

Outcome Evaluation on UNDP's Engagement with Civil Society Actors and Mechanisms, including Small Grants Schemes between 2008 - 2012

Revised Draft Report



Mallika R. Samaranayake and Shaufa A Saeed

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Abbreviations

A2J	Access to Justice
AEC	Atoll Ecosystem Conservation
AusAid	Australian Agency for International Development
BDSC	Business Development Service Centre
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality
DIA	Direct Implementation Approach
EAMP	Environment Awareness media Project
FAO	Food and agriculture Organization
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GEF- SGP	Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme
HDI	Human Development Index
HRCM	Human Rights Commission of the Maldives
HRD	Human Resource Development
HRM	Human Rights Commission
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IGP	Integrated Governance Programs
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
IUCN	International Union for Conservation Nature
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MARPs	Most-at-Risk populations
MCS	Maldivian Civil Society
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MDN	Maldivian Democracy Network
MFF SGF	Mangrove for Future Small Grant Facility
MFF	Mangroves for the Future

MNAW	Maldives Network on Violence against Women
MoFA	Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MWs	Migrant Workers
NDA	National Drug Agency
NGO	Non Government Organization
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NIM	National Implementing Modality
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
P4D	Partnering for Development
RBME	Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation
REIO	Renewable Energy Investment Office
RETDAP	Renewable Energy Technology Development and. Application Project
ROAR	Results Oriented Annual Report
RWs	Resort Workers
SAP	Strategic Action Plan
SGF	Small Grants Facility
SHE	Society for Health Education
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
STELCO	State Electric Company
ToTs	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VCT	Voluntary Counseling and Testing
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

Since the first democratic elections in 2008 Maldives has been moving forward, despite many challenges, towards building up as a democratic state. The country has recognized the fact that civil society actors are a vital element for the establishment and stabilization of democratic structures and instruments, furtherance of democratic norms and values, and for the mobilization of popular participation in good governance. Through the UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD 2008-2011 and 2011-2015,) UNDP Maldives has supported national development efforts through four areas of work described in early sections of this report. In doing so, UNDP has worked closely with civil society actors, including non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, private sector, and women and youth groups. The country as well as UNDP has much wider objectives in strengthening the civil society, to build it as a powerful instrument to be able to meaningfully participate in democratic institution building and in the overall national development efforts.

Given the above context UNDP Maldives initiated an independent evaluation to critically assess strength and weaknesses of its past and ongoing engagement and mechanisms and learn lessons for the future. This outcome level evaluation is part of UNDP Maldives Country Office evaluation plan for 2011 – 2015 and is expected to review projects and non-project interventions that support civil society development and require civil society engagement and mechanisms across all program areas of the CPD.

The ***purpose of the evaluation*** is to help UNDP Maldives to review its project and non-project work 1) as a direct contribution to the UNDP CPD outcome on civil society engagement and also 2) an indirect means (partnership strategy and engagement, and mechanisms – e.g. small grants) in achieving its overall development goals across the country programme of UNDP.

The ***methodology*** adopted was a combination of qualitative and quantitative assessment tools. The techniques utilized were *i). Intensive desk review* of reports (Project Documents, Progress Reports, Annual Reports, Field Visit Reports, Reports of Missions commissioned by UNDP etc,) for gathering secondary information, *ii). Qualitative information* was generated using ***Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)*** with Government, NGOs/CSOs and UNDP Unit staff based on a structured format and a rating scale ranging from 1-5 (Low to High), *iii). Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)* selected from different stakeholder categories using a structure interview schedule covering stakeholders from Government, NGOs / CSOs, Donors & UNDP Senior staff based on an interview structure and *iv). A beneficiary questionnaire* reaching 100 beneficiaries from the key program components and small grants recipients. Details appear in Chapter 2.0 in Section 2.3.

The ***sampling*** frame for applying the above tools and techniques was purposive given the country context of a wide dispersion of Island communities. However, 10 FGDs with UNDP Unit staff and implementing partners and 19 KIIs with relevant stakeholders under the four program components and 100 questionnaires of beneficiaries from the different program

components - Democratic Governance (40), Poverty Reduction (30) & Environment and Energy (30) and Small Grants Recipients (29). Details appear in Chapter 2.0 in Section 2.3. The **detailed findings** appear in Chapters 3.0, 4.0, 5.0 & 6.0 under the different program components but based on United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Criteria namely, **Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Sustainability** in terms of direct contribution to the UNDP CPD outcome on civil society engagement and indirect means (partnership strategy and mechanisms in achieving the overall development goals of UNDP Country Program.

The evaluation also makes an effort to comment on the shortcomings and strengths of UNDP engagement strategy with civil society actors and mechanisms (including small grants) as a base towards making forward-looking practical and substantive recommendations.

Overview of Key Findings

Relevance of UNDP's Direct Contributions and Partnership Strategy

Relevance of UNDP's direct contributions and partnership strategies and mechanisms were considered under three aspects, namely i) Relevance to national and community needs and priorities, ii) Relevance of UNDP's partnership strategy and mechanisms to national conditions and priorities iii) Relevance of UNDP to pursue the development results and work with civil society.

With regard to **direct contribution to the UNDP CPD outcome on civil society engagement** was found to be **highly relevant** and supported by evidence from desk review, FGDs, KIIs & beneficiary perceptions. Support to the preparation of policy documents (revision of Associations Act) related to civil society in partnership with the government, incorporation of human rights and democracy (new concepts to Maldivian society) as major components in UNDP's democratic governance program and women being better able to participate and voice their opinions as an outcome of training were considered as substantial contributions in supporting civil society engagement. However, the program was restricted to NGOs with democratic governance in their agenda which was a limitation.

UNDP's partnership strategy and mechanisms adopted such as use of various modalities to engage civil society allowing engagement with CSOs of varying capacities and expertise were also found to be very relevant. Use of grants to civil society directly helped overcome challenges faced in achieving development goals when working with government and the ability to support reaching more isolated communities were found to be **highly relevant to national conditions and priorities**. When compared with the limited number of NGOs focusing on specialized areas, the operation of the small grants mechanism to civil society is even more significant.

Leadership role of UNDP can also be regarded as **highly relevant** to pursue intended development results and work with civil society due to its long term presence in the country as compared to UN and other agencies and consequent understanding of local context. UNDP is also considered as impartial by both government and civil society organizations which adds to its value of the capacity to play a leadership role. However, civil society still needs to understand the role of UNDP to detach from a dependency relationship

perspective. Although UNDP is being mandated to work with government, sometimes hostile relationship between government and CSOs could be a challenge

Effectiveness of UNDP's Direct Contributions and Partnership Strategy

Direct contributions to the UNDP CPD outcome on civil society engagement was found to be **fairly effective** due to: UNDP's catalytic support in increasing awareness of the role of civil society within government and among communities, UNDP's Governance programme successfully increased the dialogue and interaction between Government agencies and the civil society. Prioritization of inclusion of atoll based CSOs has allowed them to access opportunities for improved capacities and human rights NGOs have expanded activities and joint initiatives with UNDP support. However, some NGOs are found to be active only until funding ceases for projects. Only Male' based NGOs are fairly well established.

UNDP's **partnership strategy** and mechanisms found to be **fairly effective**. The current partnership strategy allows capacity building of CSOs and linkage building with the private sector to some extent. UNDP supported to design a methodology to conduct public forums and piloted in the North with the potential of expanding to other areas as planned under the P4D program can be considered as a conscious effort to engage the Private Sector in development interventions.

Small Grants Mechanisms, engagement of civil society for the small grants mechanisms and the process adopted has opened opportunities for civil society actors to participate in the development process. Majority of small grant recipients are atoll based who had limited interaction with development actors, contributing to a wider geographic coverage. Small grants mechanisms promoted development of the capacity of youth and women in participating in development activities and providing space for voicing their opinions. Access to financial support developed a sense of ownership among grant beneficiaries building a sense of credibility. However, the fact that small grants mechanisms provide financial assistance does not guarantee technical assistance accompanying the process. Project cycle based funding was found to be inadequate to go beyond project period. The Training of Trainers (ToTs) largely dependent on a multiplier effect did not take place as envisaged due to fund constraints. Small grants mechanisms did not have a systematic monitoring system and reporting was limited to activity implementation. Linkage to local government institutions is yet to take place.

Gender equity and mainstreaming, efforts taken to increase women representation in politics eg. 46% of women elected to local councils participated in UNDP supported training for women contestants. However, although gender is almost always considered during design stage of projects there is still a lack of proper understanding of gender equity and mainstreaming among government and CSO partners as evidenced from FGDs. Although gender mainstreaming is accepted particularly in the poverty reduction component, the management and resources of CBO partners are dominated by men.

Vulnerable groups: Partnership with CSOs under Global Fund project allowed engagement with vulnerable groups who were not specifically targeted in Government interventions. However, lack of clear definition of who constitutes vulnerable groups limits targeting their needs during design and implementation of interventions under certain UNDP components.

With regard to progress made: The overall impression with regard to the progress achieved towards the stated outcome or outputs on civil society engagement and development was found to be ***fairly satisfactory and is on track***. Capacity of NGOs supported by UNDP was found to be higher than those not supported. Awareness of the government and non government sectors with regard to role of civil society ***increased as a result of the interventions under the country program***. GEF SGP is moving in a positive direction with engagement of local communities. However, many targets have not been achieved due to process delays, capacity constraints and the political situation. Sometimes NGOs & CSOs participation is limited to implementation and no significant role in decision making.

It is noted that ***some progress has been made towards achieving the civil society outcome in relation to all outcomes in general as per CPD***. The program has expanded through the engagement of existing networks and expanded in thematic areas as well, increasing the dialogue and interaction between government agencies and civil society. It was pointed out that in the context of Maldivian society the concept of civil society engagement is new and will take time to be internalized. Progress towards the achievement of HIV/AIDS prevention and care has been substantial, yet the capacity of NGOs & CSOs needs to be strengthened.

With regard to ***factors contributing*** to achieving the intended outcome can be identified as increased awareness among government authorities on the role of civil society, increased dialogue and interaction between government agencies and civil society, UNDP support to capacity building of NGOs, use of different modalities to engage civil society and the ability of UNDP to adjust the program to reflect national priorities and the willingness of NGOs & CSOs to engage themselves in program interventions.

Factors that inhibit the achievement of the outcome appear to be capacity constraints of partners, political instability, civil society engagement being new, limited outreach of training, financial and technical capacity of NGOs being limited and the geographic dispersion of Island communities.

Efficiency of UNDP's Direct Contributions and Partnership Strategy

UNDP's ***direct contributions and partnership strategy and mechanisms*** were found to be ***somewhat efficient*** in terms of timeliness and cost effectiveness. Partnering with CSOs have overcome delays in implementation experienced with government partnerships. Partnering with atoll based CSOs is cost-effective considering limitations in outreach due to geographic constraints. However, UNDP requirements and procedures (procurement, CSO partner reporting) were found to be time consuming and complicated for some partners.

UNDP's internal capacity and structure: Technical expertise and experience on working to strengthen civil society. Technical capacity on specific areas of work can be utilized by CSO partners who are often very new to their respective areas. However, outreach was limited causing difficulties in communication with CSOs and internal technical capacity development efforts were also limited.

Coordination among UNDP components, UN agencies and other partners: Regular meetings are held to stimulate internal coordination and annual work plans are validated by all units. However, inadequate communication and coordination with UN agencies and other partners working with CSOs – sometimes lead to duplication of efforts. Less frequent regular meetings of UN thematic groups

Monitoring and Evaluation: Results based monitoring and evaluation yet to be internalized. Limited monitoring of outcomes and impact and reporting is more on activity implementation and financial progress. Limited field visits due to financial constraints in overcoming geographic challenge. CSO partners' have limited knowledge of indicators.

Sustainability of UNDP's Direct Contributions and Partnership Strategy

Direct contributions to the UNDP CPD outcome on civil society engagement appears **somewhat sustainable** but requires a much longer period to have systems in place given the changing environment with regard to democratic governance. UNDP support to MoHA in strengthening environment for civic engagement builds necessary foundation for future development efforts. The contributions through the Access to Justice Project are contributory towards creating an environment for civil society participation with a strong emphasis on a rights based approach. Therefore support for developing a meaningful legal and regulatory framework that enables civil society to thrive is a process and requires the time duration necessary to bring all actors on board. The attempt to establish operational administrative structures suitable for decentralized decision making is yet another area that demands UNDP contribution in building capacities particularly of the island councils.

However, inadequate understanding at policy level on the complementary role of civil society in development poses a challenge in engaging civil society organizations at the different administrative levels. Inadequate capacity of most NGOs (technical expertise, skills in financial and project management, record keeping, fundraising etc) will be limitations in realising the expected outcome. **Small grant schemes** tend to support activities rather than strengthen capacity of small grants recipients. NGOs challenged by perceptions of political affiliation and bias. Rising religious fundamentalism and cultural norms are challenges to addressing gender equity and mainstreaming.

UNDP's partnership strategy in designing project interventions with sustainability elements built in **is not very significant as assessed by stakeholders**. The very concept of partnership with CSOs/NGOs is meaningful from a development context allowing partners to enhance their capacities, confidence and credibility **can be considered as planting seeds for future sustainability**. Private sector linkages with civil society organisations have prospects of maturing into sustainable development efforts. However, not much emphasis on long term partnerships – likelihood that projects can collapse when external support ceases. Inadequate attention to clear exit strategies and guidelines for project takeover by partners is an issue. Effective consideration of sustainability factors in design and implementation phases including community involvement in a participatory process of development remains to be improved.

Key Recommendations

Strategic and Programmatic Recommendations based on the findings are detailed in **Chapter 7.0 in Section 7.2.**

Strategic and Programmatic recommendations are in the area of:

1. Capacity building of NGOs / CBOs in the context of long term needs to stimulate and galvanize evolving democratic processes in Maldives
2. With regard to sustainability of the UNDP supported project interventions emphasis to be placed in having a clear exit strategy with awareness among all stakeholders
3. Joint strategic approach among other UN Agencies and Bi-Lateral Agencies towards common development Goals
4. Area based program development approach in the context of the wide geographic spread of Maldives
5. Promotion of public / private partnerships to ensure private sector involvement in civil society organizations
6. Enhancing capacities of UNDP program staff and partner institutions for Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation and Reporting
7. Improving the potential of small grant mechanism for civil society engagement
8. Furthering the work under Partnership for Development (P4D) program for fostering business linkages and CSR
9. UNDP to assist laying a firm foundation with its Government Counterparts at national and local level by supporting institutionalization and strengthening capacities for creating and enabling environment for civil society strengthening

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Country Context

The Republic of the Maldives is comprised of small low-lying coral islands. Its 1,190 coral islands grouped into 26 atolls stretch over an area of 90,000 sq. km. The islands are very small in extent and 3 islands have a land extent of over 3 square kilometers. Just 13.33% of the total land area is arable. The population of approximately 394,000 (2012 estimate) is scattered over 198 inhabited islands. Only 4 islands have a population of over 5,000, while 67% of all inhabited islands have a population of less than 1,000 people. Another 80 islands have been developed as tourist resorts. With the elevation being 0m to 2.4m, Maldives is highly vulnerable to climate change.

Maldives has made ***significant progress in terms of economic and social development*** during the past two decades. The country has experienced relatively low inflation through out the recent years. It has the highest Human Development Index (HDI) ranking in South Asia and is on track on five of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets. More effort is however needed with regard to the achievement of 3 MDGs namely, promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women (MDG 3, ensuring environmental sustainability (MDG 7), developing a global partnership for development (MDG 8). The steady economic growth seen over the past several years was due to the expansion of the tourism and fisheries sectors. However, this masks wide disparities between the capital and outer atolls as well as between atolls. It also does not reflect the considerable challenges Maldives faces as a small island developing State. Despite becoming a 'MDG Plus' country, considerable challenges remain in Maldives. There are increasing disparities between the rich and the poor and between the capital island Male and the outlying atolls. Although extreme poverty has been eradicated, poverty rates are heavily concentrated in the atolls, which contain more than 60% of the country's poor. Revenue from tourism comprises approximately 28% of total government revenue and tourism brings nearly 75% of foreign exchange reserves.

In 2008, Maldives witnessed a ***peaceful transition to democratic rule***, with the 2008 ratification of a new Constitution and the multi-party presidential and parliamentary elections. The newly elected government appreciated the need for swift economic reforms pivoted on greater private sector involvement in the development of the country and initiated private-public partnership programs in several sectors. Part of the major democratic change has been the space created for civil society through explicit guarantee of the rights of freedom of expression and association. There are currently over 1300 registered NGOs in the country though comparatively few are regularly active. The newly established democratic, human rights and justice institutions are in their early stages and struggle to define and implement their mandates. They require significant technical, institutional and human resource support. This need has been enhanced in the context of the recent controversial transfer of power and the current rapidly changing democratic landscape in the country.

The ***Government has set out its priorities and clear strategies in the national Strategic Action Plan*** to address its development challenges, including guarantees that space will be allowed for individual freedom and the civil society to thrive. However, Maldives will require strong cooperation from its development partners in support of its efforts to nurture a nascent

democracy, withstand and effectively respond to the impact of the global economic crises and its vulnerability to climate change as it adjusts to ***graduation to middle-income status***.

1.2 Civil Society Context

A comprehensive study made of the Maldivian Civil Society in 2011, commissioned by UNDP, puts the number of civil society organizations registered in Maldives at over 1,200. Civil society organizations are considered “vital partners for decision-makers, as they are best placed to know population’s needs in terms of development. They are important because they are neither created nor controlled by the state. In the current context, where the democratic reform process is rife with tensions and has given rise to new challenges for the country, ***it is vital that the civil society sector is strengthened*** to fulfill their role as watchdogs, advocates and lobby groups. The key to build capacity of local NGOs and exploit the synergy, based on partnerships and coalitions”¹.

Civil society’s role is particularly ***relevant to the generation of public dialogue and in giving a voice***, to the marginalized groups on sensitive issues such as women’s rights and gender-based violence. It is equally important in the process of decentralization and is relevant in the recent developments that have taken place in this regard in Maldives with the appointment of local councils within the atolls².

The ***Constitution of Maldives*** itself provides a framework for the civil society by guaranteeing ‘the ***freedom of thought and of communicating opinions and expressions***, the freedom of acquiring and imparting knowledge and the right to undertake measures to achieve economic and social rights”, only constitutional limitations being that civil society shall not engage in political activity and in activities that are contradictory to Islam. The Associations Act of 2003 depicts the role of civil society in local governance and mentions CSOs alongside companies and other development agencies as an equal partner of state.

Civil Society Organizations in Maldives are diverse in their objectives as well as in their organizational forms. They are engaged in one or more of 25 main areas of work ranging from Sports, Music and Leisure (54.0%) Social Development, Volunteerism, Service and Peace-building (45.1%) Economic and Business Development, Employment and Income Generation (25.7%), Education, Training and Learning Improvement (22.5%), Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups (21.6%), Environment Protection, Climate Change Response , Wild-life Protection (19.4%) to Prevention of Drug use and Drug trade (8.9%), Human Rights (7.0%), Good Governance and Democracy (5.8%) etc³.

Most organizations are involved in more than one area of work showing a high level of ***multi-sector engagement***. The study indicates that almost half of the CSOs are ‘generalists’ (meaning that they are involved in a number of different areas and bound to an island or to a particular community). Generalists are often keen to promote its overall development and advancement concept and are found to operate more out of Male and who often lack professional and technical resources. The other half of CSOs are ‘specialists (meaning that

¹ Preliminary Impact Evaluation Report – Support to Civil Society Development Project –Sept 2010-Sept 2011

² Preliminary Impact Evaluation Report – Support to Civil Society Development Project –Sept 2010-Sept 2011

³ Summary Report - Comprehensive Study of the Maldivian Society

they focus on a fewer range of areas of work and tend to develop a specialized and deeper knowledge of the area that they are engaged with). A greater proportion of specialist CSOs are based in Male. This category of CSOs is more likely to possess professional and technical resources at their disposal.

The civil society sector is driven by a **high level of volunteerism**. The study indicated that only 0.7% of those involved in the sector received payment for their services. CSOs were also said to possess ethical responsibilities and obligations to the society and its citizens. A large majority of CSOs (35.7%) conducted their activities from funds collected through their own fundraising activities, and through sponsorships (34.3%).

“A project co-funded by AusAid and UNDP, “*The Support to Civil Society Development in the Maldives: Small Grants Facility (SGF)*” was developed to help strengthen civil society through targeted support to NGOs and empower civil society to effectively lobby for issues through institutional systems of public dialogue, particularly the smaller, remote organizations at the local levels in the Maldives”⁴

Being the principal vehicle through which the outcomes of the country programme are anticipated to be achieved, **strengthening of civil society is a major initiative** of the project. Basically civil society strengthening involves both technical facilitation and financial support. Workshops centered around project formulation and writing of project proposals, consolidation of structures and procedures and project implementation and monitoring have been conducted to a cross section of civil society organizations.

1.3 Programme Context

UNDP has been working in Maldives in the area of reduction of disparities and vulnerabilities, promotion of democratic governance, protection of the environment and in empowerment of communities through provision of technical expertise, advisory support, and UNDP supported project interventions with the overall objective of improving people’s lives. During the previous cycle, the UNDP focused its support on the areas of democratic governance, poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS prevention and the environment, climate change adaptation and disaster-risk reduction. Experiences gained (as per desk review) demonstrate that UNDP has contributed substantially not only towards post-tsunami recovery, achievement of MDG goals and strengthening of national institutions, but also in the area of democratic transition. The UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) for Maldives (2011 -2015) sought to build on the gains made in the previous cycle to reinforce democratic transition through strategic policy and capacity development support and to sustain the gains made under the 5 MDGs. The CPD supports sustainable human development goals and is fully aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2011-2015 and national development priorities articulated in the Government’s Strategic Action Plan, 2009-2013.

The **Country Programme was designed** to focus on four main areas, namely, (i) democratic governance, (ii) poverty reduction, (iii) HIV/AIDS and (iv) environment, energy and climate

⁴ Preliminary Impact Evaluation Report – Support to Civil Society Development Project –Sept 2010-Sept 2011

change adaptation. The overall strategy of the Country Programme focuses on strategic upstream policy support and strengthening policy dialogue and advocacy, capacity development at the national and local levels and scaling-up of successful pilot initiatives. The programme has a strong focus on gender equality and targets vulnerable groups particularly women and youth.

1.4 Programme Components in the context of Civil Society Engagement and Partnership Strategy

1.4.1 Democratic Governance: Since 2010 UNDP's Democratic Governance Unit in collaboration with AusAID has implemented the Support to Civil Society Development Small Grants Facility, with the aim of supporting initiatives of NGOs and other CSOs to advocate for good governance, human rights, development of women's rights and participation in development and to strengthen civil society engagement in the democratic process.

UNDP has issued three rounds of grants. In each round, prior to issuing grants, workshops are held for potential applicants from the civil society including NGOs to increase capacity in areas such as project management, proposal writing and working with donors in order to guarantee the quality of project proposals submitted.

The first round in 2010 issued grants to 9 CSOs from different areas in the country. Projects selected in the first round covered a range of thematic areas such as empowerment and capacity building of NGOs (2), electoral violence monitoring (1), awareness raising on rights of persons with disabilities (1), raising awareness on the Employment Act and human rights enshrined in the Constitution among civil servants (1), raising public awareness on local governance and promoting civil society participation in local development planning (2) and empowerment of women leaders (2).

The second round in 2011 issued grants to 13 CSOs from different areas in the country. Projects selected in the second round also covered a range of thematic areas such as empowering youth human rights organizations (1), promoting youth participation in society (2), promoting transparency and accountability in local governance (1), promoting community awareness on good governance and human rights (7) and promoting women's empowerment and training women leaders (2).

The third round was initiated in 2012 and 11 grants have been issued to CSOs from different areas in the country. Projects undertaken in the third round covered a range of thematic areas such as capacity development on human rights in civil society and local government, and general awareness on human rights (3), women's empowerment and increased women's participation in politics (3), youth development and engagement (3), and strengthening local governance (1) and civil society capacity building (1).

1.4.2 Poverty Reduction: Since 2008 Poverty Reduction Unit has implemented, 4 projects with civil society participation during the period under review as follows:

(i) Support to Integrated Farming Project (2008 – 2010): This project was led by the Ministry of Fisheries, Agriculture and Marine Resources in partnership with the Ministry of

Economic Development and Trade and the Women Entrepreneurs Council. Activities implemented under the project include providing **technical support and capacity building for farming initiatives for a total of 8 NGOs in 5 atolls** (3 in H.A atoll, 2 in Thaa atoll, 1 in G.A atoll, 1 in Seenu atoll and 1 in Fuvamulah). Five (5) of the initiatives involved the establishment of Autopot systems, 2 were for poultry farming and one was for establishing a chili sauce processing facility. **Equipment necessary to implement the initiatives was provided by UNDP** and in some cases funding was provided for expansion or if issues requiring financing arose.

(ii) Gender and Economic Development Project (2009 – 2010): This project was led by the Department of Gender and Family Protection Services in partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development and Ministry of Human Resources, Youth and Sports. Activities implemented under the project include providing financial support for ‘Leadership and Empowerment trainings for domestic violence victims to rehabilitate and reintegrate domestic violence victims into Community’ conducted by CARE Society in collaboration with the Maldives Network on Violence against Women (MNAW), a small and Medium Enterprise mapping survey in collaboration with the Ministry of Economic Development, the Partnering for Development forum (a multi stakeholder forum with the purpose of creating a platform where actors from the private sector, local communities, local NGOs and government could interact and foster partnerships and business linkages) held in the North in collaboration with the Department of Gender and Family Protection Services, and the Small Business Programme for Women small grants.

Under the **Small Business Programmes for Women grants scheme**, a total of 4 grants (of US \$ 5000 each) were issued for NGOs in Faafu Atoll and H.Dh. Atolls (2 NGOs from each atoll). The grants scheme was initially envisioned to be much broader (a total of US \$ 120,000 was to be disbursed) but was limited in favor of the Partnering for Development Forum following an assessment of Faafu and H.Dh. atolls. The grants financed initiatives to expand agricultural projects, set up a small sale of general goods business, conducting sewing courses and setting up a sewing business.

(iii) Support to Integrated Farming Project 2011 – 2013: This project is being led by the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture (MoFA) and the Marine Research Centre in partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development. Activities implemented under the project include providing technical support and capacity building for farming initiatives for the 8 community projects which were established in the Integrated Farming Project (2008-2010), as well as supporting the establishment of cooperative societies to enable expansion of these activities as commercial businesses.

The project provides further support towards strengthening market integration for the community projects initiated, in addition to developing the institutional capacity of MoFA and relevant partners.

(iv) Employment and Enterprise Development for Women and Youth Project 2011 -2013: This is being led by the Ministry of Economic Development in partnership with Ministry of Human Resources, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture and the Department of Gender and Family Protection Services (now the Ministry of Gender, Family

and Human Rights). Activities implemented under the project include technical support to finalize the SME legislation, a workshop to raise awareness on SME legislation, a second Partnering for Development forum in the South and a follow up to the first Partnering for Development forum held in the North (under the Gender and Economic Empowerment project 2009 -2010) during the Hubasana trade festival.

1.4.3 HIV/AIDS prevention Programme: UNDP was the principal recipient of the Global Fund. The programme ended in August 2012. While it did not have a grant scheme, the programme ***worked extensively with civil society organizations and other marginalized/vulnerable groups*** in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention and support. During the 2008 – 2011period, UNDP collaborated with Society for Health Education (SHE) (NGO) on a HIV and STD Prevention Outreach Programme for migrant workers and resort workers, and with Journey (NGO), on HIV Prevention Outreach Programme for drug users through Drop-in Center scheme and by improving access for drugs and HIV prevention services for the drug users. In 2011, it partnered with Open Hand Society (NGO) to conduct HIV Prevention Outreach Programme for drug users under the same strategy. It also partnered with these three NGOs to conduct voluntary counseling and testing services from 2008 – 2011 (with SHE and Journey) and in 2011 (with Open Hand Society).

1.4.4 Environment and Energy: Similar to the previous country programme outcomes, almost all outputs designed under this country programme outcome too ***have a strong bearing on the civil society as partners*** as well as in the character of beneficiaries. The Energy and Environment Unit implements two small grants schemes that are aimed at supporting local level solutions to environmental issues designed by local communities as follows:

(i) Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP) has been implemented since 2010as a part of the global program. Under the Operational Phase 4, small grants were issued to a total of 8 ***NGOs/CSOs from different parts of the country***. 7 of these projects were implemented at the island level and 1 on a nation-wide scale. Projects covered a range of areas such as turtle conservation, mangrove conservation, land conservation, sustainable home based agriculture, stopping the use of plastic bags, energy efficient street lighting and the establishment of a network of partners working on environmental issues.

As part of round one of Operational Phase 5, a total of 10 grants have been issued to ***NGOs/CBOs from different parts of the country***. 9 of these projects were implemented at the island level and 1 on a nation-wide scale. Projects covered a range of areas such as cultivation of traditional medicinal species, energy efficient street lighting, establishing waste management systems, conservation of marine biodiversity, curtailment of the use of plastic bags and education for low emission climate resilient development.

No grants have been issued yet under the ongoing round two of Operational phase 5, although proposals have now been short listed.

(ii) Mangrove for Future Small Grant Facility (MFF SGF) has been implemented since 2008 as part of the regional programme in collaboration with IUCN. Under phase 1, small grants were issued to a total of 5 NGOs/CBOs in the North and the Capital island. 3 of the projects dealt with awareness raising (1 on general environmental issues, 1 on mangrove

conservation and 1 on proper waste management) and the other 2 were related to waste management.

Under phase 2, grants have been issued to 3 NGOs/CBOs so far. All three projects are based in the Central region (2 at island level and 1 at atoll level). They are related to waste management systems, alternative livelihoods for women and aquaculture of mangrove crabs.

2.0 Purpose and Methodology of the Evaluation

2.1 Purpose

As per ToR (**Annex 1**) The purpose of the evaluation is to help UNDP Maldives to review its project and non-project work 1) as a direct contribution to the UNDP CPD outcome on civil society engagement and also 2) an indirect means (partnership strategy and engagement, and mechanisms – e.g. small grants) in achieving its overall development goals across the country programme of UNDP.

It was expected that the evaluation will also provide UNDP management with conclusions and recommendations that are expected to assist in identifying strategies and operational approaches pertaining to UNDP partnership with civil society actors, in coordination with other development partners.

2.2 Scope and Objectives

The evaluation was supposed to cover period between 2008 (post tsunami and democratic transition period) to date to: -

- assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of UNDP engagement strategy with civil society actors – non-profit organizations, including at the national and community levels, and private sector actors, including cooperative societies, and mechanisms (including small grants) in achieving its development goals as outlined in the UNDAF and CPDs for the past 4 years, and
- highlight shortcomings and strengths of UNDP engagement strategy with civil society actors and mechanisms (including small grants) and make forward-looking practical and substantive recommendations to help further strengthen UNDP's contribution to this area and strategically position the organization as a critical partner in development in the Maldives.

2.3 Evaluation Methodology

For the purpose of the Outcome Evaluation on UNDP's Engagement with Civil Society Actors and Mechanisms, including Small Grants Schemes, progress evaluation and process mapping tools were used to gather data on the ***policies and legislative frameworks established to foster civil society development*** and ***increased engagement of citizens in community development*** planning and implementation processes. The evaluation team relied strongly

on these tools and methodology to ensure valid findings and evaluate overall progress towards outcome.

As elaborated in the following section, the evaluation team used ***mixed methodologies*** involving quantitative and qualitative analysis, in order to assess the level of ***relevance (appropriateness), effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability*** of each of the program components, namely ***Democratic Governance, Energy and Environment, Poverty Reduction and support to HIV/AIDS Prevention***. Findings are mapped against the overall analysis in order to answer the specific evaluation questions as per ToR. The evaluation framework in reference to evaluation questions appear in ***Annex 2***. In addition, the evaluation process focused on understanding any unintended impacts (both positive and negative) of specific project interventions.

2.1.1 Data collection tools

The evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to assess the level of progress made in terms of reaching the objectives laid out in UNDP Country Programme within the UNDAF Outcome 13 using the following tools.

(i) Desk Review

The evaluation was based on both primary and secondary data derived from a number of past assessments, studies and reviews, including quarterly and annual project progress reports, ROAR and independent evaluations (***List of documents reviewed appear in Annex 3***). A specific format was designed to facilitate the desk review. In addition the secondary information gathered through the desk review was utilized to triangulate findings along with the results of qualitative information generated through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs).

(ii) Focused Group Discussions (FGDs)

FGDs were used as a participatory assessment tool to obtain the perceptions of the various stakeholder groups in order to inform the qualitative analysis. FGDs followed the United Nation Evaluation Group (UNEG) criteria namely, ***Relevance (Appropriateness), Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability (impact)*** and evaluated each of the project components relevant to a particular geographic location and participant group. The selection of such groups was done in close consultation with evaluation committee and the National stakeholders.

Pre-prepared formats were used to facilitate the discussion. The assessment was based on a 5 point score 1-5 (***Very Unsatisfactory-1, Unsatisfactory-2, Average-3, Satisfactory-4 & Very Satisfactory-5***). The scoring required reasoning / justification from the participants (positive as well as negative). In the event of low scoring, suggestions for improvements were also elicited from the participant's point of view, discussed as a group and agreed upon. Such an assessment was envisaged to assess the needs, expressed freely as a group. The formats appear in ***Annex 4 (A, B, C & D)***.

Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) with different stakeholder groups

Based on the consensus reached with the Evaluation Committee, the following FGDs (10) were conducted with different stakeholder groups as follows and were held in the capital city of Male’

Unit staff of UNDP

- Governance
- Environment
- Poverty
- HIV /AIDS

Project Partners

- GEF Steering Committee
- Take Care
- The Island Community
- Baarah Cooperative Society
- Baarah Zuvaanung Dhirunn
- HIV/AIDS NGOs (SHE & Journey)

(iii) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Key informants were selected from each stakeholder category, including UN Agencies, Government counterparts such as Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Gender and Human Rights, Ministry of Energy and Environment, Ministry of Economic Development, *Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture*, Ministry of Finance and Treasury and key civil society and private sector partner organizations that UNDP has been working with **(details appear in Annex 5)**. These were conducted at Male as face to face interviews and one telephone interview. Open ended questions related to specific evaluation questions formed the structure of the interviews to obtain each stakeholders point of view. These interviews provided vital information on the context and background of findings gathered from the desk review and also on external factors that influence the implementation of the programme. Semi-structured generic interview format developed for the purpose appear in **Annex 6**. These individuals were selected in consultation with UNDP CO and Evaluation Steering Committee. A total of 16 KIIs were conducted as indicated in **Table 1**

Table 1: Overview of KIIs conducted

Program Component	Stakeholder Category	No. of KIIs
Democratic Governance and Civil Society Engagement	Government	2
	NGOs	3
Energy and Environment	Government	1
	UNDP staff	1
Poverty Reduction	Government	2
	Cooperatives	1
	Private Sector	1
	NGOs	1
HIV/AIDS & Drugs prevention	Government	1
General	Government	2
	UNDP staff	2
	UN Agencies	2
	Donor	1
Total		19

(iv) Questionnaire Survey

An individualised survey questionnaire was administered amongst 100 beneficiaries of the three major components of the UNDP Country Programme and 29 small grant recipients.

This questionnaire was primarily based on the programme outcome as laid out in the TOR and other project documents (*Annex 7*).

The quantitative data generated through analysis of questionnaire responses served in providing insights into beneficiary perceptions with regard to improvements / changes brought about by program interventions.

It is observed that the individualised quantitative questionnaire was not administered on the basis of a selected representative random sample due to severe time constraints and the geographical limitations but instead 100 beneficiary questionnaires were administered to participants from the different components. The number of respondents/ participants was maintained at a minimum of 30 per component so that a statistically significant minimum requirement was adhered to. The participants were contacted through the relevant partners and the questionnaires were mostly administered by phone by the National Consultant and Research Assistant. As for the small grant recipients the total of 29 recipients were interviewed over the phone by the National Consultant. The two recipients in 2012 were left out as it was too early to assess outcomes.

The selected sample for administration of the questionnaire by component appears below.

Table 2: Overview of Questionnaire Administration

Component	No. Questionnaires
Democratic Governance	40
Environment and Energy	30
Poverty Reduction	30
Total	100
Small Grants Schemes	29

2.4 Validation of Findings Workshop

The validation of findings workshop was held on 19th December 2012 at the national level with the participation of with approximately 35 participants from Government, NGOs/CSOs and UNDP. After the presentation there was a group work session after which feedback on the presentation was given which were very much positive, with a few suggestions for improvement.

2.5 Limitations

Some of the key limitations faced by the evaluation team are as follows:

- Only two field locations were organized for the team to visit due to very short time duration planned for the evaluation and also due to bad weather as explained by the Steering Committee. Therefore, the observations are limited to such field interactions and cannot be generalized.

- The geographic characteristic of the Island communities prevented face to face interactions in conducting the questionnaire interviews. As a result most of the questionnaires had to be administered over the phone which was the recommendation from the Steering Committee. It is also noted that the entire sample selected for the interviews were those proposed by the respective Units and the evaluation team had to depend on such responses / perceptions and the observations are governed by this limitation even though an effort has been made to triangulate to the extent possible with Desk Review.
- Phone interviews required a long time period as contacting them was difficult and had to accommodate during the time they could spare. A research assistant was hired for the purpose who could conduct such interviews in the local language and during the time convenient to the beneficiary, while the small grants recipients were interviewed by phone by the national consultant.
- Private Sector participation for KIIs was limited to one person as it was difficult to get their participation at short notice as explained by the Unit concerned. However, observations in the Report are not limited by this single interview. They are supported by KIIs, FGDs and Desk Review as well.

3.0 Main Findings related to Civil Society Engagement, Partnership Strategy & Mechanisms in the context of Democratic Governance Component

Interventions implemented under the theme of Democratic Governance targeted the achievement of 5 Country Programme Outcomes, namely, (i) *Capacities strengthened to ensure transparency and accountability of public institutions with emphasis on decentralized bodies*, (ii) *Equitable access to justice and rule of law improved through strengthened legislative frameworks and institutional capacities*, (iii) *Enabling environment created and strengthened for civil society to thrive and to encourage public dialogue*, (iv) *Culture of respect for human rights including women's rights advocated, fulfilled, protected and fostered at all levels*, and, (v) *Development effectiveness and harmonization achieved in implementing Strategic Action Plan through strengthened coordination and capacity at the national and decentralized levels*.

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the details obtained through a rapid review of a multitude of documents pertaining to the project (including Project Documents, Progress Reports, Annual Reports, Field Visit Reports, Reports of Missions commissioned by UNDP etc.) and the information generated through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) – **Annex 8** and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) – **Annex 9** and beneficiary questionnaire survey covering a cross section of project stakeholders.

The outcome findings are presented according to the **UNEG criteria** indicated in the TOR (*Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Sustainability*) with special reference to civil society engagement.

3.1 Relevance in the Context of Democratic Governance

3.1.1 UNDP Engagement with Civil Society Actors

A major milestone in the democratic reforms in the Maldives under the new Constitution of 2008 was the completion of the first ever multi-party local elections held in February 2011. Decentralization brought sweeping changes to governance of the country⁵. Analysis of the desk review provides evidence that substantial and qualitatively far-reaching contributions have been made through the project in the areas of capacity development of public institutions and civil society organizations, instituting transparency and accountability in public institutions and to support the movement of the decentralization process on the right track. These achievements were made possible through an engagement strategy that involved working with different strata of the government and the civil society. Decentralization basically involved an engagement strategy interaction at policy level, executive and administrative level and the grassroots citizen level which are considered **very relevant** from Country needs point of view towards and contributes to UNDP CPD outcome on civil society engagement.

Another important element in the project that has a bearing on civil society engagement is improvement of Access to Justice (A2J). The **relevance of the country programme outcome** gains its legitimacy owing to the fact that Maldives, in the course of its democratization process, is committed to upholding access of justice to all and to improve rule of law. The relevance to civil society engagement is linked to the role the civil society could play in ensuring equal justice to all, particularly at community level and its ability to participate in alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

The relevance of the intended outcome on civil society engagement and outputs to national and community needs and priorities was rated by the Focused Groups Discussion (FGDs), in a range between a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 5, the larger number of groups (8) rating more than 3.5. The reasons for the positive determination made by the FGDs are wide ranging and cover different areas of the country programme outcomes.

FGDs saw the **positive relevance** of the perspective being assessed from the point of view that the governance programme **focuses on legislative and policy requirements of the country**. This was further corroborated at Key Informant interviews, in that the proper functioning civil society was identified as **essential for the ongoing democratization process – to monitor and maintain checks and balances**. In the Maldives, NGOs were formed as part of a change movement for political reasons during the beginning of the democratic reform process and they are just becoming part of a proper civil society now. The **new integrated governance programme is needs based and relevant**.

The **relevance** of the Democratic Governance component to the national and community needs and priorities was reconfirmed by the perceptions expressed by Key Informants as well. From the viewpoints expressed, the component was appreciated from the stand point that it made an effort **to strengthen the civil society as a means of promoting democratic**

⁵ ROAR –UNDP Maldives 2011

awareness among the people. This is particularly valid in the context of Maldives being a new democracy, and it was after the establishment of the first democratic government in 2008 that the people got the opportunity to freely voice their opinion. However people remain unaware of their rights to some extent. It is **very relevant** because UNDP is **trying to strengthen organizations that can help to promote awareness**.

Similar perceptions were held by programme beneficiaries. As to whether **government activities, including decision making, have become more decentralized** since project interventions, 45% of the beneficiaries who responded to the questionnaire had the feeling that the **situation has improved to the optimum level or was satisfactory**. Men were more positive in this regard than women. The positive opinion was based on the fact that attempts are now made by the National Government to intermittently consult local councils or community leaders. However 35% of respondents were of the view that progress in this regard has been extremely slow.

Recognizing the need for more wholesome and strategic support to strengthen civil society in Maldives, **civil society development was made a specific outcome under the country programme**. A Comprehensive Study on Maldivian Civil Society has been completed under the auspices of the programme, which could be used as a foundation to design an extensive civil society strengthening strategy, and has in fact formed the basis for revising the existing Associations Act. Capacity building of civil society entails training and technical support provided to help them become more effective during the transitional period. Considering the status of the civil society in the Maldives, the various initiatives undertaken by the project to strengthen CSOs is **very relevant** to the achievement of the objectives.

As regards the **internal transparency and accountability of civil society organizations**, of the 23 respondents (almost 80%) who are members of grant recipient NGOs/CBOs, the majority strongly agreed or agreed that **transparency and accountability of their NGOs have enhanced**, since project interventions. Reasons for believing so included the fact that annual reporting was done efficiently, that regular meetings take place to discuss finances and that members are provided with information regarding projects and finances upon request.

The above positive perceptions are further strengthened by the views held by the Public Sector of Maldives. From the government perspective the outcome on civil society and UNDP focus on strengthening civil society was found to be **extremely relevant**, given the infancy of civil society in the country and the ongoing democratic transition and the need for a strong civil society.

With regard to whether the civil society has become strong enough to engage in public dialogue, which is one of the main aims of the SGF, more than half of the respondents (52%) believed that there was still much **room for improvement in strengthening civil society organizations to engage in public dialogue**. Only a few respondents (all of whom were male) believed civil society was now emancipated and vibrant enough to engage effectively. The Donor community view is that the UNDP Country Programme is **very relevant** since NGOs are very new in the Maldives and building their capacity is imperative, which supports the views held by the beneficiaries. **UNDP support to HRCM activities involving civil society**

was also considered **very relevant**. UNDP supported activities such as civil society scoping exercise was helpful in understanding the situation of CSOs and for building on. Involving CSOs in awareness raising is important because democracy and good governance concepts are very new to the Maldives. Confirming the need for external support the public sector holds the view that government is not yet capable of leading an effective CSO strengthening initiative and therefore, UNDP assistance is considered **very relevant**.

The majority of beneficiary respondents (72.5%) were generally positive in this regard with 37.5% strongly agreeing that **there had been improvement in volunteerism** and 35% that there was a satisfactory build up in motivations, while 10% disagreed that there was improvement. However, even among those who rated higher in this category, some noted that people only volunteered for certain types of work which is less time consuming.

The human rights situation in the Maldives has shown some progress in 2011. There have been continued efforts to implement basic rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of association. As the national human rights institution, Human Rights Commission of the Maldives (HRCM) continues to make efforts to promote human rights in the Maldives. Engagement of civil society in human rights promotion increased. For instance a Human Rights Defenders' network was established through the Maldivian Democracy Network. There were 120 human rights defenders in 15 out of 20 Atolls⁶ as at end of 2011.

FGDs identified the relevance of the intended outcome on civil society engagement from the point of view that **human rights and democracy**, which are new concepts to the Maldivian society, have been incorporated to the programme as major components. Human rights and **democracy concepts are not taught in schools and the programme provided a good forum for youth to learn them**. Interviews with Key Informants also corroborate the view expressed at the FGDs, in that the UNDP's small grants fund was intended to strengthen civil society in promoting human rights and youth development.

However civil society organizations in the Maldives lack **resources and capacity to take up sensitive human rights issues, such as gender equality, for fear of reprisals**. Organized radical Islamic groups have increased their influence. Religious conservative groups have become more vocal in their message, that women's role should be confined to the private sphere and the notion has a growing popularity that could impact women's participation in decision making.

Under the *Small Grants Facility* administered by UNDP, in 2011 support was provided for seven projects which contribute to promotion of human rights - areas supported include women's empowerment, human rights awareness and human rights mainstreaming. The grants have resulted in increased level of NGOs advocating on particular rights issues.

FGDs revealed that the programme has created space for extensive improvements in **enabling youth** to participate in the decision-making process, compared to the situation before the programme. It was stated that as of now Local Councils listen to youth concerns to some extent. With strengthened capacity, youth are approaching NGOs with issues that relate to them. FGDs noted a greater motivation among NGOs to work on issues pertaining

⁶ ROAR-UNDP-Maldives - 2011

to the community and the country. FGDs also identified the **relevance from the gender perspective** in that women are better able to participate and voice their opinion as a result of the outcome of training they were exposed to. With regard to GEF focus areas they were identified by FGDs as aligned with national priorities giving a score of 4 and directly catering to community needs proposed and complemented by CSOs / NGOs. Originally the projects were isolated and not linked to the main objectives.

3.1.2 UNDP Partnership Strategy

With regard to the relevance of **UNDP's partnership strategy** and mechanisms to national conditions and priorities the scores given by the 10 FGDs are mixed and range between 2 (minimum) to 5 (maximum) in a scale of 1 – 5. Both the lowest and the highest ratings have been given by FGDs comprised of NGOs/CSOs. 5 groups have scored the outcome at 3 or less, while 3 FGDs have given scores of 4 or more. On the principal question whether UNDP's partnership strategy and mechanisms are relevant to national conditions and priorities majority of FGDs stated that they are **aligned to national conditions and priorities**. As regards the mechanisms adopted FGDs stated that various modalities were adopted to engage the civil society. For instance the Programme Board and Technical Committees meet regularly to ensure alignment with national priorities. Direct partnership avoids often flawed government bureaucratic process. An aspect that has a bearing on the relevance of the UNDP partnership to national conditions and priorities touched upon by the FGDs is that members emphasized that **NGOs are social actors / volunteers** working with the people irrespective who is in government and that they are more aware of local contexts.

On the matter **whether UNDP is relevant to pursue these development results and work with civil society as intended**, all FGDs gave scores of 3 and above, with 2 Institutional FGDs and 2 NGO / CSO FGDs giving it the maximum of 5 in the 1 – 5 scale. Another 2 Institutional FGDs and 2 NGO / CSO FGDs gave a score of 4, indicating that by and large there is acceptance by the partner community on the **relevance of the UNDP** to pursue the intended development results and work with the civil society.

Giving the UNDP an endorsement from the perspective of **relevancy of the lead role**, FGDs state that UNDP is mandated to work with government agencies. UNDP has marked its presence in the country over a long period compared to other UN agencies. It is also the only agency that can work in the country from a development perspective and is recognized as an impartial organization by government agencies, other donors as well as by the civil society. While has a proven record of working in the development arena, it is endowed with the capacity to work with the government and with NGOs with equal confidence, it possesses the capacity to lead.

This positive assessment is further strengthened by the views held by Key Informants who are **convinced that UNDP has the capacity to play a lead role in civil society engagement** in pursuing development results. It was made clear that UNDP also knows the country context more than other agencies because of their long presence here and understands the situation of CSOs who are young. With regard to the relevance of UNDP to pursue the intended development results, there was high acceptance that **UNDP is capable of taking the lead**. The opinion held by the Public Sector of Maldives further corroborates this view.

According to government sources UNDP's technical and financial capacity, long term presence, institutional memory, understanding of local context, easy accessibility and capacity to facilitate aid from other donors makes it a very relevant agency to play a lead role.

On the downside of things, in spite of the space created for the civil society to participate in development issues, FGDs stated that a strategic weakness was that as they see, the ***programme was limited to some extent to NGO participation*** and that it should promote wider participation by the civil society. In the same tone they grieved that the programme opted to participate only with NGOs that have "democratic governance" in their agenda and that some NGOs may have 'skewed' to fit perceived priorities of the UNDP (as opposed to national and community needs and priorities). Some members stated that in their own NGOs, sufficient capacity has not been developed through the project. These views of FGDs however were neither corroborated nor contested by Key Informants or by beneficiaries, but there was general acknowledgement that the programme was not (understandably) wide open and restrictive across the board, which may well be due to operational and / or financial constraints. There was also the view that civil society still needs to understand the UNDP role in the country, which is associated with UNDP's limited outreach capacity.

The programme has yet been ***unable to encourage specialized NGOs*** to become implementing partners. While working with the government could lead to political influence, it was also pointed out that NGOs / CSO have not developed their capacity adequately so as to manage on their own. FGD members stated that the programme only supplied financial assistance and technical expertise was not shared adequately affecting the efficiency of project implementation and the quality of outcomes.

Adding to the negative perception was the view held by some FGDs that "UNDP's structure" (perhaps meant to be systems, procedures, reporting mechanisms and controls) is very strict and hard to deal with. There are issues emerging because of these inflexible and cumbersome processes which Maldivian NGOs are unfamiliar with and find hard to comply with.

3.2 Effectiveness in the Context of Democratic Governance

3.2.1 UNDP Engagement with Civil Society Actors

On the question whether the ***progress made to date on achieving the stated outcome or outputs*** on civil society engagement and development is on track or not, the Electoral Violence Monitoring of the Local Council Elections (2011) was a major achievement made in civil society participation in the electoral process in Maldives. The project was undertaken by the Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN) an NGO focused on the promotion of human rights and the principles of democracy⁷. Civil society has been very active in advocating for increased transparency and accountability of public institutions and public officials, including a campaign for declaration of assets of public officials.

⁷Preliminary Impact Evaluation Report – Support to Civil Society Development Project 2011

The Civil Society and Democracy Project **has been effective** in increasing the capacity, participation and effectiveness of Maldivian Civil Society to address national and community level issues pertaining to development, democracy and governance, responds to the findings of previous research conducted by the NGO on the status of civil society in the Maldives.

UNDP engaged the Maldives Civil Servants Association for the empowerment and awareness of civil servants on the rights of workers, the current Employment Act and the Codes of Conduct of the Maldives Civil service. Funds obtained from SGF have enabled the NGO to travel to the atolls in advocating for the rights of civil servants⁸. Evidence available to this evaluation suggests that the UNDP engagement strategies and mechanics **have been effective** in achieving its development goals as outlined in the UNDAF and CPDs

Whether the **progress made to date on achieving the stated outcome or outputs** on civil society engagement and development is on track or not was also examined through FGDs. Except for one FGD the other 9 FGDs gave scores of 3 and above. Out of the Institutional FGDs, one FGD rated the performance at a low of 2 while 2 FGDs rated the performance at a high of 5. One FGD rated this intended outcome at a score of 3.

FGDs observed that the **capacity of NGOs that were supported by the UNDP is higher than the capacity of those that were not supported**. Further the awareness the government sector and the non-government sector had with regard to the role of the civil society increased as a result of the interventions made by the country programme. FGDs state that certain activities such as youth empowerment, women's empowerment, and awareness on human rights and good governance implemented by some stakeholders are on track. FGD members stated that UNDP is making an attempt to motivate the civil society sector. CSOs are engaging very much with local people and **members are able to raise human rights issues with the relevant forums**.

Partially supporting the view held by FGDs, Key Informants confirmed that **interventions with regard to youth development are on track** and that UNDP's image among the youth and local communities is generally positive. The youth feel that UNDP works more with them and is more interested in their concerns than the government. This is due to UNDP's consultative process where they often discuss issues with NGOs.

The Support to Civil Society Project has enabled the concept of civil society development to be taken out of the capital Male to the Atolls. Through the workshops conducted under the project, the NGOs were able to obtain the technical skills needed and apply them through grants obtained from the Small Grants Facility. The project designs and proposals have seen a marked improvement since the trainings were conducted. The establishment of the Nation wide Network and the support the country programme provided to strengthen CSOs and NGOs enabling them to effectively advocate for good governance, human rights, women's rights and to engage in consolidating the democratization process are some of the outcomes of the projects the tangible effects of which can only be seen in future years. Projects

⁸Preliminary Impact Evaluation Report (Draft) Support to Civil Society Development Project Sept 2011

undertaken through the grants provided under the Small Grants Facility have enabled the concept of human rights and good governance to be taken to the forefront.⁹

The country programme prioritized the need for more inclusion of the atoll-based NGOs in capacity building initiatives as well as in the provision of opportunities to access grants from the Small Grants Facility. It is reported that over 80% of the grants under Small Grants Facility were given to atoll-based NGOs. As a part of engagement strategy, some of the atoll-based NGOs were provided the opportunity to collaborate in projects with Male-based NGOs. The effect of this was a very fruitful relationship between the Male NGOs and atoll NGOs.

Civil society in Maldives has continued to advance. In particular, human rights NGOs expanded their activities in 2011 and added membership and increased joint initiatives. Two civil society networks that have been active include the Anti-Corruption network led by Transparency International Maldives and Human Rights Defenders' network led by Maldivian Democracy Network. NGO activism towards influencing policy changes have also increased. The Parliament Watch initiative facilitated forums for commenting on draft bills. It also helped engage NGOs to lobby on revisions to selected bills. Through this public input has been provided for important bills such as Access to Information Bill, Political Party Bill, Bill, NGO Associations Bill and Domestic Violence Bill. NGOs have strengthened advocacy for issues such as HIV prevention, right to information and anti-corruption, mobilizing during the Anti-corruption Day and the International AIDS Day. A drug prevention campaign was also launched by the local NGO Journey.

Viewing the progress from the point of view of the effect the outputs have had on the internal strengthening of CSOs is reflected from the fact that among those who responded to the questionnaire survey 65.5% believe that **internal transparency and accountability of CSOs had enhanced** since project interventions, and that 45% feel that there is satisfactory progress. In relation to other interventions, 30% of the respondents strongly agree that there has been an **absolute enhancement of equitable access to justice and rule of law** as a result of training and awareness interventions by NGO/CSO partners, and 37.5% believe either that **everybody had equal access to legal aid now** or that the situation for women was much better than before.

Capacity constraints of implementing partners including government and non-government organizations are one of the causes for the slow progress. Capacity constraints are common to all implementing partners including government and non-governmental organizations. In addition the **political instability too impedes the engagement of the civil society**. Many targets have not been achieved due to process delays and due to the political situation. It was pointed out that in the context of the Maldivian society, the concept of civil society engagement is new and that it will take time to be internalized.

With regard to the question whether **progress towards that particular outcome has been made**, all FGDs gave scores of 3 or above on this aspect of the assessment. One FGD gave it

⁹Preliminary Impact Evaluation Report (Draft) Support to Civil Society Development Project -Sept 2011

the maximum of 5 and another, a score of 4.5. One FGD rated this intended outcome at a score of 4 indicating satisfactory progress.

The evaluation looked at the factors contributing to achieving or not achieving the intended outcome ***Factors that support the achievement of the outcome*** were identified by the FGDs as follows: (i) Increased awareness among government authorities regarding the role of the civil society, (ii) Increased dialogue and interaction between government agencies and the civil society, (iii) UNDP support to capacity building of NGOs, (iv) Use of various modalities to engage NGOs, (v) Motivated youth, (vi) Positive acceptance of the public of changes in the governance systems (democratization and decentralization), (vii) UNDP adjusting the programme to reflect national situation (priorities), (viii) UNDP's efforts to motivate NGOs.

On the contrary the ***factors that inhibit the achievement of the outcome*** were identified by the FGDs as follows: Capacity constraints of partners, (ii) Political instability, (iii) Civil society engagement being new to the society, (iv) Limited outreach of training, (v) Lack of financial and technical capacity of NGOs to promote civil society engagement and capacity building, (vi) Geographic dispersion and high population in the atoll making it difficult to reach majority, (vii) Inadequate support from government and UNDP, (ix) Concepts being new to the country.

The programme ***engaged more civil society organizations progressively*** and also ***expanded the outreach*** through the engagement of existing networks. The programme has also ***expanded thematic areas*** and successfully ***increased the dialogue and interaction between government agencies and the civil society***. Through this dialogue and interaction, people have become more aware of the role of the civil society and also of their rights and how they can influence policy.

The fact that the progress towards the particular outcome has been made is also evident from the perceptions expressed by beneficiaries (through the questionnaire survey). A total of 22 small grants were issued by the Democratic Governance component of UNDP Maldives in the years 2010 and 2011 under the Support to Civil Society Development SGF. Projects supported under the grants include awareness raising activities (on good governance and the role of civil society, local government and youth and women in development), promotion of youth and women participation and leadership and building the technical and administrative capacities of CSOs.

As regards the evaluation question whether the ***UNDP strategy for engagement*** with civil society organizations, actors and partnership strategy has been effective in achieving the CPD outcomes and outputs, out of 10 FGDs 9 provided their scores for this outcome ranging from a low of 2 to high of 4.

According to the FGDs the programme employed ***different means of engaging*** the civil society (small grants, responsible parties etc.) which ***was a contributory factor*** to the achievement of the outputs and outcomes. The ***strategy being accessible to NGOs*** was another. The programme established ***good working relationships with key NGOs and government agencies*** working on governance. FGD members pointed out that through

partnership with NGOs it is possible to **overcome the bureaucratic process of the government** and also **discourage the possibility of politicization**.

On the question whether the Small Grants mechanism has contributed effectively as a mechanism for engaging civil society and achieving the ultimate result, only half the FGDs participated in the discussion of the outcome. Three institutional FGDs and 2 NGO FGDs (provided their scores ranging from a low of 2 to a high of 4).

It was suggested by the FGDs that the engagement of the civil society for the Small Grants mechanism and the **process adopted has produced a very salutary effect**, in that the quality of proposals submitted by the organizations has shown a progressive improvement. The Small Grants mechanism **followed a transparent and democratic process to identify beneficiaries**. The mechanism also had a **good geographical coverage**. One of the important features of the Small Grants scheme is that it **provided much needed financial resources** enabling a majority of the NGOs to overcome financial constraints. The scheme was also seen by the FGDs as a facility that **enables the development of capacity of youth**. FGDs stated that UNDP is the only organization that has come to help them (civil society) and that NGOs are able to undertake activities needed to strengthen the civil society. Small grants **allow coverage of more Island communities** and the risk is low.

Among the negative features identified at FGDs is that the Small Grants mechanism provides financial assistance but does not guarantee technical assistance. Further members of the FGD were unhappy that **the amount of financial assistance is inadequate** to cover projects planned by the beneficiaries. Although ToTs were conducted the programme does not provide sufficient funds to follow up. Only a limited number of project proposals were received. FGD members stated that the net-work they initiated (Addu NGO Network) did not function as envisioned at the beginning. Another drawback is that the Small Grants mechanism does not have **adequate monitoring capacity**. It also does not have a mechanism to ensure adequate geographic coverage.

3.2.2 UNDP Partnership Strategy

The evaluation made an attempt to examine whether the **UNDP partnership strategy** been appropriate and effective. A total 9 out of 10 FGDs gave the performance of the programme being reviewed, scores of 3 or more, the lowest being 2.5. 6 FGDs rated the performance under review a score of 4 (highest) respectively.

Members of FGDs are of the view that the (basis of) current engagement is more appropriate in the long run than **direct implementation**, since current basis gives an **opportunity to build capacity in NGOs** and that they are familiar with local contexts and are closer to local communities. FGDs noted that there is a progressive improvement in the quality of project proposals submitted.

Giving some credibility to the contention that the UNDP partnership strategy been appropriate and effective, Key Informants pointed out that the UNDP's **interaction with partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders is partially effective**. It depends on how they approach NGOs and how NGOs approach them. Civil society finds UNDP staff to be very

accessible and we can approach them whenever they want. However the civil society feels that UNDP Units need to work together on civil society engagement. As regards the approaches adopted by the UNDP, the civil society perception is that UNDP employs a mixture of approaches such as direct implementation, small grants, contracting NGOs, NGO-CSO collaboration etc, depending on who the partner is. This flexibility is considered as effective considering the varying contexts of different stakeholders they work with.

The perceptions of the public sector too add validity to the argument that **UNDP partnership strategy been appropriate and effective**. From a government point of view, UNDP using a mixture of modalities depending on type of partnership is **effective**. Right now there is a move towards direct implementation (in the new integrated governance programme as well) which is good given the current context and to avoid delays in implementation. However, it was pointed out that from a long term perspective

The beneficiary perceptions however are quite to the contrary. Respondents believe that the effectiveness of the **engagement strategy and of the mechanisms have found to be wanting in the areas in respect for human rights** (52% believe that there is much room for improvement), institution of mechanisms for gender-just and gender-sensitive alternate dispute resolution (67.5% feel that there had been no visible progress) and in civil society engagement in public dialogue (52% believe that there is much room for improvement) considering that enhancement of civil society capacity is one of the main aims of the SGF. With regard to equitable access to justice too there is much room to improve the effectiveness of the partnership strategy. 15% believed moderate progress had been made while 22% believed there were still some gaps in access, men feeling more positive than women.

In spite of the current partnership strategy exhibiting some salutary features, a particular weakness is that after capacity building activities the follow up is limited. Even in the area of capacity building, there is a **long way to go until the NGOs are able to manage on their own**. The current engagement strategy allows for effective implementation of activities, but the sustainability of outcome is not ensured beyond the project which depends on ownership and capacity for continuity.

On the negative side the absence of a strategy to encourage specialized NGOs, especially outside Male to participate in the programme was identified at FGDs as a key deficiency. Compounding this is the programme's limited engagement with NGOs outside Male. The effectiveness of civil society engagement is also limited due to the wide geographic spread of the country. It was also pointed out that the capacity so far developed is inadequate for NGOs to manage on their own. So also is the effect of the limited technical support provided by the UNDP. Limited private sector involvement too acts as a deterrent to the effective achievement of the outcome.

The evaluation examined the factors that have contributed to effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the outcome on civil society engagement through discussion at FGDs. **The factors that have contributed to the effectiveness of the outcome** are (i) The current strategy of engagement allows capacity building of NGOs, (ii) good geographic coverage, (iii)

NGOs are familiar with local contexts, (iv) NGOs have a close interaction with local communities, (v) Acceptance and understanding by the general public.

Factors that have inhibited the effectiveness of the outcome are (i) Limited follow up after NGO capacity building activities, (iii) In spite of efforts to build capacity, constraints in capacity still persist which inhibit effectiveness, (iv) the amounts given as grant are insufficient to undertake meaningful activities, (v) Lack of involvement by local governments. Capacity constraints of NGOs and inadequate technical knowledge at local level were identified as factors inhibiting effectiveness.

The effectiveness of opening up of issues for discussion is especially apparent in the area of **Gender equality and women's empowerment**. Documented sources reveal that in a radical advancement for women's rights in the country, the new Constitution removed the gender bar from top executive positions in the nation, whereby a legal foundation has been laid for women's participation in politics. However there are many challenges to gender equality in public life and women's political participation in decision-making remains minimal. A number of NGOs have been actively advancing for issues concerning gender equality and the empowerment of women in recent years. A nation-wide campaign against domestic violence dubbed "1 in 3" was launched in Nov 2010 by the Maldivian Network on Violence against Women. From documented sources it is also evident that in order to increase representation of women in politics, support was provided for training of women contestants for Local Council elections and 46% of women elected had participated in this training.

On the issue whether UNDP interventions are gender mainstreamed and contributed to gender equity, there was a wide disparity in the scores given by the FGDs in regard to this outcome. Other than 1 Institutional FGD (Poverty staff FG) the other 4 FGDs gave the outcome low scores of 3 and below (with 2 FGDs giving 1 respectively). The 5 NGO / CSO FGDs conversely gave the outcome high scores of 4 and above.

Adducing reasons for the score members of FGDs pointed out that gender aspects are considered in all small grants. **Gender mainstreaming was highlighted and emphasized** at interactions with the UNDP and at training sessions. The experience gained has been that training women is better and more productive since women who are well oriented can mould whole families. Female youth participation in activities is higher than that of male youth. There is no discrimination for women in regard to their participation in activities.

The positive outcomes are validated to some extent by the civil society. According to Key Informants from the civil society, the UNDP'S role in the context of **gender mainstreaming is that gender is always on the agenda** in any work any UN agency conducts.

On the other hand FGDs point out that there is a **lack of understanding of the concept of gender equity**. They also noted that the gender perspective is not given due cognizance in planning. No particular focus on gender mainstreaming and equity in appraising proposals.

The civil society key informants however feel that the work on **gender is not consolidated enough**. This is an interagency issue though they all work towards the same goals but the

resources are not merged. UNDP also needs to bring in partners who have common understanding and link them so that efforts are not isolated and spent in an *ad-hoc* manner. The view of the public sector is that gender being a very sensitive subject, is always considered in UNDP and HRM activities. However religious extremists are openly calling for discrimination and that it is necessary to work more with civil society, either directly or indirectly.

The evaluation looked at whether the ***UNDP interventions successfully target ‘vulnerable groups’ and meet their needs*** through design and implementation. In this outcome too there is a wide divergence of opinion among the FGDs with the scoring ranging from 1-5.

One of the objectives of providing small grants is to support vulnerable groups. At training programmes conducted by the UNDP, participants were exposed to the idea of targeting vulnerable groups. Participation at the training programmes made members realize that unemployed youth are identified as a vulnerable group. At present consideration is given to this category in planning projects, especially by including unemployed youth in the 2 year work plans.

However, one of the problems in targeting vulnerable groups is the lack of a clear definition of who constitutes a vulnerable group. Although one of the objectives of the small grants mechanism is to reach vulnerable groups, a focus in prioritizing vulnerable groups does not appear to have been taken into consideration.

3.3 Efficiency in the Context of Democratic Governance

3.3.1 UNDP Engagement with Civil Society Actors and Partnership Strategy

The evaluation made an attempt to examine ***whether UNDP’s engagement with the civil society in achieving the intended outputs and contributing to outcomes has been timely and cost effective***. The evaluation was constrained by time limitation in order to carry out a cost effectiveness study based on quantitative data. Therefore this evaluation is purely based on documented information and stakeholder perceptions.

Decentralization has brought sweeping changes to governance of the country. Yet, lack of adequate resources and capacity was a challenge that the country has to face in the implementation of the reforms. The most pressing challenge is the severe lack of capacity of the newly elected officials, including in planning, budgeting, resource management and leadership, in which the civil society could have made significant inroads, had they been strong and capable. It was stated that party politics and tensions undermined the new system, and that there were tensions between councilors of different parties, between government and opposition-majority councils, which is another area in which the civil society could have productively intervened through consultation and mediation.

The design and content of some of the sub-projects implemented through civil society participation have also directly contributed to the timeliness and efficiency of the engagement strategy. For instance the Community-based Theatre project created space for discussion on issues related to political and social transition in Maldives, encouraging debate

among the wider public, building confidence of various groups within local communities to express their views and strengthening the skills-base of key individuals and organizations to enable stronger engagement in social transformation¹⁰.

In 2011 UNDP **utilized a multi- pronged approach towards strengthening the civil society**, which addressed some of the most pressing needs. In summary the strategy was as follows:

- (i) *“Strengthening and Enhancing Civic Engagement in the Maldives Project”* project initiated in 2010, provided support to strengthen the environment for civic engagement
- (ii) Support was provided to build capacity of NGOs through training and grant support.
- (iii) The Small Grants Facility (SGF), under the Support to Civil Society Development project has overseen the disbursement of approximately USD 250, 000 worth of grants to 22 different NGOs within the atolls and in Male’.
- (iv) Over 50 NGOs from across the country were trained in project management, planning and budgeting as well as on the role of civil society in a democracy, human rights and gender equality.

One of the engagement strategies adopted under this project was to **utilize capable civil society organizations to train and share their experience with new and emerging organizations to upgrade themselves**. A case seen as an example is the work done by Raajje Foundation.

The on-going activities under the Civil Society and Democracy project implemented by the Raajje Foundation, initiated with the objective of increasing the capacity, participation and effectiveness of Maldivian Civil Society to address national and community level issues pertaining to development, democracy and governance, **responds to the findings of the research conducted by the NGO on the status of the civil society in the Maldives**.¹¹

Under the auspices of the Human Rights Project titled “The Right to Empower” implemented by Take Care Addu (NGO) 23 NGOs operating in Addu City and Fuvah Mulah have been brought together and successfully established as **a network called Addu NGO network. The Human Rights Defenders Network established by the Maldives Democracy Network, which is supposed to be the first Regional NGO Network in the Maldives**, is supported by the second component of “Right to Empower” project as part of the capacity building efforts promoting community based human rights trainers in Addu and Fuvahmulah. The project titled “Capacity Building – Maldives Civil Servants” implemented by the Maldives Civil Servants Association (NGO) is yet another **initiative taken up to create awareness and empower civil servants on the rights of workers, Employment Act and the Code of Conduct of Maldives Civil Service**.

Also through the Small Grants Facility a 3-day training workshop was held in October 2011. The workshop focused on civil society development, the role of civil society in promoting

¹⁰ Third Quarter Progress Report - “Building Trust, Confidence and National Capacities for the Management of Change”

¹¹ Preliminary Impact Evaluation Report (Draft) Support to Civil Society Development Project -Sept 2011

democracy, human rights, gender equality and empowerment, good governance and youth empowerment. The workshop also ***provided training on project management and budgeting, proposal writing and working with donors***. In addition to the NGOs already listed in the Governance Network, the representation and participation of NGOs and civil society organizations in the workshop was enabled by coordinating with other units in the country offices such as the Global Fund, Environment and Poverty¹². **More than 80% of the grants given were for NGOs based in the atolls where resources and capacity are most needed. The above analysis emphasizes the extent to which the efficiency of support services promoted through networking.**

A total of 9 out of the 10 FGDs assessed this intended outcome and rated it at scores between a low of 1 to a high of 5 indicating a wide divergence of opinion. The other 4 Institutional FGDs gave the outcome scores between 3 -5. The 5 NGO / CSO FGDs gave the outcome scores of 1- 4. These indicate a fairly high level of success in efficiency, even though a few FGDs did not subscribe to it.

FGDs that responded positively were of the opinion that the engagement has produced good returns in relation to the amounts spent. The ***ToTs were cost effective***. Activities were implemented as planned and the financial progress was also achieved as planned.

The opinion of the FGDs is validated by the opinions expressed by beneficiaries, subject to some qualifications. Whether the means of the UNDP engagement strategy with civil society in achieving the intended outputs and contributing to cost effectiveness is difficult to be judged just as yet, but that ***it has been timely*** is reflected as indicated in the perceptions of the beneficiaries.

Of the 23 respondents who are members of the grant recipient NGOs/CBOs, the majority strongly agreed (34.78%) and agreed (30.43%) that transparency and accountability of their NGOs had been enhanced since project interventions. Given that enhancement of the internal governance, transparency and accountability of civil society is fundamental to the success of all other development interventions in which the civil society is either the intermediary or the beneficiary. In this sense, the means of the UNDP engagement with civil society are considered timely, to be able to take up wider responsibilities in time to come.

Equally important are the timely outcomes produced under decentralization initiatives. With 45% of the respondents strongly agreed / agreed that decentralization of government activities have improved. Financial disbursements under civil society and governance of small grants programme are found to be successful. That means to that extent the engagement strategy has been timely and has facilitated the process of local level governance.

The means of UNDP engagement with civil society in regard to the achievement of the objectives of increased volunteerism and community participation in development has been timely in relation to the anticipated integrated governance enhancements, and development projects which are on target.

¹² Support to Civil Society Development Project - Annual Report 2011

However, although the interventions with regard to promoting respect for human rights and women's rights were timely, effects have been somewhat less than satisfactory with 52.5% of the respondents feeling that there is much room for improvement. The timeliness of the interventions is particularly seen as vital considering the increased political polarization and growing religious fundamentalism.

Although good returns have been achieved FGDs pointed out that the results are not monitored effectively and that a proper communication system has not been established. Trainers could not effectively implement follow up activities due to financial limitations. Those who questioned the timeliness of implementation of interventions pointed out that funds available for the third round A2J project are very much under spent, the current progress being about 5% up to now. Funds are not moving due to the current country situation. It was however not possible to independently verify this opinion.

UNDP's ***Project management mechanisms*** is seen by the civil society as "***sometimes too lenient with partners***". Some government agencies are very slow in implementation and UNDP does not push them as much as they should. This area needs improvement, especially in bringing and linking together partners with similar interests.

One of the evaluation questions referred to whether the ***UNDP's internal capacity and its structure are equipped to deliver results efficiently***. The efficacy of the internal capacity and its structure are evident from the number of interventions it had carried out, which required technical competence. To site a few: (i) acting as *convener* and facilitator UNDP provided support to draft legal enactments, (ii) support provided to design a methodology to conduct public forums which was piloted in one island in the North, (iii) engagement with and support given to civil society by adding weight and voice to advocacy campaigns on specific issues (like advocating with high level politicians and government officials in revising the Bill to reduce crime), (iv) technical support given for the Domestic Violence Bill campaign, (v) training of over 50 NGOs across the country in project management, planning, budgeting, role of civil society in a democracy, human rights and gender equality, (vi) groundbreaking support provided to civil society initiatives on Electoral Violence Monitoring and (vii) establishment of a Regional NGO Human Rights Network.

On the same question whether the UNDP's internal capacity and its structure are equipped to deliver results efficiently scores given by the FGDs range between 2 and 5. A total 6 FGDs rated the outcome at a score of 3 or more. One FGD marked a score of 4 indicating the ability of UNDP structure to deliver results efficiently.

Supporting above average scores the FGDs pointed out that ***technical capacity exists within the UNDP***. Members observed that specific coordinator was assigned for GEF SGP who had access to GEF Network which added to efficiency of delivery.

However although technical capacity exists within the UNDP, members of FGDs pointed out that UNDP's outreach capacity is limited. UNDP has not assigned Monitoring and Evaluation staff for the task. Projects are implemented by implementing partners on the direct implementation modality, which is accepted as an efficient mode of implementation but there was concerns with regard to ownership for the projects.

The evaluation looked at whether ***the coordination complementarities and synergies amongst UNDP projects, units, UN agencies and other partners enhanced efficiency and effectiveness?***

A total of 9 FGDs gave scores ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 5. A total of 7 FGDs gave the element under review scores of 3 and above. The mixed level of perception is evident in both categories of FGDs.

It is the general perception of members of the FGD that UNDAF has been developed to enhance coordination, complementarily and synergy, which allows the space to work on a common plan. Regular meetings are held to stimulate coordination and Annual Work Plans are validated by all units. The new small grant evaluation mechanism was established with the participation of all units demonstrating the extent of coordination, complementarily and synergy that is present. FGDs stated that UNDP provides funds for the purpose of raising awareness. No other agency provides such support.

It was the view held by some members of FGDs that one of the drawbacks was that a proper communication system to maintain coordination etc. has not been established, which has resulted in inadequate coordination between units and with other agencies. The Evaluation Team was subsequently made to understand that a proper coordination mechanism is now in place and is operational. Opinions were not expressed by Key Informants on this subject.

The evaluation examined whether the ***UNDP's Monitoring and Evaluation activities been efficient and effective.*** Of the 10 FGDs 6 groups gave given scores of 3.5 or more while 6 groups have rated the performance in the element as 2 and below, one FGD rating as low as 1 and another as high as 4.5. Among the 2 categories of FGDs (Institutional and NGO / CSO) too there are variations in the scores.

It was noted from the observations that a regular system on project-level reporting and follow-up on activities prevail. Visits are being undertaken when the projects are on-going and feed-back is given together with any guidance required. UNDP staff members meet NGO partners when they visit the atolls for other purposes as well.

Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation is yet to be internalized, inadequacy of funds to undertake monitoring visits however is a drawback. A major drawback is that projects are being monitored on the (physical) progress of activities and financial progress, but not so much on outcomes. Although steering committee is mandated to conduct field visits for monitoring, financial constraints limit the possibility and therefore are not planned or facilitated by UNDP. Steering committee finds it difficult to monitor and follow on regular progress reports.

Civil society does not seem to be very familiar with the use of indicators in monitoring and evaluation. They are aware of the existence of indicators but are not sure whether they are used for monitoring or not and feel that monitoring needs to be improved. Donors corroborate the view that ***Monitoring reports are mostly based on activity reporting.*** The public sector too concurs with the broad need for the institution of the stronger M & E Mechanism. ***Monitoring and review meetings with UNDP are infrequent and irregular and***

are not based on monitoring indicators. Their monitoring of small grants is inadequate and needs improvement. Therefore it is not possible to obtain the larger picture on the ground situation.

Therefore, overall it is important to improve the project monitoring and reporting system and ***a stronger and more rigorous design for monitoring is required for ensuring contribution to the achievement of outcomes.***

3.4 Sustainability in the Context of Democratic Governance

3.4.1 UNDP Engagement with Civil Society Actors

The sustainability of the engagement strategy and the mechanisms employed by the project would depend on closely following up on the benefits achieved so far and building on them. There are also some gaps that have to be addressed for the purpose of ensuring sustainability. ***Capacity gaps still remain, particularly the lack of specialized technical expertise, which is common both to the public service and to the civil society organizations.*** There is little representation of women in key democracy and governance issues while the Women's Development Committees mandated by the law are yet to be formed. There is very limited capacity in the Maldives media, including lack of editorial expertise, lack of professionals and standards of practice.

In regard to ***Equal access to justice*** the sustainability of the engagement strategies and mechanics in so far as the civil society is concerned depend to a large extent on the accomplishment of three factors (i) the extent to which the ***modern justice system can co-exist with the traditional Shari-ah law***, in which the civil society has a major role to play (ii) the extent to which the ***modern justice systems and procedures can break through the traditions and cultural norms***, in which also the civil society can make very useful contributions, provided their capacity and skills are upgraded through project-based interventions and (iii) ***the level of cooperation*** the police and other law enforcement agencies in association with concerned civil society organizations will extend to consolidate and strengthen the justice system.

Sustainability of Civil Society will depend on the level of maturity they will be able to acquire. In the process of acquisition of experience and skills needed to sustain themselves NGOs and CSOs will have to overcome several challenges. The Preliminary Impact Evaluation Report (Draft) Support to Civil Society Development Project (Sept 2011) states that "perceptions of partisanship have notably been associated with concepts such as human rights and good governance". ***NGOs are also challenged by the perceptions of political affiliations and bias.*** The public perception of NGOs will not change unless they are able to work as independent groups free from political affiliations.

The lack of capacity in some NGOs and CSOs will also require close monitoring to ensure that they do not drop out at a critical juncture. ***The need for more technical skills in financial management and record keeping*** is evident in some organization, which in the long run will affect sustainability.

Sustainability of the civil society ***depends to a large extent on the availability of external funds and the ability to raise funds locally.*** The civil society still continues to face many challenges such as the lack of funding due to weakness in capacity to mobilize finances and limited mechanisms for state and private sector funding and partnerships with NGOs. The lack of a ***strong legal and regulatory framework that enables civil society to thrive coupled with a lack of understanding at policy level of the role of civil society*** and the ***lack of capacity in relevant government departments*** has made it difficult to regulate civil society

Sustainability of the benefits gained from the promotion of ***human rights and women's rights*** achieved under the project will largely depend on three factors (i) commitment of the Central Government and Local Councils to respect human rights and women's rights, (ii) strength of law enforcement agencies to dispense justice and (iii) capacity of the civil society to be active within the communities to maintain the accepted norms with the participation of the people. As far as the civil society is concerned, a ***sustained capacity development strategy to upgrade the capacity and capability of the activists*** will be the key to sustainability of the gains achieved.

One of the difficult problem areas that the civil society sector will have to emerge out of is ***gender equality***. The effects of Islamist Fundamentalism will certainly clash with genuine efforts to bring about gender equality (in spite of the removal of legal bars in the public sector) in the Maldivian society, which is still dominated by traditional norms and values. More awareness and reaching out to the hinterland will be required.

All 10 FGDs gave almost similar scores with regard to the outcome being reviewed, in that 8 out of 10 FGDS gave a score of 3 while 2 gave a score of 2. The rating indicates that a majority of the stakeholders have a common perception about sustainability concerns.

It was noted that proposals made by NGOs are evaluated in relation to the outcomes and sustainability. The main focus is on capacity building as a means of ensuring sustainability of interventions. ***With strengthened capacity within partners, there is a belief that they will be able to sustain the outcomes by themselves.*** With regard to the sustainability of the enabling environment created for the civil society to thrive and to engage in public dialogue, it is the expectation that small grantees would themselves contribute to sustainability.

Subscribing to the potential that is present, the view held by the civil society is that the ***UNDP appears to be "doing little on the surface but these little things have a huge impact"*** in the long run, within the existing capacity and structures of the country. Institutional strengthening through restructuring of institutions at all levels is very necessary for the Maldives and its democratization process at the moment. UNDP's work in supporting institutional strengthening is the way to make sure their interventions are sustainable. Sustainability of the interventions is outside UNDP's hands. It depends on the government and politicians of the country. Funding and other support have to be arranged to sustain the progress made under the small grants scheme. Overall, Maldives has a "strong culture of dependency" and the country needs to progressively get over it.

One impediment to sustainability however is the lack of awareness on the role of the civil society by the different stakeholders. Because of the lack of awareness, there is little

support that can be anticipated by NGOs from the local government institutions. On the other hand the awareness that NGOs themselves have on their role in society too is inadequate. The long-term partnerships with CSOs are limited, implying that when external support ceases, there is likelihood for the project to collapse. Another issue that affects sustainability is the absence of a proper mechanism to share information. NGOs lack financial capacity to continue the progress of projects after external support ceases. Lack of financial resources affects continuation of training as well. Additionally weak institutional set up of partners and high turnover rates of staff act as impediments to sustainability.

The evaluation tried to examine whether the ***UNDP deliberately designed interventions and engaged partners to build-in sustainability in the project.*** While 1 Institutional FGD and 1 NGO / CSO FGD gave low scores of 2 for the outcome being reviewed, 2 Institutional FGDs and 3 NGO / CSO FGDs gave scores of 3 or more (One institutional FG giving the maximum of 5).

As stated in the earlier paragraph FGDs reiterated that the potential of sustainability of projects is a factor taken into consideration at the time of evaluation of projects submitted by NGOs, indicating that by design UNDP has deliberately instituted safeguards against unsustainable projects.

However a clear exit mechanism not being defined and understood is a particular weakness relating to sustainability. The long-term partnerships with CSOs are limited, implying that when external support ceases, there is likelihood for the projects interventions to lapse.

3.4.2 UNDP Partnership strategy

For the sustainability of the projects, donors prefer a partnership approach of implementation through the partners and not the Direct Implementation Approach (DIM). The government too concurs with this view. The public sector point of view on sustainability is that a move towards direct implementation is not conducive to sustainability even though significantly contribute to efficiency in implementation. The Evaluation Team was made to understand that this decision on DIM was made to respond to a particular set of circumstances which is temporary in the political nature. It has been the result of close consultation with all partners, which was purely meant to be a short-term arrangement. The new programme acknowledges the constraints of sustainability the government is working towards expanding the work on supporting CSOs and ensuring an enabling environment good for sustainability. Capacity building of government and non-government organizations is therefore a basic requirement in this context, which needs to be addressed under the program.

Considering the overall contribution of the ***small grants mechanisms*** the fact that majority of the grant recipients were engaged in implementing activities related to creating awareness on good governance, accountability and human rights etc, with the local communities, by itself can be considered as a substantial contribution. However, for continuity and sustainability of their involvement further support from UNDP is needed until they gain technical as well as financial capability to commit on their own, particularly because of the fact that the expected outcomes are more to do with attitudinal and

behavioral changes as compared to tangible benefits. The need for further capacity building of NGOs & CSOs was highlighted by the beneficiaries in their qualitative supplementary answers reflecting on the content of the democratic governance component.

In regard to the sustainability of interventions made under improvement of the **human rights and women's rights** arenas more than half of the beneficiary respondents (52.5%) believed there was still much room for improvement in promoting respect for human rights and women's rights on their islands. The need for awareness creation in a systematic and consistent manner is reflected in the qualitative responses of the beneficiaries which supplemented the questionnaire responses.

With regard to increased **volunteerism and community participation** in development which is also a reflection of commitment to democratic processes, the majority of respondents (72.5%) were agreeing, out of which 37.5% strongly agreed which can be considered as a significant build up in motivations which contributes to sustainability of civil society engagement. Interestingly however; it was only respondents who were in their 20s or late teens that referred to the high level of youth volunteerism. Those who rated low were older (above 35) and they noted that the spirit of volunteerism had disappeared and people expected payment for their work currently. Therefore unless there is a drastic change of attitude among the public on volunteerism or if the volunteer cadre is not replenished regularly, the concept cannot be successfully sustained.

4.0 Main Findings related to Civil Society Engagement, Partnership Strategy & Mechanisms in the context of Poverty Reduction Component

The Country Programme Outcomes envisaged under the Programme Component Poverty Reduction are (i) *"Institutional Capacity strengthened to remove barriers to economic diversification and private sector development"*, (ii) *"Enabling environment strengthened creates decent work opportunities for women and men aligned with ILO standards"*, (iii) *"Equitable access to drugs and HIV prevention, treatment, care and prevention and support services ensured to most at-risk and vulnerable populations"* and (iv) *"Individual and system-wide capacities to promote gender equality"*.

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the details obtained through the same sources as stated in Chapter 3 and the information generated through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) – **Annex 8** and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) – **Annex 9** and beneficiary questionnaire survey covering a cross section of project stakeholders.

The outcome findings are presented according to the **UNEG criteria** indicated in the TOR (*Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Sustainability*) with special reference to civil society engagement.

4.1 Relevance in the Context of Poverty Reduction

4.1.1 UNDP Engagement with Civil Society Actors

As regards the key evaluation question whether *the intended outcomes on poverty reduction and outputs are relevant to national and community needs and priorities*. The relevance has to be viewed in the light of the outcomes of the civil society engagement in the implementation of 4 projects, namely, (i) Support to Integrated Farming project (2008 – 2010), (ii) Gender and Economic Empowerment Project (2009 – 2010), (iii) Support to Integrated Farming Project (2011 – 2013), and (iv) Employment and Enterprise Development for Women and Youth Project (2011 -2013), brief descriptions of which are given in section 1.3.2.1.

The Support to Integrated Farming Project was designed to create opportunities for a diversified economy in selected regions in the Maldives with a view to strengthening the economic resilience of Island communities and vulnerable groups including women and youth. The project actively promoted the creation of partnerships with the private sector.

The Employment and Enterprise Development for Women and Youth Project was formulated to strengthen economic resilience of island communities and vulnerable groups including women and youth through strengthening opportunities for economic diversification and employment creation.

The relevance was discussed with 10 FGDs comprising of 5 Institutional FGDs and 5 NGO / CSO FGDs. The scores given are in a range between a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 5, the larger number of groups (8) rating more than 3.5.

Institutional FGDs were of the view that the Poverty Reduction Programme meets the needs of the country and is aligned with UNDAF and that Annual work plans prepared for poverty reduction meet national standards. The relevance is further confirmed since employment opportunities including opportunities for women are scarce in the islands.

The opinion of the government sector reinforces the contention that the Poverty Reduction component of the UNDP Country Programme is very relevant. UNDP is working with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and cooperatives and establishing market linkages which are in the National Strategic Action Plan, formulated with community consultation. Sources from the government sector opine that under Support to Integrated Farming project, the country is working with UNDP to establish market linkages, introduce new technologies and strengthen CBO activities, all of which are relevant and in line with National Strategic Action Plan, further confirming the earlier view.

The cooperative sector view point is also that the programme component is very relevant. Being very isolated, the communities need projects of this nature. UNDP is providing technical assistance, monitoring progress¹³ and linking the communities with markets, MoFA

¹³During every monitoring trip – the team meets with the beneficiaries to make them understand about the efforts made (Comment by Poverty Reduction Unit)

and the BDSC and IFAD. The BDCS assists by providing assistance in preparing proposals and business plans and working to establish links with markets.

Although the evaluation team interacted with only one private sector intermediary, the general private sector view is also that the interventions of the poverty reduction component is strongly relevant to needs and priorities of the country. P4D exercise at the Hubasaana Forum was ***very relevant as it would move towards development of local people and economic sustainability. Resorts have to work to improve surrounding communities as part of CSR.***

A total of 30 questionnaires were conducted with beneficiaries of 7 out of 8 total CBOs/cooperatives from 5 out of total 6 target islands, with whom UNDP has formed partnerships. This was comprised of 5 CBOs/cooperatives involved with the auto-pot project and 2 involved with the poultry project. All beneficiaries are women so the respondents were all female.

Two projects were implemented under the Poverty Reduction component with the objective of strengthening economic resilience of targeted island communities (especially among women and youth) by strengthening and expanding farming opportunities (2008 – 2012). The first was the Support to Integrated Farming (2008-2010) project which targeted 6 islands and the second, a continuation of the same project, the Support to Integrated Farming (2011-2013) project which provided technical support in market integration by facilitating the establishment of cooperatives and formation of market linkages.

The relevance of the UNDP engagement with civil society in the context of the poverty reduction outcome to national and community needs and priorities was identified from 2 perspectives (i) the need to remove barriers to diversification and private sector development (national priority)(ii) improvement of Value-chain linkages with regard to tourism, trade and food security-related livelihood (community priority) .

With regard to removal of barriers to diversification and private sector development 13.33% stated that 'barriers have gradually been removed', and 16.66% that 'barriers still exist'. Since this is more a policy issue both the civil society and beneficiaries have little contributions to make other than managing the results. The relevance of the UNDP becomes increasingly significant in view of its capacity to influence at policy level. On the issue of improved value-chain linkages with regard to tourism, trade and food security related livelihood, 13.33% of the respondents stated that there is a satisfactory improvement.

It is thus considered that intended outcome on civil society engagement is relevant to national and community needs priority. The same is applicable to UNDP partnership strategy and mechanism and that UNDP is in a position to pursue this development result and work with civil society in the context of poverty reduction component. No reference however is seen with regard to urban poverty which may require attention in the future¹⁴.

¹⁴This issue was identified recently with HIES report and it has been a new emerging issue. UNDP had supported in implementing "Affordable Housing for All" project in 2009 with Ministry of Housing and Environment. The main objective of this project is to build capacity in government for the implementation of its rights-based "Affordable Housing for All" Policy, particularly focusing on poverty reduction through targeted

4.1.2 UNDP Partnership Strategy

The second evaluation question referred to whether ***UNDP's partnership and strategies and mechanisms are relevant to national conditions and priorities***. With the objective of strengthening economic resilience and creation of opportunities for economic diversification and employment generation, the project created space to engage with NGOs, CSOs, Cooperatives and the Private sector. Information confirming that the partnerships and strategies and mechanisms adopted came from FGDs. The scores given by the 10 FGDs in respect of this area of the project are mixed and range between 2 (minimum) to 5 (maximum) in a scale of 1 – 5.

Institutional FGDs who responded to this inquiry stated that ***a good working relationship has been established with Implementing Partners and community-based Cooperatives and NGOs operating at the ground level***. Planning is carried out jointly with Implementing Partners and NGOs. Work relating to the programme is aligned with that of other donors. Currently a partnership strategy with the private sector is being developed and it is too early to comment on the results.

The third evaluation question according to the ToR is whether ***UNDP is relevant to pursue these development results and work with poverty reduction, as intended***. Institutional FGDs and Cooperative FGD rated this outcome at the maximum in the scale i.e 5. NGO FGD gave the outcome a score of 3. UNDP is relevant to pursue these development results as it is recognized by other donors as a trusted partner. UNDP is relevant also because the current programmes are being implemented through the National Implementing Modality (NIM). UNDP provided a lot of development aid to different islands in the Maldives and that it has helped the NGOs to think along business lines. UNDP has promoted new ways of thinking and has provided development aid to communities.

NGO / CSO FGDs were posed an additional outcome to consider, namely, ***“UNDP's partnership with your organization is relevant to your expectations”***. Positive responses offered by the NGO/CSO FGDs include that the UNDP provided equipment and training when the project was launched and that training offered by the UNDP was relevant.

From the above findings it can be stated that in the context of the current economic situation of the country UNDP has an important role to play and that ***UNDP is relevant to pursue these development results and work with poverty reduction, as intended***.

4.2 Effectiveness in the Context of Poverty Reduction

4.2.1 UNDP Engagement with Civil Society Actors

The first evaluation question is whether ***the progress made to-date in achieving the stated outcome or outputs on civil society engagement and development is on track***. As far as the removal of barriers for trade, the project supported the BDSC with the market linkages and

interventions for the poor and vulnerable. Although the report was not acknowledged by MHE as the housing component got merged with the manifesto of MDP and resulted in the housing (flats) plans which are currently in place. (Comment made by the Poverty Reduction Unit)

also helped them to better understand market demands/constraints during the two resort forums held during the year. The project also supported the Ministry of agriculture and communities in adopting modern methods and agriculture practices, with civil society functioning as intermediaries.

In the course of discussions with FGs, the groups gave scores ranging from 3 to 5, indicating that the ***progress made to-date in achieving the stated outcome or outputs on civil society engagement and development is on track***. The positive outcome has been contributed to by the fact that the Poverty Reduction programme is flexible. While farming interventions are progressing and are on track it was the view that the programme can ultimately lead to viable income generating ventures.

However the Poverty Reduction Programme depends on the work of other partners as well implying that as a programme it cannot stand on its own. It should be recognized that programme initiatives are not gap fillers but opportunities for creating a base for other donors to functions and operate. UNDP 2010 met with BDSC, IFAD and other such donors working on the community level to come to the same level of understanding and to work with each other¹⁵.

At the atoll level the main issue pointed out was that the progress of income generation is very slow. In this regard however, it should be appreciated that UNDP led community projects are not commercial ventures but demonstration projects made with a purpose of demonstration for showcasing its feasible and it is profitable and it was left for NGO/cooperatives for their expansion.¹⁶

Sometimes as a consequence change of government, the priorities may have to be redesigned mid-way in implementation, which suggests that the civil society should be strong enough to withstand the effects of political change.

Beneficiaries confirmed that the outputs have been on track. A principal outcome of the UNDP's engagement with civil society was capacity building of CSOs. The majority of respondents stated that they were trained at the initial stages. Some noted that although ***training was provided on how to start up small business, there was not enough coverage of how to establish market linkages***

To the question whether ***progress toward that particular outcome has been made*** the scores given by the FGDs from 3-5. The institutional FGDs in particular observed that the MDG indicators on poverty reduction in Maldives ***have been achieved at the national level mainly due to civil society engagement in poverty reduction*** interventions of UNDP partnering with NGOs / CSOs. Key Informants confirmed that introducing cooperatives for the first time as planned under SAP, worked on most islands (except Baarah atoll). More than 70% direct beneficiaries are women (although they are missing in leadership positions).

From the beneficiary point of view several strategies were adopted under the UNDP engagement with civil society to ensure the achievement of the stated outcome, but the

¹⁵ Poverty Reduction Unit

¹⁶ Poverty Reduction Unit

progress has been mixed. The effectiveness of the strategy to establish market linkages is constrained due to high prices of produce. Even linkages that were attempted at the Hubasaana P4D Forum have run into problems. The programme created the base for BDSC to showcase its products with various SME to the potential market¹⁷.

As regards the evaluation question of ***factors are contributing to achieving intended outcome*** in so far as civil society partnership is concerned were identifies as: (i)Partnerships as well as readiness of the community to empower themselves, (ii) Trust the community has with the UNDP as a development partner, (iii) Assistance given by the UNDP at the start,(iv) Material assistance received from the UNDP (chicks and equipment), as a part of the partnership.

With regard to the evaluation question whether ***UNDP strategy for engagement with poverty reduction related organizations, actors and partnership strategy has been effective in achieving the CPD outcomes and outputs***, FGDs gave scores between 3 – 4. It was observed that the engagement strategy is very good, linking partners' own projects with those of other donor agencies. There is an informal working group in place to stimulate the work of project implementation for SME capacity building. The existing key stakeholder group is providing technical inputs to NGOs and Co-operatives, further reinforcing the success of the partnership strategy. ***UNDP also provided information on the advantage of forming cooperative societies and on operation of poultry farms.***

One of the deficiencies however is the ***varying capacity of partners***. It was stated that training in poultry farming was limited to daily care of poultry. ***Lack of dependable market linkage*** is a particularly felt problem. While only a limited number were trained, it was noted that ***a regular mechanism has not been established to link small grants to the poverty sector.***

4.2.2 UNDP Partnership Strategy

Whether ***UNDP partnership strategy has been appropriate and effective***, is another evaluation question that demanded answers. All FDGs scored the effectiveness of the outcome at 3. The evaluation noticed that ***UNDP partnership strategy has been flexible in strategies based on experiences***. The strategy is enriched with a ***strong relationship that has been built up with government implementing partners, communities and relevant NGOs.***

As regards strengthening of business development and entrepreneurial capacity through project interventions, little over half (56.6%) the beneficiaries believed that appreciable (33.3%) or satisfactory (23.3%) progress in this regard was being made. Majority of respondents felt that market linkages were seriously lacking on all projects at island level. CBO/cooperative partners still face many challenges in conducting business activities in practice. ***Strengthening the functioning of cooperatives requires to be seen as a key element in civil society engagement.***

¹⁷ During the forum a lot of feedbacks were provided to these products, which BDSC has not been able to incorporate given the fact that they had to wind up right after this. With the next phase, they would be working on these recommendations.(Poverty Reduction Unit)

Factors that have contributed to effectiveness in so far as the civil society partnership is concerned were identified as (i) Good working relationships with existing partners, (ii) Acceptance of UNDP as having the comparative advantage to work with the government, (iii) Provision of equipment and supplies by the UNDP under the partnership arrangement.

Factors inhibiting effectiveness in so far as the civil society partnership is concerned were identified as: (i) Inadequate technical capacity of implementing partners and especially of community based organizations in the islands, (ii) insufficient sharing of information, inadequate information given on the advantages of forming a cooperative society. (It was however clarified that Projects were at demonstration scale and further expansion was taken up by other donors (IFAD) and Ministry also gives priority to replicating this in other islands.)¹⁸, (iii) Inadequate training imparted, (iv) Not providing assistance to diversify (compulsion to undertake either farming or mat-weaving under the cooperative).

In regard to whether UNDP interventions are gender mainstreamed and contributed to gender equity, FDGs provided high scores between 4 – 5. Gender equity guidelines are closely followed. NGO/CSO FDGs pointed out that the interventions undertaken under the Poverty Reduction component are more suitable to women. While most of the beneficiaries of projects under the Poverty Reduction Programme are women, they have improved their incomes through programmes that were supported by the UNDP. There has been a change in the attitudes of people, in that now they believe that women too can generate income.

Although gender mainstreaming is accepted in principle, during the limited field visits undertaken by the Evaluation Team it was noticed that the management and resources of CBOs are dominated by men¹⁹. Whether this is a common feature needs further investigation and if so need corrective action by empowering women with the necessary skills.

The outcome whether **UNDP interventions successfully target ‘vulnerable groups’ and meet their needs through design and implementation**, the scores given by FDGs was wide ranging; from 1 to 4. Institutional FDGs explained that 49% of the households are women-headed (2006 Census) and that their participation is accounted for at the design stage of programmes.

4.3 Efficiency in the Context of Poverty Reduction

4.3.1 UNDP Engagement with Civil Society Actors and Partnership Strategy

UNDP’s engagement with poverty reduction in achieving the intended outputs and contributing to outcomes has been timely and cost-effective: FDGs gave scores ranging from 1 to 4 in regard to actions towards the achievement of the above intended outcome. It was observed that the projects are implemented in a timely and cost-effective manner. There has however been an increased focus on policy level actions than community-based

¹⁸ Poverty Reduction Unit

¹⁹ In all 8 community projects the actual work is done by all women and so they are the beneficiaries, but in 6 out of the 8 projects, NGOs/Cooperatives are headed by men and thus decision making on resource control is done by men. (Poverty Reduction unit)

activities which in a way affected the density of operations at community level where UNDP interventions are most needed. Absence of work plans was identified as a major drawback.

As regards whether **UNDP's internal capacity and its structure is equipped to deliver results efficiently** the 2 NGO/CSO FGDs gave this intended outcome scores between 2 and 4. FGDs explained that compared to the financial allocation a lot of work has been accomplished by this portfolio. Human resources available to this portfolio are very limited. The internal technical capacity also needs to be improved further. The distance between the UNDP Country Office and project sites has made communication very difficult.

Coordination, complementarities and synergies amongst UNDP projects, units, UN agencies and other partners has enhanced efficiency and effectiveness: FGDs gave this intended outcome scores between 2 and 3. The Institutional FGD clarified that efforts are being made to collaborate internally on project implementation and monitoring (e.g Poverty and Environment). From the point of view of the Government, **programme is well managed, with UNDP leading coordination of all stakeholders**. It needs more engagement and focus to establishing market linkages. While project management is adequate, Steering Committees are working well but require more participation of private sector in committees and during design.

It was however observed that whilst efforts are being made to internally collaborate, Institutional FGDs stated that coordination is not happening efficiently enough in the areas of project implementation and monitoring.

UNDP's monitoring (and evaluation) in relation to poverty reduction activities have been efficient and effective: FGDs gave this intended outcome scores between 2 and 4. As an integral part of the monitoring process regular field visits are being undertaken once every three months during the first two years. Also financial monitoring is carried out regularly during the first two years. The lessons learnt from monitoring visits are shared and used in decision-making for further programme development

However in spite of the provision for regular field visits, visits are undertaken intermittently. **The absence of a regular monitoring plan was also observed.** It was also noted that there is no follow up on monitoring and no advice has been offered. Institutional FGDs pointed out that resources are not available to conduct monitoring visits.

4.4 Sustainability in the Context of Poverty Reduction

4.4.1 UNDP Engagement with Civil Society Actors and Partnership Strategy

The existing government systems are being used for programme implementation and that partner commitment exists to sustain the outcomes confirms the view that **contributions to outcome and achievement of outputs are sustainable within the existing capacity and structures of the country**. FGD's scores are 2 and 3 respectively.

UNDP deliberately designed interventions and engaged partners to build in sustainability in the project: All FGDs that reviewed this intended outcome gave it a score of 3 each. The

view held by the Institutional FGDs was that UNDP encouraged the Partners to share their financial resources among themselves. NGO/CSO FGD explained that ***provision of necessary equipment and necessary training by the UNDP has enhanced the sustainability of the outcomes.***

A third of the beneficiaries who participated in the questionnaire survey claimed that there has been an 'appreciable level of enhancement of business development and entrepreneurial capacity'. ***Sustainability of the outcomes will largely depend on the arrangements that can be negotiated with resorts/private sector groups for marketing of agricultural produce.***

One of the shortcomings is the lack of a proper exit strategy. The issues of sustainability were considered and exit strategies formulated during design stage, but they do not work sometimes. The Pearl culture project proved the importance of having a clear exit strategy. Clear guidelines have not been given for the take-over of the projects by the partners and in regard to the continuity of the outcomes after programme funding ceases. Lack of clarity about the next phase of the engagement process is also identified as an issue. In the opinion of the Government sector, UNDP support will still be required for at least five more years; three years after graduation to middle income status. Government is working on finding ways to continue after UNDP phases out.

Many respondents from the islands noted that there had initially been more interest by women to participate but that this had gradually gone down. This reflects a ***decreasing enthusiasm for the projects over time and could have adverse effects on sustainability and overall strengthening of these CBOs/cooperatives as envisioned by UNDP.*** The main ***issue is sustainability through developing human resources and infrastructure,*** so that the outcomes can continue when project ends. It is important to support the community to sustain the outcomes than for the government to take over. IFAD now supporting to expand and continue activities once the UNDP phases out.

5.0 Main Findings related to Civil Society Engagement, Partnership Strategy & Mechanisms in the context of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care Component

The third important country programme outcome incorporated within the Poverty Reduction programme component (even though funding has phased out) is "Equitable access to drug and HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services ensured to most at risk and vulnerable populations. The National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS for 2007-2011, aims at maintaining the low prevalence of HIV primarily targeting the Most-at-Risk populations (MARPs) and to create an enabling environment to mitigate the impact of HIV. However, ensuring equitable access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services to MARPs and vulnerable populations is quite challenging given the context of the country"

UNDP is one of the key players working with the government and the civil society organizations to achieve the above outcome. The project has helped Society for Health

Education (SHE), NGO to develop the outreach programme on HIV and STD prevention to the Migrant Workers (MWs) and Resort Workers (RWs). A total of 8,581 MWs and 460 RWs were reached through this programme in 2011. Under this activity UNDP works closely with private sector organizations to educate their employees on the subject. Outreach programme has also been linked to the Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) service center established at SHE.

In 2009 it was stated that Maldives is fortunate to have very few people living with HIV/AIDS. However the risk factors for a concentrated HIV epidemic are prevalent in the country. The country has high rates of hepatitis B (and C), STI rates are average for the region (but higher than in Sri Lanka), condom use is low across the board, there is a high rate of sexual partner change among parts of the population, and needle sharing is reported by a significant proportion of the injecting drug users. Further taboos and stigma have driven underground behaviors most likely to fuel a future HIV epidemic²⁰. A significant portion of the resources allocated for HIV prevention has already been expended. But apart from peer education for injecting drug users, the programs have not been well targeted, reaching Maldivians who are unlikely to be at risk for HIV. It was recommended that the country should enter into provision of comprehensive services to populations most at risk to avoid a concentrated epidemic among people with high risk behaviors. This is where civil society can perform a major role.

During the field investigation the Programme Component HIV/AIDS was examined from the main perspective of the issues: Relating to Social Protection and Social Security including support to HIV/AIDS – *Access to health care services, education, child and family protection, social security, drugs and HIV prevention treatment care and support services*, contemplated in Country Programme Outcome “*Equitable access to drugs and HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services ensured to most at-risk and vulnerable populations*”

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the details obtained through a rapid review of a multitude of documents pertaining to the project (including Project Documents, Progress Reports, Annual Reports, Field Visit Reports, Reports of Missions commissioned by UNDP etc.) and the information generated through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) – **Annex 8** and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) – **Annex 9** and beneficiary questionnaire survey covering a cross section of project stakeholders.

The outcome findings are presented according to the **UNEG criteria** indicated in the TOR (*Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Sustainability*) with special reference to civil society engagement.

5.1 Relevance in the Context of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care Component

5.1.1 UNDP Engagement with Civil Society Actors

Intended outcome on Civil Society engagement in the context of Social Protection & Security and support to HIV/AIDS prevention engagement and outputs are relevant to

²⁰2009 Mid-term Review of the Maldives National Response to HIV

national and community needs and priorities: The FGDs with NGOs gave a score of 4.5 signifying that the activities carried out under the component are relevant to national and community needs and priorities, indicating a high assessment of the outcomes

It was observed that the programme has contributed to more than 80% of National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDs. The programme also contributed to strengthening national HIV / AIDS related M&E system. The relevance arises due to the reasons that (i) Global fund is aligned with national Strategic Action Plan, (ii) All civil society had inputs at design phase, (iii) Different target groups assigned to different NGOs, and (iv) A number of capacity building trainings (Financial Management etc.) conducted under the programme which built national capacity.

The high relevance of the component is reaffirmed by Government actors that the HIV/AIDs component of the UNDP Country programme is relevant in the national context. Global Fund (GF) activities have been recognized as highly relevant and the cooperation with NGOs/CSOs is necessary for the success.

It was however observed that the cultural sensitivity is limiting interventions and that the programme did not adequately address stigma issues adequately. The programme could have been better focused on migrant workers as well and that it should have made inroads to policy level changes.

5.1.2 UNDP Partnership Strategy

With regard to second evaluation question of whether ***UNDP's partnership strategy and mechanisms are relevant to national conditions and priorities***, FGD gave scores between 2 and 3. Supporting the thinking that the outcome is relevant, it was noted that programme has the flexibility to adapt to emerging situations and work directly with civil society partners. At present 3 MoUs with 3 NGOs are operational to conduct provision of services. The strategy adopted was recognized as practical since government working with NGOs leads to community acceptance

However programme was understood as more donor driven. While Government partners' capacities are limited, the engagement of civil society is also limited due to few numbers working in this specialized area. Long bureaucratic process of reporting through NDA delayed implementation.

The third evaluation question related to relevance is whether ***UNDP is relevant to pursue these development results and work with Social Protection & Security and support to HIV/AIDs prevention engaging civil society as intended***: The FGD that reviewed the progress gave the outcome a mid-way score of 3 indicating that although on track, there is more distance to be covered. NGOs FGD however gave a score of 4 indicating its high relevance.

It was noted from the observations that UNDP places high priority on social protection. Target groups place more trust in UNDP than government or other agencies. GF has set up a platform and foundation (infrastructure, evidence based data gathering) to continue work in

this sensitive area. In the opinion of the FGD, UNDP is relevant to pursue the intended development results because, (i) UNDP has the systems, resources and capacity to work in this area, more so than the government or other local agencies, (ii) UNDP is recognized as a reliable and able donor to implement activities, (iii) It's reputation for mentoring civil society organizations.

5.2 Effectiveness in the Context of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care Component

5.2.1 Perceptions of FGD Participants

With regard to whether ***the progress made to date on achieving the stated outcome or outputs on Social Protection & Security and support to HIV/AIDS prevention engagement and development is on track.*** The FGD gave the progress of actions implemented so far towards achieving the above intended outcome the maximum score of 5 which indicates an excellent record of progress. NGOs also gave a similar score indicating satisfaction about the progress made so far in achieving the intended outcome on civil society engagement and therefore well on track.

It was noted that all but one indicator (number of people with advanced HIV put on ART) is on track. UNDP supported study trips to other countries, developed capacity, facilitated dialogue with government authorities and arranged for civil society representation in steering committees making a significant contribution to capacity development of the civil society sector.

The second evaluation question pertaining to effectiveness refers to ***progress toward that particular outcome has been made:*** The FGDs gave a maximum scores of 4.5 and of 5 respectively, which indicates an excellent level of progress towards the achievement of the objective or that the component is approaching its goal in terms of achieving the particular outcome. ***UNDP facilitated dialogue with government authorities*** and also established baseline on HIV prevalence through UNDP supported Biological and Behavioral Survey. The foundation established was to continue the work. Under the component several studies have been carried out, 123 Peer Educators have been trained, 3 Drop-in Centers have been established, 2 NGOs have been established and supported, community classes have been started, and a NGO Coordination Unit and database of NGOs working with us have been set up.

With regard to shortcomings however, it was noted that activities of the programme are concentrated in the Central and South areas. The linkage with NGOs and CBOs in the islands is weak and their capacity also not been developed to the required level.

What factors are contributing to achieving or not achieving intended outcome?

Factors contributing to achieving the intended outcomes in so far as civil society is concerned: (i) Placement of project supported staff within relevant civil society implementing partners, (ii) Civil society partners' confidence in UNDP as development partner (iii) Space created for NGOs to work with government, (iv) Willingness of CBOs to commit themselves, (v) Trust of clients with service provision by NGOs. Decentralization of

the public health system has however posed challenges to the reporting system of HIV/AIDS related data by civil society partners.

On the question whether ***UNDP strategy for engagement with Social Protection & Security and support to HIV/AIDS prevention related organizations, actors and partnership strategy has been effective in achieving the CPD outcomes and outputs***, the progress of actions implemented so far a scores of 3 and 4 were given by the FGDs, which indicate a satisfactory level of effectiveness towards the achievement of the objective or an average achievement.

5.2.2 UNDP Partnership Strategy

The evaluation understood from the observations made at FGDs that change in partnership strategy to direct implementation is effective in achieving outcomes and outputs. NGO FGD pointed out that services of competent people were made available to the Implementing Partners to work as resource persons and implementers, which made a significant impact on the effectiveness of interventions of the civil society partners.

In spite of the merits of the direct implementation modality, it was however stated that direct implementation limits capacity development of government partners and affects sustainability. FGD with NGO suggested that long bureaucratic process of reporting through NDA delays implementation which is a disadvantage for the implementing partners.

The evaluation examined whether ***UNDP partnership strategy has been appropriate and effective***. The FGDs which reviewed this outcome gave the progress of actions implemented so far towards achieving the above intended outcome a scores of 3 and 4 respectively which indicate that ***UNDP partnership strategy has been appropriate and effective*** or that it has been somewhat satisfactory, but there is more distance to cover to be effective in terms of supporting the overall objectives.

The ability to adjust to the current situation and the ability to overcome implementation challenges posed by political instability were understood as positive characteristics. Direct implementation cuts down government bureaucracy and allows timely implementation

Factors contributing to effectiveness: FGDs identified the following as factors that are contributing to achievement of the objective in so far as the civil society is concerned: (i) Flexibility to adjust to the current situation, (ii) Ability to overcome implementation challenges posed by political instability, (iii) Change in partnership strategy to direct implementation in some instances. (iv) Civil society commitment to the cause, (v) linking of services and information services to the NGOs and the community. Capacity constraints of partners were the only negative factor that was identified.

Whether UNDP interventions are gender mainstreamed and contributed to gender equity was posed to the FGs for their opinion. Showing a wide disparity in their level of appreciation, FGs which reviewed this outcome gave the above intended outcome scores of 1 and 4.

It was understood from the discussions that partners practiced gender sensitive data collection and that they identified and targeted MSM as a vulnerable group for the first time through social mapping exercise. UNDP encouraged gender balance in project interventions. Differing signals were received by the evaluation with regard to level of gender mainstreaming at design stage. Some members of FGs noted that all activities are gender mainstreamed at the reporting stage, while others pointed out that it is not accounted for during project design (Indicators and targets not gender sensitive). Gender mainstreaming not accounted for during design phase. Therefore a clear view on the level and intensity of gender mainstreaming was not available to the evaluation.

Whether ***UNDP interventions successfully target 'vulnerable groups' and meet their needs through design and implementation*** was examined by the evaluation through discussion at FGs. FGD which reviewed this outcome gave the progress of actions implemented so far towards achieving the above intended outcome a score of 1 which indicates that a lot of work needs to be accomplished to progress towards the achievement of the objective. However FGD with NGOs scored 5 for this outcome, suggesting that vulnerability criterion is fully recognized in the HIV/AIDS component.

FGDs identified the following as the positive interventions: (i) Vulnerable groups identified for HIV sector and programmes designed to target them, (ii) Conducted social mapping which identified vulnerable gender groups to be included in national strategy and to design comprehensive prevention interventions for the first time, (iii) Consultations conducted with vulnerable groups in programme design and in development of national strategy

5.3 Efficiency in the Context of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care Component

5.3.1 UNDP Engagement with Civil Society Actors and Partnership Strategy

As to whether ***UNDP's engagement with Social Protection & Security and support to HIV/AIDS prevention in achieving the intended outputs and contributing to outcomes has been timely and cost-effective in term of civil society engagement strategy***, FGDs which reviewed this outcome gave the efficiency of actions implemented so far the maximum scores of 4 and 5 which indicates that efficiency was excellent or that a very good level of efficiency has been achieved for the cost involved.

Partners have achieved almost all targets and utilized almost all available funding as planned. In fact they achieved more than was initially planned for by the project. The FGD came up with 6 positive reasons supporting the suggestion that the intended outputs have been timely and cost-effective. (i) Clear work plan, (ii) Clear deadlines for reporting, (iii) Clear guidelines for implementation, (iv) Regular monitoring and evaluation by UNDP, (v) Achieved all targets on time, (vi) NGO capacity to deliver on time. Members of FGDs however desired that more research needs to be done to determine cost effectiveness. Reporting through NDA leads to delays

The evaluation made an attempt to verify whether ***UNDP's internal capacity and it's structure is equipped to deliver results efficiently***. The score given by the FGD was 5 indicating a slightly more than a mid-way and another a score of 3, indicating that UNDP's

internal capacity and it's structure is fully equipped to deliver results efficiently or is at a generally acceptable level. It was observed that the programme received support from global fund grant support unit at UNDP New York. UNDP possesses technical capacity to work with civil society in this area. UNDP's internal structure is supplemented with competent resource persons (international and local) and was providing supportive guidance throughout the project, which combined gave strong credibility to the intended outcome.

It was however observed that lack of internal capacity development efforts and lack of support and guidance provided regarding financial management and utilizing atlas system were main drawbacks.

With regard to whether ***coordination, complementarities and synergies amongst UNDP projects, units, UN agencies and other partners has enhanced efficiency and effectiveness***, FGD which reviewed this outcome gave the efficiency so far the maximum score of 5 which indicates progress towards the achievement of the objective was excellent. Another FGD assigned this outcome a score of 3.5 which indicate better than average efficiency.

Whether ***UNDP's monitoring (and evaluation) in relation to civil society engagement in Social Protection & Security and support to HIV/AIDS prevention activities have been efficient and effective*** was reviewed through FGD process. Only one of the FGD which reviewed the outcome gave a score of 3.5. Through discussion it was noted that the programme promoted a culture of civil society partnership reporting to UNDP and government agencies which encourages accountability and capacity of partners. (i) Regular quarterly monitoring in person, (ii) Regular quarterly reporting and subsequent verification visits by UNDP, (iii) Use of monitoring indicators, (iv) Flexibility to revise monitoring indicators based on emerging issues

Lack of M&E Unit within UNDP was identified as a major deficiency. Bureaucratic reporting process delays implementation and Results based monitoring yet to be institutionalized among CSOs

5.4 Sustainability in the Context of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care Component

5.4.1 UNDP Engagement with Civil Society Actors and Partnership Strategy

The question of whether ***Contributions to outcome and achievement of outputs are sustainable within the existing capacity and structures of the country*** was examined at the 2 FGDs. Only 1 FGD which reviewed this outcome gave a score (of 3) in respect of this outcome.

It was noted that the programme supported formulation of two major policy documents and also trained and built capacity of health care providers. It was also noted that CSOs are committed to the continuation of the programme and new funding sources have been identified. The dependency on project supported staff for the sustenance of projects was identified as a main drawback.

Whether **UNDP deliberately designed interventions and engaged partners to build in sustainability in the project** was rated at the maximum score of 5 in respect of this outcome.

The justification for the excellent rating were noted as (i) Advocacy interventions well received by partners and vulnerable groups, (ii) Involvement of vulnerable group members in implementation resulting in more commitment for the cause, (iii) Components being continued by other development partners (IPPF and UNODC), (iv) Culture of civil society partners reporting to UNDP and government agencies being promoted, which encourages accountability and capacity of partners, (iv) Support for the establishment (infrastructure and equipment) of CSOs and National Blood Transfusion services.

6.0 Main Findings related to Civil Society Engagement, Partnership Strategy & Mechanisms in the context of Environment and Energy Component

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the details obtained through a rapid review of a multitude of documents pertaining to the project (including Project Documents, Progress Reports, Annual Reports, Field Visit Reports, Reports of Missions commissioned by UNDP etc.) and the information generated through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) – **Annex 8** and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) – **Annex 9** and beneficiary questionnaire survey covering a cross section of project stakeholders.

As required in the TOR the assessment is confined to 2 specific elements of the project, namely, (i) UNDP engagement strategy with civil society actors – non-profit organizations, including at the national and community levels, and private sector actors, including cooperative societies, and (ii) mechanisms (including small grants) in achieving its development goals as outlined in the UNDAF and CPDs for the past 4 years. An effort has also been taken to answer as many of the evaluation questions posed in the TOR subject to the limitations in the availability of information and data.

The evaluation also makes an effort to comment on the shortcomings and strengths of UNDP engagement strategy with civil society actors and mechanisms (including small grants) as a base towards making forward-looking practical and substantive recommendations.

The outcome findings are presented according to the **UNEG criteria** indicated in the TOR (*Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Sustainability*) with special reference to civil society engagement.

6.1 Relevance in the Context of Environment and Energy Component

6.1.1 UNDP Engagement with Civil Society Actors

Maldives is almost completely dependent on the import of fossil fuels for power generation. In 2009 the country consumed more than 340,000 tons of oil, (which translates to 1.3 million tons of CO₂) of which more than 280,000 tons was diesel fuel. A study conducted in

2011 estimates that the demand for electricity in the Maldives will grow by 8% in 2020²¹. As early as in 2001, in the “Sixth National Development Plan” (2001-2005), the government focused on the need, among other things, for ***awareness regarding fuel consumption and sustainable use of energy resources***.

A Renewable Energy Investment Office (REIO) has been set up under the Ministry of Economic Development in light of the government’s decision to go carbon neutral by 2020. In addition, the Energy Policy for Maldives has been approved by the parliament, and a Renewable Energy (RE) feed-in-tariff structure has also been established.

The role of the civil society in energy and environment initiatives extends over several areas including ***community awareness creation***, promotion of adoption of energy-efficient technologies at ***domestic and community levels***, extension of more prudent land-use planning and coastal resource management and ***community level implementation*** of sustainable ecosystem conservation and hence the relevance of the outcome on civil society.

The relevance of Waste management initiatives undertaken by the civil society in at least two islands (Ha Horafushi Island – Ha. Atoll School / Isdharivaruggen Jammaiya-NGO) and (Hdh. Vaikaradhoo Island – Illustrious Happenings of Arts-ILHAAR - NGO) have been endorsed by monitoring missions.²²

A total 30 beneficiaries (14 female and 16 male) of 7 selected grants projects participated in the questionnaire survey. A total of 13 small grants were given out under the Environment and Energy in the years 2010 and 2011 under two small grants schemes, 8 grants under the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP) and 5 under the Mangroves for the Future Small Grants Facility (MFF SGF). Projects supported under the grants included environmental awareness raising activities, establishing and promoting livelihood opportunities, establishing waste management systems, environmental conservation efforts and introducing renewable energy.

The progress of the Energy and Environment projects undertaken under the Country Programme was comprehensively discussed at the UNDP Unit FGD. The discussion was structured so as to glean the stakeholder perceptions under UNEG criteria. The FGD discussed the relevance issues under 3 evaluation questions as stated in the ToR.

The question of whether ***the Intended outcome on civil society engagement and outputs are relevant to national and community needs and priorities*** was examined during the FGD process. FGD that examined the above outcome rated it and the outputs leading to its achievement at a score of 3. The satisfactory score is justified by the fact that (i) the content of the component is aligned with needs related to climate change in the country and (ii) Environmental Management (specifically on conservation) activities are aligned with national priorities.

²¹ Pricewaterhouse Coopers – The Framework for Energy Investment in the Maldives” 2011

²² Small Grant Project Monitoring Report-Jan 2010; Ha Horafushi Island – March 2010

The negative elements noted in regard to relevance are, (i) waste management is a national need but it is not reflected in portfolio (although a few projects were accommodated under the Small Grants Facility), (ii) programme priorities and community needs sometimes differ, (iii) the programme has not addressed national sanitation needs, (iv) there is a mismatch between national needs (infrastructure etc.) and what UNDP can cater to within its limitations.

All beneficiaries (who received small grant support for environmental initiatives) agreed that the ***activities conducted under the small grants were either very or mostly relevant to their own community's needs and priorities*** and that they are very useful. It was observed that there had been many positive changes in the behavior of the local community following the end of the project and also an increase in awareness on local environmental issues, which indicate that a salutary trend is developing.

6.1.2 UNDP Partnership Strategy

Whether ***UNDP's partnership strategy and mechanisms are relevant to national conditions and priorities*** was examined at FGDs. The FGD that examined the above intended outcome rated it at a score of 2.5. It was noted that in so far as civil society engagement is concerned (i) National Implementation Modality (NIM) allows for capacity development of government partners, (ii) NIM builds up ownership of the assets and outcomes produced through programme interventions within the participating communities, and (iii) Provision exists for Independent Joint Steering Committees (with civil society participation) of SG mechanisms to function, which collectively indicate that the UNDP's partnership strategy and mechanisms are relevant to national conditions and priorities.

However (i) engagement in programme activities is limited to applicants and it is difficult to verify common community needs and priorities (ii) partner priorities change over time, (iii) NIM and government capacity constraints and procedural delays leading to delays in deliverables, (iv) Delays leading to micromanagement by UNDP, and (v) Practical difficulties for CSO accessing UNDP's technical resource pool.

As regards the evaluation question whether ***UNDP is relevant to pursue these development results and work with energy and environment, as intended the*** FGD that examined the intended outcome rated it at a score of 4 indicating considerably high level of relevance. The determination of high relevance arises from (i) UNDP is understood as the only agency that can work in the area from a development perspective, (ii) UNDP has established good working relationships with all development actors in the country, (iii) UNDP can be reached comparatively better than with other agencies, (iv) UNDP has a comparative advantage to bring all development actors together, (v) GEF and MFF SG schemes are the most substantial SG schemes available to local CSOs in the area of environment, which directly or indirectly have a bearing on civil society engagement. GEF SE FGD indicated that working directly with Island communities ensures better civil society engagement. The perception of Key Informants on the partnership strategy and mechanisms is also that, they are relevant to national conditions and priorities.

It is further strengthened through the perceptions of key public sector informants, indicating that the themes of GEF SGP are very relevant and much in line with government priorities (climate change, carbon neutrality, waste management grants, energy saving technology etc). UNDP is very relevant to lead civil society strengthening but lacks outreach. The opinion held by the UNDP is that the AEC project is very relevant. There have been broad consultations with all stakeholders (communities, private sector local government). It was stated that 95% of atoll residents supported declaration of the Reserve. Use of partnership strategy is necessary for projects of this nature and requires involvement of communities, government and private sector, and hence the high relevance of the outcome.

The view that UNDP is relevant to pursue the intended development results in the energy and environment area is further consolidated by the perceptions expressed by beneficiaries of SGF. They noted that UNDP has always been very helpful and that it is very relevant to pursue the development results. It was also observed that UNDP should provide more technical as well as financial support to ensure sustainability of progress achieved under the interventions.

6.2 Effectiveness in the Context of Environment and Energy Component

6.2.1 UNDP Engagement with Civil Society Actors

Although the basic infrastructures to drive renewable energy (RE) investments are now in place, the country is yet to see their outcome and impacts on low carbon development. Environment Awareness media Project (EAMP) Established in 2008, (Dhi FM Radio Station/Maldives Media Company Pvt. Ltd) was found to be a very effective community environmental awareness initiative. From the results of a recent media survey conducted, Dhi FM Radio Station was rated as the most popular private Radio Station in Male²³ which plays a crucial role in disseminating environment awareness to people who otherwise would not have access to information.

FGDs discussed the issues relating to the “effectiveness” of the outcomes and outputs leading to the achievement of the outcomes from 9 evaluation questions as stated in the ToR. :

With regard to the question whether ***progress made to date on achieving the stated outcome or outputs in the context of energy and environment engagement and development is on track***, the outcome was rated at a score of 4, which indicates a fairly high level of progress of achievements. It was noted that GEF and MFF are moving on track in terms of completing Annual Work Plans. The achievement of set targets are also on track in terms of environment related CPD outcomes. However the National Implementation Modality (NIM) and government capacity constraints and procedural delays are leading to delays in delivery of outputs to some extent.

The evaluation made an attempt to verify whether ***progress toward that particular outcome has been made***. The performance of activities and the achievement of outputs

²³ Small Grant Project Monitoring Report- March 2012

leading to the outcome were rated by FGDs at a score of 3, indicating an above-average level of achievement of progress. AEC and the SG's progress have been as planned and some activities related to outputs are still in progress. However there are delays in delivery of some outputs.

From a beneficiary point of view, a majority of beneficiaries (both men and women) interviewed felt that the purposes of the respective projects they were involved with were either completely or mostly achieved. Some felt they were either only moderately achieved or not achieved at all. Those who felt they were completely/mostly achieved stated that awareness had increased the situation on their islands had improved. Some also noted that more time was needed to determine the outcome of the interventions implemented.

What factors are contributing to achieving or not achieving intended outcome?

Among the factors that contribute to the achievement that have a bearing in civil society engagement the following were identified as predominant: (i) Technical and financial capacities of partners have enhanced through the process, (ii) Infrastructure has been developed with UNDP support and (iii) UNDP involvement at activity implementation level and support to local government bodies are productive.

The following factors were noted as those that inhibit the achievement of the outcome in so far as civil society engagement is concerned are: (i) Capacity constraints of small grants recipients (financial management, communication outreach, project management, difficulties in describing concepts in local language, lack of understanding of relevant concepts e.g. climate change, difficulties in linking local issues to donor concerns), (ii) Lack of specialized NGOs to partner with for island development activities, (iii) Weakness of financial management in local institutions, (iv) Weaknesses in institutional set up for project management (lack of guidance by Steering Committees, Project Boards, inadequate prioritization of project management involvement by government partners), (v) Weakness in project management by government partners, (vi) Inadequate collaboration and cooperation between local government and NGOs, (vii) Changes in government priorities, (viii) Lack of understanding among government partners regarding specifics of knowledge management components of projects, (ix) Focus on outcome – being process oriented is difficult to measure and is spread over a period of time which is not necessarily the end of project, (x) Findings of evaluations conducted on completed projects have not been disseminated for sharing of knowledge, (xi) Greater focus on national level activities rather than local level activities.

With regard to the evaluation question whether ***UNDP strategy for engagement with energy and environment focused organizations, actors and partnership strategy has been effective in achieving the CPD outcomes and outputs***, FGD rated The effectiveness at a score of 2, which indicates low level of accomplishment. One of the positive achievements was the involvement of the Maldives Water and Sanitation Company on the Technical Committee of the water project.

From the beneficiary point of view, the strategy adopted by the UNDP in engagement with civil society has in fact been effective in achieving the planned outputs and outcomes. The majority of beneficiaries interviewed felt that the issues related to waste

management/livelihoods/environmental degradation were either completely or mostly solved following the projects supported by the small grants. However, women felt less positive about the progress made with more female respondents than male respondents saying they were either only mostly solved or not solved at all.

Problematic issues noted by respondents in this regard included reluctance of community members to become involved, participants in activities not implementing what they have learnt and the need for more work to be done in addressing issues they faced in relation to waste management/livelihoods/environmental degradation.

It was however noted that that the focus of the programme is mostly on government. The level of engagement with actors who are crucial for achieving outcome but not directly involved in the project (State Electric Company - STELCO) for energy related projects) and with Local Government bodies, leaves room for improvement. So also was the weak engagement with relevant government authorities and having to work with one line Ministry and there is no direct link between UNDP and local government, which affect the effectiveness.

The evaluation made an attempt to see if the Small Grants mechanism has contributed effectively as a mechanism for engaging civil society in the context of energy and environment related activities and achieving the ultimate result. FGD rated the effectiveness at a score of 3, which is slightly above the half-way mark.

On the positive side the programme has built capacity in disciplines like project management, project formulation, familiarization with technical issues (climate change) of NGOs to some extent, and has also provided an opportunity to partner with NGOs to implement development projects. Commenting on the extent of UNDP support, half of the beneficiary respondents felt that the amount of funding provided by the small grants were adequate.

On the down side NGOs are unfamiliar with the technical language required to formulate project proposals, which reduces the technical quality of reports. It was also noted that there was no allocation for capacity building activities and funding was set apart only for implementation of physical activities. Lack of integration of small grants with larger environment programmes which are necessary in the interests of the country reduces the effectiveness of the outcome and there is a mismatch between local contexts and thematic priorities. Key Informants pointed out that access to GEF small grants was selective and unequal. While small island NGOs were not aware of the existence of the grant scheme, a selected few with contacts in Male were aware.

6.2.2 UNDP Partnership Strategy

The question relating to whether ***UNDP partnership strategy has been appropriate and effective in environment management and related activities*** was discussed at the FG, which rated the appropriateness and effectiveness at a score of 2.5, which is the half-way mark. The reasons for the assessment were noted as that Small Grants Scheme is appropriate to implement projects in ***partnership with NGOs***, and that the programme

provided assistance to NGOs to upgrade their proposal writing skills, which has improved the quality of proposals submitted. Desk review and primary information point to the fact that the AEC Project has been successful and is considered a flag-ship project. Among its successes are the declaration of a Reserve, establishment of a Management Plan, Permit System and Trust Fund, designation of Baa atoll as UNESCO protected Reserve and training of a Local Ranger. Partnerships with resorts, private sector and local community were established and are functioning well.

What factors contributed to effectiveness or ineffectiveness in environment management and related activities?

Factors that contribute to the effectiveness: (i) Small grants allow partnering with NGOs, (ii) The programme is providing assistance to NGOs to improve proposal development and proposal writing, (iii) The Programme has built capacity in areas like project management, project formulation, familiarization of NGOs on technical issues (Eg: climate change) by NGOs to some extent.

From the beneficiary point of view, among the factors that contributed to the effectiveness of the projects, participation in and support for the projects given by community members has been of primary importance. Some however noted that political issues hindered the implementation of certain activities. This highlights the level of political polarization on islands which is increasingly leading to lack of social cohesion and working together for the betterment of local communities

Factors that inhibit the effectiveness: These are similar to those identified under factors contributing to not achieving intended outcome under small grants.

On the question whether ***UNDP interventions are gender mainstreamed and contributed to gender equity***, the FGD gave a score of 3 indicating a fairly satisfactory level of effectiveness. The justification for the score was noted as the focus the programme has on increasing women's participation in decision making during project implementation stage. It was also noted that ***a minimum of 3 women are included on Project Boards on directly implementing projects supported by UNDP which is an indication of the commitment to gender mainstreaming.***

It was however noted that provisions made for gender mainstreaming is affected by the limited internal understanding on how to mainstream gender in environment projects. ***Women's participation is ensured in implementation but not adequately at the decision-making level.*** Language barrier in decision making meetings is limiting the involvement of women.

With regard to the evaluation question whether ***UNDP interventions successfully target 'vulnerable groups' and meet their needs through design and implementation***, the FGD gave a score of 2, suggesting that a long distance is yet there to cover. On the positive side there is provision in the programme to focus on engaging gender and youth in activity implementation, while on the negative side identification vulnerable groups have not been identified by the Environment programme as yet.

6.3 Efficiency in the Context of Environment and Energy Component

6.3.1 UNDP Engagement with Civil Society Actors and Partnership Strategy

Although not directly related civil society engagement, it is worth the while to mention that the government has declared 13 islands to be carbon neutral by 2013. To achieve the target, with the assistance from different donors, the government has been working towards introduction of RE in different sectors in the country. As such, a number of projects are ongoing such as the clean energy promotion in Male', Clean Energy for Climate Mitigation in the island of Thinadhoo, Solar Grid connection in small island of Dhiffushi, Green building project and development of a CDM project with DANIDA.²⁴ Also it is relevant to note that RETDAP was formulated in 1999 to assist Maldives in the removal of barriers to the development of Renewable Energy resources such as Solar, wind, biomass and biogas. The rationale for RETDAP (i) Exposure to price variations of imported fuels, (ii) Rising electricity costs, (iii) Need to raise awareness of the impact of climate change/rising sea levels (in which the civil society can play a significant role). Project commenced in 2004 and completed in Dec 2011. The goal of the project is reduction in the annual growth rate of GHG emissions from the increase in the share of renewable energy generation in the Maldivian energy mix.

With regard to environmental conservation efforts that have a direct relationship with civil society actions, the project engaged with Ha. Atoll School / Isdharivaruggen Jammiyya (NGO) to implement a waste management project. Project proponent Ha. Atoll School Isdharivarunge Jammiyya is a community based NGO. Three members of this NGO attended the proposal writing workshop which was organized by MFF Secretariat and MFF Maldives in May, 2009. The proponent applied the MFF SGF funds using the skills learnt from the Workshop. During the MLE meeting with grantee, we were informed that a new NGO will soon be set up to replace Atoll School Isdharivarunge Jammiyya as grantee for this MFF project. Two waste disposal centers were built after Tsunami with funds from Australia Red Cross and Canadian Red Cross. Before the disposal centers were built in 2005, garbage was littered on the island or threw into the sea.²⁵

The FGDs that reviewed the different aspects of the Energy and Environment component of the Country Programme, looked at 'efficiency' from 4 evaluation questions as follows:

Whether ***UNDP's engagement with energy and environment related activities, in achieving the intended outputs and contributing to outcomes has been timely and cost-effective*** was looked into at the FGD which did not offer to give a score, presumably because according to the perceptions of stakeholders, UNDPs engagement has not sufficiently contributed to achieving the outputs in a timely and cost effective manner. It was noted that the programme failed to complete projects on time due to capacity constraints of government and changes in government priorities during implementation stage. Less than 20% of activities were completed during planned periods. The costs provided for projects had to be revised during implementation stage due to inflation. A notable drawback that was pointed

²⁴ ROAR-UNDP-Maldives - 2011

²⁵ Small Grant Project Monitoring Report- March 2012

out was that more funds were spent on project management than for project implementation. However it was not possible to independently verify this statement due to lack of analytical data.

A little over half of the respondents stated that all activities were completed within the planned timeframe. Around 2/3 stated that most were completed on time. Reasons for activities not being completed on time included the lack of community participation (due to both the issue of political polarization and limited time to be involved due to their regular jobs) and lack of cooperation from local councils leading to delays in approvals and this implementation. The most common reason cited for why activities being completed on time was the level of planning that occurred.

Further it was observed that UNDP systems and procedures delayed implementation resulting in raised costs. Similarly UNDP/ Government procurement procedures and requirements also delayed recruitment of resource persons. This however is understandable in the context of having to comply with organizational procedures, but the partners and beneficiaries need to be kept apprised. Ownership of NIM projects is also not quite evident during the implementation process.

The FGD that went into the question of whether ***UNDP's internal capacity and it's structure is equipped to deliver results efficiently*** gave a score of 2, indicating a fairly low level of internal capacity within the UNDP. It was noted that UNDP has instituted a strong system of Team Work and promoted team spirit. In addition UNDP is fairly strong in managing relationships with partners. In general the Government partner's opinion was that UNDP staff is efficient, capable and completes their tasks on time.

However inadequate technical capacity within the UNDP was identified as a major deficiency. Structural issues relating to inadequate balance of technical and administrative roles/posts within the UNDP hierarchy was identified as a major constraint. Another issue is the inadequate clarity on UNDP processes, which has resulted in what is called the "Annual procurement clog" (based on the last four years progress)

The third question was whether ***coordination, complementarities and synergies amongst UNDP projects, units, UN agencies and other partners has enhanced efficiency and effectiveness***. The outcome was given a score of 3, which is slightly better than the half-way mark.

The coordination process adopted by the UNDP consists of Weekly Management Meetings, Weekly Unit Meetings and Web-based Information sharing on Weekly Meetings. On the down side however the heavy work load does not allow for reflection on the overall performance of the component and the Country Programme. The main focus of the UNDP is on project implementation. It was also pointed out that there has been inadequate attention given to implement findings from employee retreat exercises. Lack of integrated projects was identified as a weakness which has a bearing on civil society engagement.

The evaluation looked into the question whether ***UNDP's monitoring (and evaluation) activities have been efficient and effective*** through the FG process. The outcome was given a score of 3.5 indicating a fairly adequate level of Monitoring and Evaluation by the UNDP.

There is a system of Indicator-based monitoring for GEF projects. The monitoring process includes Annual Progress Reports, Quarterly Progress Reports and Financial Reports, Quarterly and Annual Risk Monitoring. It was however observed that monitoring not quite systematic and that the geographic and financial constraints are limiting field visits. Government has not been involved with monitoring yet. Although it is known that monitoring indicators exist, it is not clear how much they are utilized, which is a drawback seen across the board in the Country Programme.

6.4 Sustainability in the Context of Environment and Energy Component

6.4.1. UNDP Engagement with Civil Society Actors and Partnership Strategy

Many stakeholders including the Government raised concerns, regarding the lack of clear strategy to address climate change in the broader development agenda of Maldives. The Strategic Action Plan of the Government presents climate change as a developmental issue, but addressing it has been challenging, due to lack of appropriate strategic direction. This challenge is compounded by fiscal issues that the country has been facing. Lack of a clear exit mechanism has also been pointed out as a concern affecting sustainability. Even if it is built into the project clear understanding by stakeholders concerned is crucial.

FGD examined the issues relating to sustainability of the Energy and Environment component using 2 evaluation questions from the point of view of civil society engagement as follows:

On the evaluation question whether ***contributions to outcome and achievement of outputs are sustainable within the existing capacity and structures of the country***, the FG gave a score of 3, indicating that reasonable hopes for sustainability of the outputs and outcomes can be expected. It was noted that capacity development is currently taking place under different project components. Declaration of Baa atoll as a biosphere reserve under AEC project is leading to national level changes. Project interventions led to formulation and enactment of a large number policy legislations.

The majority of respondents stated that the progress made through the activities funded by the small grants were completely sustainable within the existing structures and capacity of their communities.

On the other hand Government priorities are changing over time resulting in inadequate attention by government partners, as experienced during the recent changes. Projects are donor driven to some extent. Common challenges for ensuring sustainability noted were political issues within councils limiting their support and action on environmental issues and the lack of funding to continue progress. Other challenges included the lack of community participation due to limited time available and activities not being implemented as planned.

Answers to the question regarding the continuation of activities/progress made under the projects by community members were mixed. 40% stated that they had continued progress in full, while 20% stated they were mostly continued, though not fully. 7% said they were not continued at all and a significant 30% said they were unaware of any ongoing work, indicating a lack of effective continuation of these projects.

Whether ***UNDP deliberately designed interventions and engaged partners to build in sustainability in the project*** was examined at the FGD which gave a score of 2.5. The positive observation relating to sustainability made by members is that sustainability is deliberately built into projects, through a consultative process with partners. This position was confirmed by the Key Informants who stated that sustainability of activities is considered in GEF small grant proposal evaluation. The government expects CSOs to continue the progress achieved through the project after grants end. Small grants are very new (only 2 years) and therefore it is too early to forecast sustainability yet.

It is observed that currently every UNDP supported project has a handover component, and a Trust Fund will support management and conservation activities. Through broad-based consultation, the Programme managed to get a large stakeholder engagement (private sector, local government and communities). Public-private partnership is seen as the only way forward. However the private sector is facing problems which are similar to those faced by the communities (waste management etc.) and are willing to invest regionally under their CSR programmes. Declaration of protected site will live on forever. UNDP and GEF flexibility in extending project period is important to set up such sustainability measures.

On the other hand inadequate use of terminal evaluation findings and exit strategies are not being very clear in all project components cast some amount of indecision with regard to sustainable management activities.

7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

The conclusions appearing in this chapter are outcomes of the evaluation of project and non-project work in the context of the direct contribution to the UNDP CPD outcome on civil society engagement in creating and strengthening an enabling environment for civil society to thrive and to engage on public dialogue, and in the context of it serving as indirect means of achieving its overall development goals across the Country Programme. The conclusions were drawn from a logical analysis of the secondary evidence gleaned from the desk review, ideas expressed by a cross-section of the stakeholders at Focused Group Discussions and at Key Informant Interviews and from perceptions conveyed by beneficiaries through an individualized questionnaire survey. As required under the Terms of Reference, the conclusions are presented under relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of UNDP engagement strategy with civil society actors - non-profit organizations, including at the national and community levels, and private sector actors, including cooperative

societies, and mechanisms (including small grants) in achieving its development goals as outlined in the UNDAF and CPDs for the past 4 years.

i). Relevance:

Relevance of UNDP's direct contributions: The evaluation revealed a number of key strategies and mechanisms related to direct and indirect interventions through which the UNDP contributed to the CPD outcome on civil society engagement, which were found to be **highly relevant**. In the areas of strategic support, the direct contributions made by the UNDP for the preparation of Policy Documents (e.g. revision of the Associations Act), designing of a Methodology on Monitoring Political Violence based on the Election Violence Education Methodology (EVER) of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), and for capacity building of Maldives Civil Servants have been highly relevant to the social and political emancipation of the young democracy of Maldives.

Contributing substantially to the evolution of more organized, purposive and productive civil society was the support given to undertake ***the Comprehensive Study of the Maldivian Civil Society***, which was intended to “deepen the understanding of the operating civil society and following that to establish meaningful regulation of the sector, enable the strengthening and development of the civil society sector, and to harness the potential of the civil society sector to contribute to the country’s development”.

The incorporation of ***human rights and democracy***, which relatively are new concepts to the Maldivian Society, as major components of the UNDP’S democratic governance program came out well in their relevance. In this regard an outcome that bears a significant relevance to strengthening of the civil society is the support provided for the establishment of a nationwide network of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) established by Maldivian Democracy Network which was also supported by SGF & IGP.

It was noted that as a result of the ***outcome of training programmes*** conducted with the support of the project, women are better able to participate and voice their opinions. Through engagement with CSO’s that have women’s participation and strategies such as providing as technical and financial support to projects like “*Strengthening Women Youth Leaders and their role as civil society players*”(HIRIYA) and “*Raising Public Awareness on Local Governance, role of NGOs in Good Governance and Empowering Women Noon Atoll*”(Lhohee Zuvaanunge Club) the UNDP has contributed both towards the UNDP CPD outcome on civil society engagement, and also towards achieving its overall development goals, which without doubt establishes its relevance. The project also created a ***forum for youth to learn concepts relevant to democratic governance***, which is also highly relevant to the emerging generation of Maldivians. The intended outcome on civil society engagement and outputs therefore are certainly relevant to national and community needs and priorities.

Relevance of UNDP's Partnership Strategy and Mechanisms: The evaluation discovered several facets of UNDP’s partnership strategy and mechanisms as **highly relevant** to national conditions and priorities. In this Country Programme UNDP has been using various modalities to engage civil society allowing engagement with CSOs of varying capacities and

expertise. UNDP predominantly employed two strategies, namely ***Direct Implementation Modality (DIM), and Implementing Agency / Partnership Modality.***

The relevance of the DIM is seen by the fact that where civil society capacity was insufficient in terms of organizational capability or technical skills, the most appropriate modality was employing a paid consultant / resource person who serves the multiple role of field organizer, community mobilizer, trainer and monitor, until the community groups or CSOs as the case may be acquires adequate capacity and skills to move forward.

Where civil society capacity was available as in the case of Male-based NGOs, UNDP very appropriately engaged them together with island-based CSOs to accomplish the tasks. These ***modalities therefore are highly relevant to national conditions and priorities.*** It was also observed that through the use of DIM, it was possible to overcome challenges faced in achieving development goals when working with the government. In this context the small grants program has contributed significantly in reaching the more isolated communities through the Island based CSOs. However, capacity building to sustain the efforts requires further support.

Leadership role of the UNDP: One of the evaluation questions referred to, whether UNDP is relevant to pursue the planned development results and work with civil society, as intended. Throughout the evaluation the ***relevance of the UNDP to pursue the intended development results*** was highlighted by stakeholders and beneficiaries with equal clarity during FGDs and KIs. Primarily UNDP is regarded as ***highly relevant*** to pursue intended development results and work with civil society due to the following reasons, namely, (i) Long-term presence as compared to other UN agencies and other International bilateral donors and the consequent familiarity and understanding of the local context, (ii) UNDP is accepted both by governmental and civil society organizations as impartial and (iii) Other UN Agencies accepted that UNDP had a comparative advantage in catalyzing other UN Agencies as collaborative partners for common objectives.

Many stakeholders unequivocally stated that UNDP has the capacity and experience to lead, which is imperative given the local conditions. UNDP possesses systems resources and capacity to work in the country, more than any other government and local agency. It has also gained the reputation of being a development assistance organization that is ready to introduce new thinking, which is a current need, and to help communities to think on 'business-lines' (as opposed to subsistence living). Civil society organizations recognized the UNDP's capacity to as a 'mentor', which they consider imperative to acquire knowledge on the roles CSOs can play in a development context. The conclusion drawn from the perceptions expressed by many, point towards the fact that UNDP is relevant to pursue the development results planned under the Country Programme and work with civil society.

ii). Effectiveness

With regard to progress made: The overall impression with regard to the progress achieved towards the stated outcome or outputs on civil society engagement and development as analyzed in Chapters 3.0, 4.0, 5.0 & 6.0 under the different components, it was found that the ***progress is fairly satisfactory and is on track.*** Capacity of NGOs supported by UNDP was

found to be higher than those not supported as expressed by FGD participants. A key factor for the limitation of some NGOs not being able to access UNDP support was highlighted as their inability to prepare proposals meeting the requirements.

Awareness among the government and non government sectors with regard to role of civil society increased as a result of the interventions under the country program (Eg: awareness on human rights, good governance, youth empowerment, women empowerment etc.). GEF SGP is moving in a positive direction with engagement of local communities. However, many targets have not been achieved due to process delays, capacity constraints and the political situation. Sometimes NGOs & CSOs participation is limited to implementation and no significant role in decision making.

It is noted that ***some progress has been made towards achieving the outcome*** with FGD ratings as average. The program has expanded through the engagement of existing networks and expanded in thematic areas as well, increasing the dialogue and interaction between government agencies and civil society. It was pointed out that in the context of Maldivian society the concept of civil society engagement is new and will take time to be internalized. Progress towards the achievement of HIV/AIDS prevention and care has been substantial with the relevant FGDs scoring high, yet the capacity of NGOs & CSOs needs to be strengthened.

With regard to ***factors contributing*** to achieving the intended outcome can be identified as increased awareness among government authorities on the role of civil society, increased dialogue and interaction between government agencies and civil society, UNDP support to capacity building of NGOs, use of different modalities to engage civil society and the ability of UNDP to adjust the program to reflect national priorities and the willingness of NGOs & CSOs to engage themselves in program interventions.

Factors that inhibit the achievement of the outcome appear to be capacity constraints of partners, political instability, civil society engagement being new, limited outreach of training, financial and technical capacity of NGOs being limited and the geographic dispersion of Island communities.

Effectiveness of UNDP's direct contributions: The evaluation findings suggest that the effectiveness of UNDP's direct contributions to the CPD outcome on civil society engagement is ***fairly effective***. Stakeholders including beneficiaries commented quite appreciatively of the catalytic support UNDP has provided in increasing the awareness on the role of civil society in working with the government as well as in community mobilization towards development results. In the same tone the Democratic Governance programme has successfully increased the space available for dialogue between the government agencies and the civil society, effectively bridging a gap that prevailed before project interventions.

One of the most productive contributions made by the UNDP was the prioritization afforded to atoll-based CSOs, providing them opportunities to participate in local development initiatives that were hitherto restricted to Male-based NGOs. The other notable direct contribution has been the assistance provided to Human Rights NGOs to expand their activity sphere and to implement joint initiatives with the UNDP. Stakeholders mentioned the fact that as a part of the UNDP's strategy to enhance the capacities of the civil society,

the ***services of competent persons were made available as Resource Persons and as Implementers.***

UNDP contributions have however failed to achieve the desired results in some areas notably that some NGOs who accessed the project funds and other facilitations were found to be active only when funds were forthcoming suggesting that some NGOs have not been able to acquire the capacity enhancement desired under the project or that the strategy did not produce the expected results, hence the conclusion that the effectiveness of UNDPs direct contributions were 'somewhat effective'.

Effectiveness of the UNDP's Partnership Strategy: The results of the evaluation obtained through a variety of sources suggest that UNDP's partnership strategy and mechanisms are ***fairly effective***. Throughout the evaluation the fact that the current partnership strategy allows capacity building of CSOs and efforts to build linkages with the private sector surfaced at meetings with the stakeholders as well as beneficiaries. The strategy has created space to develop good working relationships between key NGOs and government agencies working on democratic governance.

The strategy is sufficiently flexible which allows partners to access capacity development in a wide range of areas depending on the context and needs. For instance while the more capable Male based NGOs can access services that allow them to improve their capacities to participate in policy level interventions, the newer and younger CSOs based in the atolls have access to develop their primary needs like institution-building (e.g. forming cooperative societies) and technical skills (e.g. poultry farming). The partnership strategy with NGOs has made it possible to overcome the bureaucratic process of the government and the possibility of politicization of interventions.

However it was found that the ***limited engagement of the private sector is an underlying cause of serious challenges*** related to the establishment of market linkages and increase in incomes, which are essential for the success of some interventions (e.g. poverty reduction). Only about 1/8 of the beneficiaries interviewed felt that barriers standing in the way of trade have been adequately removed to see that value-chain linkages with regard to tourism, trade and food security-related livelihoods have 'satisfactorily improved'. This point to the conclusion that experiences like 'Hubasana' and 'Partnering for Development' should not be 'one-off' events, but need repetition, replication and close follow-up, given the socio-economic conditions of the Maldivian society.

A deficiency in the strategy is that it does not, at least yet, encourage 'specialized NGOs' and NGOs outside Male to participate in the programme. The effectiveness of the strategy has also been constrained due the wide geographical spread of the interventions. Taking a clue from the perceptions of stakeholders, a conclusion can be reached that the partnership strategy needs to be reconsidered and refined to allow further capacity building (including expansion of the content) where it is found that the capacity built so far is insufficient for the NGOs/CSOs to manage on their own.

Small Grants Mechanism: In the Small Grants partnership mechanisms it was noted that the engagement of civil society for the small grants mechanisms and the process adopted has

opened opportunities for civil society actors to participate in the development process. A majority of small grant recipients are atoll based who had limited interaction with development actors, contributing to a wider geographic coverage. The partnership strategy has promoted development of the capacity of youth and women in participating in development activities and providing space for voicing their opinions. Access to financial support developed a sense of ownership among grant beneficiaries building a sense of credibility.

In the Small Grants mechanism it was however observed that the fact that small grants mechanisms provide financial assistance does not guarantee technical assistance accompanying the process. Also the project cycle-based funding was found to be inadequate to go beyond project period. Linkage to local government institutions which could trigger reciprocated benefits is yet to take place. The Training of Trainers (ToTs) largely dependent on a multiplier effect did not take place as envisaged due to fund constraints. Further the partnership strategy in the Small grants mechanisms did not imbed a systematic monitoring system and reporting was limited to activity implementation, which were noted as deficiencies.

Despite the substantial salutary effects of the UNDP's partnership strategy and mechanisms, the shortcomings briefly discussed above compels this evaluation to rate the effectiveness of the partnership strategy and mechanisms as ***'fairly effective'***.

Gender: In the cross – cutting issue of gender equity and mainstreaming, the evaluation noted that efforts have in fact been taken to create awareness and a public opinion on the need to accommodate women in the social, economic, administrative and development agenda of the country. The outcome of UNDP's contribution in partnership with the civil society has been that there was an increase women representation in politics (e. g. 46% of women elected to local councils participated in UNDP supported training for women contestants). UNDP's partnership strategies and strategies adopted at ground-level interventions ensure that gender mainstreaming and gender equity is highlighted and emphasized in all UNDP interactions and training programmes. In fact gender is considered in all aspects of the small grants scheme and all beneficiaries in poverty reduction small grants scheme are women.

However although gender is almost always considered during design stage of projects there is still a lack of proper understanding on the concept of gender equity and mainstreaming among government and CSO partners as evidenced from FGDs. Although gender mainstreaming is accepted particularly in the poverty reduction component, the management and decisions with regard to resource utilization by CBO partners are to a great extent dominated by men, even though the majority of beneficiaries are women. The lack of established women's organizations, the lack of gender mainstreaming at activity level and the decrease in the number of people who accept the rights to gender equality are some of the challenges that the UNDP partnership strategy is facing currently, which will require solutions during the next phase, given the importance of gender equity in a traditionally male-dominated society.

In regard to gender equity and gender mainstreaming of the UNDP partnership strategy and mechanisms the conclusion therefore that they have been ***partially effective***.

Vulnerable Groups: Partnership with CSOs under Global Fund project allowed engagement with vulnerable groups who were not willing to interact with government authorities. It was noted that the NGO sector has been enabled to identify different areas of intervention for different target groups (e.g. SHE working with migrant workers; JOURNEY with IDUs and Drug-user sex workers etc.) Stakeholders revealed that GEF small grants are intentionally focusing on environmentally vulnerable communities, which have created a role for civil society action.

However, Lack of clear definition of who constitutes vulnerable groups limits targeting their needs during design and implementation under certain UNDP components. It was noted that there is no prioritization of vulnerable groups under small grants schemes. Further UNDPs and CSOs are said to be unable to work with MSM and other vulnerable groups due to social and cultural sensitivities. Stakeholders stated that in the identification of groups social vulnerability is not employed as a criterion. Instances where some vulnerable people who were found employment having dropped out were highlighted by stakeholders, which brings up the need for NGOs/CSOs to be empowered to follow-up and trouble shoot in the interests of sustainability of such interventions.

Therefore considering the fact that definition of vulnerable communities goes beyond the purview of the UNDP / CPD involving the wider context of UNDAF at national level, the positive achievements under the UNDP partnership strategy and mechanisms relating to vulnerable groups have been ***effective to a considerable extent.***

iii). Efficiency

In general it is observed that UNDP direct contribution and partnership strategy in achieving the intended outcome of civil society engagement is a fair mix which is found to be ***somewhat efficient.***

Timeliness and Cost-effectiveness: In regard to timeliness and cost-effectiveness the evaluation team was informed that partnering with CSOs have overcome delays in implementation experienced with government partnerships and that partnering with atoll based CSOs is cost-effective considering limitations in outreach due to geographic constraints. In the judgment of some stakeholders the partnership has produced ‘good returns for the investments made’. However the veracity of these statements needs to be checked through a cost analysis.

However, some partners perceived that UNDP requirements and procedures (procurement, CSO partner reporting) were found to be time consuming, rigid and complicated while others found UNDP procedures less time consuming and direct compared to Government procedures and requirements. What is evident from the contradictory observations is that the awareness building process at the inception of the project implementation can be further improved, so that they get a clear understanding of procurement procedures and technical expertise required, some of which are non negotiable as UNDP is part of an inter-governmental system.

UNDP's internal capacity and structure: The evaluation revealed that UNDP possesses technical capacity to implement the UNDP Maldives Country Programme. It also has

technical expertise and experience on working to strengthen civil society. The UNDP technical capacity on specific areas of work can be utilized by CSO partners who are often very new to their respective areas. Added to this UNDP is accepted by the NGO/CSO community as effective in managing relationships with partners. It was said by stakeholders that UNDP has provided supportive guidance throughout the project.

However, the evaluation noted that limited outreach due to the geographic distance between country office and project sites in the context of the direct implementation modality it uses, which has been appreciated through out by all stakeholders, there is yet a need for improved direct interaction which is limited due to the Island disposition and the dependence to some extent on electronic media, even though field visits by Unit staff have been highly appreciated. Partners stated that there is insufficient clarity on the procedures of the UNDP, understandably because most new and small CSOs are not familiar with development and procedural jargon and needs simple explanations and guidelines rather than technical and procedural language. Some stakeholders claimed that UNDP does not share its technical expertise sufficiently with implementing partners.

Coordination among UNDP components, UN agencies and other partners: The evaluation found through information provided by stakeholders that regular meetings are being held to stimulate internal coordination and annual work plans are validated by all units. It was also made known that while UNICEF and WHO supported the conduct of baseline surveys, there is joint cooperation by other UN agencies as well for certain interventions facilitated by the UNDP, thus enriching the services deliverable under the partnership strategy. Partners understand that internal coordination that exists within the UNDP ensures that duplication is avoided. It was also noted that the Steering Committee system brings expertise and experience together to the advantage of the implementing partners.

It was however noted at the evaluation that inadequate communication and coordination with UN agencies and other partners working with CSOs sometimes leads to duplication of efforts. Less frequent regular meetings of UN thematic groups was identified as a drawback. Although coordination exists feedback to the partners is lagging behind and therefore partners do not get the benefit of information and guidance that will help improve their performance.

Monitoring and Evaluation: The evaluation surfaced a shortcoming that needs to be addressed sooner than later; that of Results based Monitoring and Evaluation and Reporting which are yet to be internalized. There is only limited monitoring of outcomes and impacts and more on activity implementation and financial progress. CSO partners have limited knowledge of indicator-based monitoring. Due to the limited field visits that are possible due to financial constraints a proper and regular coverage has not been possible. The conclusion drawn at the evaluation with regard to monitoring and evaluation is that much work needs to be done to qualitatively improve and systematize the M&E process, within the financial and geographic limitations. Enriching the CSOs knowledge and experience on Results based M&E will go a long way to strengthen their perceptions on project implementation and management and their outlook on the benefits that can be delivered to the communities.

Therefore the overall conclusion the evaluation reached on 'efficiency' is that the UNDP's direct contributions and partnership strategy and mechanisms are ***reasonably efficient***.

iv). Sustainability

Sustainability of UNDP's direct contributions: Contributions to the UNDP CPD outcome on civil society engagement appears ***somewhat sustainable*** but requires a much longer period to have systems in place given the changing environment with regard to democratic governance. It was noted that UNDP support to MoHA in strengthening environment for civic engagement builds necessary foundation for future development efforts. The contributions through the Access to Justice Project are contributory towards creating an environment for civil society participation with a strong emphasis on a rights based approach. Therefore support for developing a meaningful legal and regulatory framework that enables civil society to thrive is a process and requires the time duration necessary to bring all actors on board. The attempt to establish operational administrative structures suitable for decentralized decision making is yet another area that demands UNDP contribution in building capacities particularly of the island councils.

However, the evaluation brought up several key issues as conclusions that need to be addressed. Limited understanding at policy level on role of civil society and subsequent hostility between government and civil society, especially local government poses a challenge and requires intervention by the UNDP at the appropriate levels.

Inadequate capacity of most NGOs (technical expertise, skills in financial and project management, record keeping, fundraising etc.) will limit the realization of the expected outcome. Small grant schemes tend to support economic and environmental activities rather than strengthen capacity of small grants recipients and therefore a strong capacity building input will be desirable.

It was noted that NGOs/CSOs tend to be challenged by perceptions of political affiliation and bias, which goes against the spirit of community-based organizational strengthening. Furthermore rising religious fundamentalism and strict 'not-negotiable' cultural norms challenge addressing vital gender equity and mainstreaming to make Maldives an emancipated and modern nation.

Sustainability and UNDP's partnership strategy and mechanisms: UNDP's partnership strategy in designing project interventions with sustainability elements built in ***is not very significant as assessed by stakeholders***. However, the very concept of partnership with CSOs/NGOs is meaningful from a development context allowing partners to enhance their capacities, confidence and credibility can be considered as ***planting seeds for future sustainability***. Private sector linkages with civil society organizations have prospects of maturing into sustainable development efforts.

Sustainability of Civil Society will depend on the level of maturity they will be able to acquire. In the process of acquisition of experience and skills needed to sustain themselves NGOs and CSOs will have to overcome several challenges, like getting over partisanship,

affiliations and political bias. Weak institutional set up acts as an impediment to sustainability. Capacity development therefore is a major issue to be addressed.

The evaluation however noted that not much emphasis has been placed on long term partnerships and the likelihood that projects can collapse when external support ceases. Inadequate attention to clear exit strategies and guidelines for project takeover by partners is an issue that needs to be addressed. Limited effective consideration of sustainability at the design and implementation phases, including community involvement in a participatory process of development, will appear as a serious issue when project funds cease, particularly in the context of project being terminated **without a clear exit mechanism**. The next phase of the project needs to address these issues at the design stage itself with clear exit strategies.

7.2 Recommendations

In order to obtain the optimum benefits from a strengthened civil society towards building a peaceful and resilient democratic society, the civil society needs to acquire sufficient strength and capacity to sustain and expand the space created through democratic reforms, influence decision makers, and provide services, promote good governance and build capacities to effectively lobby for issues, particularly in the areas of human rights, gender equality and youth development. UNDP Maldives has gained valuable experience in working with civil society partners in a number of projects. Therefore before the next phase of democratic institution-building, the country needs to bridge the gaps experienced in civil society engagement in the current programs and build on the lessons learnt. The following strategic recommendations are made with a long term vision towards harnessing the active and productive support of the civil society sector for the creation of a resilient and peaceful democratic society in Maldives.

1. UNDP support for **capacity building of NGOs/CSOs**, should be placed in the context of the long term needs to stimulate and galvanize evolving democratic processes in Maldives, in the character of a continuing process as opposed to strengthening for project implementation per-se.

It should contribute to consolidating the efforts for institutionalizing knowledge, skills and attitudes required to be effective partners in promoting the work of civil society to be mainstreamed through out the programs and cross sectorily. The initial effort taken by UNDP with the integrated governance program could be further strengthened through capacity building of civil society organizations placed in this context.

UNDP should pursue the possibility of strengthening the existing NGO Federation with capacity development required to function as a Federation in promoting civil society engagement in the context of democratic governance with the ability to partner with the Government as well as the UNDP.

2. With regard to sustainability of the UNDP supported project interventions, emphasis should be placed in having an **exit strategy** in every project design for phasing out. Such strategies should be made known and well understood by the implementing partners and the beneficiaries from the start of the project itself.

As expressed during interviews “handover to the community and not to the government” which means that the NGOs / CSOs should be strengthened with this end in view building a sense of ownership with space for community participation throughout the project cycle.

3. UNDP should **catalyze** and coordinate a **joint strategic approach among other UN agencies and bilateral agencies** working towards common development goals defined in UNDAF. The mechanism already exists but a systematic and regular modus operandi needs to be promoted for which the UNDP should take the lead as accepted and expected by the other UN Agencies during the evaluation, in view of its comparative advantages.
4. In view of the wide geographic spread of the Maldives islands, attention should be given by UNDP to an **area based program development approach**. Most of the stakeholders accepted this view, but a clear and transparent mechanism and a strategy need to be developed based on objective criteria. It will also contribute towards visibility of UNDP support not only to civil society engagement, but also lead to direct implementation strategy resulting in improved impact on the community concerned.
5. UNDP should explore the potential of **promoting public private partnerships** so that it becomes part of the strategy at the design stage of programs itself. This could contribute to value addition, market development and supply chain management in building community capacities for livelihood improvement.

Private sector involvement with civil society organizations should be conceptualized in such a way that it leads to capacity building of primary producers to maintain quality standards and guaranteed pricing systems with market linkages etc, (Value Chain Development) are built into the strategy within a regulatory framework. The **UNDP could influence policy directions in partnership with the government** towards this end.

6. Enhancing **capacities of UNDP program staff and partner institutions for Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBME)**. It is essential that the reporting system be aligned to such a monitoring mechanism. It was recognized by all stakeholders as a felt need. The results frame is in place, but reporting on that basis using indicators for assessment of outcomes remains to be institutionalized.

Within UNDP country program, there is a **need to build upon a coordinated strategy** between programme component units which will contribute to joint monitoring systems and efficiency in program implementation. It will also provide space for cost effective implementation and monitoring strategies, particularly in the context of Island communities.

7. **Improving the potential of small grant mechanism for civil society engagement:**
 - Could be further improved by extending the **length of the grant cycle** or following up with two to three grant cycles building upon the experience and learning with a view to consolidate civil society organisational capacities.
 - In designing small grants mechanisms, attention should be paid to providing a **comprehensive package** with financial assistance, technical support and where necessary, hardware facilities

- **Post project sustainability** issues in relation to small grants schemes need to be addressed e.g. Waste management project, household level composting project.
8. Furthering the work under **Partnership for Development (P4D) Program**:
- UNDP should follow up on forums to **foster partnerships and business** linkages in the area of quality assurance, continuity of supply, promotion of authentic Maldivian products, transfer of expertise to SMEs, product pricing etc.
 - UNDP to support more NGOs for commitment to CSR promotion. NGOs should be promoted to build closer relationships with businesses in order to **align CSR priorities of the private sector and businesses** for the participation and the benefit of the community concerned.
9. UNDP to assist laying a **firm foundation with its government counterparts at national and local levels** by supporting institutionalization and strengthening capacities for creating the space needed in promoting an enabling environment for civil society strengthening which is a crucial push factor. This implies the need for periodical reviews and support for policy formulation in the context of the evolving democratic processes in Maldives.

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## Acknowledgements

The commitment and support given in various ways by the following is very much appreciated and valued by the evaluation team as a significant contribution in accomplishing the assignment:

- Government Agencies (Ministries and Agencies) collaborating with UNDP program
- Civil Society/NGO/Private Sector implementing partners of UNDP supported programs
- All those who participated in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and community participants who responded to the beneficiary questionnaires
- UN Agencies and Donor representatives
- UNDP Country Office Senior Management, Unit Staff and consultants

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