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GENDER THEMATIC EVALUATION

FINAL REPORT

NOVEMBER, 2023

SUBMITTED BY

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PROJECT INFORMATION

<p>Projects</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainable Economic Empowerment and Development for SMEs project (SEEDS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Project ID:</u> 00127823 <u>Gender Marker:</u> 1 • <u>Budget:</u> \$1,449,360.00 • <u>Time Frame:</u> June 2020 – March 2021 2. Integrated Governance Programme Phase 3 (IGP III) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Project ID:</u> 00142954 <u>Gender Marker:</u> 2 • <u>Budget:</u> \$7,850,000 • <u>Time Frame:</u> 1 April 2022 – 1 April 2027 3. Supporting vulnerable communities in Maldives to manage climate change-induced water shortages – GCF financed project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Project ID:</u> 00094293 <u>Gender Marker:</u> 2 • <u>Budget:</u> \$28,229,364 • <u>Time Frame:</u> 9 May 2017 – 8 May 2022 4. Eliminating POPs through Sound Management of Chemicals (GEF project) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Project ID:</u> 00100995 <u>Gender Marker:</u> 2 • <u>Budget:</u> \$63,091,076.71 • <u>Time Frame:</u> 01 January 2020 – 31 December 2024 5. Operationalizing Integrated National Financial Framework (INFF) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Project No:</u> (UN Joint Project Programme). <u>Gender Marker:</u> 2 • <u>Budget:</u> \$1,472,534.02 • <u>Time Frame:</u> July 2020 – December 2022 6. Accelerator Lab – Future of Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Project ID:</u> 00127931 <u>Gender Marker:</u> 2 • <u>Budget:</u> \$271,350.00 • <u>Time Frame:</u> 2022 	
<p>Evaluation type</p>	<p>Gender Thematic Evaluation</p>	
<p>Final/Midterm Review/Other</p>	<p>Thematic Review of Six Projects (Three ongoing and Three Closed)</p>	
<p>Evaluation Manager</p>	<p>Vathanya Vichitlekarn</p>	
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	<p>2017</p>	<p>2023</p>
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Lebrechtta Nana Oye Hesse-Bayne and Yumna Fathimath

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ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

ALAB MV	ACCELERATOR LAB IN MALDIVES
AGRONAT	AGRO NATIONAL CORPORATION
BAT	BEST AVAILABLE TECHNIQUES
BEP	BEST ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES
BCC	BUSINESS CENTER CORPORATION
CEDAW	CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
CPD	COUNTRY PROGRAMME DOCUMENT
CO	COUNTRY OFFICE
CSOs	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS
DAC	DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE
DFA	DEVELOPMENT FINANCE ASSESSMENT
GAP	GENDER ACTION PLAN
GCF	GLOBAL CLIMATE FUND
GEAP	GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN
GEF	GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
GEWE	GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT
GTE	GENDER TERMINAL EVALUATION
GRES	GENDER RESULTS EFFECTIVENESS SCALE
HDC	HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
ICT	INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
IGP	INTEGRATED GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME
INFF	INTEGRATED NATIONAL FINANCING FRAMEWORK
JP	JOINT PROGRAMME
MED	MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
MFMC	MALDIVES FUND MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
MGEM	MALDIVIAN GENDER EQUALITY MODEL

MOFMRA	MINISTRY OF FISHERIES, MARINE RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURE
MOGFSS	MINISTRY OF GENDER, FAMILY AND SOCIAL SERVICES
MSMEs	MICRO SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES
OECD	ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC CORPORATION AND DEVELOPMENT
POP	PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANT
SDGs	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
SIDS	SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPMENT STATES
SEEDS	SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT FOR SMES
SMEs	SMALL MEDIUM ENTERPRISES
TOC	THEORY OF CHANGE
TOR	TERMS OF REFERENCE
UNDP	UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
UNICEF	UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
UNFPA	UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND
UNSDCF	UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION FRAMEWORK
WHO	WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION
WAMCO	WASTE MANAGEMENT CORPORATION LTD.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The report presents a summary of the Gender Thematic Evaluation of six selected projects implemented in the Maldives. The UNDP Country office commissioned this external evaluation with the aim of assessing gender results and impacts, including the progress made in achieving gender mainstreaming and the level of gender responsive and gender transformative results. The evaluation was undertaken by a national and an international consultant, a team of two.

Evaluation Scope and Objectives

The scope was to evaluate six projects, three closed projects and three ongoing projects using the Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria focused on the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The objectives of the evaluation were to: -

To assess the gender results of the CO's interventions (thus far) in bringing about change either as gender responsive or gender transformative in six identified projects;

To assess the potential of the six chosen projects to bring about meaningful and impactful gender results at the end of the present country program and;

To provide recommendations to the selected projects on measures to ensure gender responsive or transformative results.

Projects Evaluated

The Sustainable Economic Empowerment and Development for SMEs (SEEDS) Project provided economic rehabilitation to mitigate the negative impacts of the COVID-19 crisis; by increasing agriculture production, promoting food security by building entrepreneurship among farmers and creating innovative, productive, and environmentally friendly agri-businesses. Women were targeted and the project is currently closed.

The Eliminating POPs through Sound Management of Chemicals (GEF project) works with Governments partners and local state actors to reduce the risk of Persistent Organic

Pollutants' (POPs) on human health and the environment by strengthening institutional capacity and policy frameworks for environmentally sound management, removing technical capacity barriers, and increasing awareness through stakeholder engagement. The project is still in its implementation phase.

Supporting vulnerable communities in the Maldives to manage climate-change induced water shortages (GCF project) developed a low-cost water supply system using rainwater, groundwater, and desalinated water for vulnerable households. The aim was to provide uninterrupted supply of water to 49 islands and build water desalination production plants on four larger islands. Thus, delivering safe and secure freshwater to 105,000 people including women to address climate change risks and enhance groundwater quality for long-term resilience. The project is currently closed.

Integrated Governance Programme (IGP III) is designed to address the persistent governance challenges by establishing Open, decentralized, and gender-responsive governance systems; enabling equitable access to justice and human rights and fostering and empowered, cohesive and resilient communities for women.

Operationalizing Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) in the Maldives is a joint programme with two priorities for development: (i) climate action and (ii) reforms required to deliver quality, equitable, gender-responsive, and sustainable social services. The ultimate objective is for the populace to benefit from enhanced climate resilience and high-quality social services.

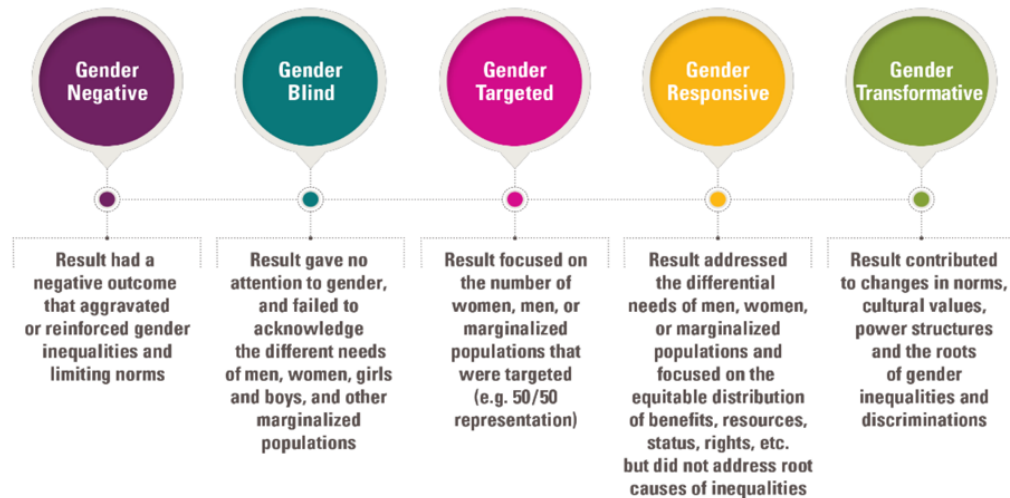
Accelerator Lab Network is a UNDP global initiative of made up of a network of Country Accelerator Labs. It is one of world's largest and quickest learning network on development challenges. The Maldives Accelerator Lab joined the second cohort of labs in 2020 right after the first cohort in 2019. The aim is to embed and institutionalize innovation processes and capacities within the country office, test Country Program-related solutions, and continue to document and disseminate learnings through blogs, reflections, and other channels. The work of the ALab MV is ongoing.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation utilized a mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative data collection approaches, drawing on data from multiple sources including primary and secondary data, in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. Key informant interviews

were held with Project Managers Government Officials and focal points. Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) were conducted with beneficiaries (individual and beneficiary communities) of the projects and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Figure 1: The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale



Source: Adapted from the Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to GEWE, IEO, UNDP, 2015

A total of 17 males and 33 females were consulted using key informant interview questionnaires and a survey. The UNDP Gender Results Effectiveness Scale was also used as a performance standard to measure the findings.

FINDINGS

RELEVANCE

Finding 1

All six projects consider GEWE and have gender targets in the project documents.

Finding 2

A comprehensive gender analysis is needed to examine the root causes of gender inequality.

Relevance to the needs of women and men: -

The findings show that the projects were highly relevant to the needs of local communities received well by the communities. The Maldives Accelerator Lab applies

ethnographic techniques to identify the problems and create a long-term plan to guarantee meaningful engagement with emphasis on women's empowerment and gender equality. women owned farming machinery worth 30,000VR at the end of the SEEDS project and out of 256 Contract Farming agreements signed, 110 were with women and 146 men. The GCF project provided water security to 105,000 people (51,947 women). The "Eliminating POPs through Sound Management of Chemicals" project assisted in the inclusion of women in their predominately male dominated sector at the Waste Management Corporation Ltd (WAMCO). Changes to the lives of women were experienced by the from the execution of the projects however, the SEEDS and IGP III projects presented the most evidence of significant change, with the SEEDS project being the most gender responsive project.

Relevance to operationalize gender concerns and gender mainstreaming: -

Although the objectives of the programs are aligned with government policies on gender equality and women's empowerment, and primarily SDG 1 and 5 as it relates the evaluation. The Country's new Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) 2022-2026 was launched when most of the projects had already been developed and some were in their final stages of closure. Hence some of the respondents were not aware of the linkage to their projects. Nevertheless, efforts were made by UNDP to integrate the GEAP in the ongoing projects. It has to be acknowledged that most ministries do not consider gender mainstreaming as part of their institutional policy.

Rather it is seen as a mandate of the Ministry with responsibility for Gender Affairs. The evaluation results depicted that a comprehensive gender analysis examining gender transformative issues needs to be conducted as part of the project cycle. The projects mandated the collection of gender disaggregated data. The interventions also have contributed to progress in reporting to international frameworks such as CEDAW. Beneficiary from GEF 6 feels that there is potential for gender mainstreaming mainly women are employed in the entry department and mid-level sections. However, at the leadership level, representation of women is very low.

Relevance in UNDP contribution to narrowing certain gender gaps/ inequalities etc.: -

The primary data collected revealed there were attitudinal changes from the SEEDS and IGPIII projects. Women's work was seen as beyond the home. There is emphasis from UNDP to ensure women's participation and to collect gender data. However, Majority of the projects focused on the number of men and women reached. Reporting on change in perceptions, norms and biases the root causes of gender inequalities was not

reported. Findings from FGDs showed that the project interventions created a culture of dialogue within the targeted groups especially among women, creating safe spaces to share ideas, network and dialogue on the systemic gender equality barriers they face and coming up with solutions to address them.

COHERENCE

Finding 3

UNDP's projects are coherent with Government Partners and aligned with the UNSDCF.

Finding 4

The national GEAP was developed post the formulation of the closed projects, and efforts have been made to integrate GEAP actions into the ongoing projects.

Finding 5

Alliances established with State and Non-State actors have led to gender targeted results, creating opportunities to commence gender responsive dialogues for future programming.

UNDP's programme is coherent with that of its partners within the UN System and the broader Maldives Gender Equality Action Plan: Out of the 6 projects evaluated, while UNDP staff were aware of the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) only IGP III, SEEDS, and INFF projects had the opportunity to substantively apply the actions to their projects. The other ongoing project have the opportunity to apply GEAP. Among the beneficiaries, only the IGP III project beneficiaries were aware of GEAP and its contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE). Only the INFF project which is Joint Programme with other UN Agencies project, demonstrated UNDPs contribution to coherency with other partners in the UN System. The others revealed coherency with United Nations Sustainable Development Corporation framework (UNSDCF).

UNDP's GEWE alliances been strategic and adequate to generate gender responsive results:

In maintaining strategic partnerships with key government ministries, UNDP has played an instrumental role in advocating for policy reforms and interventions to create an enabling environment to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The SEEDS project and past IGP projects including IGP III, builds the most strategic alliance

to generate gender responsive results with room for improvement to develop the IGP III project to be gender transformative.

Project's intervention coherent with commitments to gender equality in other policy areas: In all the projects very vigorous stakeholder consultations and validation sessions which involved the participation of key ministries such as Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services was held. Commitments were shared to scaleup the GEAP actions into ongoing projects.

EFFECTIVENESS

Finding 6

UNDP has been somewhat effective in implementing gender mainstreaming initiatives and contributing to institutional change.

Finding 7

Project targets focusing on the number of women and men reached have been achieved with little to no room for gender transformative effectiveness.

Finding 8

Indicators were limited to only measure the number of women and men benefitting from a project. This crippled the project's opportunity to be gender responsive or gender transformative to address the root causes of gender inequality.

UNDP's effectiveness in implementing gender mainstreaming and contributing to institutional change: 50% of the respondents indicated UNDP's contribution to implementing gender mainstreaming institutional changes has been somewhat effective. All the projects made the appropriate efforts to include various groups of stakeholders including the most marginalized such as vulnerable women, single mothers, and women with disabilities. Analysing the project documents against the stakeholder responses from a gender perspective, disclosed the inclusion of women and indicators on the number of women reached or included in a project intervention was the primary concern given to gender equality issues. Very limited attention was given in the projects to reduce the underlying root causes of GEWE.

Measuring indicator achievement for Effectiveness: All the completed projects were effective in delivering their intended outputs. The GCF water project did not have any specific measure against its indicator but was able to account for at least 73,000 persons

on seven atolls with dry season water and a 40 percent reduction in dry season water distribution costs. The IGP III fully met achieving 40% of contesting in the local parliamentary election; one of the ten projected interventions in line with the GEAP had been implemented. Data was not available to measure the INFF's gender intervention. For the SEEDS project 256 farmers (110 female, 146 male) contract farmers signed agreements with AgroNat; 2,000 MSMEs, out of which at least 40% are women-led or women-owned businesses; 50 homebased workers of which 60% is women. For the GEF POPs project, 50 homebased workers of which 60% is women; about 30 temporary jobs in construction of the interim storage facility in Addu city (120-day duration of the construction works); Updated Gender Action Plan (GAP) and train-the-trainers workshop and 2 training workshops had been held. Not all achievements had sex-disaggregated data. Nevertheless, the limited gender analysis conducted by the projects during the project conceptualization phase diminished the opportunity to move beyond the numbers as a measurement of results to address the root causes and yield gender transformative results. The IGP III; the GEF 6 POPs and the Accelerator Lab Projects can develop gender transformative indicators on the way forward

EFFICIENCY

Finding 9

A dedicated in-house full-time technical support for GEWE at the country office level is currently not available. Stakeholders recognize this gap and its effect on efficiency and request the recruiting of a gender specialist.

Finding 10

The COVID-19 pandemic led to project delays.

Finding 11

Project resource. distribution did not take GEWE into consideration.

Adequacy of UNDP's resources (financial, time, male/female staff, technical and gender expertise) are to address gender inequalities and their root causes: UNDP has tools such as the global UNDP GEWE and national Country Office GEWE strategy to assist the Government of Maldives to advance GEWE. The Country Office leans on the expertise of the sub-regional gender specialist and an internal Gender Task force to advance its work on gender equality. A dedicated gender specialist to support the work of the country office has not yet been established which has limited the country office's gender transformative journey in project delivery. Very limited evidence on project level M&E

was available to the Evaluators. Consultations revealed the CO has challenges in keeping track of M&E components of project level delivery. Monitoring and Evaluation capacity is only available to vertical funds, with very little support available at the project level.

Project teams which are most often 2 members i.e., a manager and an assistant are tasked with M&E amongst the other project management delivery obligations. Thus, tracking of M&E commitments end up falling behind, which was evident in the documents presented to the Evaluators. The COVID-19 pandemic affected the timelines of some of the projects, notable the INFF project which was extended to approximately a year later than the scheduled dates. While the projects were adequately resourced the distribution of the resources did not take GEWE into consideration. In other words, special measures to ensure that resources targeted interventions which will yield maximum gender consideration was not given.

IMPACT

Finding 12

Only two projects (SEEDS and IGP III) depicted preliminary impacts.

Finding 13

The monitoring and evaluation support to capture gender data and highlight GEWE challenges at the project level is limited

Finding 14

The absence of gender-responsive and gender-transformative indicators resulted in only gender-targeted preliminary impacts

Preliminary effects of the projects to address gender inequalities: This criterion could not be measured thoroughly as some of the projects are still ongoing however, preliminary impacts were observed in the following projects. The IGP III has trained over a hundred women and the agency of women have been strengthened. The intervention has the potential to be transformative if attention could be given to include activities that will foster changing gender norms and perceptions of women's leadership at the community level. The SEEDS project proactively engaged women in the agricultural sector resulting in 42.97% women and 57.03% men as contract farmers across the identified atolls and islands being engaged (the 2022 annual report). The SEEDS project demonstrated the most significant change in the perception of gender norms and roles compared to the other projects. The GCF final evaluation noted it was too early to assess

the broader impact of the project on women for the 29 islands, the impact of global water projects has resulted in enhancing the lives of community members by decreasing household expenditure on bottled water; a reduction in the burden of water collection by the provision of water at household level or from taps close to the house, improving water security as well as increased prospects for livelihoods for both men and women.

SUSTAINABILITY

Finding 15

Government Stakeholders are confident projects will continue after they are closed. However, interviews revealed majority of the Government stakeholders view gender mainstreaming as an exercise for the gender machinery.

Finding 16

Sustaining projects will require financial and technical commitment from all stakeholders including UNDP.

Finding 17

The absence of an in-house Gender Specialist based primarily at the Country Office and is easily accessible to both Government and UNDP stakeholders was raised as a concern.

Finding 18

The Attitudes and perceptions towards women including the ownership of GEWE by all Government sectors as well as the legislative framework for GEWE to thrive for all, is limited.

Extent of benefit from UNDP's projects and interventions to GEWE continue or likely continue

The key stakeholders consulted i.e., both the government and beneficiaries indicated the need to have financial and technical support to sustain the projects. The benefit from UNDP's projects and to GEWE continue or are likely to continue; GEF 6 beneficiary is confident that there will be a platform available within the organization to address the issues of chemical waste management and make an impact with a focus on GEWE. The limited gender capacity within the ministry to support the actions including the uncertain view of stakeholders if this support can be provided by UNDP was highlighted. While technical staff are engaged to include gender, based on lessons learnt from gender mainstreaming strategies globally, this has been seen as extra requirement for

technocrats thus, not fully missing the opportunity to mainstream gender as a sustained integral part of the project.

Required support by agencies to maintain the benefits coming out of this project: To have sustained coherence, financial sustainability seemed to be a challenge. Unless Government agencies have a gender responsive budgeting mechanism, it will be a challenge to sustain the projects with a focus on GEWE.

CHALLENGES

The approach that was established during the initiation of the project encountered several challenges that were outside the purview of the evaluators. The evaluation process coincided with the national general elections, resulting in certain stakeholders being preoccupied and hindering accessibility to certain atolls, including L. Fonadhoo, Addu City and AA. Mathiveri. Moreover, a subset of the stakeholders were preoccupied with the electoral process, resulting in their unavailability and limited engagement with the survey. However, despite these constraints, the progress was not impeded as virtual meetings were performed and the existing written data was validated through stakeholder interviews and testimonials. Health challenges of the consultants affected the timing of the draft and final report.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Coordination should be given a priority, especially within the sectors relevant for specific projects.
2. Strengthen gender analysis prior on changing root causes and power dynamics on the status of women.
3. Periodically review and align Projects with GEAP priorities.
4. Involve a gender specialist from UNDP at all levels of the project management cycle.
5. Continuous training on gender sensitization is needed for UNDP, stakeholders, and project staff.
6. Consideration should be given to power dynamics once women start earning.
7. Focused awareness on gender issues, gender perspectives and their impact on development for Government partners and UNDP staff.
8. Allocate budgets with a gender lens, applying gender responsive budgeting principles for all the projects.

9. Anticipated benefits for women are not documented prior to the project implementation. Therefore, it is required to ask these questions in the project identification process.
10. At the design stage, there was no assessment of legal, cultural, religious, or other constraints on women's potential participation in the project. It is recommended to formulate strategies to address these during the design phase.
11. Similarly, the project was explained to the community during the implementation phase. Women or women's related NGOs were not consulted. It is encouraged to ensure that women and NGOs are consulted, and a meaningful participation is ensured before the design and planning stages.
12. It is vital to define indicators to measure progress and contribution to gender equality so that how women are benefitted can be documented.
13. Realist timing and duration to be provided for workshops such as that on chemical waste management. Also, detailed information to be shared with the participants.
14. Lack of M&E support hinders the measurement of project achievements when gender data is not collecting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Continue to review ongoing projects from a gender lens and explore avenues to incorporate gender dimensions beyond the number of male and female beneficiaries; include activities that will consider actioning initiatives to address root causes of inequality, norms, power structures and resources. The aim is to end up with gender-responsive and gender-transformative results. 'Gender transformative programmes typically include participatory processes that foster critical and personal reflection about gender roles, norms, and inequalities; promote positive, more equitable behaviours and norms; and where possible, aim to transform the underlying norms, structures, and policies that sustain inequality.

Recommendation 2: Continue more dynamic systematic gender orientation programmes for existing and new UNDP staff, Government stakeholders, beneficiaries and those who are working on the projects including those at the policy level, to see GEWE as integral to all phases of the project cycle, specifically on gender transformative approaches and process to achieve meaningful results.

Recommendation 3: Continue to strengthen partnerships with the national gender machinery to sensitise Ministries, media and the general public about the socio-cultural barriers to women's success in living to their fullest potential. These sensitisation sessions will compliment ongoing activities and result in a successful approach to gender responsive and gender transformative project results.

Recommendation 4: Enhance monitoring data and indicators to be gender responsive and gender transformative. Determine goals and indicators of projects will contribute directly to gender equality and women's empowerment. Make the indicator development a consultative process with beneficiaries to get buy-in and willingness to work together to deliver the results.

Recommendation 5: Engage in sustainability conversations from project design phase with Government officials and stakeholders, exploring ways to partner with private sector or other entities for financial sustainability of projects especially projects with Atolls.

Recommendation 6: Explore with Senior management and programme teams possibilities to progressively plan for a higher percentage of the budget, seeking to achieve the UNDP global mandate of 15%, which will address the project-level gender needs at the GEN3 level.

Recommendation 7: Explore opportunities to recruit a gender specialist at Country Office level.

Recommendation 8: Work closely with Government partners, UN agencies, CSOs and Private Sector Organisations to develop additional projects or joint programmes aligned with the GEAP and where feasible incorporate indicators into existing ongoing projects. Priority should be given to the following GEAP aligned SDG indicators: -

5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age.

5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence.

5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments.

5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions.

5.a.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure.

5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control.

5.c.1 Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Recommendation 9

Recruit an additional M&E staff at the Country Office | dedicated to support in house project level key M&E initiatives.

1. INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of the Gender Thematic Evaluation of UNDP Maldives projects / portfolio, is to strengthen and advance gender equality by (i) assessing the gender results of the Country Office's (CO) interventions (thus far) in bringing about change either as gender responsive or gender transformative in the six identified UNDP projects; (ii) assessing the potential of the selected projects to bring about meaningful and impactful gender results at the end of the present country programme and (iii) to provide recommendations to the above-mentioned projects on measures to ensure gender responsive or transformative results.

The Gender Thematic Evaluation examined the performance of UNDP Maldives in areas that are critical to ensuring sustained contribution to development results. This thematic evaluation focused on assessing the gender results and impacts across six selected UNDP projects that are either ongoing or closed / completed.

This gender thematic evaluation also assessed the progress made in mainstreaming gender and the level of gender responsive and gender transformative results from the six selected projects. The evaluation envisioned a formative assessment of the overall status and results of gender equality and women's empowerment of the selected interventions across the three Country Programme Document (CPD) outcomes which are democratic governance, resilience and climate change, and economic and livelihoods.

Given the timeframe for this evaluation and the overall progress made by UNDP Maldives in mainstreaming gender, the six selected projects' contribution to the overall development and institutional changes in gender equality and women's empowerment in the Maldives were assessed. This evaluation report serves as a repository of useful and practical good practices, recommendations and lessons learned for the government, UNDP and other stakeholders to help enhance their ability to identify to further address gender equality issues the country. The evaluation findings will also contribute to the implementation of the Country Office's Gender Equality Action Plan and seek to identify possible synergies that could make a more impactful change in the lives of beneficiaries of programmes of UNDP Maldives.

The following projects and portfolio were assessed under the evaluation: -

1. Integrated Governance Programme Phase 3 (IGP III)

2. Sustainable Economic Empowerment and Development for SMEs project (SEEDS).
3. UNDP-supported GCF-financed project “Supporting vulnerable communities in Maldives to manage climate change-induced water shortages.”
4. UNDP-GEF project “Eliminating POPs through Sound Management of Chemicals.”
5. Maldives Accelerator Lab – Future of Work.
6. Operationalizing Integrated National Financial Framework (INFF).

Prior to this report, an Inception Report was submitted outlining the various stages of the process which was undertaken to reach final output of this assignment. Further, preliminary findings of the evaluation were also shared with the UNDP team.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Maldives is an archipelago of over 1,192 small islands, 187 of which are inhabited. The country is divided into 20 atolls and the capital of Malé, which is inhabited by 40% of the population. The 2022 Census depicted a population size of 515,132 people living in the Maldives. This includes 382,639 resident Maldivians (188,077 females and 194,562 males) and 132,493 (15,061 female and 117,432 males) as resident foreigners¹.

The Maldives’ 2008-ratified Constitution serves as the nation's highest law. It lays out the rights and responsibilities of Maldivian citizens, establishes the Republic of Maldives' legal framework, and specifies the governmental system². Article 17a of the Constitution makes provision for non-discrimination irrespective of one’s “race, national origin, colour, sex, age, mental or physical disability, political or other opinion, property, birth or other status, or native island³.”

As one of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Maldives faces economic, social and environmental challenges of a small population, geographical dispersion and isolation. The low-lying nation is vulnerable to climate change and extreme weather events, suffering coastal erosion, flooding and the impacts of

¹ <https://census.gov.mv/2022/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/WPD2023.pdf>

² <http://dx.doi.org/https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/mv/mv001en.pdf>

³ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Maldives_2008

sea-level rise. There has been strong economic growth in recent times thanks to a successful tourism industry, and strong fisheries and services sectors. GDP per capita was US\$11,890 in 2018⁴.

The Gender Equality Act (18/2016) is a significant step in the direction of our goals of achieving gender parity and combating discrimination based on gender. The Act requires the creation of redress systems to handle allegations of discrimination based on gender at places of work. This method was put in place by a total of 75 institutions in September 2021.

Gender equality has been reinstated as a major area of national development, notwithstanding several gaps in the Gender Equality Act's application. Therefore, the Government's top priority is to hasten the adoption and execution of the Gender Equality Action Plan (2022-2026). To achieve gender equality in five core areas - leadership and governance, economic empowerment, institutional gender mainstreaming, gender-based violence, and access to justice - the Gender Equality Action Plan, which is aligned with SDG 5, lays out important measures. With technical assistance from UNDP and in-depth engagements with government stakeholders and CSOs, the Ministry of Gender, Family, and Social Services formulates and leads the implementation of this action Plan. The Island Women's Development Committees, Local Councils, and CSOs are some of the local organizations that help put the comprehensive outcome document into practice at the local level.

The Government's commitment of the GEAP led to the establishment of a cabinet appointed high-level steering committee in 2022 and held its inaugural meeting under President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih. The steering committee was established to oversee, direct, and ensure that the GEAP created in accordance with the Gender Equality Act (Law No. 18/2016) was implemented. The President's Office served as the location of the committee meeting. To identify and hasten the implementation of the GEAP and the national gender equality goals, the committee adopted the "Maldivian Gender Equality Model (MGEM)". Under the MGEM, a "Maldivian Gender Equality Index" will be created, and all

⁴ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/maldives/overview>

institutions and government agencies will have "MGEM Advocates" assigned to them.

The Government is aware of the numerous sociocultural obstacles preventing women from working directly in tourism facilities. To address the problem of gender inequality in the tourism sector, efforts are being made to establish market connections that highlight the potential for atoll communities to generate revenue from tourism by incorporating it into their current ways of life.

As reflected in the TOR, UNDP has detailed out the national context of the Maldives and the efforts made by the Government in addressing gender and women empowerment. Gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE) are recognized as integral to successful human development and are grounded in a rights-based approach that recognizes women's rights as human rights and human rights as women's rights. GEWE is at the heart of reaching the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Development Agenda. Gender equality targets and indicators cut across all 17 goals, with a standalone focus under Goal 5 "Gender Equality". UNDP's Strategic Plan 2022-25 identifies Six Signature Solutions, with a dedicated focus under Signature Solution 6. Aligning to the Strategic Plan, UNDP also launched its fourth Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025 which lays out the future direction of UNDP engagement and interventions on GEWE and has mainstreamed gender in 5 of the Signature Solutions with Signature Solution 6 remaining as the standalone goal on gender equality⁵.

Further, gender equality remains the key focus in the new Country Programme Document (CPD) 2022-2026 of UNDP and plays an integral part of all programmatic work in the CO engaging with partners (government, CSO and others) while striving to ensure that no one is left behind.

1.2 PROJECTS EVALUATED

A summary of the six projects evaluated is outlined below.

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT FOR SMES (SEEDS) PROJECT

This project aimed to provide economic rehabilitation to mitigate the negative impacts of the COVID-19 crisis in the Maldives. It was designed to increase

⁵ Extracted from Evaluation ToR

agriculture production and promote food security by building entrepreneurship among farmers and creating innovative, productive, and environmentally friendly agri-businesses. The project was implemented with the Ministry of Economic Development, Maldives Fund Management Corporation (MFMC), Agro National Corporation (AgroNat), Business Centre Corporation (BCC), Urbanco and the Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture (MoFMRA).

AgroNat introduced a new Contract Farming concept to farmers, initially with local farmers from 7 islands in Laamu atoll and expanded to other regions. By the end of the project, 256 farmers signed agreements with AgroNat for contract farming. AgroNat also provided guidance and training to all Contract Farmers, focusing on environment-friendly, sustainable agricultural practices. AgroNat also developed a planning system, provided necessary Information Communication Technology (ICT) equipment, and launched a mobile application for farmers.

In the Greater Malé Region, an agri-business incubation program was introduced in partnership with the Housing Development Corporation to increase opportunities for urban farming capacity. The program was piloted with 48 targeted beneficiary entrepreneurs, distributed to 16 urban farming plots. The program provided support for scaling up production, reducing risks related to starting self-owned agricultural enterprises, managing finances and market products, and providing training for selected applicants.

The Business Centre Corporation of the Government of Maldives was also provided with technical support to increase its capacity to provide support services for Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) adapt to the new normal. A co-working space and a co-shared kitchen facility were developed for home-based entrepreneurs. Two websites, BCC and Authentic Maldives website, were developed to showcase local MSMEs and home-based workers' work and increase their reach to different markets. The project is operationally completed.

ELIMINATING POPS THROUGH SOUND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS (GEF PROJECT)

A grant of US\$3,675,000 received from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was sourced in October 2019. This project aims to reduce the risk of Persistent Organic Pollutants' (POPs) on human health and the environment by

strengthening institutional capacity and policy frameworks for environmentally sound management. Sustainable systems for collecting, labelling, storage, and disposing of hazardous POPs chemicals and waste are established, along with Best Environmental Practices (BEP) and Best Available Techniques (BAT) at regional/municipality and tourist resort levels. The project aims to increase national POP management capacities, remove technical capacity barriers, and increase awareness through stakeholder engagement. The project is still in its implementation phase.

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES IN MALDIVES TO MANAGE CLIMATE-CHANGE INDUCED WATER SHORTAGES (GCF PROJECT)

The project aims to develop a low-cost water supply system using rainwater, groundwater, and desalinated water for vulnerable households in the Maldives. This will provide uninterrupted supply to 29 islands that currently rely on emergency water deliveries for three months each year. Decentralized and cost-effective dry season water supply systems will also be introduced. Water desalination production plants will be built on four larger islands, contributing to the improved dry season water distribution network. The project aims to deliver safe and secure freshwater to 105,000 (51,947 females) people in the islands of Maldives, addressing climate change risks and enhancing groundwater quality for long-term resilience. The adaptation solution involves maximizing water production and utilizing an integrated water supply system, bringing three primary sources of water (rainwater, groundwater, and desalinated water) into a least-cost delivery system that can maintain service levels in the face of climate change-related pressures. Addressing main barriers to implementing integrated water supply systems, such as cost recovery, management capacity, and institutional mandates, will help achieve a paradigm shift in water supply systems. This project is operationally completed.

INTEGRATED GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME (IGP III)

This project commenced its third phase in April 2022, and it is expected to end in April 2027 with 3 key outcomes designed to address the persistent governance challenges within a 5-year programming cycle.

1. Open, decentralized and gender-responsive governance systems established
2. Equitable access to justice and human rights enabled
3. Empowered, cohesive and resilient communities fostered

Throughout the last two consecutive cycles of the Integrated Governance Programme, UNDP has consistently provided support to strengthen democracy in the Maldives. This support encompasses initiatives aimed at reforming the judiciary, legal system, and justice system. Furthermore, initiatives were implemented to create an independent and empowered civil society and media. It also offered formative and ongoing support for decentralization and local governance. Additionally, the previous programme cycles actively contributed to the nation's efforts to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women. To contribute to the Maldives' long-term stability and peace, the partnerships under the programme cycles were primarily focused on institutional and human resource capacity development in accordance with international standards and good practices, global development agendas, as well as the promotion of coordination and dialogue. A follow-up to IGP I and IGP II was developed.

The overarching programmatic strategy of IGP III is to bring people to the centre of governance, especially at the sub-national level, to address the governance deficits in the Maldives. This entails a concerted effort to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of governance institutions, enabling them to deliver people-centred services by transformation of current public administration and public service delivery mechanisms. To achieve these objectives, IGP III actively coordinates and facilitates multi-partner investments in digital transformation and effective digital governance across all areas, particularly to ensure the continuity and delivery of core government functions and public services. IGP III recognizes the potential for accelerated digitalization to not only enhance existing processes but also to create new business models and opportunities, fostering digital leapfrogging within traditional industries and governance structures. This approach is particularly relevant for addressing geographical disparities within a country like the Maldives.

Moreover, Gender Equality and Inclusivity (based on the principles of Leaving No-one Behind) is a central theme, which is mainstreamed, as well as specifically and consciously targeted under all three result areas.

OPERATIONALIZING INTEGRATED NATIONAL FINANCING FRAMEWORK (INFF) IN THE MALDIVES

This Joint Programme contributes to the Maldives' implementation of an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) process. Further, with the

support of Joint SDG funds, the theory of change is put at the centre of effective INFF implementation process. The Joint Programme (JP) aims to (a) strengthen the fundamental system of planning and financing governance and (b) mobilize and improve the targeting of financing toward two long-term development priorities. The two priorities for development are (i) climate action and (ii) reforms required to deliver quality, equitable, gender-responsive, and sustainable social services. The ultimate objective is for the populace to benefit from enhanced climate resilience and high-quality social services.

Complementing the ongoing Development Finance Assessment (DFA), the Joint Programme (JP) will support financing requirements assessments and costing exercises to estimate the SDG financing gap in light of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis's impact on the Maldives' SDGs. In addition, the JP will consolidate the extant institutional arrangements into a fully functional, gender-balanced INFF Oversight Committee. The JP will support the enhancement of the INFF oversight committee's capacity in order to strengthen its primary functions and enhance its effectiveness. This is closed.

ACCELERATOR LAB MALDIVES

Accelerator Lab Network is a UNDP global initiative of made up of a network of Country Accelerator Labs. It is one of world's largest and quickest learning network on development challenges. The Maldives Accelerator Lab, joined the second cohort of labs in 2020 right after the first cohort in 2019. The aim is to embed and institutionalize innovation processes and capacities within the country office, test Country Program-related solutions, and continue to document and disseminate learnings through blogs, reflections, and other channels. In response to the widespread recognition that business-as-usual will not get us to the world we want in 2030 and beyond, the UNDP is experimenting with new methods of operating that fundamentally reimagine and shape 21st century development. The network will identify and bolster locally derived solutions at scale while mobilizing a diverse and dynamic partnership of actors contributing knowledge, resources, and experience. Country Accelerator Labs will accomplish the following: Intended Outcome as stated in the UNDP Strategic Plan: Outcome 1: Accelerated delivery of top-quality programmatic results for the SDGs (SP Organizational Performance, Tier 3). New sustainable development solutions will be scaled at the country level, per second output. A global learning and scaling network is operational and established. This year, the UNDP Maldives

Accelerator Lab (ALab MV) provided the country office with novel and innovative approaches for sensemaking and exploration. In the Country Office Business Plan process, these include establishing space for reflection and facilitating sessions for sensemaking. ALab MV supported UNDP Maldives' positioning in the policy innovation domain by supporting the curation of Policy Dialogue on Foresight and the collective conceptualization process of the UNDP-MED (Ministry of Economic Development) Policy Lab.

In addition to the above, the Accelerator Lab enhanced the utilization of data for decision making, by creating a learning ecosystem for knowledge exchanges between Hulhumalé and other islands and cities. The ALab MV developed a localized liveability index and data platform for Hulhumalé; conducted data driven research and experimentation; and convened knowledge exchanges for data driven policy. Moreover, in 2023, UNDP Maldives Accelerator Lab has been part of the Collective Intelligence Design Studio for the Climate Crisis where a cohort of 15 Accelerator Labs are working together with Nesta in exploring, applying and testing Collective Intelligence methods to develop and prototype a solution in the area of Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction.

The ALab MV will aim to embed and institutionalize innovation processes and capacities within the country office, test Country Program-related solutions and continue to document and disseminate learnings through blogs, reflections, and other channels. The work of the ALab MV is ongoing.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVENTION

To achieve the intended outcomes of the evaluation apart from the review of documents provided, interviews were conducted with the project officers responsible for implementation from the relevant agencies and also with beneficiaries of the projects.

The team collected both quantitative and qualitative data for this Evaluation. Two types of primary data were collected from the six projects. The first series of primary data included interviews with key stakeholders. The second series of primary information collected was originally to be gathered through field visits to project sites (with beneficiaries of the project). However, the second series was only conducted online apart from SEEDS I Urbano contract farmers which one member of the consultancy team was able to meet physically. Others were not able to as the timing of the Evaluation fell during Presidential Election period which hindered the travel schedule as many of the stakeholders and beneficiaries were occupied with the elections process.

The GTE considered the "Theory of Change (TOC) and log frames for projects" approach to determine the nature of the causal links and scope of GEWE interventions across the outcome areas. The Evaluation team developed an appropriate framework to determine how UNDP interventions have contributed to reduce gender gaps / gender inequalities in democratic governance, resilience and climate change, and economic and livelihoods opportunities.

The UNDP Maldives CPD articulates the outcome level TOC and it forms part of the resources and results framework of the programme, with interlinkage with the other outcomes of the CPD. Therefore, the Evaluators analysed the TOC described in the six projects examining whether they are aligned and correspond to the programme's TOC, and where there are deviations, noted them, especially if it affected the attainment of outcome changes in the implementation of the projects. Primary and secondary data/information that were collected using a mixed research method approach. These data were then triangulated in order to ensure their accuracy. Further corroboration took place to affirm the confidence of the reported information, results and recommendations. Due to the limited time available to conduct the evaluation, especially in the mobilization and data collection phase, an iterative and flexible methodology was recommended to make room for further stakeholder engagement, ethical issues or feasibility checks that may arise.

Evaluators adhered to the overarching Ethical Principles of 'Integrity, Accountability, Respect, and Beneficence' as outlined in the United Nations Evaluation Guidelines 2020 Edition⁶. The team adhered to the principle of being accountable to operate in a transparent manner, taking responsibility for actions taken, being responsive to any questions that may arise, work with the client to apply UNDP's data management protocols and ensure stakeholders are accurately informed, justifying our actions in the evaluation process. Respect in the form of seeking the consent of stakeholders, confirming they have all the information required to consent or withdraw their consent at any point in the evaluation process. The confidentiality of the information shared by stakeholders will be assured to make room for open discussions to enhance UNDP's work. Efforts were made with the assistance of UNDP to have a broad base of stakeholders to allow for an inclusive evaluation that is also non-discriminatory and empathetic to expert feedback that will be rendered by stakeholders.

⁶ UNDP Evaluation Guidelines https://erc.undp.org/pdf/UNDP_Evaluation_Guidelines.pdf

3. EVALUATION SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

This section of the report outlines the scope and objectives of the Evaluation as guided by the Terms of Reference (ToR). The ambit of the consultancy, how the evaluation will assist UNDP in its decision making, the criteria and performance standard applied and the main questions being addressed by the evaluation, to assistance provided for users of the Evaluation are detailed in this section.

3.1 EVALUATION SCOPE

The ToR guiding the GTE outlined the scope of the assignment as follows: -

UNDP's overall progress in mainstreaming gender equality in the six selected projects to contribute to the overall development and institutional changes in gender equality and women's empowerment in the Maldives.

Development of a repository of useful and practical good practices, recommendations and lessons learned for the government, UNDP and other stakeholders to help enhance their ability to identify space for improvement to address gender inequality issues in the country.

Contribute to the implementation of the Country Office's Gender Equality Action Plan 2023–2024 and seek to identify possible synergies that could make a more impactful change in the lives of beneficiaries of programmes of UNDP Maldives.

Within this scope, the GTE is to review six projects in the programmatic work of the country office. The projects ranged from the periods 2017–2027 as listed below: -

1. Accelerator Lab – Ongoing
2. Supporting vulnerable communities in Maldives to manage climate change-induced water shortages (2017–2023).
3. Integrated Governance Programme III (IGP III: 2022–2027).
4. Operationalizing Integrated National Financing Framework in the Maldives (INFF: 2020–2022)
5. Sustainable Economic Empowerment and Development for Small Medium Enterprises (SEEDS: 2020–2021)
6. Eliminating Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) through sound management of chemicals (2020–2024).

While the target population for the projects were for all the population at large, the targeted beneficiaries were women, Persons with Disabilities (PWD) and young people.

3.2 EVALUATION OF OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the GTE amongst others is to advance gender equality by: -

- (i) Assessing the gender results of the CO's interventions (thus far) in bringing about change either as gender responsive or gender transformative in the six identified projects.
- (ii) Assessing the potential of the six projects to bring about meaningful and impactful gender results at the end of the present country program and
- (iii) To provide recommendations to the selected projects on measures to ensure gender responsive or transformative results. As some of the projects are ongoing the evaluation will aid the Country Office (CO) to gain lessons learnt from the projects that are completed, enhance the ongoing projects to advance gender equality deliverables and realign the projects with the newly developed Maldives Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) to ensure deliverables lead to gender responsive or gender transformative results.

3.3 EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Evaluators made use of the internationally accepted United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) evaluation criteria⁷ developed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC). The projects are assessed for their Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability. Gender equality and human rights are mainstreamed across the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. Table 1 below elaborates on the evaluation criteria used.

⁷ OECD DAC updated its criteria in 2020 to include Coherence, this is adding value to the work of UN Agencies in their efforts to jointly support Governments <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/evaluation-criteria-flyer-2020.pdf>

Table I - GTE Evaluation Criteria

Relevance	Examines the extent to which the UNDP's six projects in their design and objectives have / are contributing to the GEWE national priorities and policies and will continue to do so if circumstances change.
Coherence	Assesses the internal synergies and interlinkages of UNDP's programmatic work as outlined in its internal strategic documents; in addition to its external compatibility working with UN system partners, regional organizations and CSOs.
Effectiveness	Measures UNDPs achievement of GEWE results against objectives and targets over the six projects including any differential results across groups.
Efficiency	Analyses the sufficiency and extent to which the six projects were / are being delivered in a cost-effective and timely manner.
Impact	Explores the potential of transformative effects that are likely to take place to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. This will be examined in the social, environmental and economic context looking at changes in systems or norms, and potential effects on people's wellbeing, human rights, gender equality, and the environment.
Sustainability	Assesses the sustainability of the interventions of the six projects yielding sustained GEWE results beyond the project's lifespan.

Applying a gender lens using the criteria above aided the evaluation team to further examine the evaluation results using the UNDP Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES).

3.4 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The ToR for the GTE and the inception report identified the primary users for the GTE to be the UNDP as the CO continues to implement its Country Programme Document (CPD). However, the GTE will also serve as a tool for the Government of Maldives and key partners as they work towards the advancement of GEWE in the Maldives.

The evaluation questions were intended to assist the CO scale up its GEWE results. Towards this end, the following evaluation questions were asked.

- a. Relevance - To what extent has UNDP contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment development results at the policy and implementation level?
- b. Coherence - To what extent has UNDP's programme been coherent with that of its partners within the UN system and the broader UNDP system?
- c. Effectiveness - How effective has UNDP been in implementing gender mainstreaming and contributing to institutional change?
- d. Efficiency - To what extent are UNDP resources (financial, time, male/female staff, technical and gender expertise) adequate to address gender inequalities and root causes?
- e. Impact - To what extent has GEWE advanced in the Maldives as a result of the projects?
- f. Sustainable - To what extent will the benefits of UNDP's projects and other interventions in respect to gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment continue, or are likely to continue in future?

4. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODS

This section of the report presents a summary of the evaluation approach, data sources, sampling, data collection procedures together with the instruments used, the performance standards applied, stakeholder participations, ethical considerations, background information on the evaluators and major limitations of the methodology. Each area is expounded upon to provide the context within which the evaluation was approached and the methods used.

4.1 EVALUATION APPROACH

Although a gender and human rights lens was used in the conduction of the GTE, a feminist approach to foster participation and inclusiveness was also applied. The feminist approach addressed the gender inequities that led to social injustice and examined opportunities for reversing gender inequities' (Sielbeck-Bowen, Brisolara, Seigart, Tischler, & Whitmore, 2002). The aim here was to prioritize women's experience and voices, including women from groups discriminated against and / or marginalized (UN Women, 2020). Thus, marginalized groups such as women with disabilities were intentionally targeted to share their experiences. The approach also included.

4.2 DATA SOURCES

Primary and secondary data was collected using a mixed research method approach. Evaluators utilized both quantitative and qualitative data to conduct the evaluation. The data review process commenced with a desk review of key national development documents including UNDP global as well as country level documents and all available documents for the six projects. This process guided the evaluation team to engage in a stakeholder analysis and develop the data collection instruments. Annex 3 presents the documents reviewed by the evaluation team.

4.3 SAMPLING

The evaluators together with the evaluation team purposefully selected 51 stakeholders including UNDP staff to be engaged in the key informant interviews. The sampling strategy aim was to consult stakeholders who were direct and indirect beneficiaries of the project, including those with oversight and implementation responsibilities. with have enough knowledge about the project.

Careful consideration was given to have stakeholders from each of the six projects. Another group purposefully selected were key government officials directly involved in the project implementation. This group was engaged by the use of an electronic survey which resulted in six responses.

4.4 **DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES AND INSTRUMENTS**

The evaluation team adopted a participatory approach that generated optimum evidence-based information. Both the quantitative and qualitative gender responsive data collection instruments were developed to gather information for the evaluation. An inception report was developed by the evaluators which detailed the approach, methodology work plan including a template for the final report. The data collection procedures were desk review of UNDP literature including project and national documents, key informant interviews, survey data collection, focus group discussions direct and online observation with key stakeholders and feedback on preliminary findings presentation. The mixed method approach generated a substantial amount of evidence from multiple sources which were further triangulated to present a robust analysis on which the evaluation findings, and recommendations were based on.

Desk Review

The evaluators reviewed over 25 documents including but not limited to national strategic plans, action plans, policies, strategic plans guiding the work of the UN System and UNDP in the Maldives, project documents, evaluation reports, progress reports and financial documents. A checklist was also developed by the evaluators to guide in measuring the gender responsiveness of the data examined during the desk review.

Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews in the form of semi-structured interviews focus group discussions, were conducted with 53 stakeholders made up of 18 males and 34 females Senior Government partners, beneficiaries, UNDP Staff including key community stakeholders. A gender responsive approach was also taken during the focus group discussions interviewing male and female where feasible.

Survey

An online survey through SurveyMonkey was generated, targeting 25 technical government officials directly involved in the implementation of the project were

targeted. Responses were received from 2 males and 4 Government officials. The survey made provision for stakeholders to provide open honest responses where the privacy of the stakeholder was protected.

Direct observation

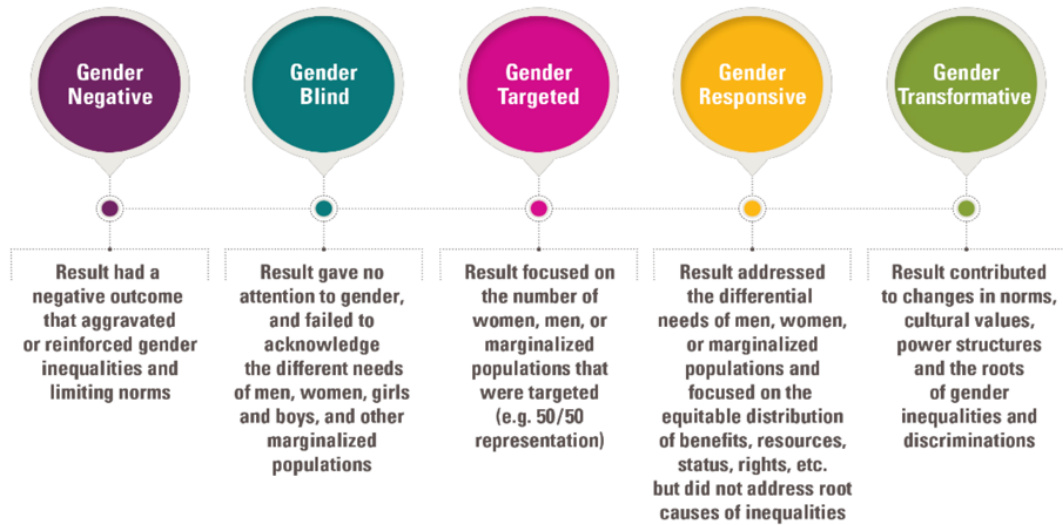
A mixture of face to face, telephone and online virtual interviews were conducted. During focus group discussions and face to face meetings, the local evaluator was able to gather general observations to complement the primary and secondary data.

Preliminary Findings Presentation

On 10 October 2023, the Evaluators shared preliminary findings with the UNDP Representative, Deputy Representative, Evaluation Manager, the Sub-Regional Gender Specialist including Programme Managers for the six projects.

4.5 PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The standard of measurement included national gender and development indicators prioritised by the government and incorporating the UNDP Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) to the evidence generated as a response to the evaluation questions. Applying the GRES by following the measurement standards recommended by the GRES methodology guidance note, gave the evaluators the opportunity to measure 'progress made in mainstreaming gender equality and the level of gender responsive and gender transformative results emanating from the six selected projects. The GRES scale captures gender results in five categories as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 - The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale

Source: Adapted from the Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, IEO, UNDP, 2015

An evaluation matrix was developed by the evaluators to provide a simple methodology to measure the outcome of all the evidence obtained for each of the evaluation questions before applying the GRES as a rating scale. The matrix presented for evaluation, the key criteria questions, specific sub-questions, data sources, data collection methods and tools, indicators/success standards and the methods for data analysis. The summary matrix is affixed in Annex 2.

4.6 **STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION**

Government representatives both overseers and implementors of the projects, UNDP programme staff, beneficiaries, both male and female including persons with disabilities participated in the stakeholder consultations. A gender responsive approach was taken to engage men and women separately. Behaviours, habits, social relations and gender issues in the respective project locations were examined and observed. This exercise complemented the verbal interpretations of the issues articulated by other stakeholders coming out of the questionnaires and surveys. Annex 5 details the persons consulted for the GTE.

4.7 **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The evaluators adhered to the UN system code of ethics for evaluation by executing the assignment utilizing the highest level of professionalism and committing to the code of ethics outlined for evaluators by the United Nations Evaluation Group. This commitment was cemented by the signing of the evaluation agreement forms during the inception phase by the evaluation.

The confidentiality of the Stakeholders was assured during the consultation phase, that the information provided will not be linked to them. They also had the right to end the interview at any point or not respond to questions they were not comfortable with. Additionally, they were further protected by not listing their names in the stakeholder list but rather the institutions and organizations they represented.

4.8 **ASSOCIATED RISKS**

Projects run the risk of exacerbating inequalities when implementation takes place with minimal or no gender consideration. Vulnerable groups are left behind and development is decelerated. Organisations run the risk of not being able to show tangible results when they do not track and report on financing allocated towards Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Commitment to ensure Overseas Development Assistance is used effectively was agreed upon in the outcome document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development attended by Heads of States and High representatives.

4.9 **MAJOR LIMITATIONS ON THE METHODOLOGY**

The methodology agreed upon during project inception experienced some difficulties which were beyond the control of the evaluators.

- The evaluation coincided with the national general elections and thereafter an election run off. This affected the engagement of some stakeholders as some communities close to the evaluation period were involved in election campaigns.
- Field visits were arranged by UNDP. Consultations took place in Hulhumale, Addu and Laamu however, Health challenges encountered by the National Consultant affected face to face visits to some of the Atolls. This gap was mitigated with virtual and telephone consultations.

- The survey targeting 25 Government officials surprisingly received very low response.
- Unavailability of some key stakeholders extended the consultation phase, nevertheless rescheduling missed interviews led to all intended key stakeholders being consulted.
- Limited M&E data challenged the desk review process however, primary data from stakeholders was used to fill this gap.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

The evaluation exercise generated a plethora of data emanating from the review of national documents, UNDP policy and strategic documents, project documents, field research, data check lists and SurveyMonkey results. The analysis methods used to scale down the information are detailed below.

5.1 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

A data instrument (survey) for quantitative data was developed using SurveyMonkey. The software analysed the results which was then used as part of the primary data for the findings. Other quantitative data was extracted from the desk review and utilised as part of analysis to draw conclusions for the findings.

5.2 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Information gathered from the focus group discussion, key informant interviews, project reports and findings from the literature review formed the bulk of the qualitative data to be analysed. Some of the data especially those emanating from the literature review made use of the systematic review and process tracing to scale down the information gathered. The data was further condensed using content analysis and realistic synthesis to filter out the key information responding to the evaluation questions. Secondary analysis from previous reports and evaluations were also incorporated. In order to ascertain the added value of UNDP's work in the various projects, Evaluators examined the most significant change. To determine the efficiency of the projects a preliminary cost benefit analysis was applied. A few impromptu interviews were conducted towards the end of assignment, in the interest of time, a rapid evidence assessment was used to analyse the content.

5.3 APPLICATION OF THE GENDER RESULTS EFFECTIVENESS SCALE

Following the analysis and triangulated analysis, the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) was applied to determine where the different GRES categories were.

5.4 CREDIBILITY AND VALIDITY OF RESULTS

To ensure the credibility and validity of the information gathered, the desk review was triangulated with the data collected from stakeholders. The corroboration of

the evidence allowed for any biases to be observed, hence enhancing the validity of the data collected and the analysis presented.

6. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Following the data collection and analysis findings were drawn based on the criteria with a gender lens. The findings were characterized according to the evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

6.1 RELEVANCE

The documents provided to the evaluators highlighted all the projects as having gender targets. However, it should be noted that there has not been a comprehensive gender analysis done in almost all the projects, rather several public consultations were conducted under the SEEDS and GCF project.

Finding 1

All six projects consider GEWE and have gender targets in the project documents

Relevance to the needs of women and men: The findings indicate that the projects were highly relevant to the needs of local communities and were well received by the target communities. The Accelerator Lab on the Future of Work, examined exclusion in the labour markets interviewing more than 200 participants from 19 islands/cities across the country. The interviewees half of which were women, reflected on the needs of men and women in the community. The project component that was carried out on Baa Atoll investigated the obstacles that keep particular groups from engaging in the labour market. Youth, women, people with disabilities, and other groups that run the risk of being left behind are some of the groups that had the opportunity to raise their concerns in the employment sector. The Maldives Accelerator Lab, supported by worldwide expertise, experience, and techniques, applies ethnographic techniques to identify the problems and create a long-term plan to guarantee meaningful, fruitful, and full employment for everyone with an emphasis on women's empowerment and gender equality. The SEEDS project, depicted significant changes to lives of women. For example, women owned farming machinery worth 30,000VR at the end of the project, out of 256 Contract Farming agreements signed, 110 were with women and 146 men. The project also created new found economic opportunities for 50 homebased workers 60% of these workers were women. The GCF project provides water security to 105,000 people (51,947 women). Though women were not directly targeted the provision of water

security will inarguably improve the lives of both men and women i.e., health, livelihoods and standard of living.

Finding 2

Comprehensive Gender analysis is needed examining the root causes of gender inequality.

However, consideration has not been given to the relationship dynamics or the power dynamics that could occur due to women earning more. Economic empowerment for households where traditional gender norms, roles and patriarchy are entrenched can create a toxic environment where economic empowerment can exacerbate violence against women. Sensitisation at the community level, with particular attention given to men and the benefits of increased household income, can improve negative family dynamics associated with power and control.

Further, the beneficiary interviewed for the UNDP-GEF project “Eliminating POPs through Sound Management of Chemicals” noted that the information provided by the UNDP in the one-day workshop was beneficial and very relevant to the public services provided by the organization. The relevance of the project components on waste management especially on chemical waste management, the relationship between gender and chemical waste management was crucial. For example, WAMCO as a service provider, has many women in the waste collection and entry department and they are the first contact for waste hence, the information provided was very useful however, an impact will take time as the information received needs to be executed at ground level. In addition, since there are women involved in the entry and collection of waste it is vital to pass the information on waste management especially on chemical waste management as exposure to chemical and harmful waste if not cautious can be harmful to pregnant women.

Relevance to operationalize gender concerns and gender mainstreaming:

Even though the documents reflect that most of the objectives of the programmes are aligned with government policies on gender equality and women’s empowerment, including those at the global level, where SDGs, 1 (no poverty) and 5 (gender equality) permeates all the six projects, some government

and community respondents are not aware of these broader objectives and its linkages with the projects. Furthermore, the evaluation showed that a comprehensive gender analysis or situation analysis needs to be conducted and the findings mainstreamed throughout the project cycle (from planning to monitoring and evaluation). It has to be acknowledged that most ministries do not consider gender mainstreaming is part of their institutional policy. Rather it was seen as a mandate of the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services which has the mandate for gender mainstreaming and gender transformative strategies for GEWE. In terms of institutional changes, all the projects mandated the collection of gender disaggregated data. Therefore, if this data is used it would be a good baseline for future projects. Further, IGP III is aligned with the targets of the Strategic Action Plan, the Gender Equality Act of the country. The interventions also have contributed to progress in reporting on international frameworks such as CEDAW. One of the Beneficiaries from GEF 6 expressed the potential for gender mainstreaming to be successful at their organization. Women are the majority of employees in the government entry department and mid-level sections of the organization. However, at the management level of the organization, mainstreaming gender and representation of women is very low, which demonstrates that women holding management positions in the organization is a challenge.

Relevance in UNDP contribution to narrowing certain gender gaps/ inequalities etc: The primary data collected revealed that to some extent there were attitudinal changes in accepting that women can work beyond home based work especially on IGP III and SEEDS Project. There is an emphasis from UNDP to ensure women's participation and to collect data from a gender disaggregated angle. However, data is not used or analysed beyond the numbers. The majority of the projects made mention of the number of men and women reached however, reporting on change in perceptions and engaging in activities that will building capacity and training in different thematic areas was very appropriate due to the relatively low level of knowledge and skills especially amongst the women, caused by lack of opportunities. Findings from FGDs showed that the project interventions created a culture of dialogue within the targeted groups. Women have safe spaces to share ideas, network and dialogue on the systemic gender equality barriers they face and coming up with solutions to address them. Donors have recognized the role UNDP is playing to bridge the gap for women's

political participation. This has enhanced partnership opportunities to scale up the work through IGP III to further narrow the gender and inequalities gap.

6.2 COHERENCE

UNDP's projects are coherent with Government Partners and aligned with the UNSDCF. The INFF a Joint Programme demonstrated UNDPs coherency with the UN System. The national GEAP was developed post the formulation of the closed projects, and efforts have been made to integrate GEAP actions into the ongoing projects. Alliances established with State and Non-State actors have led to gender targeted results, creating opportunities to commence gender responsive dialogues for future programming.

Finding 3

UNDP's projects are coherent with Government Partners and aligned with the UNSDCF.

Coherency of UNDP's projects with that of its partners within the UN System and the broader Maldives Gender Equality Action Plan: The table below demonstrates how stakeholders from the primary data collection viewed the projects' coherence towards UNDP's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Table 2 - Stakeholders view of UNDP's Coherence with Partners

Project Name	UNDP staff / Programme Staff	Government Partners /Focal Points	Beneficiaries
Integrated Governance Programme Phase 3 (IGP III)	Aware of GEAP and how the project activities will contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment	Aware of GEAP and how the project activities will contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment	Aware of GEAP and how the project activities will contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment
Sustainable Economic Empowerment and Development for SMEs project (SEEDS)	Aware of GEAP and how the project activities will contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment	Aware of GEAP and how the project activities will contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment	Not aware of GEAP and how project activities related to gender equality and women's empowerment
UNDP-supported GCF-financed project "Supporting vulnerable communities in Maldives to manage climate change-induced water shortages"	Aware of GEAP however GEAP was endorsed and launched after the Project was developed and was it in its final stage of completion.	Ministry of Environment – Aware of GEAP and integrated it in a number of project activities, aiming and ensuring meaningful participation of women	Not managed to conduct interview
UNDP-GEF project "Eliminating POPs through Sound Management of Chemicals"	Aware of GEAP and have the opportunity to integrate GEAP actions.	Aware of GEAP and how project activities related to gender equality and women's empowerment	Not aware of GEAP and how project activities related to gender equality and women's empowerment
Maldives Accelerator Lab – Future of Work Operationalizing	Aware of GEAP, the organic nature of the Accelerator Lab	Aware of GEAP but have not yet developed project activities related to GEAP actions.	No interviews were conducted.

Project Name	UNDP staff / Programme Staff	Government Partners /Focal Points	Beneficiaries
	provides an opportunity for GEAP integration.		
Integrated National Financial Framework (INFF)	Aware of GEAP and how the project activities will contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment	Aware of GEAP and how the project activities will contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment	No interviews were conducted.

With the exception of the INFF, all the projects under review are UNDP led. The IGP III, SEEDS, GCF and GEF-6 are aligned with the UNSDCF. The GEAP, UNSDCF and the IGP III were developed within the same timeframe hence the gender analysis for the GEAP and UNSDCF was applied to the IGP III. Coherency was also observed in the IGPIII and GEAP key policy goals pertaining to political and economic empowerment of women and access to justice. The specific indicators are also aligned to the UNSDCF which are also the indicators for the UNDP CPD Outcome on Governance.

Finding 4

The national GEAP was developed post the formulation of the closed projects, and efforts have been made to integrate GEAP actions into the ongoing projects

Some of the projects such as the GCF project commenced in 2019 hence, the national institutional framework for gender equality the GEAP, which came into effect in 2022 has limited time to fully integrate the GEAP. However, the Gender Action Plan developed within the project framework facilitated to incorporate gender perspectives in various outputs and activities by giving emphasis on gender-sensitive concerns especially in leadership roles, decision-making processes, capacity-building, and protection of women, including the children and elderly.

Despite key informant interviews from Government partners, highlighting the challenges encountered coordinating multiple different UN agencies; the evidence of Joint Programming under the United Nations Sustainable Development Corporation framework (UNSDCF) through the INFF project, demonstrates UNDPs contribution to coherency with other partners in the UN System. In the INFF project, UNDP led the development of the climate finance strategy, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) led the social sector financing strategy and the United Children’s Fund the monitoring framework with other components taken by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The other five projects were UNDP led projects.

UNDP’s GEWE alliances have been strategic and adequate to generate gender responsive results: In maintaining strategic partnerships with key government ministries, UNDP has played an instrumental role in advocating for policy reforms and interventions to create an enabling environment to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. For instance, UNDP worked closely with its partners under IGP II and III, providing technical and financial support in the formulation of the Gender

Equality Action Plan including sensitising relevant actors on gender equality and the GEAP as well as training of relevant actors on Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences Act and more. Two successful alliances that has been catalytic in generating gender responsive results the partnership/alliances with the women's wings of political parties, have resulted in the piloting and scale up of a Practise Parliament Programme in partnership with the People's Majlis of Maldives. Additionally, partnership with local CSOs such as the Family Legal Clinic, has resulted in UNDP being able to facilitate the provision of pro-bono legal aid to vulnerable women.

Finding 5

Alliances established with State and Non-State actors have led to gender targeted results, creating opportunities to commence gender responsive dialogues for future programming

While all the projects would have built strategic alliances, the SEEDS project and past IGP projects including IGP III, built the most strategic alliance to generate gender responsive results. Building networks with other key stakeholders benefitted UNDP by broadening its scope with new sector partners. Even though UNDP has been working with the justice sector for a while, the policy goal reflected in GEAP (Policy Goal 1: Leadership and Governance) with key results for the justice sector is seen as an encouragement for the justice sector. Programs such as the Women Judges Conference and other programs reflected in the GEAP for justice sectors have the buy-in of the sector partners to implement the related GEAP actions.

The SEEDS project partnership with the Government, global, regional, technical partners, private sector organisations, local actors, academia and CSOs strengthened the projects' effort to deliver gender targeted results for agri-business incubation programme. Partnership with the Housing Development Corporation led to 27 female and 21 male entrepreneurs distributed to 16 urban farming plots: 6 plots for women, 5 plots for youth and PWDs, and 5 plots for general applicants⁸.

UNDPs approach also utilized the ministry's position as a representative of the government to convene meetings with relevant stakeholders. This ensured the potential of all involved actors were utilized effectively to generate maximum results.

⁸ SEEDS Final Report

The GEF 6 POPs Chemical Project and the Accelerator Lab initiatives to be developed in the future, have the opportunity to enhance strategic alliances to generate gender responsive results by partnering with the Ministry with responsibility for gender equality. Since the GEAP was also developed after the development of the GEF6 POPs Chemical Project, opportunities exist to integrate GEAP actions such as legislative reviews and empowering women.

Project’s intervention coherent with commitments to gender equality in other policy areas: In all the projects there has been vigorous stakeholder consultations and validation sessions which involved the participation of key ministries such as Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services. Hence it is believed by many partners that the policies and planned actions would be incorporated into the strategy. Further, MoGFSS was part of the initial phase of the GCF project, and facilitated a gender sensitization session for key stakeholders involved, and in the development of the Gender Action Plan. The IGP III contributed to policy development in the Justice and Local Governance areas supporting interventions where gender dynamics in law making, litigation and adjudication are considered. This includes support towards making the judiciary more gender responsive through capacity building and facilitation of dialogue among judges on gender justice.

6.3 EFFECTIVENESS

UNDP has been somewhat effective in implementing gender mainstreaming initiatives and contributing to institutional change. Project targets focusing on the number of women and men reached have been achieved with little to no room for gender transformative effectiveness. Limiting indicators to only measure the number of women and men benefitting from a project cripples the project’s opportunity to be gender transformative and address the root causes of gender inequality.

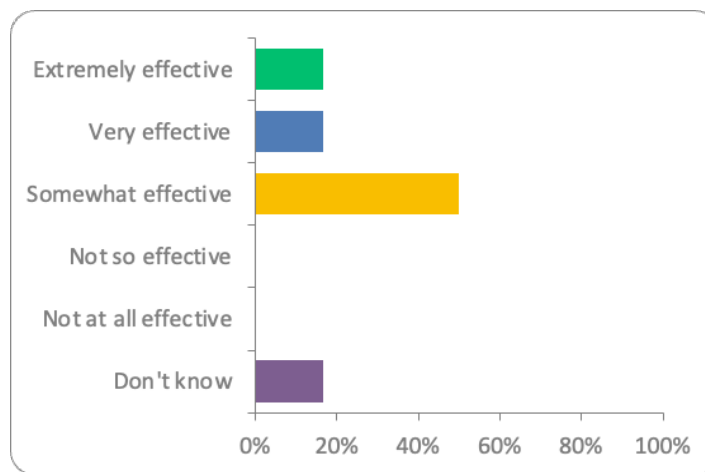
Finding 6

UNDP has been somewhat effective in implementing gender mainstreaming initiatives and contributing to institutional change

UNDP’s effectiveness in implementing gender mainstreaming and contributing to institutional change: In response to the main evaluation question of “How effective has UNDP been in implementing gender

mainstreaming and contributing to institutional change?”, 50% of the respondents indicated UNDP’s contribution to implementing gender mainstreaming institutional changes has been somewhat effective. While findings from the survey indicated the projects were somewhat effective, key stakeholders providing input on the INFF, SEEDS and IGP III projects indicated they were satisfied with the measures taken on mainstreaming gender.

Figure 2: UNDP’s effectiveness in implementing gender mainstreaming and contributing to institutional change



INFF stakeholders indicated “in the past we might have an objective that would like provide X amount of financing to X number of SMEs, but now, the goals are gender specific establishing sex-disaggregated targets

for financing allocated to towards women entrepreneurs.

Gender equality gains made in IGP I and IGII has resulted in the interest of past participants to present themselves as candidates, thus increasing the pool of women in the Maldives interested in elected politics.

Finding 7

Project targets focusing on the number of women and men reached have been achieved, with little to no room for gender transformative effectiveness

Engaging Stakeholders and developing gender indicators to address root causes of gender inequality: All the projects made the appropriate efforts to include various groups of stakeholders including the most marginalized such as vulnerable women, single mothers and women with disabilities. Analysing the project documents against the stakeholder responses from a gender perspective

disclosed the inclusion of women and indicators on the number of women included in the project intervention was the primary concern given to gender equality issues. Outlined in the table below are some of the gender indicators used in the projects.

Table 3: Key Gender Indicators from the Projects Evaluated⁹

Project	Indicator	Achievements to Date
GCF Water Project Supporting vulnerable communities in Maldives to manage climate change-induced water shortages (Closed Project)	<u>Indicator 2.3</u> Number of males and females with year- round access to reliable and safe water supply despite climate shocks and stresses	Overall, good progress was made towards the output. 2 targets of providing at least 73,000 persons on seven atolls with dry season water and a 40 percent reduction in dry season water distribution costs.
IGP III Integrated Governance Programme III (Ongoing Project)	<u>Indicator 3.1.1:</u> Extent of alignment of local development plans with long-term national development vision which are also gender sensitive and results-based.	Long term NDP in place and local development plans are fully aligned, gender responsive and results based
	<u>Indicator 3.4.1:</u> Proportion of women contesting in local and parliamentary elections	40%
	<u>Indicator 3.4.1:</u> Project level Indicator: Number of interventions developed and rolled out on gender equality in line with GEAP	1 WDC Economic Empowerment Training
INFF Project Operationalizing Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) in the Maldives (Closed Project)	<u>Output 1.2. Indicator 1:</u> % of gender responsive and other social sector related SDG targets covered by the specific financing needs assessment exercise for	Social sector financing needs assessment report was not available for review

⁹ Achievements were extracted from project final and mid-term evaluation reports, project final reports, project annual reports and indicator data sources where available.

Project	Indicator	Achievements to Date
	institutional service delivery reforms	
SEEDS Project Sustainable Economic Empowerment and Development for SMEs (SEEDS) (Closed Project)	<u>Output indicator:</u> Number of small-holder farmers contracted for farming in Laamu region <u>Final Target:</u> At least 250 small holder farmers contracted (including 100 women) for farming by AgroNat	256 farmers (110 female, 146 male) contract farmers signed agreements with AgroNat.
	<u>Output indicator:</u> Number of MSMEs benefitted from the outreach programme <u>Final Target:</u> 2,000 MSMEs, out of which at least 40% are women-led or women-owned businesses	2,000 MSMEs, out of which at least 40% are women-led or women-owned businesses.
	<u>Output indicator:</u> Quantity of affected homebased workers including women with newfound economic opportunities. <u>Final Target:</u> 50 homebased workers of which 60% is women	50 homebased workers of which 60% is women. Authentic Maldives websites features local small businesses from which more than sixty percent are women
Eliminating POPs through sound management of chemicals (Ongoing Project).	<u>Project Objective Indicator 2</u> Sex-disaggregated number of direct project beneficiaries for which the risks of POPs exposure has been reduced (GEF Core Indicator 11)	No progress on development of economic instruments, no data available on assessment of progress on direct beneficiaries affected by the project
	<u>Outcome 2 Indicator 3</u> Sex-disaggregated number of jobs created to ensure environmentally sound handling of hazardous waste	About 30 temporary jobs in construction of the interim storage facility in Addu city (120-day duration of the construction works)

Project	Indicator	Achievements to Date
	<p><u>Outcome 3 Indicator 1</u> Number of trainings carried out in line with the Gender Action Plan (Annex G)</p> <p><u>Midterm Targets</u> Training materials developed 5 trainings carried out</p>	<p>Updated Gender Action Plan (GAP) and train-the-trainers workshop</p> <p>2 training workshops</p>
	<p><u>Outcome 3 Indicator 2</u> Sex-disaggregated number of people reached through awareness raising events on the human and environmental risks of POPs, and environmentally sound ways to reduce POPs emissions</p> <p><u>Midterm Targets</u> 83,000 direct project beneficiaries (41,500 female and 41,500 male) for which the risks of POPs exposure have been reduced 183,000 direct project Beneficiaries (91,500 female and 91,500 male) for which the risks of POPs exposure</p>	<p>No data not available</p>

Finding 8

Indicators were limited to only measure the number of women and men benefitting from a project. This crippled the project's opportunity to be gender responsive or gender transformative to address the root causes of gender inequality

Very limited attention was given in the projects to reduce the underlying root causes impeding gender equality and women's empowerment issues. As seen from Table 3, indicators focused on addressing gender parity with the under-represented sex, majority being women were included in the projects. While making sure that no one is left behind,

just including women without considering the societal norms and issues that affect women's lives in order to make 'a real difference in women's lives' is a missed opportunity. As noted by the German Institute of Development and Sustainability, gender equality "involves a substantive shift not only in the proportion of men and women under specific indicators, but in the deeper dimension of societal norms and sense of identities – to be valued and respected equally, regardless of gender. If gender equality is to be realized, efforts need to go beyond achieving statistics for gender parity" (Matias & Manlosa, 2018). This observation drives the point home that UNDP must advance gender equality in a substantive way to transform lives in the Maldives.

For some projects such as the Accelerator Lab, stakeholders indicated the gender inequality issues observed will require long term interventions for change to be experienced. The Government of Maldives according to stakeholders decided to have a gender balance in the structures that will be built under the INFF project, once again emphasizing the point that projects need to go beyond numbers and address the structural inequalities that exist. This is the only project out of the three closed projects that instituted structural gender responsive change policy at the structural / policy level. The IGP III project has made substantive inroads to encourage a diverse population to apply for judgeship. The Women Judge's Conference is an opportunity to advance the dialogue beyond the numbers to address the gender inequality issues.

6.4 EFFICIENCY

Dedicated in house full time technical support for GEWE at the country office level is currently not available. The COVID-19 pandemic led to project delays. Project resources distribution did not take GEWE into consideration

Finding 9

A dedicated in-house full-time technical support for GEWE at the country office level is currently not available. Stakeholders recognize this gap and its effect on efficiency and request the recruiting of a gender specialist

Adequacy of UNDP's resources (financial, time, male/female staff, technical and gender expertise) are to address gender inequalities and their root causes: Another critical to the work of gender equality is the extent to which and institution's resources (financial, time, male/female staff, technical and gender expertise) is adequate to address gender inequalities and root causes.

In the Maldives, UNDP has a plethora of approaches, resources, models, conceptual framework relevant to achieve any planned GEWE outcomes. The global UNDP GEWE and national Country Office GEWE strategy outlines clear details at the local level to advance gender equality. The Maldives National Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) 2022–2026 also defines the road map for gender equality that the country plans to take. With the above instruments outlined, the UNDP Country Office is equipped with theoretical framework and tools to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment for the Government and people of Maldives. The intersectionality of gender and disabilities have also been prioritized by the UNDP country office as a disability strategy was developed in 2022 with consideration given to scale up the gender gap in disability prevalence.

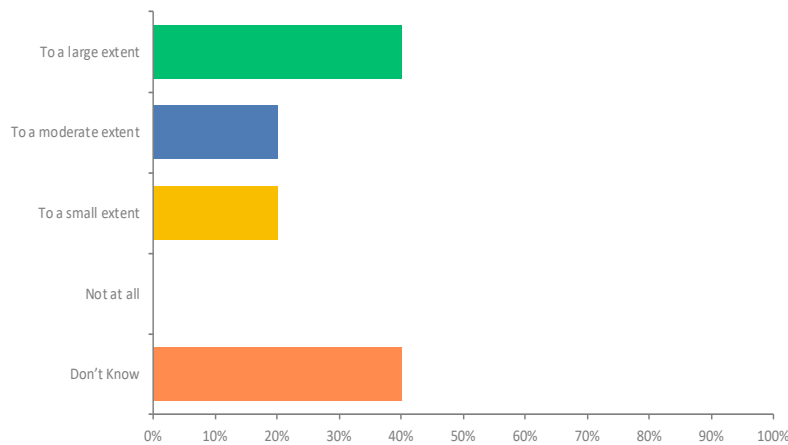
Gender technical support for UNDP is provided by the UNDP Sub-Regional Gender Specialist. The Country Office leans on the expertise of the sub-regional gender specialist to advance its work on gender equality. A dedicated gender specialist to support the work of the country office has not yet been established. Efforts have been by the Country Office to equip the staff with gender training. Mandatory gender training is accessible by all staff members and monitored by the Human Resources. The country office had more than 10% of its whole office learning plan and budget dedicated to gender learning and perspective building. Gender capacity also included the following sessions led by the learning Committee, Gender Focal Team and anti-sexual harassment / Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse focal team: -

- Capacity and team gender outlook assessment – conducted at team level and responses obtained through an anonymous platform – Oct 2021
- Introduction to Gender, Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Marker for all Staff – Oct 2021
- Gender values clarification session for all staff – October 2022
- All staff consultation on gender equality strategy – October 2022 (Mandatory)
- Brown bag session on PSEA/ SH – November 2022

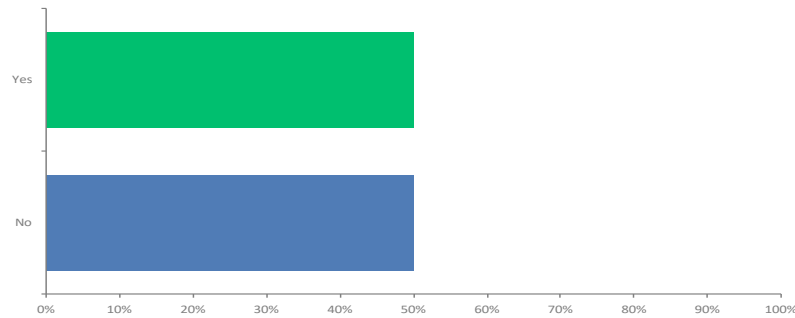
Although the UNDP technical staff have the foundation and understanding of gender equality and women’s empowerment the application of these theoretical

principles and tools in the work of the various thematic groups are limited. This was highlighted by the INFF, IGPIII and SEEDS project stakeholders who acknowledged the limited gender expertise available. As one stakeholder indicated, "It would be useful, not just useful it is necessary that we have a national gender analyst based here at UNDP". Stakeholders recognized the benefit of having a gender specialist as part of the project technical team for project formulation and implementation processes. Survey responses in regards to the adequacy of UNDP's resources to address gender inequalities and root causes seem to be primarily to a large extent positive while an approximately equal number of stakeholders did not know if adequate resources were available.

Figure 3: Adequacy of UNDP's Resources to address Gender Inequalities



The adequacy of UNDP resources to address root causes of gender inequalities was further probed to review if adequate gender technical support was timely provided to support ministries and organizations. While the response was equally divided in the survey, key informants from the one-on-one interviews were able to highlight gender technical support being provided by consultants and UNDP international colleagues.

Figure 4: Timely Gender Technical Support

The above scenario was coupled with a low understanding of gender equality and women's empowerment within the key institutions. Gender mainstreaming is not seen as a development process expected to be applied by all ministries. Despite the commitment made by the Maldives through the CEDAW, the SDGs and the national GEAP, there is a limited understanding of gender amongst stakeholders. The inclusion of women was the predominant indicator in the view of stakeholders that a project was gender sensitive. Key ministries within the group of Government stakeholders also perceive gender mainstreaming as an initiative solely for the Ministry with responsibility for gender equality thus, limiting an efficient implementation of gender responsive projects by lead ministries.

UNDP's gender transformative journey in project delivery will be enhanced when a dedicated gender specialist to support the work of the country office is established.

Very limited evidence on project level M&E was available to the Evaluators. Consultations revealed the CO has challenge to keep track with M&E components of project level delivery. Monitoring and Evaluation capacity is only available to vertical funds, with very little support available at the project level. Project teams which are most often two members a manager and an assistant are tasked with M&E amongst the other project management delivery obligations. Thus, tracking of M&E commitments end up falling behind, which was evident in the documents presented to the Evaluation.

Finding 10

The COVID-19 pandemic led to project delays.

Project Constraints

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the timelines of some of the projects, notable the INFF project which was extended to approximately a year later than the scheduled dates. Limited sex disaggregated data and core gender data on key gender related issues pertaining to the project's focused areas made it difficult for some of the projects to establish baselines such as the Accelerator lab. Thus, some of the targets set would not have pre-informed evidence to measure changes resulting from the project. The IGP III faces barriers in the areas of applying interventions for transformative change on GEWE on civic and political empowerment of women. Without the political will interventions are often unable to produce full impact considering the structural and cultural barriers that persists in the Maldives society. The IGP III teams mitigates this challenge due to its neutral role by working with CSOs, national partners and individual champions to gain the political will needed.

Finding 11

Project resource distribution did not take GEWE into consideration.

Financial Resources

The projects were resourced with direct funding from UNDP and partners. All the key implementing agencies with the exception of IGP III indicated the financial resources were adequate to implement their projects. The efficient use of resources to cater for the needs of both man and women, taking into consideration their unique interests is the ideal for gender responsive projects. The aim is to have adequate resources to address the identified needs of the men and women targeted by the project. The IGP III project mitigates the limited financial resources, which is a challenging task by including gender specific and gender mainstreamed interventions into new proposals by integrating gender into the design of the activities wherever possible and resource mobilization efforts. While the other projects were adequately resourced the distribution of the resources did not take GEWE into consideration. UNDP's M&E tools requires allocation to indicate gender indicators and sex-disaggregation when reporting on the indicators to assist in monitoring gender reach and gender disparities of

results. However, this application was not evident in the desk review, stakeholders indicated applying this practice in budget planning and reporting is difficult, unless it is applied to activities that are gender-specific. This creates an opportunity for when the country office gets a dedicated Gender Specialist and a M&E Specialist with direct responsibility for projects, the duo team can build staff capacity to fully apply these tools in adherence to the resolution of the “Outcome document of the third International Conference on Financing for Development: Addis Ababa Action Agenda” which calls for “countries to track and report resource allocations for gender equality and women’s empowerment”¹⁰ At this conference when the document was adopted, Maldives made a statement (on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States)¹¹ Adherence to this resolution will concurrently equip UNDP Maldives to assist the country build its capacity to meet its international obligation. Additionally, UNDP Maldives has committed in its GES “Starting from 2023, 80% of all project budgets will seek to ensure that a minimum of 15% is allocated for gender equality related initiatives, putting in place a dedicated budget for gender-related activities.”¹²

6.5 IMPACT

Preliminary impacts were observed in the SEEDS and IGP III projects. The GCF water project missed the opportunity to capture gender data highlighting the challenge faced with M&E support. In the absence of gender responsive or gender transformative indicators did not measure gender transformative impacts, Gender targeted impacts were experienced.

Finding 12

Only two projects (SEEDS and IGP III) depicted preliminary impacts.

Preliminary effects of the projects to address gender inequalities: The impact of a project from a gender perspective explores the transformative effects, examining beyond the immediate results, capturing consequences of the project ‘by examining the holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms, and potential effects on people’s wellbeing, human rights, gender equality, and the

¹⁰ [Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27 July 2015. Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development \(Addis Ababa Action Agenda\)](#) No. 53

¹¹ [Report on the third International Conference on Financing for Development](#)

¹² Page 23 of the UNDP Gender Equality Strategy clearly outlines the CO’s Gender Transformative, Policy, Planning and Programming

environment. The following questions were considered in evaluating the impact of the project: -

- Has the intervention caused a significant change in the lives of the intended beneficiaries?
- How did the intervention cause higher-level effects (such as changes in norms or systems)?
- Did all the intended target groups, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, benefit equally from the intervention?
- Is the intervention transformative – does it create enduring changes in norms – including gender norms – and systems, whether intended or not?
- Is the intervention leading to other changes, including “scalable” or “replicable” results?
- How will the intervention contribute to changing society for the better? (OECD, 2021).

This criterion could not be measured thoroughly as some of the projects are still ongoing however, preliminary impacts were observed in the following projects. Beneficiaries of the IGP III project recognized the emergence of inclusive governance in the Maldives as a result of the project. The capacities of women were built in IGP I and II, while the focus and attention on building the capacity of women councillors was not incorporated this was highlighted to become a priority going forward for IGP III. Over a hundred women have been trained by the programme and the agency of women have been strengthened. The intervention has the potential to be transformative if attention could be given to include activities that will foster changing gender norms and perceptions of women’s leadership at the community level as noted in the analysis of outcome 1.2 in the project document¹³.

The SEEDS project proactively engaged women in the agricultural sector resulting in as of the 2022 annual report 42.97% women and 57.03% men contract farmers across the identified atolls and islands had been engaged. The SEEDS project demonstrated the most significant change in the perception of gender norms and

¹³ International experience also shows that successful approaches to women’s political empowerment need to be systematic and not only engage with the electoral framework and issues such as temporary special measures (quotas) but also address the socio-cultural barriers to women’s success in holding electoral office, including stereotypes about women’s leadership capacities, unequal access to campaign financing and other funding (although we were told by informants that this is not an issue in the Maldives), broader societal issues such as the unequal unpaid care-burden and lack of facilities for professionals with child-care responsibilities etc., and that there should also be engagement with political parties, media and the general public

roles compared to the other projects. Community members observed women's economic livelihoods expand and perceptions about women farmers are starting to change. The expansion of the economic earning power of women is also significant as the project benefited 2,000 MSMEs, out of which at least 40% are women-led or women-owned businesses.

Finding 13

The monitoring and evaluation support to capture gender data and highlight GEWE challenges at the project level is limited.

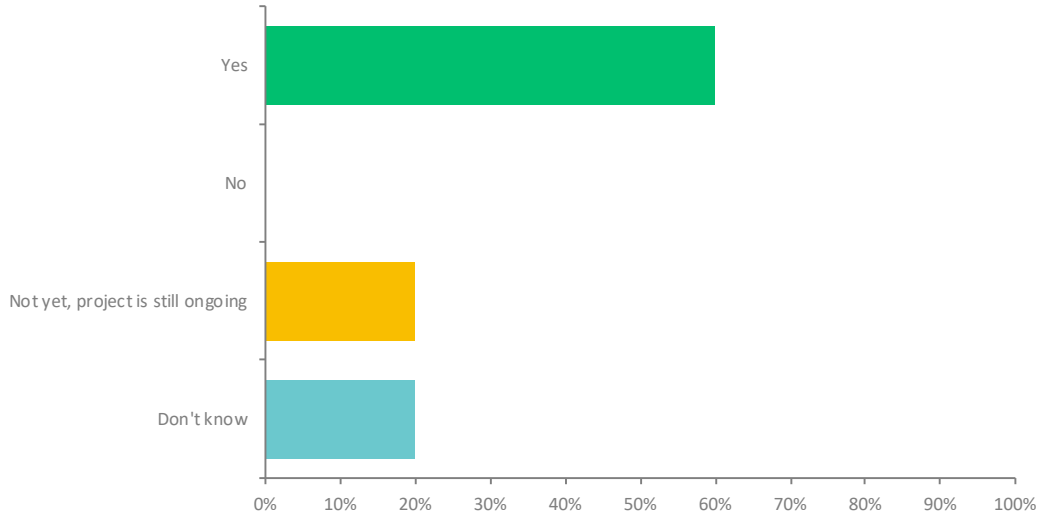
The Supporting vulnerable communities in Maldives to manage climate change-induced water shortages project achieved year-round water security for its target communities. While the project evaluation noted it was too early to assess the broader impact of the project on women for the 29 islands, the impact of water projects implemented internationally have resulted in enhancing the lives of community members by decreasing household expenditure on bottled water; a reduction in the burden of water collection by the provision of water at household level or from taps close to the house, improving water security as well as increased prospects for livelihoods for both men and women. The project through its GAP, also influenced the incorporation of gender equality and inclusive targets in the 2020 National Water and Sewerage Strategic Plan.

The observed impact of the INFF project while institutional, in its effort to improve procurement, provide a gender responsive financing strategy, develop a monitoring framework and a gender balance governance and coordination mechanism does not yield immediate significant change in the lives of the intended beneficiaries. The potential exists for the project to introduce Gender Responsive Budgeting to key ministries, thus scaling up the institutional achievements to tangible actions that can be experienced in the lives of the men and women of Maldives. On an overall basis, the unintended impacts generated by the six projects included an awareness raising, development of disaggregated data which was not in existences for some of the sectors. The IGP III team has observed the Judiciary, taking an active role in becoming proactive in the implementation of gender equality initiatives, due to GEWE gains made during the implementation of IGP II.

Finding 14

The absence of gender-responsive and gender-transformative indicators resulted in only gender-targeted preliminary impacts.

Figure 5: Project meeting identified GEWE Targets



In response to the survey question on UNDP's intervention meeting the GEWE targets identified by stakeholders, a strong affirmative response was given as shown in Figure 5.

A review of the GEWE expected results primarily focused on quantitative indicators as demonstrated in Table 3 hence, while the expected GEWE results identified by the projects were met, there were very minimal changes in cultural norms, values and power structures; which are the conditions for gender responsive and transformative results.

UNDP has to be intentional in bringing about gender transformative changes in the Maldives. The gains made by creating a culture of dialogue can be capitalised to established incubators for dialogue on gender transformative initiatives that will fit the cultural context of the Maldives. The Accelerator lab can be engaged together with the project teams to engineer opportunities for future programming, thus taking steps to meet the gender transformative commitments made in the UNDP Maldives Gender Equality Strategy.

6.6 SUSTAINABILITY

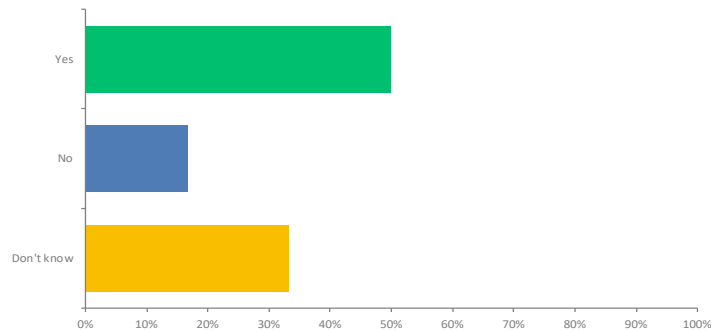
Government Stakeholders are confident projects will continue after they are closed. Sustaining projects will require financial and technical commitment. Some stakeholders see Gender Mainstreaming as an exercise for only the gender machinery. The absence of a Gender Specialist who is easily accessible is a concern. Sustaining the projects with a focus on GEWE requires backing from the UNDP both financially and technically. The Attitudes and perceptions towards women including the ownership of GEWE by all Government sectors as well as the legislative framework for GEWE to thrive for all, is a challenge.

Finding 15

Government Stakeholders are confident projects will continue after they are closed. However, interviews revealed majority of the Government stakeholders view gender mainstreaming as an exercise for the gender machinery

Extent of benefit from UNDP’s projects and interventions to GEWE continue or likely continue. While Government officials who took the survey were confident, they had the financial capacity to maintain the projects benefits as depicted in Figure 6. The key stakeholders consulted i.e. both government and beneficiaries indicated the need for financial support to sustain the projects.

Figure 6: Financial Capacity to Maintain Project Benefits



Sustainability is not only dependent on financial commitments but also the continuation of GEWE initiatives following the closure of the projects and the interest demonstrated by stakeholders to carry on the activities. As guided by the OECD on *Applying Evaluating Criteria Thoughtfully* "Assessing sustainability calls for an examination of the enabling environment: the ability of the financial, economic, social, environmental and institutional systems to sustain net benefits over time."¹⁴

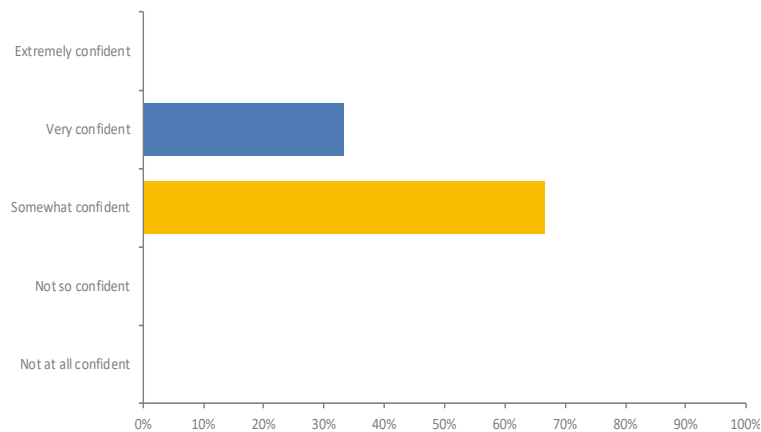
GEF 6 beneficiaries are confident that there will be a platform available within the organization to address the issues of chemical waste management and make an impact with a focus on GEWE.

Finding 16

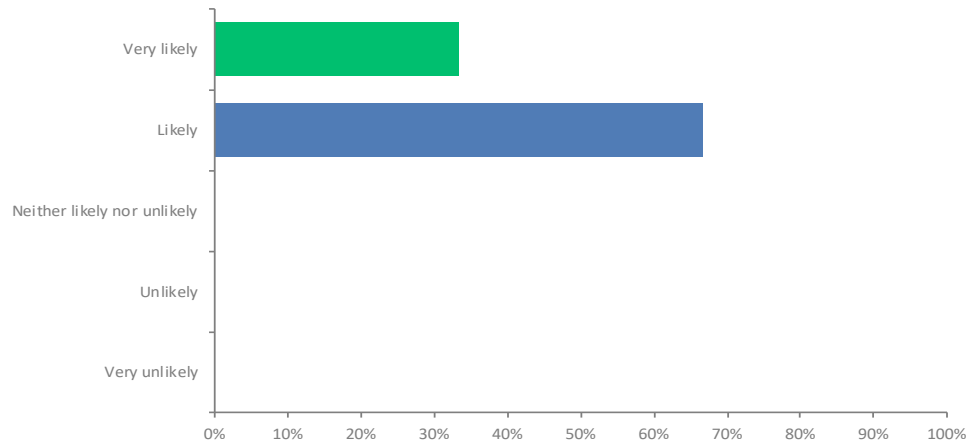
Sustaining projects will require financial and technical commitment from all stakeholders including UNDP.

While the Integrated Governance Programme has resources dedicated for GEWE, the same cannot be said of the other projects. The Country Office will have to scale up its resource mobilisation initiatives to ensure tangible resources, coupled with an enabling environment at the Ministries working with UNDP embrace gender mainstreaming as part of their work. to implement the UNDP Maldives Gender Equality Strategy to advance GEWE for the Government and people of Maldives.

Figure 7: Likelihood of Ministry to continue GEWE activities



¹⁴ [Details on how to review sustainability from a wholistic human rights perspective](#) Applying Evaluating Criteria thoughtfully pgs. 52-53

Figure 8: Ministry ability to build on GEWE changes

Sustaining the projects with a focus on GEWE requires backing from the UNDP both financially and technical support. Stakeholders were primarily somewhat confident about the Ministry's ability to carry on GEWE changes. The limited gender capacity within the ministry to support the actions including the uncertain view of stakeholders if this support can be provided by UNDP was highlighted.

The projects will require support by agencies to maintain the benefits coming out of this project: A commitment to explore the implementation of a gender responsive budgeting system can alleviate the immediate concerns to maintain GEWE benefits coming out of the projects. Another sustainability mechanism to sustain the benefits of the intervention will be UNDP supporting Government partners to lobby for further state funding including mobilising donor funding as well maintain the gains made by the project.

Finding 17

The absence of an in-house Gender Specialist based primarily at the Country Office and is easily accessible to both Government and UNDP stakeholders was raised as a concern

The absence of dedicated gender capacity at the UNDP Office and the line ministries is an area of concern when the issue of sustainability is pondered. While technical staff are engaged to include gender, based on lessons learnt from

gender mainstreaming strategies globally, this has been seen as extra requirement for technocrats thus, not fully utilising the opportunity to mainstream gender as a sustained integral part of the project. Hence, the absence of a dedicated gender specialist, preliminary GEWE actions are taken.

Finding 18

The Attitudes and perceptions towards women including the ownership of GEWE by all Government sectors as well as the legislative framework for GEWE to thrive for all, is limited

Consultations revealed an increase in the inclusion of women in the Civil Service. However, it has not changed the perceptions and attitudes towards women. Except for the Judiciary, where female judges assert their rights and show ownership of gender equality principles by introducing GEWE interventions, a similar observation was not revealed in the other five projects. The existence of the GEAP as a national corporate identifier is yet to be embraced and mainstreamed to yield results such as gender budgeting to enhance sustainability. Additionally, the Maldives CEDAW report points out gaps in the legislative framework to incentivise the desired institutional environment for all men and women, boys and girls, to thrive to their fullest potential. Thus, sustainability is challenged from a gender-responsive and gender-transformative stance.

6.7 **CONCLUSION**

UNDP has invested heavily in advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Maldives through the 6 projects evaluated. The findings led to the following conclusions.

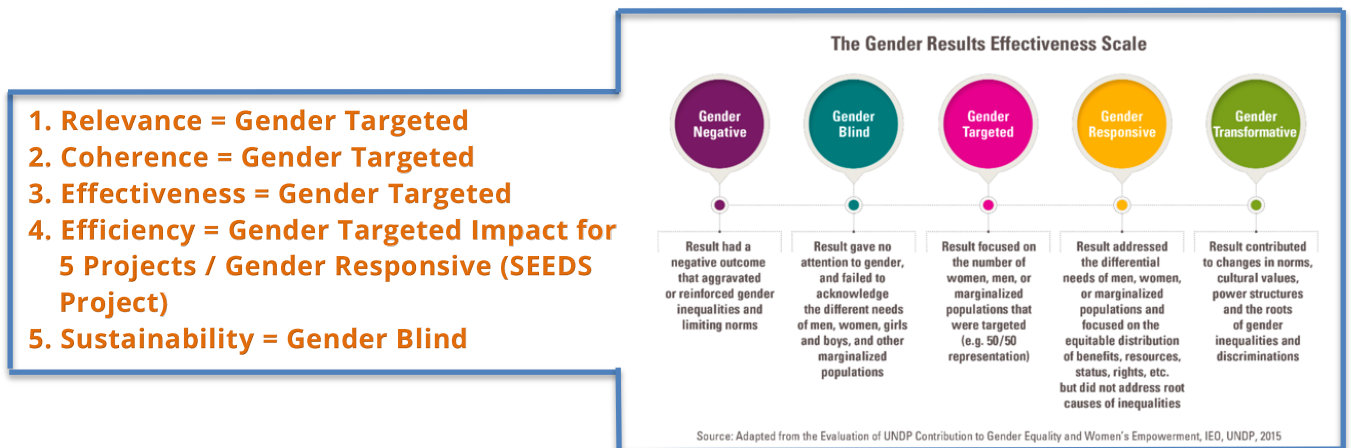
CONCLUSION 1: The lack of an in-depth gender analysis to examine the root causes of gender inequality has limited the project documents to only formulate gender target indicators. Hence indicators do not delve deeply into addressing the different gendered needs of women, men, boys and girls. The projects primarily focus on achieving gender results based on the number of men and women engaged, which creates a gender balance but leaves key gender related issues such as the equitable distribution of benefits, resources, rights, root

causes of inequalities, norms, cultural values, power structures and the systemic roots of gender inequality and discrimination unaddressed.

CONCLUSION 2:

The GES was used to assess how the GTA criteria fared from a gender perspective.

Figure 9: Summary Evaluation



Rating

Based on the above rating, recommendations were made to enhance the gender related work of UNDP in the Maldives.

CONCLUSION 3:

While the projects reviewed were relevant, the development of the GEAP has led to a realignment to take place. Efforts must be made with the support of a gender specialist to ensure gender transformative project activities and indicators contribute to the GEAP including the development of gender transformative policies and the breakdown of institutional barriers.

CONCLUSION 4:

Establishing a partnership alliance to with the National Gender Bureau / unit for all gender related projects will add value and enhance sustainability of the project results.

CONCLUSION 5:

Although majority of the projects met their targeted indicator expectations, an intentional attempt must be made to go beyond achieving statistics for gender parity; the status quo must be examined from a human rights perspective and the results carried using change management principles.

CONCLUSION 6:

The recruitment of a Gender Specialist and an M&E Specialist will enhance the efficient delivery of UNDP Projects to be gender transformative addressing the unique gender intersectionality existing in the Maldives. The assistance of the M&E Specialist will help project teams develop their annual M&E plan and capture the gender results.

CONCLUSION 7:

Emphasis must be placed on tracking and reporting on the GEWE budget allocations in projects, ensuring at least 15% of the budget goes towards GEWE activities.

CONCLUSION 8:

While Preliminary impacts of the projects evaluated were minimal the gains made will be lost if the root causes of gender inequality are not addressed by transformative activities. For example, communities and households not understanding the challenges of unpaid care work falling primarily on women; the lack of support from spouses and family members can lead to women empowered by the IGP projects to scale back their interest to enter electoral politics as the burden of care and prevailing gender biases create a difficult environment for them to exercise their human right to enter this field of work.

CONCLUSION 9:

Establishing partnerships with Governments, private sector organisations including CSOs can assist in sustaining projects beyond the close off date.

CONCLUSION 10:

The adherence and follow up on GTE observations and recommendations have proven to augment meeting development priorities and leaving no one behind.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the report spells out key recommendations to scale up UNDP's work to gender responsive and gender transformative projects, thus addressing root causes and to promote and sustain Gender Equality in the Maldives.

Table 4 - Recommendations

Recommendations	Agencies involved to action recommendation			Action Points	Rational
	Gov	UNDP	CSO & Private Sector		
Recommendation 1: Continue to review ongoing projects from a gender lens and explore avenues to incorporate gender dimensions beyond the number of male and female beneficiaries; include activities that will consider actioning initiatives to address root causes of inequality, norms, power structures and resources. The aim is to end up with gender-responsive and gender-transformative results. 'Gender transformative programmes	✓	✓	✓	1. Review gender analysis questionnaire and include questions that tackle patriarchy, gender norms and biases, including other intersectionality specific to the culture in the Maldives.	The GEAP depicts a commitment to address gender equality tangibly. It opens the door to explore national barriers that will impede its realisation. Conclusions 3 & 5

Recommendations	Agencies involved to action recommendation			Action Points	Rational
	Gov	UNDP	CSO & Private Sector		
typically include participatory processes that foster critical and personal reflection about gender roles, norms, and inequalities; promote positive, more equitable behaviours and norms; and where possible, aim to transform the underlying norms, structures, and policies that sustain inequality ¹⁵				<p>2. Sensitize Gov officials, key stakeholders and targeted communities for projects on GEWE, societal and behavioural changes that will be required for the GEAP to be achieved.</p> <p>3. Where feasible develop gender responsive and gender transformative indicators in consultation</p>	

¹⁵ [Gender Transformative Programmes](#)

Recommendations	Agencies involved to action recommendation			Action Points	Rational
	Gov	UNDP	CSO & Private Sector		
				with Gov and community stakeholders	
Recommendation 2: Continue more dynamic systematic gender orientation programmes for existing and new UNDP staff, Government stakeholders, beneficiaries and those who are working on the projects including those at the policy level, to see GEWE as integral to all phases of the project cycle, specifically on gender transformative approaches and process to achieve meaningful results.	✓	✓		<p>1. Develop a dynamic systematic training plan for new and existing Country Office staff</p> <p>2. Dialogue with Gov to develop a training plan for UNDP Ministry project counterparts.</p>	<p>The projects implemented to date including the national and community dialogues held to date highlight openness for further conversations and learning.</p> <p>Conclusions 1 & 2</p>
Recommendation 3: Continue to strengthen partnerships with the national gender machinery to sensitise Ministries, media and the		✓		1. Hold meetings with Ministry with	The national gender machinery has the mandate for GEWE and gender mainstreaming

Recommendations	Agencies involved to action recommendation			Action Points	Rational
	Gov	UNDP	CSO & Private Sector		
<p>general public about the socio-cultural barriers to women's success in living to their fullest potential. These sensitisation sessions will compliment ongoing activities and result in a successful approach to gender responsive and gender transformative project results.</p>				<p>responsibility for gender.</p> <p>2. Develop a GEWE advocacy plan to include amongst others, topics such as CEDAW, GEWE international obligations, innovative measures that can facilitate and motivate women to enter male dominated sectors</p> <p>3. Implement the plan with frequent monitoring to</p>	<p>with access to the wider population than UNDP. Working with them will foster national ownership to create an environment where gender responsive and gender transformative results can take place.</p> <p>Conclusion 4</p>

Recommendations	Agencies involved to action recommendation			Action Points	Rational
	Gov	UNDP	CSO & Private Sector		
				ensuring its meeting its targets.	
<p>Recommendation 4: Enhance monitoring data and indicators to be gender responsive and gender transformative. Determine goals and indicators of projects will contribute directly to gender equality and women's empowerment. Make the indicator development a consultative process with beneficiaries to get buy-in and willingness to work together to deliver the results.</p>	✓	✓	✓	<p>1.Continue reviewing ongoing project indicators, after stakeholder gender sensitisation sessions.</p> <p>2.Assign M&E and gender specialists to lead gender responsive and gender transformative Indicator development sessions.</p>	<p>Indicators developed for ongoing projects are currently gender targeted and will not lead to gender responsive or gender transformative results.</p> <p>Conclusions 5 & 6</p>

Recommendations	Agencies involved to action recommendation			Action Points	Rational
	Gov	UNDP	CSO & Private Sector		
Recommendation 5: Engage in sustainability conversations from project design phase with Government officials and stakeholders, exploring ways to partner with private sector or other entities for financial sustainability of projects especially projects with Atolls.	✓	✓	✓	<p>1.UNDP to initiate meetings with Gov and key stakeholders on key requirements for sustainable gender responsive projects.</p> <p>2. Create an action plan</p>	<p>When applying a human rights and gender equality lens to the criteria on sustainability the Maldives is heavily challenged.</p> <p>Conclusion 9</p>
Recommendation 6: Explore with Senior management and programme teams possibilities to progressively plan for a higher percentage of the budget, seeking to achieve the UNDP global mandate of 15%, which will address the project-	✓	✓		<p>1.Develop a gender specific resource mobilisation plan</p> <p>2. Equip Programme</p>	<p>UNDP Maldives in its Gender Equality Strategy has made a commitment to start in 2023 to allocate 15% of project budgets to GEWE</p> <p>Conclusion 7</p>

Recommendations	Agencies involved to action recommendation			Action Points	Rational
	Gov	UNDP	CSO & Private Sector		
level gender needs at the GEN3 level.				staff with to apply UNDP tool that demonstrate 15% allocation of funds to gender equality.	
Recommendation 7: Explore opportunities to recruit a gender specialist at Country Office level.		✓		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mobilise resources for additional staff. 2. Develop ToR and recruit a local gender specialist with experience in M&E. 3. Equip gender specialist with change management 	<p>Both Government and UNDP stakeholders expressed the need for an inhouse Maldives based CO gender specialist.</p> <p>Conclusion 6</p>

Recommendations	Agencies involved to action recommendation			Action Points	Rational
	Gov	UNDP	CSO & Private Sector		
				skills to facilitate their work to effect behaviour change in gender inequality perceptions.	
<p>Recommendation 8 Work closely with Government partners, UN agencies, CSOs and Private Sector Organisations to develop additional projects or joint programmes aligned with the GEAP and where feasible incorporate indicators into existing ongoing projects. Priority should be given to the following GEAP aligned SDG indicators: -</p> <p>5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current</p>	✓	✓	✓	<p>1.UNDP to meeting with Government counterpart to discuss this recommendation</p> <p>2. Hold project development planning sessions with key stakeholders using the GEAP</p>	<p>The GEAP is a recently launched plan. UNDP has the opportunity to advance implementation of the GEAP and also work with other agencies on Joint programmes to achieve the same.</p> <p>Conclusions 1 & 2</p>

<p>or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age.</p> <p>5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence.</p> <p>5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments</p> <p>5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions</p> <p>5.a.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure</p> <p>5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women’s equal rights to land ownership and/or control</p>				<p>aligned SDG priority indicators.</p>	
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Recommendations	Agencies involved to action recommendation			Action Points	Rational
	Gov	UNDP	CSO & Private Sector		
5.c.1 Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment					
<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>Recruit an additional M&E staff at the Country Office I dedicated to support in house project level key M&E initiatives.</p>		✓		<p>1. Senior management to mobilise resources for M&E staff recruitment</p> <p>2. Recruit M&E staff member with experience in developing and reporting on gender responsive and gender transformative indicators.</p>	<p>Stakeholders attested to limited resources and capacity to track M&E results. Efficient delivery and measuring results using gender data are essential elements of gender transformational projects.</p> <p>Conclusion 6</p>

8. LESSONS LEARNED

The lessons learnt from the evaluation exercise and the implementation of the projects up to the time of the evaluation process are listed below.

1. Challenges in coordination with partners was one of the main issues raised from the stakeholder interviews. Especially on the area of gender equality and women's empowerment. Coordination should be given a priority, especially within the sectors relevant for specific projects.
2. More focus should be given to carry out a gender analysis prior to project design and how results can be achieved on changing root causes and power dynamics and status of women.
3. Periodically review and align Projects with Government's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment priorities. As some of the projects commenced before the implementation of GEAP, the projects need to be reviewed and as much as possible to align with the national GEWE priorities and plans.
4. Involvement of a gender specialist from UNDP during all levels of project cycle management is key to have consistency and success focus on inclusivity and gender transformative process.
5. Consideration should be given to power dynamics once women start earning and how the project made a positive impact on the power dynamics.
6. More focused awareness on gender issues, gender perspectives and its impact on development should be given both to government partners and UNDP staff.
7. Budgets are not distributed from a gender lens, no gender responsive budgeting. Hence, it is important to have gender responsive budgeting carried out for all the projects.
8. Anticipated benefits for women are not documented prior to the project implementation. Therefore, it is required to ask these questions in the project identification process.
9. At the design stage, there was no assessment of legal, cultural, religious or other constraints on women's potential participation in the project. It is recommended to formulate strategies to address these during the design phase.
10. Consultation with CSOs in the development of institutional frameworks is recommended for any gender related work.
11. No specific indicators were formulated to measure women's achievement and contribution to gender equality. It is vital to define indicators to measure

progress and contribution to gender equality so that how women are benefitted can be documented.

12. Realist timing and duration to be provided for workshops such as that on chemical waste management. Also, detail information to be shared with the participants.
13. Timing of evaluation exercises with ongoing national activities should be examined and priority given to assist evaluators meet stakeholders in a timely manner.
14. Applying lessons learnt from previous projects can go a long way to minimize risks.

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