WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN POLITICAL PROCESSES IN THE MALDIVES

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List of Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AG	Attorney General
AP	Adhaalath Party
CBO	Community Based Organization
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
CMDA	Capital Market Development Authority
CPP	Civic Participation Project
DH	Democracy House
DGFPS	Department of Gender and Family Protection Services
ECM	Elections Commission of the Maldives
HRCM	Human Rights Commission of the Maldives
JP	Jumhooree Party
LGA	Local Government Authority
MDA	Maldives Development Alliance
MDP	Maldivian Democratic Party
MDN	Maldivian Democracy Network
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
PPM	Peoples Progressive Party of Maldives
TM	Transparency Maldives
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WDC	Women's Development Committee

Executive Summary

This assessment was conducted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) to gain a better understanding of obstacles to—and opportunities for—women's political leadership and representation in the Maldives. A desk study examined gender equality in the legal, regulatory and policy framework, and the conclusions from this study were tested through interviews and focus group discussions with a variety of electoral stakeholders. Recommendations were then developed to address barriers identified.

The legal system of the Maldives contains commitments to gender equality. Article 17 of the Constitution provides that the law will not discriminate based on gender, and legitimizes temporary special measures to redress any inequalities. Previous attempts to introduce temporary special measures (quotas) have not been successful, suggesting that the requisite political will to bring about structural changes to increase women's representation was absent.

Women's participation in politics and in top government positions is very low in the Maldives. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Maldives ranks 136th out of 154 countries in terms of the number of female Members of Parliament (MPs), with only five female MPs out of 85 (5.88 percent). Figures for the number of women in the cabinet and serving as deputy and state ministers are somewhat better, at 17.65 and 15.3 percent, respectively. These statistics reflect surprising public attitudes about gender equality revealed by Transparency Maldives' (TM) survey released in May 2014: "a substantial portion of the public, about two-thirds, do not support the idea of gender equality. What is truly striking is that women are less supporting [sic] of gender equality than are men."[1]

Although the percentage of women running for office is extremely low, women are active at the grassroots level, supporting candidate campaigns and attending rallies in significant numbers. This does not translate into leadership roles in the political sphere. Several interviewees highlighted that socio-cultural and religious beliefs ascribing women's primary responsibility to the home inhibits women's mobility, networking and participation in trainings[2], hindering their political participation. In addition, some interviewees noted that women lacked confidence, especially in public speaking, which affected their interest in running for office. For women who do decide to pursue political party leadership or elective office, family support is closely linked to women having the necessary socio-cultural support and financial resources to run for office.

With the cost of campaigns increasing drastically – in part as a result of increased vote buying – women's limited access to financial resources also creates barriers to competing in elections. A main source of financial support for any candidate is either personal wealth or support from wealthy patrons, such as businessmen, to whom very few female candidates have access.

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1 Transparency Maldives, "Democracy at the Crossroads" 2014, p. 8.
2 Women candidates and leadership trainings typically take place in and or around Male.

The media plays an essential role with respect to campaign coverage. Although interviewees shared diverse views about female candidates' access to the media, most agreed that the media often objectified female candidates rather than focusing on their qualifications for office. This was especially true of social media, which was used for character assassination during campaigns and had an adverse effect on female candidates.

Although the turnout of female voters has traditionally been high, anecdotal evidence suggests that some women are being pressured into voting for particular candidates by family members, including through threats of divorce.

Finally, it should be noted that although there has been a lack of meaningful participation of women in political processes, there has been some progress in legal reform establishing gender equality. Examples are the passage of the Domestic Violence Act (2012) and the Sexual Harassment Act (2014), and the ongoing drafting of the Gender Equality Law. In addition, all political parties interviewed indicated that they were taking steps or had plans to increase women's leadership within their political party.

The recommendations from this assessment reflect six approaches to increasing women's political participation. These approaches emerged from IFES' consultations and mapping of past and present initiatives, and are informed by IFES' experience with women's political empowerment programing globally. Below is a brief summary of strategies to increase women's political participation in these six areas:

1) Political parties promote greater participation of women in politics:
- Hold strategy sessions with women leaders on how political parties can groom women candidates
- Amend political party charters/constitutions to encourage women's participation
- Develop long-term plans (between elections) to train and empower women candidates
- Recruit politically active women to run for island councils
- Provide additional funds for women candidates
- Increase activities of women's wings (internship rotation programs and mentorship programs)
- Conduct skill-building workshops for women at the island and national level
- Create networking opportunities for women participating in internship, mentorship, and training programs

2) Increase women's political participation at the local level:
- Increase women's exposure to how government operates and increase women's confidence being in decision-making roles. This could include advocating for affirmative action policies for public sector boards at the island level and creating internship opportunities with island councils
- Conduct a study to identify why active members of Women's Development Committees (WDCs) do not run for political office and formulate programing based on study results. Activate dormant WDCs through exchanges with active WDCs

3) Structural changes to address legal and human rights issues
- Provide information on different modalities for temporary special measures
- Explore the gender implications of different electoral systems
- Provide technical support to the Elections Commission of Maldives (EC) to include a gender unit, gender focal point, or gender ombudsman as part of its strategic plan
- Amend the Decentralization Act, so that the EC conducts the WDC elections, in order to increase the significance of these elections

4) Political finance reform and greater regulation of money in politics
- Raise awareness about political finance regulations and transparency
- Promote political parties giving additional funding to women candidates to ensure a level playing field
- Amend the Political Parties Act to provide additional funding to political parties who field female candidates

5) Change perceptions and attitudes toward the role of women in public life
- Revise gender messaging in the school curriculum
- Support government ministries to conduct gender awareness programs in schools with male and female role models
- Include gender sensitization in school teacher's curriculum
- Conduct qualitative studies examining prevailing attitudes and perceptions that marginalize women in public life
- Foster community dialogues on identified barriers to women's political participation
- Conduct gender sensitization programs for MP's, political parties, and media
- Conduct a public awareness campaign, complementing the aforementioned recommendations
- Support programs promoting women's rights within Islamic law and culture

6) Combat vote coercion to address intimidation faced by female voters
- Conduct door-to-door advocacy providing information about the right to vote
- Establish a help-line to report vote coercion
- Educate the police and courts on vote coercion, so that penalties can be enforced
- Broadcast public awareness messages featuring male champions

1.0 Methodology

In the Maldives, as in all countries around the world, women's interest and ability to participate in the political process is impacted by a combination of legal, political, social, economic and cultural factors. An understanding of how each of these factors independently affects participation, as well as the aggregate effect of these combined factors, is critical to developing targeted strategies to increase women's engagement in the political process.

IFES assessed the opportunities and barriers for women's political participation in six areas: power and decision-making; knowledge, beliefs, perceptions and gender roles; access to public space, services and resources; security and election violence; and legal and human rights. IFES' goal was to determine what specific obstacles exist to women's political participation and develop recommendations appropriate for the Maldivian context.

The first phase of this assessment, conducted in December 2013, consisted of a desk study examining the Maldives' commitment to international and regional conventions that promote gender equality, the current electoral framework, and the government national gender action plan. The desk study also looked at how many women were represented in various government and civil service leadership roles, how many women have run as candidates in previous elections, and the gender representation in the Elections Commission of Maldives (EC). The participation of women in political parties and political campaigns, and the influence of women who currently serve in elected leadership positions, was also assessed. Women's Development Committees, government bodies that serve alongside Island Councils, were also examined to assess their current and potential role in advocating for increased women's participation in the political process.

The first phase also sought to gather information from various international and domestic organizations operating in the Maldives to determine 1) what activities they have conducted in the past or have planned for the upcoming year that work to increase women's political participation, and 2) what they have learned from their previous activities. This information was obtained through interviews and a thorough review of surveys, reports and assessments. Information obtained from these sources has been cited throughout this assessment. Implementing partners' activities were collated into a Maldives Gender Programming Matrix (see Annex 1), and information obtained regarding obstacles to women's political participation was used to inform IFES' analysis.

The second phase of the assessment was conducted in May – June 2014, during which IFES conducted a wide range of field interviews and focus group discussions. Specialists met with government agencies[3] , political parties, women candidates, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other implementing partners.

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3 Government agency meetings included Human Rights Commission of the Maldives, Attorney General, Elections Commission, Family Protection Authority, Ministry of Health and Gender

IFES presented the assessments' preliminary findings and recommendations at a roundtable on women's political participation on June 5, 2014. Representatives of the EC, Ministry of Health and Gender, Human Rights Commission, four major political parties, CSOs including Transparency Maldives, Hope for Women, Voice of Women and Democracy House participated actively in tailoring the recommendations that have been presented in this report.

2.0 Context

Gender Equality in the Legal Framework

The Maldives became a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) in 1993 and the CEDAW Optional Protocol in 2006.[4] However, the Maldives ratified CEDAW with reservations to Articles 7(a) and 16. Article 7(a) provides women the right to vote in all elections and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies, and Article 16 requires that states take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations. In March 2010, the Maldives withdrew its reservation of Article 7(a) as the Constitution adopted in 2008 removed the barrier from the previous Constitution (1998) preventing women from holding the position of Head of State.[5] It has been reported that the Maldives has fallen behind in fulfilling its obligations to the Convention; advocates suggest that state institutions lack the interest and technical capacity to fulfill their obligations and lack the political will to initiate change.[6]

The Maldives is a signatory to a number of other international instruments relevant to this assessment: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the ICCPR Optional Protocol; the International Covenant to Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); the UN Convention against Torture (CAT); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD); and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). It is also party to the Commonwealth Action Plans on Gender Equality and regional initiatives such as South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution. Maldives has also ratified all eight International Labour Organization (ILO) fundamental conventions, including the Equal Remuneration Convention 1951, which provides that men and women shall earn equal pay for equal work, and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention 1958, which provides that state parties agree to undertake programs to stem all discrimination (both race and sex-based) with respect to employment.[7]

The Maldives is a member state of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), a 57-member organization with the mission of "ensuring to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world

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4 The CEDAW Optional Protocol provides for individual women (and groups) to submit complaints directly to the CEDAW Committee in cases where they are unable to access effective redress of their grievances.

5 Hope for Women, Maldives NGO Shadow Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2012), p 4 and 6.

6 Hope for Women, Maldives NGO Shadow Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2012), p 6.

7 ADB website, http://www.adb.org/themes/gender/gdcf-case-studies/laying-groundwork-gender-equality-maldives accessed 03 March 2014.

in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world."[8] The OIC has demonstrated a commitment to achieving gender equality. During the Third Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of OIC member states, OIC Secretary General, Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, stated that: "Women have usually been victims of prejudices and misperceptions, traditions, customs and the negative mindset dominant in our societies, whereas Islam upholds the rights and status of women in the society and strongly supports their participation and involvement in various fields of life." [9] The OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women was adopted in 2008 and is a comprehensive strategic plan aimed at improving the situation of women in political, economic, cultural and social spheres.[10]

The Maldives has made a commitment to achieve the eight **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** by 2015, as established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000. While the Maldives has made progress in achieving several of these goals, the country is reportedly falling short of meeting MDG number three to promote gender equality and empower women.[11]

Women's Suffrage

Suffrage was extended to women in 1964 and, subsequently, the literacy criterion was removed for qualification as a voter. In January 2008, the People's Special Majilis amended the Constitution allowing women to run for President. This was considered a crucial step in upholding the international commitments of the Maldives under CEDAW and other UN human rights conventions.

Protection of Women's Political, Legal, Civil and Human Rights

The legal system of the Maldives is based on a combination of Islamic law[12] and English common law. The Constitution of the Maldives, adopted in 2008, contains a commitment to gender equality. Article 17 states that the law will not discriminate based on gender and legitimizes temporary special measures or affirmative action to redress any inequalities. Article 18 provides that it is the duty of the state to follow the constitutional provisions of fundamental rights and promote the rights and freedoms of the people.

Reports have concluded that the Maldives' legal system lacks secondary legislation on equality and anti-discrimination and have expressed concern that the state lacks commitment to prioritize and produce such legislation.[13] However, significant progress has been made by the passage of the Domestic Violence Act (April 2012)[14] and the Sexual Harassment Act (April 2014).

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8 OIC website, http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv2/page/?p_id=52&p_ref=26&lan=en, accessed 3 March 2014.

9 http://www.oicoci.org/oicv2/topic/?t_id=4733&ref=1996&lan=en&x_key=Plan%20of%20Action%20for%20the%20 Advancement%20of%20Women

10 ibid

11 This is to be assessed through the ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and proportion of seats held by women in national parliament. The target is to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education at all levels by 2015. UNDP assessed in June 2013 that the Maldives had still not met this goal.

12 For example, the Constitution states that "The People's Majlis shall not pass any law that contravenes any tenet of Islam." Section 70 (c).

13Hope for Women, Maldives NGO Shadow Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2012), p 23.

14 http://www.womenchangemakers.net/resources/laws/559-unofficial-translation-of-the-domestic-violence-act

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has recommended the adoption of a **Gender Equality Law** to provide a legal framework for the temporary special measures allowed under the Maldives Constitution. In particular, the gender equality law would define and prohibit all forms of gender discrimination and provide for temporary special measures to be taken to facilitate the achievement of gender equality.[15] The report suggested that although this legislation in and of itself cannot achieve gender equality, it can help provide legitimacy for special programs and support to women, including the allocation of resources, without being regarded as discriminatory to men.[16] Although the bill might not include temporary special measures for women's seats in Parliament, the bill would promote the use of special measures to advance women's integration into political, economic, cultural and public life.[17]

When the Constitution was being revised in 2006, a female MP proposed a 15 percent quota for women in the People's Majlis. At that time, there were 11 female MPs in the Special and People's Majlis. Of these 11, three were elected and eight were appointed by the President.[18] When the proposed amendment was voted on in November 2006, it was defeated 56 percent to 44 percent. Following this, lobbying continued for the inclusion of ten seats for women (rather than a percentile quota), but this proposal never made it to the floor for debate.[19] Another round of lobbying was initiated in 2010 for inclusion of a quota for women on local councils in the Decentralization Bill; this died in parliament without debate. Hope for Women submitted a proposal in February 2012 to amend the Political Parties Act to include a quota of 30 percent women among political party electoral candidates, but the proposal never received any traction.

National Gender Action Plan

After the current government took office in November 2013, the Minister of Health and Gender announced certain aspects of what the government planned to accomplish on gender issues under the rubric of the **100-day road map.** Included in this road map were the following: amending the Civil Service Regulation to provide flexible working hours or work-from-home options for women with children under three, creating childcare facilities for working mothers, convening a women entrepreneurs council, creating training opportunities for women who wish to contest elections, and building a framework to combat domestic violence. The Ministry of Gender and Human Rights Commission have both recognized the need for male advocates to help move the national gender action plan forward, and the Ministry of Gender convened a group of male gender trainers in early 2013 to conduct gender equality trainings and sensitization programs.

The Ministry is currently developing a five-year gender strategic plan focused on economic and political empowerment of women. The 100-day road map is currently being implemented and several items have been achieved. Accomplishments under the 100-day road map include:[20]

- Enactment of the amendment to the Capital Market Development Authority's Governance Code requiring that two women be appointed to the Board of Directors of every publicly-traded corporation.
- Increasing women's representation at decision-making levels in diplomatic missions and ministries.

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15 ADB website, http://www.adb.org/themes/gender/gdcf-case-studies/laying-groundwork-gender-equality-maldives accessed 03 March 2014.
16 ibid
17 Article 10, a of the draft Gender Equality Law
18 Hope for Women, Maldives NGO Shadow Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2012), p 30.
19 ibid
20 This list is not exhaustive.

- Passage of the Sexual Harassment Act.

- Facilitating an arrangement for divorced women who have trouble getting child support that ensures husbands deposit payments with the Family Court.

- Preparation of a commentary on the Domestic Violence Act.

- Starting awareness programs on gender sensitization in schools.

- Approval by the President of the formation of a Women Entrepreneurs' Council.

2.1 Participation of Women and Men in Politics, Government and Independent Commissions in the Maldives

The percentages of women's representation at various levels of government are presented in the following table:

Government Position	Percentage of women's representation – total number of representatives
Cabinet	17.65 percent - 3 out of 17 cabinet positions
Deputy and State Ministers	15.3 percent - 10 out of 63 deputy ministers, and 5 out of 35 state ministers
Parliamentarians	5.88 percent - 5 out of 85 seats.
Parliamentary election candidates	7.6 percent - 2014 - 23 out of 302 candidates
Local council	5.46 percent - 61 out of 1118
Local council election candidates	8.06 percent - 222 candidates out of 2754 island, city and atoll councils
City and atoll councils	11.76 percent City Council, and 2.17 percent Atoll Council - 2 out of 17 City Councilors and 3 out of 138 Atoll Councilors
City and atoll election candidates	8 women competed for atoll councils, and 2 for city councils
Judiciary	4.86 percent - 9 of 185[21]
Human Rights Commission	40 percent - 2 of 5 commissioners
Anti-Corruption Commission	20 percent - 1 out of 5 commissioners

The Maldives ranks 136th out of 154 countries in terms of the number of female Members of Parliament.[22]

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21 Statistics from Judicial Service Commission, jsc.gov.mv/jlist/index,Dec. 2013. There was a historic appointment of the first two female judges to the judiciary in 2007. However, there is still no female representation on either the Supreme Court of the Criminal Court benches, each consisting of seven justices.
 22 Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women In National Parliaments," http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm

As demonstrated in the table, below, although women are well represented in the civil service (56 percent), their representation in more senior positions is only 14.86 percent.

Civil Service	Male	Female	Female Percentage
Permenant	8828	11611	56.81
Temporary	6	15	71.43
Contracted	2767	1418	33.88
Retired and Contracted	5	2	28.57
Salary Range			
Up to 4,000 MVR($267)	4954	4950	49.98
5,000-9,999 MVR ($333-667)	6320	7984	61.71
10,000- 14,999 MVR ($667-1000)	269	101	27.30
Above 15,000 MVR ($1000)	63	11	14.86

Overall in the Maldives, voter turnout is extremely high among both men and women:[23]

Ellection	Percentage turnout,women	Percentage turnout, men	Percentage turnout based on population
Parliamentary Election 2009	49.23	50.77	79.22
Local Council Election 2011	49.88	50.12	72.11
Presidential Elections 2013 (Round 1)	49.40	50.60	87.20
Presidential Elections 2013 (Round 2)	49.15	50.85	91.41
Parliamentary Elections 2014	49.5	50.5	78.8

While it is positive that women are able to participate in elections as voters, there remains a concern that many women are being instructed to vote in a certain manner by their family members (discussed in more detail below).

Women's Participation in Political Parties

Although the percentages of women contesting elected office are extremely low, anecdotal evidence suggests that women have played a major role in political party activities at the grassroots level, organizing and attending campaign rallies and conducting door-to-door outreach in significant numbers. However, this did not translate into leadership roles within political parties, even in the women's wings. Interviewees explained that participating in campaigns was easier for women, as these activities were at a local level and did not require a full-time commitment. However, if women want to assume a leadership role, they would be taken away from household and childcare duties –traditionally viewed as exclusively a woman's role.[24]

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23 Elections Commission of the Maldives, www.elections.gov.mv
24 Women in Public Life in the Maldives: Situational Analysis, UNDP, 2011, p 31.

IFES met with the five main political parties to learn how their party structure incorporates women. All parties either have a women's wing or are amending their charters to institute women's wings in 2014.

The *Progressive Party of the Maldives* (PPM), established in 2011, is one of the few parties that encouraged women's participation through a quota system. An amendment to the parties' charter, adopted at the 2013 party congress, included a 33 percent quota for women deputy leaders. The 28-member PPM council also reserves four seats for women. The island level branches elect three members to attend the congress, one of whom must be a woman. PPM fielded three female candidates out of the 23 who contested the parliamentary elections in March 2014, and one was successful.

The *Maldivian Democratic Party* (MDP), established in 2005, takes a different approach to women's empowerment, believing it should start at the grassroots level. MDP's chairperson was a woman until recently, and some of the constituency leaders and branch leaders are women. MDP has very active women's grassroots participation at protests and campaign events. Seven female candidates (out of 85) contested the parliamentary election on the MDP ticket and three of the five women elected to parliament are from the MDP. MDP also has a women's wing dedicated to engagement of women in party activities.

The *Adhaalath Party* (AP), established in 2005, reserves three seats for representatives from the Women's Council on the Party Council. There are currently four women out of 50 members of the Party Council. AP is restructuring its strategic plan with a focus on women's empowerment. AP's sub-councils (for youth, women and scholars) include female representatives. AP fielded two female candidates during the parliamentary elections, and one was elected to office.

The *Jumhooree Party* (JP), established in 2008, does not have a specific policy to increase women's participation but supports women's inclusion in decision-making in the party. The party has a women's wing included in the charter; however, the women's wing was not active during the last election cycle. JP is currently restructuring its party activities to bolster the participation of women. The party plans to propose affirmative action policies during the next congress to increase women's participation in the party's decision making. The party fielded one female candidate during the parliamentary elections, who was not successful.

The *Maldives Development Alliance* (MDA), established in 2012, was the first political party in the Maldives to include a gender quota for deputy leaders in its party charter, requiring one woman among the three deputy leaders. There are three women out of 22 members of the Party Council.

Some interviewees suggested that despite the existence of women's wings in political parties, women continue to be underrepresented at decision-making levels across political parties. The same interviewees noted that political parties could be catalysts for change if they start to work on promoting women in leadership positions within the party and are willing to field and support female candidates. There is a critical opportunity to work with political parties to realize this goal.

Influence of Women in Elected Leadership Positions

Those consulted during this assessment advised that women in elected positions in parliament often follow the will of the party in their decision-making; however, this seems to be the case for many male representatives as well. In a baseline study conducted by UNDP, participants noted that female MPs come from families that have a long history of political involvement, and the opinion expressed was that attaining political office was only a possibility for the political elite.[25] "Women holding political office does not necessarily translate into women's needs being addressed at national policy or local levels."[26] As has been seen in other countries, some female MPs do not acknowledge barriers to women's political participation, citing their own accomplishment. However, some female MP's do show an interest in gender equality and have sponsored and lobbied bills to address the gender inequality gap. To effect change, it is important for female candidates to caucus and show a united front on issues of equality.

Gender Balance in the Election Management Body

There are currently three commissioners at the EC, all of whom are male. The EC, from its inception, has never had a female commissioner. After the removal of the Chair and Vice Chair of the EC during the parliamentary election, the President sent four nominations to Parliament, of which one is female. At the EC, as of May 2014, the 57 permanent posts are occupied by 22 men and 31 women, with four positions vacant. The Secretary General and both Directors General are male. There are four male and two female directors, with one director position vacant. However, several senior officers heading units are female, i.e. planning, registration, finance and the legal department.[27] The EC has no written gender engagement policy, no unit dedicated to gender issues, and no gender focal point, but discussions on these topics are expected to be included in the work on the strategic plan.

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25 Women in Public Life in the Maldives: Situational Analysis, UNDP, 2011, p 24.
26 Women in Public Life in the Maldives: Situational Analysis, UNDP, 2011, p 24.
27 Until their recent resignations, elected head of IT and voter education were women.

2.2 Government Structures Devoted to Gender Issues

The Maldives has gone through major changes in its governance system over the past few decades. These changes resulted in the re-structuring of the "National Women's Machinery[28]," or government structures devoted to gender issues. The chart below outlines the changes.[29]

Organization Title	Years
Ministry of Gender, Family Development and Social Security; Gender Equality Council	2003 – 2005
Ministry of Gender and Family; Gender Focal Points in all line Ministries; Gender Equality Council	2005 – 2008
Department of Gender and Family Protection Services under the Ministry of Health and Family; Gender Focal Point is the President at the National Planning Council; Gender Focal Points in all line Ministries	Nov 2008 – Feb 2012
Department of Gender and Family Protection Services under the Ministry of Gender, Family and Human Rights	May 2012 – Nov 2013
Ministry of Health and Gender	Nov 2013 – July 2014
Ministry of Law and Gender	July 2014 – Current

The shift in November 2008 from a ministry dedicated to women's empowerment and gender equality to the Nasheed administration's downsizing of the ministry to a department marked a vision that "all ministries were women's ministries." The theory was that all levels of government should recognize that women's needs and concerns differ from those of men, and ensure all policies were gender sensitive and gender responsive. The administration drew criticism from the opposition over its inability to operationalize this vision due to a lack of resources and the cumbersome decentralization framework passed by the opposition-controlled parliament. The responsibility for gender mainstreaming was moved to the Department of Gender and Family Protection Services (DGFPS), which was already severely under-resourced.

With the change in power in 2012, President Waheed abolished the DGFPS and established a Ministry of Gender, Family and Human Rights, and a strategic action plan was formulated to go into effect in 2014. However, President Yaameen was inaugurated in November 2013, bringing further changes to the national gender architecture and the merger of health and gender under the Ministry of Health and Gender. Recently, this ministry was renamed to Ministry of Health, and the newly-formed Ministry of Law and Gender assumed responsibility for gender policy.

In discussing the frequent shifts in the National Women's Machinery, those consulted remarked how disruptive this had been to priorities identified by the ministries, as well as to investment of resources.

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28 National Women's Machinery refers to national mechanisms that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.
29 Chart based on information from Hope for Women Maldives NGO Shadow Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2012).

2.3 Women's Development Committees

Most of the islands and cities in the Maldives have a Women's Development Committee (WDC), which works under the council. Elections for WDC members are run by the Local Government Authority in coordination with councils, and elected members serve three-year terms.

Since 1982, WDCs have been active on many islands and provide a platform for women to participate in the development of their communities. In the 2006 NGO Shadow Report to the CEDAW Committee, WDCs were described as being "coerced and forced by island authorities to act as the public kitchen and cleaning force on islands … as the island's wives." The public perception was that these committees should only be responsible for doing "women's work," namely the sweeping of the island, rather than participating in political affairs. Following decentralization in 2010, the mandate of the WDC was outlined in Article 35 of the Decentralization Act[30], which gave legal standing to the WDCs that had previously been absent. [31] In a survey conducted by UNDP in 2011, views had changed. Survey respondents reported that the WDCs had a strong reputation for supporting the community, specifically for "providing a solid platform and framework for women to network, plan, implement action initiatives that support the community needs."[32] Those interviewed were aware that the WDCs' funding had ceased, and women participants expressed regret that the WDCs had lost their influence in the community because of political differences at the national level.[33]

Those consulted for this assessment advised that women in the WDCs were often not fully aware of their mandate, and lacked both the power and budget to fulfill their mandate. There is no budget automatically allocated to the WDCs under the Island (and other) Councils; individual WDCs need to submit a budget request to the Island Council for funds (to be submitted with the Island Council annual budget request to parliament). However, the central government has historically lacked the funding for Island Councils, and the government has yet to determine the fiscal formula, as per the Decentralization Act, to determine the amount of funds each Island Council is to receive.[34] Needless to say, the WDCs were more active and engaged in community affairs before the adoption of the Decentralization Act.

Despite these challenges, a few WDC's have found ways of self-funding and leading community projections. For example, the Maafushi WDC bought and developed three properties adjacent to the tourist beach (a tourist shop, a restaurant, and a guest house) from which it earns a regular monthly income. The WDC uses this income to run a pre-school, operate the WDC office, provide self-help loans to women to start sewing businesses, and purchase equipment for the island health clinic.

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30 The Decentralization Act was passed in April 2010, which defined a three-tier local government structure designed to have City Councils at city level, Atoll Councils at atoll level and Island Councils at island level. Each of these tiers has decentralized functions under locally elected councils. An oversight body, referred to as the Local Government Authority was created to monitor, regulate and build the capacity of local councils.

31 The powers and responsibilities of the WDCs include the following: (a) Advise island council on matters related to island development and municipal services provided by the council; (b) Own properties and conduct business activities with others in the name of the committee; (c) Sue and be sued in the name of the committee; (d) Conduct various activities for income generation and for the development of women; (e) Work to uphold the rights of women; (f) Work to increase religious awareness amongst women; (g) Work to increase political participation of women; (h) Work to increase the numbers of women enrolled in higher education; (i) Work to improve the health condition of women; (j) Gather important information related to women; (k) Manage assets and finance of the committee. Decentralization Act, section 36.

32 Women in Public Life in the Maldives: Situational Analysis, UNDP, 2011, p 23.

33 ibid

34 Article 82 of the Decentralization Act 2010, stipulates that allocations shall be made from the national budget annually for city, atoll and island council based on the following; Administration, Provision of Services and Development expenditure. This allocation is to be made based on formulae to be derived on the criteria stipulated in Article 82 of the Decentralisation Act.

The Gender Section of the Ministry of Law and Gender is trying to more broadly empower the WDCs by giving them office space in government-operated Family and Children Service Centers. The Gender Section is also working with the Ministry of Finance to try to unfreeze WDC bank accounts that were frozen by the government.

An amendment to the Decentralization Act was proposed in November 2013 to dissolve the WDCs and establish an Advisory Committee for Women's Development with a similar mandate to that of the WDCs. There was no debate on this amendment prior to the end of the 17th Majlis and it is not clear whether the 18th Majlis will take up the discussion.

3.0 Findings

After a thorough review of surveys and assessments that had been conducted by various domestic and international organizations documenting their research, IFES organized in-depth interviews with various stakeholders to identify the main barriers affecting women's participation in politics. Interviews and focus group discussions were held with government agencies[35], political parties, women who had run as candidates in the recent primary and general elections for parliament, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other implementing partners. Findings from both IFES' research and in-depth interviews have been summarized below.

3.1 Area of Inquiry 1: Power and Decision Making

Women's Mobility

Due to the geographic structure of the Maldives, travel by boat is often required to attend meetings and trainings, which are mostly held in Malé. Interviewees shared that some women interested in contesting elections were unable to attend trainings because they were unable to travel to another island for a week and leave behind their household responsibilities, which are viewed as a woman's primary responsibility.[36] It is perceived that taking on political leadership roles will take women away from home for long periods of time, limiting women's political participation.

Financial Resources and Vote-buying

All the interviewees stressed how essential it is for a woman to have the support of her family in order to run for office. This is often, but not always, linked to financial backing from her family. Female candidates in the major parties tend to come from political families; are well educated (often having studied abroad), and receive significant financial backing from their families. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for women to run a successful campaign without this financial support. Women in the Maldives, according to the Gender Gap Index, have lower employment rates than men and on average earn half as much as men. Therefore, women lack the personal financial resources to fund their campaigns. It should be noted that campaigns have become extremely expensive in the Maldives, largely due to vote buying. Many male candidates reportedly spend between MVR 6,900,000 and 12,900,000 (USD 460,000 and 860,000). Very few female candidates were reported to have spent such large sums of money.

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35 Government agency meetings included Human Rights Commission Maldives, Attorney General, Elections Commission, Family Protection Authority, Ministry of Health and Gender
36 Women in Public Life in the Maldives: Situational Analysis, UNDP, 2011, p 31.

The sources of funding for campaigns were individual businessmen, other individual donors, families and political parties. Very wealthy businessmen were often candidates themselves, while other businessmen contributed large sums to campaigns, but almost exclusively to male candidates. Female candidates – especially those running as independents – had little success getting businessmen to contribute to their campaigns. A female candidate stated that businessmen do not like to contribute to female candidates because they feel that women will vote for the people's interest and not business interests (e.g. lower taxes).

Small contributions from individual donors were sought infrequently, especially in the primaries. Political parties supported candidates by paying travel expenses and providing campaign posters, but only provided significant contributions in a few cases. This is due to the fact that funding for political parties from the government is barely enough to pay the party administrative expenses. Thus, the most significant source of funding for female candidates was their families.

Patronage was commonly provided by candidates, both male and female, including cash, food, gifts (e.g. electronics, vacations), medical assistance, job offers and payment of utility bills. Numerous candidates said, "you need to do these things because the voter will just go to another candidate who will do it and you will lose a vote." Some interviewees reported that voters could receive MVR 4,860 to 25,005 (USD 324 to 1,667) for one vote.[37] There are few women who can afford the patronage that voters have come to expect of candidates to "earn" their vote. Rampant vote-buying, lack of a comprehensive definition of vote buying in the electoral legal framework, and lack of campaign finance regulations and enforcement in the Maldives puts women at a distinct disadvantage to run a successful campaign.

Numerous female candidates complained about the abuse of state resources during the campaign period. This was common, and took the form of government officials starting projects on islands before the election when they had been scheduled to begin months after the election. Government officials also went to the islands to campaign, which gave the perception of government backing for that candidate. As there are few women in political office (incumbents), the abuse of state resources disproportionately affects women.

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37 Placing marks (often assigned numbers) on ballot papers was the way the candidate could tell that the person whose vote was bought voted the right way. When the votes are being counted and the ballot paper held up for all to see, the party observer could tell how the person voted.

3.2 Area of Inquiry 2: Knowledge, Beliefs, Perceptions and Gender Roles

In a human rights baseline survey conducted by the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives (HRCM) in 2005, participants were asked questions pertaining specifically to their attitudes toward women's rights. When asked whether participants "agree or disagree that women should have equal rights with men to take part in the government and be elected to political position," 72.9 percent of men and 79.0 percent of women either strongly agreed or agreed. However, in a follow-up survey conducted in 2011, HRCM found a significant drop in support for women's equality – primarily in male responses.[38] On the same question, women's agreement rose from 79.0 percent to 80.5 percent, while men's agreement dropped from 72.9 percent to 57.6 percent.[39] When looking in the aggregate at responses to questions pertaining to women's rights, HRCM found that "men have become more conservative on these sensitive issues related to women's rights…whereas women's views, for the most part, have altered much less and in some areas are more strongly supportive of women's rights."[40]

During UNDP's Women in Public Life in the Maldives focus group discussions, views regarding women's participation in politics were mixed on supporting women running for office. While some male and female respondents said that they would support women entering the political arena (predominately in the southern atolls), many urban men and women expressed conservative views of women's roles in the family, demonstrating that they would likely not vote for a female candidate.[41]

Additionally, UNDP's Women in Public Life in the Maldives focus groups found that female participants perceived "courage and willingness to carry responsibility" as important qualities for a successful politician to possess, and many of these participants felt that women might not have these qualities.[42]

 The "Democracy at the Crossroads" survey conducted by TM in 2013 found that "a substantial portion of the public, about two-thirds, do not support the idea of gender equality. What is truly striking is that women are less supporting [sic] of gender equality than are men." [43] In an interview with TM on May 29, 2014, they stated that additional analysis of the numbers shows that 70% of women believe that women make worse leaders than men while only 60% of men answered that way. On a more upbeat note, the survey found that "support for gender equality in the Maldives is significantly higher among the young and better educated than it is among older generations (those over 35 years of age)." [44]

Negative public perceptions of women are made worse by stereotyping of the roles of women and girls in the nation's school textbooks, i.e. portraying women as cooking and cleaning, with girls helping, while conversely portraying boys playing active games and men as heroes.[45]

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38 The "rights side of life" second baseline survey, HRCM, 2012, p 30.

39 ibid p 35.

40 ibid p 31. Note that the survey asked questions regarding supporting women's right to equality in seven areas: family matters, courts, inheritance, custody, divorce, work and politics.

41 Women in Public Life in the Maldives: Situational Analysis, UNDP, 2011, p 23-26.

42 ibid

43 Transparency Maldives, "Democracy at the Crossroads" 2014, p. 8.

44 Ibid., p. 27.

45 Rasheeda Mohamed Didi, "The Role of Males and Females in Text Books, published by Hope for Women.

Media Portrayal of Women

Interviewees provided conflicting views about female candidates' access to the media and their portrayal in the media. However, all agreed that the media often focused on objectification of women and what men they associated with, rather than on their qualifications for office. This is particularly true for online news media. However, men were sometimes portrayed more negatively than women, particularly regarding coverage of scandals, illegal activities and secret marriages. Nevertheless, the adverse effect of negative portrayals is greater on women.

The National Broadcasting Company provided equal airtime for all candidates in debates. However, private media companies are allegedly aligned with political parties, and they covered mostly their party's candidates. Some candidates said that the parties tended to promote the male candidates on their TV channels - although others disagreed with this assessment.

Social media was widely used during the parliamentary campaign. Women's photos were often photoshopped on social media to accentuate parts of their body or show them in bikinis they had never worn, causing great concern among female candidates. One candidate said she refrained from putting her photograph on her campaign posters for fear that someone would appropriate it and photoshop it on social media.

Religious Beliefs Regarding Gender Roles

In a survey conducted in 2011, HRCM asked respondents whether they considered human rights to be in conflict with religion. HRCM reported that approximately one-third of respondents agreed with this statement. Women were more likely to think there was a conflict. When those who said there was a conflict were asked to provide examples, a woman's right to equality was mentioned most often.[46] During UNDP focus group discussions in 2011, male respondents were recorded as saying "our religious beliefs say women are supposed to stay at home" and "a female cannot be president because religion doesn't allow women to be in that position." [47]The 2010 MDG Country Report compiled by the Finance Ministry stated: "cultural religious social norms of the country do not in certain circumstances promote women's equal participation." [48]

It should be noted that although most of the interviewees clearly expressed their belief that political participation of women is compatible with Islam, more conservative voices seem to dominate this discourse nationally. However, there are some encouraging signs. The Gender Section of the Ministry of Health and Gender worked with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs on a Friday sermon that was delivered on International Women's Day in March 2014, in an attempt to bring out a more gender-balanced voice in an Islamic perspective. Although only a small first step, it demonstrates that there are ways of engaging religious leaders on this issue.

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46 The "rights side of life" second baseline survey, HRCM, 2012, p 29.
47 Women in Public Life in the Maldives: Situational Analysis, UNDP, 2011, p 24.
48 ibid

Cultural Beliefs Regarding Gender Roles

UNDP's Women in Public Life in the Maldives survey acknowledged both the role of Islamic traditions as well as South Asian traditions in forming the social definition of roles for men and women in the community. UNDP's focus group discussions found that men in the Maldives "occupy the upper echelons of the social hierarchy," while women often face "subtle and sometimes overt forms of subordination."[49] The family is the most important social unit in the Maldives, and men (specifically, male heads of household) were found to be the primary decision-makers in that unit. [50]

Results in HRCM's Rights Side of Life survey further illustrate the dominance of men in society. A significant percentage of respondents indicated that they considered women to have a subordinate role in the husband/wife relationship; 87.3 percent of women said that they agreed or strongly agreed that a good wife always obeys her husband even if she disagrees.[51] Based on anecdotal information gathered from those consulted during this assessment, this often translates into a husband expecting a wife to vote the way he instructs.

Interviewees listed cultural stereotypes that prevent women's political participation, such as women being seen as physically and emotionally weak. Others said that women are not respected, regardless of their educational level, and were concerned that women would not be able to travel due to obligations at home, and would be unable to fulfill their roles as politicians. According to interviewees, this means people are hesitant to vote for women, which is compounded by views that men are 'patrons' – able to provide patronage – and women are 'matrons' – unable to provide the expected patronage.

Lack of Confidence in Public Speaking

Those consulted during this assessment said that women's lack of confidence, including in public speaking, affects their interest in running for office. The Maldives educational system does not have a strong focus on cultivating public speaking skills, beyond annual inter-school debate competitions. Women spoke at campaign rallies, but often the same women were utilized as presenters. Even when parties asked new women to speak, they usually did not accept because they lacked the confidence.

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49 Women in Public Life in the Maldives: Situational Analysis, UNDP, 2011, p 9.
 50 ibid
51 The "rights side of life" second baseline survey, HRCM, 2012, p 44.

3.3 Area of Inquiry 3: Access

Public Space/ Networking Opportunities

Traditionally, women played a significant role in their communities through agricultural activities and maintaining the island. However, as participants discussed during UNDP's Women in Public Life in the Maldives report, budget cuts to initiatives such as the WDCs, along with lower employment rates for women, has been detrimental to women's role in social life.[52]

Those consulted spoke of a huge disparity between the public space available to men and women. For example, there used to exist separate mosques for men and women. In 2009, the Islamic Affairs Ministry decided to close the women's mosques due to a limited government budget. In a news article, Deputy Minister at the Islamic Affairs Ministry, Sheikh Mohamed Faroog, said that the ministry had decided to shut down all mosques used exclusively by women in order to cut down expenses and that the government's new policy would be to build larger mosques with separate areas for men and women. However, in the same article, the Deputy Minister was also quoted as saying that "in Islam, the best place for women to pray was at home."[53] As discussed in UNDP's Women in Public Life in the Maldives, Situational Analysis, the fact that space for women has been taken away and re-allocated to the men's mosques "reinforces the perception that men have a right to public space," whereas women's space is less important and can be reduced. The report goes on to say that this conveys "a very public message that women have no right (or need) for public space…[and] suggests institutional decision-making processes that discriminate against women."[54]

Additionally, there is a culture in the Maldives of men congregating at 'hotas,' or traditional men's cafes; men use this space for socializing, but also utilize the space for political and business discussions. Interviewees noted this as a time for men interested in running for office to learn about the needs of their constituents and a place to secure financial resources for their campaigns.

Women do not have similar spaces in which to increase their social capital and/or their sphere of influence. Although some interviewees mentioned that women sometimes meet at the beach in areas with swings and chairs, these are not opportunities for women to meet people of means and influence. Limited networking negatively affects women's ability to run for public office. Another key factor affecting women's inability to network is that women are too busy caring for families to have time to network, whether or not they work outside the home.

One networking success story involves eight women candidates (mostly independents) who ran for parliament and formed their own network for mutual support and to seek funding. Another success story involves women who were running for local council seats who attended a campaign school held by a Maldivian NGO and formed networks that continued through the local level elections.

Unless women have family connections to people of political influence and economic means it is often very difficult for women to become involved in politics especially at the national level. There are a few exceptions among the educated elite.

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52 Women in Public Life in the Maldives: Situational Analysis, UNDP, 2011, p 23-28.
53 Islamic ministry to close all women's mosques, New English Review. Online. 2 July 2009, http://www.newenglishreview.org/blog_display.cfm/blog_id/21712, accessed 2 January 2014.
54 Women in Public Life in the Maldives: Situational Analysis, UNDP, 2011, p 31.

Public Services/Lack of Child Care

One of the biggest hurdles to women's active political participation (as well as to employment) is the lack of available childcare for working mothers. In the Asian Development Bank's 2007 Strategy and Program Assessment on the Maldives Pertaining to Gender and Development Assessment, household management and childcare were seen as the sole responsibility of women in the Maldives with estimates that "less than 4% of men contribute to household tasks and childcare."[55] Currently there are no government-funded childcare facilities, and private childcare facilities are expensive and not always available. While the government is currently in the process of formulating guidelines and standards for childcare facilities, the absence of this public service makes it exceedingly difficult for women to be employed after they have children and to participate in leadership capacities in political campaigns.

One of the problems exacerbating the childcare issue is that many more people are living in nuclear families and no longer have members of an extended family available to provide childcare. While extended families are still common on the islands, making childcare somewhat less of a problem, women are still socially constrained by the need to attend to household responsibilities.

3.4 Area of Inquiry 4: Gender, Security and Political Violence

Election Violence is any harm or threat of harm to any person or property involved in the election process, or to the election process itself, during the election period.[56] As stated in IFES' white paper, Breaking the Mold: Understanding Gender and Electoral Violence, "those who incite electoral violence against candidates and political activists of both genders have the same objective: to delay, intimidate, prevent or eliminate political opponents and/or electoral processes. Yet, in the case of female candidates and activists, these destructive objectives extend deeper into the social fabric, shaping women's relations to the power structures that govern them and undermining the human rights framework in their countries."[57]

According to IFES' global election violence education and resolution data that documents direct and verifiable incidents of violence, women are most frequently victims of intimidation, verbal harassment and physical harm and group clashes. In terms of victim types, women globally were most often identified as victims when associated with a public role, and voters were the second most commonly reported type of victim.[58] According to an IFES study, the most frequently reported threat to women is intimidation, which accounts for nearly one-third of all cases of violence against women in the electoral context and nearly 90 percent of cases against female party leaders, party/candidate supporters or candidates.[59]

55 Asian Development Bank, Strategy and Program Assessment; Maldives: Gender and Development Assessment, 2007, pg.1
56 IFES, Voting Undeterred [online] Available at: http://www.ifes.org/Content/Topics/~/media/Files/Publications/Brochure/2011/IFES_Electoral_Violence_Brochure.pdf
57 Bardall, Breaking the Mold: Understanding gender and electoral violence, IFES, 2011, p 11.
58 Bardall, Breaking the Mold: Understanding gender and electoral violence, IFES, 2011, p 1.
59 Bardall, Breaking the Mold: Understanding gender and electoral violence, IFES, 2011, p 14.

Direct physical electoral violence in the Maldives

The only documented case of electoral violence against women during the 2013 Presidential and 2014 Parliamentary campaigns was one incident in which a man beat his wife after leaving the polling station. He was arrested and released without being charged. [60] The only other violence candidates mentioned in interviews in May 2014 were incidents in which political posters were torn down.

Voter intimidation in the Maldives

Bardall describes five forms of electoral violence under the category of social-psychological violence, including psychological intimidation, social sanctions and punishment, familial pressure, child abuse and domestic violence. [61]

The Maldives Democracy Network (MDN) conducted a small political violence monitoring assessment in 2011, in collaboration with IFES, which found that the majority of female respondents observed that "pressuring or influencing a woman to vote for a certain candidate is a common occurrence."[62] Interviewees in 2014 stated there has been a great deal of anecdotal evidence of women being pressured into voting a certain way by their family members. Some women were allegedly forced to take an oath to vote as instructed by their male relatives, while others were threatened with divorce if they did not obey their husbands, and allegedly divorces[63] occurred for this reason, as did remarriages afterwards.

Several candidates reported being told by male heads of households that they were going to deliver six or seven votes for the candidate, thus demonstrating their control over the votes of the entire family.

Numerous candidates reported that heads of households, mostly men, withheld ID cards of family members, in particular women. A candidate reported hearing of 75 cases of women's ID card been withheld by male family members in her constituency. She responded by creating a flyer on the right to vote and not have your ID card confiscated, and distributed 400 of these flyers in the community.

The Elections (General) Act (2008) penalizes "preventing or hindering an individual from voting"[64] with one to four years imprisonment or a fine of MVR 180,000 to 720,000 (USD 12,000 to 48,000). [65] However, there was no prosecution of vote coercion during the 2014 Parliamentary elections, although the EC received some complaints.[66]

60 http://www.haveeru.com.mv/dhivehi/news/152014 (22 March 2014)(in Devehi); http://www.haveeru.com.mv/dhivehi/news/152138 (25 March 2014)(in Devehi)
61 Bardall, Breaking the Mold: Understanding gender and electoral violence, IFES, 2011, p 8.
62 MDN, Political Violence Monitoring Report, 2011, p 61.
63 According to the UN, the Maldives has the highest divorce rate of any country with an average of 10.97 divorces per 1,000 inhabitants per year.
64 Elections (General) Act, section 74,(a) (12)
65 Elections (General) Act, section 72 (b)
66 Interview with Elections Commission, May 26, 2014.

3.5 Area of Inquiry 5: Legal and Human Rights

Gender Equality in the Electoral Framework

The Maldives electoral system is first past the post [Constitution, section 72 (b)], which, according to expert analysis, works to the disadvantage of women.[67] There has been no discussion among political leaders to date in the Maldives about exploring proportional representation or mixed systems to achieve a larger number of female elected officials.

State funding is provided for political parties under the Political Parties Act, utilizing a mandatory 0.1 to 0.2 percent of the state budget.[68] The EC distributes these funds to the political parties according to the size of the party's membership.[69] The EC has not considered proposing an amendment to the law in order to give more money to parties with a greater number of women candidates.[70] [71] However, this may be possible in future as the entire system of how funds are allocated to political parties is being reviewed.[72]

Temporary special measures (quotas) for women

Three bills proposing temporary special measures for women have failed to date in parliament, two on reserved seats for women in parliament and one on reserved seats for women on Island Councils in the decentralization bill. It is unlikely that there is the political will to re-introduce a bill for reserved seats for women in parliament at this time. Many male and female MPs argue that quotas aren't needed because five women were successful in their campaigns for MP. Male MPs will continue to put up stiff resistance because some of them would lose their seats (depending on how the quota bill is designed). There needs to be greater awareness and education on the different options for temporary measures.

Political party efforts to increase the numbers of women in party leadership have resulted in designating one-three slots for women's wing representatives on the party's council, and some of the political parties allocate a seat (one out of three) for women at the deputy leadership level. While women are still underrepresented at decision-making levels across political parties, there is the political will to ensure that women are in leadership positions within the party and parties are willing to field and support female candidates. There are, as of yet, unrealized opportunities to engage political parties as catalysts for change, as there has been almost no discussion about voluntary reservations of seats for women on party lists and other potential measures to increase women's leadership within political parties.

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67 Cf. Electoral System Design: the new international IDEA Handbook, 2005, p. 37.
68 Political Parties Act, section 34.
69 Political Parties Act, section 35 (a).
70 Interview with Elections Commission, May 26, 2014.
71 An excellent example of this is Papua New Guinea, in which the Political Parties and Candidates Act provides that if a woman candidate gets 10% of the votes in her constituency, the Managing Body will refund 75% of expenses incurred during her campaign. http://iknowpolitics.org/en/knowledge-library/consolidated-responses/summary-e-discussion-political-financing-women
72 Interview with Elections Commission, May 26, 2014.

Reserved seats for women on boards of directors

The amendment to the Capital Market Development Authority (CMDA) governance code requiring a minimum of two women on boards of directors of publicly-traded corporations was adopted in February 2014 by CMDA. Two women have been elected to boards of corporations, to date. CMDA holds ongoing trainings for directors. CMDA staff have submitted a request that the CMDA board approve a gender sensitization session for this program. CMDA is developing a database of women who could be appointed to boards of directors. The success of the advocacy effort to amend the CMDA governance code, and the additional work being done to bolster its implementation, can be seen as a key lesson for promoting women's political leadership.

Domestic Violence Act

The Domestic Violence Act is being implemented by the Family Protection Authority, which is understaffed and underfunded, but doing a great deal of work nonetheless. One interviewee mentioned that implementation is plagued with coordination problems. The current plan is seeking to address some of these issues by issuing comments on the Domestic Violence Act in order to bring greater clarity to roles and responsibilities for its implementation.

Although there is resistance to the Domestic Violence Act on religious grounds by some people, the Minister of Islamic Affairs responded that the Act was in accordance with Sharia, and Islamic scholars also have presented arguments in favor of the Act.

Sexual Harassment Law

The Sexual Harassment Law was passed in April 2014. It is too early to evaluate its implementation.

Gender Equality Law

The ADB worked with the Gender Section of the Ministry of Health and Gender on the first draft of the Gender Equality Law. The second draft is being vetted by the Attorney General's office and once the implementation mechanism is settled, the bill will be translated into Dhivehi and sent out for comment, including public consultations. Then the Gender Section will finalize the bill and send it again to the Attorney General, from where it will go to the President and to parliament (the target date is September 2014).

4.0 Recommendations

Following IFES' literature review, legal review, gender mapping and key informant interviews, a roundtable on the preliminary findings and recommendations of the Gender Assessment was held on June 5, 2014, with 24 participants, including female candidates and representatives from political parties, government agencies, local NGOs and UN agencies. After the presentation of the findings and recommendations, participants broke up into four small groups to focus on key areas (increase women's political participation at local level and combat vote coercion; prepare women to be candidates; change perceptions and attitudes and structural changes and political finance reform) to provide additional inputs and feedback. The final recommendations were formulated in consultation with interviewees and reflect past and current initiatives that should be supported and expanded, as well as new ideas introduced by stakeholders and stemming from IFES' experience in women's political empowerment programing. The complete list of recommendations from roundtable participants is contained in Annex 5.

4.1 Recommendation 1: Political Parties Promote Greater Participation of Women in Politics

Interviewees overwhelmingly stated that political parties were the key to bringing change in the short term to increase women's political participation. In order to better prepare female candidates between election cycles, we recommend that political parties hold strategy sessions with female leaders on how political parties can encourage and groom female candidates, beyond allocated elected seats within the party. More formally, political parties should amend their charters/constitutions to encourage women's participation. In addition, political parties need to develop a five-year plan between elections to train and empower female candidates. Since the findings indicated a reluctance of women at the island level to become politically active other than in campaign rallies, political party members, including male champions and female politicians, should reach out at the island level (face-to-face) to recruit politically active women to political party leadership at the local and regional levels and encourage women to run for island councils. Political parties should also allocate additional finances for women, e.g. providing additional funds to female candidates, building on the finding that women have a much more difficult time than men raising campaign funds. Additionally, political parties at the highest level should disseminate messages on the inclusion of women at all levels within the party, including as candidates, and raise awareness on training, internship and mentoring programs.

There were many recommendations about the need for political parties to strengthen their women's wings, especially at the island level. We recommend focusing on increasing the activities of women's wings with the following year-long programs: (1) Internship Rotation Program: women will shadow officials in various public institutions to learn about policy issues and how these government offices function; and (2) Mentorship Program: politically active women are mentored by current elected officials or party leaders.

Since the findings showed a lack of confidence and public speaking skills on the part of potential women candidates, political parties should conduct workshops at the island and national levels for politically active women on how to campaign, public speaking, roles and responsibilities of government officials and government operations, among others.

Another major finding was the absence of networking opportunities for women. To improve this, we recommend conducting an orientation program for women participating in internship, mentorship and training programs - to create a network of up-and-coming women who are interested in seeking political office. Networking meetings could take place quarterly for the women participating in year-long programs to share what they learned and solidify the network.

While we encourage political parties offering candidate training to aspiring female politicians, we also recognize the need to continue the candidate trainings being offered by the NGO sector as they serve two functions: (1) they reach unaffiliated female candidates; and (2) they bring together women across party lines. Currently female candidate trainings being conducted by NGOs are only taking place prior to elections in Malé. These programs should also be held between elections and at the island level, as some qualified women cannot attend trainings in Malé due to household and childcare responsibilities. The goal of these programs would be twofold: (1) developing skills and knowledge to run for office and becoming effective decision makers, and (2) creating networks of mutual support for politically active women. Training topics should include:

- Decentralization, roles and responsibilities of elected officials
- Civic and political participation of women (human rights perspective)
- Advocacy and professional lobbying skills
- How to raise funds, push their agenda, and organize
- Finance and management
- Confidence building programs
- Leadership training
- Public speaking
- Negotiations skills.

In order to comprehensively address women's lack of confidence in public speaking we recommend increasing public speaking skill-building opportunities for young women by: (1) scaling up debate club activities in secondary schools and university from one-off annual competitions to year round extracurricular activities; (2) conducting awareness activities for young women participating in debate clubs to encourage their political participation; (3) encouraging the youth and women's wings of political parties to conduct public speaking workshops and encourage young women to speak up at meetings and rallies and (4) providing higher education opportunities for women on focused areas such as public life and politics.

4.2 Recommendation 2: Increase Women's Participation at the Local Level

Recommendations to increase women's political participation at the local level was a key theme that emerged through interviews and there was a high level of interest around this theme at the roundtable discussion. A key area for action was exposing women to how government works, so that they are prepared to run for political office and be effective leaders. Since the findings showed the reluctance of women to participate in political party leadership (other than in campaign rallies), we recommend advocating for affirmative action policies on school boards, health clinics and other decision-making bodies at the island level, so that women gain experience in decision-making roles at the local level. In fact, the Ministry of Education nominates (appoints) a percentage of the members of local school boards; thus, the Ministry should be encouraged to appoint women to these seats. Another way to

help women gain experience in governance is to create internship opportunities with island council members for women who want to become politically active.

WDCs should be a natural pipeline for women's political participation at the local level; however, as noted in the findings, they are not functioning that way. We recommend conducting a study to identify why active members of WDCs do not run for political office, which will inform outreach activities to WDCs and island councils to promote women running for office. One of the key challenges to WDCs' functioning more effectively is the lack of funding. We encourage supporting the Gender Ministry's efforts to unfreeze WDCs bank accounts, advocate to support funding WDCs, and encouraging them to be politically active and take up their mandate to voice women's concerns to the island councils. In order to address the challenge of WDCs that do not fully understand their mandate, we recommend having active WDC members visit dormant WDCs to work with them and form a mentoring relationship to explore how they can become more politically active and fulfill their mandate.

4.3 Recommendation 3: Structural Changes

Although we found that the political will was not present for the time being to work on temporary special measures, many of our interviewees still felt it was important not to give up on the issue because of its importance in leveling the playing field in the short run with regard to women's political participation. The goal is to achieve not only "equality of opportunity," but "equality of results," i.e. more women in political leadership positions. To accomplish this, our recommendations include: (1) providing information and education about different ways of introducing temporary special measures (quotas); (2) educating MPs on the issues; (3) educating political parties on voluntary reserved positions for women; (3) educating the media; and (4) educating the public as a whole about quotas through round tables, white papers, newspaper articles, TV shows and other forms of outreach. The above recommendations cover not just temporary special measures for women in parliament but also for women's seats on Local Councils.

Women have a greater chance of election under a proportional representation system, particularly in a country with developed parties, such as the Maldives .[73] This type of change takes a long time. At this stage, the recommendation is to start the conversation about different electoral systems. One suggestion that came up at the roundtable was to change the legal framework to have the eligibility to vote in local council elections be residence-based instead of constituency-based. This may have the effect of increasing the number of women on local councils, since female residents exceed male residents on the islands.

With regard to the EC, IFES recommends technical support to the EC to develop and establish a gender unit, gender focal point or gender ombudsman as part of its updated strategic plan. Another recommendation is to amend the Decentralization Act, so that the EC conducts WDC elections (instead of the island councils), in order to increase the significance of these elections. Lastly, as election commissioners are self-nominated - women should be encouraged to nominate themselves for these positions.

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73 Cf. Electoral System Design: the new international IDEA Handbook, 2005, p. 37.

4.4 Recommendation 4: Political Finance Reform

Political financing in the Maldives lacks both sufficient regulation and adequate implementation of the existing norms. This leads to a lack of accountability and transparency on campaign spending, which in turn means that money plays a disproportionally large role in elections. Improved regulation of campaign spending will decrease the role of money in politics and benefit women, who have less access to campaign funding. The disproportionate impact of political finance on women's representation is discussed in detail in IFES' recent white paper "Political Finance and Gender Equality". [74] To address this issue we recommend the following: (1) raise awareness about political finance transparency and regulations, with the overall goal of decreasing the role of money in elections and politics; (2) promote affirmative action policies among political parties to give additional funding to female candidates that helps level the playing field; and/or (3) amend the Political Parties Act to provide additional funding to political parties who field female candidates. Discussions are taking place now about how state funding is allocated to political parties; therefore, the time is ripe for such an amendment.

4.5 Recommendation 5: Change Perceptions and Attitudes

As noted in the findings, the stereotyping of women's role as being in the private sphere and men's role being in the public sphere often begins at an early age in schools. In order to address this issue, we recommend the following: (1) in coordination with the Ministry of Education, support civil society to revise gender messaging in the school curriculum; (2) support the Ministry of Gender to conduct gender awareness sensitization programs in schools for students and teachers and bring in male and female role models in a wide variety of occupations that break down gender stereotypes and (3) work with the Maldivian National University's Faculty of Education to gender sensitize the school teachers' curriculum.

Changing perceptions and attitudes is one of the most difficult things to accomplish. Some work is being done in this area by NGOs, but mostly the interviewees were highly concerned at the state of affairs and not sure how to begin to effect change. To begin the process, we recommend supplementing existing quantitative data with qualitative studies examining prevailing attitudes and perceptions that marginalize women in public life. To build on this, we recommend fostering community dialogues on identified barriers to women's political participation in the locality, by: (1) conducting community dialogues using the civic participation project (CPP) model developed by TM in partnership with local CSOs and WDCs, where possible; and (2) seeking buy in from gatekeepers, including local council and community leaders, which may include WDCs, important families, religious scholars, school principals and health center directors.

We further recommend gender sensitization programs for MPs, political parties and the media. To accomplish this, gender trainers should conduct gender sensitization as part of orientation for MPs, for political party councils (male and female members) and for journalists to reduce objectification of female candidates, support media focusing on issues, and educate the media using data on women's political participation.

While community dialogues and gender sensitization programs go deeper into issues, we recommend a complimentary public awareness campaign to reach a mass audience by (1) presenting women in a variety of roles, at the national and island levels, young and old, through a variety of media PSAs, video, radio and TV – as people need to be exposed to role models that they can both relate to and aspire to

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74 http://www.ifes.org/~/media/Files/Publications/White%20PaperReport/2014/IFES%20Political%20Finance%20and%20Gender%20Equality%20White%20Paper.pdf

emulate; (2) showing women being able to balance family and work/public life and show men sharing housework and childcare duties; (3) publicizing success stories of female leaders in politics, business and in other professions; and (4) highlighting women's contributions to Maldivian society.

Almost all of our interviewees were distressed at the increasing dominance of conservative views about Islam (e.g., that women belong in the home) at the present time in the Maldives. Thus we have included a series of recommendations about promoting other scholarly views about women in politics according to the Qur'an. These include: (1) supporting the Ministry of Islamic Affairs in developing Friday sermons about the position of women in public life under Islam (in cooperation with HRCM and Ministry of Gender); (2) working with religious scholars to design lectures to be presented at the Islamic University and the Maldivian National University on the rights of women under Islam; (3) supporting discussions about the role of women in politics under Islam by bringing in experienced religious scholars from abroad; and (4) based on previous successful experiences, supporting programs that promote women's rights according to Islam, e.g. Sisters in Islam, IFES' Muslim Women's Initiative (India).

4.6 Recommendation 6: Combat Vote Coercion

The findings demonstrated the widespread occurrence of vote coercion by husbands vis-a-vis their wives. IFES recommends: (1) conducting door-to-door advocacy on this issue, distributing material that discusses the right to vote free from coercion; (2) establishing a help-line to report vote coercion (confiscation of voter IDs and threats); (3) educating the police and courts on vote coercion so that penalties can be enforced; and (4) working with male champions to publicize the message that men should not coerce women to vote or prevent them from exercising their right to vote.

Annex 1: Maldives Gender Programming Matrix, Recent and Current Projects

Lead Org	Activity	Dates	Local Partner/ Funding Source	Objective	Participants/Results
Asian Development Bank	**Gender Equality Law Project**	2012- Ongoing	Funded by ADB's Gender and Development Cooperation Fund (GDCF) conducted in partnership with Ministry of Health and Gender	Legislation to define and prohibit gender discrimination and proactively promote gender equality through temporary special measures (TSM).	Gender Equality Bill has been drafted and has gone through 2 rounds of consultations and revisions. Ministry of Gender aims to table by end of 2014.
UNDP	**Women in Public Life in the Maldives Situational Analysis (Publication)**	August 2010 publication	Department of Gender and Family Protection Service (DGFPS) UN Country Team	Facts and a qualitative analysis of the current situation with regards to the participation, representation and leadership of women in economic, social and political spheres. Provide a snapshot of participation of women in decision making, politics, volunteer sector, environments, arts, sports and those who are economically active, including profiles and case studies of women. Provide information on public knowledge, attitudes, and perception regarding women's participation, representation and leadership. An analysis of constraints, impediments, and opportunities faced by women in access, opportunity, agency, enabling environment.	Baseline report on women in public life. Profile/case studies of women's experiences (those who are currently active in public life).
	Small grants projects	Round 1 (as discussed): June 2010 Round 2 (as discussed): 2012-present	*Round 1: AusAID funding *Round 2: US State Dept funding	Supporting small island/atoll-specific projects to increase women's participation in public life. Support targets small island/atoll-specific projects to increase women's participation in public life through community-led initiatives. Focus on local elections, developing leadership skills of women.	Grants ranged from approx. $6K - $8K per grant. 12 small grants projects ongoing (1 national NGO, and 11 island based CBOs) targeting human rights, women's right and empowerment, women's

Lead Org	Activity	Dates	Local Partner/ Funding Source	Objective	Participants/Results
					participation in politics, youth participation, strengthening civil society networks at the regional level, and enhancing institutional capacity of NGOs for improved local governance. 2013: five NGOs awarded small grants in the area of women's empowerment, youth development, local governance and voter education.
	Leadership skills building training for women, round 1 and 2	Round 1: December 2010- January 2011 Round 2: 2013	Democracy House; Democracy Network; HRCM; Maldivian Network on Violence Against Women; TM; Bandos Institute	First round targeted first council elections 2011; trained candidates running for office. Training topics ranged from background on government structure and decentralization, gender issues, public speaking, leadership, campaign management, confidence building, communication, and women in Islam. Targeted the women's wing of political parties, and had candidates from all parties. 3 trainings, 2 for political parties and 1 for independent candidates. Second round expanded participation to all women. Application necessary to participate. High demand. 2 rounds of training.	Round 1: 96 women from 20 atolls trained, approximately 30 in each training. 46% of women who participated in training were elected to council seats Round 2: First training, approximately 26-28 participants. Target is 40 for second training.
	Forum for Women Councilors	2012	Worked in collaboration with Local Government Authority (LGA) *funded under	Platform for discussion, networking and experience sharing for women community leaders. Aims to strengthen knowledge base of women councilors in good governance and democracy, teaching leadership, communication and negotiation skills.	3 day forum 26 island representatives (55 invited). Participants discussed starting a formal association, but determined that it would be better to start this

Lead Org	Activity	Dates	Local Partner/ Funding Source	Objective	Participants/Results
			*funded under Integrated Governance Programme	and negotiation skills.	be better to start this informally. Hope to have similar forums once every 2 years.
	Maldivian Women's Vision	Consultations held in November 2013. Analysis to be launched in 2014	UN Women	To compile information on women's concerns and visions for their personal lives, community, and the Maldives. UN Women to use results for advocacy efforts. Involves focus group discussions to identify issues, and survey of islands distributed through Women Development Committees. Will look at geographical differences in survey results.	Consulted with civil society organizations including Hope for Women, WDCs from 33 selected islands, and individual women to develop survey that will be implemented in communities to collect a representative sample.
	3rd Annual Youth Leadership Program	November - December 2012 December 2013	Democracy House; Institute for Governance and Democracy	The main aim is to increase youth awareness on issues of national interest and to empower youth to become active agents of change to overcome the issues that the country is facing today. A total of 118 youth have so far been trained under the Youth Leadership Programme. This programme is inclusive of a "gender equality" session within the curriculum, which was delivered by staff from the Department of Gender. The programme, supported by UNDP and other donors, aimed to make youth aware of cultural issues, civic education, democratic principles and functions of parliament, issues such as child protection, gender equality, conflict resolution, human rights, extremism and intolerance. A model parliament session was conducted at the end of the training, and was aired on the national TV channel.	40 participants (20 girls and 20 boys) from 18 atolls, a Youth Parliament was held, 2 participants were selected to attend Commonwealth Day celebrations in London in March 2013 (funded by People's Majlis)
	ToT on SoPs for Women's Development	December 2013		The training focused on the application of SoPs in the field and the procedures for amendments.	Training of trainers were conducted for 30 professionals (16 males, 14

Lead Org	Activity	Dates	Local Partner/ Funding Source	Objective	Participants/Results
	Committees and Local Councils				females) from the Civil Service Training Institute and the Local Governance Authority in developing standard operating procedures
UNFPA	**Gender ToT for Gender Ministry**	First training Oct 2012 (refresher in Jan 2013); second training Dec 2013	UN Women Gender Ministry; Hope for Women; 6-4-3	To increase the knowledge and understanding of participants on gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights; to provide leadership and training skills to participants and increase their confidence; to create a network of gender experts and women's rights advocates who will push the gender equality agenda forward in the Maldives; to build a perspective on gender equality issues in the Maldives and globally. Trainers expected to sign a contract with the Ministry of Gender and will be mobilized for various training for different target groups, such as local councilors, communities, women development committees, civil society organizations and government employees that may be supported by UN agencies or the Government.	30 gender advocates trained. Once the ToT was completed, participants were evaluated and registered in a roster of trainers. A follow-up training will be planned in early 2014.
	Gender Advocacy Working Group	Constituted in 2011, meeting every two weeks or as needed	UN Women; Hope for Women	Main activity is organizing and implementing activities for the annual campaign, 16 Days of Activism (bring awareness to gender based violence).	Group is informal and has limited resources. UNFPA acted as the secretariat in the initial period.
	Maldivian Madhaha music video and three PSAs on he theme "equality	March 2014	UN Women	To commemorate International Women's Day and promote gender equality in the Maldives.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lIT_gbygD5A&feature=youtu.be

Lead Org	Activity	Dates	Local Partner/ Funding Source	Objective	Participants/Results
	for women is progress for all" based on the original Indonesiam "Shalawath" promoting gender equality.				
UN Women	Support to Gender Ministry		Gender Ministry	Assist in strengthening their database capturing reported cases of domestic violence. By law, ministry must report on this monthly/annually.	
Democracy House	Leadership skills building training for women	2014	UNDP	Training similar to potential female candidates local council, however will target female candidates for parliamentary elections slated for March 2014	Target = 40 women
	Gender Sensitization training	December 2013	SHE Core; UNFPA; UN Women; Ministry of Health and Gender	To raise awareness on increasing women and girls participation in development	4 trainers from the gender ToT participated as facilitators
	Shadow report to Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women	September 2012	*UNFPA funding	Critical commentary on the state's 4th and 5th periodic report of the state and provide recommendations to relevant authorities.	Report submitted to CEDAW Committee.
Hope for Women	Distribution of information related to women in Islam	July 2013 - present	Sisters in Islam- *Malaysian NGO* *UN Women funding	An initiative to counter what a growth in "conservative Islamic teachings or religious justifications" that use Islam as a tool to intimidate and repress women. Also compiled a publication that examines women's role in Islam.	Translated 3 booklets by Sisters in Islam in to Dhivehi; "Are women and men equal before Allah", "are Muslim men allowed to beat their wives?", "Musawa Framework for Action", "Women's Rights through an Islamic lens"
	Leadership	January 2014	*funded by UNDP	Participants have a better understanding of	Participants selected through

Lead Org	Activity	Dates	Local Partner/ Funding Source	Objective	Participants/Results
	Camp for Girls			gender equality Establish a group of empowered young girls who are willing to pursue a career in influential and decision making roles in political, economic and public life. Increase participants' knowledge of gender based violence (thereby reducing their vulnerability) Increase participants' knowledge on their sexual and reproductive rights. Establish a good understanding on women's rights in Islam.	an open call for application, aiming to select at least 1 girl from each atoll. Young women between 16-19 were trained on gender equality and women's human rights.
	Women's leadership and political participation	2014 - 2015	*funded by UNDEF	Situational analysis and capacity building women councilors and Women's Development Committees	
	Women in Policing review (within their Police reform program)	2014 – ongoing	*funded by Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative	Assess how women are treated within the police, whether equal opportunities are presented, and provide recommendations.	
Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN)	**Parliament Watch**	2010-2012	Funded by UNDP.	Project studies draft legislation at Parliament and provides commentary on these drafts from a human rights perspective. MDN works closely with local NGO partners, international partners, resource personnel and state institutions to propose amendments and generate comments which are in line with human rights principles, international best-practice and the Maldivian context.	In the past has proved to be a successful lobbying effort with several amendments proposed by MDN adopted by the Parliament. Has carried out the project since 2010 (with funding from UNDP). Has a website majliswatch.com and annual report outlining the outcomes of the program. Police

Lead Org	Activity	Dates	Local Partner/ Funding Source	Objective	Participants/Results
Human Rights Commission, Maldives (HRCM)	**Awareness campaign for political participation of women**	2011		Sessions in partnership with local councils on political participation of women.	Aims to conduct trainings in 3 atolls per year. 6 islands planned for 2014.
	Advocacy on treaty body reporting	2013	Different ministries of the executive	Conventions that Maldives is party to including CEDAW, CRC, and reporting requirements	Policy staff of 6 Ministries
	Strategic Planning for 2015- 2020	2014	--	Engaging in a strategic planning exercise for HRCM, it would be at this point that HRCM defines their gender programming for the duration of the current administration.	--
	Reporting on international conventions	2014		Inclusive of reports/shadow reports on CEDAW, ICCPR (among other conventions)	--
Voice of Women	**Study on trafficking (video documentary)- unpublished**	2011-2013		Interviewed undocumented immigrants and representatives government officials, stake holders, to understand how people are getting trafficked, perception about trafficking, and extent of issue. Testimonies of women who have been trafficked for sex work.	Plan to publicize but lack human and financial resources.
	"Women rising for Climate Justice- A Day of Action"	Feb 2014	Women's Earth and Action Network, International One Billion Rising	Emphasize the impact of climate change on Maldivian women, highlight potential adaptation and mitigation strategies that can be implemented to reduce the detrimental impacts and raise awareness amongst the community about the issue which must be addressed at a domestic and global level.	Signed "WECAN Declaration" and Women of the World Call for Urgent Action on Climate Change and Sustainability Solutions".

Annex 2: List of Meetings

Adhaalath Party (AP)
- Ahmed Shareef, Deputy Secretary General
- Ali Zahir, Spokesman and Council member
- Anara Naeem, Member of Parliament
- Haleela Abdul Sattar, Candidate
- Shidatha Shareef, Council, Women's Council, President of of Social Committee

Attorney General (AG)
- Mohamed Anil

Democracy House
- Nafia Abdulla, Executive Director
- Shahaa Hussain, Project Officer

Election Commission Maldives
- Ahmed Aboobakr, Elections Coordination Director
- Ismail Habeeb Abdul Raheem, Commissioner
- Mohamed Farooq, Commissioner
- Mohamed Zahir, Voter Education

Family Protection Agency (FPA)
- Aminath Eenas, Chief Executive Officer
- Aminath Leena Ali, Director, Policy and Advocacy

Gender Department of the Ministry of Health and Gender
- Aminath Nadhira, Deputy Minister, Gender
- Aishath Rameela, State Minister, Child Protection
- Dr. Hala Hameed, State Minister, Gender
- Mohamed Zahid Deputy Minister
- Shidhatha Shareef, Deputy Minister, Disabilities

Human Rights Commission of Maldives (HRCM)
- Aishath Fasohath, Communication and Advocacy Director
- Ahmed Anwar, Monitoring Officer
- Ahmed Tholal, Commissioner
- Fathimath Ibrahim Didi, National Preventive Mechanism Director

Hope for Women
- Aminath Nadhira, Member of Executive Committee
- Aneesa Ahmed, Chair Person
- Fathmath Nazeefa, Advocacy Officer
- Rashida Yoosuf, Vice Chair
- Shaadin Rasheed, Programme Coordinator

Independent Candidates
- Fathimath Badhoora, Independent Candidate

Jumhooree Party (JP)
- Aishath Sheryn, Coordinator
- Imad Solih, Spokesperson
- Mohamed Ajmal, Policy Secretary
- Yashfa Abdul Ghanee, Volunteer

Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN)
- Shahindha Ismail, Executive Director

Maldivian Democracy Party (MDP)
- Aishath Leesha,Candidate
- Aishath Velezinee, Primary Candidate
- Ameen Faisal
- Mohamed Nasheed, Interim Leader of MDP
- Rozaina Adam, Maldivian Democratic Party
- Shauna Aminath, Deputy Chair, MDP Media Committee
- Shaneez Saeed, Vice President, Women's Wing
- Shaffiya Zubair
- Zifleena Hassan, Primary Candidate

Maldives Development Alliance (MDA)
- Abdul Haleem Abdul Ghafoor, Deputy Minister of Finance
- Aishath Rafiyya, Deputy Leader
- Ismail Saeed, Secretary General
- Mohamed Umar, Registrar

Panel for National Harmony
- Naseema Mohamed, Member
- Dr. Rasheedha Mohamed Didi, Vice Chairperson
- Zulfa Ibrahim, Coordinator

Progressive Party Maldives (PPM)
- Aishath Inaya, Vice President, Women's Wing
- Aminath Nadhira, Primary Candidate
- Aminath Nadhira, Women's Council Member
- Asma Rasheed, Progressive Party of the Maldives
- Zahira Nafiz ,Primary Candidate
- Tholal, Secretary General

Transparency Maldives
- Aiman Rasheed, Communication and Advocacy Officer
- Azim Zahir, Senior Project Coordinator (Elections Observation)
- Ibrahim Thayyib, Press and Public Outreach Coordinator (Elections Observation)
- Mariyam Shiuna, Executive Director
- Shaziya Ali, Senior Project Coordinator (Civic Participation)
- Thoriq Hamid, Project Manager

UNFPA
- Shadiya Ibrahim, Assistant Representative

UN Women
- Mariyam Mohamed Didi, National Gender Consultant

UNDP
- Aishath Noora Mohamed, Project Coordinator (Social Cohesion)
- Craig Collins, Peace and Development Advisor
- Katia Chirizzi, Human Rights Adviser
- Shaliny Jaufar, Programme Analyst (Democratic Governance)
- Shamha Naseer, Project Coordinator (Social Cohesion)
- Sharad Neupane, Programme Manager/ Chief Technical Advisor (Integrated Governance)

Voice for Women
- Aminath Ummu Kulsoom, Treasurer
- Aminath Shaneez Saeed, Program Director
- Azleema Ahmed, President
- Ismail Zahir, Secretary General
- Ibrahim Imad, Vice President
- Noorban Fahmy, Public Relations Coordinator

Annex 3: Focus Group Discussion Questions for Women Candidates

1. What opportunities enabled you to progress in your political career? How did you come to run for office?
2. What barriers if any did you face when you first became politically active and then as you progressed in your political career?
3. Do women have equal access to media (TV, radio, online) resources? Are women and men portrayed equally in the media?
4. Are women able to decide whether to vote or campaign free of influence from male family members?
5. What types of professional/political networking opportunities have you had? What types of political/social networking opportunities exist for men and women?
6. What financial resources were you able to draw on for your campaign? (Personal, Family, Community, Corporate)
7. Do women candidates need to engage in vote-buying in order to run successful campaigns?
8. How do Maldivians in general view men and women's primary roles? Has this view changed? Why do you think there has been a change? PROBE: How do religious and cultural beliefs/ perceptions around women's and men's roles in the political, professional and community spheres affect women's political participation?
9. What would be the most effective ways of changing the public's attitude towards women's political participation amongst both men and women, girls and boys?
10. Would a national or political party quota system work in the Maldives context?

Annex 4: Break-out Group Recommendations from June 5, 2014 Roundtable

To increase women's political participation at local level and to combat vote coercion
- Education Ministry to nominate (appoint) women members to the local school boards
- To implement a quota for women at Local Council level
- Elections Commission to administer the Women's Development Committees (WDC) elections to increase significance of WDC elections
- To mentor WDC's to become more active in the political field

Prepare women to be candidates
- Individual level
    - To build capacity and skills of women with a focus on confidence building, public speaking, campaign financing and management, women in public life, and negotiation skills
- Political Party level
    - To conduct awareness and educating sessions for political party members
    - To amend political party constitutions to encourage women's participation
    - To allocate additional finances for women. For example, providing additional funds to women candidates competing from the party
    - To encourage women to participate in party primaries
    - To strengthen women's wings of political parties at island level
- National level
    - To publicize success stories of women politicians
    - Media to provide more publicity to women politicians
    - To provide higher education opportunities for women ion focused areas such as public life and politics
    - Central government to provide high importance to local level politics

Change perception and attitudes
- To conduct systematic surveys to identify the root causes of gender inequality in order to better address the issue
- To supplement existing quantitative data with qualitative study examining prevailing attitudes and perceptions that marginalize women in public life.
- To conduct gender sensitization programs for the Members of Parliament, and Political Parties
- NGO's, State institutions, working groups, and other relevant organizations to establish a platform to discuss gender equality and women in politics
- To utilize male champions including gender trainers, scholars amongst others
- To work with faculty of education to ensure gender sensitization of school teachers' curriculum.

Structural changes and political finance reform
- To amend the Political Parties Act to address issues in political financing
- To amend the legal framework to increase number of women in local councils. For example, change from a constituency system to a residential system for local elections
- To amend laws to include temporary special measures at party level and national level
- To nominate more women members to the Elections Commission
- To convene a gender ombudsmen at the Elections Commission