

General Assembly resolution on “Women in Development”

- Strengthening and implementing gender-responsive poverty eradication strategies, including social protection systems, to help ensure an adequate standard of living for women and girls, especially in response to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (paragraph 10)
 - One key measure taken was assisting families, who have been financially affected by the impacts of COVID-19 and located in the capital city Male', to voluntarily relocate to their islands. This voluntary relocation program (Ahulu) was a multi-agency effort, designed to improve the standard of living of such families, through provision of financial assistance via a 0% interest loan. The loan was provided for refurbishing and maintenance costs of the premise that families moved into. Additionally, a re-establishment allowance for a period of 6 months was also provided, along with ensuring access to healthcare, education, employment and other necessities for a dignified life. Through this project, 125 members of 32 families have been relocated from capital Male' to their home islands.
- Increasing investments in and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programmes for full and productive employment and decent work for all women, including their participation in and access to labour markets, and addressing women's disproportionate job losses during the COVID-19 crisis (paragraphs 31 and 32)
 - During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Economic Development started an income support programme as well as a loan scheme for businesses. However, with a large portion of women applying for these programmes being informally employed (including self-account workers) and not having sufficient documents to support their applications, many women faced difficulties due to the eligibility criteria and documents required, measures were taken to reduce the burden for women applying for these programmes by changing the documentation requirement and eligibility criteria. This thus extended the scope of support services provided to women who faced job or income losses during COVID-19.
- Promoting the transition of women from informal employment to formal employment, including access to decent work, improved wages, social protection and quality childcare (paragraph 11)
 - Under the Asian Development Bank's Strengthening Gender Inclusive Initiative project, the Ministry is working on increasing access to affordable childcare through subsidies for daycare centres.
 - The Ministry is also in discussions with the Ministry of Economic Development to work on promoting the transition of women from informal employment to formal employment, including by creating greater awareness of registration processes, pension benefits, in partnership with local governments and regional Job Centre offices.
- Prohibiting all forms of discrimination against women, including in the world of work, including against women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as migrant women and women with disabilities (paragraphs 16, 43, 44, 47)
 - The Gender Equality Act (Law No. 18/2016) prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of gender, including “the use of a discriminatory

system to allocate certain types of jobs for a specific gender and the subsequent exclusion of a specific gender from opportunities due to this systemic discrimination shall be construed as discrimination based on gender”.

- Promoting and protecting women’s labour and human rights in the workplace through targeted measures, including universal minimum wage, social protection and equal pay for work of equal value, reducing occupational segregation and gender pay gaps and ensuring collective bargaining and recruitment, retention and promotion of women (paragraph 28)
 - In January 2022, a minimum wage was established for the first time in the Maldives. With a large portion of lower ranking civil servants being women, and the government being the largest national employer, the introduction of a minimum wage is hoped to increase the average salaries and income of most working women in the Maldives.
 - Measures to reduce occupational segregation, through a focus on increasing the number of men in fields such as nursing, education, social work and increasing the number of women in fields such as STEM and construction are outlined in the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP).
 - The GEAP also includes strategies to increase the proportion of women in managerial positions. Given that one of the biggest factors for the disproportionate difference in the average pay for men and women is the fact that women generally occupy jobs in lower-paying ranks as well as less lucrative fields, whereas men occupy a greater proportion of management positions, a more balanced representation of men and women in management jobs as well as a reduction in occupational segregation is expected to reduce the gender pay gap.
- Recognizing, reducing and redistributing women’s and girls’ disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work and representing and rewarding women’s paid care work, especially given the increases in the unequal burden on women and girls during the COVID-19 period (paragraphs 29, 33 and 44)
 - The *Geveshi Gulhun* campaign, launched in 2020 and aimed at combating domestic violence and strengthening family relationships, includes activities to promote values such as sharing work load at home, promoting non-stereotypical roles and values, particularly men engagement programmes to emphasise their role to promote the redistribution of domestic work.
- Supporting women’s entrepreneurship, expanding existing women-owned and -led micro, small and medium enterprises and facilitating opportunities for new women entrepreneurs (paragraph 37)
 - Out of 7 total commercial loan schemes available, 3 currently have special provisions for women and under loans issued by SME Development Finance Corporation, 20% of approved loans were issues to female-based businesses.
 - The Business Centre Corporation, established under the Ministry of Economic Development, has developed business start-up kits for women entrepreneurs and carries out trainings for women on financial literacy, ICT skills, communication and marketing skills, aimed at building the capacity of women entrepreneurs.

- Preventing and eliminating all forms of violence, sexual harassment and discrimination against women and girls, including in the world of work, and addressing the increase in gender-based violence during the COVID-19 period (paragraphs 16 and 35)
 - During the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020, an advocacy campaign titled *Geveshi Gulhun* aimed at combating domestic violence and strengthening familial relationships was launched. An increase in reported cases was identified, since the beginning of this campaign. In 2021, a campaign focused on ending sexual violence (including sexual harassment) titled *Mikan Huttuvaanan* was also launched. Additionally, a GBV helpline was established in 2021 to increase the scope of services provided to victims of violence during the pandemic.
- Providing equitable and universal access to affordable and quality health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, for women and girls in order to achieve the realization of the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, particularly in contexts of HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 (paragraph 17-19)
 - During COVID-19, the Ministry in partnership with a local NGO (Society for Health Education), provided dignity kits including hygiene products to 37 individuals, including 18 women.
- Promoting and protecting women's and girls' right to education and ensuring their safe and equal access to and participation in education throughout the life cycle and at all levels, given the prolonged suspension of educational activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and redressing the attrition of women and girl students (paragraph 24)
 - Activities conducted on International Day of the Girl Child. The activities are centred around strengthening the rights women and girls have in fields of work that are predominated by men. They are introduced to leading female figures in these fields, who share the challenges they faced during every turn and what they had to do to overcome those challenges. For young girls, these life stories act as motivators for them to pursue their dream careers which they might have had to give up due to the constraints they face due to their gender.
 - Awareness sessions conducted on parenting at an island level, under the *Geveshi Gulhun* campaign, also addresses gendered approaches to parenting and gender equality within households.
- Integrating a gender perspective into climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes and providing adequate resources to ensure the full and equal participation of women in all levels of decision-making and implementation in these areas (paragraph 48)
 - The National Disaster Management Authority, under its Maldives Urban Development and Resilience Project, is developing gender equitable guidelines and revising their National Emergency Operations Plan (NEOP) and Relief Guideline to further strengthen gender mainstreaming into disaster response.
- Improving and systematizing the collection, analysis and dissemination of high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable disaggregated data, with a focus on women's employment, informal employment, access to decent work and social protection,

entrepreneurship, and unpaid care and domestic work through time-use surveys and satellite accounts to assess the contribution of such work to national income (paragraphs 49 and 50)

- The latest Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), conducted in 2019, used time-use surveys to assess the proportion of time spent on unpaid care and domestic work, by men and women. Additionally, the HIES also contains sex-disaggregated data on employment, informal employment, average hours spent at work. The Maldives Bureau of Statistics also collects information on beneficiaries of social protection, including pension, disaggregated by sex.