



International
Labour
Organization

Jobs Strategy

Promoting Transformation and Job Creation in the Maldives

ILO Country Office for Sri Lanka and the Maldives

A. Context

Over recent decades, the Maldives has made impressive progress in raising income levels and human development outcomes. The Maldives sustained an average growth rate of 8.0 per cent from 2002 to 2011.¹ As a result, the Maldives has become an upper-middle income status, the first country in South Asia to do so. The Maldives graduated from LDC status in 2011, and by 2014, GDP per capita reached US\$8,625, reflecting a total economy of \$3.03 billion. Such a trajectory has allured many small -island developing states across the world.

However, despite these successes in raising incomes and tackling poverty, the Maldives faces a number of economic and social challenges. The economy is vulnerable to external shocks as seen in 2005 in the wake of the tsunami and in 2009 during the global financial crisis. This vulnerability stems from the narrow economic base and lack of diversification: in 2014, the tourism sector represented 29.4 per cent of GDP.² As recognized in the Maldives Economic Diversification Strategy 2013, the economy is over-dependent on tourism as a driver of economic growth and prosperity.

The bigger challenge is the performance of the labour market. The Maldives is a young country with youth aged less than 30 accounting for almost 65 per of the population (Census 2006, to be updated with Census 2014). As a result of demand and supply-side factors, many young Maldivians end up unemployed and discouraged. In 2009/10, the youth unemployment rate reached 35.3 and 21.6 per cent for those aged 15 to 19 and 20 to 24, respectively. These figures increase further if unemployed youth who have given up job search are included.

The Maldives is, therefore, experiencing high rates of unemployment amongst young people though many jobs are filled by expatriate workers. This imbalance needs to be corrected if the situation in the labour market is to improve. Key issues to address include improving education and skills, while overcoming other structural barriers to taking up employment.

In light of these challenge, the Government of the Maldives recognizes the importance of creating more and better jobs, especially for the youth of the country. The President outlined his vision for creating 94,000 jobs over five years, of which 54,000 jobs will be created through investments and new Government programmes along with policy and legislative changes.

In order to meet this goal, this Jobs Strategy will bring greater coherence in the delivery of Government programmes and services to provide the enabling environment for investment and job creation, while enhancing the employability of its citizens, especially our youth. This is a crucial policy for the Government and will form a major component in the Maldives National Development Strategy.

This Jobs Strategy also seeks to improve the management of expatriate workers to ensure a level playing field for Maldivians. A fundamental dimension is data: this policy will strengthen the collection and analysis of employment data to ensure that we are on track to achieving the overarching goal of job creation. If we are not on track, better data and a functional labour market information system

¹ World Bank World Development Indicators.

² National Bureau of Statistics.

will help us change our course of action and steer interventions, and precious resources, to create better outcomes.

B. Vision of the Jobs Strategy

The vision of the Jobs Strategy is to have an economy that creates more and better jobs for its citizens, particularly its youth, which leads to transformation of the Maldives and greater prosperity and inclusion for all.

C. Objectives and goals of the Jobs Strategy



In order to achieve this vision, the Jobs Strategy is centred on five goals that address different aspects of the labour market, which seek to:

1. **ENABLE:** Promote economic diversification that leads to the creation of productive employment
2. **TRAIN:** Enhance education and skills development that improves employability of jobseekers
3. **SUPPORT:** Help youth make the transition from school to the world of work, targeting in particularly school dropouts and young women
4. **MANAGE:** Better manage the expatriate labour force in order to protect workers and encourage the participation of Maldivians in the labour market
5. **INFORM:** Strengthen the collection and analysis of data through a labour market information system, which will enhance monitoring and evaluation of interventions

D. Strategies

Strategic objective 1: Sustained growth built on a more diversified economy, which leads to the creation of more and better jobs

Towards achieving the goal of creating 94,000 jobs over 5 years, the Government of the Maldives will take a multi-pronged strategy based on investment across key sectors, improving the enabling environment for business and promoting entrepreneurship. Diversification of economic activity will help create more job opportunities for Maldivians across the country. New sectors, including IT-based services, will be promoted to provide exciting and appealing employment to the youth.

The key strategies are:

- i. Investment forums will be held to attract foreign investment to the Maldives, which promote diversification and job creation.
- ii. All relevant government ministries and agencies will also identify local employment opportunities and requirements in their planning processes. To support this process, the Ministry of Education will complete a human resource (HR) requirements plan.
- iii. Local employment requirements will be identified and integrated in the mega projects leading to specific employment targets for Maldivians during all phases of the projects, which will be linked to training and awareness programmes:
 - a. Integrated development project in North Maldives as an SEZ
 - b. Relocation of Male' port and warehouse/processing
 - c. Hulhumale' Youth City development project (see also strategic objective 3)
 - d. Ibrahim Nasir International Airport development project
 - e. Male' – Hulhule' bridge project
 - f. Social housing
- iv. To identify local employment requirement, an Employment Impact Assessment (EIA) will be undertaken for all large investment projects, including those in the Special Economic Zones (SEZs), which will be a requirement for gaining approval for investment. Based on a set of guidelines, the EIA will start with a "job-list" that identifies the likely number of jobs by occupation in a given project.
- v. Each relevant ministry and agency will identify key occupations to be reserved for Maldivians (see also Strategic Objective 4). Occupations, including cashier level jobs and photography, will be reserved for Maldivians.
- vi. The Employment Act will be reviewed to ensure that labour practices are improved.
- vii. Focusing on six priority areas (fishing, agriculture, tourism, construction, IT and transport), entrepreneurship will be promoted through the delivery of business centre training programmes, improved access to finance via credit guarantees and business proposal development, and better information on market and product opportunities.
- viii. Employment in the fisheries sector will be increased through the promotion of mariculture and aquaculture, increased value addition and the introduction of new fishing techniques (long line fishing) and training to encourage the employment of Maldivians.
- ix. After conducting a value-chain analysis, the production of agricultural and marine products will be increased to supply the tourism sector.
- x. Loan schemes will promote job creation in agriculture and fishing.
- xi. Uninhabited islands will be leased to create job opportunities.
- xii. Cooperatives, including in the fisheries sector, will be strengthened by increasing their products and access to markets.
- xiii. Guesthouse, homestays and ecotourism will be promoted to attract other segments of the tourist market.
- xiv. The ease of doing business will be improved by reducing the number of steps required to get a license and open a new business.
- xv. Resorts will be required to take on local interns/apprentices as part of their internship/apprenticeship programmes.

Results framework – Strategic Objective 1

Outcome	Outputs	Responsible ministry	Indicator	Baseline	Target (2015-2019)
Increased job-rich investment and diversification, benefiting Maldivians	Investment forum	MED	No. of forum held	2	5.
	Employment targets and local employment requirements	All ministries	Sector level targets		94,000
	Local employment requirement scheme for mega projects	Ministry of Economic Development, TVETA, SEZ Board	No. of jobs created for Maldivians	0	1,000 (?)
	Local employment requirements for SEZs and investment projects (employment impact assessment (EIA))	Ministry of Economic Development, TVETA, SEZ Board	No. of projects with explicit employment requirement	0	3,000 (?)
	Incentive programme for other sectors		% increase in share of sectors in GDP	tbc	Tbc
	Reservation of occupations for locals	All ministries	No. of jobs created though reservation of occupations	n.a.	8,000 – 10,000 jobs in cashier positions 109 jobs in photography
	Revision of Employment Act	MED	Act reviewed	n.a.	Act reviewed by March 2016
	Loan schemes targeting agriculture and fishing	Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture	No. of jobs created through loans	n.a.	248 in agriculture; 639 in fishing
Enterprise development promoted	Business development programmes and training provided by 6 business centres	MED	No. of beneficiaries of programmes	tbc	6 centres and XX beneficiaries
	Credit guarantee scheme and business proposal development support	MED, MMA	No. of beneficiaries of credit guarantee	tbc	tbc
	Product and market information scheme	MED	No. of beneficiaries of information	tbc	tbc
Greater integration into supply chains	Cooperative capacity building programme	Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture, MED	No. of cooperatives supplying larger enterprises	tbc	tbc

Strategic objective 2: Enhanced education and skills development that improves employability of jobseekers

On the supply side, it is critical that the employability of job seekers, particularly the youth of the Maldives, increases through improved access and better quality education and skills development programmes. A more effective education and training system will be developed to both tackle the high rates of youth unemployment and to ensure that the planned economic diversification will benefit Maldivians. Moreover, in conjunction with the actions under the other strategic objectives, efforts will be made to ensure that youth are “work ready” on leaving formal education. Interventions in this area will cover secondary schooling, tertiary education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET). To ensure coherence in the delivery of various schemes, coordination will be improved.

The key strategies are:

Formal education

- i. The quality and access to formal education will be further enhanced through measures to improve the capacity and supply of high-quality secondary teachers.
- ii. A technology-based, online programme will be implemented to improve access to modern teaching resources.
- iii. A technical and vocational education stream will be enhanced in middle school.
- iv. Career guidance and counselling in secondary school will be strengthened through online programmes and the training of teachers as counsellors.
- v. Awareness of entrepreneurship, vocational training and career opportunities will be promoted through social marketing campaigns targeting schools and youth, including through the use of social media.
- vi. Work experience and internship opportunities for secondary school students will be encouraged (made compulsory) to ensure youth are “work ready”. This will be supported by civic education and training on soft skills and work ethics.
- vii. The Maldives National University and the Maldives Polytechnic will be reviewed to ensure they are delivering the most appropriate courses without duplication and inefficiency.
- viii. The Maldives Polytechnic will be revamped to cover vocational and academic programmes.
- ix. Programmes on soft skills will be introduced in tertiary institutions.
- x. BTech programme will be implemented (already there).
- xi. Government-trained graduates will be required to serve in Atolls (professions include nurses).

TVET

- i. Coordination and consultation between industry and training providers will be strengthened, including through the Employment Sector Councils (ESC), to ensure demand-driven curricula and courses.
- ii. The STEP apprenticeship programme, which provides an MQA-recognized certificate (level 3) to youth, will be expanded to provide more opportunities in tourism and other sectors.
- iii. Through the Dhasvaaru programme, vocational training and internships will be provided to youth (see also Strategic Objective 3).
- iv. The match between the demand for workers created by the mega projects and supply of Maldivians, especially youth, will be improved through training and awareness campaigns.
- v. In consultation with industries, each ministry to identify the key occupations to be filled by Maldivians, drawing on projected skills requirements and qualitative analyses. Training programmes will be established and enhanced with revolving targets to train workers in skills that are in short supply (pharmacists, cashiers, photographers, receptionists, etc.). Reservation of occupations will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it is not harming economic activity and revised accordingly.
- vi. The match between the demand for specific skills and their supply will be improved through the implementation of a functioning labour market information system (LMIS) (see Strategic Objective 5).
- vii. Awareness among schools, communities and private sector of training schemes and TVET will be enhanced through a programme targeting the Atolls. TVET for all youth, not only the vulnerable, will be emphasized.
- viii. The training of trainers and assessors will be enhanced to improve the delivery of competency-based training and skills development in specialized areas.
- ix. Through a single national scheme, career guidance efforts will be coordinated across ministries and streamlined to ensure greater outreach and impact. The scheme will be centrally managed but supported by local authorities and institutions, supported by resources to ensure that the scheme can reach the Atolls.
- x. The National Career Guidance Centre will be revitalized to improve its utilization and effectiveness, including improved access to a revitalized web portal (Vazeefage Dhaftharu), social media and mobile applications.
- xi. A national training award scheme will be launched to promote TVET and recognize the achievements of students, trainers and training providers.

Results framework – Strategic Objective 2

Outcome	Outputs	Responsible ministry	Indicator	Baseline	Target (2015-2019)
Access to and quality of education improved	Capacity building programme for secondary school teachers	MoE	No. of teachers with training		
	Online programme to improve access to modern teaching resources (translated)	MoE	No. of users of online programme		

	Career guidance and counselling scheme	MoE	No. of teachers trained as career counsellors		
	Awareness campaign to promote entrepreneurship and start-ups	MED	No. of responses to campaign		
	Awareness campaign on vocational training and career opportunities	MoE, TVETA	No. of responses to campaign		
	Work experience and internship programme	MoE, MED and other relevant agencies	No. of students participating		
	Review of MNU and Maldives Polytechnic and implementation of recommendations	MoE, MNU	Review completed and implemented	n.a.	Review done by March 2016
Demand-driven TVET programmes provided	Technical and vocational educational stream in schools	MoE			
	Establishment of an eLMIS (see SO 5)	MED	System established	n.a.	eLMIS established by June 2016
	STEP apprenticeship programme targeting youth	TVETA, MYS and MoT	No. of beneficiaries	63	100+
	Dhasvaaru programme with training and internship	TVETA	No. of beneficiaries		
	Coordination between mega projects and government agencies on training and awareness campaigns, working with local councils and schools	TVETA	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Training programmes targeting skills/occupations in short supply (pharmacists, cashiers, etc.) with recognized certification	TVETA, MED, and others	No. of beneficiaries		
	National Career Guidance Scheme	MED, MoE, MYS			
	Revitalized National Career Guidance Centre	MYS	No. of jobseekers utilizing services of NCGC		
	Web portal, social media and mobile app revitalized and developed to inform the population of TVET and career opportunities.	MYS, MoE			
	National training award scheme				

Strategic objective 3: Supporting youth to make the transition to the workplace

With the high rates of unemployment among youth, the Jobs Strategy will target youth beyond the overall measures outlined under the other Strategic Objectives. Motivated, engaged and employable youth are essential for the Maldives to achieve our broader goals of accelerating economic development and creating a prosperous society for all. However, challenges persist in terms of education and skills, along with attitudes about work opportunities. Moreover, a number of initiatives already exist but further efforts are needed to reduce duplication and fragmentation, in order to improve efficiency of programmes targeting youth.

The key strategies are:

- i. National service will be reinstated.
- ii. A nation-wide youth civic education and volunteer programme will be implemented to train young people on soft skills and to undertake social and community work, while providing them volunteer opportunities to promote integration in society.
- iii. A campaign, as outlined above, including through social media, will be undertaken to raise awareness not only on career opportunities but also on work ethics through the promotion of positive role models across various profession.
- iv. A new integrated scheme targeting youth will be established, combining existing initiatives to provide a clear structure and entry point for youth, particularly school dropouts and at-risk youth. Efforts will be made to ensure that youth are “work ready”.
- v. Youth entrepreneurship will be further supported through the Get-Set programme of the Government, which gives priority to women and proposals that create jobs. Get-set will be reviewed to ensure that it is accessible to youth who are able to create sustainable start-ups. A youth enterprise development strategy will be formulated to support these efforts.
- vi. Peer education programme will be strengthened.
- vii. An integrated approach will be used to reach out to youth through the existing infrastructure (business development centres, youth centres, and village councils) in order to provide career guidance and access to information about training and employment opportunities.
- viii. Job opportunities will be created for youth through the expansion of sport arenas across the country.
- ix. A jobs exhibition will tour the atolls to promote career paths and job opportunities.

Results framework – Strategic Objective 3

Outcome	Outputs	Responsible ministry	Indicator	Baseline	Target (2015-2019)
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Improve awareness of career opportunities and work ethics	Awareness campaign, through social media and other means	MED, MYS	No. of responses to campaigns		
	National Service reintroduced	MYS	Establishment of scheme	n.a.	Introduced by 2017
	Youth civic education and volunteer programme	MYS	No. of beneficiaries		
	Peer education programme	MYS	No. of beneficiaries		
	Integrated delivery mechanism to provide career guidance and information for youth	MED, MYS	No. of centres revitalized		
	Job exhibitions to promote career paths and job opportunities	MED	No. of attendees/job exhibitions		
Transition for youth from school to work improved	New scheme targeting youth, particularly school drop-outs and at-risk youth	MED, MYS, MoE	No. of beneficiaries		
	Sport arenas, with job opportunities for youth	MYS	No. of jobs filled by youth		
Youth entrepreneurship promoted	GETSET youth entrepreneurship programme	MED	No. of beneficiaries		
	Youth enterprise development strategy	MED, MYS	Strategy formulated	n.a.	Strategy by August 2016

Strategic objective 4: Managing the expatriate labour force

Expatriate workers have played a critical role in progress towards middle income status and the skills of expatriate workers will continue to be needed in the near future. However, since the country has few natural resources, people are the main asset and a prosperous future will ultimately depend on balancing the needs for foreign workers and providing opportunities for Maldivians. In order to have a more level playing-field, the extent that foreign workers are utilized in the Maldives will be closely managed to ensure better outcomes for all.

The key strategies are:

- i. The quota system will be reviewed. Revised or new targets (quotas and reservations) will be introduced for a number of professions, based on an analysis of demand for specific skills and identification by relevant ministries and stakeholders.
- ii. Reservation of occupations will be reviewed to ensure that it is not harming economic activity.
- iii. A more effective tracking system will be established, which will help identify the number of expatriate workers once they have entered the Maldives.
- iv. Monitoring of expatriate workers in the tourism sector will be strengthened through the inspection and licensing system.

- v. The use of Maldivian workers will be promoted through interventions highlighted under Strategic Objectives 2-4.
- vi. Monitoring and enforcement capacity in the Labour Relations Authority will be increased.

Results framework – Strategic Objective 4

Outcome	Outputs	Responsible ministry	Indicator	Baseline	Target (2015-2019)
More effective management of expatriate workers	Review of quota regime for foreign workers	MED	n.a.	n.a.	Review carried out by December 2015
	Quantitative targets set for a number of professions	MED	n.a.	n.a.	
	Tracking and collection of data on foreign workers	MED	n.a.	n.a.	
	Monitoring of expatriate workers in the tourism sector	MoT	n.a.	n.a.	
	Capacity of the Labour Relations Authority	MED, LRA	n.a.	n.a.	

Strategic objective 5: Strengthened labour market information system to inform

In order to achieve the overall objective of creating jobs and improving the employability for Maldivians, it is critical that more regular and relevant employment data is collected. Data on the supply and demand for skills will help address the co-existing problems of unemployment and labour shortages. Moreover, data on employment and job creation will inform whether the interventions outlined under Strategic Objectives 1-4 are resulting in the desired impact. Without consistent monitoring and evaluation, it is impossible to ascertain whether these interventions are on track or not.

The key strategies are:

- i. A labour market information system (LMIS) strategic plan will be formulated to provide clear roles and responsibilities in the supply, analysis and dissemination of labour market information (See Annex 1 for an overview of the proposed LMIS).
- ii. A new electronic LMIS (eLMIS) will be established to manage all data sources and ensure information is available and used effectively.
- iii. A Statistics Act will be legislated to ensure that quality and relevant survey and administrative data is made available on time to inform policy decisions; all data-collecting agencies will be required to share data and make it available as an input to the eLMIS.
- iv. A more regular data collection programme based on a labour force survey (LFS) will be implemented.

- v. A more regular survey of establishments will be carried based on the business register and a technological, cost-effective approach to provide estimates of demand for certain categories of workers.
- vi. Check for qualified locals via national job matching system (data base/YES website)
- vii. A salary survey will be conducted to collect data on wages across professions.
- viii. Training needs surveys will be carried out more regularly, along with assessment of skills requirements in enterprises. Subsequently, projections on skill requirements and supply, which are critical for identifying reservations for Maldivians, will be carried out with both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.
- ix. Dissemination of information on labour market trends, skills needs and occupational analysis will be improved covering different users of LMI, namely students, schools, employers, employment services, training providers and policymakers.
- x. Following the establishment of more regular surveys, a regular Maldives Employment Trends Report will be produced and disseminated among all stakeholders.
- xi. The capacity of local data collection agencies in the Atolls will be strengthened.
- xii. Employment targets will be better implemented through support to relevant ministries and agencies, including a training programme on targeting.
- xiii. An employment impact assessment of mega projects and large investments (above a certain threshold) will be carried out, identifying local employment requirements and opportunities.

Results framework – Strategic Objective 5

Outcome	Outputs	Responsible ministry	Indicator	Baseline	Target (2015-2019)
More regular collection and dissemination of relevant data for policymakers	Electronic Labour Market Information System (eLMIS)	MED, NBS	n.a.	n.a.	eLMIS established by December 2016
	LMIS Strategic Plan	MED, NBS	n.a.	n.a.	Strategic Plan formulated and adopted by April 2016
	Statistics Act	NBS	n.a.	n.a.	Statistics Act enacted by December 2016
	Guidelines on sharing of data among government agencies	NBS	n.a.	n.a.	Guidelines formulated by June 2016
	Regular surveys (LFS, establishment)	NBS	n.a.	n.a.	LFS commenced by December 2016
	Salary survey	NBS, MED	n.a.	n.a.	Survey conducted by July 2016
	The Maldives Employment Trends Report	MED, NBS	n.a.	n.a.	Report started in 2016-17

	Capacity programme for local data collecting agencies	MED, NBS	No. of training workshops	n.a.	
Better integration of employment data in policymaking	Employment targeting capacity building programme	MED	No. of training workshops	n.a.	
	Implementation of guidelines for employment impact assessment on mega projects and large investment	MED	n.a.	n.a.	
	Survey of training needs and requirements; projections on skills requirements and supply	TVETA, MED, NBS	n.a.	n.a.	

Implementation and monitoring

Due to the cross-cutting nature of the Jobs Strategy, a degree of coordination is required to ensure that different parts of government and other stakeholders, including representatives of employers and workers, come together to achieve the strategic objectives outlined above.

Key strategies are:

- i. A tripartite Jobs Committee will be formed to oversee implementation, which would meet on an annual (or bi-annual) basis to review progress towards meeting the objectives of the policy
- ii. Each line ministry will prepare a jobs plan identifying revised employment targets and priority occupations for Maldivians.
- iii. The capacity of implementing ministries will be strengthened to integrate employment objectives into their respective policies and programmes through employment impact assessment methodologies and systematic monitoring and evaluation linked to the employment targets.
- iv. A review of government programmes will be undertaken to remove duplication and inefficiencies and consolidate interventions to ensure the maximum impact.
- v. An integrated approach will be taken on the delivery of awareness campaigns focusing on career guidance, TVET and employment opportunities. This will require a cost-effective use of existing infrastructure and mechanisms.

Annex 1: Proposed labour market information system of the Maldives

