Health and Gender. With this change, the previous gender architecture; which saw a separate ministry for Gender, Family and Human Rights became obsolete, while the manifesto of the new Government is currently considered as the overarching guiding document for the promotion of gender equality by the Government.

The manifesto consists of pledges, under which there are policies to achieve the pledges. The policies on implementing the promotion of women's rights pledge include:

1. Addressing barriers to employment of women;
2. Addressing domestic violence and violence against women;
3. Increasing women's participation in politics;
4. Empowering women economically
5. Protection for single mothers and divorcees
6. Establishing equality in division of marital assets

The Ministries are at the moment formulating five year plans to implement the policies in the manifesto, which would be the guiding document for the Government's programmes and initiatives during their term.

At local level, Women's Development Committees were elected under the Decentralisation Act to ensure that the development planning and implementation of programmes and initiatives takes into account the needs and priorities of women. Women's Development Committees were first established in 1979 in Male' and in the islands in 1984 under the then National Women's Committee. They remained under the parentage of the Ministry of Gender in its various forms, until they were abolished in 2010 to be re-established under the Decentralisation Act, as an advisory body to the island and atoll councils. As with previous Women's Development Committees, the current Committees also face the constraints of limited access to decision making by the Councils, limited financial resources, and also lack of understanding of their mandate and role by the Councils as well as the Women's Development Committee themselves. There is also ambiguity in terms of their role vis-a-vis the Councils in the Decentralisation Act, and the regulation regarding the Women's Development Committee requires strengthening.

A Gender Equality Act is currently being drafted by the Ministry of Health and Gender, which would outline in law the structure and framework of the gender machinery. This would overcome one of the main issues that the Ministry of Gender has faced over the years, whereby each elected Government changes the structure, composition and mandate of the institution.



In terms of international commitments on gender equality, Maldives signed the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1993, with reservations on Article 16 which concerns with the equality of men and women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations. Maldives is also committed to the achievement of MDGs, although in comparison to most of the Goals, the country is lagging behind in achieving the Goal on promoting gender equality and empowering women, particularly in the indicators relating to economic and political participation.

### 1.3. Objectives of the Maldivian Women's Vision Document

Through consultations with women across the country and documenting their views and perspectives, the compilation of a Maldivian Women's Vision document is intended to bridge the information gap between women and the decision makers. The report aims to present the concerns and aspirations at personal, community and national levels of Maldivian women to policy makers and decision makers of all government and state institutions. It is hoped that the document will be considered as a useful tool to design inclusive policies and programmes at national and local level that is sensitive to women's concerns and priorities and will serve as a basis for understanding the respective concerns and priorities of women in the Maldives.

## 2. Methodology

The Maldivian Women's Vision initiative looked at a) *concerns* and b) *aspirations* of women at three levels; namely

1. Personal level
2. Community level
3. National level

There were two methods used for the compilation of this document, i.e1) consultations with women in Male' and the atolls, and the information gained from the consultations were used to formulate questions and develop a 2) survey instrument that was used to obtain the data required for the compilation of the document.

### 2.1. Consultations

Consultation were held with women in Male' and atolls to get a basic understanding of the concerns and aspirations of women in general. This information would serve as the basis for designing the structure and contents of the survey tool. The consultations were conducted utilising Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) techniques. PLA is a part of a group of approaches where the facilitator focuses on engaging participants in analysing their own situations by themselves in a reflective and participatory manner, and where participants are engaged using a hands on approach of generating information.

#### *Consultations with women in Male'*

Two sessions were held with women in Male'. The first consultation was held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2013 with professional and self-employed women. This included women from Government and State agencies, NGOs, professional associations and women entrepreneurs within the age range of 19 to 56 years. The second consultation was held on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2013, with female representatives of political parties, women working in the informal sector and home makers. The participants of the second consultation included female residents of Male', Vilimale' and Hulhumale'.

In the consultations with women in Male', participants were initially asked to conduct **a mapping exercise of the community they lived in**. The objective of this exercise was to break the ice and initiate the process of reflection of their concerns and vision.

In the second session, the participants were asked **6 questions**, which were formulated in consultation with a technical group for the women's vision activity. They were as follows:

1. What are your concerns or barriers to self-development at personal level?
2. What are your aspirations for yourself at personal level?
3. What are your concerns or barriers to development in your community?
4. What are your aspirations for your community?
5. What are your concerns or barriers to development in Maldives?
6. What are your aspirations for Maldives?

To answer each question, the participants wrote down five concerns or aspirations each in separate pieces of paper, which were collected by the facilitator.

In the third session, an open discussion was facilitated to address the following question: What **needs to be changed** at personal, community and national level to address the concerns raised or aspirations expressed?

### *Consultations with women from the Atolls*

There were two two-day consultation workshops conducted with women from the atolls. The workshop was targeted to members of the islands' Women's Development Committees. Representatives from a total of fourteen atolls participated with each atoll having a representation of two to three islands. Based on the size of the population as per the 2006 Population and Housing Census of the Maldives, Women's Development Committee representatives from the island with the largest population in the atoll, the island with the smallest population in the atoll and the island with the median population in the atoll were invited to the consultations. Only islands with Women's Development Committee were invited. If an island in an atoll with the smallest, largest or median population did not have a Women's Development Committee, representatives from the island with the second smallest, largest or median population were invited

For the consultation sessions with the Women's Development Committee representatives, the same method as the Male' sessions were applied. For each question the participants wrote down their five top concerns or aspirations in small pieces of paper which were collected. Then a similar interactive discussion was facilitated to discuss what needs to change to address the concerns and aspirations expressed by the women.

## **2.2. Women's Vision Survey**

The concerns and aspirations written down by the participants in responding to the 6 questions were tabulated and the 15 concerns or aspirations that were mentioned as the most critical for each question were identified. The survey instrument was a six page form with each page representing one of the 6 questions, and the 15 top concerns or aspirations mentioned in the consultations were listed under each question in the form. The respondents of the survey were

requested to tick their top 10 priority concerns or aspirations out of the 15 for each of the 6 questions. The respondents were also asked to write what should be changed to address the concerns or achieve the aspirations they had prioritised.

The island survey forms were compiled from the consultations with the island Women’s Development Committee consultations, and the Male’ survey form was compiled from the two consultations held with women from Male’, Vilingili and Hulhumale’. Different survey forms were used for Male’ and the atolls due to the differences in the context of the capital and the atolls. The survey forms used for the atolls are included in Annex I the Male’ forms in Annex II.

The data collection in the atolls was facilitated by the Women’s Development Committee participants of the consultation workshop by taking questionnaires to their islands and getting women from different walks of life to fill out the forms. In Male’, there were survey filling sessions held for women from Male’, Vilimale’ and Hulhumale’ organised by UNDP. In addition, survey forms were distributed to Government ministries, independent institutions and political parties.

In total there were 1096 survey forms completed and returned from both the atolls and Male’. This included 896 survey forms from women from 14 atolls, including Addu City, and 200 forms from women in Male’. All 1096 forms were used to generate the top ten concerns and aspirations at the three levels.

However, some survey forms received did not include information on age and occupation and could not be included to analyse the comparisons between age groups and occupations. This included 202 forms without information on age group and 826 forms without information on occupation. The following are the number of respondents that are included in the analysis of the comparisons between age groups and occupations in the Findings chapter.

**Table 1 Composition of Respondents**

<b>Table1–Summary of Respondents</b>		<b>Number of survey forms</b>
<b>Respondents by age</b>	18-25	298
	26-45	475
	45+	121
<b>Respondents by occupation</b>	Professional women	71
	Admin and support	102
	Home-based	97

## 2.3. Constraints and Limitations

The following challenges were faced during the course of the initiative:

1. The consultations and survey may have been affected by the political events that took place in the country at the time of data collection. From September 2013 onwards, the

country faced political instability with the Presidential elections. It is possible that the informant's perceptions during the consultations and survey may have been influenced by events that were taking place in the country at that point in time. The concerns and priorities identified in the findings maybe reflective of the context of the country at that time.

2. Due to the delays in holding the consultations with women from the atolls, the data collection in the atolls coincided with the year-end school holidays when a lot of the women, including the Women's Development Committee members who were facilitating the process were away from their home islands and therefore were not able to organise the survey filling process in a timely manner.
3. There was a lower than expected return rate of survey forms which was distributed to the atolls, as well as in Male' and as a result, the target numbers was not met. This affects the representativeness of the data generated from the survey forms. However, the points included in the survey forms were generated from the consultation sessions that included a representative sample from across the country, and could possibly contribute to offset this limitation of the data generated.
4. A lot of the completed survey forms that was received did not have the information on age and occupation included, These forms could not be included in the comparison of concerns and aspiration across age groups and occupation groups and as a result a smaller sample of the respondents than the total was part of the analysis comparing the two variables of age and occupation, which might have affected the final results, and made the comparison especially across occupations non significant. However, all the survey forms were used in the comparison between atolls and Male'.
5. Each selected island survey forms were distributed to a sample equivalent to 30 percent of the female population above the age of 18 years of the respective island, as per the 2006 Population and Housing Census of the Maldives of 2006. However, while some islands sent back the all the forms, there were some islands that had returned very few or did not send back any completed forms. As a result, the views of some islands would be represented more than others.
6. Due to the major differences in quality of life the people of the capital and that of the atolls, there were separate consultations held to generate information for survey forms used in the capital and the atolls. This was validated in the differing level of concerns and aspirations that was raised in these two consultations, which would be discussed in the findings chapter. it was possible to broadly group together the concerns and aspirations of both Male' and atolls so as to reflect the priorities for both groups and specific explanations are given in the findings chapter of the report on what women meant by the concerns raised as it applies to different contexts. The findings chapter also includes comparison tables of the priorities identified from the atolls and Male' survey forms.

### 3. Findings

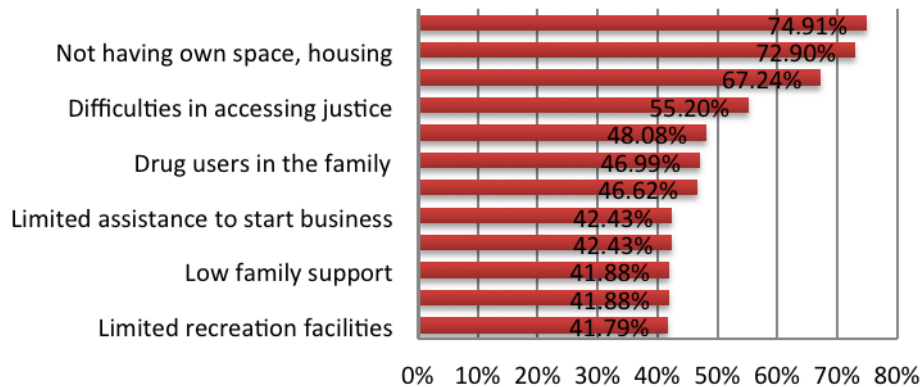
From the concerns and aspirations included in the survey the respondents identified their top ten concerns and aspirations at personal, community and national levels. The findings of the survey are detailed below including an elaboration of the concerns and aspirations from the information obtained from the consultations.

Under each heading, the top ten concerns or aspirations generated from all the survey forms from the atolls and Male' are being presented. This is followed by comparisons of the top ten concerns or aspirations between the atolls and the capital, across age groups, and across occupation groups.

#### 3.1. Personal Concerns

Personal concerns included concerns or barriers to self-development that the women had at personal level. The following are the top concerns as per the survey findings.

**Figure 1 – Personal Concerns of Women for Both Male' and Atolls**



1. Violence against women

- I cannot go out any time I like because I am a woman-* Participant, Consultation with Male' women
- My husband uses force with me-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women
- I face taunting and harassment from people-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women
- There is no safe and secure environment for women-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

In line with national statistics that shows that violence against women is very prevalent in the country, violence was identified as the top personal concern by the survey respondents. The Women's Health and Life Experiences Study of 2007 showed that one in three women aged 15-49 have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence during their lifetime. Personal experiences of domestic violence and abuse were mentioned by the participants of the consultations as a serious concern. There were personal accounts of violence written in the pieces of paper by the participants that included spousal violence and rape, and also emotional abuse by members of own and husband's family. Other issues such as low reporting, no guarantee of confidentiality after reporting violence and lack of protection for victims of violence were also mentioned.

## 2. Not having personal space or own housing

*I have no privacy in my own home-* Participant, Consultation with Male' women

*So many people living in one space causes health problems-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*We have to sleep on mats in the living room-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Living together with so many people causes problems within the family-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

The need for personal space was very important for women from all regions, including women in the capital. Having to share personal and family space with many people was a major concern. There were accounts of having to sleep in small spaces, sometimes in the living room, and problems such as arguments, health and hygiene issues arising from having to live with many people.

## 3. Limited educational and higher education opportunities

*I don't have the opportunity to go for further education-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

Many women expressed concern at not being educated and/or trained enough due to limited educational and technical training opportunities. Also limited access to higher education due to most opportunities being centralized was a concern, especially for those who cannot access them due to family obligations, or lack of affordability and mobility issues.

## 4. Difficulties in accessing justice

*There is widespread corruption in the legal system-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*The courts are not very friendly to women-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

There were many concerns expressed with regard to accessing justice that women face. Some women indicated that Magistrates themselves are not very knowledgeable of the laws. It was difficult for women to go to courts to get justice, and legal assistance was either too expensive or not available.

5. Few qualified elected representatives

*People who make decisions on issues that affect me are not qualified-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

This was identified as a personal concern as women felt that those who have been elected to represent their views and protect their rights were not qualified enough to responsibly carry out their responsibilities.

6. Having drug users in the family

*Having a family member who uses drugs is very stressful-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

Women expressed difficulties in their personal situation having to live with people who have drug addiction problems in the family. This caused distress and financial burden on the family, as well as decreased security in their homes.

7. Limited access to quality healthcare

*It is so difficult to consult a doctor, and most of the time, doctors of the speciality we want are not even there-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Health was a significant personal concern for women. They expressed concerns about not being able to get sufficient information about health issues and lack of specialist doctors including those relating to women's health, and inability to do even basic tests in the atolls.

8. Limited assistance to start businesses and income generating activities;

*I need capital to start a business of my own-* Participant, Consultation with Male' women

Women expressed desire to a start business or an income generating activity, but were concerned about the lack of assistance and information available on starting up and managing businesses.

8. Limited access to technical training

*There are no avenues for vocational training---* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

In addition they stated that it was quite challenging for women to start businesses and required more support to obtain financing such as micro credit or easily accessible loans. Women also expressed the desire to learn various vocational or technical skills that would assist them in generating an income. However they indicated that there were very limited opportunities to gain such skills.

9. Low family support in all aspects of life;

*My husband prevents me from going ahead in my field-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*My family is not supportive of my decision to work-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

A lot of the women stated that they lacked the support of their spouse or family members in various areas of their lives, including the decisions they wanted to make regarding self-development and their career. For instance, some of the women expressed that their spouses objected to them earning a living, and others stated that their family was not supportive in their



career choices, or in further developing or expanding their work. This stemmed from the ascribed social roles for women of being homemakers instead of breadwinners or working outside their homes/islands.

#### 8. Inadequate basic services

The availability of adequate basic services such as drinking water, electricity, and sewerage system was also a major concern. There was dissatisfaction expressed on the quality of basic services that presently exists, for instance the inadequate access to clean water with the ground water being in the atolls being contaminated.

#### 10. Limited recreation facilities

*There are no exercise classes for women-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Limited opportunities to play sports-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

There was desire expressed by women to participate in sports and leisure activities. Many reported that there were limited or no sports and recreation opportunities available in most islands. As a result, they do not have anything to do in their free time, including opportunities for gym and/or exercise classes. The concern for lack of recreational services is a good indication of women desiring better quality of life

**Table 2 Comparison between Capital and Atolls**

	ATOLLS	MALE'
1	Limited opportunities for education	High cost of living
2	Violence against women	Decreased personal safety due to high crime
3	Inadequate access to housing	Congested and unclean roads
4	Difficulty in accessing justice	Lack of personal space due to congested housing
5	Few qualified elected representatives	Limited assistance to start businesses and income generating activities
6	Drug users in the family	Limited access and affordability of day-care
7	Limited access to quality healthcare	Violence against women
8	Limited access to vocational & tech training	Limited access to counselling for marital and family problems
9	Inadequate basic services; Low family support in all aspects of life	Limited access and affordability of legal aid
10	Limited recreational facilities	Lack of assistance and involvement of fathers after divorce

There was a considerable difference between the respondents in the capital and those from the atolls in terms of the priority concerns. Most of the concerns of women from the atolls were focused on the limited accessibility of services and facilities such as education, health, training and basic services. Some of the concerns of respondents in Male' relate to the congested and overcrowded living conditions in Male', with them expressing concerns regarding lack of personal space, overcrowded roads and safety issues due to high level of crime in the capital. With the high numbers of women in formal employment in Male,' women were concerned by the limited availability of day care facilities to enable them to seek employment. Other concerns among respondents in Male' include limited access to capital to start businesses and limited counselling services to address various marital and family issues they face.

**Table 3 Comparison by Age Groups**

	18-25 years	26-45 years	Above 45 years
1	Violence against women	Violence against women	Not having own space or housing
2	Not having own space or housing	Not having own space or housing	Violence against women
3	Difficulties accessing justice	Difficulties accessing justice	Limited employment/income opportunities
4	Limited employment/income opportunities	Limited employment opportunities	Difficulties accessing justice
5	Limited access to quality education	Drug users in the family	Limited access to quality education; Limited recreation facilities
6	Limited recreation facilities; Lack of family support in all aspects	Limited access to quality education	Drug users in the family
7	Limited access to quality healthcare	Lack of family support in all aspects	Lack of family support in all aspects
8	Inadequate basic services	Limited recreational facilities	Inadequate basic services
9	Pests such as mosquitoes	Limited access to quality healthcare	Limited access to quality healthcare
10	Difficulty of movement due to lack of proper transport system	Inadequate basic services	Few qualified elected representatives

There are few differences identified in personal concerns across the three age groups. Violence appears prominent across all the age groups, as well as access to services and opportunities. Women above 45 years were more concerned about their representatives not being qualified.

**Table 4 Comparison by occupation**

	Professional	Administrative / Support	Home based/ Home maker
1	Inadequate and congested housing	Inadequate and congested housing	Violence against women
2	Violence against women	Single and divorced women viewed negatively	Inadequate and congested housing
3	Difficulty accessing justice	High cost of living	Difficulty accessing justice
4	Limited access to quality /higher education	Violence against women	Limited access to employment/ income opportunities
5	Few qualified elected representatives; Limited assistance to start businesses and income generating activities	Unclean and congested roads	Limited access to quality /higher education; Drug users in the family
6	High cost of living	Decreased personal safety due to high crime	Limited recreational facilities
7	Limited access to employment/ income opportunities	Limited recreation facilities; Difficulty accessing justice	Limited access to quality healthcare
8	Drug users in the family; Decreased personal safety due to high crime	Limited access and affordability of day-care; Limited assistance to start businesses and income generating activities	Few qualified elected representatives
9	Limited recreation facilities	Limited access to counselling for marital and family problems	Inadequate basic services
10	Limited access to quality healthcare; Limited access to counselling for marital and family problems	Lack of family support in all aspects	Lack of family support in all aspects

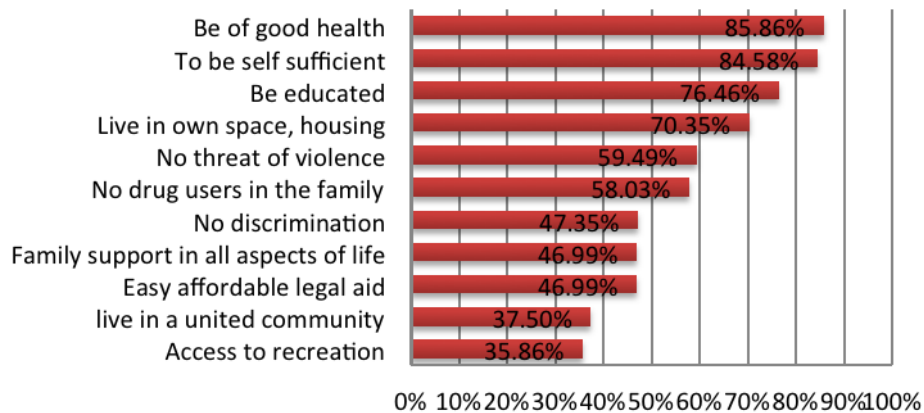
There are some differences identified across women from different types of occupations. For professional women, the key concerns include limited accessibility of education and training opportunities, availability of capital to start businesses and personal safety and difficulty in movement in public due to increasing crime and unsafe roads. While these were the same concerns identified by women whose occupations relate to administrative and support category,

they also raised concerns about the negative perception for single and divorced women, and difficulties due to lack of sufficient day care facilities. Home based women expressed concern for not being able to access education, training and income generating opportunities; however they did not identify any issues with regards to movement in public. Inadequate access to housing and violence against women figured prominently across all occupation groups.

### 3.2. Personal Aspirations

Personal aspirations included what women aspired or hoped to achieve for themselves at personal level. The following were the top aspirations as per the survey:

**Figure 2 Personal Aspirations among women in Male' and Atolls**



#### 1. Be of good health

*I would like to have access to better medical facilities at IGMH- Participant, Consultations with Male' women*

*I would like access to good maternal care so that I don't have to go abroad for delivery- Participant, Consultations with Male' women*

*I would like to go to classes giving information on maternal health and general health- Participant, Consultations with Atoll women*

The aspirations of majority of women surveyed was to be aware and have sufficient information on health issues including common and emerging illnesses and diseases, preventive healthcare and maternal health, and to remain healthy. They also expressed the desire to have proper information, treatment and access to facilities during pregnancy and childbirth.

## 2. To be self sufficient

*I would like to stand on my own feet without bothering anyone-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

The women expressed the aspiration to earn enough not to depend on members of the family, and to be in a status to fulfil the financial needs of their immediate family.

## 3. To be an educated person

*I would like to do a degree-* Participant, Consultations with Atoll women

*I would like to attain the highest level of education in my field-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Most of the women desired to have proper education that will enable them to improve their lives in terms of being able to access better employment opportunities or to advance in their chosen career. They also wished to be able to access higher education or training opportunities to be more aware and qualified.

## 4. To have own space and housing

*I would like to own a house or land-* Participant, Consultations with Atoll women

*I would like to live in my own place with my family-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

To be able to own a land or house was a significant aspiration. This stemmed from their desire to live alone or with their immediate family, and not having to share their personal space with many people.

## 5. Not to have any threat of violence

*To feel secure in the home-* Consultation with Atoll Women

*I would like to walk on the street in peace-* Consultation with Male' women

As identified in the previous section, violence against women was a prominent personal concern expressed and hence a life free from the threat of violence inside and outside their homes was very strongly desired by women. While violence against women was the top personal concern it comes after health, self-sufficiency, education and housing. Many felt that the mentioned aspirations such as good health, self-sufficiency, quality education and housing would reduce their chances of being victims of violence and were therefore being prioritised.

## 6. Not to have drug users in the family

Women expressed desire to be free from the challenges of having a drug user in the family, such as the anxiety, worry for the family and the decreased security in their homes. Their aspiration was for the whole family to be able to spend peaceful times together.

## 7. Not to be discriminated against

*I would like to be treated equally in the workplace-* Consultation with Male' women

*To have my views considered to be important as well in making decisions in the home-* Consultations with Atoll women

Most women desired to live in an environment where there was no differentiation based on gender. This involved inside their homes where their views are to be valued, outside their homes in accessing opportunities such as employment, and generally to have the same access to opportunities and facilities as men.

8. Family support in all aspects of life

*My family to support me to develop myself and work in the field I wish-* Consultations with Atoll women

Women desired the decisions regarding their life to be respected and supported by their families and spouses. This was particularly expressed with regards to their career choices.

8. Easy access to and affordable legal aid

*Would like to obtain services of a lawyer at an affordable rate-* Consultations with Atoll women

Women also expressed that they would like to have easy access to affordable legal aid services to help them resolve problems regarding family matters such as divorce, property and alimony.

9. Live in a united community

Due to the general disharmony observed in most communities at the time, many relating to political conflicts or rivalry between wards, women wished to live in an environment where there was unity and peace among the residents. This also include families where close ties were broken due to various disagreements, and most women wished these relationships to be revived and more harmonious relationships be established.

10. Access to recreation facilities

Women desired to enjoy recreation and leisure opportunities, including exercise facilities to achieve better mental and physical health. Once again, the aspiration for better recreational facilities is a good indication of their desire to have a better quality of life.

**Table 5 Comparison between Capital and Atolls**

	ATOLLS	MALE'
1	To be self sufficient	Be of good health
2	Be of good health	Live in own space, housing
3	To be an educated person	To be able to take care of parents
4	Not to have a threat of violence	To be self sufficient
5	Not to have drug users in the family	Have a good job
6	Live in own space, housing	Have a happy family life
7	Not to be discriminated against	Good future for children
8	Easy, affordable legal aid; Family support in all aspects of life	To be an educated person
9	Live in a united community	Learn a technical or vocational skill
10	Access to recreation facilities	Have access to quality maternal care

There are few differences in the aspirations of women surveyed from the atolls and Male'. To be of sound health, self-sufficiency and own living space were prominent aspirations. Respondents in the Atolls desired to be free from threat of violence while this did not figure in the top ten aspirations of respondents in Male'. This may be that the respondents considered their top aspirations such as to have good health, own space and self-sufficiency would reduce their risks to violence. Respondents in the atolls desired to live in a united community and have access to recreational facilities while respondents in Male' wished to have good jobs, be able to take care of their parents and have access to quality maternal care. Both groups desired support and good relations with their families.

**Table 6 Comparison by Age Groups**

	18-25 years	26-45 years	Above 45 years
1	To be self sufficient	To be self sufficient	Be of good health
2	Be of good health	Be of good health	To be self sufficient
3	To be an educated person	To be an educated person	Live in own space, housing
4	Live in own space, housing	Live in own space, housing	To be an educated person
5	Not to have a threat of violence	Family support in all aspects of life	Not to have a threat of violence
6	Not to have drug users in the family	Not to have drug users in the family	Not to have drug users in the family
7	Family support in all aspects of life	Not to have a threat of violence	Easy, affordable legal aid
8	Not to be discriminated against	Not to be discriminated against	Not to be discriminated against
9	Easy, affordable legal aid	Easy, affordable legal aid	Family support in all aspects of life
10	To be self-confident	Live in a united community	Happy family relations

Women across age groups expressed almost identical personal aspirations. Self-sufficiency, good health, own living space, education and family support were the top priorities. The 18-25 age group expressed the aspiration to be self-confident, which can be explained by their life stage where there is transition from education to employment. Women above 45 expressed more aspirations of family support and harmonious family relations, as they will be getting more dependent on their families for their wellbeing.

**Table 7 Comparison by occupation groups**

	Professional	Administrative / Support	Home based/ Home maker
1	Be of good health	Be of good health	To be self sufficient
2	To be self sufficient	Live in own space, housing	Be of good health
3	To be an educated person	To be an educated person	To be an educated person
4	Live in own space, housing	Happy family relations	Not to have drug users in the family
5	Happy family relations	To be self sufficient	Live in own space, housing
6	Not to have a threat of violence	Have a good job; To be able to take care of parents	Not to have a threat of violence
7	Easy, affordable legal aid	Good future for children	Not to be discriminated against
8	To be able to take care of parents	Not to have a threat of violence	Family support in all aspects of life
9	Not to have drug users in the family; Have a good job	Not to have drug users in the family; To serve the community	To be self-confident
10	Good future for children	Learn a technical or vocational skill	Easy, affordable legal aid; Live in a united community

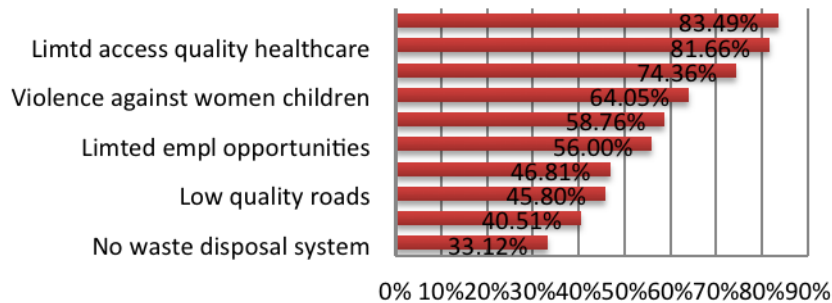
There were also no major differences in personal aspirations across occupation groups of the women surveyed. Self-sufficiency, own personal space, education and good family relations featured prominently across the age groups. Women whose occupation relate to administrative jobs and support roles desired to learn a vocational or technical skill to further their career, while women in the home based group desired to be self-confident and to live in a united community.

### 3.3. Community Concerns

Community concerns referred to issues that the women felt were barriers to the development of their respective communities. The following were the top ten concerns as per the survey



**Figure 3 Concerns for the Community for Both Male' and Atolls - Total**



1. Increase in drug users and crime

*Drug use is my biggest concern in this community-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*Drug users are increasing in my island-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*There are gangs everywhere-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

The top most concerns for the respective community of survey respondents were the increasing number of drug users and other crimes in their communities. Women expressed concern about the increase in robberies, assault and other drug related crimes that reduced security in their communities.

2. Limited access to quality healthcare

*I.G.M.H. needs better quality specialised doctors-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*We have to travel to Male' for many things as we cannot access many health services in our island-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*We cannot get many of the medicines in the island-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*There are many hospitals and clinics but quality of care is low-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Women expressed concern due to limited access to, sometimes, even basic healthcare in their communities. There were concerns due to lack of specialized doctors at atoll level, and having to spend a lot of money to travel to other atolls or to the capital, or even abroad, to access the required health services.

3. Inadequate basic services

*There is no proper sewerage system in the island-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Not having clean drinking water is very concerning-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

The limited availability of sustainable and adequate basic services in their communities was a significant concern. Access to safe drinking water and water for domestic use, electricity and sewerage system was identified as the most pressing needs for their communities.

#### 4. Violence against women and children

*Incidents of rape are increasing-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*There is harassment on the roads on a regular basis-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*There are many children who are being abused sexually but the mothers are not reporting these crimes-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

Women in the consultations talked with concern about the rising incidents of violence against women in their communities. There were accounts of violence and rape of women that are gang related, emotional abuse and domestic violence and harassment and assault of women in public. Abuse of children was also expressed as a major concern in the communities.

#### 5. Limited educational and training opportunities

*We are unable to give a good education to our children because there aren't good teachers in the island-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*There are not enough qualified teachers in the schools-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Women expressed concern about the quality of education available in their communities. The issues raised included not having enough teachers or lack of qualified teachers, lack of opportunity beyond primary or secondary schooling, and no opportunities for higher education, or technical training at community level.

#### 6. Limited opportunities for employment and income generation

*It's very difficult to get employment in the island-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*It is very difficult to get a loan as a woman-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

There were concerns due to limited employment opportunities at community level. There were also limited avenues to start income generating activities that the women could engage in, and also few opportunities to acquire vocational or technical skills. The need to travel outside of their communities to access such opportunities was a barrier for women

#### 7. Negative impact of politics in the communities

*Politicians give money and make young people do undesirable acts-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*Vulgar language is used in rallies and political songs, and children get exposed to it-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*We are using unity and families are breaking up due to politics-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*There is no respect for each other and we are losing the culture of caring for one another-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Women expressed concern about the divisions and lack of cohesion caused by political differences in their communities. Women reported increase in disagreements and negative impact on family relations to the extent of leading families to divorce due to political differences. Few women mentioned incidents of violence as well.

#### 8. Low quality roads

*The roads are not safe-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*There are too much traffic on the roads-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

The quality of roads was a concern for most women, as it restricted their movement. Women from different communities expressed different concerns with regard to roads: decreased usability of roads during rainy seasons, bad condition of roads making travelling in vehicles difficult, even causing damage to vehicles, congestion and pollution due to heavy traffic, road users not following transport regulations making roads unsafe and lack of cleanliness.

#### 9. Inadequate access to land and housing

*There is no more land to be issued in the island-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Having to live with so many people causes many problems-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*There are not enough housing in Male'-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*There are too many people living here-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Women from most communities mentioned the scarcity of land or housing in their respective communities. Women especially had challenges in owning or obtaining land. The difficulties of not having personal living space, and the challenges of sharing housing with many people were mentioned, including issues such as risks of spreading disease and low hygiene.

#### 10. No proper waste disposal system

Women expressed concern that there was no proper system for waste disposal in their islands. There were also other issues such as lack of cleanliness in their communities and no systems to mitigate the issue of waste such as recycling.

**Table 8 Comparison between Capital and Atolls**

	ATOLLS	MALE'
1	Inadequate basic services	Increase in drug users and crime
2	Limited access to quality healthcare	High cost of living
3	Increase in drug users and crime	Inadequate and congested housing
4	Limited educational and training opportunities	Violence against women and children
5	Limited opportunities for employment and income generation	Limited access to quality healthcare
6	Violence against women and children	Increase in illegal migrant workers
7	Low quality roads	Increasing corruption
8	Negative impact of politics in the communities	Negative impact of politics in the communities

9	No proper waste disposal system	Low quality, polluted and congested roads
10	Not enough initiatives for development of women	Limited opportunities for quality education for children

There are considerable differences among the respondents in Male' and respondents in atolls in terms of their concerns for their communities. Quality healthcare, education, crime, violence, roads and negative impacts of politics are concerns common to respondents of both Male' and atolls. Women in the atolls were most concerned about the lack of basic services as per the situation of their islands, and also regarding the limited opportunities for education, income generation, proper waste disposal, and the lack of initiatives to make the situation of women better. Concerns of women in Male' focussed more on increasing their quality of living as opposed to basic services, and aspects of living conditions such as congestion, cleanliness and high cost of living. They also listed increasing illegal migrant workers and corruption as top concerns.

**Table 9 Comparison by Age Groups**

	18-25 years	26-45 years	Above 45 years
1	Increase in drug users and crime	Increase in drug users and crime	Increase in drug users and crime
2	Limited access to quality healthcare	Limited access to quality healthcare	Limited access to quality healthcare
3	Inadequate basic services	Inadequate basic services	Inadequate basic services
4	Violence against women and children	Violence against women and children	Limited opportunities for employment and income generation
5	Limited educational and training opportunities	Limited educational and training opportunities	Violence against women and children
6	Negative impact of politics	Low quality roads; Negative impact of politics	Limited educational and training opportunities
7	Low quality roads	Limited opportunities for employment and income generation	Low quality roads
8	Limited opportunities for employment and income generation	Inadequate and congested housing	Inadequate and congested housing
9	Not enough initiatives for development of women	No proper waste disposal system	Not enough initiatives for development of women
10	No proper waste disposal system	Not enough initiatives for development of women	Decreasing unity in the community

There are no significant differences across the age groups in terms of the concerns for their communities. Increasing drug use and crime, healthcare and basic services remain the top concerns

across all the age groups. Women above 45 year were more concerned about the decreasing unity in their communities.

**Table 10 Comparison by occupation groups**

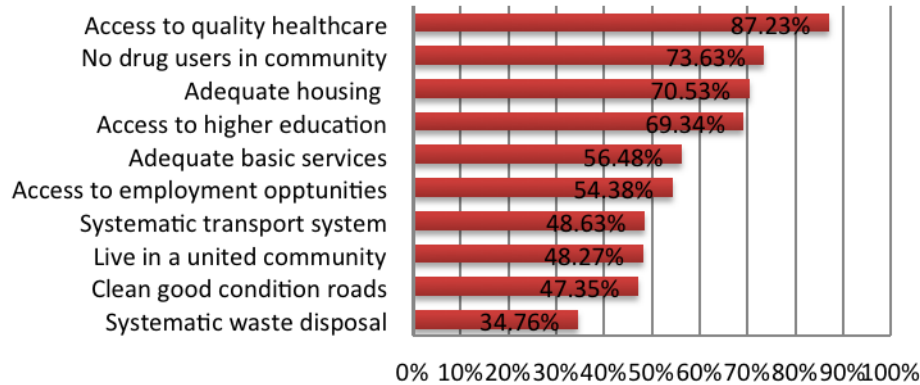
	Professional	Administrative / Support	Home based/ Homemaker
1	Increase in drug users and crime	Increase in drug users and crime	Inadequate basic services
2	Limited access to quality healthcare	Limited access to quality healthcare	Increase in drug users and crime
3	Violence against women and children	Inadequate and congested housing	Limited access to quality healthcare
4	Negative impact of politics	Violence against women and children	Violence against women and children
5	Inadequate and congested housing	Decreasing unity in the community	Limited educational and training opportunities
6	Decreasing unity in the community; Low quality roads	Negative impact of politics	Limited opportunities for employment and income generation
7	Inadequate basic services	High cost of living	Low quality roads
8	Limited educational and training opportunities	Low quality roads	Negative impact of politics
9	High cost of living	Increasing corruption	Not enough initiatives for development of women
10	Limited opportunities for employment and income generation; Increasing corruption	Increase in illegal migrant workers	No proper waste disposal system

No major differences were observed across the occupation groups. Women from professional and other occupation groups such as those relating to administrative work and support roles were almost identical in the concerns identified for their communities. The top concern for women who were home based/ home makers were inadequate basic services in addition to those identified above

### 3.4. Community Aspirations

Community aspirations included women’s aspirations regarding the communities they were living in, at atoll or island level. The top ten aspirations were as follows:

**Figure 4 Aspirations of Women for their Community - Male' and Atolls**



1. Access to quality healthcare at atoll level

More equipment in hospitals- Participant, Consultations with Male' women

To be able to access good healthcare and do tests without having to travel to Male' Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

As healthcare was one of the top concerns of the women respondents, the top community aspiration was access to quality healthcare at least at atoll level. This included good maternal care, doctors and access to health information.

2. No drug users in the community

*To be free from drugs users-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

Most women aspired to live in a community free from drugs. This included being safe from drug related crimes such as robbery, and safety on the streets and generally in public.

3. Access to adequate housing

*A solution to the housing shortage-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*Adequate housing provided to all families in the island-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*To be able to live with husband and family-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Better housing and land availability and ownership and being able to own and have own housing with husband or immediate family were important to the women respondents. A solution to the housing shortage was a key aspiration.

4. Access to higher education and training

*To have qualified teachers in the island-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*To have a good school in the island-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*To be able to study degree level courses in the island-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*I would like my children to be have access to quality educational institutions-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

It was an aspiration for most women for further education facilities and opportunities be available at community or atoll level.

#### 5. Adequate basic services

*Clean water, sanitation and pest control-*Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*To be able to get on and off the island easily-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

The quality of basic services at community level was a concern for most women and hence having adequate access to basic services such as water, electricity and sewerage system was an important aspiration for women. Some women also mentioned a better harbour/jetty for the island.

#### 6. Access to employment and income generation opportunities

*Need financial help to start businesses for women-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*Would like to have more opportunities for income generation in the island-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*More job opportunities for youth-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Women expressed the desire for more employment and income generation opportunities available at community and atoll levels. There were also concerns about the large numbers of unemployed youth in their communities, who did not have anything to do once they finished their studies at island level. Respondents therefore expressed the need to have more options and opportunities for earning a living for youth.

#### 7. Systematic transport system

*To be able to travel around the atoll and to Male' on ferries-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

A reliable and efficient transport system within and between atolls was an aspiration for women. This was linked to their being able to afford and access services and opportunities outside their communities, without being dependent on ad hoc transport arrangements.

#### 8. Live in a united community

*To live in a peaceful environment-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*To have everyone working together to develop the island-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

Similar to the personal aspirations section, women expressed their desire to live in a harmonious community that is peaceful and free from conflict.

#### 9. Clean roads that are of good condition

*To have paved roads-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Less taxis, more public transport, pedestrian friendly roads-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*A clean Male' with no rubbish all over the roads-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Women expressed their aspiration to have clean and peaceful roads in their communities that are of good condition, especially in atolls where islands are joined by land. Roads that are clean, free of congestion, and safe where people adhere to rules and regulations were desired.

10. To have a system of waste disposal

*To have a proper waste management system established in the island-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

Waste was a significant issue to women who wished to have waste produced by the communities disposed in a systematic way. Women also aspired to live in a clean community where there were specific areas for waste and ensure that public places were free from waste.

**Table 11 Comparison between Capital and Atolls**

	ATOLLS	MALE'
1	Access to quality healthcare at atoll level	Access to adequate housing
2	Access to higher education and training	To live in a peaceful and safe community
3	No drug users in the community	No drug users in the community
4	Adequate basic services	Access to quality healthcare
5	Access to adequate housing	More opportunities for youth
6	Access to employment and income generation opportunities	Affordable cost of living
7	Systematic transport system	Clean roads that are of good condition
8	Live in a united community	Protection for divorced women and victims of abuse and violence
9	Clean roads that are of good condition	Green open spaces for family
10	To have a system of waste disposal	Capable qualified elected representatives

Many of the aspirations identified by respondents in Male' and respondents in atolls were common such as housing, healthcare, good roads and decrease in drug users. Women in Male' also wished to have more opportunities for youth in terms of education, training and employment, and proper protection mechanisms and facilities for women experiencing violence and divorced women. They also desired to have green open spaces where family could spend their leisure time and wished to be represented by qualified and capable political candidates.



**Table 12 Comparison by Age Groups**

	18-25 years	26-45 years	Above 45 years
1	Access to quality healthcare at atoll level	Access to quality healthcare at atoll level	Access to quality healthcare at atoll level
2	Access to adequate housing	No drug users in the community	No drug users in the community
3	Access to higher education and training	Access to adequate housing	Access to adequate housing
4	Systematic transport system	Clean roads that are of good condition	Access to employment and income generation opportunities
5	Adequate basic services	Access to employment and income generation opportunities	Clean roads that are of good condition
6	Clean roads that are of good condition	To have a system of waste disposal	Live in a united community
7	Access to employment and income generation opportunities	Live in a united community	Adequate basic services
8	To have a system of waste disposal	Adequate basic services	Access to higher education and training
9	Access to same level of Islamic education (as capital)	Access to same level of Islamic education (as capital)	To have a system of waste disposal
10	No discrimination	Systematic transport system	Access to same level of Islamic education (as capital)

Quality healthcare was the top aspiration across age groups. Women aged 18-25 prioritised access to education and training more than other age groups, while for other age groups, access to income generation opportunities were more prioritised. The older two age groups also aspired to have access to religious education, which is now mostly available only centrally at the capital. Women aged 18-25 years aspired for women to not face discrimination in any aspect of their lives.

**Table 13 Comparison by occupation groups**

	Professional	Administrative / Support	Home based/ Homemaker
1	Access to quality healthcare at atoll level; No drug users in the community	Access to quality healthcare at atoll level	Access to quality healthcare at atoll level
2	Access to adequate housing	No drug users in the community	Access to higher education and training
3	Access to higher education and training	Access to adequate housing	Systematic transport system

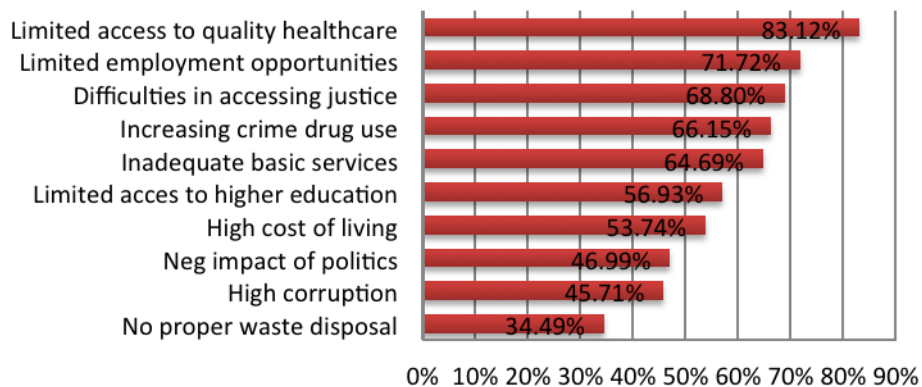
4	Clean roads that are of good condition	Capable qualified elected representatives; Clean roads that are of good condition	Access to adequate housing
5	Capable qualified elected representatives	To live in a peaceful and safe community	No drug users in the community
6	Access to same level of Islamic education (as capital)	More opportunities for youth	Adequate basic services
7	Live in a united community	Access to higher education and training	Clean roads that are of good condition
8	To live in a peaceful and safe community	Affordable cost of living	Access to employment and income generation opportunities
9	More opportunities for youth	To have a system of waste disposal	Live in a united community
10	Access to employment and income generation opportunities	Access to employment and income generation opportunities; Live in a united community	To have a system of waste disposal

Quality healthcare was the top aspiration for their identified among respondents of all occupation groups. Professional women wished to have more opportunities available for youth at the community level, while women from occupation group that relates to administrative work and support roles expressed desire for a more affordable cost of living.

### 3.5. National Concerns

National concerns included issues that the women perceived as barriers to the development of the country. The top concerns were as follows:

**Figure 5 Concerns of Women in Male' and Atolls for the Nation**



### 1. Limited access to quality healthcare

*Accessing healthcare is the most costly thing for us-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Not being able to show specialist doctors or do certain tests in the Maldives-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

The top national concern for the women respondents was accessing quality healthcare. In the consultations, there were concerns raised about limited access to basic healthcare facilities, and hospitals either not having doctors, or competent specialised doctors or not being able to treat some serious illnesses at national level. There were also concerns raised about the over burdening of health facilities in the capital making it difficult for patients to get appointments or admittance in hospital. In addition, having to spend money to travel to where proper healthcare was available was a burden on the families.

### 2. Limited employment and training opportunities

*There are no employment opportunities when you finish school-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*There is limited training centres to learn skills-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Women expressed desire for higher education or skills training to further their careers and the limited access to education and training for most women were a major concern. Affordability of accessing the opportunities was an issue as well.

### 3. Difficulties in accessing justice

*The legal system is not trustworthy-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*There is corruption in the judiciary-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Judges lack integrity-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*There is no fairness in the judiciary-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

This was identified as a major concern at national level. Women in the consultations expressed dissatisfaction with the judicial system and the difficulties in satisfactorily concluding the cases they lodge through the judicial system. Women expressed concerns about corruption in the judiciary, differentiation in access to justice to those people who have contacts, and not having power being able to hold judges to account. The non-enforcement of some of the decisions of the courts was also an issue raised by women.

### 4. Increasing drug use and crime

*Increasing drug use, violence, robberies and rapes-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Youth turning to crime and gang related activities-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

The increase in drug users and related crimes was a major national concern for women. Women also expressed that not enough interventions are carried out to counter this issue. Some women stated that Police in their communities were not able to do much to overcome the drug issue and that the suspects do not get sentenced and are back in the communities very soon. There were concerns raised about limited rehabilitation services to drug users as well.

## 5. Inadequate basic services

*We don't get clean drinking water-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*The quality of the sewerage system is very low-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*There are health problems due to a bad sewerage system-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

The quality of basic services was a concern for women. Women consulted mentioned that the services they receive such as sewerage system and electricity was not up to standard. The problem of not having proper electricity throughout the day, and frequent blackouts was a concern as it causes disruptions in their daily lives as well as damage to their property. Access to water for drinking and domestic use was also a concern.

## 6. Limited access to education and training

*The standard of education we get is generally low-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

Access to good education and training courses was a concern. Women expressed dissatisfaction about the quality of education and of teachers, which makes it necessary in some cases for families to migrate to another island or the capital, which puts a financial burden on the family. In addition higher education opportunities are quite limited and requires financial support schemes for instance to study abroad.

## 7. High cost of living

*The cost of food is increasing every day-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*The cost of basic necessities is high-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Most people can't afford good housing-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Women expressed concern regarding the rising costs of living. The prices of basic necessities such as food and housing are quite high and continue to increase every year. The cost of baby and children's products were also quite high. Hence most women stated that the incomes received by families were never enough to meet their household demands and personal needs.

## 8. Negative impact of politics

*Politics is causing divisions-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*Even NGOs are affiliated to some side-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*There is no unity among the people now-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Political instability is not good for the country-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Women were concerned about the political instability and overall negative behaviours that have resulted due to political differences. Their perception of politics and politicians were very negative, and were concerned that important issues do not get the attention and priority due to political disagreements and deals.

## 9. High corruption in the country

*Cannot get anything done without a bribe-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Corruption is everywhere, in the Government and the private sector-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Women consulted, expressed concern about the rising corruption that is widespread in the nation. This included those in positions of power working for their personal interest and not being held accountable for their actions. A lot of women expressed that most things can be done or fast tracked by giving bribes and that there was no institution that is trying to adequately tackle this issue.

#### 10. No proper system of waste disposal

*We have no way of disposing of waste-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*There is waste everywhere in the islands-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*There is no recycling system-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Not having a system for waste disposal was a concern for women and they stated that this causes littering and pollution in the whole country. People throw away garbage everywhere and there is no way to dispose of the garbage that is collected.

**Table 14 Comparison between Capital and Atolls**

	ATOLLS	MALE'
1	Limited access to quality healthcare	Decreasing personal safety due to increasing crime rate
2	Increasing drug use and crimes	High cost of living
3	Inadequate access to basic services	Difficulty in accessing justice
4	Limited employment and income generation opportunities	Limited access to quality healthcare
5	Limited access to education and training	Increasing corruption; Limited assistance and facilities for persons with special needs
6	Difficulty in accessing justice	Limited employment and income generation opportunities
7	High cost of living	Negative impact of politics
8	Negative impact of politics	Violence against women and children
9	Increasing corruption	Decreasing condition of the economy
10	Increase in religious differences	Lack of proper waste disposal system

There are considerable differences in their respective concerns for the nation identified between women from the atolls and the capital as observed previously. While the top national concern was healthcare for women from the atolls, this was further down in the list for respondents in Male'. They instead viewed increasing personal safety due to crime as their top national concern. Women in atolls were also concerned about the rising crime, and limited education and employment opportunities while women in Male' were more concerned about the limited assistance to people with special needs, violence against women and children, and the current deteriorating state of the economy due to high levels of national debt. Women from the atolls were concerned about in

adequate access to basic services and increase in differences in religious interpretations, particularly more extremist interpretations among society.

**Table 15 Comparison by Age Groups**

	18-25 years	26-45 years	Above 45 years
1	Limited access to quality healthcare	Limited access to quality healthcare	Limited access to quality healthcare
2	Limited employment and income generation opportunities	Difficulty in accessing justice	Limited employment and income generation opportunities
3	Difficulty in accessing justice	Limited employment and income generation opportunities	Difficulty in accessing justice
4	Increasing drug use and crimes	Increasing drug use and crimes	Increasing drug use and crimes; Inadequate access to basic services
5	Inadequate access to basic services	Inadequate access to basic services	Limited access to education and training; High cost of living
6	High cost of living	High cost of living	Decreasing unity in the nation
7	Decreasing unity in the nation	Decreasing unity in the nation	Increasing corruption
8	Limited access to education and training	Limited access to education and training	Low numbers of women in decision making
9	Increasing corruption	Increasing corruption	Inadequate and congested housing
10	Violence against women and children	Increase in religious differences	Violence against women and children

Limited access to quality healthcare was the top national concern across all age groups and the rest of the concerns expressed by women were similar across age groups. Some of the differences include; women in the age group 26-45 years were concerned regarding the increase in differences of religious interpretations, and women over 45 years were more concerned about the low numbers of women in decision making position.

**Table 16 Comparison by occupation groups**

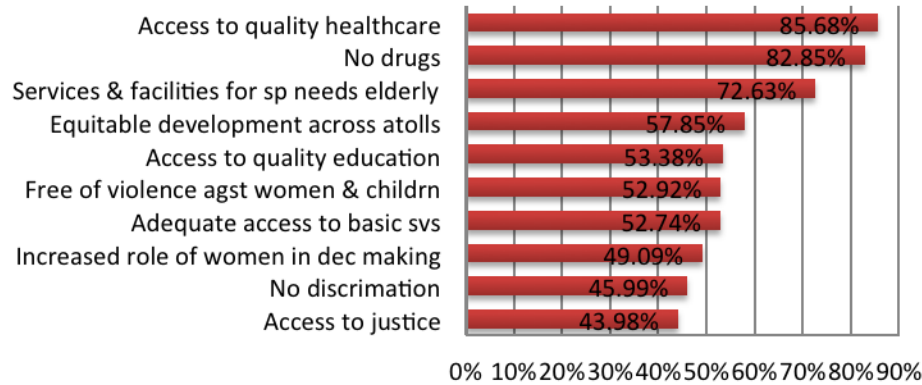
	Professional	Administrative / Support	Home based/ Homemaker
1	Limited access to quality healthcare	Limited access to quality healthcare	Limited access to quality healthcare
2	Difficulty in accessing justice	Difficulty in accessing justice	Limited employment and income generation opportunities
3	Limited employment and income generation opportunities	Violence against women and children	Increasing drug use and crimes
4	High cost of living	Limited employment and income generation opportunities; High cost of living	Inadequate access to basic services
5	Increasing corruption	Increasing corruption	Limited access to education and training; Decreasing unity in the nation
6	Increasing drug use and crimes	Decreased personal safety due to increasing crime	Difficulty in accessing justice
7	Violence against women and children	Increasing drug use and crimes; Lack of a proper waste disposal system; Negative impact of politics; Decreasing condition of the economy	High cost of living
8	Limited access to education and training	Lack of a reliable and systematic transport system	Increase in religious differences
9	Inadequate access to basic services	Limited assistance and facilities for persons with special needs	Increasing corruption
10	Decreased personal safety due to increasing crime	High divorce rate and limited life skills/ counselling services	Lack of a proper waste disposal system

Limited access to quality healthcare was the top national concern across women of all occupation groups, and no major differences in the top concerns identified by women are observed across the occupation groups. Women from the occupation group relating to administrative work and support roles was concerned about limited assistance and facilities for persons with special needs, and the high divorce rate with limited counselling services for problems with spouse or family.

### 3.6. National Aspirations

National aspirations included how the women wished Maldives to be or their vision for the country. The top ten aspirations included:

**Figure 6 National Aspirations of Women - Male' and Atolls**



#### 1. Access to quality healthcare

*A good healthcare system established that can be accessed easily-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*To be able to access good healthcare without leaving the Maldives-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Birthing centres need to be established in the Maldives-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*Good doctors and nurses in the healthcare system-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

The top national aspiration from the survey was access to quality healthcare, and this has been a major concern expressed at all levels as well. This included access to basic and specialist care, good health facilities, access to medicines, health information on illnesses and emerging diseases and good access to maternal information and care.

#### 2. A drug free nation

*Reduced drug use and rehabilitation services-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*Elimination of the business of drug dealing-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*I would like to see a drug free Maldives-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Most of the women aspired to have the issue of drugs reduced or eliminated. This would reduce drug related crimes such as violence and robbery. Women also wished to have more rehabilitation and reintegration assistance, services and facilities available for drug users.



### 3. Services and facilities for persons with special needs and the elderly

*An old age pension that is sufficient to live independently-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*Educational facilities for children with special needs-* Participant, Consultations with Atoll women

*Facilities and opportunities for the blind-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*Specialised doctors, nurses and facilities for the elderly-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

As it was identified previously, there was a serious lack of services and facilities for persons with special needs the elderly, and it was a top national aspiration of women that such assistance is provided in order to facilitate a more dignified life for these groups.

### 4. Equitable development across atolls

*Services to be available in the islands at a similar level-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*All islands to be treated equally in implementing development-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Equality for all citizens in development-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Tourism to be developed in all the atolls-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

Women expressed their aspiration for the Government to pay equal attention to all regions and for resources to be distributed equally across the country so that the regional disparities would be minimised or eliminated.

### 5. Access to quality education

*I would like a good educational system with focus on building life skills-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*To be able to get highest levels of education without leaving the Maldives-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

Another top national aspiration of women was to have a strengthened education system in the country. This included better education facilities, competent teachers and ways established to increase accessibility for higher education for those who wish to pursue it.

### 6. No violence against women and children

*Security for women who report domestic violence-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Safety for women trying to escape from abusive spouses-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*Protection for child victims of abuse-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*To be able to walk on the streets in peace-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Women respondents aspired to live in an environment that was free from violence against women, and better protection mechanisms for survivors of violence and abuse. The women also wished to ensure effective implementation of laws and provisions for protection for survivors in the relevant legislations be established and functioning.

## 7. Adequate access to basic services

*Good sewerage systems established in the islands-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Get clean water at a cheap price-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Women aspired for adequate access and proper delivery of basic services such as water, electricity, sewerage and harbours/jetties.

## 8. Increased role for women in decision making

*Would like more women to be in high positions of the Government-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*Allocations for women in Councils, Boards and Parliament-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*I would like to see a female President-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*More women in political positions-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*More women in the Councils-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Women respondents identified the limited numbers of women at decision making levels as a concern and one of their national aspirations was to have increased number of women in policy level and decision making bodies through quotas for women in the Parliament, Councils, Board of Directors of Public Companies etc. The women felt this was very important for perceptions on women in leadership positions be changed as there is currently a view that women are unable to perform or incompetent to be in these positions and that it is important to ensure that women's voices be represented in the decision making including the development process of the country

## 9. No discrimination

*Equal opportunities for women in all aspects-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Include women's say in making national decisions-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*Equal opportunities to access employment for men and women-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

Women aspired to live in a country where there was no discrimination against them. The women consulted wished to have the independence to make the decisions regarding their lives by themselves and to act on their aspirations regarding their personal, professional and social lives without influence from others. They also wished to have access to equal opportunities as men in all areas of the society.

## 10. Access to justice

*Lawyers and judges to have integrity-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

*Responsible lawyers and judges-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*An accountable judicial system-* Participant, Consultations with Male' women

*Lawyers and judges to be free of corruption-* Participant, Consultation with Atoll Women

Finally, women expressed their desire to have a better judicial system in the country. They would like to have a more accountable, transparent and just judiciary, where they have the same regard and access as men, and one that is free from corruption and influence.

**Table 17 Comparison between Capital and Atolls**

	ATOLLS	MALE'
1	Access to quality healthcare	A drug free nation
2	A drug free nation	Access to land / housing
3	Services and facilities for persons with special needs and the elderly	Access to education and training
4	Equitable development across atolls	Safety and security with reduced crime
5	No violence against women and children	Access to justice
6	Adequate access to basic services	Access to quality healthcare
7	Increased role for women in decision making	Services and facilities for persons with special needs and the elderly; A good economy
8	No discrimination	A united, tolerant and harmonious nation
9	A reliable systematic national transport service	A population that is politically aware and mature
10	Access to education and training	A clean environment

There are noticeable differences in the aspirations of women from atolls and Male'. While elimination of the issue of drugs remains in the highest priority for both groups, access to healthcare becomes the first aspiration of women from atolls. Top aspirations of respondents in Male' relate to housing, education, personal safety and strengthened judicial system, and they also aspire for the nation to be economically advanced and for its populace to be democratically aware and mature. Due to the development disparities between the regions, women from the atolls have a strong national aspiration for equitable development across the nation. They also aspire for the elimination of violence against women and children, introduce quotas for women in decision making bodies and to have an environment free from discrimination against women.

**Table 18 Comparison by Age Groups**

	18-25 years	26-45 years	Above 45 years
1	Access to quality healthcare	Access to quality healthcare	A drug free nation
2	A drug free nation	Services and facilities for persons with special needs and the elderly	Access to quality healthcare
3	Services and facilities for persons with special	A drug free nation	Services and facilities for persons with special

	needs and the elderly		needs and the elderly
4	Equitable development across atolls	Equitable development across atolls	Access to education and training
5	Access to education and training	Access to education and training	Equitable development across atolls
6	Increased role for women in decision making	Adequate access to basic services	Adequate access to basic services
7	No discrimination	Increased role for women in decision making	Increased role for women in decision making; Access to justice
8	Access to land/ housing	Access to land/ housing	No discrimination
9	Adequate access to basic services	Access to justice	A reliable systematic national transport service; Access to land/ housing
10	Access to justice	No discrimination	Safety and security with reduced crime

Access to quality healthcare in the country remains among the top aspirations across all age groups, and other top aspirations are also quite similar across age groups. Women over 45 years desired to live in a safe and secure nation that is free from crimes.

**Table 19 Comparison by occupation groups**

	Professional	Administrative / Support	Home based/ Homemaker
1	Access to quality healthcare	A drug free nation	Equitable development across atolls
2	A drug free nation	Access to quality healthcare	Access to quality healthcare
3	Services and facilities for persons with special needs and the elderly	Services and facilities for persons with special needs and the elderly	A drug free nation
4	Safety and security with reduced crime	Safety and security with reduced crime	Services and facilities for persons with special needs and the elderly
5	Access to education and training	A united harmonious nation	Adequate access to basic services
6	Access to land/ housing	Access to land/ housing	Increased role for women in decision making
7	Access to justice	Access to education and training	No violence against women and children
8	Increased role for women in decision making	Access to justice	No discrimination; Access to education and training
9	A united harmonious nation	Empowerment of women	Access to justice; Access to land/ housing

10	Adequate access to basic services	A good economy	A reliable systematic national transport service
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Elimination of the issue of drugs is a top aspiration common to women of all occupation groups. The prioritisation of the aspirations of women from professional and other occupation groups remain very similar although there are some differences among home based women. For home-based group, the top priority was to achieve equitable development across atolls in the Maldives in addition to having quality healthcare and ensuring elimination of drugs, having access to basic services and elimination of violence against women.

### 3.7. Linkages between concerns and aspirations

The concerns at the different levels in some cases translated into aspirations at that respective level as well. This was particularly true in the top concerns in all levels which related to access to quality healthcare, and access to land and housing. However, in some instances top concerns did not translate into corresponding top level aspirations. For instance the issue of violence against women was a top personal concern amongst the women but the aspiration to be free from violence did not appear as a top level personal aspiration. This may be due to women believing that having access to education, avenues for income generation and other means of self sufficiency will reduce the risks of being exposed to violence. Community level concerns however did tend to translate into community level aspirations.

There were some differences between the concerns and aspirations at national level. While healthcare was the top concern and aspiration, other top level concerns did not necessarily translate into top level aspirations. There were concerns on access to employment, basic services and education while top level aspiration included achieving equitable development across the nation mainly due to the fact that major concerns with access to services and facilities stems from services being centralised in the capital.

### 3.8. Issues specific to women

Most of the concerns and aspirations that were gathered from the consultations and which were to be included in the survey were not all specific to women. The nature of the constraints faced by women over the issue might be different from men due to their different day to day realities but they remain critical issues relevant to all citizens. However, there were also issues that came out of the consultations were very much specific to the situation and status of women. Some of these women specific issues include violence against women, limited recreational facilities, discrimination and limited choices for women at decision making levels.

There were some issues that were identified in the consultations but not included in the survey since they did not occur in the frequency required to be included such as the following:

### *1. Difficulties due to husbands being away from the island*

Women in the consultations mentioned the challenges of living and taking care of family members without the presence of husbands who were mostly away working outside the island. They have added responsibilities which they have to carry out alone in the absence of their husbands. They also mentioned the loneliness of being without their spouses and that children are affected as they lack attention of a father figure. Women also mentioned that there is no one to take care of them when they are ill or in need of support.

### *2. Having to take on caretaking responsibilities because of being a woman*

Women described the challenges of having to take up the caretaking responsibilities of the sick, elderly, those with special needs in the family, as well as children. In most communities, with the men being away from the islands for employment, the responsibilities of caretaking the young, old and the sick generally falls on the women in the island. Women, especially from the consultations with island women representatives, reported that this left them with little personal time, especially to pursue interests and activities for themselves such as seeking employment, engaging in income generating activities or leisure activities.

### *3. Having to work without pay for communal activities*

Women, especially those from Women's Development Committees, expressed concern that they are expected to do communal activities but do not get any payment for it. For instance, women are expected to come out and clean the island and not men, and they do not get any remuneration for this. If there are high level guests visiting the island, women are often expected to do the catering for events that are organised and other hospitality related activities of the guests. Those women who do not participate in giving their time for such activities are viewed negatively in the community.

### *4. Negative perception and challenges of single mothers and divorced women*

Some of the women in the consultations expressed concern that the society tends to view single mothers and divorced women in a very negative light. It was mentioned that society tends to be judgemental of women who were divorced and assumes responsibility of the breakup of the marriage on the women. Some women also mentioned the challenges of being single mothers without assistance from the father after the separation. They cited financial difficulties, as it was difficult to seek employment due to childcare responsibilities, creates general dependency on other people and lower quality of life for the child.

## 4. Conclusion

Over the past decades, substantial progress has been made to achieve gender equality in the Maldives. Equal rights for women and men are enshrined and protected in the Constitution of Maldives. It is also stipulated that special measures can be taken in areas where the realisation of women's rights are lagging behind. However, cultural, structural and other barriers exist that prevent women from fully participating in their communities and utilising the opportunities and benefits equally with men. This difference is most apparent in the representation of women in positions of power and decision making.

A review of the top concerns identified by women indicates that women are concerned about problems facing the community and the nation as a whole such as inadequate access to quality healthcare, education, roads. Women are also concerned about issues that are more specific to women, such as violence against women and having few women in decision making roles. Concerns ranged from those associated with practical needs such as inadequate basic services to those associated with women's strategic needs such as access to capital and participation in decision making that can improve their overall status and wellbeing. Limited accessibility to quality healthcare was the major concern of women, even when compared across age and occupation groups, as well as between women of atolls and the capital. Violence against women is also a strong concern for women. Therefore the top concerns of women are a combination of concerns affecting the general population and those that affect women more specifically.

Women also included discrimination against women as a major issue that women face not only in the public domain but within their homes as well, where their views and decisions regarding their lives are not given prominence or supported by family members. While women do express general issues such as limited access to education, high crime rate and limited employment opportunities, their challenges due to these issues are also confounded by the added layer of discrimination faced by them as women. For instance, scarcity of employment opportunities is a major issue for everyone, but for women, there is an additional layer of difficulty in terms of limited mobility, caretaking responsibilities due to them being women, and/or limited control over their lives that makes the issue more challenging for them.

Looking at the aspirations identified by women, while there were general communal aspirations such as better access to basic services and assistance and services to the elderly and persons with special needs, the desire for self-development was very evident, particularly looking at the personal and community level aspirations. The top aspiration again was to be healthy or to have access to quality healthcare. Other aspirations include having education and employment opportunities, family support in all aspects of life, to be free from threat of violence and to not be discriminated against in access to opportunities.

As the general theme of their aspirations centred on self-development and self-sufficiency, the aspirations identified by women appear to be coloured by their lived realities of being a group that has to be dependent on others in both private or family sphere and in the community sphere. This is also in line with their concerns of discrimination with respect to accessing available opportunities.

Women also expressed concern about the politicised state of the country and issues of governance such as lack of transparency and accountability of elected representatives and institutions, and hence aspired for a more united nation, with increased integrity of institutions and leaders.

When comparing the concerns and aspirations of women across age and occupation groups there were few differences. This indicates that women as a group generally have similar lived experiences that present similar sets of challenges that influences their concerns and desires in their lives. However, differences can be seen in comparing the findings between women from the atolls and Male'.

Given that most of the services, facilities and opportunities are centralised in the capital, the concerns and aspirations of women in Male' were more related to issues of personal safety and the need for personal space or less congested housing, clean and congestion free roads, access to counselling and more personal safety by reducing crime. Male' also has a lot of professional women and those engaged in formal employment and this was reflected in the aspirations which were related to support in starting up businesses and access and affordability of day care facilities. With the relative limited opportunities in the atolls, the concerns and aspirations of women in the atolls were different and centred on having access to basic services, facilities and opportunities, such as health and maternal health, electricity, water, harbours/jetty, education, employment, and vocational training.

The findings of the women's vision initiative emphasise that while the concerns and aspirations of women reflect the general issues and problems facing the country, their experiences of these issues may be different due to their general disadvantaged position in the society. Therefore, the provision of services, facilities and opportunities need to take into account the lived experiences and challenges of women in order ensure that equitable services are available for women and men. In addition, there are issues that are specific to women that need to be addressed in order to provide a better quality of life for women in the country. In order to facilitate these, women's voices need to be heard, considered and incorporated into the decisions that are made in order for the outcomes of these decisions to be beneficial for all the citizens of the country.



# 5. Recommendations Put Forward By Women

In the consultations with women as well as in the survey forms, women were asked on how the identified concerns can be addressed or aspirations can be reached and to list recommendations on what *needs to be changed* at a) personal level, b) community level and c) national level. The following are broadly what was suggested by the women:

## 5.1 Personal level

The suggestions of women on what can be done personally fell broadly into three categories; namely developing one's self; being an example of the change that was desired; and being an active agent to work for the change or to become change makers.

In the first category women's suggestions included

1. Educating oneself and seeking more knowledge that would contribute towards achieving personal development
2. Having the self confidence in order to work towards achieving personal aspirations
3. Becoming more aware of opportunities for acquiring knowledge, training and self-development, and utilising them,
4. Working harder to achieve the desired goals, and
5. Seeking counselling or talking to someone else about personal problems that was hindering personal growth

In order to being examples of the desired change, suggestions included

1. Taking own responsibility first for issues that were within the family or community
2. Treating everyone equally, including marginalised groups and youth with behaviour problems
3. Keeping own personal space clean and not contributing to maintaining cleanliness on the island
4. Obeying laws and regulations

In terms of being change makers, women proposed

1. Being proactive in tackling issues concerning family and community
2. Raising voice on issues instead of keeping silent
3. Making others aware of issues and how to work towards addressing them
4. Impart the knowledge one has to educate and inform others
5. Organising activities such as petitions on issues of community or that of national concern
6. Engaging more and developing better relations with the Island Council

7. Take matters to the attention of the relevant agencies, such as reporting violence to the Police
8. Join or form groups such as NGOs with likeminded people to work for specific causes.

## 5.2 Community level

The recommendations of women on how change can be brought about at community level fall mainly into what can be changed at how islands are administered at the moment and suggestions on what can be changed to address specific issues.

Majority of the suggestions of women for community level change were targeted towards the Island Councils and the atoll and island level institutions. The suggestions included:

1. Island Council should become more engaged with the communities.
2. Atoll Council should develop more close relations with the Island Council and the island residents
3. The institutions within the island should identify the needs of the people and then plan development and other programmes accordingly
4. Atoll and island level authorities should include Women's Development Committees in the decision making process
5. Island Council should have discussions and close relations with all the institutions in the island and work together in island administration and development management
6. There should be a culture of discussion and dialogue within and between island institutions and the people, as well as with outside national level institutions
7. Councils and other institutions should provide information on the status of the island and its development activities regularly to residents, as lack of information is a cause for dissatisfaction and conflict
8. Atoll and island level leaders should be very proactive in "pressuring" Government and central agencies on assistance to tackling critical issues in the community
9. Leaders should not work for political parties but for the people

There were also recommendations for addressing specific concerns and critical community level issues, which included:

1. There should be more information and awareness programmes on issues by technical persons held in the communities on national issues
2. Prioritisation should be given to qualified people for positions of responsibility in the island
3. All institutions in the community should unite and work together to combat crime
4. Island leaders should be of the highest integrity
5. More opportunities for vocational training for youth must be created
6. Children and youth should be targeted early with awareness programmes and life skills in order to prevent them from going into criminal activities
7. There should be equal opportunities given to everyone in the island, regardless of gender, ward, or political affiliation.

8. More programmes and initiatives should be conducted at the island level to increase the knowledge and skills of women to facilitate a more empowered female population
9. Land plots that have not been built for a long period of time should be confiscated and redistributed to more deserving applicants
10. Easy access to medicines should be provided at island level
11. Elected representatives of the constituency should be used to bring local matters to national attention
12. Family spaces should be created in every island

### 5.3 National level

The recommendations of women on what must be changed at national level also broadly fall under two categories of what should be changed at how the country is administered, and suggestions on what should be done to address specific issues.

Recommendations for the high level institutions and decision making bodies included

1. Politicians should work through their differences and work together to develop the country and empower its people
2. National leaders and those in positions of decision making should be closer to citizens and be more aware of what the concerns and priorities of the people are, “even outside of the elections period”.
3. There should be a culture of discussion and dialogue among the decision makers and in making policy level decisions
4. There should be a prioritisation process during decisions on which development interventions should be implemented, looking at the current situation and basing the decision on what is most essential for the people
5. Adequate budget should be allocated for the provision of essential services
6. Proper information on Government policies and development plans, and implementation schedules should be shared in a timely manner with community leaders, so that through them the people are aware of such plans, and also know about implementation delays as well
7. Accountability mechanisms should be increased in oversight bodies as well as within institutions as well

The recommendations on addressing specific issues included:

1. Priority given to train professionals in all sectors, especially those sectors responsible for provision of essential services, and taking necessary measures to retain those trained
2. Appointing qualified and capable people to decision making positions, including political positions
3. Increase avenues for access to information to citizens
4. Ensure sentencing of criminals to suit the crime, including application of Islamic Sharia, and also timely implementation of the sentences
5. More attention to be given to raising awareness and tackling environmental issues locally

6. Providing assistance and facilities to persons with special needs at atoll or island level
7. Strengthening laws and regulations where they are weak
8. Introducing more housing schemes and assistance for getting land or housing
9. Establishing higher criteria for elected representatives
10. Quota for women in Parliament, Cabinet, Boards of Public Companies, Independent Commissions, political appointees and other decision making and oversight bodies
11. Giving more importance to qualifications and experience when giving employment
12. Implementing programmes and initiatives to increase productivity of the nation
13. Strengthening judiciary, including its accountability mechanisms
14. More programmes needs to be conducted to raise awareness and change behaviour of people on critical issues

# ANNEX I: Translation of Survey form – Atolls

## Maldivian Women’s Vision

Island:

Occupation:

Age:

(If you require follow up info) Phone/Email:

### 1. Personal Concerns

Please read the following concerns, and add any concern/s that is not included, and tick the top 10 personal concerns for you out of the total concerns.

#	Details	✓
1	Limited access to vocational and technical training	
2	Limited access to quality healthcare	
3	Limited opportunities for education	
4	Limited assistance to start business and income generating activities	
5	Inadequate basic services such as water, sewerage and electricity	
6	Lack of personal space due to congested housing	
7	Limited freedom of movement due to lack of systematic transport	
8	Limited recreational facilities	
9	Low family support in all aspects of life	
10	Few qualified elected representatives	
11	Drug users in the family	
12	Difficulties due to pests such as mosquitoes	
13	Living under the threat of violence and abuse	
14	Increasing crimes against women	
15	Difficulty in accessing justice	
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What can be done to address these concerns:

At personal level

At atoll/community level

At national level

## 2. Personal Aspirations

Please read the following aspirations, and add any aspiration/s that is not included, and tick the top 10 personal aspirations for you out of the total aspirations.

#	Details	✓
1	To be active politically or be in a decision making position	
2	Live in own space, housing	
3	To be an educated person	
4	To have confidence in self	
5	To be of good health	
6	To be in a good job	
7	Live in a united community	
8	To have opportunities for agriculture and Mari culture	
9	To be aware and safe from violence	
10	To be self sufficient	
11	Not to have drug users in the family	
12	Access to recreation facilities	
13	Not to be discriminated against	
14	Family support in all aspects of life	
15	Easy, affordable legal aid	
16		
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What can be done to achieve these:

At personal level

At atoll/community level

At national level

### 3. Community Concerns

Please read the following concerns, and add any concern/s that is not included, and tick the top 10 community concerns for you out of the total concerns.

#	Details	✓
1	Limited opportunities for employment and income generation	
2	Increase in drug users and crime	
3	Limited educational and training opportunities	
4	Not having people with integrity among elected representatives	
5	Inadequate basic services such as water and sewerage system	
6	Limited access to quality healthcare	
7	Low quality roads	
8	Negative impact of politics in the communities	
9	No proper waste disposal system	
10	Few activities at community level to empower women	
11	No solution found so far to the problem of erosion	
12	Issues from not having adequate access to electricity	
13	No transport system	
14	Limited opportunities for youth in the community	
15	Increasing violence against women and children	
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What can be done to address these concerns:

At personal level

At atoll/community level

At national level

## 2. Community Aspirations

Please read the following aspirations, and add any aspiration/s that is not included, and tick the top 10 community aspirations for you out of the total aspirations.

#	Details	✓
1	Access to quality healthcare at atoll level	
2	Access to higher education and training	
3	Clean roads that are of good condition	
4	Adequate basic services	
5	Systematic transport system	
6	To have a system of waste disposal	
7	A solution to the problem of erosion	
8	Equal opportunities for women in employment and other areas	
9	No drug users in the community	
10	Market for agricultural products	
11	Access to adequate housing	
12	Live in a united community	
13	Access to justice	
14	Access to Islamic education	
15	Qualified and capable elected representatives	
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19		
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What can be done to achieve these:

At personal level

At atoll/community level

At national level



## 5. National Concerns

Please read the following concerns, and add any concern/s that is not included, and tick the top 10 national concerns for you out of the total concerns.

#	Details	✓
1	Limited access to quality healthcare	
2	Limited access to education and training	
3	Difficulty in accessing justice	
4	Negative impact of politics to the nation	
5	Increasing drug use and crimes	
6	High cost of living	
7	Decreasing national productivity	
8	Limited employment and income generation opportunities	
9	No equitable taxation system	
10	Non adherence to rules on the roads	
11	Difference of opinion on religious matters	
12	Limited number of women in decision making positions	
13	No proper system of waste disposal	
14	Increasing corruption in the nation	
15	Inadequate access to basic services	
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What can be done to address these concerns:

At personal level

At atoll/community level

At national level

## 6. National Aspirations

Please read the following aspirations, and add any aspiration/s that is not included, and tick the top 10 national aspirations for you out of the total aspirations.

#	Details	✓
1	Increased role for women in decision making	
2	Access to quality healthcare	
3	Access to education and training	
4	Services and facilities for persons with special needs and the elderly	
5	Equitable development across atolls	
6	Appointment to positions based on qualification	
7	A drug free nation	
8	A reliable systematic national transport service	
9	Access to justice	
10	Affordable cost of living	
11	Equitable access to basic services across the nation	
12	Access to land and housing for all citizens	
13	A country free of corruption	
14	No violence against women and children	
15	Adequate access to basic services	
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What can be done to achieve these:

At personal level

At atoll/community level

At national level

# ANNEX II: Translation of Survey form – Male'

## Maldivian Women's Vision

Island:

Occupation:

Age:

(If you require follow up info) Phone/Email:

### 1. Personal Concerns

Please read the following concerns, and add any concern/s that is not included, and tick the top 10 personal concerns for you out of the total concerns.

#	Details	✓
1	Decreased personal safety due to increasing crime rate	
2	Limited assistance to start business and income generating activities	
3	Congested and unclean roads	
4	High cost of living	
5	Limited access and affordability of legal aid	
6	Challenges to selling own products due to weak legislation on Copyrights	
7	Limited opportunities for vocational training	
8	Lack of personal space due to congested housing	
9	Harassment at workplaces	
10	Lack of assistance and involvement of fathers after divorce	
11	Violence against women	
12	Limited access to counselling for marital and family problems	
13	Negative societal perception of divorced women and unmarried women	
14	Problems within the family due to political differences	
15	Limited access and affordability of day-care	
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What can be done to address these concerns:

At personal level

At atoll/community level

At national level

## 2. Personal Aspirations

Please read the following aspirations, and add any aspiration/s that is not included, and tick the top 10 personal aspirations for you out of the total aspirations.

#	Details	✓
1	Have a good job	
2	Be of good health	
3	Establish own products in the market	
4	To be self sufficient	
5	To learn a technical or vocational skill	
6	Live in own space, housing	
7	Have access to support to start an income generating activity	
8	Have access to quality maternal care	
9	Have equal opportunities to have a say in decision making inside and outside the home	
10	Better educational opportunities for self and children	
11	To be active politically or be in a decision making position	
12	Good future for the children	
13	To contribute to the development of the country	
14	Have a happy family life	
15	To be able to take care of parents in their old age	
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17		
18		
19		
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What can be done to achieve these:

At personal level

At atoll/community level

At national level

### 3. Community Concerns

Please read the following concerns, and add any concern/s that is not included, and tick the top 10 community concerns for you out of the total concerns.

#	Details	✓
1	Increase in drug users and crime	
2	Inadequate and congested housing	
3	Increase in illegal migrant workers	
4	Low quality, polluted and congested roads	
5	High cost of living	
6	Gender discrimination inside and outside the home	
7	Increasing corruption	
8	Limited access to quality healthcare	
9	Limited monitoring of media and no actions taken for content that's destructive to society	
10	Negative impact of politics in the communities	
11	Increased promotion of extremist religious views	
12	Violence against women and children	
13	Limited access to quality education for children	
14	Widening gap between the rich and the poor	
15	Decreasing friendships and unity among families in the community	
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What can be done to address these concerns

At personal level

At atoll/community level

At national level

#### 4. Community Aspirations

Please read the following aspirations, and add any aspiration/s that is not included, and tick the top 10 community aspirations for you out of the total aspirations.

#	Details	✓
1	More vocational and employment opportunities for youth	
2	No drug users in the community	
3	Access to adequate housing	
4	Clean roads that are of good condition	
5	To live in a peaceful and safe community	
6	Green open spaces for family	
7	Access to quality healthcare	
8	More women in decision making positions	
9	Protection for divorced women and victims of abuse and violence	
10	Access to better maternal care and information	
11	Availability of fresh and nutritious food at affordable prices	
12	A systematic waste disposal system established	
13	Increased religious awareness and more space for women in mosques	
14	Capable qualified elected representatives	
15	Access to vocational training opportunities	
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What can be done to achieve these:

At personal level

At atoll/community level

At national level

## 5. National Concerns

Please read the following concerns, and add any concern/s that is not included, and tick the top 10 national concerns for you out of the total concerns.

#	Details	✓
1	Decreasing personal safety due to increasing crime rate	
2	Limited number of women in decision making positions	
3	Limited employment and income generation opportunities	
4	Difficulties in accessing justice	
5	High cost of living	
6	Negative impact of politics	
7	Limited access to quality healthcare	
8	Decreasing condition of the economy	
9	Violence against women and children	
10	Increased promotion of extremist religious views	
11	Lack of proper waste disposal system	
12	Increasing corruption	
13	Increasing divorce and lack of opportunities to seek life skills and counselling	
14	Lack of a systematic transport system	
15	Limited assistance and facilities for persons with special needs	
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What can be done to address these concerns:

At personal level

At atoll/community level

At national level

## 6. National Aspirations

Please read the following aspirations, and add any aspiration/s that is not included, and tick the top 10 national aspirations for you out of the total aspirations.

#	Details	✓
1	A drug free nation	
2	Increased numbers of women in decision making positions	
3	Access to education and training	
4	Safety and security with reduced crime	
5	Access to justice	
6	A clean environment	
7	Access to assistance and services for women to start businesses and income generating activities	
8	Better opportunities for vocational training for women	
9	A quota for women in Parliament and other such bodies	
10	Access to land and housing	
11	Access to quality healthcare	
12	Services and facilities for persons with special needs and the elderly	
13	A prospering economy	
14	A united, tolerant and harmonious nation	
15	A nation with a democratically mature and aware citizens	
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What can be done to achieve these:

At personal level

At atoll/community level

At national level



# ANNEX III: Terms of Reference: Compilation of the Women's Vision Document

Terms of Reference: Coordinating the Development of a Consultation Guideline and formulation of a "Women's Vision for the Future" document

Project Title: Integrated Governance Programme (IGP) – Result 3: Social Cohesion

Project Description/Context:

The Maldives' national Constitution (2008) guarantees women and men equal rights in all aspects of public life – be it the political, business, civil service or community leadership arenas. But, the reality is that very few women participate in public life. Experts point to structural, functional and cultural barriers to women alongside strong subscription to gender roles.

Over the past decade the Maldives has faced significant and difficult challenges as the nation transitions to democracy. This has left many feeling insecure and a more conservative interpretation of Islam is reportedly on the rise. Meanwhile, the space for constructive public debate about issues and challenges facing the country is shrinking. Systematically creating awareness is seen as the first and most critical step for facilitating a change in public perceptions on the issue of women's participation in public life. Engaging women themselves, especially local leaders, to voice their needs and concerns in the lead-up to the presidential, parliamentary and local elections was identified as an important opportunity to not only raise awareness, but also to demonstrate the importance to society of women playing an active role in public life.

In addition, as we head towards 2015 and the end of the period for attaining the MDGs, while the Maldives have had considerable progress it is still lagging behind in the gender indicators. There is a need to obtain the voices of women and their priorities as we look towards the development of the post MDG development framework.

One of the result areas of the Integrated Governance Programme of UNDP is to create and strengthen an enabling environment for enhanced social cohesion through inclusive and participatory decision making and development. In this regard, the IGP is supporting enhancing capacities and mechanisms for women to participate in public life and contribute to social cohesion and the present consultancy is intended to build capacity of Women's Development Committees and female Councillors, and support them to generate a document on a Women's

Vision, or women's voices on their key concerns, needs and recommendations to drive the development of this country.

**Scope of work:**

The objective of this consultancy is to coordinate the development, training of women's development committees and compilation of a women's vision document that includes concerns issues and recommendations towards the development of their communities from the perspective of women. These do not need to be issues specific to women, but concerns and vision for their communities *from a women's perspective* and could also include affirmations or commitments of women for the betterment of the country. This would be used to gauge the inclusiveness of the priorities of women in policy and programmes of the state, and also contribute towards the formulation of the post MDG development framework. The final document would be launched at an event targeting leaders and policy makers. A technical committee comprising of local experts in the area of gender and development, representatives of UN Women and UNDP will provide technical guidance to the consultant.

In consultation with the technical committee for the activity, the consultant would be expected to do the following tasks:

1. Review sample guidelines and materials provided and adapt a simple, accessible guideline that is relevant to local context
2. Develop agenda, organize resource persons and conduct a 2 day training for women's development committees to introduce and train on the guideline, and also wider gender related topics
3. Provide a reporting format and then distance mentoring for participants after they travel back to their islands to conduct the consultation and during reporting back
4. After reports are received review methodology and amend the guideline if required
5. Develop agenda, organize resource persons and conduct a 2 day training for batch 2 and provide support for their island level consultations and reporting back
6. Compile the information into a brief women's vision document, which would be a short advocacy document.
7. Submit the end of assignment report documenting the process of compiling the women's vision document.

**Expected Outputs/Deliverables:**

Task	timeframe	Deliverable
Coordinating the development of a consultation guideline	10 days October	Consultation guideline
Conduct a 3 day training for first batch, including training arrangements and resource persons	5 days (incl prep day) (October)	Women from 10-15 WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEEs and Councils trained
Review the consultation process and outputs and make revisions to the guideline as necessary	5 days (November)	Revised consultation toolkit
Conduct training for additional batch of	5 days	Women from 10-15

participants on the revised guideline	(November)	WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES and councils trained
Compile the Women's Vision document from consultation feedback from 20-30 communities, in consultation with UNDP and UN Women	15 days (November)	Women's vision document compiled
Submit the end of assignment report, documenting the process and methodology of the compilation of the women's vision document		End of assignment report submitted

**Institutional arrangement:**

The consultant will be contracted by UNDP, and supervised by the Programme Analyst – Democratic Governance. Monthly reporting to Assistant Resident Representative – Governance, and Programme Manager – IGP would be done. The consultant will also work in collaboration with UN Women. UNDP and UN Women will invite participants and organise the logistical and administrative arrangements for the trainings. A briefing and debriefing meeting will be organized with UNDP senior management at the beginning, mid and end of assignment.

**Duration and Duty Station**

The time envisaged for the consultancy is 2 months, starting from 1<sup>st</sup> October till 31<sup>st</sup> November, in which the consultant is expected to contribute 40 working days for the above mentioned deliverables. The duty station will be Male', with travel to islands as and when required. UNDP will bear all cost for travel and living cost for field visits.

**Qualification and experience:**

- Graduate/Post graduate degree in development studies, social sciences or related field.
- Demonstrated ability to analyze information and compile comprehensive reports
- Demonstrated ability to effectively deliver required work on targeted timelines;
- Fluency in English and Dhivehi

# ANNEX IV

## End Notes

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- <sup>1</sup>UNDP Maldives, 2013  
<sup>2</sup>UNDP Maldives, 2011  
<sup>3</sup>Ministry of Education, 2012  
<sup>4</sup> ibid  
<sup>5</sup> UNDP Maldives, 2011  
<sup>6</sup> UNDP Maldives, 2013  
<sup>7</sup> ibid  
<sup>8</sup> UNDP Maldives, 2013  
<sup>9</sup>Raazee, H, 1999  
<sup>10</sup> UNDP Maldives, 2011  
<sup>11</sup>Election Commission of Maldives, 2014  
<sup>12</sup> Ibid  
<sup>13</sup> UNDP Maldives, 2011  
<sup>14</sup> The Constitution of the Maldives, 2008  
<sup>15</sup> UNFPA Maldives, 2011

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