



Health and Human Rights Fact Sheet – Maldives



Introduction

Maldives has made much progress in public health, especially in the reduction of maternal mortality, child mortality, human resource development and immunization. Health expenditure has increased over the years and has remained around 10 % of the national budget. The Maldivian public gives great weight to health services. In an opinion survey commissioned by the Human Rights Commission of Maldives with support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Maldivian respondents ranked the right to an adequate standard of living and medical care as the most important human rights issue in the country; 95.7% of the respondents thought that the right to health was very important and 4% rated it important.

Maldives' commitment to health and human rights

In recent years, the Government has taken steps to integrate a human rights approach to health in its national development policy. The Seventh National Development Plan states that "the health policy of the government is targeted to ensure access to primary health care to all citizens in an equitable manner". In its Health Master Plan for 2006-2015, the Government of Maldives has committed itself to provide equitable access to health care for all its citizens. The government has pledged to reduce the disparities in the quality of life and disease burden.

The government aims to achieve these goals primarily through decentralization of health services and the primary health care approach. The right to treatment and confidentiality is a part of Maldives' HIV policy. Also, treatment for tuberculosis is a right of patients. Both HIV and tuberculosis treatment is provided free of charge, as are other preventive health services for

children and mothers. The new Constitution of Maldives provides for the right to health.

The Government of Maldives is party to six international human rights treaties and five optional protocols that deal with civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, racial discrimination, torture, gender discrimination and children's rights. A milestone for Maldives' human rights commitments was its accession to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2006. Maldives has not acceded to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

In March 2008 the Government of Maldives sponsored a resolution on climate change and human rights which was adopted by consensus by the United Nations Human Rights Council.



The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Abdulla Shahid, signed the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on behalf of Maldives during the UN's annual Treaty Event in New York on 2 October 2007. (Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Maldives)

Human Rights Treaty		Year of adoption	State Parties	Treaty Body	Ratification/ Accession of the Maldives	Maldives' Reports to Treaty Body
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	1966	160	Human Rights Committee	19/9/2006	0
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	1966	157	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	19/9/2006	0
CERD	International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination	1965	173	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	24/5/1984	2 (1987, 1989)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	1979	185	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women	1/7/1993	2 (1999, 2005)
CAT	Convention against Torture, and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment	1984	145	Committee Against Torture	20/4/2004	0
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child	1989	193	Committee on the Rights of the Child	11/2/1991	2 (1998, 2006)
ICRMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families	1990	37	Committee on Migrant Workers	Not a member	–
ICPPED	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	2006	1	Committee on Enforced Disappearances	Signature 6/2/2007	–
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2007	7	Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Signature 2/10/2007	–

Concluding observations and recommendations of treaty bodies

Human rights treaties are supervised by committees, or treaty bodies, which are specifically established for this purpose. The task of these committees is both to assess the achievements of the reporting country as well as to offer guidance

on making progress in implementing its commitments. The outcome of this exercise is reflected in the concluding observations and recommendations issued by treaty bodies.

The CEDAW and CRC committees have issued a number of important recommendations for Maldives in relation to health. In its 2007 report, the CEDAW Committee recommended that the Government of Maldives:

- Ensure that health-service providers are sensitized to all forms of violence against women and can provide adequate support to victims;
- continue efforts to improve the quality of health and social services for women and to integrate a gender perspective into all health sector reforms so that all women in the atolls have equal access to appropriate and adequate health services;
- take concrete measures to enhance women's access to health care, in particular to sexual and reproductive health services;
- strengthen measures aimed at the prevention of unwanted pregnancies, including by making a comprehensive range of contraceptives more widely available and without restriction and by increasing knowledge and awareness about family planning;
- give priority attention to the situation of adolescents and that it provide age-appropriate sex education as part of the regular education curriculum, targeted at girls and boys, with special attention to the prevention of early pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases;
- revise Penal Code to eliminate punishment for extramarital sex, which disproportionately affects women.

The 2007 report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that the Government of Maldives:

- Allow children whose births have not been registered and who are without official documentation access to basic services, such as health and education;
- ensure that appropriate resources are allocated for the health sector and that it develop and implement comprehensive policies and programmes for improving the health situation of children;
- ensure that professionals working with and for children with disabilities, such as medical, paramedical and related personnel are adequately trained;
- continue to take measures to reduce infant and under-five mortality, *inter alia*, by guaranteeing access to quality pre- and post-natal health services and facilities, including training programmes of midwives and traditional birth attendants;
- strengthen efforts to improve the nutritional status of children through education and promotion of healthy feeding practices;
- facilitate greater and equal access to quality primary health services by mothers and children in all areas of the country and establish a network of community health workers to ensure, *inter alia*, that children living in the smaller islands have access to health care and counselling as well as to essential medicines;
- continue to provide children with thalassemia adequate treatment and health services, including by using mobile health teams, and to provide families and other caregivers with financial support to meet the high costs of thalassemia treatment;
- conduct a comprehensive national youth study, including adolescents' sexual development, behaviours, relationships and attitudes, and provide adolescents based on the results of this study with tailored and youth-sensitive health services and counselling respecting the privacy of the adolescent;
- promote adolescent health, including sex and reproductive health education, in schools and in other appropriate places frequented by adolescents and ensure that teachers are adequately trained to discuss sex and reproductive health topics;
- strengthen efforts to implement the National AIDS Control Programme in order to prevent the incidence and spread of HIV/AIDS, for example, by updating the programme to respond to all existing risk factors as mentioned above and by providing adolescents with accurate and comprehensive information about HIV/AIDS, its transmission channels, treatment and preventive measures, in schools and other places frequented by them;
- ensure that children have access to adequate social and health services as well as ensure that children have access to child-sensitive and confidential HIV/AIDS

counselling with full respect for the child’s privacy when requested;

- review and update national legislation on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in order to adopt a more child-sensitive and recovery-oriented approach to children misusing drugs;
- take all appropriate measures, including administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and to prevent the use of children in the illicit trafficking of such substances;
- as a matter of urgency, introduce multidisciplinary reintegration and recovery programmes tailored for child victims of drug and substance abuse;
- introduce child-specific prevention programmes which also include the family and the community at large to reinforce the information that is communicated to children;
- adopt comprehensive strategies which are not limited to penal measures but also address the root causes of gang violence and crime related to drugs among adolescents, including policies for social inclusion of marginalized adolescents.



Members of the Human Rights Commission of Maldives. Front row from left: Ms Majida Majdy, Mr Ahmed Saleem (President), Ms Maryam Azra Ahmed. Back row from left: Mr Mohamed Zahid (Vice-President), Mr Ahmed Abdul Kareem. (Source: Human Rights Commission of Maldives)

Key actors in health and human rights

The Maldives Ministry of Health is the key government agency responsible for health promotion. The Human Rights Commission of Maldives (HRCM) is the national institution responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights in Maldives, including those pertaining to health. Also WHO, UNDP and the Human Rights Adviser to the UN Country Team promote health-related human rights in Maldives.

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Dignity and justice for all of us