Understanding Gender in the Maldives: Towards Inclusive Development

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1. What context and institutions underlie gender differentials?

2. How do gender differentials manifest in relations between men and women in the private sphere of the household?

3. How do gender differentials manifest in the interaction between men and women in the public sphere of society, economy, and politics?

4. What do recent trends say about the future of gender equality in Maldives?
• Analysis of surveys and census data
  • Maldivian government statistics
  • Demographic and Health Surveys
  • Household Income and Expenditure Survey, World Bank
  • Statistics from other international organizations

• Analysis of data and findings from reports
  • ADB gender analysis
  • Maldivian government policy and program reports
  • Maldivian Human Rights Commission
  • Other Maldivian NGOs and international organizations

• Primary qualitative data
  • Key informant interviews: 33 individuals from 16 organizations
  • 2 Focus Group Discussions: young people, owners of resorts
  • Maldives and Washington DC
Maldives: Basic facts

**Geography**
- 1000 islands in the Indian ocean
- Land area < 300 square km
- 1/3rd population lives in Male in 2 km²

**Demography**
- 340,000 population
- 50% of population < 25 years of age
- Sex ratio (M:F) = 101.4
- Life expectancy (M/F) = 78.8/76.7

**Economy**
- GDP annual avg growth rate: 3.7%
- Current GNI p.c.: US 10,799
- Non-inclusive development
  - Between Male & atolls
  - Across sectors
- Macroeconomic, fiscal challenges
Social-Cultural-Economic-Political Context

Constitutional guarantee of gender equality
Rapid economic growth and MDG achievement
Few traditional restrictions on women
Liberal traditional version of Islam

Limited capacity for implementation of gender laws and policies
Non-inclusive economic development model
Increasing conservatism
Increasing youth disconnect

Favorable to gender equality
Detrimental to gender equality
Gender Equality in Maldives Unpacked

Gender Equality

- Agency
- Opportunities
- Endowments/Resources

Outcomes

- Private Sphere -> interactions within the household or with intimates
- Public Sphere -> interactions within the broader social, economic and political spectrum

Influenced by and influence broader context
Gender and Growth: An Interlinked System

The Context: Formal institutions (law and policy), informal institutions (society and culture), market (econ devt), households

Gender-Private Sphere: ownership of household assets, violence

Gender-Public Sphere: education & health; employment; political participation

The Context: Formal institutions (law and policy), informal institutions (society and culture), market (econ devt), households
What are the Patterns of Gender Equality in Maldives?
Gender Equality in Basic Wellbeing

- Success story in South Asia
- No son preference
- Gender equality in survival and schooling
However... MDG 3 to support gender equality is not yet achieved

1) Female disadvantage: private and public spheres
2) Youth: gendered constraints for women and men
3) Decline over time in support for gender equality

Gender inequality remains an important axis of social exclusion
Gender Inequality: Public Sphere

Women’s economic participation
- Less likely to be employed than men: 47.6% vs 79.7%
- Average female wages lag behind those of men
- Less access to pension than men

Women’s political participation
- 5.1% of city representatives
- 0.5% of atoll representatives
- Maldives 128th of 190 countries in female parliament representation

![Graph showing gender economic participation and political representation over time.](image-url)
Areas of Disadvantage for Young Women

Societal expectations
- Mobility constraints for postsecondary schooling and training: 1/3rd of scholarships to young women
- Household responsibilities: 13% cite as reason for not working vs. 1% of men

Opportunities
- Limited opportunities in high growth sectors: almost 0% in fisheries and tourism
- Currently (2009) neither working nor in school: 27% vs. 20% of young men

Agency and voice
- Less say than young men in marital partner: 36% vs. 58% for young men
- Ages 25-29 have highest rates of lifetime partner violence (30%)

Rural disadvantage
- Sex ratio of current inactivity higher in rural than urban areas (60% vs 16%)
- Least likely to have say in marriage partner (33% vs. 40% for urban women; over 50% for urban and rural men)
Areas of Disadvantage for Young Men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gang participation</th>
<th>Substance abuse</th>
<th>Unemployment</th>
<th>Societal disconnect</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Mostly young men under the age of <strong>25 years</strong></td>
<td>• Tobacco use: <strong>47%</strong> of men, <strong>12%</strong> of women</td>
<td>• Ages 15-19: <strong>44%</strong> of men vs. <strong>27%</strong> of women</td>
<td>• Disconnect between aspirations and existing opportunities</td>
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<td>• 2012: <strong>20-30 gangs in Male</strong>; 40-500 members in each</td>
<td>• Drug abuse: <strong>6%</strong> total, mostly men</td>
<td>• Ages 20-24: <strong>23%</strong> of men vs. <strong>20%</strong> of women</td>
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<td>• Violence: interpersonal, political and business-related</td>
<td>• <strong>68%</strong> of youth identify drugs as major problem for young men</td>
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Tilt Away From Gender Equality: 2005-11

**MEN**
- Continuing support for gender-equality
  - Divorce
  - Domestic violence
  - Work
  - Access to courts and politics
  - Family issues

**WOMEN**
- Decrease in support for gender-equality
  - Work
  - Divorce
  - Domestic violence
  - Access to courts and politics
  - Family issues
Decline in Support for Women’s Rights

**RURAL**

- Custody: 92-57
- Work: 89-69
- Family matters: 89-78
- Politics: 79-69
- Inheritance: 58-67
- Divorce: 32-40
- Courts: 78-82

**URBAN**

- Custody: 91-61
- Inheritance: 66-53
- Family matters: 79-69
- Work: 83-73
- Courts: 77-70
- Politics: 72-70
- Divorce: 34-39

Legend:
- Green: 2005
- Red: 2011
What Next?

• Engage women
  • Opportunities in tourism and fisheries: social norms, child care
  • Technical and skills-based education: social norms, mobility, residential possibilities
  • Build on traditional gender egalitarian norms to resist growing inegalitarian attitudes

• Engage youth
  • The future of the country, the bulk of the country
  • High aspirations + limited engagement & opportunities = social tension
  • Harness power of educated, eager, energetic youth
    • Technical education
    • Work with youth to narrow gap between aspirations and reality
    • Work with employers, parents, educators to change attitudes towards youth

• Strengthen government capacity to mainstream gender

• Improve data on gender concerns
  • Cannot assess progress without data
  • Cannot measure extent of inequality without data
  • Data particularly limited on social exclusion

Achieved tremendous gains in basic wellbeing – build on them
Thank you

Report can be accessed at:
https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/24118