



**Australian  
Aid** 



**SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS**

**Mapping of the  
Strategic Action Plan (2019-2023)  
of the Maldives with the  
Sustainable Development Goals**

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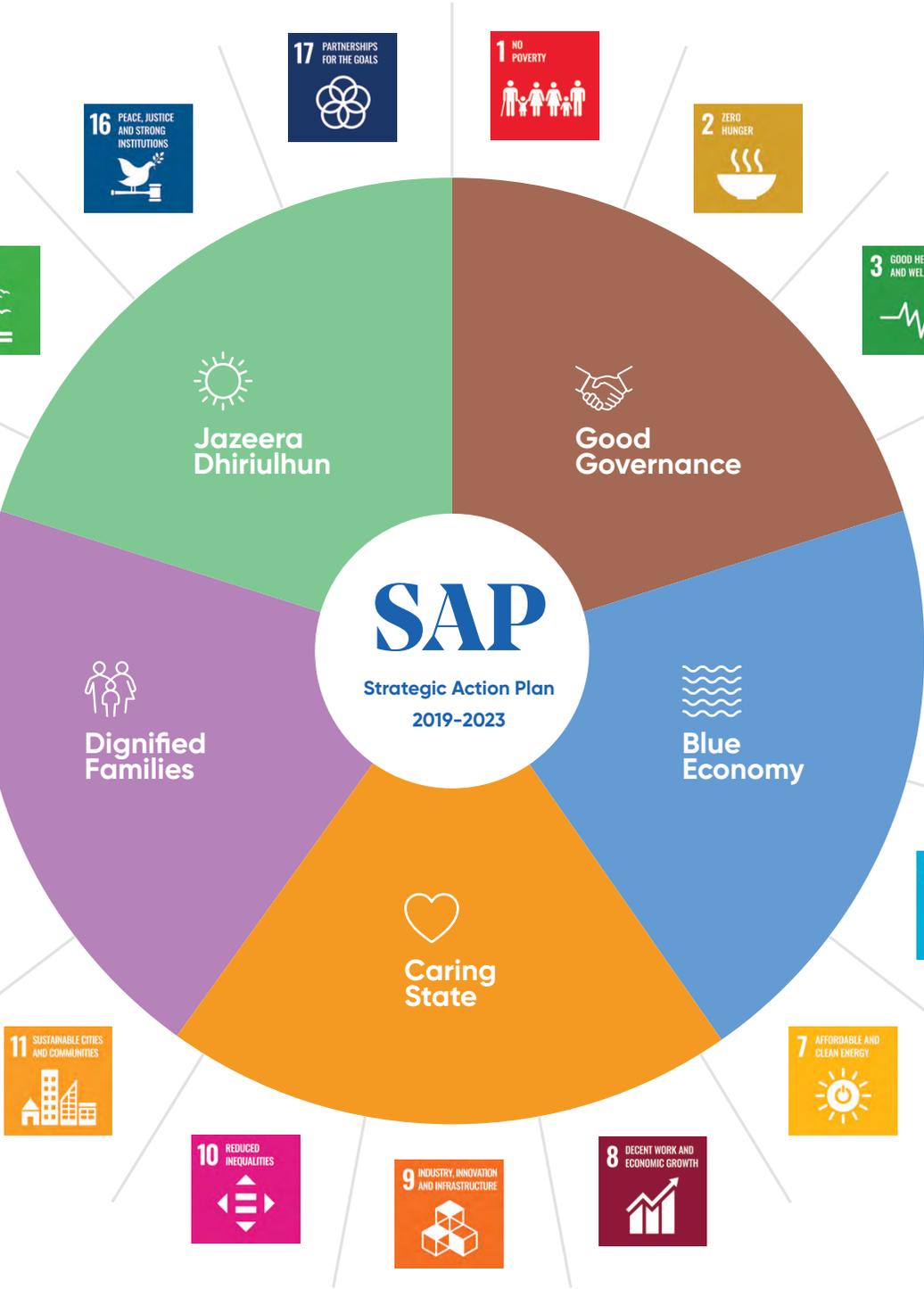
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**SAP**  
Strategic Action Plan  
2019-2023



# Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACH	Arts, Culture and Heritage
BCC	Business Center Corporation
BTEC	Business and Technological Education Council
CSG	Community Social Group
DV	Domestic Violence
EPP	Environmental Protection and Preservation
FA	Fully Aligned
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GoM	Government of Maldives
ICT	Information, Communication & Technology
IGP	Integrated Governance Program
JD	Jazeera Dhiriulhun
LGA	Local Government Authority
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoNPHI	Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
NA	Not Aligned/No Alignment
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NDP	National Development Plans
NSP	National Spatial Plan
NSDS	National Statistics Development Strategy
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
PA	Partially Aligned
PARIS21	Partnerships in statistics for development in the 21st century
PSPI	Public Sector Investment Program
PO	President's Office
RIA	Rapid Integrated Assessment
RUC	Regional Urban Centre
SAP	Strategic Action Plan (2019-2023)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEN	Special Education Needs
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
TVET	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VNR	Voluntary National Review

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# Executive Summary

## BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVE

This report was commissioned by the Integrated Governance Programme (IGP) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Maldives Country Office as part of their ongoing support to the Strategic Action Plan for 2019 -2023 (SAP) formulated by the President's Office (PO) of the Government of Maldives (GoM). It serves as the narrative report to the mapping exercise conducted to determine the linkages between the SAP and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The mapping matrix was submitted alongside this report as a separate document.

The Maldives, after a long planning void, formulated the Strategic Action Plan for the period 2019 to 2023, which serves as the main focus of this mapping exercise. The SAP is an ambitious medium-term development tool comprising of presidential pledges, a joint coalition election manifesto, constitutional and legislative frameworks, sector plans and international commitments through various global conventions and agreements. The SAP includes policies, strategies and time-bound actions across 33 subsectors grouped under five broader thematic areas or sectors. The five sectors of the SAP are Blue Economy, Caring State, Dignified Families, Jazeera Dhiriulhun (island life) and Good Governance. The SAP identifies 435 policy targets which will be used to measure progress and impact.

The report includes findings of the aforementioned mapping exercise. The mapping was carried out at two levels. The first level aimed to identify linkages in terms of scope covered (i.e. the extent to which issues/topics/areas identified in the SDG targets have been reflected in the SAP). The second level aimed to measure the level of ambition between the vision set forth in the SDG targets and their corresponding SAP targets (i.e. a measurement of how much similarities exist in terms of the ambition between the two set of targets).

The main objective of this mapping exercise is to gauge the interlinkages between the SAP and the SDGs. The mapping will allow the GoM to identify areas (in the SAP) that are already in line with the SDGs as well as determine the gaps that would require additional attention. The results of this exercise will further assist the GoM to recognize specific local conditions and realities that should be reflected in the SDG localization and prioritization exercises, as well as, the important stakeholders for each of the SDG targets.

## METHODOLOGY

This exercise was carried out using a mixed methodology adopted from the guidelines formulated by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) to guide United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) to mainstream the SDGs into local development plans with the Rapid Integrated Assessment Methodology formulated by UNDP.

A four-step approach was used to carry out the mapping; (i) design mapping matrix template, (ii) conduct the mapping exercise, (iii) validate findings and (iv) develop final report.

As mentioned, the mapping was conducted at two levels; the first to map the coverage and the second to map the level of ambition.

To map the level of coverage (or scope), a keyword search was carried out to identify SAP actions containing similar themes/issues in relation to every SDG target. The results were computed into a matrix indicating the SDG target and the interlinked SAP actions.

To determine the level of ambition between the two, the corresponding SAP target for each of the mapped actions in the previous step were recorded. A ranking was given to each of the mapped targets using the following criteria.

- a. **Criteria One:** Is the issue covered in the SDG target covered in the SAP target?
- b. **Criteria Two:** Is the ambition of the SDG target matched or surpassed by the SAP targets?
- c. **Criteria Three:** Are all the subthemes in the SDG target, or specific groups (sex disaggregation, rural and urban population, population groups, etc.) identified in the SDG target, being addressed by the SAP targets?

LEVEL OF AMBITION	GUIDING RULES	COLOUR CODE
<b>Fully Aligned</b>	All three criteria are met	Light Green 
<b>Partially Aligned</b>	One or two criteria are met	Light Yellow 
<b>No Alignment</b>	None of the criteria are met	Light Red 

The results of the mapping exercise were collated into a spreadsheet which allowed analysis from both SDG and SAP angles separately. The results were also layered over the SDG framework and the five SAP sectors to analyse areas of high interlinkages and gaps.

## THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND THE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN OF THE MALDIVES

The 2030 Global Agenda and the SDGs set out an ambitious and interlinked global vision consisting of 17 goals, 169 targets and 231 indicators. The SDGs build on three main principles; universality, inter-relatedness and leaving no one behind.

The mandate of administering, coordination, monitoring and reporting is held by the Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (MoNPHI). The SDG Division of the MoNPHI fulfils this role through a multi-sectoral Technical Committee divided into five thematic clusters (economic, social, infrastructure, environment and partnerships). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), also under the broader MoNPHI umbrella, collects and maintain data relevant to the SDGs for monitoring and reporting.

A number of national level work has been completed to achieve progress on the SDGs. These include national level dialogue sessions to map existing sector policies, a Voluntary National Review, a Rapid Integrated Assessment, adoption of SDGs into the local development planning methodology, national stock-taking exercise to identify nationally available data for SDG monitoring and reporting and the formulation of a Communications Strategy and Action Plan. Localization and prioritization exercises were initiated but not completed mainly due to frequent government change and absence of a long-term planning document which outlines national priorities.

## MALDIVES ASSESSMENT IN THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2020

The Maldives was positioned at 91 out of the 166 countries in the global SDG ranking through the annual global assessment published by the United Nations. Grouped as a ‘Fast Riser’ (a term given to countries making rapid progress relative to regional averages and are well positioned to achieve the SDGs provided the momentum is maintained), the country received an index score of 67.6 which is slightly higher than the regional average of 67.2.

The following trends were reported for the Maldives in this global assessment. These trends were identified using data maintained by international organizations across 85 indicators. As per the global assessment, the Maldives is currently on track to achieve seven SDGs. However, progress of some goals shows a stagnating or decreasing trend. These SDGs require additional effort and strategic interventions to ensure that the momentum of the entire country is maintained.

TREND	SDG
On track or maintaining SDG achievement	SDG 1, SDG 3, SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 11, SDG 13, SDG 17
Moderately improving	SDG 2, SDG 8, SDG 9
Stagnating	SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 14, SDG 16
Decreasing	SDG 15
Information unavailable	SDG 10, SDG 12

## OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

**The mapping results showed an overall alignment of 88.46% between the SAP and the SDG targets in terms of coverage of scope.** Nine SDGs scored 100% alignment in the mapping conducted to determine the coverage or scope between the SDGs and the SAP.

**Linkages between the ambitions set out in the SDG targets and their corresponding SAP targets were recorded 1405 times during the mapping.** Of these, 48% instances related to targets that showed full alignment between the visions set out in the SDG target and its corresponding SAP target. Moreover, an additional 26% instances showed partial alignment between the two.

**A further 25% of instances were recorded as not aligned.** A No Alignment rank was given in two situations. First, a NA rank is given if there is a SAP action holding strong similarity with a given SDG target but there is no corresponding SAP target. The second situation is when there is a corresponding SAP target, but the ambition in the SAP target does not match with the SDG target.

**The distribution of aligned targets shows that the SAP has a strong focus on increasing access decent jobs and fostering economic growth of the country.** SDG 8 has the highest number of Fully Aligned targets (91%). Strong alignment is also observed in SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 3 (Health), SDG 7 (Clean Energy), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 14 (Life below water).

Looking at the **distribution of the aligned targets (fully and partial) across the five main sectors of the SAP it is observed that the highest number of aligned targets falls under the Blue Economy sector (33%)** followed by Jazeera Dhiriulhun sector (29%). The Caring State sector held 14% of the aligned targets, while the Dignified Families sector held 13% and Good Governance sector held 11% of aligned targets.

**The SAP includes most references to those issues given in people related SDGs, but in terms of ambition, the strongest linkages were with prosperity related goals.** For coverage of scope, it was found that the highest linkage was on people related SDGs (SDGs 1 – 6). However, the highest occurrences of Fully Aligned targets between SAP and SDGs were linked to prosperity related goals (SDGs 7 – 10), followed by partnership (SDG 16).

**There is a strong correlation between SAP targets and SDG indicators.** Approximately 6 SDGs have indicators that have a minimum 70% correlation with SAP targets. The SDG with the highest correlation is Goal 7 (access to energy) with 100% inclusion and the weakest goal is SDG 12 (sustainable consumption and production) with 23.07% correlation.

Some key observations and gaps from the mapping exercise.

### INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

- There was strong emphasis on the development of infrastructure across a number of subsectors, but the resilience of these structures to climatic perturbations or their potential impact to the natural environment was not adequately considered.
- Similarly, the coherence between central level planning and local level planning was missing. Large infrastructure projects would require coordination between the local councils and central ministries, particularly with the amendments brought about to the Decentralization Act.
- Another angle to consider in relation to infrastructure development is the need or demand. For instance, in the sports subsector, there is mention of developing sports infrastructure across the country but there is no mention about basing these developments on a needs analysis. It is important to identify what sort of infrastructure is needed by whom (gender, age group) and for what purpose (recreation, professional, therapeutic sports) and design infrastructure plans around this need.

### GENDER EQUALITY

- Weak linkages with improving gender equality across the various subsectors were noted. While many of the subsectors contained explicit references to females, there were very few targets that aimed at improving the current social, economic and political standing of women. Similarly, gender barriers in accessing these opportunities have not been considered (for instance, the accessibility of a certain academic or skill development programme to a young female student in a peripheral island, or the timings of these courses that collides with domestic work).

### BREAKING INSTITUTIONAL SILOS AND ENHANCING COHERENCE

- Education subsector focused solely on formal education system but its linkages to a range of broader social and environmental issues was not adequately covered in the targets (some actions were noted). For example, schools can play an important role in teaching about good nutrition, leading a healthy lifestyle and learning for environmental sustainability. It can also be linked with poverty reduction in the long term. However, these links were missing.
- Traditional sectors such as energy and water appeared to be working in silos without adequate linkages to the economy, functioning of social institutions or governance mechanisms.
- Food security related targets are weakly covered in the SAP. The agriculture subsector mainly focuses on infrastructure development, regulations, providing loans and training to farmers (including women). While these would potentially contribute towards food security and nutrition level of the population, there were no specific targets relating to these aspects. The issue of reducing food wastage was also missing.

- A lot of references were also made to developing legal frameworks or creating mechanisms and systems to address a certain issue (for example domestic violence). But it must be recognized that having a legal framework alone would not help achieve the vision set out in the SDGs and that it would take years to institutionalize systems and develop capacity to fulfil legal mandates. The geographic profile of the country would also make these efforts more challenging.
- The SAP contained a lot of policies and strategies to create decent jobs and foster economic growth. SDG 8 was noted as the goal holding the greatest alignment to the SAP. However, the linkages between employment and economic activity with poverty reduction was not covered. The SAP did not contain the word ‘poor’ or ‘poverty’.

### TRAININGS AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- There was a number of interventions in the SAP relating to enhancing economic and social well-being of the people. These included targeted loans, training programs and scholarships. However, the target groups were generally defined. It is important to define and identify who the most vulnerable people are and ensure that these programmes are targeted at these most deserving groups.
- A number of training and higher education programmes were included in the SAP, but these did not explicitly link with the human capital needs identified in the various subsectors. Most subsectors included reference to capacity building programmes, but these need to be collated to determine the national priorities. Moreover, gender related targets need to be set for these programmes.

### ADDRESSING EMERGING SOCIAL ISSUES

- Some emerging issues like extremism, human trafficking, refusal to vaccinate or sending girls to school, child marriages, and narcotics/drugs inflicted violence has not been covered adequately in the SAP.

### ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

- The role of civil society in many of the development related work and community empowerment was noted to be weak.

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SDG IMPLEMENTATION

The outbreak of COVID-19 global pandemic has had a paralytic effect on societies and economies world-wide, attacking social systems at their very core, disrupted economies and exposed structural fragilities and fundamental weaknesses in global and national systems. What began as a health crisis rapidly escalated into a global economic, social and humanitarian crisis in a matter of few months. From an environmental perspective, the pandemic pause, is observed to have temporarily lowered greenhouse gas emission and improved air and water quality across the globe due to reduced travel and production but has significantly increased pandemic related waste that is generated.

The true impact of COVID-19 on global economic and social systems is yet to be determined, but it is widely accepted that the pandemic will reverse years of development progress made by countries. It will deepen pre-existing vulnerabilities, more so in highly marginalized groups, such as women, elderly, children and adolescents, youth, those in specific type of economic work, migrant workers and people who are already living in poverty. It places a strong imperative on governments to put in motion both immediate and long-term policy responses that would enable the recovery process to follow a sustainable and equitable trajectory.

This mapping exercise coincided with the onset of COVID-19 outbreak in the Maldives. The original scope of the exercise was modified to analyse the findings of the mapping from a COVID-19 lens to provide recommendations to the government on recovery planning and post pandemic prioritization work. The analysis found that adverse impacts of COVID-19 will touch across all SDGs and it will challenge SDG implementation, but to varying extents. The report therefore highly recommends using the SDG as a guiding framework for recovery planning, especially in the absence of a long-term national development plan or vision.

## MOVING FORWARD: NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The SDGs provide a holistic framework which encompasses all three elements of sustainable development that can guide recovery planning efforts. In this regard, a five-step approach is presented to the GoM.

**Step One - Localize the SDGs identified in the priority exercise:** The SDG targets need to be localized to reflect the national realities and specific local context. A localization exercise led by the MoNPHI in partnership with the United Nations System in the Maldives needs to be conducted. This exercise will require extensive coordination and dialogue between multiple stakeholders including government ministries, agencies, state owned enterprises, civil society groups, and the private sector. Local governments will play a crucial role in identifying specific local contexts that need to be considered.

**Step Two: Conduct a prioritization exercise:** Impediments caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on achieving the targets identified in the SAP and similarly those agreed through international commitments forces the Government to carefully assess the current situation and make

coordinated, decisive and innovative policy responses. **Recovery planning must therefore identify national priorities that would receive focus and finance over the remaining period of the SAP and the SDGs.** In doing so, it is critical to identify which SDGs are likely to have accelerated effects on multiple other goals and targets, while minimizing tradeoffs. The United Nations is organizing a Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) mission in late 2020 which will help in the prioritization and localization exercises.

**Step Three: Use a systems approach:** The SDGs offer a holistic and integrated approach that entails social, economic and environmental elements of development. Decisions made now are likely to have a long-lasting impact on the development trajectory of the Maldives. The benefits of adopting the SDGs to guide national recovery planning process has been discussed earlier in this brief. This recognition needs to be embedded into sector level response planning being conducted at present.

**Step Four: Integrate data to streamline definitions, methodologies and reduce duplication and double reporting:** The exercise mapped 134 of the global indicators which could potentially be used for reporting on corresponding SAP targets. Consultations with the relative departments of the government revealed that definitions and methodologies used for data collection by the implementing agencies sometimes varied with global definitions. There needs to be integration of data to streamline definitions and collection methods to reduce duplication and double reporting.

**Step Five: Align local development plans and development partner support with the prioritized and localized SDGs:** Synergizing the local development plans with the sector and national plans is crucial to ensure policy coherence and coordinated effort towards a common vision. Local council elections would likely be held in early 2021, following which a new local development planning cycle will take place. It is important to sensitize civil servants in the local councils with the SDGs and also carry out similar awareness sessions for political parties and contesting candidates. Similarly, there needs to be alignment between country programme frameworks formulated by development partners with the revised national priorities.

## LIMITATIONS AND GAPS

- **Keyword searches might have resulted in human error.** To minimize this, a number of variations of the keywords were used (e.g. both ‘preschool’ and ‘K level’ were used in the keyword searches relating to education related targets). Keyword searches were also not limited to SAP action level but used on the entire SAP to determine if these linkages could be mapped through the broader policies or strategies that relate to the action. Technical terms frequently associated together was also used to minimize error (e.g. the keyword ‘climate resilience’ was alternated with ‘climate action’, ‘climate change’, ‘disaster risk reduction’). Different styles of writing were also considered (e.g. ‘ecotourism’, ‘green tourism’, ‘eco-tourism’).
- **The ranking of ambition level may be highly subjective to the consultant’s own bias and understanding of the issue.** To minimize this, a series of virtual validation sessions were conducted, and written feedback to both the mapping matrix (including the rankings given) and the key findings report was obtained from all implementing ministries and resident UN agencies. A list of all consulted stakeholders will be provided under the annexes.

- **Absence of localization of SDGs required a number of assumptions to be made by the consultant while ranking ambition levels.** It is likely that national definitions may vary from the universal definitions used in the SDGs. A number of SDG targets were also observed to hold little significant to the Maldivian context. However, given the absence of localized targets, all the SDG targets were included in the mapping despite their relevance.
- **There are significant differences between the temporal scales of the SDGs and the SAP.** The SDGs are a long-term global vision document mainly containing targets for 2030, whilst the SAP is more medium term with targets set within a five-year period up to 2023. The scope of the two varied greatly making measurement of ambition level between the two challenging.
- **The mapping coincided with the COVID-19 lockdown period which, to a great extent, disabled sector level consultation prior to the mapping.** Ideally, stakeholder level working sessions should have been conducted which would have allowed multi-sector dialogue for each SDG. However, physical distancing measures imposed to contain COVID-19 did not allow for these sessions to take place as planned. As an alternative, all relevant stakeholders were invited to provide written comments to both the mapping matrix and the key findings report. A series of virtual validation sessions were also conducted to obtain feedback.

# PART 1

*CONTEXT / METHODS*

# Preamble

- 1** This report integrates the whole U.N system expertise and was supported by the Integrated Governance Programme (IGP) of the United Nations Development Program Maldives Country Office (UNDP) as part of their ongoing support to the Strategic Action Plan (2019 -2023) formulated by the President’s Office (PO) of the Government of Maldives (GoM).
- 2** The scope of the assignment<sup>1</sup> was to examine alignment between the SAP and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in relation to both coverage and level of ambition. As per the terms of reference of this assignment, the SDG targets were mapped against the corresponding SAP actions (to determine coverage) and further the corresponding SAP targets (to determine the level of ambition). The methodology used in conducting this mapping draws from the guidelines published by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) in 2017 to guide United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) to mainstream the SDGs into local development plans, and the Rapid Integrated Assessment Tool (RIA) formulated by UNDP in 2017. A detailed description of the methodology will be provided later in this report.
- 3** The mapping was conducted by an individual national consultant and a national research assistant based in the Maldives. It was carried out from 1 March 2020 – September 2020 and was largely desk-based due to the lockdown and social distancing measures enforced amidst the COVID-19 outbreak in the Maldives.
- 4** The mapping exercise produced two key documents; a mapping matrix and this report. The mapping matrix will contain details of the mapping exercise including the rankings given. It was submitted alongside this report as a separate document. This report will include the narrative of the analysis carried out using the mapping matrix. This report is divided into two main parts. Part I will provide the contextual details regarding SDG implementation in the Maldives, details of the SAP and the methodology used to carry out the mapping exercise. Part II will contain detailed descriptive findings of this exercise (as provided under the mapping matrix), including an analytical discussion of the main linkages, observed gaps, reflections on the linkages with the global SDG indicators. This will be followed by recommendations on the way forward through a COVID-19 lens.
- 5** The annexes include the scope of this assignment, the mapping matrix template, list of stakeholders consulted and a table containing SAP actions holding strong similarity to SDG targets, but was not captured in the mapping exercise due to absence of corresponding SAP targets.
- 6** A draft of this report and the mapping matrix were shared with the resident U.N. agencies and key government stakeholders. The feedback received was taken into account in preparing the final version of the report. Further, virtual validation exercises were also conducted. The cumulative feedback gathered from these exercises was instrumental in further strengthening the findings of the mapping exercise.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Appendix 1 for detailed scope of work as per the TOR.

- 7 The consultants would like to acknowledge the continued support provided by the Policy Department of the President's Office, the National Bureau of Statistics, the SDG Division of the Ministry of National Planning and Infrastructure and the team at IGP in UNDP. The valuable inputs provided by the representatives of these organizations are greatly appreciated. Further gratitude is extended to all representatives of the various sectors and UN agencies who provided written feedback to the mapping matrices and participated in the virtual validation exercise sessions.

## The Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Global Development Agenda

- 8 Consisting of 17 goals, 169 targets and 231 indicators<sup>2</sup>, the SDGs are highly ambitious and intricately linked, and intend to be transformative, integrated and universal.<sup>3</sup>
- 9 The SDGs build on three main principles. First, the SDGs are *universal*. It applies to all country typologies and allows national adaptation of the SDGs as per the local context. Under this principle, the SDG recognizes that different countries require different approaches for implementation based on their local circumstances.
- 10 Second, the SDGs call for an *integrated approach*. Due to the integrated nature of the SDGs, interventions in one goal leads to either acceleration or trade-off between related goals and their targets. An integrated systematic approach to SDG implementation is thereby necessary to ensure that SDG implementation moves away from linear or siloed approaches, to more systematic and participatory methods. This is highlighted as a major challenge for policy makers and implementing agencies.
- 11 Finally, the SDGs central and transformative promise is to '*leave no one behind*'. It aims at universal eradication of poverty, discrimination and marginalization of groups of people. The SDGs prompts countries to re-evaluate their development approaches, policies and funds allocation to ensure that the groups that are furthest behind is reached first. It requires countries to address the root causes of social and economic marginalization (for instance, discriminatory laws, systems, social practices) and address these underlying issues to pave way for a more just, equitable and inclusive development trajectory.
- 12 Mainstreaming of the SDGs into local and national development planning necessitates a strong understanding of how the SDGs are designed. Each goal contributes to the three pillars of sustainable development – *the social, economic and environmental aspects* – and can be grouped into 5Ps (people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships). The targets

<sup>2</sup> The global indicator framework includes 231 unique indicators, but the total number of indicators in the global indicator framework equals 247. Twelve indicators are repeated under different targets. [<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>].

<sup>3</sup> UNDP. 2017. Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) to facilitate mainstreaming of SDGs into national and local plans. New York. p. 11.

of the first 16 SDGs comprise both outcome targets (total 88) and those relating to means of implementation (total 62). The means of implementation targets refer to the ‘processes’ while the outcome targets refer to intended ‘outcome’. Goal 17 includes 19 policy targets which are also considered as process targets, bringing the total number of process targets to 81.

## SDG Implementation in the Maldives

- 13** The Maldives transitioned into the SDGs with notable achievements from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially around social development areas such as health and education.<sup>4</sup> The areas where progress was slow included environmental sustainability, gender equality and global partnerships for development.<sup>5</sup>
- 14** While the relative success of the MDGs in the country provided a good foundation, the SDGs are broader in scope and is based on the idea of balance between the three pillars of sustainable development. The SDGs are more diverse and highly interlinked thus necessitating stronger coordination, dialogue and streamlining between multiple sectors.
- 15** The need for preparing institutions to uptake the SDGs was recognized early on in the Maldives. For instance, in 2017, the Ministry of Environment and Energy, supported by UNDP Maldives, conducted a Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) to determine the readiness of the Maldives to implement the SDGs. Readiness were determined across eight practice areas; institutional mechanism, level of policy alignment, human resource capacity, data and monitoring capacity, level of visibility and advocacy, financing, technology and interlinkages between SDGs.
- 16** The SDGs adoption coincided with a time where the Maldives lacked a long-term development plan or any form of central policy guidance mechanism. The 2030 Global Agenda and the SDGs filled this gap and provided a long-term national development vision through a comprehensive and integrated framework. A number of sector plans developed around the time (for example the Health Master Plan and the Maldives Energy Policy and Strategy) attempted to integrate the SDGs as much as possible indicating this early adoption.

<sup>4</sup>The Maldives achieved five out of the eight MDGs making it the only MDG+ country in South Asia.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Environment and Energy. 2017. *Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) to assess the Maldives readiness to implement the SDGs*. Malé, p. 5.

## Institutional Mechanisms

- 17 The mandate of overall SDG coordination, monitoring and reporting falls on the SDG Division placed under the planning arm of the MoNPHI.<sup>6</sup> The Ministry serves as the National SDG Coordinator of the GoM.
- 18 The SDG Division administers a multi-sectoral Technical Committee (divided into five thematic clusters; economic, social, infrastructure, environment and partnerships) and fulfils the role of providing necessary technical assistance and guidance for SDG implementation.<sup>7</sup> Respective line ministries or agencies are responsible for the implementation and achievement of relevant SDG targets.<sup>8</sup>
- 19 The NBS, also under the MoNPHI umbrella, collects all data relevant for SDG monitoring.

## Early Interventions to Adopt the SDGs

- 20 Among the earliest works done to roll out the SDGs in the Maldives was a **national level dialogue** conducted to map existing sector policies (in various stages of development) against the SDGs in 2016. This exercise attempted to initiate the SDG localization process in the Maldives, but it was discontinued due to a number of reasons including low awareness in the sectors on the SDGs and changes in government administration.
- 21 The Maldives submitted a **Voluntary National Review (VNR)** for the High-Level Political Forum on the SDGs in 2017 through which the overall planning, strengths and challenges were communicated. A **Rapid Integrated Assessment** was also carried out in the same year with UNDP support. This assessment determined the readiness level of the country to implement the SDGs across eight practice areas. These were: institutional mechanisms, level of policy alignment, human resource capacity, data and monitoring capacity, level of visibility and advocacy, financing, technology and interlinkages between SDGs. The RIA process involved initial steps to prioritize the SDGs in the local context, but the prioritization was never finalized for different reasons. The RIA provided a range of short, medium and long-term recommendations to strengthen SDG implementation.

<sup>6</sup>The SDG Division was first created in the Ministry of Environment and Energy in May 2016 but was transferred under the Ministry of National Planning and Infrastructure after the change in administration in late 2018.

<sup>7</sup>SDG Division works with all stakeholders: state agencies, private sector, local governments, development partners, academia, CSO and general public.

<sup>8</sup>The RIA report includes an institutional mapping of all lead and co-lead ministries/agencies for each SDG.

- 22 In 2017, UNDP Maldives partnered with the GoM to conduct a **National Forum for SDGs targeting Civil Society Organizations**. The objective of this forum was to gather CSO's across varying interest areas to design a CSO cooperation model that best suits the Maldivian context. A series of sensitization meetings were held across five regions of the country, leading up to the National CSO Forum. These workshops and forum yielded two main outputs; an understanding of differentiated concerns and issues that would feed into the SDG planning and implementation work and heightened understanding and awareness of the SDG among CSOs.
- 23 The same year, the Local Government Authority, together with UNDP Maldives, adopted 13 'nationally relevant goals' in the **local development planning** process for local governments for the period 2017 to 2021. The goals that were included in this list were SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 13, SDG 14, SDG 15, SDG 16 and SDG 17. Though the rationale behind this selection is unclear, this process is highlighted as an important early intervention to mainstream SDGs into local planning, but one that must be revisited and reinforced over time.
- 24 The following year, in 2018, a **national level stock-taking exercise** was carried out by the NBS to establish the available baseline for SDG monitoring. The data assessment identified data that were available through the National Statistical System and those that could potentially be collected with some additional effort. This assessment result identified 42% of the data required for SDG monitoring were available nationally while 35% of the data could be made available with additional effort, and 23% of data were not available at the national level. Most of the data collection systems were lacking in the environment and agriculture sector. The assessment excluded Tier III indicators for which there were no established definitions or methodologies.
- 25 The NBS and the SDG Division also worked on **streamlining the definitions and collection methodologies used across the sectors with the SDG global definitions**. The global indicators were also mapped to identify lead government agencies responsible for reporting and partner ministries/agencies also working together on localizing and prioritization of SDGs.
- 26 More recent works include developing a **Communications Strategy and Action Plan** for the period 2019 to 2023. This plan aligns itself with the SAP and includes key messages under each goal and tools for implementation work.

# Challenges for SDG Implementation

- 27** Prior to 2019, lack of centralized planning mechanisms was observed to be the greatest challenge for SDG implementation in the Maldives. The time of SDG adoption coincided with a period of significant political volatility in the country. The administration at that time initially pursued developing a National Development Strategy but later moved on to formulate a Greater Male' Development Plan.<sup>9</sup> The absence of a central policy document and a long-term strategic direction obstructed the identification of long-term national priorities from the SDGs. Moreover, there was no mechanism to connect the numerous sector plans and policies nor any clarity regarding the hierarchy of each. To date there has been no complete localization process of the SDGs leading to a void in understanding the specific national and subnational context which would otherwise have supported implementation of the SDGs. As mentioned before, the localization process was initiated in 2016 but was discontinued due to the absence of long-term national plan or vision. This have had resulted in the weakened understanding and low sense of ownership of the SDGs among the implementation agencies therefore leading to delayed implementation.
- 28** Lack of centralized planning also believed to have deepened the sectoral divide among central line ministries and agencies and further between the central and local governments. While some sectors (e.g. health, education, local governance) made early attempts to interpret, adopt and mainstream the SDGs into their respective sector plans<sup>10</sup>, other sectors (for instance, transport) lagged behind. This reinforced existing silos. Lack of an overarching planning authority during this time period, also resulted in the SDGs implementation mandate being handed over to the then Ministry of Environment and Energy. Being housed within the structure of a line ministry meant the SDGs Division struggled to assert coordination and planning functions from other sectors and ministries.
- 29** With the election of a new administration in late 2018, there has been a renewed focus on development planning, with the SDGs Division moved under the newly formed MoNPHI, alongside the NBS. With this new capacity and strengthened mandate, the SDGs Division has participated in the sector wide coordination of key national planning outcomes such as the Strategic Action Plan. However, the SDG Division is significantly understaffed, with only four employees, including the National SDG Focal Point. There is urgent need to review the role of the SDG Division, carry out a capacity needs assessment and equip the Division with trained staff to fulfil the mandate.

<sup>9</sup>This document was never published.

<sup>10</sup> Some examples of sector policies and plans aligned with SDGs include National Food Safety Policy (2017-2026), Health Master Plan (2016-2025), Maldives Energy Policy and Strategy (2016), and National Waste Management Policy (2015). It is noted that these sectors have stronger ties with UN agencies which may be the reason for early adoption.

- 30 — Another challenge that continues to be identified is the lack of mechanisms to collect data for planning, implementation and monitoring. Apart from the standard population censuses and household income and expenditure surveys few other surveys are conducted at a national scale. Disaggregated data is particularly relevant due to the contrast in human development outcomes identified across regions and certain strata of the population. Collection and consolidation of disaggregated national level data across the country is also extremely cumbersome. Coordination between sectors remains weak and this leads to duplication of data and discrepancies in definitions and methods utilized to collect data across sectors and islands. While the NBS has a team of highly trained statisticians, the overall statistical capacity in implementing ministries and agencies remain weak.

## Looking Forward

- 31 — A number of actions are being carried out by the GoM and the United Nations System in the Maldives to realize the SDGs. These include:
- **SDG Localization and Prioritization Exercises:** The SDG Division's main focus following this mapping is on conducting SDG localization and prioritization exercises. A MAPS mission is also being planned for late 2020 by the United Nations System as a support to these exercises.
  - **Formulating the National Strategy for Development Statistics (NSDS):** The NBS is currently formulating a NSDS, which is a 10-year strategy document that would support GoM in realizing its national and international targets and commitments. Concomitantly, there will also be increased focus on strengthening the SDG indicator framework to reduce dual reporting.
  - **Improve country reporting:** A country progress report is being planned for 2021 once the census results are released.
  - **Review of the available data to measure progress and enhance reporting:** A further review of the 2018 SDG data report is also being carried out to measure implementation progress of SDGs to date. Both these documents will facilitate the NBS to cater the development data required for SAP monitoring and reporting on the SDGs. Additionally, an Economic Survey is being planned alongside the 2021 Population Census. The NBS is also working with relevant sectors to identify additional mechanisms that can be used to collect missing data.
  - **Conducting a UNDP Landscaping Assessment:** The United Nations System is supporting the GoM conduct a SDG landscaping assessment which would help identify multi stakeholder partnerships and country driven partnership platforms that will accelerate SDG implementation.

# Maldives Assessment in the Global Sustainable Development Report 2020

- 32** The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Report for 2020 was a global report released on 30 June 2020. The is an annual publication which provides an overview of the global implementation efforts to reach the SDG targets. It identifies areas of progress and where challenges remain for each country, using available data from international organizations.<sup>11</sup>
- 33** The Maldives was identified among the ‘Fast Risers’ which is a term given to countries making rapid progress relative to regional averages and are well positioned to achieve the SDGs provided the momentum is maintained. **The Maldives was positioned at 91 out of 166 countries** in the global SDG ranking issued through the annual Sustainable Development Report (Sach et. al 2020). The Maldives received an index score of 67.6 which is roughly the same as the regional average of 67.2, but slightly higher.

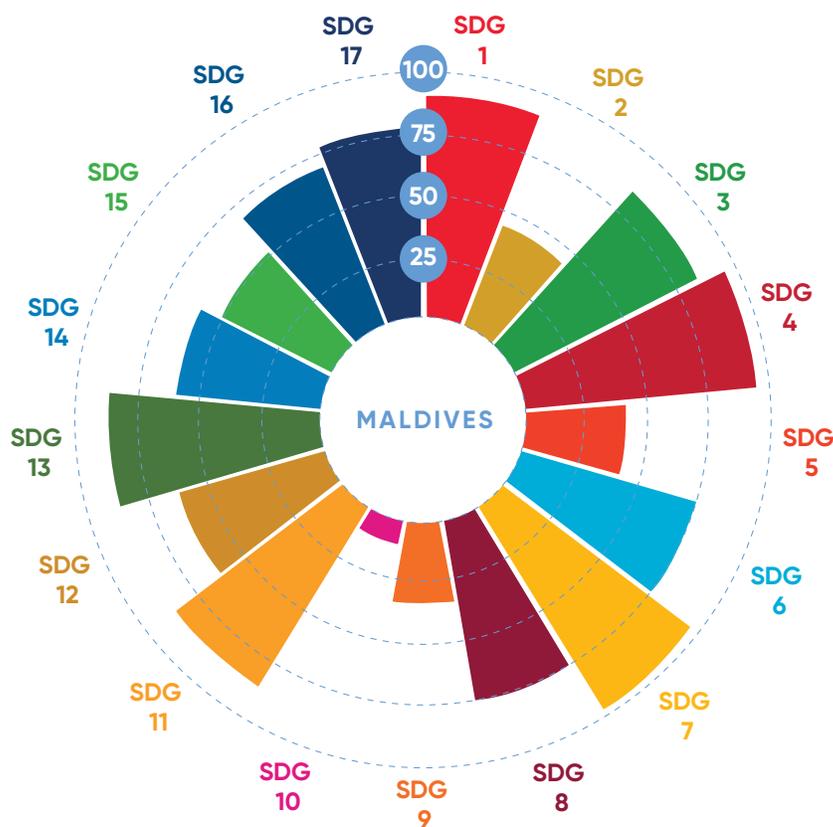


Figure 1: Average performance by SDG (Source: Sach et. Al 2020)

<sup>11</sup> The global assessment was conducted using data from international orgnaizations across a set of 85 indicators.

- 34 — A summary of the Maldives Assessment in the SDG report is provided under Figure 2. The only goal that the Maldives has achieved so far is SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy). The assessment shows that the Maldives are on track (or maintaining momentum) on poverty eradication, improving health, provision of clean water and sanitation, promoting sustainable cities and communities, addressing climate action and fostering partnership for the goals. More work is required for all remaining goals, particularly on Goal 15 where a decreasing trend was reported.

### CURRENT ASSESSMENT - SDG DASHBOARD



### SDG TRENDS



Figure 2: Summary of Maldives SDG assessment (Source: Sach et. al 2020)

**35** As previously mentioned, the global assessment builds on data provided by international organizations and not country produced data. The actual reality of SDG implementation in the Maldives may likely differ, but this remains uncertain in the absence of published data and reports tracking SDG progress in the Maldives. To date, the Maldives does not have a comprehensive monitoring and reporting framework for the SDGs which remains as a significant gap. To ensure dedicated and maintained momentum, it is imperative establish this monitoring framework following an indicator nationalization process and further formulate a long-term national development policy which would outline how the Maldives will achieve the 2030 Agenda.

## Overview of the Strategic Action Plan 2019-2030

**36** The Strategic Action Plan was formulated in 2019 by the administration of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih as a medium-term policy tool for the period 2019 to 2023, for the period of the incumbent administration.

**37** The 2019 SAP fulfils a central planning void that has fragmented national development directive following the period of increased political volatility after the historic changes to the country’s political landscape upon enactment of the 2008 Constitution.

**38** The SAP is an ambitious, time bound document building on 33 subsector matrices grouped into five broad themes or sectors; the Blue Economy, Caring State, Dignified Families, Jazeera Dhiriulhun (Island Life) and Good Governance. It provides strategic direction to line ministries and agencies (including the parliamentary and judicial branches of the government, independent institutions, international donors, private sector and civil society) as well as development partners, to achieve key development targets.

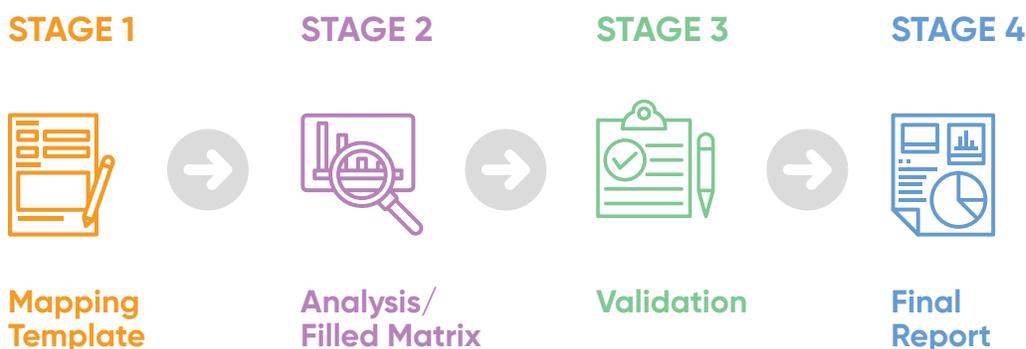
Table 1: SAP sectors and subsectors

 Blue Economy	 Caring State	 Dignified Families	 Jazeera Dhiriulhun	 Good Governance
Fisheries and Marine Resources. Agriculture. Tourism. SMEs. Labour, Employment and Migration. Economic Diversification.	Health. Education. Higher Education. Social Protection. Prevention of narcotics abuse and drugs rehabilitation.	Family. Housing. Youth. Community Empowerment. Sports. Islamic Faith.	Decentralization. Transport Network. Environmental Protection and Preservation. Clean Energy. Waste as a Resource. Water and Sanitation. Resilient Communities. Information, Communication and Technology. Arts, Culture and Heritage.	Rule of Law and Judicial Reform. National Security and Public Safety. Eliminating Corruption. Accountable State. Independent Institutions and Public Service Reform. Gender Equality. Foreign Affairs.

- 39** The SAP builds on three layers of directives. Each subsector comprises policies and associated strategies and actions tabulated under a results matrix. The lead responsible agencies and other partner agencies have been identified and the actions which require inter-sector collaboration have been highlighted. Cross cutting priorities that are relevant to all subsectors are also identified and compiled primarily under the Good Governance Sector of the SAP. These include interventions to strengthen rule of law, increase government accountability, enhance gender equality and strengthen public service efficiency. The prominence of decentralization, improved connectivity through multi-modal transportation systems and the role of information and communication technology is also provided. The SAP identifies 435 policy targets which would serve as the main basis for monitoring and evaluation. A separate monitoring plan was being developed through technical assistance from the World Bank at the time of writing this report.
- 40** The SAP serves as a five-year development directive and will remain the chief policy document of the GoM until a long-term National Development Plan (NDP) is formulated.

## Objectives & Methodology

- 41** The main objective of this mapping exercise is to gauge the interlinkages between the SAP and the SDGs. The mapping will allow the GoM to identify areas that are in line with the SDGs as well as the gaps which would require more attention. The results of this exercise will further assist the GoM to recognize specific local conditions and realities, along with identification of the stakeholders for each SDG target.
- 42** The SAP-SDG mapping exercise was divided into four main stages; (i) design mapping matrix template, (ii) conduct the mapping exercise, (iii) validate findings and (iv) develop final report.



*Summary of methodology*

**43** The mapping matrix template used in this exercise was designed based on the discussion and specific requests made by the President’s Office and the NBS, and a mixed methodology adopted from UNDP’s RIA tool and guidance provided by the UNDG to mainstream local plans with the global agenda.<sup>12</sup>

**44** Initially, two separate templates were developed - one to map the coverage and one to determine the level of ambition. The initial templates were piloted, and necessary adjustments were made before conducting the full mapping exercise. A key learning of the pilot mapping exercise was the difficulties arising from using two separate spreadsheets. The revised spreadsheet was redesigned to capture all elements into a single template.<sup>13</sup>

LEVEL OF MAPPING	WHAT IT MEANS ?
<b>Mapping of coverage or scope</b>	Determination of whether the scope of the SDG target (i.e. the issues referred to in these targets) appears anywhere in the SAP document.  Method used: Keyword search.
<b>Mapping of the level of ambition</b>	Measurement of the linkages or similarities between the SDG target and corresponding SAP target.  Method used: Ranking based on pre-set criteria.

**45** The mapping template was structured as below.

- I. A list of all SDG targets was inputted into a spreadsheet document. A separate tab was used for each SDG to make the document more readable. All data from the individual spreadsheets were collated into two summary sheets. The first of these summary sheets contained the results of the exercise from an SDG angle (titled as ‘Summary Sheet – SDG’ in the mapping matrix document) and the second summary sheet communicated from a SAP angle (titled as ‘Summary Sheet – SAP’ in the mapping matrix document).
- II. **Column A: Sustainable Development Goals and targets:** For each SDG, the corresponding targets were listed under column A.
- III. **Columns B and C: Coverage of SDGs in the SAP**
  - a. **Sector and Subsector:** The corresponding SAP sectors and subsectors were recorded against each SDG target using a standard coding (for example the agriculture subsector under the Blue Economy Sector would be entered as ‘BE – Agriculture’). If a target corresponds with more than one sector and subsector, additional rows were included.

<sup>12</sup> UNDG. 2017. Mainstreaming the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. Reference guide to UN country teams. NY. UNDP. Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) tool to facilitate mainstreaming of SDGs into national and local plans. NY.

<sup>13</sup> Please find the revised template under Annex II.

- b. **Action:** The SAP action falling under these subsectors were recorded in numerical order (example: 1.1a, 1.1b, 1.2a, 1.2b). Related actions were identified through an extensive keyword search. Keywords were selected based on how it is phrased in the respective SDG target and also using a combination of commonly used terms (e.g. ‘climate change’, ‘climate action’, ‘global warming’) and different styles of writing (e.g. the words ‘primary and secondary education’ is referred to as ‘K to 12’ in the SAP).
  - c. A review was done to determine the level of coverage between the SDG target and its matching SAP actions. Emphasis was given to ensure commonly used concepts were also searched (despite not being used in the exact phrasing of the SDG target and the SAP action). This means that the overall description or intended outcome of the two were considered throughout the mapping exercise.
- IV.** Based on the method under (ii), whenever an SDG target had a link with a SAP action, it was considered as ‘covered’ – irrespective of the level of ambition. The SDG targets that had no related SAP action were labelled as Not Available (n/a).
- V.** **Column D: Corresponding SAP target:** Wherever available, the corresponding SAP targets for each action identified under ii(b) were recorded provided these portray linkages with the vision of the respective SDG target.
- VI.** **Column E: Level of ambition of the SAP target with the corresponding SDG target (or extent of coverage):** The level of ambition of each SAP target recorded under (iii) (with respect to the corresponding SDG target) was determined using the following criteria.
- a. **Criteria One:** Is the issue covered in the SDG target covered in the SAP target?
  - b. **Criteria Two:** Is the ambition of the SDG target matched or surpassed by the SAP targets?
  - c. **Criteria Three:** Are all the subthemes or specific groups (sex disaggregation, rural and urban population, population groups, etc.) identified in the SDG target, being addressed by the SAP targets?

The following rules were followed while determining the level of ambition.

LEVEL OF AMBITION	GUIDING RULES	COLOUR CODE
<b>Fully Aligned</b>	All three criteria are met	Light Green 
<b>Partially Aligned</b>	One or two criteria are met	Light Yellow 
<b>No Alignment</b>	None of the criteria are met	Light Red 

- VII.** **Column F: Corresponding SDG indicator:** The corresponding global indicator which bear similarities with the SAP target and could potentially be used to measure the SAP targets were identified in this column.

# PART II

*KEY FINDINGS / IMPACT OF COVID-19  
ON SDGS / GLOBAL INDICATORS /  
RECOMMENDATIONS / LIMITATIONS*

# Overview of key findings - Coverage and level of ambition

- 46** Results of the mapping exercise were analysed from both the SDG and SAP perspectives.
- The results were further layered across the SDG framework and the five SAP sectors to identify areas of high interlinkages and gaps. This section will provide an overview of the key findings of the mapping exercise.
- 47** The results of the mapping exercise from the SDG perspective is provided under Table 2.
- Nine of the 17 SDGs have 100% coverage of their respective targets with the SAP meaning that all the individual targets coming under these nine goals have at least one SAP action aligned to it. It is reiterated here that the measurement of ‘coverage’ is different from the measurement of ‘ambition’. ‘Coverage’ simply refers to whether or not the issues in the SDG targets have been reflected in the SAP in one form or the other, irrespective of subgroups, specific themes or differences between their spatial and temporal scales.
- 48** **The mapping results showed an 88.47% alignment between the SAP and the SDGs while considering coverage of targets.** Overall linkages are also quite high with 15 of the 17 SDGs scoring over 60% scores during the coverage exercise. The weakest coverage is observed in SDG 12 with 45% (Figure 3).
- 49** Linkages between similarities in the ambitions set out in the SDGs and their corresponding SAP targets were recorded 1405 times during the mapping. Of these, 47% instances related to targets that showed full alignment between the visions set out in the SDG target and its corresponding SAP target. Moreover, an additional 27% instances related to targets showing partial alignment between the two.<sup>14</sup>
- 50** A further 25% of instances were recorded as not aligned. A No Alignment rank was given in two situations. First, a NA rank is given if there is a SAP action holding strong similarity with a given SDG target but there is no corresponding SAP target. The second situation is when there is a corresponding SAP target, but the ambition in the SAP target does not match with the SDG target.

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<sup>14</sup> Please refer to SAP Summary Sheet of the mapping matrix for the references in paragraphs 49 and 50.

Table 2: Summary of alignment between SAP and SDGs (scope covered and level of ambition)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL	COVERAGE IN SAP (%)	LEVEL OF AMBITION %		
		FULLY ALIGNED (FA)	PARTIALLY ALIGNED (PA)	NO ALIGNMENT (NA)
1 No Poverty	100.00%	73.08%	13.46%	13.46%
2 Zero Hunger	100.00%	28.41%	53.41%	18.18%
3 Good Health and Well Being	92.31%	64.81%	18.52%	16.67%
4 Quality Education	100.00%	41.96%	15.18%	42.86%
5 Gender Equality	100.00%	22.54%	35.21%	42.25%
6 Clean Water and Sanitation	100.00%	50.00%	9.38%	40.63%
7 Affordable and Clean Energy	100.00%	77.27%	9.09%	13.64%
8 Decent Work and Economic Growth	83.33%	91.01%	2.81%	6.18%
9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	100.00%	31.21%	48.41%	20.38%
10 Reduced Inequalities	60.00%	52.00%	42.40%	5.60%
11 Sustainable Cities and Communities	90.00%	34.74%	41.05%	24.21%
12 Responsible Consumption and Production	45.45%	33.33%	16.67%	50.00%
13 Climate Action	100.00%	62.16%	8.11%	29.73%
14 Life Below Water	100.00%	60.00%	12.50%	27.50%
15 Life on Land	91.67%	28.57%	19.05%	52.38%
16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	83.33%	54.55%	24.55%	20.91%
17 Partnerships for the Goals	57.89%	21.74%	6.52%	71.74%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>88.47%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>25%</b>

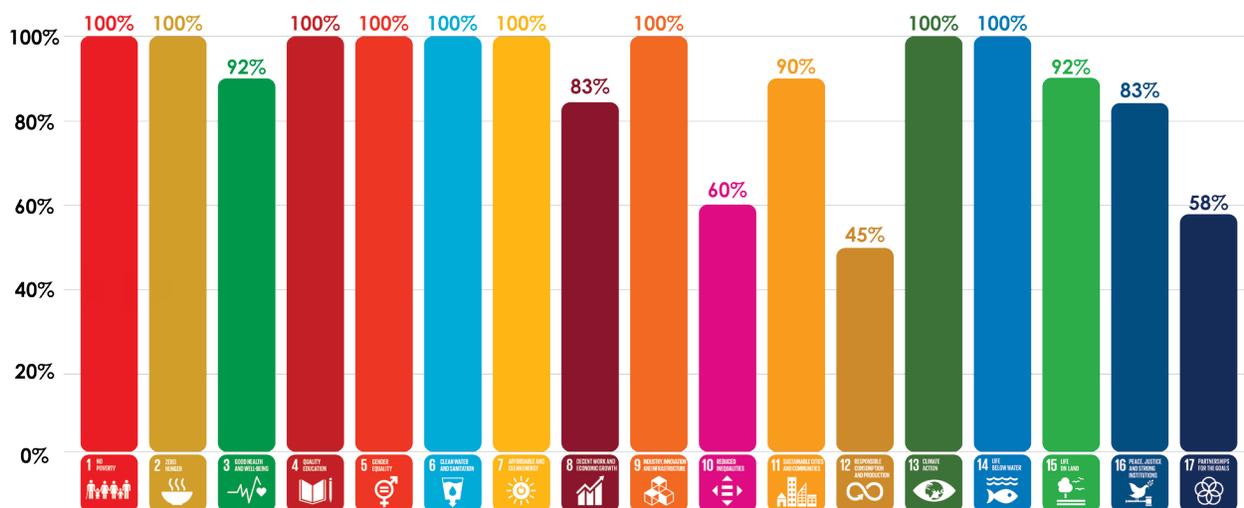


Figure 3: Summary of coverage of SDG targets in the SAP<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Figures in this chart have been rounded off to nearest decimal place for ease of visual communication. For detailed figures kindly refer to Table 2.

- 51** It is important to highlight that a high alignment between certain SDGs and the SAP does not necessarily mean that these particular SDGs have been prioritized in the SAP. For instance, SDG 3 relating to good health and well-being scored 92% in terms of coverage (and not 100%). This does not imply that SDG 3 is of lesser priority in the SAP than other SDGs who scored higher. There are 13 targets listed under SDG 3, and 12 of these targets were mapped in this exercise. The missing target (SDG 3.b) referred to the development of vaccines and was not applicable to the local context. The Maldives is a small island developing state with weak research capacity and limited technology. SDG 3.b is also targeted more towards developed nations, but, as the SDGs have not been localized in the Maldives all SDG targets (despite its relevance to the national circumstances and realities) were used in this mapping exercise.
- 52** Figure 4 shows the alignment between the level of ambition between SDG targets and corresponding SAP targets. SAP targets were aligned with the SDGs on 1405 instances. A given SAP target might have been mapped against several SDG targets, but received different ratings depending on the vision of the respective SDG target. Of this total, 677 instances showed full alignment between the SDG target and its corresponding SAP target (48%) and 372 instances it was ranked Partially Aligned (26%). In 356 instances, there appeared to be no alignment between the two (25%).<sup>16</sup>
- 53** Non-uniformity between the targets given under each subsector of the SAP was found as the main reason behind the high number of non-aligned rankings. As mentioned earlier, SAP identifies 435 policy targets, each stemming from a specific policy under each subsector. Some subsectors contained more policies than others and therefore had more targets. The formation and level of targets also varied among subsectors. Some targets were broader and displayed strong alignment with other global targets (for instance, several SAP targets in the EPP subsector matched with those from the Maldives National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan), while others were more local and at an output level (e.g. Target 2.3 of the Labour, Employment and Migration subsector reads “By 2023, Industrial Relations Act is enacted”).

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<sup>16</sup> No Alignment here refers to two instances. (i) A SAP action containing similar references to issues specified in an SDG target has no corresponding SAP target, or (ii) there is a corresponding SAP target, but its ambition do not match the ambition in the SDG target. For these figures please refer to SAP Summary Sheet of the mapping matrix.

MAPPING OF THE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN (2019-2023) OF THE MALDIVES WITH THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

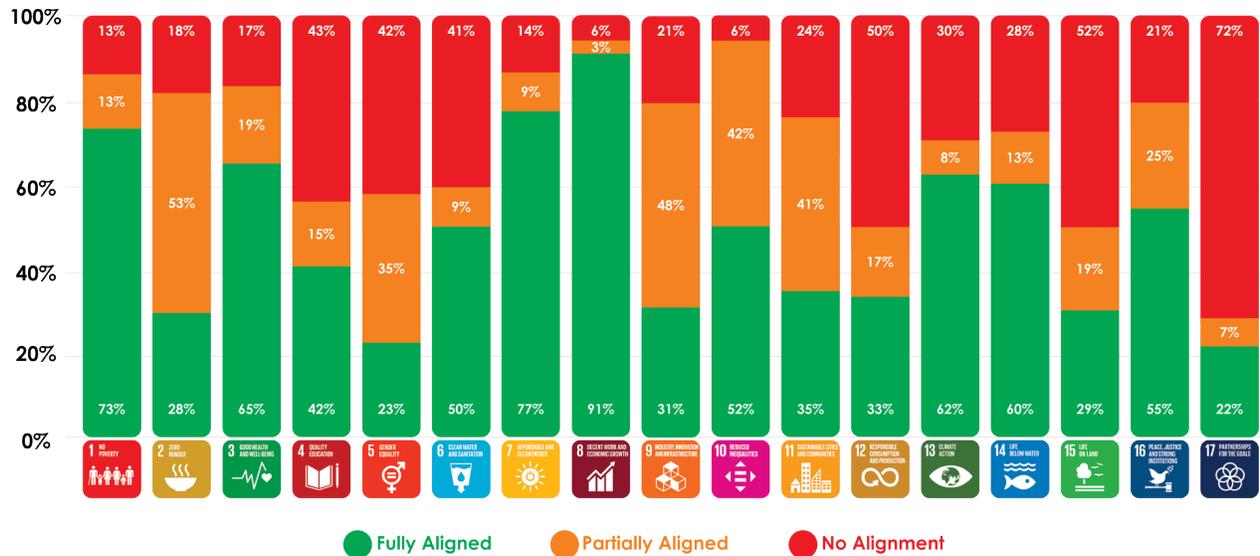


Figure 4: Summary of ambition of the SDGs mapped against the SAP<sup>17</sup>

54 The distribution of aligned targets suggests that the SAP has a strong focus on increasing access to decent jobs and fostering economic growth of the country. SDG 8, as seen in Figure 4, has the highest number of Fully Aligned targets (91%). Strong alignment is also observed in SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 3 (Health), SDG 7 (Clean Energy), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 14 (Life below water).

55 Looking at the distribution of the aligned targets (fully and partial) across the five main sectors of the SAP shows that the highest number of aligned targets fall under the Blue Economy Sector (33%) followed by Jazeera Dhiriulhun Sector (29%). The Caring State Sector held 14% of the aligned targets, while the Dignified Families Sector held 13% and Good Governance Sector held 11% of aligned targets (Figure 5).

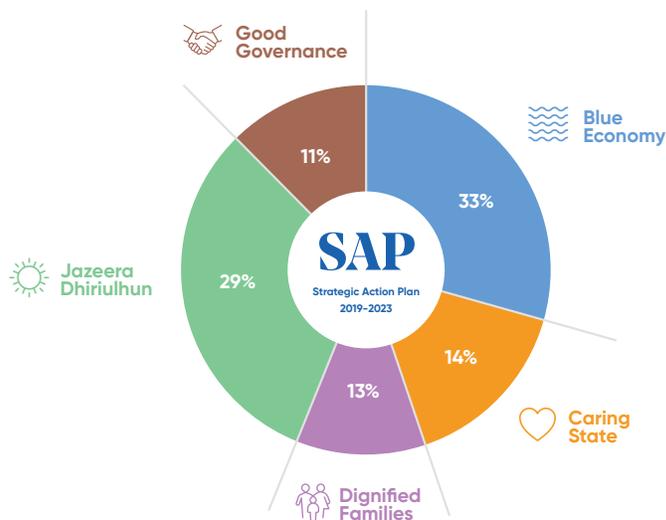


Figure 5: Distribution of ambition of the SDGs within the SAP sectors

<sup>17</sup> The figures in this chart has been rounded off to nearest decimal for easier visual communication. For exact figures please refer to Table 2.



Figure 6: Results of the mapping layered over the SDG and SAP frameworks

- 56** The results of the mapping were layered over the SDG and SAP frameworks (Figure 6). This enabled identification of areas with strong interlinkages and gaps. The Jazera Dhiriulhun Sector was observed as the only SAP Sector with linkages across all 17 SDGs. The greatest concentration of interlinkages was across SDG 8 (Decent work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). This suggests the heavy focus of the SAP on creating employment, investing in necessary social and economic infrastructure, addressing inequalities and developing cities and communities that are equitable, safe, sustainable and thriving at social and economic fronts.
- 57** The results also suggest strong silos in sectors such as water and energy. Despite the critical nature of these sectors, the mapping revealed interlinkages of these goals only appeared under the Jazera Dhiriulhun Sector. Both sectors are critical for the healthy functioning of the economy, ensuring a healthy population and delivery of social services (such as health and education), need investment in developing skilled workers, and must have a comprehensive governance mechanism given the geographic context of the Maldives. While action level interventions were observed in the SAP, target level linkages were missing outside the Jazera Dhiriulhun Sector.
- 58** A similar observation was noted on SDG 15 (Life on land). The only linkages with the SAP and this goal also came under Jazera Dhiriulhun. Though limited, terrestrial resources in the Maldives hold strong premise to people's livelihoods, way of life and cultural identity. These linkages were observed as missing. Further, the governance mechanisms needed to manage life on land were not determined through the mapping. It is likely that these governance mechanisms might have been addressed at the SAP action level, but not at the target level.

59 The results of the mapping were also analysed using the 5Ps of SDGs (People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace and Partnerships) as a guide.<sup>18</sup> The averages generated from the mapping exercise were tabulated according to the 5Ps as a guide and the results were mapped in a radar chart to identify variations in alignment between the different areas (Figures 7 – 9).

60 As seen from Figure 7, the strongest alignment leans towards the people SDGs (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) and the weakest is observed in relation to SDG 17 on partnerships. The alignment with prosperity and planet SDGs is also observed. The people centric focus of the SAP is evident here, as is the prominence given for economic development, improvement in innovation and infrastructure and reducing inequalities and sustaining the environment.

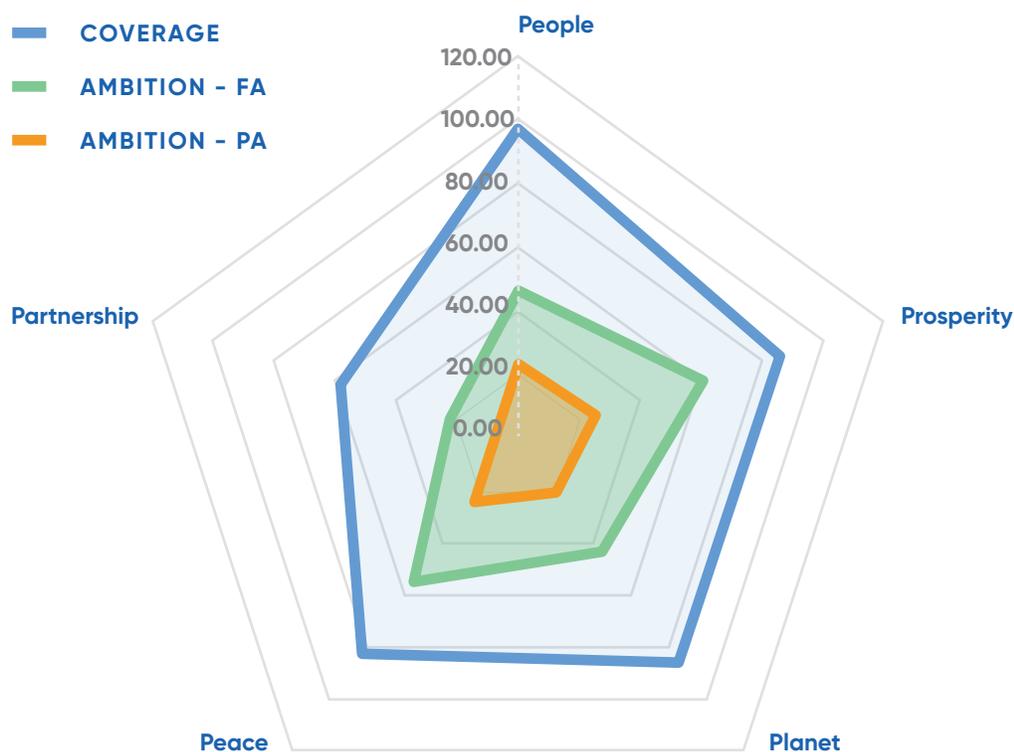


Figure 7: Alignment between SAP and SDGs using the 5Ps

61 Looking at ambition level a slightly different picture can be identified (Figure 8). The strongest interlinkages of Fully Aligned targets mapped between the SAP and the SDGs lean towards prosperity related goals. There is also strong inclination towards the peace related goal, SDG 16, which included 55% Fully Aligned targets and 25% Partially Aligned targets. This suggests that although the issues covered under the people related SDGs are high in the SAP, there is lower alignment of ambition between the set targets.

<sup>18</sup> 5Ps of SDGs: **People** (SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 6), **Prosperity** (SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10), **Planet** (SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13, SDG 14, SDG 15), **Peace** (SDG 16), **Partnership** (SDG 17).

62 The distribution of non-aligned targets among the 5Ps show that the highest is attributed towards partnership goals (Figure 8). This is likely due to the absence of SAP targets in the Foreign Affairs subsector and also overall weak linkages (in terms of ambition) between SDG 17 and the remaining subsectors of the SAP.

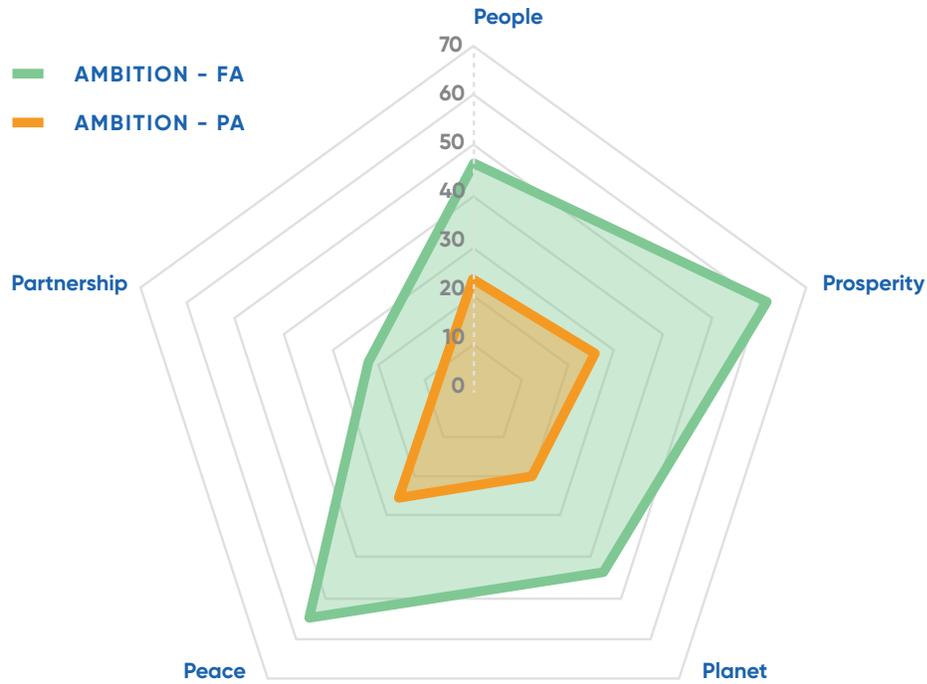


Figure 8: Level of ambition between SAP and SDG targets using the 5P

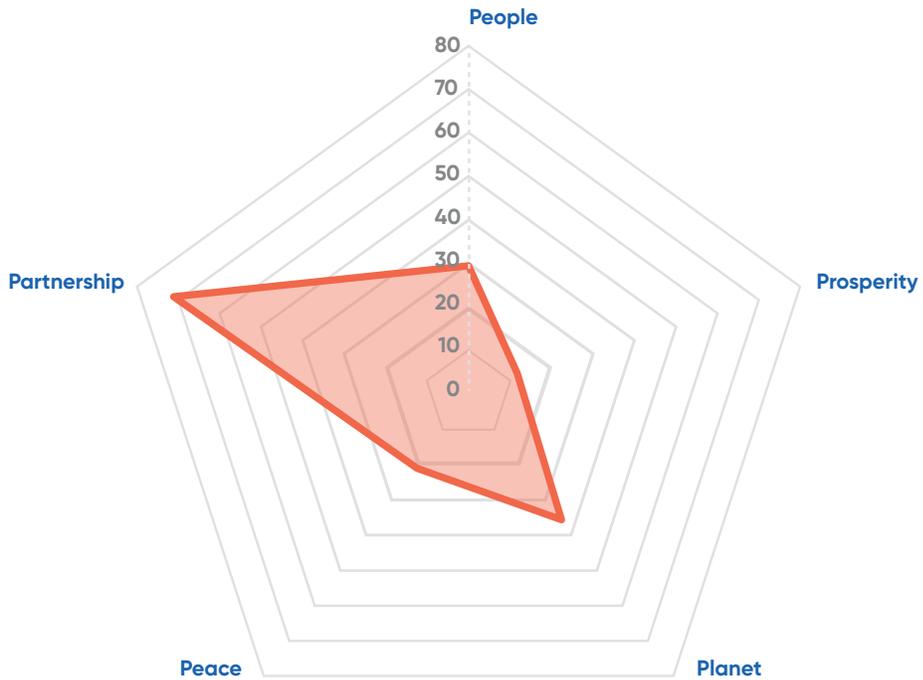


Figure 9: Distribution of non-aligned targets using the 5Ps

## Key Findings

- 63** This section will provide detailed narrative of the key findings of the mapping exercise.
- The analysis will attempt to synthesize the main findings from the perspective of the SAP on a sector level. This will be followed by an analysis of the key observations under each subsector which would include areas where there are strong inter-relations and where there are possible policy gaps.

## Blue Economy Sector

- 64** The World Bank identifies ‘Blue Economy’ as the “sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, jobs and ocean ecosystem health” and the European Commission defines it as “all economic activities related to oceans, seas and coasts, covering a wide range of established, interlinked and emerging sectors”.

Table 3: Summary of SAP targets linked to SDG targets under the Blue Economy Sector (level of ambition)

SUBSECTOR	FA	%	PA	%	NA	%	TOTAL
Fisheries and Marine Resources	66	64.1	21	20.4	16	15.5	103
Agriculture	42	48.3	37	42.5	8	9.2	87
Tourism	25	65.7	5	13.2	8	21.1	38
SMEs	41	61.2	17	25.4	9	13.4	67
Labour, Employment and Migration	37	71.2	9	17.3	6	11.5	52
Economic Diversification	29	59.2	16	32.6	4	8.2	49
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>240</b>		<b>105</b>		<b>51</b>		

- 65** In keeping with global standards, the SAP recognises the vital ties of the economy and well-being of Maldives to the health and wealth of the natural environment, especially the ocean. Six of the 33 subsectors in the SAP are represented by the Blue Economy Sector. These include diverse thematic areas ranging from tourism, small and medium enterprises, fisheries and marine resources, agriculture, economic diversification to labour, employment and migration.
- 66** With 345 instances of mapped aligned targets, the Blue Economy Sector held the largest number of SAP targets aligned with the SDGs with 33% of targets recorded as either Fully Aligned or Partially Aligned coming under this sector. Fully Aligned SAP targets were significantly more, with a total of 240 instances where FA ranking was given in comparison to PA which occurred on 105 instances. The mapping showed 51 instances where SAP targets had No Alignment with the corresponding SDG target.

- 67** The fisheries and marine resources subsector was observed as particularly significant as the mapping identified it as the subsector with the highest mapping of aligned targets. FA targets were mapped in 66 instances for this subsector while PA targets were recorded in 21 instances.
- 68** Other subsectors with a high number of aligned targets included agriculture (79 instances of FA and PA) and SMEs (58 instances of FA and PA). The fisheries and marine resources subsector along with the agriculture and SME's subsector was recorded as the ones with the highest alignment with the SDGs in terms of ambition level.
- 69** The subsector with the lowest level of alignment to the SDG targets was noted as the tourism subsector with only 25 instances where FA targets were mapped and an additional five instances where a PA ranking was mapped. The targets mapped in these 30 instances were distributed among seven SDGs. These were related to education, decent job creation, industry, innovation and infrastructure, sustainable cities, peace, justice and strong institutions and partnerships. Interestingly, the mapping results displayed a weak alignment between tourism subsector and SDGs relating to gender equality, reducing inequality or environmental sustainability.
- 70** The Blue Economy sector showed interlinkages with 12 SDGs (SDGs 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17). Despite the sector representing 33% of all aligned targets in the subsector, the mapping points to an uneven representation of targets across the various SDGs. Those that have not been linked with the sector are SDG 3, SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 12 and SDG 15. The SDG with the highest linkages were SDG 8 (150 mapped targets), SDG 9 (70 mapped targets) and SDG 2 (54 mapped targets).
- 71** The significance of SDG 8 in terms of target linkages reveal that the sector bears a strong focus on economic growth and job creation, particularly in contrast to goals which have a sustainable development and environment protection focus. Subsectors such as fisheries and marine resources, agriculture and tourism depend heavily on the protection and the preservation of the physical environment. However, the many infrastructure development initiatives that are planned, including the development of maricultural farms, offshore fishing platforms, agricultural farms, transshipment ports and other regional economic infrastructure do not bear any focus on environmental sustainability. If developed using unsustainable practices, such infrastructure projects could have dire consequences for the environment.
- 72** The SDG alignment and gaps identified point to a further key issue pertaining to inclusivity. All subsectors within this sector have targets and actions focused on target populations that they have identified as vulnerable including PWDs, Women, Young people as well as a more general term "vulnerable people" while the SDGs, in addition to addressing these aspects, also bear a strong focus on income equality with targeted interventions for the poor. It would be good to incorporate individuals in poverty as a target group in all these sectors to ensure that the economic activities are developed to ensure reduction of poverty in addition to economic growth.

## FISHERIES AND MARINE RESOURCES

- 73** This subsector contained the highest number of aligned targets within the entire SAP. — Targets belonging to this subsector was mapped across the SDGs 87 times following a FA or PA ranking. The subsector contains 66 instances Fully Aligned targets, and 21 instances of Partially Aligned targets. A further 16 instances were recorded but showed no alignment in terms of ambition level. These 16 instances were recorded as NA.
- 74** The targets are represented across 10 of the 17 SDGs (SDGs 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14 and — 17). Of these, the highest number of Fully Aligned targets are observed in the SDGs 8 (28 targets) and 14 (15 targets).
- 75** All targets of the Fisheries and Marine Resources subsector were found to be aligned — to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), especially to SDG 8.1 which focuses on productivity and GDP growth. This target has been linked to all SAP targets in the Fisheries and Marine Resources subsector, with all identified as Fully Aligned.
- 76** Targets that were covered in the Blue Economy sector included those that strengthen policy — making through data and harmonisation with international guidelines and the protection of marine environments through close monitoring endangered and protected species and areas such as shark population and reefs. Human resource development was also looked into through capacity development and knowledge exchange, loan and training incentives, promoting inclusive participation in the sector through campaigns, stronger social safety nets, technical and financial support. These actions have been specifically formulated to empower the fishery-based SMEs which would in turn contribute towards sustainable development. Additionally, the subsector also looked into improved access to technologies through loan schemes and improved infrastructure in the form of offshore fisheries platforms, ice plants and better fish markets. Underdeveloped fishing areas are also planned to be identified and facilitated. Mariculture expansion is linked to stronger local engagements in fisheries expansion, with the development of sea-cucumber and grouper grow out farms and mariculture hatcheries. These strategies aim to promote sustainable development and empowerment of the fishery-based SMEs through loan and training incentives.
- 77** Goal 14 (Life Below Water) was the second most aligned goal to this sector with several — SAP actions linked to all but three targets in the goal. SDG targets with linkages to this subsector covers targets that include, but are not limited to, aspects such as sustainable protection and management of marine and coastal ecosystems (Target 14.2) and prohibiting subsidies for certain harmful forms of fisheries (Target 14.6). Target 14.b bears a special focus on enhancing access to resources and markets for small-scale and artisanal markets, and this is well covered in the SAP actions through its duty exceptions, value added facilities and products piloted in five regional areas and with loans catered specifically to SMEs. The recent amendments to the Fisheries Act (as under Action 1.1a of the SAP's Fisheries and Marine Resources subsector) strengthened the sector's standing as a policy priority, in an economic, cultural and social standpoint. The formulation of multiple fisheries management plans is a key target of the SAP, as is the investment in the fisher communities including access to resources and opportunities and expansion of social protection schemes for the workers in this sector. These management plans are

expected to contribute significantly to the sustainable management and regulation of the fisheries industry.

- 78 — The strong presence of Goal 8 in this subsector shows the significance given to economic growth and expansion in the development of the action points. These action points bear little to no focus on environmental and social development; two of the three dimensions of sustainable development. This goes back to a general limitation of the SAP, that it was focused primarily on manifesto priorities, which were most likely developed not with reference to the goals, thereby raising important questions about the overall sustainability of the suggested action points.
- 79 — Strikingly, the SAP targets were found to not be aligned to seven of the 17 targets. These include SDGs 3, 6, 7, 12, 13, 15 and 16. Save for goals 2 and 16, all the rest of these seven goals are focused on environmental protection and preservation pointing to the limited nature of representation of sustainable use of natural resources within this subsector.

## AGRICULTURE

- 80 — Agriculture ranks as the subsector showing second strongest alignment with the SDGs. Targets belonging to this subsector was mapped across the SDGs on 79 instances, where 42 of these instances showed full alignment and 37 showed partial alignment. An additional eight instances showed No Alignment.
- 81 — However, like other subsectors in the Blue Economy, agriculture is also not evenly represented across 17 SDGs. Targets in this sector can be linked to 9 of the 17 SDG goals (SDGs 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14). While the linked SDGs are the same as the Blue Economy sector, the level of coverage differs. The highest number of targets can be linked to Goal 2 (12 instances of Fully Aligned, 13 instances of Partially Aligned, and 4 targets with No Alignment) followed by Goal 9 (4 instances of Fully Aligned, 17 instances of Partially Aligned targets and one target with No Alignment), and Goal 8 (17 instances of Fully Aligned targets). This is noticeably in contrast to all other subsectors in the Blue Economy sector that ranked SDG 8 as the Goal with most linkages and the highest number of Fully Aligned targets.
- 82 — The subsector is closely aligned with Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) due to its linkages with reducing hunger, malnourishment and ensuring food security. However, SDG 2 is linked to a significant number of targets that have been identified as Partially Aligned rather than fully. While the subsector is focused on enhancing technical and financial capacities of women, SMEs, youth and rural communities, the majority of the larger scale activities that focused on enhancing agricultural productivity didn't appear to have a focus on vulnerable groups.
- 83 — Targets relating to addressing nutrition needs of the population was also observed as weak or missing in the agriculture subsector. There were interlinkages identified in relation to SDG 2.2 focusing on ending malnutrition in countries. The focus of the agriculture subsector was observed to be more directed towards building agricultural systems, developing local capacity and improving access to credit for small scale farmers. However, their linkages to addressing nutritional deficiencies across the country was weakly addressed.

- 84** — There were some actions that if implemented, could have a negative impact on vulnerable communities. For instance, 1.4a, which covers the enforcement of MGAP certification, might be a deterrent for vulnerable marginalised communities that practice farming on a very small scale to further enhance and commercialise their output. SDG 4.6a and 4.6b focusing on regulation and divestment of agricultural enterprises with migrant workers employed, needs to also be elaborated, in a way to ensure these regulations do not propel them into further vulnerability. SDG 4.2a, regarding the revising of land allocation guidelines could be a way to ensure secure and equal access to land by all, including vulnerable groups. Currently, the reallocation aspect seems to bear a larger focus on productivity rather than empowering vulnerable populations.
- 85** — Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) is strongly linked to targets in this sector due to its focus on infrastructure developments. Target 9.1 which focuses on the development of sustainable and resilient infrastructure can be linked to SAP targets in the sector such as the development of regional markets and produce transportation links, agricultural centres, poultry farms, goat and agri-farms as well as home-based agriculture. While the focus on regional developments can be seen as a move towards ensuring sustainability, a number of these initiatives, particularly those on large commercial scale do not specify that they will be constructed and operated using sustainable methods, which resulted in them receiving a Partially Aligned rating.
- 86** — While there were many initiatives that can be linked to SDG target 9.2 based on its focus on sustainability and inclusivity, majority of these initiatives do not work on these aspects together. For instance, there are targets that focus on providing financial support to women and small-scale farmers, however it is not ensured that these loans are disbursed to environmentally and socially sustainable initiatives. It is a recommendation to ingrain both sustainability and inclusivity into all targets to ensure that these elements work together. Another issue that could be noticed is that while a number of targets are used to enhance inclusivity, as with the subsectors in Blue Economy, there is little focus on ensuring inclusivity in decision making for the sector, particularly ensuring the involvement of regional and communities in the decision making.

## TOURISM

- 87** — With 25 instances of targets ranked as FA, and a further five instances where mapped targets ranked as PA, the tourism subsector shows the weakest alignment to the SDGs.
- 88** — Only six out of 17 SDGs are represented in the tourism subsector; SDGs 4, 8, 9, 11, 16 and 17. Out of these aligned goals, only SDGs 8 and 17 contain Fully Aligned targets, with the bulk of these concentrated in SDG 8 (20 instances of Fully Aligned targets) compared to SDG 17 (three instances of Fully Aligned targets).
- 89** — Goal 8 is represented relatively well in this subsector due to the strong focus on economic development. Increase in industrial productivity for instance, is ensured within this subsector through a number of creative and innovative marketing initiatives such as the introduction of relatively new forms of tourism such as sports and adventure tourism, ecotourism, local tourism, cruise lines, yacht and halal tourism.

- 90 In terms of promoting employment, this subsector also bears a focus on dissemination of information of employment opportunities, particularly at the regional level, which is important for inclusion. Training opportunities are also highlighted actions, including the development of tourism training facilities in two regions which could assist in improving local participation in upper management level, as well as training facilities in regional areas that could increase participation from regional areas. However, accessibility and safety of these facilities to men and women must be ensured. Regulatory changes such as guaranteeing fair distribution of service charge and revising the policy of local foreign parity as well as divestment plans could also be seen as reviving local employment opportunities. There is a strong focus on strengthening the human resource mechanisms of the tourism sector. The resulting better work conditions could be a lure that increases employment. Notable amongst these is actions to address sexual abuse and harassment through increased awareness, compliance monitoring of sexual abuse and harassment, which could improve gender parity in the sector.
- 91 Goals that bear no linkages to the subsector include SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14 and 15. These goals cover aspects that are significant principles of Blue Economy such as social and economic inclusivity and environmental sustainability. Actions relating to these goals were included. For instance, ensuring safe onsite accommodation for female staff links with SDG 5 but there are no targets relating to gender equality in the tourism subsector.
- 92 Another such notable gap is the lack of any linkages between Goal 1 “No Poverty” and the tourism subsector. This is most likely due to the fact that the targets for Goal 1 contain specific focus on those identified to be in poverty (poor and vulnerable or people living on less than \$ 1.25 per day) and the targets and actions within the SAP bear no focus on specific income groups, but rather on specific population groups such as women, PWDs. This is a significant issue that can be observed both within the tourism subsector and all other economic related subsectors highlighted in the SAP. It is unclear how the target groups were identified (whether it is simply based on social and political exclusion, or whether it also includes economic exclusion) and whether strategic imperatives for the development of economic sectors is to alleviate poverty and inequality, or to generate economic growth. As the largest economic sector in the Maldives, tourism could play a very important role expanding and supporting other significant sectors for Maldives such as agriculture and fisheries and marine resources and food security. At the moment SAP has no linkages between the tourism subsector and Goal 2 and 14, pertaining to these sectors.
- 93 The gaps in linkages for environment related goals such as SDGs 6, 7, 12, 13, and 14 is also telling considering the significant role environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources play in the concept of Blue Economy. Related SAP targets within the Tourism subsector include the development of regulations, the provision of incentives, and the development of partnerships for sustainable management and biodiversity conservation. In terms of biodiversity conservation even the actions can be seen as relatively weak considering it focuses more on facilitating and incentivising rather than regulating. For example, 2.6 a which ‘facilitates’ the development of management plans and regulations promoting eco - tourism for sustainable management of protected areas and 2.6c which discusses providing fiscal and non-fiscal incentives to undertake programmes biodiversity conservation. There also seems to be a comparatively greater

focus on biodiversity conservation as compared to environmental sustainability in relation to the many infrastructure projects that are planned to be undertaken through this sector.

## SMEs

- 94** There were 58 instances where SAP targets relating to SMEs was linked to the SDGs. These include 41 instances of FA targets, 17 instances of PA targets, and 9 instances of NA targets. SDG goals that the SMEs targets cover include SDGs 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10.
- 95** The greatest number of Fully Aligned targets is linked to SDG 8 (27 instances) as well as SDG 9 (7 instances of FA and 10 instances of PA). Other goals in this subsector if represented are done relatively less in comparison.
- 96** This sector contains comprehensive targets and actions that look into strengthening the SME landscape in the country through legislative strengthening, data as well as financial and technical capacity building. The targets look specifically into addressing the geographic representation of businesses and enhance the skills development by addressing regional disparities in these aspects. The establishment of business centres and incubation platforms as well as staffing that continue to provide business support services. Financial capacity building and support is targeted through financial literacy and management practices as well as SME focused lending programmes both through the government and non-traditional sources. Technical and financial support is provided to build productivity as well as move towards greener models of business, by creating conducive environments to enhance SME productivity through technology and innovation. Identifying access to markets as a challenge, there are targets to provide access to business markets as well as reduce physical barriers to markets through the development of key infrastructure such as regional markets, and supply ferries. To ensure accountability in the development, regulation and disbursement of services, there are targets to strengthen monitoring of grants performance as well as differing to data driven policy making.
- 97** The development of this SME sector can be seen to be relatively holistic, addressing a number of key issues that have been hindering the proper development of the sector including access to finance and technical services, access to business markets and geographic barriers, and lack of transparency and accountability in the provision of support. However, there are also some areas where the sector could be further strengthened, and these areas are evident looking into the gaps in the SDGs in terms of linkage. It is clear that goals with a key focus on the protection and preservation of natural environment bear no linkage in these sectors. The only section addressing environmental protection and preservation environmental sustainability is the SAP target 3.2, “at least 50 SMEs adoption green SME initiatives”. This target is to be achieved through the “green SME initiatives” which is likely to be a funding scheme as it pertains to the technology and innovation as well. The development of green SMEs, and environmentally sustainable SMEs should be incorporated into all aspects of SMEs including the disbursement of all SDFC grants and other financial initiatives, the trainings and support provided at business centres and other accelerators.

- 98** The SAP targets have given due significance to inclusivity with the development of training and funding opportunities to those that might be not as well represented within SME development and face additional barriers to enter these areas; such as women and youth. There are SME based trainings for women, youth and PWDs and fund disbursements via SMEs specifically for young people. However, it can be noticed that poverty is not identified as a factor contributing to vulnerability. It is suggested to have specific measures to boost income through SME development, as well as have specific concessions for those within a particular income group, as without this focus, women and youth who are privileged within the economic system could find it easier to access these grants, resulting in an equality in representation, however not a reduction in inequalities and economic conditions.

## LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND MIGRATION

- 99** A total of 46 instances of alignment were noted between targets in the labour, employment and migration subsector to various SDGs. Of these, a total of 37 instances of FA targets and 9 instances of PA targets were recorded. An additional 6 instances of NA targets were mapped. These refer to instances where the subsector contained actions referring to a particular SDG target, but did not have any matching SAP target to measure ambition level between the two.
- 100** In terms of the distribution of SDGs, the mapping captured links across 7 SDGs but only three which contained FA and PA rankings. Of these the bulk of the targets are reflected, similar to most other subsectors in the Blue Economy sector, to Goal 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth with over 31 targets. Second most represented Goal is Goal 10, reducing inequality, with 7 instances of Fully Aligned and eight instances of Partially Aligned targets. Other SDGs that have an alignment to SAP targets include SDGs 1, 4, 5, and 17 although these goals have a total of one or two linked targets each.
- 101** Targets within this subsector bear a strong focus on legislative and regulatory strengthening to enable key labour rights as per international standards such as equal pay and remuneration, and the establishment of minimum wage and unemployment benefits. There is also a focus on job security for mothers and fathers through affordable childcare facilities, and the identification of the role of women in unpaid care work within households and how it impacts their labour and employment. The subsector also contains targets to formulate a legal framework to govern employer, employee rights as per international labour standards. There is a focus providing employment support and guidance and working towards more accessible workplaces to utilise the skills of workers, particularly with a special focus on PWDs. There is also a focus on the better regulation of migrant workers through reforming and improving the quota system and combatting human trafficking through better enforcement as well as community awareness.
- 102** Better pay and employment practices highlighted above is the reason for the strong alignment between the SAP and the SDGs. The strongest linkages were observed as SDG 8.1 on sustained per-capita economic growth, SDG 8.3 focused on decent job creation (particularly the career support services through the JobCentre), and most significantly SDG 8.5 which focuses on the achievement of full and productive employment and decent

work for all men and women, including for young people and PWDs, equal pay for work of equal value. Implementing minimum wage, unemployment benefits and strengthening regulations under the Employment Act regulations and its implementation are also closely linked to SDG 10.4, with a focus on wage and social protection policies for greater equality. The strengthening of regulations on human trafficking and migration is also closely linked to SDG 10.7, which focuses on the facilitation of orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people.

- 103** Goals that are not at all represented in the subsector, and therefore identified as gaps include, SDGs 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16. While the regulatory changes will have a strong impact on all subsectors under the Blue Economy Sector, a closer look reveals just two explicit mentions of other sectors. One such mention is the formulation and enforcement of a regulation under the Employment Act regarding collection and fair distribution of service charge, to be coordinated with the tourism subsector. The second such mention is an action point that focuses on the formulation and enforcement of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Standards in line with international standards.<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to note that the only subsector this has been linked to be coordinated with is the fisheries and marine resources subsector, while it is also equally important to have these systems in place for sectors such as agriculture, tourism and construction. There needs to be a stronger alignment of this subsector to other subsectors of the SAP to further their rights such as through the provision of adequate housing, adequate health care and humane treatment of workers, and better protection afforded in times of disaster of unforeseen challenges. Other key aspects that could have been incorporated into the subsector to further strengthen the targets could include protection of children from exploitation and child labour (which would be closely linked to SDG target 16.2) as well as other migrant remittances (highlighted in SDG 10.c).

## ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

- 104** The economic diversification subsector when mapped against the SDGs showed 49 instances where targets were aligned. This includes 29 instances of FA and 16 instances of PA. There were four instances where targets with No Alignment were mapped, but these cases showed SAP actions that relate to the scope of the SDGs.
- 105** These targets are distributed over six of the total 17 SDG goals. The greatest number of targets are aligned to SDG 8 (25 instances of FA targets). There were few Fully Aligned targets outside of SDG8, with just once instance of FA target under SDG 10 and three instances of FA targets linked to SDG 17. Another seven instances were recorded with PA targets linked to the SDGs 2 and eight instances of PA targets under SDG 9.

<sup>19</sup> These standards are to be linked to the fisheries, health, tourism and construction sectors.

- 106** The economic diversification subsector represents a number of key areas of focus. These include strengthening trade and investment through stronger regulation and stronger cross sectoral coordination, improving the business environment and reducing obstacles to trade, increasing avenues for investment in various forms of trade, facilitating trade through investment in enabling infrastructure, the expansion of existing economic sectors and the development of new industries and building the payer confidence to the tax system, to name a few.
- 107** The focus on improving economic productivity and trade through reducing barriers, promoting investment and enabling infrastructure means this sector is closely aligned to a number of key targets in SDG 8, including targets 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3. The SDG target 8.2 is particularly relevant as it deals with the achievement of highest levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high value added and labour-intensive sectors. Economic diversification is the only subsector that has been found to be aligned to that target.
- 108** Goals that are not at all represented in this subsector include SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16. There needs to be stronger linkages established with Goal 1 (No Poverty), with all aspects of the subsector being driven towards the key focus of reducing inequalities in addition to economic growth. The lack of representation of key environmental goals is also significant, especially due to the fact that the subsector contains ambitious infrastructure targets. These include the development of Gulhifalhu port, expansion of Velana International Airport, exploring the potential for transshipment ports, the development of economic infrastructure in five Regional Urban Centres (RUC)<sup>20</sup>, and the development of special zones for light industry. All of these infrastructure developments, if not conducted in a sustainable manner, might have detrimental effects to the environment. This fact is also the reason why despite infrastructure development being heavily represented in a number of targets, the alignment to SDG 9 (Industry Innovation and Infrastructure) were mostly partial.

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<sup>20</sup> Five Regional Urban Centres or RUCs were identified in the draft National Spatial Plan. These are: Hdh. Kulhudhufushi, Lh. Hinnavaru, L. Gan, Gdh. Thinadhoo and S. Hithadhoo.

## Caring State Sector

**109** The Caring State Sector of the SAP consists of five individual subsectors. They are health, education, higher education and social protection, and prevention of narcotics abuse and drugs rehabilitation.

Table 4: Summary of SAP targets linked to SDG targets under the Caring State Sector (level of ambition)

SUBSECTOR	FA	%	PA	%	NA	%	TOTAL
Health	28	50.00	15	26.80	13	23.2	56
Education	20	48.78	4	9.76	17	41.46	41
Higher Education	7	17.50	6	15.00	27	67.50	40
Social Protection	24	36.40	30	45.50	12	18.1	66
Prevention of Narcotic Abuse & Drug Rehabilitation	11	68.75	2	12.50	3	18.75	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>		<b>57</b>		<b>72</b>		

**110** The Caring State Sector has an overall 14% alignment with the SDGs whilst mapped against ‘level of ambition’. The sector shows interlinkages with 12 SDGs (SDGs 1,2,3,4,5,8,9,10,11,13,16,17). Those SDGs that have not been linked with the sector are SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 12, SDG 14 and SDG 15.

**111** There are a total 90 instances where SAP targets in the Caring State Sector showed full alignment with the SDG targets. Another 57 instances showed partial alignment. The SDGs with the highest number of interlinkages with this sector were Goal 4 (19 instances), Goal 3 (35 instances) and Goal 10 (35 instances).

**112** Most of the instances where targets were aligned fell under the ‘social protection’ subsector (54 instances), followed by the health subsector (43 instances), and the education subsector (24 instances). The subsectors with the highest number of Fully Aligned targets are the health and social protection subsector with 28 and 24 respectively. Higher education has the highest number of instances that showed No Alignment with the SDG targets (38 instances).

**113** The distribution of the targets across the SDGs confirm the emphasis of the Caring State sector to improve education and reduce social inequalities in the country. Particularly, the alignment of the social protection subsector is highlighted. The policies included under this subsector demonstrate high correlation with SDGs focusing on eliminating poverty, improving gender equality and reducing inequalities. The entire social protection subsector was mapped against SDG 1.3 (Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable) through ambitious targets identified in the SAP to ensure universal coverage of social protection schemes for all citizens.

- 114** 'Prevention of narcotics abuse and drug rehabilitation' was observed as the subsector having the weakest interlinkages with the SDGs. The mapping exercise recorded only instances where targets showed alignment. These were mainly linked with SDGs 3, 4, 10 and 11, and only 11 of these cases (mapped entirely under SDG 3) were Fully Aligned.

## HEALTH

- 115** As expected, most of the actions and targets in the health subsector showed strong correlation with SDG 3 (Good health and well-being). The SAP covers all key elements that are covered under SDG 3 including actions to improve essential obstetric services across all health level systems in the country through ensuring skilled birth attendants and primary care providers across the country (linked to SDG 3.1). This is likely to reduce maternal mortality as well as neo-natal and infant mortality (linked to SDG 3.2). The SAP further recognizes the importance of recognizing 'near misses' which is likely to improve service delivery across the nation. Building a cadre of health professionals is also identified and it links directly with SDG 4.4. Additionally, these interventions are likely to contribute to ensuring all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development as targeted under SDG 4.2.
- 116** The only SDG target that was not covered under the health subsector relates to vaccine development (SDG 3.b). This SDG target is not applicable to the local context as the Maldives do not have any ongoing vaccine development programmes.
- 117** Similarly, the health subsector includes specific interventions to reduce mortalities linked to non-communicable diseases, vector borne diseases, respiratory diseases, cancers, diabetes and other similar lifestyle-based illnesses that are frequently associated with high morbidities across the Maldives (linking with SDG 3.3).
- 118** Mental health (linked to SDG 3.4) is also identified in the SAP as an important focus area. There are provisions in the SAP to enable access to mental health services across the five RUC's highlighted in the draft National Spatial Plan (NSP) and also importantly, to enable access to medication through the national health protection scheme *Aasandha*.
- 119** The SAP targets to increase government spending on health by 10% compared to 2018 levels, including building five tertiary level hospitals across each RUC and ensuring availability of vaccines for the national vaccination program. There is also focus on increasing health professional capacity and improving inter-connectivity of the health system such as improving transfer of medical samples, safely and effectively between different levels of health service providers in the atolls. Reducing cost of essential medicines is also covered in the SAP (linking to SDG 3.8).
- 120** Action 3.3c of the health subsector focuses on developing health sector capacity and mechanisms to support national efforts to address Gender Based Violence (GBV). The SAP target that corresponds (to a limited extent) is the target set to have community health workers in every island doing home visits. If the role of community health workers can be revived, and appropriate training is extended to develop their capacity in responding and managing Domestic Violence (DV) cases, it is likely to help identify victims early on and appropriate interventions to be put in place with other relevant organizations. This

also links with Action 2.5b of the Decentralization subsector where councils are required to attend to matters of DV through collaboration with respective bodies (e.g. Community Social Groups - CSGs), and it links with the monitoring work mentioned under action 4.43 of the social protection.

- 121** Action 1.3 of the health subsector refers to OHS and action 1.5b to improve access to reproductive services (migrant workers specifically mentioned). Similarly, action 1.6 refers to developing a migrant health policy and carrying out education programs targeting migrant workers on health. All these actions relate to SDG 8.8 on protecting labour rights and promoting safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers.
- 122** The SAP also included provisions to build necessary digital infrastructure which will reduce structural barriers in accessing health services. Actions such as enabling telemedicine would likely improve accessibility and sustainability for a geographically dispersed nation. Establishing tertiary hospitals and improvements in sample transfer mechanisms between local health centres and regional and tertiary health care facilities is also likely to contribute towards SDG 9.1 focusing on developing reliable and quality infrastructure that would support human well-being while ensuring equitable access for all and to SDG 11.a which focus on supporting positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.
- 123** Policy 5 of the health subsector is ‘strengthen the response of the health system in emergencies. These include developing establishing paramedics, training, developing response plans, SOPs, health emergency operational plans, strengthening partnerships with humanitarian organizations. The actions in this policy matches with the ambition set forth under SDG 11.5 looking at reducing the number of deaths and number of people affected by disasters, with a focus on people who are poor or in vulnerable situations. Target 5.3 of the health subsector aims to develop contingency plans to deliver medical care in situations of disasters and emergencies where health facilities are established. This links directly with SDG 13.2 (Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning).
- 124** However, in some instances, the health subsector contained actions that had strong similarities with the SDG targets, but did not have any matching SAP targets which disabled measuring the level of ambition between the two. One such instance was noted under SDG 3.2 which focused on ending preventable deaths of new-born babies and children under five years of age. The health subsector has strong focus on improving essential obstetric care, including ensuring skilled birth attendants’ availability throughout the country, rigorous monitoring on infant deaths and near misses and frequent training. These actions are very likely to improve neo-natal, infant and Under 5 mortalities. The limitations in specific health targets in the SAP does not mean that these sector level targets are missing, nor that the health sector do not have strategies and actions identified to address the issue. The health sector is differentiated in the Maldives through their rigorous and comprehensive strategic planning. In this regard, the Health Sector Master Plan contains multiple targets covering a wide range of areas, all of which contributes to the achievement of the policy target written in the health subsector of the SAP.

- 125** Another similar case observed relates to SDG 3.3 focusing on ending epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, neglected tropical diseases, hepatitis, water borne diseases and other communicable diseases. The SAP has actions relating to ‘controlling and preventing’ spread of some diseases identified in the SDG mainly through strengthening surveillance of these diseases, but there were no targets to ensure their ‘complete elimination’. The only instance where total elimination was recorded (at an action level) was in reference to leprosy and tuberculosis, both which were in final certification stages for complete eradication in the Maldives at the time of writing this report. The SAP also had no reference to hepatitis, which is specifically mentioned in SDG 3, but it is implied to be covered under the STIs and immunization strategies reflected in the health subsector. Hepatitis is also included under the national immunization programme.
- 126** Similarly, action 1.3 f of the health subsector links closely with SDG 3.9. The action refers to improving coordination for regulation and monitoring of chemical usage which may have an impact on human health. Unregulated usage, storing and disposal of chemicals is a growing area of concern in the Maldives. It matches directly with SDG 3.9 aiming to substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals. A corresponding SAP target is missing.
- 127** Action 3.3c of the health subsector is about developing health service capacity and mechanisms to support national efforts to address GBV, and this links with SDG 16.1 (significantly reduces all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere). However, without an accompanying target, it is difficult to measure the ambition level between the two. Similarly, the role of partnerships was mentioned across the health subsector (actions 1.1d, 5.2e, 9.1c) but there were no corresponding targets.
- 128** The health subsector entirely missed linkages with SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation) despite it being a critical element for a healthy population. Actions relating to ensuring safety of drinking water, special needs of women and girls in relation to hygiene, enhancing capacity and working with communities to improve water quality and raise awareness on water safety were observed to be missing.

## EDUCATION

- 129** The education subsector has linkages with SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 9, SDG 10 and SDG 16. The greatest number of interlinkages are observed under SDG 4 where 13 instances of FA targets were recorded.
- 130** Policy 1 of the education subsector is “Ensure equitable access and completion from K to 12, especially for girls and boys, and children with special education needs (SEN) and at risk of falling/dropping out”. This is directly linked with the vision set forth in SDG 4.1 and 4.2.
- 131** The education policies do identify alternative pathways for continuing education linking to SDG 4.3 (ensuring equal access to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education) and SDG 4.4 (increasing number of youths with relevant skills for employment and decent jobs). The education subsector includes conducting a gender gap

analysis to increase understanding of gender differences in *accessing* education (links to SDG 4.3 and 4.5). There are further provisions to increase awareness on expansion of vocational education and likely benefits to students (linking with SDG 4.4). Strategies included under Policy 6 of the education subsector includes plans to expand Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in schools whilst ensuring equity, gender equality and geographic equality. Further actions were identified under the strategy to introduce ‘sampler courses’ for girls and boys in younger grades to familiarize themselves with vocational education pathways, and also to increase the opportunities for higher education through support to learning pathways between different education streams. Through these interventions, the government aims to increase students successfully completing BTEC programmes by 45% compared to 2018 levels. Further ambitions are set forth under Target 7.1 of the education subsector which aims to increase the number of people who benefit from non-formal education 25% annually between the period 2020 to 2023.

- 132** The education subsector has some links with SDG 4.5 but the main focus of these is on improving access to quality SEN education for children with special needs. It also includes actions and targets to create effective learning environments for children with special needs (linking to SDG 4.a). Strategy 2 under Policy 1 of the education subsector refers to the integration of the monitoring of children at risk of failing or dropping out into the Maldives Education Management Information System to improve the implementation of the policies on children at risk.<sup>21</sup>
- 133** SDG 4.6 focuses on improving literacy and numeracy among youth and adults is missing from the SAP. There may be three possible reasons for this. First, literacy rates are already high in the Maldives and may not be too relevant to be included in the SAP. Second, the focus of the education subsector, as mentioned earlier, is on the formal schooling system. It is differentiated from the higher education subsector that looks more at tertiary education, skill development and vocational training. Third, adult literacy falls under the mandate of the local councils under the Decentralization Act. Without localization of the SDG target, it would be difficult to measure ambition levels.
- 134** The education subsector has links with SDG 5.1 (ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls) and SDG 5.2 (eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private spheres) through interventions such as awareness programmes on gender equality, gender values and domestic violence (linking to 16.1), targeting both students and teachers, providing psychosocial support (linking to SDG 10.3), and providing training school staff on the same. There are no specific SAP targets linking to this SDG target.
- 135** Similarly, using technology as a tool for women empowerment is identified in the education subsector, although not explicitly. The education actions look at increasing usage of Information, Communication Technology (ICT) and associated training to educators (who are mostly female) to aid teaching (linking to SDG 5.b) and strengthening ICT infrastructure in the education system (linking with SDG 9.1 and SDG 9.c). Strengthening

<sup>21</sup> MEMIS is an education monitoring system that enables daily monitoring of students attendance. All public schools are required to send daily updates of student's attendance to the Ministry of Education through this system.

ICT within the formal education system is also likely to develop a cohort of young female school leavers who are already familiar with technology, equipping them with important skills and knowledge to secure good employment or income earning opportunities.

- 136** SDGs that are completely missing from the education subsector are SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 12, SDG 13, SDG 14, SDG 15, and SDG 17. SDG 1 focuses on broader and convoluted development challenges that may not necessarily be addressed solely through the education system. However, the role of education in leading to improvements of poverty is crucial. Similarly, schools and educators can play a huge role in instilling good dietary habits among young people, leading to improvements in their nutrition. The health sector identified actions where such nutrition related programs are to be conducted as an effort to reduce likelihood of certain lifestyle diseases later on in life. Home economics and school gardening projects may be an effective way to increase students' understanding about the benefits of nutritional food, while also deepening their attachment to the environment. Education subsector has no links to SDGs on water, clean energy, climate action and life of land and water. Linkages to these actions within the education subsector is identified as a significant gap in achieving both the SDGs and the Jazeera Dhiriulhun (island life) ideology on which the SAP is formulated.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

- 137** The higher education subsector links with SDG 4, SDG 10, SDG 11 and SDG 17. The targets belonging to this subsector was mapped against the SDGs on 13 instances of which 7 were FA and 6 were PA. The subsector contained many references to issues covered in the SDGs but had no targets linking them. In this regard, a total 27 instances of the mapping exercise were recorded as not aligned. This is the highest occurrence of NA targets in the Caring State Sector.
- 138** The subsector identifies a number of actions to improve access to higher education opportunities to vulnerable groups including access to skills training programs conducted under TVET. While the definition of vulnerable groups is not clear, it is assumed that these would include youth groups, women and girls, people with disabilities and individuals from peripheral communities. This links with both SDG 1.b (on creating sound policy frameworks to accelerate investments in poverty eradication actions), with SDG 4.3 (ensuring access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university), and also with SDG 4.4 (increasing number of youth and adults with relevant skills for employment). Improving access to higher education and TVET programs is also linked with SDG 10.1 (progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 percent of the population at a rate higher than the national average), assuming that these investments will translate into increased labour force participation and improved income levels.
- 139** Additionally, there are actions in the SAP linking to developing junior colleges, vocational training facilities in five different regions and enhancing e-learning. These actions are likely to contribute to SDG 4.3, SDG 4.4, SDG 10.1 mentioned earlier. It also links with SDG 10.3 (ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate

legislation, policies and action) and SDG 10.4 (adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality).

- 140** The higher education subsector includes a target to provide free first-degree education to 25,000 students and this is directly linked with SDG 4.3 in terms of ambition. However, gender barriers in accessing these opportunities have not been considered (for instance, the accessibility of a certain academic or skill development programme to a young female student in a peripheral island, or the timings of these courses that collides with domestic work). Action 1.6f of the higher education subsector looks at revising existing policies to address any gender discrimination in higher education & training programmes and it is assumed that these revisions (once enforced) would contribute to increased participation of women and girls. This action also matches fully with SDG 5.1 on ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, but there is no corresponding SAP target and also with SDG 16.b (promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development).
- 141** There are also provisions in the higher education subsector to increase local capacity to support upgrade of infrastructure and retrofit industries in order to make them more sustainable, linking to SDG 9.4. Action 1.8b of the higher education subsector focuses on developing local capacity in renewable energy, which is critical for the achievement of SDG 7.2 (increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix). There is also mention of developing a tertiary education scholarship program in selected priority areas (action 2.3b). It is unclear what priority areas are or how they would be determined. It was further observed that the higher education subsector did not contain any explicit actions to improve capacity in the water and sanitation sector, which would be essential to achieve SDG 6 and also the ambitious targets laid out in the water and sanitation subsector of the SAP.
- 142** The higher education subsector also links directly with SDG 17.17 (encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships). It includes targets to provide 200 scholarship opportunities across the Maldives under public private partnership arrangements and also to enter into partnership agreements with international organizations to integrate innovation in TVET provisions.

## SOCIAL PROTECTION

- 143** The social protection subsector has the highest number of instances where targets showed full or partial alignment to the SDG targets among all subsectors coming under the Caring State Sector. There were approximately 54 instances where such alignments were recorded (24 FA and 30 PA). Most of these links with SDG 10 on reducing inequalities (21 instances) and SDG 1 on no poverty (17 instances). Other SDGs that are linked with this subsector are SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 9, SDG 11 and SDG 16.
- 144** The overall aim of the social protection subsector was to enable a universal coverage of protection schemes to all citizens. The whole subsector aligns with SDG 1.3 regarding implementation of nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all

and achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable. All actions of the social protection subsector were mapped against this target. Target 1.4 of the social protection subsector is “By 2023, at least 70% of the most eligible are benefitted from a harmonized social protection mechanism”. This target matches strongly to SDG 1.b relating to creating sound policy frameworks to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions.

- 145** A key target of the social protection subsector is to ensure universal health coverage through increasing Aasandha portfolio by increasing its scope and accessibility through privately owned health and international service providers. This would ensure better access to health facilities, as well as improve financial risk protection for all Maldivians, and would contribute to achieving SDG target 3.8, SDG 10.1 and SDG 10.4.
- 146** The social protection subsector further covers provisions to support unemployed groups with a particular focus on vulnerable groups. There are actions referring to providing income and training support to these groups until suitable employment is found. It further includes providing loans to vulnerable groups to stimulate entrepreneurship. These actions relate to SDG 1.2, SDG 4.5, SDG 9.2, SDG 9.3, SDG 10.1, SDG 10.4
- 147** Improvements in legislative and institutional arrangements to extend social protection services are also included in the SAP. These include enacting a social workers act, revise existing laws on social protection, DV, gender equality, disability and sexual harassment, revising a new plan to prevent violence against children, developing a foster-home mechanism (targeting 50 children), establishing safe homes for children on two regions and for victims of DV, and establishing CSGs in all inhabited islands. These actions have partial linkages with SDG 5.1, SDG 5.2, SDG 5.3, SDG 5.c, SDG 10.1, SDG 11.a, SDG 16.1, SDG 16.2 and SDG 17.4. However, these will only lay the foundation to achieve the vision set out in these SDG targets. Given the geographic barriers and the deeply instilled notions on gender roles and responsibilities within the community, having a legislation or building a safe house would not achieve intended outcomes (of ending all violence) but would likely to minimize it. It would require more close monitoring, prevention, awareness and a carefully coordinated, effective and timely response mechanisms to achieve the SDG vision. The CSGs could potentially play a critical role in bridging this gap, but these are also at an infancy stage and would require more targeted interventions which lack in the SAP. CSGs are not envisioned to work solely on domestic violence issues but on all social issues in that island along with the local councils. This would mean that the respective social context also needs to be considered, such as existing power hierarchies and social cohesion levels. Given the SAP target looks at establishing the CSGs at first, their ability to influence progress towards achieving the SDG target (to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls) is too ambitious.
- 148** The subsector also links with SDG 5.4 (recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate). The SAP target to develop at least three government subsidized day care facilities would likely fill a much-required gap in increasing female labour force participation. It is however likely that these facilities would be located in large urban centres and would by design exclude access to women in outer islands, who can arguably be more vulnerable.

## PREVENTION OF NARCOTIC ABUSE & DRUG REHABILITATION

- 149** The subsector on prevention of narcotics abuse and drug rehabilitation is observed as the weakest subsector under the caring state sector in terms of both coverage and alignment with the SDGs. Targets belonging to this subsector were mapped on 13 instances out of which only 11 showed full alignment. The subsector links with SDG 4, SDG 10 and SDG 11.
- 150** The area where the highest interlinkages between this subsector was noted against SDG 3.5 (strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol). All the actions of this subsector were Fully Aligned with this SDG target.
- 151** Narcotic abuse and drug usage are most common among young people in the Maldives. It is also believed that harmful alcohol abuse or dependency is also growing among locals, particularly young people. This is regarded as a serious issue as it prevents users from taking part in productive economic work and increases chances of anti-social behaviour and crimes. The subsector includes an action on building entrepreneurship and skills as part of rehabilitation and this has the potential to contribute to SDG 4.4 (substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship). However, this would only be limited to those youth and adults enrolled in a rehabilitation program and would exclude the wider groups of young people outside these programs.
- 152** Given the widespread nature of tobacco and drug use in the Maldives, it is important to ensure coherence between central and local plans, programs and policies aimed at reducing negative effects of these substances on human health and on the collective community. Action 2.3a of the subsector focuses on improving data collection and analysis to facilitate planning. This action is directly linked to SDG 11.a (support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning) but there is no corresponding SAP target.
- 153** The subsector also shows partial alignment with SDG 10.2 (By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status). Target 2.4 of the subsector aims to align treatment programs with international standards, while Target 2.5 aims to ensure all pregnant women with substance abuse disorders are benefited from treatment programs. Ensuring vulnerable and at-risk people are afforded the care and treatment that is necessary could lead to their rehabilitation and reintegration into economic, social and cultural spaces of society they were previously marginalized from.
- 154** An important element that is missing from the subsector is the linkages of drug abuse with violence (including DV, violence against children, gang related fights and murders) and its negative correlation with community safety. If these links had been in place, the subsector would have increased its coverage to include SDG 5 and SDG 16.

## Dignified Families Sector

- 155** The Dignified Families Sector of the SAP has six individual subsectors focusing mainly on social well-being of Maldivians and foreigners residing in the Maldives. These subsectors are family, housing, youth, community empowerment, sports and Islamic faith.
- 156** Approximately 13% of the total mapped targets during this exercise came under the Dignified Families Sector with approximately 137 targets. The SDGs that were not covered in this sector are SDG 2, SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 12, SDG 14 and SDG 15.
- 157** The subsector with the highest alignment with the SDGs is the youth subsector with 24 instances where targets under this sector showed linkages to the SDGs. Another 13 instances were recorded as Partially Aligned.
- 158** The weakest subsector in terms of SDG alignment is observed as Islamic faith with only five instances of Fully Aligned targets and six instances of No Alignment.

Table 5: Summary of SAP targets linked to SDG targets under the Dignified Families Sector (level of ambition)

SUBSECTOR	FA	%	PA	%	NA	%	TOTAL
Family	16	43.2	17	46.00	4	10.8	37
Housing	5	26.3	8	42.1	6	31.6	19
Youth	24	53.3	13	28.9	8	17.8	45
Community Empowerment	14	56.00	9	36.00	2	8.00	25
Sports	11	40.7	15	55.6	1	3.7	27
Islamic Faith	5	45.5	0	0.00	6	54.5	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75</b>		<b>62</b>		<b>27</b>		

### FAMILY

- 159** The subsector on ‘family’ had 33 instances where its targets were linked with the SDGs. In terms of ambition, this includes 16 Fully Aligned targets, 17 Partially Aligned targets and four targets without any alignment in ambition level. The SDGs that are covered in this subsector are SDG 2, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 9, SDG 10 and SDG 11.
- 160** The subsector focuses on creating a stable and just society that promotes social inclusion of all members of the community, including the elderly, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. It looks at reducing social disparities between families and facilitate all members of the community to engage independently within their communities.
- 161** The subsector has no direct links with SDGs 1 although there are some actions referring to elderly homes, pension schemes, foster care mechanisms and establishing day care centres to reduce disparities between families. Such social protection nets will significantly improve the life of people, particularly those in vulnerable positions, and is likely to help reduce their poverty levels.

- 162** The subsector has a strong focus on improving lives of people with disabilities. Actions have been identified on improving access to education for children with special needs. This includes ensuring school-based therapists and relevant are available in atoll schools and thereby relates directly with SDG 4.5 (eliminating gender disparities in education and ensuring equal access to all levels of education. Including persons with disabilities and children in vulnerable situations) and SDG 4.a (build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all). Further provisions are also included in the subsector to improve access to transport for people with disabilities in addition to developing a concession scheme for public transport for this group which is significantly going to improve their ability to take part in education and training. This also links with SDG 10.7 and 11.4.
- 163** The subsector also links with Goal 5 on gender equality. Under its policy to reduce socio-economic disparities between families, it recognizes the value on developing subsidized day care centres to relieve women of their domestic and childcare burdens and allow more time to engage in economic work. It also highlights shared childcare responsibilities between both parents. This reflects the vision under with SDG 5.4, but based on the geographic barriers in the Maldives, a Partially Aligned ranking was given. It also links to SDG 10.4.
- 164** The subsector identifies a number of interventions to develop relevant infrastructure to support well-being and socio-economic needs of families. Developing such infrastructure relates to SDG 9.1, however, the affordability and equitable access of these needs to be carefully considered during implementation. Factoring in possible impacts of these spaces from climate change is equally important.
- 165** The subsector has a strong focus on improving the lives of elderly population, including assessing their situation and experiences, making public spaces more accessible, pension schemes and care facilities. These actions align with SDG 10.2 and SDG 10.4 at varying degrees.
- 166** There are no references on family's accessibility to legal aid or access to justice within this subsector, though this is covered under the Good Governance Sector (Rule of Law and Judicial Reform subsector). It includes reference to providing legal aid service in family, civil and criminal matter, strengthen legal and regulatory frameworks in prisons and detention units to facilitate family visits.
- 167** There is also no observed linkage at the target level to promoting partnerships and involvement of civil society on improving lives of families living in a community. This is an area that could be explored further.

## HOUSING

- 168** The housing subsector had 13 instances where its targets aligned with the SDGs. Of this, five were Fully Aligned, eight were Partially Aligned and six had No Alignment in terms of ambition. The SDGs that were covered are SDG 4, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10 and SDG 11.
- 169** The greatest alignment between this subsector and the global goals is observed under SDG 11 (but only showing partial alignment). The subsector aims to develop new housing for 20,000 families, complete permanent housing for the population displaced by the 2004 tsunami and providing housing for families that are relocated by the government. There is also referenced to earmarking housing units for vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, victims of domestic violence and youth. These relate with SDG 11.1. The subsector includes a target to sanction at least MVR 1 billion under the national affordable housing scheme. However, there must be increased coordination with financial institutions to ensure that these housing units are in fact affordable to the general public. This aligns with SDG 8.10.
- 170** There also needs to be focus on improving the resilience of these structures against probable climate impacts and extreme weather events. Climate proofing or incorporating design features such as elevated floors, improving natural light and ventilation and insulating windows are important. At present the subsector does not show any linkages with the planet goals.
- 171** As the Maldives move away from traditional housing compounds to high rise apartments, it is important to factor in the potential social issues it may lead to. Confining families into small spaces is likely to escalate domestic violence or push younger generations (especially males) outside their living areas to seek privacy. This may increase their vulnerability to narcotics and substance abuse or involvement with gangs. Dark alleyways or poorly lit stairwells may increase likelihood of sexual harassment. These linkages (aligning with SDG 3, SDG 5, SDG 16) are missing in the subsector.

## YOUTH

- 172** Targets in the youth subsector showed linkages with SDG 1, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG9, SDG10 and SDG 11. There were 37 instances where targets under the youth subsector was mapped against the SDGs. These include 24 instances of FA targets, 13 instances of PA and eight instances where there was No Alignment.
- 173** The youth subsector does not have any explicit linkages with Goal 1 on reducing poverty. However, a number of indirect linkages can be observed that may contribute to reducing poverty among youth groups. For instance, there are actions identified to ensure higher education opportunities for youth (scholarships and study loans) and ensure their participation in vocational educational trainings (linking to SDG 1.4, SDG 1.b, SDG 4.3, SDG 4.4 and SDG 4.a). This would in turn increase their employability and would positively contribute to achieving SDG 8.6, SDG 8.10 and SDG 8.b.

**174** Additionally, the SME subsector recognizes youth as a priority group for their loan portfolio. This is likely to stimulate economic enterprise among youth and contribute to SDG 8.1, SDG 8.3 and SDG 9.3.

**175** Action 2.1e of the youth subsector looks at conducting outreach programme on sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, tobacco cessations, life skills, mental health and wellbeing, physical health, positive relationships, alcohol and other drugs targeting youth groups. These actions relate with SDG 3 on good health, particularly with SDG 3.3, SDG 3.4, SDG 3.5 and SDG 3.7. However, there are no youth specific targets in the SAP in relation to the aforementioned outreach programmes.

**176** The youth subsector further identifies actions to minimize discrimination between men and women and address violence against women. It looks at conducting public awareness campaigns on reducing discrimination, stigma and violence faced by women. It is important to explore youth friendly mediums to ensure better reach of these campaigns (e.g. through use of social media frequented by youth groups). These relate with SDG 10.3, SDG 16.1 and SDG 16.b, but there are no SAP targets to measure ambition. Two additional interventions that would contribute to reducing gender disparities are the gender balanced National Youth Council and the representation of youth (both males and females) in (at least six) government decision making bodies. These are aligned with SDG 5.1 and SDG 5.5.

**177** Actions identified under the youth subsector and the ICT subsector also contain reference to increasing females in education and training in science and technology related fields. This is likely to broaden career options for young females while help transform existing perceptions about women's 'preferred' educational and career paths. The most direct match with these actions relates with SDG 5.b.

**178** The absence of SDG localization makes it difficult to determine whether the entire youth population or certain groups within the youth cohort belong to the bottom 40% of the population as referred under SDG 10.1. As mentioned earlier, there are several targets to increase the proportion of youth in technical education, stimulate youth led enterprises (especially young females), and reduce voluntary youth unemployment. These targets could be aligned with SDG 10.1.

**179** Quotas are identified in the youth subsector to improve access to social housing schemes for vulnerable and at-risk youth, showing strong alignment with SDG 11.1.

## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

**180** Targets under the community empowerment subsector had linkages across five SDGs (SDG 5, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 16 and SDG 17). There were 23 targets that were mapped against different ambitions levels. These include 14 instances of FA, nine instances of PA and two instances without alignment.

**181** The subsector does not recognize the role of community health workers in terms of community empowerment, but this is reflected under the health subsector. Reviving the role community health workers is an important step towards improving community

health, ensure timely prevention and reduce number of domestic violence cases, reduce vector borne diseases and improve overall awareness on health issues. The subsector however introduces CSGs to work on social issues. These are mostly advisory bodies that provides a supportive role to the elected councils. Building on the experience of other similar voluntaries bodies, it is important to clearly articulate roles of the CSGs, formulate SOPs, and provide them with relevant training and resources to effectively fulfil their roles. If properly executed, the CSGs hold the potential to contribute to multiple goals, including SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 6, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 13 and SDG 16.

- 182** The subsector identifies development of community spaces that are easily accessible to all community members. These spaces are likely to provide opportunity for social cohesion, promote civil society, stimulate preservation of local arts, culture and heritage, stimulate business enterprises and innovation. It links directly with SDG 11.7 but would contribute indirectly to several goals.

## SPORTS

- 183** The sports subsector shows linkages across SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 16 and SDG 17, with a total of 26 instances where the subsector targets aligned at varying degrees. Of these instances, 11 were Fully Aligned, 15 were Partially Aligned and one was not aligned.
- 184** The actions and targets under this have strong focus on improving skills, increasing exposure and training and ensure gender equality in sport fields. Trainings targeted at youths in vulnerable situations and female athletes have been included across a range of fields such as sports medicine, sports management in addition to the different targeted trainings for commonly played sports in the Maldives. These contribute to SDG 4.4 (but without alignment in terms of ambition), SDG 4.5 (Partially Aligned) and SDG 4.b (Fully Aligned).
- 185** The provisions to invest in female athletes and ensure female representation in sports bodies are also aligned with SDG 5.1, SDG 5.5 and SDG 16.b.
- 186** The subsector also focuses heavily on developing sports infrastructure across the country which would link to SDG 9, but these actions have not looked at potential environmental impacts or the inclusivity of these infrastructure. A needs assessment must be conducted across different age groups and different levels of sporting (education, recreational, professional) and infrastructure development must be based on the need. Considering future climate scenarios into infrastructure development will also ensure its longevity.

## ISLAMIC FAITH

- 187** Targets in the Islamic faith subsector had interlinkages with SDG 1, SDG 5, SDG 9, SDG 11 and SDG 16. Of these, five instances showed full alignment. There were no Partially Aligned targets observed and six instances were recorded as containing references to SAP actions being present but without a corresponding SAP target.
- 188** The most prominent connection noticed under this subsector is its emphasis on promoting peace through dialogue on Islamic values and virtuous social norms to alleviate discrimination and violence. In this regard, the subsector contributes to SDG 5.1, SDG 5.2 and SDG 16. There must however be strong monitoring mechanisms on the types of messages that are distributed and this needs to be factually accurate and verified by both female and male religious scholars.
- 189** It also aligns strongly with SDG 1.3 relating to implementing locally appropriate social protection scheme. The Islamic faith subsector dedicates one policy for zakat collection and administration. It includes targets to develop an up to date registry of eligible beneficiaries and also to improve the transparency of the management of zakat fund. Excess funds accumulated in the zakat fund is currently spent on sponsoring indigent people to attend the annual Hajj Pilgrimage and on student loans.
- 190** The subsector also has potential to be aligned with several other SDGs. For example, Islamic values can potentially contribute to social cohesion through roles played by imams and religious scholars. It could lead to improved health through advocacy against tobacco and substance abuse. It could also increase role of women in economic and public life through experiences of prominent women in Islamic history or lead to greater public safety and improved rule of law. These connections have not been identified.

## Jazeera Dhiriulhun Sector

- 191** Jazeera Dhiriulhun (JD) – or island life – is the central philosophy behind the incumbent administration’s manifesto. It centres around an ideology encompassing elements of simple island-style lifestyle, strong local governance, closer public service delivery and environmental sustainability. The JD sector comprises of nine individual subsectors. These are decentralization, transport network, environmental protection and preservation, clean energy, waste as a resource, water and sanitation, resilient communities, ICT and arts, culture and heritage.
- 192** The JD sector holds the second highest percentage of the total targets mapped under this exercise, in terms of ambition level. Approximately 29% of all mapped targets was mapped under the JD sector. Of these, 195 were Fully Aligned, 108 were Partially Aligned and 133 were not aligned. The JD sector is the only SAP sector to have linkages with all SDGs.
- 193** The subsectors holding the highest number of matching targets are the resilient communities subsector and Environmental Protection and Preservation (EPP) subsector with 73 instances (under each) showing alignment with the SDGs. However, the resilient communities’ subsector had higher number of instances that were Fully Aligned (50 instances) and the EPP subsector had Fully Aligned targets mapped under 46 instances. The weakest subsector is the transportation subsector with only 16 instances where its targets showed links with the SDGs.
- 194** From an SDG angle, the SDG that had the highest interlinkages with the JD sector is SDG 11 with 92 links identified. This is followed by SDG 9 (35 linkages) and SDG 13 (21 linkages).

Table 6: Summary of SAP targets linked to SDG targets under the Jazeera Dhiriulhun Sector (level of ambition)

SUBSECTOR	FA	%	PA	%	NA	%	TOTAL
Decentralisation		16.2	15	40.6	37		
Transport Network		33.3	11	40.8	27		
Environmental Protection and Preservation		25.2	34	31.8	107		
Clean Energy		18.8	13	27.0	48		
Waste as a Resource		27.8	12	33.3	36		
Water and Sanitation		27.3	15	45.4	33		
Resilient Communities		25.6	17	18.8	90		
Information, Communication, and Technology		30.30	12	36.4	33		
Arts, Culture & Heritage		19.3	5	19.2	26		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>195</b>		<b>108</b>		<b>134</b>		

## DECENTRALIZATION

- 195** The decentralization subsector has interlinkages with SDG 2, SDG 5, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 16 and SDG 17. There were 16 instances recorded that showed FA between targets of this subsector with the SDGs and a further six instances with partial alignment. An additional 15 linkages were noted to contain references to SAP actions holding similarity with SDG targets, but these lacked corresponding targets to enable a measurement of ambition level.
- 196** The decentralization process of the Maldives began in 2010 without adequate preparation in terms of institution strengthening, legal coherence, local capacity building and awareness among the general public. Since its introduction, the Decentralization Act has undergone numerous changes, ranging from the size of councils, to its mandated responsibilities and more recently, to the term duration of each council. The LGA, as the guardian of all local councils, adopted 13 ‘nationally relevant’ SDGs into the local development planning methodology in 2017. Despite this integration, the Maldives RIA report states that local councils were ‘not familiar with the SDGs’.<sup>22</sup> Local councils are at the core of successful SDG realization, and it is therefore imperative to have their participation and commitment to SDG implementation.
- 197** Looking into the decentralization subsector, it can be observed that the SAP identifies greater devolvement of administrative, municipal and fiduciary powers to the local governments. In this regard, the decentralization subsector recognizes the importance of aligning local development plans with the SAP and the NDP (once formulated) and further, clarifying the hierarchies of all such documents. This push for policy coherence is fully aligned with SDG 17.14. The decentralization subsector further includes targets to increase the number of Public Sector Investment Program (PSIP) projects implemented by local councils by 50% compared to 2018 levels, while another, aims to have all municipal services mandated by law to be available in all inhabited islands through their local councils. There is also more focus on increasing revenue of the local councils through enhanced resource allocation and strengthening of legal frameworks (for instance, targets 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 of the decentralization subsector). This significant devolvement of powers is attributed to SDG 2.5a, SDG 9.1, SDG 10.3, SDG 10.4, SDG 11.3.
- 198** A gap that is identified in terms of this devolvement relates to facilitating the construction of municipal related infrastructure at the local level in line with the NSP which links with SDG 9.1. There is no accompanying target in the SAP. The demarcation of responsibilities between central ministries/agencies and the local councils may be an issue which hinders SDG implementation. Therefore, it is imperative these roles are clearly defined, perhaps during the localization process, or the mid-term review of the SAP.

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<sup>22</sup> MEE. 2017. Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) to assess the Maldives readiness to implement the SDGs, Ministry of Environment and Energy. Malé. p. 8

- 199** Decentralization policies in the SAP are observed as reasonably gender sensitive. Policies 4 and 5 in particular have strong gender equality focus, and therefore link closely with SDG 5. However, the subsector has only one target that is Fully Aligned with SDG 5. This target is Target 4.1 of the decentralization subsector which aims to have at least a third local council members as women. It matches directly with SDG 5.5 on ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. It also has partial alignment with SDG 10.2 which focus on promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, etc.). Other actions were mapped in terms of their coverage, however, due to the absence of corresponding SAP targets, level of ambition was not measured. These include actions relating to SDG 5.1, SDG 5.2 and SDG 5.5. Concomitantly, the subsector identifies the role of the CSGs in supporting the local councils to create an environment for social security, ensure inclusiveness of vulnerable and marginalized population of the community, and attend matters of domestic violence. This action links to SDG 16.1 (significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere), and SDG 16.7 (ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels).
- 200** The subsector recognizes the importance of ICT in supporting e-governance systems on which local councils rely heavily on. As such, action 2.4e of the subsector looks at ensuring internet connectivity in all councils (linking to SDG 9.c), while action 5.2c focuses on e-learning platforms to conduct training for councillors and civil servants (linking to SDG 4.3 and 4.5, and also to an extent SDG 5.5).
- 201** Interestingly, the subsector has no alignment with any environment related goals (SDG 12, SDG 13, SDG 14, SDG 15) or with any municipal service goals (SDG 6 and SDG 7). This is particularly concerning given the ambitious targets set forth elsewhere in the SAP, for example, the provision of safe water and sewerage facilities, or the assignment of protected areas in all atolls, which would require effective governance at the local level. There are however actions relating to supporting councils to integrate climate risks and hazards to local development planning and facilities and activating emergency response teams at the local level to provide aid and assistance to local communities during incidents of emergencies and disasters. These actions are related to SDG 11.5, but not to SDG 13 focusing on climate action. The role of centralized ministries still appears to be stronger compared with local councils, and this is somewhat justified given the weak capacity of local councils. However, as mentioned earlier, there should be more involvement of the local councils in stimulating action, and this would require a host of enabling factors such as technical assistance, training, scientific research, partnerships among others.

## TRANSPORT NETWORK

- 202** The transport network subsector shows links, in varying degrees of ambition, to SDG 3, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 11 and SDG 17. The subsector linked with the SDG targets on 16 instances, where seven were FA, nine were PA and 11 were not aligned. The highest number of targets that were Fully Aligned were linked to SDG 11 (5 targets).
- 203** This subsector is structured into three parts; maritime transport, land-based transport (focusing mainly on easing congestion in Greater Male' Area) and air transport. There was no transport sector master plan prior to this (although some work is reported to have been done), and this may explain the weakness of the subsector in comparison to linkages with the SDGs. Most of the policies in the subsector focused on strengthening multi-modal transport connectivity through a supportive legal and regulatory framework and improved infrastructure.
- 204** A great deal of the transport network subsector focuses on improving infrastructure which would be essential for social development, tourism and trade. This links directly with SDG 9.1 (on developing quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure to support economic development and human well-being), SDG 9.2 (promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization) SDG 10.7 (supporting orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people), SDG 11.2 (providing access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, and putting special attention to different vulnerable groups).
- 205** Though the interlinkages are there, there are certain gaps observed as missing from the SAP, partly due to the lack of explicit articulation in the transport policies. Affordability is one example. While there was significant emphasis in the transport subsector to improve inter-connectivity of the islands, the affordability of these services to the people (especially to poor people) is not stated. The only mention of government subsidy appears alongside policies to improve land-based public transport within Greater Male' Region, but the extension of these subsidies to other modes of transport in other localities, especially to peripheral communities is not clear. For instance, the SAP includes a target ensuring air connectivity to 90% of the population within a 30-minute radius, but the affordability of this remains ambiguous. If inter-island public transport is not affordable, it would act as a barrier for people accessing socio-economic services and restrict their individual mobility.
- 206** Another observation is linked to the quality of these infrastructure or how resilient and sustainable they are. It is important that the transport sector policies link closely with SDG 13 on climate action. There is one policy referring to upgrading selected port facilities to store perishables and this was linked to the resilient communities subsector. There must be scientific based decisions made for transport planning, and design of infrastructure to withstand varying climate perturbations, if continuity is to be maintained. This link appears to be missing.
- 207** Considering the geographic profile of the country, the transport subsector is crucial in ensuring the SAP vision is realized. The SAP links with the draft NSP which builds on a cluster model that relies on transport connectivity. Therefore, essential services or functions identified in the SAP depends heavily on the reliability and sustainability of this

sector. For example, the health subsector depends on inter-island transport for sample transfer. Many of the tourism and trade policies also rely on transport. Similarly, transport is necessary for the safe transfer of waste (including chemical waste) between islands and regional waste management centres without affecting the natural environment (this was mapped against SDG 12.4 for coverage, but not ambition).

- 208** Environmental protection is another area that must be taken into consideration. The transport subsector links with SDG 14.4 (prevent and reduce marine pollution of all kinds). It also includes provisions to adopt solar energy in selected land-based transport modes, set fuel emission standards, relieve vehicle congestion, and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to Maldivian airspace (linking to SDG 11.6). These positive actions could contribute to respective planet goals of the SDGs provided there are set targets.
- 209** It is observed that the safety element has been discussed to a certain extent in the SAP, particularly in relation to road accidents occurring in Male'. The SAP targets to reduce vehicle congestion in Greater Male' Region by 30% compared to 2018 levels. There is high probability that reduced vehicle congestion would lead to less road accidents and therefore less casualties, but this is not certain.
- 210** The transport subsector was mapped against three policy goals under SDG 17, but all in terms of coverage, and not ambition. The provisions in the transport subsector to facilitate private sector investment links to SDG 17.3 (Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources). Transport services in the Maldives are sometimes provided through public private partnerships, and this is included in the transport subsector linking to SDG 17.17. There is also strong emphasis in the subsector to ensure compliance with international laws governing the transport sector and this is noted as a direct link to SDG 17.14.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION

- 211** The EPP subsector has the highest number of targets that are aligned to the SDGs within the JD sector. A total of 73 linkages were identified through the mapping out of which 46 were Fully Aligned, 27 were Partially Aligned and 34 were not aligned. The EPP subsector has linkages to SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 9, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13, SDG 14, SDG 15 and SDG 17.
- 212** The EPP subsector focuses heavily on strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks, improve institutional coordination and enhance human capacity for environmental protection. This includes the formulation of an Environmental Protection and Conservations Act, integrate environmental protection and biodiversity conservation with the guidelines, regulations and compliance documents on land use planning and with local developments planning, and all infrastructure development projects. These aspects relate directly with SDG 11.3, SDG 11.4, SDG 11.5, SDG 11.a, SDG 12.2, SDG 13.1, SDG 14.2, SDG 15.5, SDG 15.9 and SDG 17.4.

**213** Natural resources in the Maldives are significantly limited and therefore ensuring sustainability of these resources is crucial for economic activity and people’s livelihoods. The EPP subsector aims to protect 10% of coral reefs, 20% of wetlands and mangroves from each atoll. This links directly with SDG 6.6 (protecting and restore water-related ecosystems, including wetlands). It is also likely to contribute towards SDG 9.2 (promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization, increase employment and gross domestic product) and 14.5 (conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information). It would also link with SDG 8.9 (devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products). The SAP includes an action referring to preparing management plans and regulations to promote ecotourism. This was included under coverage, but not ambition as there was no corresponding target. Other relevant SDG targets linking to the sustainability and conservation focus of the EPP subsector are SDG 15.1 and 15.2.

**214** With relation to natural resources, no observed links were made with SDG 5 which centres on reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources (in this context, natural resources). There are no laws in the Maldives which prevent women from accessing land or natural resource, but social and structural barriers exist. Girls are encouraged from a young age to stay home and take on more domestic roles while boys are encouraged to take more public roles and be more outgoing. Women’s role in local planning and decision making is limited. Women are also likely to be more vulnerable (especially women from outer atolls) when compared with men. The extent to which women belong to the bottom 40% population is unclear given the absence of a localization process, but in general, women in peripheral communities often rely on natural resources for their livelihoods, and their participation in decision making in relation to these resources, and further, their access to these resources is critical to achieve SDG 5.5, SDG 5.a, SDG 10.1, SDG 11.7 and SDG 15.6.

**215** It is noted that the EPP subsector has a strong emphasis on chemical management throughout the lifestyle of chemicals (linking with SDG 12.4 and SDG 14.1). The SAP aims to have a comprehensive on chemicals management by 2023, and a pesticide act which would contribute towards SDG 2.4 on ensuring sustainable food production and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production. Additional actions such as increasing awareness on organic farming, formulating an inventory of genetic resources and establishing a certification mechanism are also included, but these were only mapped for their coverage and not ambition. The action relating to establishing an inventory of genetic resources in the Maldives and collaborate with regional and international seed and/ or gene banks for safeguarding local genetic diversity, therefore is very relevant to the SDG 2.5 (and also to the global indicators linked to this target), but it was not included in the ambition measurement due to absence of a corresponding target.

**216** The EPP subsector includes several references to improving air quality through management plans, emission standards, monitoring frameworks. This was mapped as Partially Aligned to SDG 3.9. It also links with SDG 11.6 which looks at reducing the adverse environmental impacts of cities (including special focus on air quality).

- 217** There is also focus education within the EPP subsector (Target 6.2 of the EPP subsector focuses on revising the school curriculum to teach students and teachers the value of biodiversity, biosafety and sustainability). This links to SDG 4.7. More actions are included on improving research on biodiversity and ecosystems, which is likely to enhance education and awareness levels, and therefore linking to SDG 13.3 and SDG 14.a.
- 218** One gap that was observed is the absence of a target relating to ocean acidification. The term ‘ocean acidification’ occurs only once in the SAP under action 2.4b of the EPP subsector, and it also appears once among the global target and indicator framework under SDG 14.3. Action 2.4 reads ‘identify and address the impacts on coral reefs and other vulnerable ecosystems due to ocean acidification and elevated sea surface temperature’, but there is no reference to it in the targets or any further action in the SAP to minimize the impact. Ocean acidification is a planetary issue that is not confined within geopolitical boundaries, and the action of a small island such as the Maldives will not lead to significant change. This may be a reason why there is no target identified in the SAP.
- 219** Another similar issue relates to overfishing. The SAP includes measures to standardize production for key industries including fisheries, linking to SDG 14.4. However, there are no actions relating to overfishing or illegal fishing anywhere in the SAP. This needs to be addressed.
- 220** There is also limited ambition between the SAP and SDG in terms of mobilizing financing for conservation as required under SDG 15.b.

## CLEAN ENERGY

- 221** The clean energy subsector showed linkages with the SDGs on 35 instances where 26 showed full alignment while 9 showed partial alignment. An additional 13 were linked but showed No Alignment in terms of ambition. The SDGs that are reflected in the clean energy subsector are SDG 1, SDG 3, SDG 7, SDG 9, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13 and SDG 17.
- 222** A central focus of the clean energy subsector is to ensure access to affordable and reliable supply of electricity to all citizens. This would involve large scale planning across central and local governments and key stakeholders. There is a lot of focus in the clean energy subsector to increase the ratio of renewable energy in the national energy mix, improve energy efficiency and develop local capacity. In addition to the targets under SDG 7, this shift towards renewable energy and energy efficiency is directly linked with SDG 13.2 (integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning) and also to SDG 9.1 (developing quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure... to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access to all). It is also likely to contribute to SDG 9.2 (promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization) to a certain extent. However, in the absence of SAP targets on this, the ambition cannot be measured. Linkages with SDG 1.4 and SDG 11.1 is also noted.

- 223** The focus on renewable energy has linkages with SDG 11.6 (reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management) and to SDG 11.2 (provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all). Adopting clean energy in the transport sector is likely to have positive effects on air quality<sup>23</sup>, and this would likely contribute to SDG 11.6 (reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management) and potentially with SDG 3.9 (By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination). While the clean energy subsector includes actions to set fuel emission standards and moving towards hybrid vehicles, no corresponding targets were observed. This may likely be due to the lack of data in relation to transport sector energy usage which in turn disables a solid understanding of the current situation and for targets to be set.
- 224** Transitioning into cleaner energy will also require significant amounts of finance. The clean energy subsector does identify some measures to mobilize financing but does not have any targets for the amount of financing that need to be mobilized (there were however climate finance related targets under the resilient communities subsector). One such instance is the reference made to facilitating financial institutions to provide loans with low interest rates for renewable energy investments. There is no range given for these loans. To some extent, it is linked to SDG 8.10 (strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all) but no ambition level could be established. There is another reference to improving coordination with Business Centre Corporation Ltd (BCC) and the Ministry of Economic Development to support SMEs migrate to cleaner technology. This would link to SDG 7.1, SDG 7.2 and SDG 7.3 directly, but only assuming that this policy leads to an actual increase of clean energy adoption by SMEs. It would also link to 17.17 (encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships).
- 225** Another gap that was observed is the absence of linkages between clean energy and SDG 3 (Health). A supply of reliable energy stream is critical for health service delivery and storage of essential medicines and vaccines. This energy security for the health sector would be particularly important during a disaster event when people would be most vulnerable.
- 226** Another missing element that was observed is the linkages with gender equality. The energy sector has always been male dominated, despite the availability of competent females that could potentially undertake both technical and supportive roles. Increasing the role of women in the energy sector is increasingly being recognized as an important step towards achieving sustainable development. In the Maldives, the disparity in male and female workers in the energy sector is attributed more towards public perception and society norms, rather than competency. The clean energy subsector, however, includes one action referring to equipping youth with necessary skills to participate in clean energy related employment. Given the earlier statement about existing cultural norms, it might

<sup>23</sup> Significant change in air quality may take time and the contribution of fuel emission standards and hybrid vehicles to air quality improvement may be difficult to quantify.

be helpful to identify women and girls explicitly as a target group for these skills training programs. Also, the overall linkages with employment appears to be weak.

- 227** Another observed gap relates to the water sector. There are very weak interconnections between the clean energy subsector and the water and sanitation subsector within the SAP, except for references to scale up renewable energy and hybrid systems to operate existing water and sewerage facilities and to scale up feasible pilot projects on new renewable energy technologies in coordination with the water sector. The water and sanitation subsector of the SAP has high ambitions to provide safe water to all inhabited islands. There is also reference to adoption of Integrated Water Resources Management systems to ensure water security. Energy is critical for water production (e.g. desalinated water), distribution networks (which would require mechanical pumps), transport (between islands) and treatment (filtration, boiling), but this is lacking in the energy sector policies (apart from a reference to provide electricity through an integrated utility service model). The water and sanitation sector include a target to increase resilience by ensuring that 30% of the energy consumption required for water comes from renewable energy sources, but this is not directly stated in energy sector policies but identifies a blanket target across the national energy mix.
- 228** A final gap is related to scientific research on the energy sector. At present this is limited to a study of fuel usage in the transport sector and research on different renewable energy sources. There are no corresponding targets relating to research and therefore a ‘No Alignment’ ranking was given against SDG 9.5.

## WASTE AS A RESOURCE

- 229** The waste subsector links to SDG 2, SDG 6, SDG 9, SDG 11, SDG 12 and SDG 14 with a total 24 linkages (14 Fully Aligned, 10 Partially Aligned and 12 not aligned).
- 230** The waste subsector includes a number of policies to strengthen existing waste management systems, infrastructure and approaches. Waste is promoted as a valuable resource for income generation. There is focussed to instil environment friendly lifestyles among citizens (linking to SDG 12.8). Legal and regulatory measures have been identified to improve overall waste management, handling of hazardous chemicals, phase out single use plastics and improve recycling capacity. A number of policies also outline the development of waste management infrastructure (including island waste management centres and regional centres) while increasing the responsibility of local councils in municipal waste management and stimulating partnerships. These actions contribute to SDG 11.a (support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning) but the extent to which it matches the ambition of the SDG target is unclear in the absence of SAP targets. It also matches with SDG 11.3 (enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries). However, this is weak in terms of ambition. It further aligns with SDG 11.6 (By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management) identifying full and partial alignment.

- 231** Infrastructure development is also Partially Aligned to SDG 2.a (increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries). Though this SDG target links with agriculture, improvements in waste management infrastructure is believed to have positive impact in agricultural islands, as it would minimize waste dumping in undesignated areas as well as facilitate compost production.
- 232** Growth in the waste management infrastructure and systems is also likely to reduce the amount of marine pollution from land-based activities (particularly plastic). In the absence of dedicated centres, it is common practice to dump waste along the beach leading to contamination of adjacent reefs and seagrass meadows. It is important to establish linkages with SDG 6.6 (protecting and restoring water related ecosystems), SDG 11.4 (Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage), SDG 15.1 (ensuring conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services), and SDG 15.5 (Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species).
- 233** Growth in the waste management sector is also likely to increase employment and related training opportunities. This is linked to SDG 4.4, SDG 8.3 and SDG 9.2, but the waste subsector does not have any employment or skill development targets set. It is also likely that it contributes to SDG 10.1 (progressively achieving and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population at a rate higher than the national average) but this has not been linked. The subsector identifies OHS measures to protect its workers, and this links to SDG 8.8 on protecting labour rights and promoting safe and secure working environments for all workers. Again, there was no corresponding SAP target, so despite being included under the coverage component, it was mapped as not aligned under the ambition component.
- 234** A significant gap that was noted in the mapping was the absence of any reference to food waste in the waste subsector. Food waste is a serious issue in the Maldives, particularly during certain periods. Agriculture in the Maldives is limited, and therefore, it is important to increase the resilience of food production systems through improving quality of water and soil. Proper waste management is likely to reduce groundwater contamination (which is the primary water source used in irrigation) and also enhance soil quality through reduced leaching of contaminants from waste sites. However, these linkages are missing.
- 235** The country is also extremely dependent on imports for food thereby necessitating sound policies on reducing food wastage. There was nothing mapped against SDG 12.3 which aims to halve per capita global food waste. Further, reducing food waste would have positive linkages with SDG 2.1 on ending hunger and ensuring nutritious and sufficient food all year round.
- 236** It is also unclear whether the Maldives implemented the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (mentioned under SDG 12.1).

- 237** The important role played by women in reducing consumption, recycling, and segregation of waste is entirely missing. It is important to recognize the role played by women in waste management in societies and facilitate effective participation and equal opportunities for decision making in relation to the waste management sector (thus strengthening links to SDG 5.5).
- 238** Gaps were also observed with relation to SDG 13 on climate action. Inadequate waste management systems are likely to exacerbate climate related disasters and extreme events. Integrating climate change measures into waste management policies, strategies and planning is critical to ensure that the impact of such events is reduced to the greatest extent possible. If these measures are to be included, it would contribute to SDG 13.1, SDG 13.2, and SDG 13.3).
- 239** Another missing link is energy. Both the waste and energy subsectors appear to be working in silos without much coordination. By regulation, waste management centres are located away from human settlements, away from electricity distribution facilities. Often, the cost of providing electricity to distant waste management centres is more costly than building the centre itself. Energy is also critical to use waste management equipment and machinery. These are usually energy intensive and are very likely to disrupt the island's energy production, especially if the existing energy infrastructure is old. It is important to make these interlinkages between waste management and energy supply.
- 240** A final gap that was noted is that scientific research and building technological capacity was very limited in the SAP. If strengthened, it is likely to contribute towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production (linked to SDG 12.a) and strengthen the overall sector (linked to SDG 9.5). Fostering public private partnerships may be a good strategy to stimulate this area. At present, it is weakly aligned to SDG 17.17.

## WATER AND SANITATION

- 241** The water and sanitation subsector have links with SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 6, SDG 11, SDG 13 and SDG 17. The mapping recorded 18 linkages between the water subsector and the SDGs. Of these nine were Fully Aligned and nine were Partially Aligned. There were 15 instances of non-aligned targets.
- 242** The primary target of the water subsector is to provide safe water and sanitation services to all inhabited islands. In this regard it fully aligns with SDG 6.1 (By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all) and SDG 6.2 (By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations).
- 243** Water provision across all inhabited islands would require careful and coherent planning across a range of stakeholders with differing roles and interests. The water subsector, in this regard, is linked to inclusive and sustainable urbanization and human settlement planning envisioned under SDG 11.3 and supporting positive economic, social and environmental links between urban and rural areas through strengthened development planning as set out in SDG 11.a.

- 244** The subsector identifies developing water management and safety plans for all inhabited islands.<sup>24</sup> It is assumed that these would be developed through a participatory process, and if so, would link with SDG 1.4 and SDG 11.3. There is no corresponding target for these actions, hindering the measurement of ambition. It also partially aligns with SDG 13.1 on strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related hazards and natural disasters. The water subsector aims to increase resilience by ensuring that 30% of the energy consumption required for water comes from renewable energy sources. A regulation introduced under Article 27 of the Water and Sewerage Act (8/2020) now requires integration of renewable energy into all desalination plans within a five-year period for it to be eligible for an operation license. Further links can be identified with SDG 13.2 on integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning, but there is no target to measure the ambition level.
- 245** It is understood that providing water and sanitation services across all inhabited islands would require significant financial resources. This is identified in the subsector under Target 2.3 (By 2020, a standard mechanism to foster private sector investment in the water and sanitation sector will be in effect) and is Fully Aligned with SDG 17.17 (Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships).
- 246** The ambitions set forth in the water subsector would also require equal focus on building local capacity in the sector. The subsector includes a target to develop 40 engineers in the field (unclear whether there is any focus on investing in female engineers). This was mapped as Partially Aligned to SDG 4.b, but the alignment could have been improved if there had been more focus on training youth groups and females in the sector, through technical and vocational training, and enabling access to tertiary education programs (thereby linking to SDG 4.3, SDG, 4.4 and SDG 4.5).<sup>25</sup> Another instance where capacity building was mapped with relation to the water subsector was with SDG 6.a. However, this was also rated as ‘not aligned’ in terms of ambition as the policies describes national level training only.
- 247** Despite the concerns raised above, the water and sewerage sector has recently formulated capacity development plan which identifies inter and intra sectoral training programs that need to be conducted across a broad range of stakeholders belonging to the sector. Several national level capacity building programs are also being pursued, including tertiary education and training relating to a host of water and sanitation related fields. Student loan opportunities, as identified under the Caring State subsector, includes allocations for Diploma and First-Degree level training in Water and Sanitation Engineering.
- 248** A gap was identified in relation to water use efficiency. One action in the water subsector discusses on developing mechanisms to verify water efficiency through a rating scheme for water saving devices and appliances. This could be strengthened further if there is reference to regulating or controlling water extraction rates (for instance in relation to local tourism related construction, agriculture, manufacturing), especially in outer islands. The said action was mapped in terms of coverage against SDG 6.4, but as there was no corresponding SAP target, there was no measure on ambition.

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<sup>24</sup> The MoE is working with the World Health Organization in Maldives to formulate these plans through international expertise.

## RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

- 249** There resilient communities subsector shows linkages with SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 6, SDG 9, SDG, 11, SDG 13, SDG 16 and SDG 17. Altogether 87 linkages were recorded between this subsector and the SDGs. Out of this, 50 instances showed full alignment, 23 showed partial alignment and 17 showed non-alignment.
- 250** The subsector focuses mainly on strengthening adaptation actions and opportunities and build climate-resilient infrastructure and communities to address current and future vulnerabilities. This is envisioned through a strong legal and regulatory framework, improvements in building climate resilient infrastructure, enhancing partnerships and international cooperation, strengthening the resilience of communities to ‘bounce back’ and improving data collection to aid better resilience planning. The strongest alignment between the sector is observed under SDG 13 (Climate Action).
- 251** The prominence given in this subsector to increasing resilience through holistic and evidence-based planning is highlighted as an important element to achieve the SDGs. The subsector includes actions to ensure detailed sector planning (with focus on continuity of critical sectors), streamlining SOPs and guidelines, developing disaster management plans, incorporating climate resilience elements to local plans, and formulating emergency operations plans (all relating to institutional responses). It also identifies planning from an environmental or ecosystem perspective. These include developing climate profiles, hazards and vulnerability assessments, land reclamation regulations, and extending the sphere of influence to recognize adjacent ecosystems of an island (lagoons, seagrass, coral reefs). The extent to which local communities, particularly elderly, people with disabilities and women, are involved in this decision making and planning are unknown (although there are a couple of references to ensure their safety). Another area that lacks clarity is how islands would be ranked on their level of vulnerability. There are several actions on improving scientific understanding on resilience, which is recognized as an important strategy to plan accurately for current and future vulnerabilities.
- 252** The actions in the subsector has a strong linkage with SDG 1.5 focusing on building the resilience of poor and vulnerable people thereby reducing their exposure and vulnerability to climate related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental disasters. This also includes plans to improve food security, such as establishing essential goods storage in RUCs and facilitating storage of perishables in northern and southern parts of the country. These actions match with SDG 2.1a, but only in terms of coverage. It is observed that most of the actions in this subsector relating to improving food security appear to be of smaller scale compared to the EPP and agriculture subsectors. For example, it includes measures such as developing nurseries in schools and starting new coconut groves. However, these are Partially Aligned to SDG 2.4.
- 253** The subsector links with Goal 3 on good health through the role of emergency response teams and community-based disaster risk management plans. These SAP actions are linked to SDG 3.d relating to strengthening the capacity of countries for early warning, risk reduction and management of national health risks.

- 254** Linkages are also observed with Goal 6 on water. The subsector includes actions to develop water security plans and sanitation safety plans for all inhabited islands, linking directly to SDG 6.1, SDG 6.2, SDG 6.5 and SDG 6.b.
- 255** A reasonable amount of actions in this subsector relates to improving infrastructure through improvements in legislation and regulations, including a construction act, a planning act, developing compliance documents to support the building code and regulations to streamline hazard resilient features in low engineered buildings. These actions match strongly with SDG 9.2 (developing quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure) and SDG 9.4 (upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable). Infrastructure development is costly and would require mobilizing of additional financial resources. The SAP include a target to mobilize at least USD 50 million for climate action, and another USD 10 million on new private investments leveraged for low emission and adaptation measures. These two targets are Fully Aligned with SDG 17.3 and SDG 17.7.
- 256** A notable gap in this subsector is that path dependencies have not been identified. Path dependencies is important to distinguish between the barriers (financial, technical and often political) and actual limits for climate adaptation (the natural threshold of a given ecosystem to withstand pressure or alterations). The main responsible actors of this subsector have been divided between the National Disaster Management Authority, the Ministry of Environment and MoNPHI. All these institutions would operate distinctively and will likely follow customs and norms that had been shaped over the years and are likely to have their own understanding on what the barriers and limits are. It is imperative that these agencies work together and come to a common understanding.
- 257** A final gap that was noted relates to planned or forced relocation as a result of climate related disasters, which is not available. This could perhaps be linked with the planning process identified earlier and with migration targets in the SDGs.

## INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION, AND TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

- 258** The ICT subsector shows linkages with SDG 2, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 9 and SDG 17. A total of 32 linkages were recorded under this subsector linking to the SDGs. These contained 11 linkages that were FA, 10 linkages with partial alignment and 12 with No Alignment.
- 259** The focus of the ICT subsector centres around modernizing the Maldivian ICT governance mechanism to enter into a digital economy, develop the relevant ICT infrastructure, strengthen public service delivery through a data driven e-government system, encourage digital innovation and prepare an able digital literate workforce.
- 260** The two SDGs that are most aligned with the ICT subsector are SDG 9 and SDG 17. Policies included in the ICT subsector refer to developing relevant digital infrastructure in the country, including, establishing a National Data Centre to facilitate secure sharing of data for service delivery and decision making, building a universal technology stack and developing decentralized technology parks to serve as incubators for digital innovation.

There are also provisions included to develop training facilities for artificial intelligence, machine learning and other emerging technologies. These actions are partially aligned with SDG 9.1. The mapping also linked the actions relating to interconnections of telecom and banking systems and facilitating online financial transactions with SDG 9.2 (linking to promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization). However, this was only mapped for its coverage and not ambition level due to lack of associated SAP targets.

- 261** Promoting the Maldives as a technology and innovation hub for digital nomads and technology giants is linked with SDG 9.b (support domestic technology development, research and innovation in developing countries, including by ensuring a conducive policy environment for, inter alia, industrial diversification and value addition to commodities). The emphasis on engaging universities and start-ups to enhance research and innovation is similarly linked to SDG 9.5.
- 262** The ICT policies have actions focusing on ensuring affordability of the internet to all citizens through regulation and market-based mechanisms but does not include any corresponding target. The reliability and affordability of internet services links to several other subsectors of the SAP, including, health, education, decentralization, governance and economic growth. This is noted as a significant gap.
- 263** Building local capacity in ICT, particularly that of females, is highlighted in the subsector. The subsector aims to increase women in the ICT field through strengthening Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education (linking to SDG 4.3, SDG 4.5 and SDG 5.b). It also includes stimulating employment which is aligned with SDG 8.3.
- 264** Transitioning into a digital governance modality and thriving in a digital economy requires significant investment. The subsector does identify actions to attract foreign investment from global technology companies (linking with SDG 17.3) but does not set any targets. It further identifies enhancing international cooperation to access global advances on science, technology and innovation, and stimulate local knowledge and capacity. This is aligned with SDG 17.8 and SDG 17.9. It is also linked with SDG 17.6, but only in terms of coverage as no set targets have been set to help determine the ambition.
- 265** Another gap was identified in relation to natural disasters linked with SDG 11 and SDG 13. In a geographically dispersed country, ICT would play a critical role in prevention, early detection and response to natural disasters. The ICT subsector includes an action to establish regional data centres in the northern and southern parts of the country which doubles as a disaster recovery mechanism. This was mapped against SDG 11.5, but only in terms of coverage.

## ARTS, CULTURE & HERITAGE

- 266** The Arts, Culture & Heritage (ACH) subsector links with SDG 4, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, and SDG 11 with a total of 21 linkages between its targets and the SDGs. Of these linkages 16 were FA, five were PA, and five were not aligned.
- 267** The ACH subsector builds on three main policies, focusing on preserving Maldivian cultural identity, enhancing the economic value of the Maldivian arts, culture and heritage sector, and fostering intercultural communications. The first of these – preserving Maldivian culture and heritage - aligns fully with SDG 11.4 (strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the worlds cultural and natural heritage).
- 268** It is noted here that the ACH subsector has limited interlinkages with the environment related goals. The subsector has no direct link with any of the planet SDGS. However, action 1.1b of the ACH subsector refers to development of legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks in line with the constitution and international conventions. Stakeholder discussions with the sector confirmed that this includes national level work to be done under the ‘Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage’ which would likely contribute towards SDG 14. However, sustainable use of natural ecosystems and equal access to these resources is imperative for the continuity of the Maldivian arts and crafts sector.
- 269** The second policy on developing economic models to increase the economic value of the Maldivian cultural products links with SDG 8.9 (devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products), with SDG 9.2 (promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and increase share of employment) and SDG 9.3 (increase access to financial services, including affordable credit, to small scale industrial and other enterprises).
- 270** It is important to highlight that the subsector include targets to increase local literature, arts, crafts and cultural products through grant schemes and establishing nationwide cultural centres. These mechanisms are very likely to increase the number of youth and adults (both male and female) engaged in this sector, and also secure economic benefits from their products. This meets with the vision set forth in SDG targets 4.4, 8.2,8.3, 8.6, 10.2 and 10.3.
- 271** Some additional gaps that were identified include the absence of targets relating to policy planning and coherence. A few actions in the ACH subsector was mapped against SDG 11.a (support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning) and against SDG 17.14 (ensuring policy coherence for sustainable development), but there were no targets that enabled measurement of ambition between the SAP actions and these SDG targets. Similarly, there were noted gaps in terms of ambition relating to partnerships and local skill development.

## Good Governance Sector

- 272** The Good Governance sector of the SAP accounts for 11% of the total targets mapped in this exercise, in relation to ambition level. Approximately 117 linkages were mapped of which 77 were Fully Aligned, 40 were Partially Aligned and 49 were not aligned.
- 273** The subsector observed to have the highest proportion of linkages is rule of law (with 32 linkages), followed by gender equality subsector (with 31 aligned targets). The weakest linkages were observed under independent institutions and public sector reform with seven linkages.

Table 7: Summary of SAP targets linked to SDG targets under the Good Governance Sector (level of ambition)

SUBSECTOR	FA	%	PA	%	NA	%	TOTAL
Rule of Law & Judicial Reform	19	51.4	13	35.1	5	13.5	37
National Security & Public Safety	7	38.9	4	22.2	7	38.9	18
Eliminating Corruption	9	69.2	3	23.1	1	7.7	13
Accountable State	17	56.7	7	23.3	6	20.00	30
Independent Institutions & Public Service Reform	6	50.00	1	8.3	5	41.7	12
Gender Equality	19	46.3	12	29.3	10	24.4	41
Foreign Affairs	0	0.00	0	0.00	15	100.00	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>77</b>		<b>40</b>		<b>49</b>		

### RULE OF LAW & JUDICIAL REFORM

- 274** The subsector on rule of law and judicial reform was mapped against SDG 2, SDG 5, SDG 9, SDG 10 and SDG 16. Linkages with targets of this subsector and the SDGs were recorded on 32 instances where 19 showed full alignment, 13 showed partial alignment and five had No Alignment.
- 275** All the targets in this subsector are aligned either fully or partially with SDG 16.3 (promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all). Some targets relating to judicial reform were also observed to be Fully Aligned with SDG 16.5 (substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms). The measures identified in the subsector for judicial reform were also mapped as Partially Aligned to SDG 10.3.
- 276** The subsector included actions to develop rehabilitation and integration facilities such as halfway houses, vocational training facilities targeting offenders, and upgrading existing detention facilities to international standards. These actions were mapped as Partially Aligned to SDG 9.1. The targets to increase the number of prisoners enrolled in rehabilitation programs and subsequently reintegrated back to society are Fully Aligned with SDG 10.4 (adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality).

## NATIONAL SECURITY & PUBLIC SAFETY

- 277** This subsector on national security and public safety shows alignment with SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 10, SDG 11 and SDG 16. There were 11 linkages noted between this subsector and the SDGs. Of these, seven instances showed full alignment, four showed partial alignment and seven had No Alignment. It is observed that this subsector has a reasonably good coverage across social, environmental and partnership related goals.
- 278** A central focus of the national security sector is to uphold the constitution and ensure the safety of all citizens while maintaining peace and stability. The actions and targets included in the subsector has a strong focus on reducing inequalities, linking closely with SDG 10.3. Strong alignment was also observed in terms of developing a trained cadre of security officials across the relevant organizations (fully aligned with SDG 4.4). This was also linked to SDG 16.5 relating to reducing corruption and bribery.
- 279** An additional alignment was highlighted between the national target set to decrease road accidents and fatalities and SDG 3.6, however, a mismatch between the temporal scales of these two targets was observed. This national target was also mapped as Fully Aligned against SDG 11.2.
- 280** The prioritization given by the sector to reducing discrimination against women is also observed (Partially Aligned to SDG 5.1). However, the lack of targets on increasing women in decision making levels within this sector (which is heavily male dominated) is noted as a major gap.
- 281** Strategy 1.2 of the subsector focus on increasing the ability of the Maldives National Defence Force to provide prompt and speedy first responder services in the event of a disaster and national emergencies. However, very limited alignment was observed between the subsector the all the planet goals. For instance, there were no references to protecting and managing marine and coastal ecosystems falling under the sovereignty of the country, or any reference to protecting Maldivian fish stock from illegal and unregulated fishing vessels (although this is being performed by the armed forces, the policy linkages are missing). There were some actions referring to developing a national emergency operations plan (together with the National Disaster Management Authority), conducting risk assessments and expanding emergency and first responder capacity. However, no targets were set for these actions.
- 282** The subsector has a dedicated policy relating to reducing violent extremism and terrorism activities. Some actions under this policy were mapped against SDG 16.1 (reducing all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere). The linkages with violent extremism and violence against women, early child marriages, anti-vaccination and trafficking was not touched.

## ELIMINATING CORRUPTION

- 283** The subsector on eliminating corruption shows linkages to only SDG 16. There were 13 linkages recorded. These had nine linkages that were Fully Aligned, three linkages that were Partially Aligned and one linkage without alignment.
- 284** The subsector on eliminating corruption builds on two main policies – one approaching corruption with zero tolerance and the other on increasing accountability, transparency and integrity of state institutions.
- 285** The SDG target that has the strongest alignment with this subsector is SDG 16.5 focusing on reducing corruption and bribery in all their forms. The subsector identifies a number of actions and targets to reduce corruption, including operationalizing a National Anti-Corruption Policy, strengthening anti-corruption laws, institutional development, streamlining the asset declaration system, protecting whistle-blowers, and reform of public finances and procurement. There are also provisions in the SAP to support investigations into corruptions, such as training investigation officers, enabling easier access to databases to support investigations, conducting risk assessments and forming oversight bodies in all public institutions. There were further actions included which focused on increasing awareness and targeted education on corruption prevention. These actions hold full and partial alignments with SDG 16.4 (reducing illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen recovery of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crimes).
- 286** The mapping revealed a gap in the possibility of corruption in national and regional development planning. Gaining illicit enrichment or benefits linked to development planning is an area of concern in the Maldives. These plans usually involve high amounts of public funds, foreign investment or aid, or private sector partnerships which may be misused (e.g. in land reclamation projects, infrastructure projects, utility projects such as water and sewerage systems, renewable energy etc). The potential threats of this to the natural environment has also not been considered. The Maldives is a recipient of multiple climate related funds. There is limited information about the fiduciary and integrity mechanisms applied to climate finance projects, or whether there is any oversight body to safeguard these funds against corruption. Moreover, there is limited clarity on how islands are prioritized for climate finance projects, or whether the benefits of these projects are equally distributed.

## ACCOUNTABLE STATE

- 287** Targets belonging to the accountable state subsector were mapped against SDG 5, SDG 10, SDG 11 and SDG 16. There were 19 linkages recorded. These were 17 linkages showing full alignment, seven linkages showing partial alignment and six showing no alignment.
- 288** The subsector focuses on strengthening the oversight function of the parliament, creating avenues for the public to hold the state accountable, strengthen public finance management, improve governance of state-owned enterprises, enable freedom of media and enhance transparency of political parties.

- 289** State accountability is an essential prerequisite for effective socio-economic development which helps reduce inequalities. The subsector contains ambitious targets to increase public participation in the parliamentary process through establishing mechanisms for public feedback and petition. These targets are Fully Aligned with SDG 11.3 and SDG 16.7. The subsector also ensures female representation in elected positions of political parties which will ensure female voice and agency in the political landscape, linking with SDG 10.3. Freedom of media is recognized as an important tool to hold the government accountable and to inform the public on state affairs. As such, the subsector includes targets to significantly reduce journalist intimidation and harm and improve the Press Freedom Index of the Maldives. These were mapped as Fully Aligned to SDG 16.10.
- 290** It was observed that the targets in the subsector could improve in terms of ambition for SDG 5.1 and 5.5. The actions and targets mapped against these SDG targets were associated with setting quotas for women in elected positions of political parties and SOE boards. On one hand, setting quotas for women in these key positions is an important affirmative action taken to increase women's participation and representation in the economic and political landscape. However, quotas may also lead to increased discrimination against women, especially if the females appointed to these positions lack relevant training and expertise. A number of gender related factors contribute to this. Division of roles men and women play in society is conditioned from a young age, with girls being taught at both home and schools to be more submissive while boys are encouraged to be outgoing and outspoken. Therefore, women are more reluctant to step into demanding public roles based on societal and family expectations and responsibilities, limited support network, or low confidence, despite being more academically qualified than their male counterparts. There needs to be conscious dismantling of these socially constructed gender roles in society as well as targeted interventions to increase women's exposure to skill development programmes and leadership training to undertake such roles, thereby contributing to state accountability.

## INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS & PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM

- 291** This subsector showed alignment only with SDG 16 with a total seven linkages. Of these, six were Fully Aligned and one was Partially Aligned. There were five linkages that showed No Alignment.
- 292** The subsector builds on two main policies. The first policy looks at ensuring the accountability of independent institutions while the second one focuses on creating a modern public administration system. Under the first policy, the subsector aims to conduct audits for at least 70% of all independent institutions, enforce compliance mechanisms, strengthen training and improve public confidence in public service delivery by 25% compared with 2018 levels. These targets are Fully Aligned with SDG 16.6 (develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels). Another target focusing on using a centralized and integrated information management system was ranked as Partially Aligned to the same SDG target.

- 293** One weakness that was identified relates to the access to information. A Right to Information Act was formulated in 2014 but it contains clauses that institutions use for non-disclosure and delay in sharing information with the public. The subsector includes an action relating to the review of this act but has no corresponding target. It was therefore mapped for coverage, but not ambition.
- 294** Another weakness observed relates to the lack of targets for enacting a National Planning Act and National Statistics Act. These two pieces of legislation are crucial for a number of actions and targets in the SAP, as well as, streamline and strengthen development efforts to gear the country to achieve the SDGs. At present, there is no clarity regarding hierarchies and power relations between sectoral, national and local development plans. In the absence of a Planning Act, there is also no legal basis to ensure continuity of these plans despite change in government. This significant gap would likely challenge achieving SDG 11.a and SDG 17.18.

## GENDER EQUALITY

- 295** The subsector on gender equality links with SDG 1, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10 and SDG 16. A total of 31 linkages were recorded where 19 were Fully Aligned, 12 were Partially Aligned and 10 were not aligned.
- 296** The gender equality sector comprises of three main policies. The focus areas of these policies are increasing the role of women in social, economic and political decision making, addressing violence against women, and ensuring equal rights and economic empowerment of women.
- 297** Among the most notable features of the gender equality subsector is the commitment towards improving female representation at key decision-making levels of the public sphere. These include affirmative action to increase female representation in certain sectors such as the judiciary, reviewing current legislative framework, electoral quotas for local councils, capacity building and creating conducive environments for equal participation. These ambitious targets are Partially Aligned with SDG 5.1 (end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere), and Fully Aligned with SDG 5.5 (ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life), SDG 5.c (adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels), SDG 10.2 (By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status), and SDG 10.3 (Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard).
- 298** However, the presence of gender egalitarian laws alone will not be sufficient to achieve gender equality or increase the role of women in the public sphere. The barriers that prevent women from taking part in social, economic and political affairs are often socially constructed and they vary between different localities and among women from

different socio-economic backgrounds. Distribution of gender roles are deeply rooted in societies. Although a shift towards more equality in terms of access to education, health, employment and distribution of childcare work is observed among younger generations, available data shows that women bear twice the amount of domestic and childcare responsibilities compared with their male partners. This significantly restricts the time available for women to engage in public life, and even more so, if it requires inter island travel.

- 299** The SAP identifies a number of actions to end all forms of violence against women, both in the private and public sphere. There are actions relating to setting up a helpline for domestic violence victims, developing shelters for victims, formulating SOPs, strengthening health sector responses, providing financial support through an emergency fund and improving monitoring. The corresponding targets to these actions relate with SDG 16.1 (significantly reduce all forms of violence and related deaths everywhere). The reference made to building shelters link partially with SDG 9.1, although the accessibility of these shelters to all victims across the country is questionable. It is also noted that the majority of the actions outlined in the SAP refer to foundational work required (building shelters, help line, developing SOPs). It is likely that these mechanisms would take years to institutionalize and if so, the visions set forth in the SDGs on ‘eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres’ (SDG 5.2) is unlikely.
- 300** There are no set targets to end exploitation or trafficking (which links with SDG 16.2), although there is one action related to data collection. The rights of female migrant workers are also not mentioned in the SAP except for one reference in the health subsector on ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services to foreign workers (action 1.5b). This is also noted as a weakness.
- 301** Economic empowerment is an important strategy to reduce inequalities and empower women. The SAP dedicates a number of actions to stimulate economic participation of women. These includes setting targets for female workers in the tourism sector (Fully Aligned to SDG 8.3, SDG 9.2) ensuring at least 50% of entrepreneurship trainees at business development centres are women (linking to SDG 1.b, SDG 5.a, SDG 8.3, SDG 9.2 and SDG14.1) and establishing subsidized day care centres (Partially Aligned to SDG 5.4 and SDG 9.2).
- 302** A noted gap with regards to economic empowerment, however, is the accessibility and affordability of transport services. The transport sector does identify addressing the needs of women (among other vulnerable groups) but not specifically for workers. Additionally, access reliable and affordable to transport would also be critical for small scale entrepreneurs to integrate into value chains and markets (as envisioned under SDG 9.3 and SDG 11.2).
- 303** Similarly, the availability of separate onsite accommodation facilities for female tourism workers is also missing. The tourism subsector includes a reference to developing standards for onsite accommodation facilities to ‘protect and safeguard the rights, privacy and dignity of employees. It is recommended that female employees are specifically mentioned under this action.

- 304** From a social perspective, the SAP includes a number of actions on strengthening health sector response to sexual harassment, domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence. However, without a corresponding target, the ambition level of these actions to the SDGs could not be measured. In education and training, the gender equality subsector includes one reference on conducting gender sensitive training programs for female entrepreneurs to improve their bookkeeping, financial record management and business management (this was mapped as Partially Aligned with SDG 4.3). However, it is important to consider expanding female representation on all training programs, including vocation and technical training, so that women's economic opportunities are spread across more sectors, and gender disparities in higher education and training are eliminated.
- 305** The gender equality subsector had no reference to ending early and forced child marriages and female genital mutilation. The 2014 census reported 106 child married among children aged between 15-17 years.<sup>25</sup> Though relatively a small number, this is an area that needs attention.
- 306** There were also no linkages between the gender equality subsector with any of the environment related SDGs. Women play an important role in natural resource management in the Maldives, and also depend heavily on them for their livelihoods. There were also no references to increasing women in utility sectors which can be a potential employment source for women who have mobility restrictions linked with domestic responsibilities.

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

- 307** The foreign affairs subsector shows linkages with SDG 2, SDG 8, SDG 11, SDG 16 and SDG 17. There were only 15 linkages mapped. However, none of these showed any alignment with their corresponding SDGs.
- 308** The foreign affairs subsector is the only subsector without any policy targets, most likely due to the sensitive nature of foreign policy. The absence of policy targets disabled measurement of ambition levels between the subsector and the SDGs and therefore the mapping of this subsector was limited to the coverage level. In this regard, the foreign affairs subsector had linkages with the following SDG targets.
- SDG 2.a: Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries
  - SDG 8.7: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms
  - SDG 11.4: Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage

<sup>25</sup> NBS and UNICEF. 2014. Children in Maldives. Analysis of children of the Maldives from Census 2014. Malé. p. 18

- SDG 11.5: By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations
- SDG 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
- SDG 16.8: Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance
- SDG 17.1: Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection
- SDG 17.3: Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources
- SDG 17.9: Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the Sustainable Development Goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation
- SDG 17.11: Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020
- SDG 17.16: Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries
- SDG 17.17: Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships

# Reflections on the mapping of global SDG indicators against the SAP

**309** The mapping exercise pursued identification of SDG indicators that showed similarities with the mapped SAP targets. This has three potential benefits. First, the analysis is strengthened through the indicator mapping exercise. Second, it complements the work being currently carried out by the NBS in identifying relevant indicators at sectoral level for inclusion in the NSDS which would in turn support the SDG Division in MoNPHI for SDG monitoring and reporting. Third, it would help integrate data collection in terms of streamlining definitions and collection methodologies thereby reducing data duplication and double reporting.

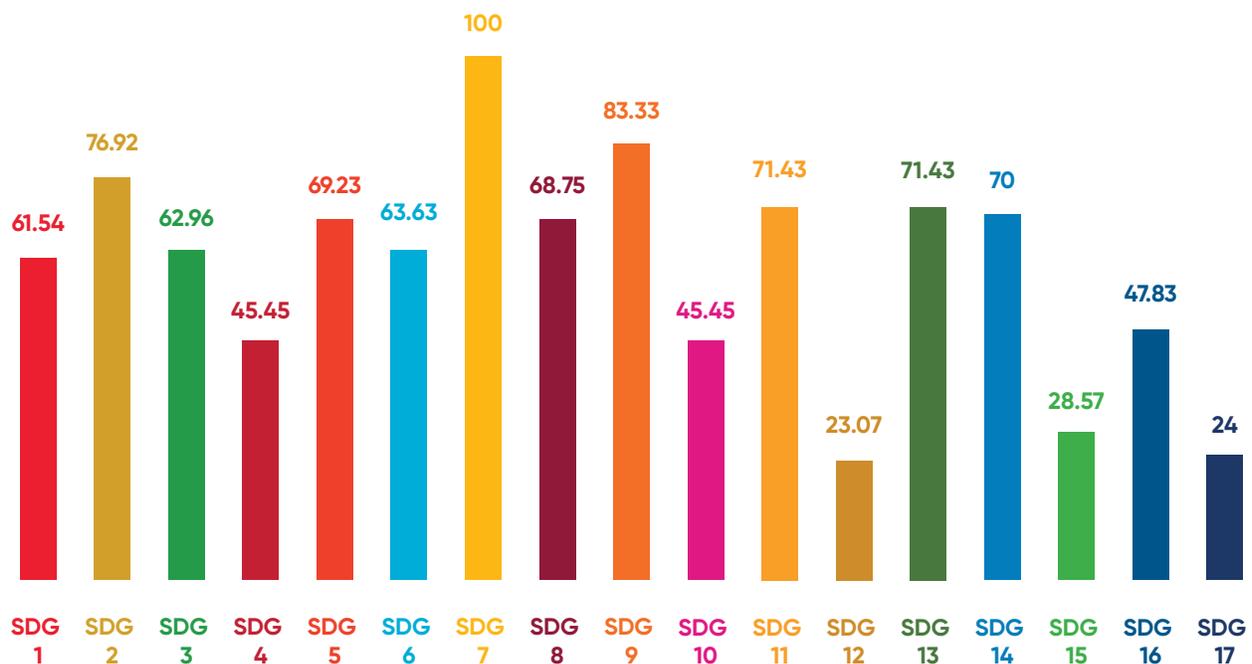


Figure 10: Alignment between global SDG indicators and mapped SAP targets

**310** Analysis of the indicator mapping component shows strong correlation between SAP targets and SDG indicators. Approximately six SDGs have indicators that have a minimum 70% correlation with SAP targets. The SDG with the highest correlation is Goal 7 (access to energy) with 100% inclusion and the weakest goal is SDG 12 (sustainable consumption and production) with 23.07% correlation.

- 311** On a number of instances, SAP actions demonstrated strong linkages with the global indicators, however, lacked a corresponding SAP target which resulted in these not being reflected in the mapping matrix. For instance, Action 2.2a of the Independent Institutions and Public Service Reform subsector is “Draft and enact a National Planning Act and National Statistics Act to institutionalize all planning processes of the state including national and local planning, sectoral and organizational planning, and implement the National Strategy for Development of Statistics to provide data for evidence-based decisions” and this action was mapped against SDG 17.8 relating to ‘data, monitoring and accountability’. One of the global indicators for SDG 17.8 is “Number of countries that have national statistical legislation that complies with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics”. The strong linkages between the said SAP action and the global target is clearly evident, but it was not included in the mapping matrix due to unavailability of a corresponding SAP target. It is highly recommended that NBS reviews the mapped global indicators mapped through this exercise, particularly to those instances where no corresponding SAP have been identified. The table provided under Annex IV can be used to guide this process.
- 312** This exercise also provided an opportunity to explore if any of the mapped global indicators can be utilized for reporting on both the SDGs and the SAP. A few considerations are noted here. First and foremost, there needs to be a national SDG localization and prioritization exercise led by the SDG National Coordinator (MoNPHI). A potential avenue to visit this is the sector level workshops conducted to formulate the NSDS or this could follow the MAPS mission being planned by the United Nations Systems for late 2020. Next, it is important to ensure that the respective sectors to adopt those indicators relevant to their respective sector based on the outcome of the localization and prioritization exercises. A common understanding must also be reached on the definitions and methods utilized to collect sector level data which is streamlined with the definitions used in the global indicators. For this, the SDG National Coordinator and the NBS is recommended to work closely with the PO and the respective implementing agencies to integrate common definitions and methodologies.
- 313** The Assessment of Gender Statistics in the Maldives identified 53 gender specific SDG indicators where data is available in the Maldives.<sup>26</sup> The assessment reports that the goals with the best coverage in terms of number of indicators that can be produced are on SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). Goal 5 is also where the biggest gaps were noted.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> NBS. 2020. Assessment of Gender Statistics in the Maldives. Malé. Available at [<http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/nbs/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Assessment-of-Gender-Statistics-in-the-Maldives.pdf>]

<sup>27</sup> Missing indicators for Maldives under SDG 5 are 5.1.1, 5.2.2, 5.6.2, 5.a.1, 5.a.2, 5.c.1.

Table 8: Summary of global SDG indicators mapped against the SAP

	INDICATORS COVERED IN SAP	INDICATORS MISSING IN SAP	%
	1.3.1, 1.4.1, 1.5.1, 1.5.3, 1.5.4, 1.a.1, 1.a.3, 1.b.1	1.1.1, 1.2.1, 1.4.2, 1.5.2, 1.a.2	61.54
	2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.4.1, 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.b.1	2.a.1, 2.a.2, 2.c.1	76.92
	3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.3.3, 3.3.4, 3.3.5, 3.4.1, 3.4.2, 3.5.1, 3.6.1, 3.8.1, 3.8.2, 3.9.1, 3.9.2, 3.c.1, 3.d.1	3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.5.2, 3.7.1, 3.7.2, 3.9.3, 3.a.1, 3.b.1, 3.b.2, 3.b.3	62.96
	4.3.1, 4.4.1, 4.5.1, 4.7.1, 4.a.1	4.1.1, 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.6.1, 4.b.1, 4.c.1	45.45
	5.1.1, 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.4.1, 5.5.1, 5.5.2, 5.6.2, 5.a.1 (a), 5.c.1	5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.a.2, 5.b.1	69.23
	6.1.1, 6.2.1, 6.3.1, 6.3.2, 6.5.1, 6.6.1, 6.b.1	6.4.1, 6.4.2, 6.5.2, 6.a.1	63.63
	7.1.1, 7.1.2, 7.2.1, 7.3.1, 7.a.1, 7.b.1	nil	100
	8.1.1, 8.2.1, 8.3.1, 8.5.1, 8.5.2, 8.6.1, 8.8.1, 8.8.2, 8.9.1, 8.10.1, 8.10.2	8.4.1, 8.4.2, 8.7.1, 8.9.2, 8.a.1	68.75
	9.1.1, 9.1.2, 9.2.1, 9.3.1, 9.3.2, 9.4.1, 9.5.1, 9.5.2, 9.a.1, 9.b.1	9.2.2, 9.c.1	83.33
	10.1.1, 10.4.1, 10.7.1, 10.7.2, 10.b.1	10.2.1, 10.3.1, 10.5.1, 10.6.1, 10.a.1, 10.c.1	45.45
	11.1.1, 11.2.1, 11.3.2, 11.4.1, 11.5.1, 11.6.1, 11.6.2, 11.7.1, 11.a.1, 11.b.2	11.3.1, 11.5.2, 11.7.2, 11.c.1	71.43
	12.2.2, 12.5.1, 12.8.1	12.1.1, 12.2.1, 12.3.1, 12.4.1, 12.4.2, 12.6.1, 12.7.1, 12.a.1, 12.b.1, 12.c.1	23.07
	13.1.2, 13.1.3, 13.2.1, 13.3.2, 13.a.1	13.1.1, 13.b.1	71.43
	14.1.1, 14.2.1, 14.4.1, 14.5.1, 14.7.1, 14.a.1, 14.b.1	14.3.1, 14.6.1, 14.c.1	70
	15.1.2, 15.2.1, 15.3.1, 15.9.1	15.1.1, 15.4.1, 15.4.2, 15.5.1, 15.6.1, 15.7.1, 15.8.1, 15.a.1, 15.b.1, 15.c.1	28.57
	16.1.1, 16.1.2, 16.1.3, 16.3.1, 16.3.2, 16.5.1, 16.5.2, 16.6.1, 16.6.2, 16.7.2, 16.10.1	16.1.4, 16.2.1, 16.2.2, 16.2.3, 16.4.1, 16.4.2, 16.7.1, 16.8.1, 16.9.1, 16.10.2, 16.a.1, 16.b.1	47.83
	17.1.1, 17.1.2, 17.3.1, 17.9.1, 17.14.1, 17.17.1	17.2.1, 17.3.2, 17.4.1, 17.5.1, 17.6.1, 17.6.2, 17.7.1, 17.8.1, 17.10.1, 17.11.1, 17.12.1, 17.13.1, 17.15.1, 17.16.1, 17.18.1, 18.18.2, 17.18.3, 17.19.1, 17.19.2	24

# Impact of COVID-19 on the SDGs and navigating the new normal

- 314** The outbreak of COVID-19 global pandemic has had a paralytic effect on societies and economies world-wide, attacking social systems at their very core, disrupted economies and exposed structural fragilities and fundamental weaknesses in global and national systems. What began as a health crisis rapidly escalated into a global economic, social and humanitarian crisis in a matter of few months. From an environmental perspective, decline in global travel and production levels have been linked with temporary reductions in greenhouse gas emission leading to improved air and water quality but led to the significant increase in pandemic related waste (Eroğlu 2020, Lokhandwala & Gautam 2020, UNDP 2020, Zowalaty, Young & Järhult 2020).
- 315** The true impact of COVID-19 on global economic and social systems is yet to be determined, but it is widely accepted that the pandemic will reverse years of development progress made by countries. It will deepen pre-existing vulnerabilities, more so in highly marginalized groups, such as women, elderly, children and adolescents, youth, those in specific type of economic work, migrant workers and people who are already living in poverty. It puts strong imperative on governments to put in motion both immediate and long-term policy responses that would enable the recovery process to follow a sustainable and equitable trajectory.
- 316** As the ministries and institutions under the GoM are assessing recovery planning strategies, planners and policy makers are confronted with three main questions; (i) Where do we stand now? (ii) Do we want to go back to the pre-pandemic world or to one that is more equitable and sustainable? (iii) What needs to change for us to get there?
- 317** COVID-19 recovery planning offers the Maldives an opportunity to reset (or completely rehaul) existing mechanisms and approaches to development. This critical timing can be used to envision a more equitable and just world where citizens can enjoy access to basic services, lead a dignified life, have stronger economic and social security, and live sustainably with their natural surroundings. This is the vision set forth in the Sustainable Development Goals or the SDGs.
- 318** The SDGs build on the interlinkages between economic, social and environmental dimensions of development thereby providing a holistic framework to shape national recovery efforts. The benefits of considering the SDGs as a guidance framework for recovery planning include:
- In the absence of a long-term national development plan, the SDGs provide a vision that is globally recognized and accepted.
  - The SDGs provide a systematic and holistic framework that encompasses the three key elements of sustainable development; the economic, social and environment.
  - Recovery from COVID-19 would be complex and non-linear. Considering the three elements (social, economic and environmental) together is important to ensure the country do not move from one crisis to another.

- The SDGs provide guidance to multiple stakeholders to achieve a common goal which could potentially help reduce existing silos between key sectors.
- The SDGs offer assurance on inclusivity, equality and prevention of people from backsliding into poverty.
- Responses to this pandemic must be universal. Without international cooperation, responses and recovery efforts are likely to be futile. The SDGs provide a renewed opportunity for countries to gather behind a common vision to build back better.

**319** **SDG 1: There is increased likelihood of reversing years of progress made towards eliminating poverty.** The Maldives made significant achievements in reducing poverty between 2006 and 2016/17. However, almost a third of the total population are still multi-dimensionally poor (28% of the total population).<sup>28</sup> With 34% of children aged 17 years or younger living in a poor household, children are more likely to be poor than any other age group. The preliminary livelihood impact assessment report by the GoM and UNDP show that 22,000 payroll workers from tourism establishments have been adversely impacted directly from COVID-19 (MoED & UNDP 2020). The full report, published in August 2020, states that employees working in the tourism sector was the hardest hit. Approximately 54% of the complaints lodged at the JobCentre Portal was by tourist sector employees. Among these, the majority were younger employees in their probationary period. Looking at occupation groups, the highest number of redundancies and complete income loss were reported by service and sales employees.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, most of these were women. The HIES 2019 shows that over 44% of informal workers are women. These workers are more likely to face disproportionate impacts, especially in the absence of a strong social protection nets. There is high possibility of people backsliding into poverty or create new groups of poor people. Young women who are pushed out of the labour force may likely not return. Similarly, the impact of COVID-19 related employment or income loss for migrant workers is not clear. In this regard, the Maldives need to define and locate the most marginalized groups. Databases across the country needs unification. These groups require direct provisions to cushion the impacts of income loss, insurance and access to services.

**320** **SDG 2: COVID-19 has demonstrated the country's extreme vulnerability in terms of food security.** With over 90% of food being imported, the Maldives must gear towards strengthening local food production, strengthening supply and distribution chains, improve storage and creating awareness around subsistence/urban farming and reducing food wastage. Food prices need to be regulated to ensure people are able to afford nutritious food throughout. The SAP does not contain strategies to reduce food waste which is an important gap that needs to be addressed. Another area that requires attention is use of innovative and climate smart methods for farming.

**SDG 3: Despite the strong health indicators, the Maldives health system is still fundamentally weak.** While the overall health responses to the COVID-19 pandemic by

<sup>28</sup> Multidimensional poverty was determined using the following indicators: overcrowding, access to health care, years of schooling, access to adequate sewage/toilet systems, access to safe drinking water.

<sup>29</sup> JobCentre is an online employment portal maintained by the Ministry of Economic Development.

the Maldives was commendable, notable gaps were apparent. The tiered health system designed around the geographic profile of the country necessitates inter-island travel to access health care services beyond primary care. The nationwide travel restrictions and ban to enter Greater Malé Region prevented a number of non-COVID patients from accessing health facilities. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) remain the main reason for mortality and these are believed to aggravate the severity of patients contracting COVID-19. The pandemic also restricted access to maternal and reproductive health services to a great extent. The sustainability of health financing is also at risk as government expenditure on healthcare is greatly inflated in responding to COVID-19.

**321 SDG 4: The disruptions to the education systems is likely to have long-term impacts.**

The pandemic is believed to have a serious impact on the education sector, although the extent of which is yet to be determined. With the temporary closure of schools, shift to digital learning methods and overall reluctance of parents to send their children back to school, the education system is struggling with novel challenges to provide inclusive and quality education. Accessibility is also an issue in distant learning. Children with special needs are excluded, and children coming from poorer households are unlikely to have gadgets, internet connectivity and space for learning within their homes. Vocational education and skill trainings have been disrupted impeding development of human capital crucial for growth. There is potential to re-direct young employees made redundant from COVID-19 towards academic and skill development programmes during this time.

**322 SDG 5: Early evidence suggests women are disproportionately affected by the pandemic.**

While both men and women have been affected by the pandemic, global evidence shows that women have had differentiated and in many cases, harder impact resulting from the pandemic outbreak. Available data from Maldives shows women are more likely to bear responsibilities on household chores, childcare and take on additional burdens linked with the pandemic such as disinfecting groceries and household items and facilitating home based learning of younger children.<sup>30</sup> This will further constrict time available for women to engage in economic and productive work or tend to their physical and mental well-being. Further, results from the joint livelihood impact assessment by the Government and UNDP indicated that more women lost their jobs compared to men, and many of the females who exited the labour force may likely never return. The number of pregnancies and births in the country are also expected to increase linking to the mobility restrictions and lockdown measures.<sup>31</sup> This may further limit immediate and future participation of women in economic work and in the labour force. The pandemic has also aggravated incidences of domestic violence. In a recent survey<sup>32</sup>, 17% of respondents reported having ‘serious concerns’ about domestic violence and one of six of these respondents reported knowing cases of domestic violence that happened within the week of reporting.

<sup>30</sup> MNU and HPA. 2020. Study on socio-economic aspects of COVID-19 in the Maldives.

<sup>31</sup> UNFPA. 2020. The impact of COVID-19 on maternal health and family planning in Maldives. p. 4

<sup>32</sup> MNU and HPA. 2020. Study on socio-economic aspects of COVID-19 in the Maldives.

- 323 SDG 6: Accessibility and affordability of safe water is imperative for diseases prevention.** The 2016/17 Demographic and Health Survey reports 98% of the households have access to soap, water and essential hand washing items. It is unclear, whether the sampling of the DHS included labour quarters where the disease is known to have spread more rapidly. At present only 21 out of 187 islands have access to safe piped water<sup>33</sup> but 73% of the households is connected to an adequate sanitation system.<sup>34</sup> Expediting the policies in the SAP to provide universal access to safe water and sanitation needs prioritization, but also concomitant measures to improve technical capacity and governance of the water sector are equally important. A Water and Sanitation Act was recently passed by the Parliament which is likely to address a number of these issues. It is also imperative to ensure availability of WASH facilities in all schools across the country.
- 324 SDG 7: Global economic slowdown has brought down oil prices to an all-time low – but this should not mean that our renewable energy targets should be relaxed.** Nor should there be a halt on incentivizing private sector expansion into the RE sector. Recovery planning should focus on maximizing green growth.
- 325 SDG 8: The Maldivian economy is among the hardest hit globally due to overreliance on tourism, however, recovery is expected to be strong.** The Asian Development Bank (2020) predicts an 11.3% contraction in the Maldivian economy as a direct result of this pandemic. However, it also predicts a strong recovery with a rebound growth of 13.7% attributed to high end tourism. The recovery of guesthouse tourism is predicted to be slower and these establishments would require more targeted interventions and support. Similar support will be required by SMEs, particularly those led by female entrepreneurs. The need for Maldives to diversify its economy is clearly evident.
- 326 SDG 9: The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated capacity and adaptability of local businesses and public service entities to accelerate use of digital technology.** The Maldives is well positioned to embrace digital technology for health, education, trade, payments and governance. The pandemic has resulted in a dramatic shift towards contemporary ways of doing business and providing public services, and this needs to be accelerated further, whilst ensuring elements of accessibility, affordability, reliability and safety are met. ICT offers solutions to bridge the geographic divide and bring services closer to people. Internet prices, however, remain costly and bandwidth issues are often reported, particularly in outer islands. Digital literacy among older women in outer islands is also believed to be low, which may be a barrier for women to transition into the digital economy.
- 327 SDG 10: COVID-19 has created new forms of inequality.** Today, disparities exist between knowledge workers and manual workers, between those people and businesses who are able to easily shift to working remotely and those frontline workers. New forms of inequality also exist in the form of access to technology, or affordability of internet which has become a prerequisite to access basic services. While it is recognized that such inequalities would have a high impact on vulnerable groups (such as women, children, PWDs, migrant workers, youth), it must be recognized that different groups will have

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<sup>33</sup> MEE. 2017. National Water and Sewerage Policy.

<sup>34</sup> NBS. 2019. Household Income and Expenditure Survey.

differentiated impacts, and there will be certain individuals within a homogenous group that are more vulnerable than others. Updated data on inequalities is important. Fiscal stimulus is essential to these groups. These can be cash transfers, unemployment benefits, safety nets etc. The design of these require careful thought to ensure that these incentives are targeted at the people who need it the most. For instance, it is very likely that an older female entrepreneur living on an island is unaware of the income support provided through the Government, or how to access it using the Job Center portal. Such workers need to be reached proactively through existing mechanisms, such as the local councils or the newly formed community social groups in the islands. Another form of inequality may stem from access to health insurance. Empirical evidence suggests that most expatriate labourers have limited access to health insurance which discourages them from seeking health services despite the establishment of flu clinics and targeted awareness messaging in multiple languages. Illegal migrants, or those without adequate paperwork, is also believed to avoid seeking medical services in fear of deportation.

- 328 SDG 11: People living in highly congested urban areas are more vulnerable to exposure.** This has been demonstrated clearly in the case of Malé where in the early weeks of the pandemic over 50% of positive cases were from highly congested labour quarters.<sup>35</sup> It is likely that many more expatriate workers in these places have had the disease and recovered but is not reflected in the official statistics on the basis of not being officially tested. As people navigate the ‘new normal’, the lack of space will create challenges to maintain social distancing or provide adequate public areas for people seeking recreation and physical activities. Recovery planning must seek to address these issues.
- 329 SDG 12: The sharp increase in home-deliveries and take-away food items have visibly increased the amount of waste being produced.** With the lack of data, it is difficult to measure the volume of waste generated over the past few months and compare it with pre-pandemic times. However, empirical evidence suggests a sharp increase in single-use plastic, paper cups/plates, Styrofoam containers and disposable protective equipment. Public littering has escalated after temporary closure of eateries, imposing risk of infection. Many island waste management facilities lack adequate machinery for disinfection, or space for separation of hazardous waste.
- 330 SDG 13 - 15: The only positive aspect of the COVID-19 pandemic is the slow-down of human pressure on environmental resources.** Halt on global economic activity and transport have temporarily lowered GHG emissions and reduced stresses on the marine and terrestrial life. However, this should not be a basis to reduce environmental safeguards that are in place to protect these natural resources during the process of recovery planning.

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<sup>35</sup> The number of positive cases during early stages on lockdown (April – June) were significantly higher among expatriate labourers who were often forced to live in highly congested quarters. Following ease of lockdown restrictions, the number of Maldivians who tested positive spiked.

- 331 SDG 16: There is increased pressure on governments to mitigate the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19.** Meeting these demands is extremely complex given the reduction in government revenue, deepened budget deficit and overall weak capacity of the civil service. Several systematic dysfunctionalities have also been identified during this time, triggering public scrutiny and discontentment. These issues mainly stem from institutional weaknesses and high degree of silos within sectors. There is also a high chance for peace disruption as workers frustration on payment delays escalate. Any hindrances to establish rule of law needs to be considered and proactively addressed.
- 332 SDG 17: Responding and recovering from COVID-19 requires coordinated action among multi-sector partners and actors.** The Government's policy responses to the pandemic would require adequate fiscal space which is increasingly narrowed through loss of revenue and increased public spending. The global scale of the pandemic is likely to reduce the amount of international aid that is channeled for development of poorer countries. The focus of major donors and development partners have rapidly shifted towards post-COVID recovery efforts. The World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the United Nations are currently in the process of formulating their country programmes/strategies/framework for the Maldives and this provides a good opportunity to align the national needs with the global aid agenda.

# Moving Forward: Next steps and recommendations

**333** Based on the above discussions, a five-step approach and a possible workflow diagram is proposed on moving forward (Figure 11).

<b>LOCALIZE</b>	Localize the SDGs to the national and subnational context.
<b>PRIORITIZE</b>	Assess where the country is in terms of available resources and identify national priorities from the SAP and the SDGs.
<b>SYSTEMS APPROACH</b>	Use the SDGs as a framework to guide national recovery efforts that is holistic and systematic.
<b>DATA</b>	Integrate data to streamline definitions, methodologies and reduce duplication and double reporting.
<b>ALIGN</b>	Align the local development plans and development partner support with the prioritized and localized SDGs.

Figure 11: Recommended five step approach

**334 Step One - Localize the SDGs identified in the priority exercise:** The SDG targets need to be localized to reflect the national realities and specific local context. A localization exercise led by the MoNPHI in partnership with the United Nations System in the Maldives needs to be conducted. This exercise will require extensive coordination and dialogue between multiple stakeholders including government ministries, agencies, state owned enterprises, civil society groups, and the private sector. Local governments will play a crucial role in identifying specific local contexts that need to be considered.

**335 Step two: Conduct a prioritization exercise:** Impediments caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on achieving the targets identified in the SAP and similarly those agreed through international commitments forces the Government to carefully assess the current situation and make coordinated, decisive and innovative policy responses. **Recovery planning must therefore identify national priorities that would receive focus and finance over the remaining period of the SAP and the SDGs.** In doing so, it is critical to identify which SDGs are likely to have accelerated effects on multiple other goals and targets, while minimizing tradeoffs. The United Nations is organizing a MAPS mission in late 2020 which will help in the prioritization and localization exercises.

- 336 Step Three: Use a systems approach:** The SDGs offer a holistic and integrated approach that entails social, economic and environmental elements of development. Decisions made now are likely to have a long-lasting impact on the development trajectory of the Maldives. The benefits of adopting the SDGs to guide national recovery planning process has been discussed earlier in this brief. This recognition needs to be embedded into sector level response planning being conducted at present.
- 337 Step Four: Integrate data to streamline definitions, methodologies and reduce duplication and double reporting:** The exercise mapped 134 of the global indicators which could potentially be used for reporting on corresponding SAP targets. Consultations with the relative departments of the government revealed that definitions and methodologies used for data collection by the implementing agencies sometimes varied with global definitions. There needs to be integration of data to streamline definitions and collection methods to reduce duplication and double reporting.
- 338 Step Five: Align local development plans and development partner support with the prioritized and localized SDGs:** Synergizing the local development plans with the sector and national plans is crucial to ensure policy coherence and coordinated effort towards a common vision. Local council elections would likely be held in early 2021, following which a new local development planning cycle will take place. It is important to sensitize civil servants in the local councils with the SDGs and also carry out similar awareness sessions for political parties and contesting candidates. Similarly, there needs to be alignment between country programme frameworks formulated by development partners with the revised national priorities.

## Specific Recommendations

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

- Ensure and advocate Government's commitment to achieving the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, providing support to the functions within the Government identified to lead on the SDGs. Ensure adequate funding for the NBS and MoNPHI for nationalising the SDGs and ensuring an effective monitoring and annual reporting process.
- Conduct strategic level discussions of the SAP targets and corresponding SDG targets that needs prioritization following the current and anticipated social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Work with the development partners to align their country programme strategies with the national priorities identified from the strategic level discussions held based on the findings of this assessment.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> All these partners in the process of formulating their respective country programme strategies/frameworks at the time of writing this report.

- Utilize the findings of this assessment to guide the mid-term review process of the SAP. Specifically, identify the missing gaps and work with the relevant sectors to formulate strategies and set targets to address these issues.
- Coordinate with NBS to integrate common indicators mapped through this exercise into the SAP Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.
- Formulate a list of definitions of terminologies included in the SAP to ensure coherence with international and national definitions and guide the SDG localization process.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NBS

- Support the MoNPHI in conducting SDG localization exercise at both national and subnational level.
- Localize the SDG indicators and targets for the Maldives and ensure an SDG based framework is in place for monitoring and annual progress reporting.
- Review the global SDG indicators mapped in this exercise to identify those that can be utilized for SAP target monitoring.
- Coordinate with President's Office to integrate common indicators into the SAP Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.
- Engage with all relevant sectors to streamline definitions and collection methodologies for indicators with the aim of better integration and reduce double reporting burden.
- Continue advocating and collaborating with the relevant authorities to ensure enactment of the Statistical Act.
- Support the PO in formulating a list of definitions of terminologies included in the SAP whilst ensuring coherence with international and national definitions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MINISTRY OF NATIONAL PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Expedite the SDG localization and prioritization process, in partnership with the United Nations, to identify the relevant national and subnational context for the Maldives.
- Collaborate with relevant government ministries/agencies to review and realign national and local targets in line with the SDG localization and prioritization exercises.
- Support the PO in formulating a list of definitions of terminologies included in the SAP whilst ensuring coherence with international and national definitions.
- Collaborate with the NBS to formulate mechanism to consolidate annual data for SDG country reporting.

- Develop a country report on SDG implementation to identify what have been achieved and what further needs to be done to ensure timely achievement of the SDGs.
- Mainstream the prioritized SDGs into all development planning processes including local development planning. This would require close collaboration with the Local Government Authority.
- Expedite effective implementation of the SDG Communications Strategy to increase awareness among sectors and local government bodies. Explore innovative electronic mediums to carry out targeted awareness sessions to overcome restrictions on physical gathering and mobility.
- Conduct regular systematic reviews of national progress on SDG implementation through available data and information.
- Continue efforts for the articulation of a longer-term national development plan through to 2030, taking into account the SDG framework.
- Collaborate with the relevant authorities to ensure enactment of the Planning Act. This is critical to ensure policy coherence between national, sector and local level plans, recognize hierarchies and ensure continuity of planning efforts.
- Review the draft National Spatial Plan to identify gaps highlighted in this assessment and ensure the social and environmental angles have also been covered.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

- Support the UN Maldives in the strategic efforts to further the 2030 Agenda in the Maldives, including through the UNCT agreed MAPS engagement scheduled for late 2020. Support technical level discussions with key government partners to identify revised national priorities and assist in the formulation of recovery plans as part of the Government, and UN Maldives defined response plans.
- Provide technical assistance to the NBS in the execution of the SDG localization process following the prioritization exercise undertaken by the government with UN Maldives.
- Provide technical assistance in identifying areas where data collection can be strengthened or integrated.
- Extend technical support to the Local Government Authority to mainstream SDGs into the local development planning cycle in 2020/21 and build local capacity to facilitate implementation.
- As part of a consolidated UN system-wide strategy, support the government in increasing SDG awareness among targeted groups.

## AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION DURING THE COVID-19 RECOVERY PLANNING PROCESS

- Define and locate the most socially and economically marginalized groups in light of COVID-19. Ensure direct provisions to cushion the impacts of income loss, insurance and access to services to these groups.
- Strengthen local food production through fortifying supply and distribution chains, improving storage and creating awareness around subsistence and urban farming and reducing food wastage.
- Address restrictions in accessing maternal and reproductive health services as a result of COVID-19 mobility limitations.
- Explore solutions to cater for the educational needs of children with special needs.
- Redirect young employees who lost their jobs during COVID-19 towards academic and skill development programmes.
- Strengthen helplines established to cater for GBV and DV victims and individuals suffering from mental health issues.
- Ensure continuity in the provision of contraceptives and family planning services.
- Expedite the establishment of WASH facilities in schools and other public buildings before reopening.
- Establish a system for informal workers (especially women) to register with the government. The Business Development Centers can be one possible avenue for registration.
- Extend support to SMEs transitioning to digital economic models.
- Ensure health insurance and access to basic health care services to migrant workers and illegal workers during the pandemic.
- Equip waste management centers to effectively and safely manage the incoming volume of COVID-19 related waste.

# Limitations and Gaps

- 339 Mapping of the coverage was done using a manual keyword searches in the SAP document increasing the risk of human error.** This could mean that some actions might have been overlooked as it did not contain the keywords elected for the search. A number of strategies was employed to reduce potential errors. First, the key word search was not only limited to the action level. Rather, the policies and strategies were also considered as the SAP builds on three layers of directives which complement each other. This is important because sometimes SAP action points did not contain the exact phrasing as that in the corresponding SDG target, but it may be reflected as a policy or a strategy. Second, as much as possible, technical terms that are frequently associated with each other or coined together were also searched in the SAP. For example, when mapping targets relating to ‘climate resilience’ the words ‘climate action’, ‘adaptation’ and ‘disaster risk reduction’ was also searched among other key climate change related terminologies. Third, different styles of writing were also searched. For example, the words ‘ecotourism’, ‘green tourism’ and ‘eco-tourism’ appear in the SAP under different sectors. As a final measure, the overall description or perceived intended outcomes of both the SDG target and the SAP actions were taken while taking into consideration the specific local context.
- 340 Rankings given might be heavily biased.** The method of determining ambition level relied heavily on the consultant’s own understanding and views regarding each target as there were no available guidance document on the specific national and subnational contexts (since SDG localization has not been done). A number of assumptions were made during the ranking process which were subjected to her own knowledge, bias and judgement. All assumptions were made in good faith with the underlying assumption that certain interventions would result in positive intended outcomes (for instance a targeted training for a certain vulnerable group would help them improve their livelihoods). To minimize this, the matrices were validated through all relevant sectors and the UN. Physical distancing restrictions enforced due to COVID-19 did not enable working sessions among sectors. However, written feedback was obtained from the sectors and were incorporated into the final matrix and report.<sup>37</sup>
- 341 Limitations were faced by the consultant in better understanding and aligning the targets due to a lack of SDG localisation, contextualisation and prioritisation information.** The Maldives has not conducted a localization process to date, and this has disabled taking into account the unique subnational contexts in the achievement of the 2030 agenda. A localization process would assist in supporting the government and their respective local and international development partners to understand the different realities under various subnational contexts and identify targeted interventions to address them. A localization process is also crucial for the involvement of local governments who would bear huge responsibilities in ensuring achieving the SDGs. Certain SDG targets are not relevant to the Maldivian context (example SDG 12.c). Localisation and contextualisation of SDG targets must take place with debate and discussion across multiple sectors and is unfortunately beyond the scope of this study. In the absence of

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<sup>37</sup> A list of sectors consulted during the validation process is included under Annex III

localized SDGs, the mapping exercise had to rely on a number of assumptions (based on the consultant's understanding and judgement) which may or may not hold true.

**342 The method used to determine 'level of ambition' is based on the availability of a corresponding SAP target.** There were many instances where the SAP actions had strong linkages with the corresponding SDG target but no corresponding SAP target. These were thus not considered while measuring the level of ambition. For example, SDG target 15.6 is "Promote fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and promote appropriate access to such resources, as internationally agreed". The corresponding SAP actions are actions 1.1o and 2.7b of the EPP subsector. The first action relates to having a regulatory framework on ownership, rights, access and benefit sharing of genetic resources, and the second one refers to formulating an inventory of genetic resources in the Maldives and collaborating with regional and international gene banks to safeguard local genetic diversity. If looking at the action level, it is Fully Aligned with the SDG target but unfortunately there was no corresponding SAP target in the EPP subsector which would enable measurement of ambition. In recognition of this limitation, all such actions that hold strong linkages with SDG targets have been tabulated under Annex IV.

**343 The mapping exercise coincided with ill timing as Male' City was placed under lockdown due to community spread of the COVID-19.** This disabled collaboration plans that were made between the consultant, the NBS and the SDG Division while conducting the mapping. It also disrupted plans to multi-sector working sessions to validate the findings.

**344 Temporal scales of the SDG and SAP vary significantly, making accurate determination of ambition between the two difficult.** The SAP is a policy guidance document spanning over a five-year period built mainly on presidential pledges and a joint coalition manifesto. It also includes other international commitments (e.g. commitments under the Sendai Framework). The time scales within SAP vary greatly depending on whether the policy is linked to political pledges or international commitments. The SDGs, on the other hand, is a long-term development agenda. Differences in the temporal scales between the SAP and SDG challenged the mapping process to a certain extent.

**345 Differences in scope between the SAP and SDGs challenged accurate analysis.** For example, only specific economic sectors were included in the Blue Economy Sector and excluded a number of industries (e.g. construction) that would impact SDG implementation. The concise focus of the Blue Economy Sector disabled portraying the macroeconomic context accurately.

**346 Differences in definitions between the SAP and SDG is likely and this may lead to inconsistencies in the result of the mapping.** Certain terminologies such as 'vulnerable groups' or 'poor' is observed to have been used differently in the SAP compared to how it was used in the SDGs. There are other terminologies such as 'junior colleges' which in manifesto based and needs more clarity into what these are and how they differ from other education establishments identified in the document. The SAP does not have a list of definitions, but it is assumed that the standard international definitions have been applied. For instance, the word 'poor' and 'poverty' does not appear in any of the SAP

subsectors, but it contains several actions aimed at reducing inequalities between groups of people and improving livelihoods of the citizens. It is unclear which criteria constitutes 'poor'. Similarly, the SDG refers to the 'bottom 40% of the population' which has not been identified locally. Without these, a number of assumptions had to be employed while conducting the mapping.

- 347** During the mapping exercise, SDG 17 was observed as having the highest number of targets that were not aligned with the SAP. Goal 17 focuses on strengthening means of implementation to revitalize global partnership for sustainable development. A total of 64 targets were recorded as having 'No Alignment' which attributes to 72% of the total targets that were mapped. This may be due to a number of reasons. Goal 17, unlike all other SDGs, contains policy goals that are intended to support countries, particularly least developed or developing countries, to achieve the 2030 global development agenda. Four areas of support are identified; *finance, technology, capacity building and systematic issues such as multi-stakeholder partnerships and strengthening data and monitoring*. These areas are cross-cutting in nature, are multifaceted and vary greatly among countries depending on the national and subnational context. For the Maldives - a middle income, small island state with wide geographic dispersal, high dependence on imports, extremely vulnerable to external shocks and climate change, and experiencing the uncertainties associated with a fledgling democracy - most of the issues covered under SDG 17 are not fully relevant or applicable due to its unique development context. Again, the absence of a localization exercise prior to this mapping created difficulties in determining how relevant or ambitious the SAP targets are in relation to SDG 17. There are certain instances where either SAP actions and targets had strong alignment with the SDG (for example, targets relating to improving domestic resource generation, mobilizing additional financial resources from multiple sources, and enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development), but these are very few (only 20 instances).
- 348** There were no targets under the Foreign Affairs subsector in the SAP. Most of the actions in the foreign affairs subsector linked very closely with the targets under SDG 17, but due to the absence of targets in this subsector a mapping of ambition was not conducted.

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## Annex I: Scope of work

- Develop a SDG mapping matrix template using existing tools and guidance resources. The template should facilitate the mapping of every action in the SAP with a corresponding SDG target or targets.
- Conduct the mapping of every action in the SAP with relevant SDG targets.
- Conduct a synthesis of the key findings of the mapping including an analysis of the SDG targets covered on level of coverage and depth with regards to the SAP.
- Conduct a gap analysis to identify SDG target areas that are weak or not covered. Draft report the SDG mapping report presenting the key findings of the mapping and the gap analysis with some relevant recommendations.
- Facilitate a validation meeting with relevant stakeholders and incorporate comments.
- Submit final report of the assessment including recommendations for SDG integration together with PowerPoint slides of the key findings, gap analysis and recommendations.

## Annex II: Mapping Matrix Template

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND TARGETS	COVERAGE OF SDGS IN SAP		CORRESPONDING SAP TARGET	LEVEL OF AMBITION OF THE SAP TARGET WITH THE CORRESPONDING SDG TARGET	CORRESPONDING SDG SECTOR	REMARKS
	SECTOR/ SUB-SECTOR	ACTION				
<b>Goal3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</b>						
3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births	CS - Health	1.4g, 1.5c	Target 1.3: By 2023, essential obstetric services with trained birth attendants and primary care providers are available at all levels of health system	Fully Aligned	3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio	
3.2 By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births	CS - Health	1.4g, 1.5c	n/a	No Alignment	n/a	
3.2 By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases	CS - Health	1.2b, 1.2c, 1.2e, 1.2f	Target 1.2: By 2023, communicable diseases, Vector and Non-communicable Disease (NCD's) surveillance mechanisms are digitized and functional	Partially Aligned	3.1.1 Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population, by sex, age and key populations 3.2.2 Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population 3.3.3 Malaria incidence per 1,000 population 3.3.4 Hepatitis B incidence per 100,000 population 3.3.5 Number of people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases	

## Annex III: Sectors consulted during the validation process

A series of virtual validation sessions were organized by the President’s Office during August 2020 to obtain sector feedback to the mapping matrix and key findings report. Five individual sessions were conducted following the five main thematic areas of the SAP; blue economy, caring state, dignified families, Jazeera dhiriulhun and good governance.

The Government agencies who took part in this process are listed below.

- |   |   |    |   |
|---|---|----|---|
| 1 | Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture   | 10 | Ministry of Islamic Affairs                       |
| 2 | Ministry of Tourism                                       | 11 | Ministry of Communication, Science and Technology |
| 3 | Ministry of Economic Development                          | 12 | Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation          |
| 4 | Ministry of Health  | 13 | Ministry of Environment                           |
| 5 | Ministry of Education                                     | 14 | Ministry of Arts, Culture and Heritage            |
| 6 | Ministry of Higher Education                              | 15 | Attorney General’s Office                         |
| 7 | Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Security            | 16 | Ministry of Foreign Affairs                       |
| 8 | Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure | 17 | National Bureau of Statistics                     |
| 9 | Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment       | 18 | Maldives Marine Research Institute                |

The U.N Agencies who contributed to this process are:

- |   |                                 |   |          |
|---|---------------------------------|---|----------|
| 1 | UN Resident Coordinators Office | 5 | UNICEF   |
| 2 | UNDP                            | 6 | UN Women |
| 3 | UNFPA                           | 7 | UNODC    |
| 4 | WHO                             |   |          |

# Annex IV: Observations on SAP actions which hold strong linkages with SDG targets

SDGs	SDG targets not covered in SAP	SDG targets that have weak or No Alignment with SAP targets	Observation and remarks
<b>SDG 1</b>	-	1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day	There are several actions in the SAP relating to Social Protection of vulnerable groups, but no action on targeting particular income groups (living in extreme poverty or poverty). In this context, SAP actions relating to minimum wage and protecting workers rights, especially those of informal workers, and unpaid care workers have been considered
		1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions	There are several actions in the SAP relating to Social Protection of vulnerable groups, but no action on targeting particular income groups (living in extreme poverty or poverty). In this context, SAP actions relating to minimum wage and protecting workers rights, especially those of informal workers, and unpaid care workers have been considered
<b>SDG 2</b>	-		
<b>SDG 3</b>	3.a Strengthen the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries, as appropriate	3.2 By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births	Actions 1.4g, and 1.5c of the health subsector is linked to target 3.2. Action 1.4g is to 'Monitor and investigate maternal and infant deaths, near-misses and maternal morbidities to facilitate future service improvements' and Action 1.5c is to 'Conduct regular training programmes at health facilities to implement Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH)'. There is no corresponding target in the SAP linking to these actions and therefore was ranked as 'Not Aligned'.

SDGs	SDG targets not covered in SAP	SDG targets that have weak or No Alignment with SAP targets	Observation and remarks
<b>SDG 3</b>	3.b Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all		SDG 3.b is targeted at developed countries with strong research and development programmes relating to vaccine and medicine development.
		3.7 By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes	Target 3.7 has interlinkages with actions 1.5a, 1.5b, 1.5c, 1.d of the health subsector, actions 2.1e of the youth subsector and actions 2.3a and 2.3b of the gender equality. However, neither of these had any corresponding SAP target which resulted in the 'No Alignment ' ranking.
<b>SDG 4</b>	4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes	4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy	Target 4.6 relates to 1.2c of the education subsector which focus on developing and conducting a literacy and numeracy programme in relevant key stages (of the formal education system) starting from the foundation stage. The action does not cover literacy among adults. This may be due to the already high literacy rates in the Maldives.
<b>SDG 5</b>		5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere	A number of actions across 10 subsectors of the SAP were mapped against SDG target 5.1 (for coverage), but all of them were either weakly aligned or had No Alignment in terms of ambition. All the instances where a 'No Alignment ' rank was given is when the SAP did not have targets in relation to these actions.

SDGs	SDG targets not covered in SAP	SDG targets that have weak or No Alignment with SAP targets	Observation and remarks
SDG 5		5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation	Target 5.3 was mapped in terms of coverage with actions 1.2c and 2.2a of the social protection subsector. The SAP has no reference to eliminate child marriages specifically, but has actions to review and update existing plans to eliminate violence against children. The legal age for marriage has also been set at 18 in November 2019 following amendments to Child Protection Act. However, the SAP does not include any actions to address either early/forced child marriages or female genital mutilation.
SDG 6		6.4 By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity	Linked with action 2.2b of the water and sanitation subsector (Action 2.2b: Develop mechanisms to verify and provide an efficiency rating schemes for water saving devices and appliances) but it has no corresponding target in the SAP.
		6.a By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water- and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies	SDG target 6.a was mapped against action 3.1a of the water subsector which is about undertaking a capacity needs assessment of the water and sanitation sector, but this has no corresponding SAP target. A capacity needs assessment of the water and sanitation sector was developed under the GCF water project by Ministry of Environment in 2019. It is unclear how this assessment differs from the one mentioned in the SAP, or whether it is the same. The need to align capacity building in water sector is imperative in Maldives and if the SAP is to achieve its other water targets such as universal coverage in all inhabited islands.
SDG 7		-	
SDG 8		8.4 Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, with developed countries taking the lead	Suggested to verify regarding the "Maldives adoption of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production" from the Ministry of Environment.

SDGs	SDG targets not covered in SAP	SDG targets that have weak or No Alignment with SAP targets	Observation and remarks
<b>SDG 8</b>	8.a Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries		EIF was implemented through a project at the Min. of Economic Development. Outcome reforms specified in the EIF are reflected in economic diversification (trade strategies).
<b>SDG 9</b>	-	9.a Facilitate sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries through enhanced financial, technological and technical support to African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States	SDG target 9a links with Economic Diversification (actions 1.1b, 2.1a, 2.1c, 2.2a, 2.2b) and Clean energy (action 2.1a). The actions in the economic diversification subsector refer to proactive efforts to disseminate information about investment opportunities in Maldives, having a monitoring mechanism in place to oversee foreign investment, investment promotion and protection agreements with foreign investors, free trade agreements with trade partners to open up markets and opportunities for exports and investment. The action in the clean energy subsector refers to facilitating utilities to make payment in USD to foreign investors through power purchasing agreements.
		9.c Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020	SDG target 9.c links with Education (1.4d, 4.4c), ICT (2.4a, 2.4b, 2.4c, 2.4d, 2.4e, 2.6a, 2.6b, 2.6c, 4.5a, 4.5b, 4.5c, 4.6a, 4.6b, 4.6c) and Decentralization (2.4e).  These actions refer to improving access to internet connectivity (for example in schools and councils), making adequate bandwidth available with uninterrupted connectivity, promoting open data governance, developing technology parks, and most importantly ensuring internet affordability through regulation and market-based mechanisms which would improve competition between the private service providers.

SDGs	SDG targets not covered in SAP	SDG targets that have weak or No Alignment with SAP targets	Observation and remarks
<b>SDG 10</b>	10.5 Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations		
	10.6 Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions		Action 1.3a of the Foreign Policy subsector refers to seeking membership and leverage support for Maldives in UN Human Rights Council but this was not included as the SDG target specifically states "representation and voice in global international economic and financial institutions"
	10.a Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements		
	10.c By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent		The word 'remittance' appears only in the Gender Equality subsector - Action 3.4b: Strengthen payment gateways to facilitate online payments and remittances. There is no mention about reducing remittance costs or eliminating remittance corridors
<b>SDG 11</b>	11.c Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials	11.b By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels	All of the actions mapped against SDG target 11.b were weakly aligned.

SDGs	SDG targets not covered in SAP	SDG targets that have weak or No Alignment with SAP targets	Observation and remarks
SDG 12	<p>12.1 Implement the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries</p>	<p>12.6 Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle</p>	<p>SDG target 12.6 was mapped against actions 4.1a, 4.1b of the waste subsector. These actions refer to conducting programmes targeted at students to encourage good waste management practices and carrying out targeted awareness programmes to consumers and industries to encourage sound waste management practices and promote civic responsibility. However, there is no corresponding SAP target.</p>
	<p>12.3 By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses</p>		<p>There is no reference to reducing food waste in the SAP which is highly relevant for Maldives.</p>
	<p>SDG 12.4 By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment.</p>		<p>Action 1.4c of the National Security subsector reads: Enact and implement Hazardous Chemical Regulation to reduce the incidents caused by hazardous chemicals. This has strong links with SDG 12.4 but has no corresponding target.</p>
	<p>12.a Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production</p>		
	<p>12.b Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products</p>		

SDGs	SDG targets not covered in SAP	SDG targets that have weak or No Alignment with SAP targets	Observation and remarks
SDG 12	12.c Rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions, in accordance with national circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies, where they exist, to reflect their environmental impacts, taking fully into account the specific needs and conditions of developing countries and minimizing the possible adverse impacts on their development in a manner that protects the poor and the affected communities		
SDG 13	-	13.b Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities	SDG target 13.b was mapped against Resilient Communities (Actions 2.3a, 2.3b) but there were no SAP targets linked to these. These actions refer to carrying out assessments to better understand the impact of climate risks on children, women, PWDs, elderly and foreign expatriate workers and develop and diversify livelihood options for women who depend on natural resources.
SDG 14	-	14.1 By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution	<p>All actions mapped under this SDG target were either Partially Aligned or had No Alignment to the SAP. The two actions under Transport Network subsector matrices (1.1f, 1.1g ) relate to developing new legislation (Prevention of Pollution of the Sea Law and the Civil Liability and Compensation for Oil including bunker pollution law). It is assumed that these laws will address the SDG target on reducing marine pollution to a certain extent, however, it does not cover the SDG targets focus on pollution from land based activities (eg. Agriculture, waste management). The transport subsector does not have any specific target on reducing marine pollution.</p> <p>Another action mapped against this SDG target is action 1.1q of the EPP subsector which is about developing a Pesticide Act. It was assumed here that a pesticide act would control land-based pollution ending up in the sea. There were further actions identified under the EPP subsector (2.2e, 2.5a, 2.5b,</p>

SDGs	SDG targets not covered in SAP	SDG targets that have weak or No Alignment with SAP targets	Observation and remarks
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**SDG 14**

2.5c, 2.7f, 2.7g) focusing on positive changes in pesticide management and improving response to chemical usage and spills.

Under the waste subsector, action 1.1g is linked to the SDG target 14.1, given its focus on setting up a policy framework for pollution prevention. In the SAP, this action is linked with EPP and Transport, but agriculture is not covered. Nutrient pollution mentioned in the SDG target is directly related to nutrient run off from agricultural islands, resulting in eutrophication, however, marine debris in Maldives is mainly plastic and the SAP target to have a national recycling strategy is likely to reduce plastic ending up in maldivian waters. A partial alignment is given as the agriculture component is not covered.

<p>14.3 Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels</p>	<p>Action 2.4b of the EPP subsector states 'identify and address the impacts on coral reefs and other vulnerable ecosystems due to ocean acidification and elevated sea surface temperature' but does not state any action to address the impacts of ocean acidification as in the SDG target 14.3. It is unclear what methods would be used to identify and address these impacts. There is also no related target in the SAP. Therefore, it is noted as covered but not aligned.</p>
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14.6 By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation

The issues in SDG target 14.6 3was addressed in the fisheries and marine resources subsector under actions 5.2e, 7.4b. Action 5.2e is on discontinuing subsidies and incentives for unsustainable fisheries and fully matches with the SDG target 14.6. However, there no SAP Target which relates to this action. Similarly, action 7.4b is on introducing new subsidies for conservation friendly fisheries which links to the elements of 'overfishing'

The reference to LDCs was not considered here.

SDGs	SDG targets not covered in SAP	SDG targets that have weak or No Alignment with SAP targets	Observation and remarks
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**SDG 14**

14.c Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of "The future we want"

This target links to fisheries and marine resources (action 1.1a relating to formulating a fisheries act), EPP (action 1.1.d relating to the environment protection and conservation act) and transport network (actions 1.1f, 1.1g - prevention of pollution of the sea law and the law relating to compensation for oil bunker pollution).

None of the above subsectors had any targets relating to the listed actions.

**SDG 15**

15.4 By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development

15.2 By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally

SDG 15.2 was mapped against resilient communities (actions 1.7a, 1.7b, 1.7d) and EPP (actions 2.2b, 2.7i). The actions in resilient communities related to revising regulations of felling of trees, their sale and relocation to other islands as seen in recent resort development cases. The actions also look at having tree planting programmes at community level and establishing nurseries in schools to support these programmes. The actions in EPP subsector were on introducing fiscal and non fiscal incentives to organizations or resorts undertaking programmes on conservation of coastal and marine ecosystems, including reefs, mangroves and forests. There were no related targets under the resilient communities subsector but there was one target under the EPP subsector which were Partially Aligned to the SDG target (Target 2.3: By 2023, at least 10% of coral reef area, 20% of wetlands and mangroves and at least one sand bank and one uninhabited island from each atoll are under some form of protection and management). A Partially Aligned rate was given for ambition level since mangroves contribute to only part of the total forest cover in the Maldives, and other ecosystems in this SAP target does not align with the ambition of the SDG target.

SDGs	SDG targets not covered in SAP	SDG targets that have weak or No Alignment with SAP targets	Observation and remarks
SDG 15		15.3 By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world	This SDG target is matched to action 1.5d of the EPP subsector. This action focus on strengthening technical capacity of laboratories for complex chemical analysis, air and soil quality testing and related procedures to identify and analyze environmental impacts. There is no mention in the SAP on restoring land quality and soil, even for agricultural purposes. Desertification is not applicable to Maldives. There is no matching target in SAP as well, thus a No Alignment was given.
		15.4 By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development	
		15.6 Promote fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and promote appropriate access to such resources, as internationally agreed	This SDG target match with Actions 1.1o and 2.7b of the EPP subsector. One action relates to having a regulatory framework on ownership, rights, access and benefit sharing of genetic resources, and the other on having an inventory of genetic resources in the Maldives, and collaborate with regional and international gene banks to safeguard local genetic diversity. If looking at the action level, it is Fully Aligned with SDG target, but has no accompanying target.
		15.7 Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products	This SDG target match with EPP subsector (actions 1.1f, 1.5f, 3.1b). These actions are about reducing regulatory gaps to address illegal trade in flora and fauna and giving required training to customs and quarantine officers and about improving research on local flora and fauna to reduce stresses against them including those from humans. Poaching is not recognized as an issue in the Maldives. In terms of ambition, a No Alignment was given as there is no related SAP target.
		15.8 By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species	This target relates to action 2.7c of the EPP subsector which is about improving research on local flora and fauna to reduce stresses against them including those from humans. There was no matching SAP target, thus a No Alignment was given.

SDGs	SDG targets not covered in SAP	SDG targets that have weak or No Alignment with SAP targets	Observation and remarks
SDG 15		15.a Mobilize and significantly increase financial resources from all sources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems	This target was mapped as covered under EPP subsector (actions 2.2a, 2.2b, 2.2c, 2.2d) relating to market and non-market based instruments for BD conservation.
		15.b Mobilize significant resources from all sources and at all levels to finance sustainable forest management and provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance such management, including for conservation and reforestation	This target links with EPP subsector action 2.2b, which is about providing fiscal and non-fiscal incentives to resorts, councils, industrial islands, civil society, and communities who are undertaking programmes to restore ecosystems such as reefs, mangroves, and forests.
		15.c Enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities	SDG target links to EPP subsector (actions 1.1f, 1.5f) which is about identifying gaps and amending regulations to address illegal trade in flora and fauna and their products and conducting capacity building programmes for Customs and Quarantine Officers on identification and verification of authorized trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora. These actions match with the elements in the SDG target well but has no SAP target.
SDG 16		16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere	Actions 2.1a, 2.1c, 2.1d, 2.1e, 2.3a, 2.3b, 2.3c of the Youth subsector has strong linkages with SDG 16.1 but has no corresponding SAP target.
	16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration	16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children	The issues in this SDG target is covered under subsectors on social protection (1.2c, 2.2a), gender equality (1.4a) and foreign affairs (1.5a). These include reviewing the on-going National Action Plan on Violence Against Children (2017-2019) and formulate a National Action Plan (2020-2023) on VAC in line with the Law on the Protection of the Rights of Children, strengthening national data collection on PVE, trafficking and gender related indicators and strengthening cooperation with strategic partners and neighboring countries in combatting terrorism, cybercrimes, violent extremism, radicalization, drug trafficking, and human trafficking. A No Alignment rank was given due to unavailability of corresponding SAP targets.

SDGs	SDG targets not covered in SAP	SDG targets that have weak or No Alignment with SAP targets	Observation and remarks
SDG 16		16.8 Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance	This SDG target was mapped against several actions of the foreign affairs subsector (which had zero targets). The actions are 1.2a, 1.2b, 1.2c, 1.2d, 1.3a, 1.3b, 1.6b, 1.7a, 2.1a, 2.1b, 2.2a, 2.2d.
		16.b Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development	This SDG was mapped against subsectors on higher education (Action 1.6f: Review and revise existing policies to address any gender discrimination), Youth (Action 2.3a: Conduct public advocacy and awareness campaigns to reduce discrimination, stigma and violence faced by vulnerable young men and women) and sports (all actions falling under strategy 4.1 which focus on creating more opportunities for women to participate in sports while eliminating any discrimination at all levels of participation and decision making).
	16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime		
SDG 17	17.2 Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance (ODA/GNI) to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries		Not applicable

SDGs	SDG targets not covered in SAP	SDG targets that have weak or No Alignment with SAP targets	Observation and remarks
SDG 17	17.4 Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress		Not applicable
	17.5 Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries		Not applicable
		17.6 Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge-sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism	<p>This target links with subsectors ICT (1.2c, 4.2a, 4.2b, 4.2c, 4.2f, 4.2h). Action 1.2c refers to enacting laws and regulations to attract investments from global technology companies in the Maldives. The remaining actions refer to encouraging digital innovation and creating a conducive environment for businesses to thrive in a digital economy.</p> <p>Action 1.3d of the youth subsector is also linked with this SDG target. This action discusses about youth exchange programs.</p> <p>There are no matching SAP targets.</p>
	17.7 Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed		
	17.10 Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda		

SDGs	SDG targets not covered in SAP	SDG targets that have weak or No Alignment with SAP targets	Observation and remarks
<b>SDG 17</b>		17.11 Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020	This target has a number of SAP actions that was mapped under the coverage angle, but none had matching SAP targets. These are: Foreign affairs (3.1b) Economic Diversification (2.2b) Higher Education (1.1g) Agriculture (2.2a, 2.3a, 2.3b, 4.5a) Tourism (3.2a) SMEs (3.1a, 3.1b, 3.1c, 3.1d, 3.1e)
17.12 Realize timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all least developed countries, consistent with World Trade Organization decisions, including by ensuring that preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries are transparent and simple, and contribute to facilitating market access		Not available	
17.13 Enhance global macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and policy coherence		Not available	
17.15 Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development		Not available	
	17.16 Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries	Actions 2.1a, 2.2a, 2.2b, 2.2c, 3.1b of the foreign affairs subsector has linkages with this SDG target. The foreign affairs subsector does not include any targets, so the level of ambition was not determined.	

SDGs	SDG targets not covered in SAP	SDG targets that have weak or No Alignment with SAP targets	Observation and remarks
SDG 17		<p>17.18 By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts</p>	<p>This target links to subsector on labour, employment and migration (Action 2.4a: Coordinate with MoGFSS, NBS, UN Women and UNFPA to review existing data on time use to document and recognise the value of unpaid care work) and also to Independent Institutions &amp; Public Service Reform subsector (Action 2.2a: Draft and enact a National Planning Act and National Statistics Act to institutionalise all planning processes of the state including national and local planning, sectoral and organizational planning, and implement the National Strategy for Development of Statistics to provide data for evidence-based decisions). It was mapped as being covered but there was no SAP target for either actions.</p>
		<p>17.19 By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries</p>	<p>Links to health subsector action 6.3e -build human resource capacity in the area of health information management, health statistics and research.</p>

# Annex V: Policy Brief

## Using the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to guide recovery from COVID-19

### HIGHLIGHTS

- The impact of COVID-19 threatens to reverse years of development and set back significant achievements made by the Maldives in attaining the SDGs.
- Recovery planning for the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic requires coordinated, decisive and innovative policy responses.
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework that can guide countries in their recovery planning efforts.
- A recent mapping of the Strategic Action Plan of the Maldives (SAP) and the SDGs showed a 88% alignment between the two in terms of scope (how much issues were covered). It was further found that 48% of the mapped targets were fully aligned with the SDG targets while a further 26% showed partial alignment and 25% had no alignment. Therefore, using the SDGs as a framework for recovery would ensure that targets in the SAP are also met.
- The Maldives currently ranks 91 out of 166 countries globally in terms of attaining the SDGs. The Maldives has been classified as a ‘fast riser’ – a term given to countries who have made rapid progress and are well positioned to achieve the SDGs provided development momentum is maintained. However, this will be extremely challenging with the global pandemic.
- A five-step approach is recommended for moving forward. These steps are (i) localize prioritized SDGs to national and subnational level, (ii) identify national priorities, (iii) Use a systems approach, (iv) strengthen data and (v) align national and sector plans with local plans.

Aishath Azfa, Consultant, UNDP Maldives  
20 September 2020

## INTRODUCTION

This policy brief is prepared as a reference guide for the Government of Maldives, in their short- and medium-term recovery planning to respond to the socio-economic impacts COVID-19.

As countries are shifting gears from response to recovery modes, it is imperative to ensure that a coordinated, systematic and evidence-based approach is taken to ‘build back better’. In this regard, during the current pandemic pause, policy makers are confronted with three main questions; (i) Where do we stand now? (ii) Do we want to go back to the pre-pandemic world or to one that is more equitable and sustainable? (iii) What needs to change for us to get there?

COVID-19 recovery planning offers countries an opportunity to reset (or completely overhaul) existing mechanisms and approaches to development. This critical timing can be used to envision a more equitable and just world where citizens can enjoy access to basic services, lead a dignified life, have stronger economic and social security, and live sustainably with their natural surroundings.

This is the vision set forth in the Sustainable Development Goals or the SDGs.

The underlying principle of the SDGs is to ‘leave no one behind’. It builds on the interlinkages between economic, social and environmental dimensions of development thereby providing a holistic framework to shape national recovery efforts.

## USING THE SDGS AS A FRAMEWORK FOR COVID-19 RECOVERY PLANNING

Some benefits of using the SDGs to guide recovery planning are:

- In the absence of a long-term national development plan, the SDGs provide a vision that is globally recognized and accepted.
- The SDGs provide a systematic and holistic framework that encompasses the three key elements of sustainable development; the economic, social and environment.
- Recovery from COVID-19 would be complex and non-linear. Considering the three elements (social, economic and environmental) together is important to ensure the country do not move from one crisis to another.
- The SDGs provide guidance to multiple stakeholders to achieve a common goal which could potentially help reduce existing silos between key sectors.
- The SDGs offer assurance on inclusivity, equality and prevention of people from backsliding into poverty.
- Responses to this pandemic must be universal. Without international cooperation, responses and recovery efforts are likely to be futile. The SDGs provide a renewed opportunity for countries to gather behind a common vision to build back better.

## LINKAGES BETWEEN THE SAP AND THE SDGs

The Strategic Action Plan 2019-2023 (SAP) is the chief policy document in the Maldives. In the absence of a long-term national development plan, the SAP serves as a medium-term guidance document for sectors. It builds on policies, strategies, and actions on 33 subsectors (grouped into five broader thematic areas or sectors) and identifies 435 targets.

A mapping exercise was carried out in early 2020 to determine the level of alignment between the SDGs and the SAP. The mapping was carried out in two steps; first, the scope of the issue in the SDG targets was mapped against the actions in the SAP to determine whether the issue was covered or not and second, the level of ambition was determined to gauge the linkages between the visions set forth in the SDG targets and the SAP targets. This is summarized below.



The results of the mapping exercise showed an **88.47% alignment between the SDG targets and the SAP** (in terms of scope). This confirms a high degree of coverage between the issues highlighted in the SDGs and the SAP.

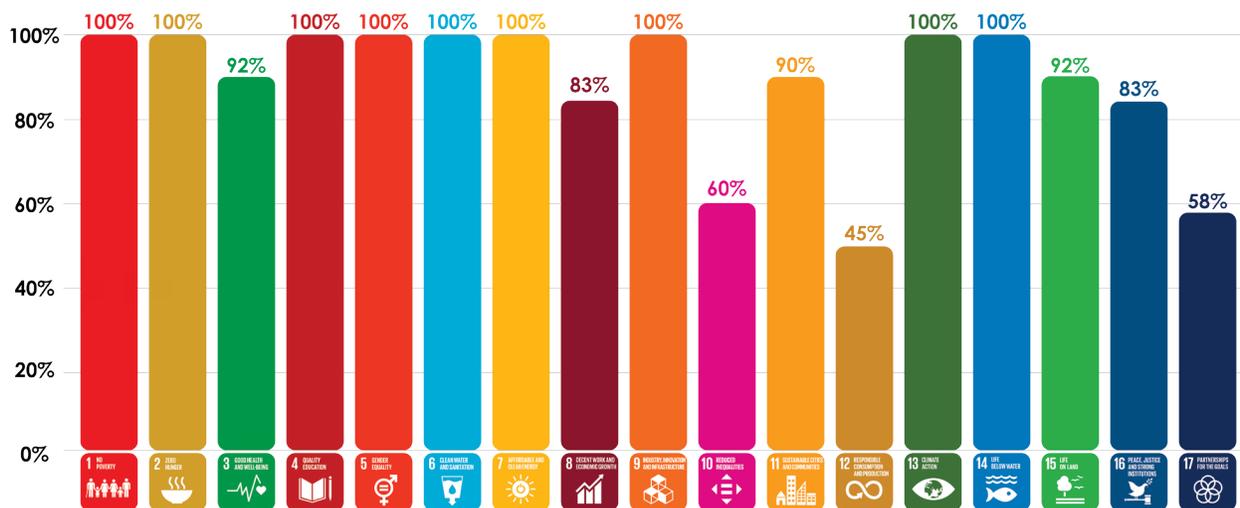


Figure 1: Alignment between issues in SDG targets and SAP Actions (coverage of scope)

The mapping also showed high degree of alignment between the ambitions set forth in the SDG targets and the corresponding targets identified in the SAP. In this regard, **48% of the mapped targets showed full alignment and 26% showed partial alignment with the SDG targets.** An additional 25% of the mapped targets were classified as not aligned, either due to no similarities between the SDG target and the corresponding SAP target, or due to the absence of a correlating SAP target altogether.

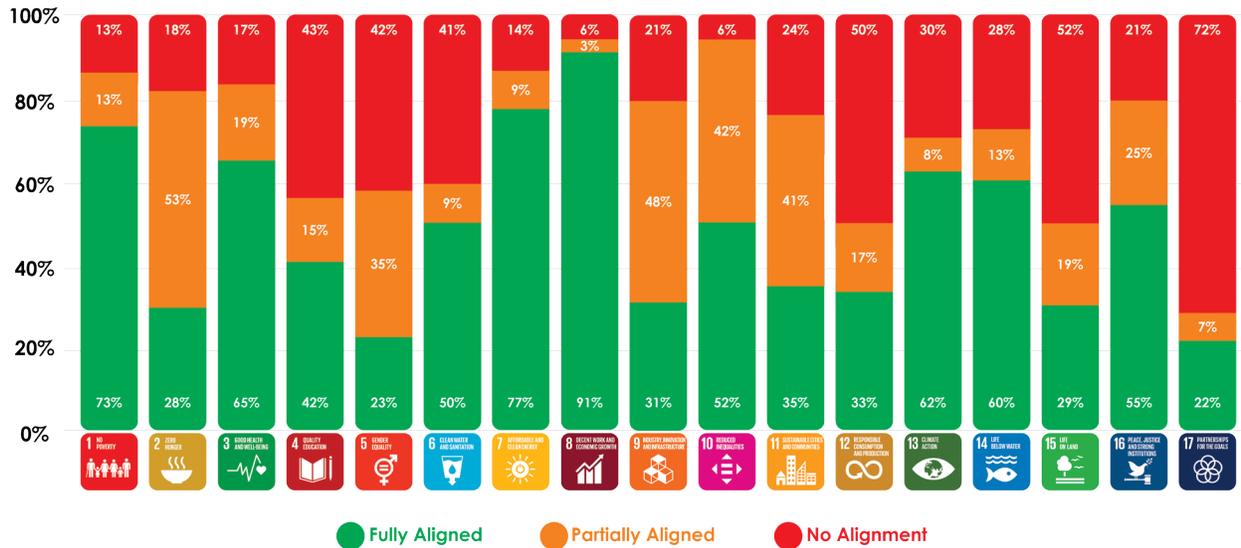


Figure 2: Alignment between issues in SDG targets and SAP targets (level of ambition)

The distribution of these fully and partially aligned targets among the five main themes of the SAP shows that most of the aligned targets are in the Jazeera Dhiriulhun<sup>38</sup> Sector (30%), followed closely by Blue Economy Sector (29%). The Caring State Sector held 16% of the aligned targets, Good Governance 12% and Dignified Families 11%.

## TO DETERMINE WHERE WE WANT TO GO, WE MUST FIRST UNDERSTAND WHERE WE STAND.

The Maldives was positioned at 91 out of 166 countries in the global SDG ranking issued through the annual chief Sustainable Development Report (Sach et. al 2020).

The Maldives received an index score of 67.6 which is roughly the same as the regional average of 67.2, but slightly higher.

The only goal that the Maldives has achieved so far is SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy).

<sup>38</sup> Jazeera Dhiriulhun refers to 'island life'.

As per this global assessment, **SDGs that are on-track or maintaining achievement** (in the Maldives) include:

- SDG 1 – No Poverty
- SDG 3 – Good Health & well-being
- SDG 6 – Clean Water & Sanitation
- SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities & Communities
- SDG 13 – Climate Action
- SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals

The SDGs that have shown trends of **moderate improvement** in the Maldives are:

- SDG 2 – Zero Hunger
- SDG 8 – Decent Work & Economic Growth
- SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure

SDGs whose performance is **stagnating** in the country include:

- SDG 4 – Quality Education
- SDG 5 – Gender Equality
- SDG 14 – Life below Water
- SDG 16 – Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions

SDG 15 (Life on Land) shows a **decreasing trend** in terms of achievement. The trends for SDGs 10 and 12 were not included in this report due to lack of available information.

The Maldives was identified among the ‘**Fast Risers**’, a term given to countries making rapid progress relative to regional averages and are well positioned to achieve the SDGs provided the momentum is maintained.

## WHAT ARE THE LIKELY IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON SDG ATTAINMENT IN THE MALDIVES?

**SDG 1: There is increased likelihood of reversing years of progress made towards eliminating poverty.** The Maldives made significant achievements in reducing poverty between 2006 and 2016/17. However, almost a third of the total population are still multi-dimensionally poor (28% of the total population).<sup>39</sup> With 34% of children aged 17 years or younger living in a poor household, children are more likely to be poor than any other age group.

Initial reports show that 22,000 payroll workers from tourism establishments have been adversely impacted directly from COVID-19 (MoED & UNDP 2020). However, the true impact on citizen livelihoods, particularly those in more vulnerable situations remains to be determined. The HIES 2019 shows that over 44% of informal workers are women. These workers are more likely to face disproportionate impacts, especially in the absence of a strong social protection net. There is high possibility of people backsliding into poverty or create new groups of poor people.

In this regard, the Maldives need to define and determine who are poor and who are vulnerable. Databases across the country needs unification. These groups require direct provisions to cushion the impacts of income loss, insurance and access to services.

<sup>39</sup> Multidimensional poverty was determined using the following indicators: overcrowding, access to health care, years of schooling, access to adequate sewage/toilet systems, access to safe drinking water.

**SDG 2: COVID-19 has demonstrated the country's extreme vulnerability in terms of food security.** With over 90% of food being imported, the Maldives must gear towards strengthening local food production, strengthening supply and distribution chains, improve storage and creating awareness around subsistence/urban farming and reducing food wastage. Food prices need to be regulated to ensure people are able to afford nutritious food throughout.

**SDG 3: Despite the strong health indicators, the Maldives health system is still fundamentally weak.** While the overall health responses to the COVID-19 pandemic by the Maldives was commendable, notable gaps were apparent. The tiered health system designed around the geographic profile of the country necessitates inter-island travel to access health services beyond primary care. The nationwide travel restrictions and ban to enter Greater Malé Region prevented a number of non-COVID patients from accessing health facilities. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) remain the main reason for mortality and these are believed to aggravate the severity of patients contracting COVID-19. The pandemic also restricted access to maternal and reproductive health services to a great extent. The sustainability of health financing is also at risk as government expenditure on healthcare is greatly inflated in responding to COVID-19.

**SDG 4: The disruptions to the education systems is likely to have long-term impacts.** The pandemic is believed to have a serious impact on the education sector, although the extent of which is yet to be determined. With the temporary closure of schools, shift to digital learning methods and overall reluctance of parents to send their children back to school, the education system is struggling with novel challenges to provide inclusive and quality education. Accessibility is also an issue in distant learning. Children with special needs are excluded, and children coming from poorer households are unlikely to have gadgets, internet connectivity and space for learning within their homes. Vocational education and skill trainings have been disrupted impeding development of human capital crucial for growth. There is potential to re-direct young employees made redundant from COVID-19 towards academic and skill development programmes during this time.

**SDG 5: Early evidence suggests women are disproportionately affected by the pandemic.** While both men and women have been affected by the pandemic, global evidence shows that women have had differentiated and in many cases, harder impact resulting from the pandemic outbreak. Available data from Maldives shows women are more likely to bear responsibilities on household chores, childcare and take on additional burdens linked with the pandemic such as disinfecting groceries and household items and facilitating home based learning of younger children.<sup>40</sup> This will further constrict time available for women to engage in economic and productive work or tend to their physical and mental well-being. Further, results from the joint livelihood impact assessment by the Government and UNDP indicated that more women lost their jobs compared to men, and many of the females who exited the labour force may likely never return. The number of pregnancies and births in the country are also expected to increase linking to the mobility restrictions and lockdown measures.<sup>41</sup> This may further limit immediate and future participation of women in economic work and in the labour force.

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<sup>40</sup> MNU and HPA (2020). Study on socio-economic aspects of COVID-19 in the Maldives.

<sup>41</sup> UNFPA. 2020. The impact of COVID-19 on maternal health and family planning in Maldives. p. 4

The pandemic has also aggravated incidences of domestic violence. In a recent survey<sup>42</sup>, 17% of respondents reported having ‘serious concerns’ about domestic violence and one of six of these respondents reported knowing cases of domestic violence that happened within the week of reporting.

**SDG 6: Accessibility and affordability of safe water is imperative for diseases prevention.**

The 2016/17 DHS reports 98% of the households have access to soap, water and essential hand washing items. It is unclear, whether the sampling of the DHS included labour quarters where the disease is known to have spread more rapidly. At present only 21 out of 187 inhabited islands have access to safe piped water (desalination network)<sup>43</sup> but 73% of the households is connected to an adequate sanitation system.<sup>44</sup> Expediting the policies in the SAP to provide universal access to safe water and sanitation needs prioritization, but also concomitant measures to improve technical capacity and governance of the water sector are equally important. It is also imperative to ensure availability of WASH facilities in all schools across the country.

**SDG 7: Global economic slowdown has brought down oil prices to an all-time low – but this should not mean that our renewable energy targets should be relaxed.** Nor should there be a halt on incentivizing private sector expansion into the RE sector. Recovery planning should focus on maximizing green growth. The lockdown period has also increased home electricity usage. The sustenance of the current subsidization programme requires careful thought.

**SDG 8: The Maldivian economy is among the hardest hit globally due to overreliance on tourism, however, recovery is expected to be strong.** The Asian Development Bank (2020) predicts an 11.3% contraction in the Maldivian economy as a direct result of this pandemic. However, it also predicts a strong recovery with a rebound growth of 13.7% attributed to high end tourism by 2021. The recovery of guesthouse tourism is predicted to be slower and these establishments would require more targeted interventions and support. Similar support will be required by MSMEs, particularly those led by female entrepreneurs. The need for Maldives to diversify its economy is clearly evident.

**SDG 9: The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated capacity and adaptability of local businesses and public service entities to accelerate use of digital technology.** The Maldives is well positioned to embrace digital technology for health, education, trade, payments and governance. The pandemic has resulted in a dramatic shift towards contemporary ways of doing business and providing public services, and this needs to be accelerated further, whilst ensuring elements of accessibility, affordability, reliability and safety are met. ICT offers solutions to bridge the geographic divide and bring services closer to people. Internet prices, however, remain costly and bandwidth issues are often reported, particularly in outer islands. Digital literacy among older women in outer islands is also believed to be low, which may be a barrier for women to transition into the digital economy.

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<sup>42</sup> MNU and HPA. 2020. Study on socio-economic aspects of COVID-19 in the Maldives.

<sup>43</sup> MEE. 2017. National Water and Sewerage Policy.

<sup>44</sup> NBS 2019. Household Income and Expenditure Survey.

**SDG 10: COVID-19 has created new forms of inequality.** Today, disparities exist between knowledge workers and manual workers, between those people and businesses who are able to easily shift to working remotely and those frontline workers. New forms of inequality also exist in the form of access to technology, or affordability of internet which has become a prerequisite to access basic services. While it is recognized that such inequalities would have a high impact on vulnerable groups (such as women, children, PWDs, migrant workers, youth), it must be recognized that different groups will have differentiated impacts, and there will be certain individuals within a homogenous group that are more vulnerable than others. Updated data on inequalities is important. Fiscal stimulus is essential to these groups. These can be cash transfers, unemployment benefits, safety nets etc. The design of these require careful thought to ensure that these incentives are targeted at the people who need it the most. For instance, it is very likely that an older female entrepreneur living on an island is unaware of the income support provided through the Government, or how to access it using the Job Center portal. Such workers need to be reached proactively through existing mechanisms, such as the local councils or the newly formed community social groups in the islands. Another form of inequality may stem from access to health insurance. Empirical evidence suggests that most expatriate labourers have limited access to health insurance which discourages them from seeking health services despite the establishment of flu clinics and targeted awareness messaging in multiple languages. Undocumented migrants, or those without adequate paperwork, is also believed to avoid seeking medical services in fear of deportation.

**SDG 11: People living in highly congested urban areas are more vulnerable to exposure of COVID-19.** This has been demonstrated clearly in the case of Malé where in the early weeks of the pandemic over 50% of positive cases were from highly congested labour quarters.<sup>45</sup> It is likely that many more expatriate workers in these places have had the disease and recovered but is not reflected in the official statistics on the basis of not being officially tested.

As people navigate the ‘new normal’, the lack of space will create challenges to maintain social distancing or provide adequate public areas for people seeking recreation and physical activities. Recovery planning must seek to address these issues.

**SDG 12: The sharp increase in home-deliveries and take-away food items have visibly increased the amount of waste being produced.** With the lack of data, it is difficult to measure the volume of waste generated over the past few months and compare it with pre-pandemic times. However, empirical evidence suggests a sharp increase in single-use plastic, paper cups/plates, styrofoam containers and disposable protective equipment. Public littering has escalated after temporary closure of eateries, imposing risk of infection. Many island waste management facilities lack adequate machinery for disinfection, or space for separation of hazardous waste.

**SDG 13 - 15: The only positive aspect of the COVID-19 pandemic is the slow-down of human pressure on environmental resources.** Halt on global economic activity and transport have temporarily lowered GHG emissions and reduced stresses on the marine and terrestrial life. However, this should not be a basis to reduce environmental safeguards that are in place to protect these natural resources during the process of recovery planning.

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<sup>45</sup> The number of positive cases during early stages on lockdown (April – June) were significantly higher among expatriate labourers who were often forced to live in highly congested quarters. Following ease of lockdown restrictions, the number of Maldivians who tested positive spiked.

**SDG 16: There is increased pressure on governments to mitigate the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19.** Meeting these demands is extremely complex given the reduction in government revenue, deepened budget deficit and overall weak capacity of the civil service. Several systematic dysfunctionalities have also been identified during this time, triggering public scrutiny and discontentment. These issues mainly stem from institutional weaknesses and high degree of silos within sectors. There is also a high chance for peace disruption as workers frustration on payment delays escalate. Any hindrances to establish rule of law needs to be considered and proactively addressed.

**SDG 17: Responding and recovering from COVID-19 requires coordinated action among multi-sector partners and actors.** The global scale of the pandemic is likely to reduce the amount of international aid that is channeled for development of poorer countries. The focus of major donors and development partners have rapidly shifted towards post-COVID recovery efforts. The World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the United Nations are currently in the process of formulating their country programmes/strategies/framework for the Maldives and this provides an ample opportunity to align the national needs with the broader aid agenda.

## MOVING FORWARD: NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A five-step approach is presented to the GoM .

**Step One - Localize the SDGs identified in the priority exercise:** The SDG targets need to be localized to reflect the national realities and specific local context. A localization exercise led by the MoNPHI in partnership with the United Nations System in the Maldives needs to be conducted. This exercise will require extensive coordination and dialogue between multiple stakeholders including government ministries, agencies, state owned enterprises, civil society groups, and the private sector. Local governments will play a crucial role in identifying specific local contexts that need to be considered.

**Step two: Conduct a prioritization exercise:** Impediments caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on achieving the targets identified in the SAP and similarly those agreed through international commitments forces the Government to carefully assess the current situation and make coordinated, decisive and innovative policy responses. Recovery planning must therefore identify national priorities that would receive focus and finance over the remaining period of the SAP and the SDGs. In doing so, it is critical to identify which SDGs are likely to have accelerated effects on multiple other goals and targets, while minimizing tradeoffs. The United Nations is organizing a Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) mission in late 2020 which will help in the prioritization and localization exercises.

**Step Three - Use a systems approach:** The SDGs offer a holistic and integrated approach that entails social, economic and environmental elements of development. Decisions made now are likely to have a long-lasting impact on the development trajectory of the Maldives. The benefits of adopting the SDGs to guide national recovery planning process has been discussed earlier in this brief. This recognition needs to be embedded into sector level response planning being conducted at present.

**Step Four - Integrate data to streamline definitions, methodologies and reduce duplication and double reporting:** The exercise mapped 134 of the global indicators which could potentially be used for reporting on corresponding SAP targets. Consultations with the relative departments of the government revealed that definitions and methodologies used for data collection by the implementing agencies sometimes varied with global definitions. There needs to be integration of data to streamline definitions and collection methods to reduce duplication and double reporting.

**Step Five - Align local development plans and development partner support with the prioritized and localized SDGs:** Synergizing the local development plans with the sector and national plans is crucial to ensure policy coherence and coordinated effort towards a common vision. Local council elections would likely be held in early 2021, following which a new local development planning cycle will take place. It is important to sensitize civil servants in the local councils with the SDGs and also carry out similar awareness sessions for political parties and contesting candidates. Similarly, there needs to be alignment between country programme frameworks formulated by development partners with the revised national priorities.

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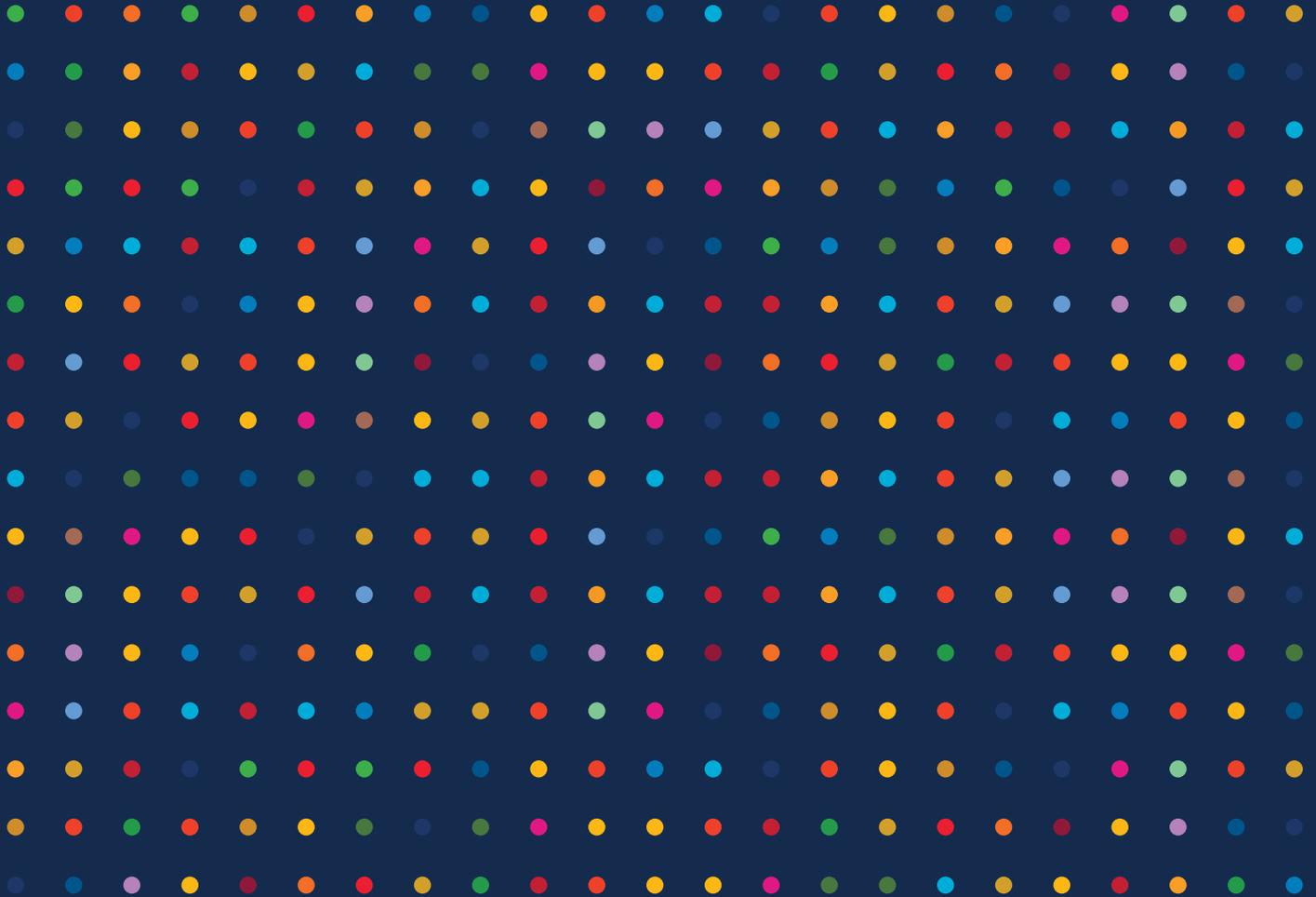
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