

Migration in Maldives

A COUNTRY PROFILE 2018



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ABSTRACT

This Migration Profile is part of a two-year project (2016–2018) implemented by the International Organization for Migration at the request of and in partnership with Maldives Immigration, under the purview of the Ministry of Economic Development. A Project Advisory Committee, chaired by Maldives Immigration and comprising representatives from the Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Tourism, Labour Relations Authority, National Bureau of Statistics and The Maldives National University, has provided important guidance and direction throughout the project, encompassing research and related capacity-building, as well as awareness-raising initiatives. This report brings together all available relevant data and information on migration and provides policy directives and recommendations to enhance evidence-based policymaking and implementation. It is not intended to be a snapshot of the migration situation in Maldives; instead, it has been released to spark a dynamic process towards long-term multi-stakeholder collaboration on migration data and governance, if complemented by regularly updated information, as well as awareness-raising and capacity-building activities in line with the identified key gaps and recommendations, as a way to ensure national stakeholders' ownership of the Migration Profile process in the future and its long-term sustainability.

This Migration Profile first examines the demographic, socioeconomic and labour market characteristics of Maldives. It then presents key figures and trends relating to internal and international migration, while the following chapter analyses links between migration and the country's socioeconomic development. It also reviews migration governance at the national and international levels, including laws and policies that touch upon migration and migrants' rights. Furthermore, it overviews the wide array of national institutions involved in migration management and data collection. To summarize and reflect on key findings, the Migration Profile concludes by outlining recommendations for future policy development for the Republic of Maldives in relation to migration governance and data management, intended to offer targeted, practical and realistic insights for policymakers.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AGO	Auditor General's Office
Ciett	International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies
EU28	The European Union with 28 Member States, including the United Kingdom
GAM	Guesthouse Association of Maldives
GDP	gross domestic product
GNI	gross national income
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
HPA	Health Protection Agency
HRC	Hotels and Resorts Construction Pvt Ltd
HRCM	Human Rights Commission of the Maldives
IDP(s)	internally displaced person(s)
IGMH	Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital
ILO	International Labour Organization
INR	Indian rupee
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
LRA	Labour Relations Authority
MACI	Maldives Association of Construction Industry
MATI	Maldives Association of Tourism Industry
MED	Ministry of Economic Development
MIPSS	Maldives Immigration Pre-Departure Security Screening
MIRA	Maldivian Inland Revenue Authority
MMA	Maldives Monetary Authority
MMDC	Maldives Medical and Dental Council
MOE	Ministry of Education
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOT	Ministry of Tourism
MOU	memorandum of understanding

MVR	Maldivian rufiyaa
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NCIT	National Centre for Information Technology
NDP	National Development Plan
NEET	“not in employment, education or training”
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SOP(s)	standard operating procedure(s)
TB	tuberculosis
TiP	trafficking in persons
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNPD	United Nations Population Division
USD	United States dollar

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Maldives, migration and the economy are closely linked. Migrants dominate the workforce and represent nearly a third of the country's population. Most migrants are young men from Bangladesh who provide low-skilled labour. In early 2015, the Government estimated there were at least 35,000 undocumented migrants – the group most vulnerable to exploitation – in Maldives. However, the real number of these irregular migrants is likely to be much higher. In the arena of migration, a number of issues have emerged, including excessive recruitment fees, migrants' misconceptions about working and living conditions, a lack of pre-departure employment information, unlawful subcontracting of workers, unsafe working conditions, ineffective monitoring of recruitment and employment practices, and weak sanctions for labour law violations. Internal migration is another key issue discussed in this Migration Profile, as nearly half of the nation's entire population has moved to the capital, Male', within the last few decades. Despite most internal migrants experiencing significantly lower quality of life in Male' due to high living costs and overcrowding, many more choose to migrate from their native islands to the city for a variety of reasons, including access to better hospitals, schools and services.

This research report is part of a two-year project (2016–2018) implemented by the International Organization of Migration (IOM) at the request of and in partnership with Maldives Immigration, under the purview of the Ministry of Economic Development (MED). A Project Advisory Committee, chaired by Maldives Immigration and composed of representatives from MED, Ministry of Tourism (MOT), Labour Relations Authority (LRA), National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and The Maldives National University, has provided key guidance and direction throughout the project, encompassing research and related capacity-building, as well as awareness-raising initiatives. This report brings together all available relevant data and information on migration, and provides policy directives and recommendations to enhance evidence-based policymaking and implementation. The project builds on the data collected by the Government of Maldives and key international organizations, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations, World Bank, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Union. Particularly useful were insights from the Maldives Population and Housing Census 2014. Apart from published sources of information, the author also relied on in-depth expert interviews with Maldivian migration stakeholders. These included representatives of the Maldivian Government, civil society, employers and recruiters.

This Migration Profile is not intended to be a definitive snapshot of the migratory situation in Maldives. Instead, it has been released to spark a dynamic process of long-term, multi-stakeholder collaboration on migration data and governance, if complemented by regularly updated information, and awareness-raising and capacity-building activities in line with the identified key gaps and recommendations as a way to ensure national stakeholders' ownership of the Migration Profile process in the future and its long-term sustainability.

Part A: Country Context analyses migration within Maldives' socioeconomic, demographic and labour contexts. The country relies heavily on imports of foreign goods and services, including labour. Foreign workers (i.e. migrant workers), mostly from less developed countries, allow Maldives to overcome labour shortages in the key sectors of construction, education, health care and tourism. These significant inflows of migrant workers have taken place in parallel to a transformation in the composition of the native Maldivian population, now dominated by young, working-age Maldivians. Despite the availability of potential local workers, many Maldivian nationals – especially young people and women – are neither working, studying, nor are in training. Employers reported a preference for migrant workers due to the lower wages that they are willing to accept, as well as their job commitment and loyalty. Migrant workers contrast with Maldivians, who are often perceived as less willing to work in lower-skilled and physically demanding occupations, and are said to lack soft and hard skills to work in higher-skilled and more technical positions. Furthermore, migrant workers are often more vulnerable and are more willing to accept working and living conditions that Maldivians are not. Hence, Maldives has experienced challenges with reconciling immigration management and planning within the context of widespread unemployment of the national population, especially women and youth. To attract more Maldivians into the local workforce, recommendations are made for improving working conditions, enhancing skills-matching and reintroducing a local labour market assessment to determine genuine labour shortages, together with more relevant education and vocational training that respond to market needs.

Part B: Migration Trends and Characteristics analyses trends in the movements of foreign migrants to and from Maldives, as well as of internal migrants within Maldives, and these populations' key economic and demographic characteristics.

Emigration. While Australia and India were once major destinations for Maldivians, by 2015, almost half of the Maldivian population abroad lived in Sri Lanka. Maldivian migrants mainly consist of students (primarily moving

to India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Australia and the United Kingdom), followed by employment-seekers (mostly in Australia, India and the United Kingdom) and asylum seekers/refugees (mostly registered in the United Kingdom). As Maldives emerges as an upper middle-income country, more Maldivians are travelling abroad as tourists or short-term health travellers, the latter going predominantly to India and other countries in South and South-East Asia for treatment at more advanced medical facilities.

Internal migration. Since 1998, and mainly due to the high costs of delivering services to smaller and more remote atolls, Maldives' population consolidation policies have concentrated on larger islands (notably, Greater Male' and islands in the five other regional centres), where infrastructure is already present and services can be provided more affordably. However, such policies have not been supported by comprehensive studies on the impacts of such relocations. Environmental threats are usually not regarded as an immediate concern and rarely prompt people to relocate.

Immigration. In parallel with its rapid economic development, Maldives has experienced an eleven-fold increase in its total migrant population since 1990. Migrants from less developed neighbouring countries – notably, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka – come to Maldives in search of better employment opportunities.

The Maldivian labour market has become heavily dependent on migrant labour, with certain nationalities favouring certain economic sectors and occupations. According to employment visa approval records, the majority of foreign construction workers are from Bangladesh, and most teachers and doctors are from India. Such a reliance on migrant workers has benefited employers in the short-term, but is likely to have negative long-term impacts, as it may exacerbate local unemployment and skills mismatches. These factors can inadvertently generate a race to the bottom for wages and working conditions, especially in the absence of a minimum wage requirement in the law.

There were significant efforts by the Maldivian Government in the past that resulted in an upgrade of the nation's status from "Tier 2 watch list" in 2016 to "Tier 2" in 2017 in the global Trafficking in Persons Report published annually by the United States Department of State. However, issues related to human trafficking for labour exploitation proved to be a challenge, and the country was downgraded back to "Tier 2 watch list" in 2018. A review of the enforcement of existing anti-trafficking laws and the implementation of policies, with a focus on victim assistance and perpetrator prosecution, would be beneficial.

Part C: Impacts of Migration on Development examines the link between migration and various aspects of national socioeconomic development.

Remittances. As the number of Maldivian emigrants have always been low, the discourse on remittances inevitably focused more on remittance outflows, which represent about 10 per cent of the country's GDP and are subject to a 3 per cent remittance tax. This has the potential to distance Maldives from UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 10.c on reducing total remittance costs to less than 3 per cent by 2030. Remittance tax revisions may be considered in the future based on the types of work that migrants engage in and the amount that they earn. Furthermore, migrants should be informed of the cheapest ways to remit money home, for example, through the World Bank's Remittances Prices Worldwide Database.

Impact of migration on main labour markets. Overall, the massive influx of foreign workers has made the Maldivian economy heavily dependent on migrant labour. As a consequence of the limited availability of soft and hard skills in the local labour force, compounded by a tendency among many Maldivians to favour white-collar jobs over manual labour, the absence of a minimum wage requirement, as well as the cultural stigma associated with certain occupations, Maldives has experienced the paradoxical combination of major labour shortages with high unemployment rates, especially among women and youth.

Impact of migration on tourism. The tourism sector was initially subject to a limit on the number of foreign nationals it could employ. However, the limit was gradually reversed from a ratio of 55:45 (locals to foreign nationals, respectively) to 45:55. The ratio is not strictly observed by all employers, as they find it difficult to attract local workers for various reasons, for example, resorts' isolated locations, the stigma associated with work in resorts, and the lack of soft and hard skills among local jobseekers. Tourist establishments owned and managed by foreign nationals tend to employ a larger share of migrant workers, while in the locally owned ones the proportion of Maldivians is higher. Data on foreign national employment in the tourism industry is difficult to access, as the MOT does not keep records of the number of migrant workers in the sector, and resorts are reluctant to share information about their employees. To address this issue, a data collection mechanism should be initiated or institutionalized by the relevant Maldivian Government authorities. To this end, increased collaboration between the MOT, the Maldives Association of Tourism Industry (MATI) and Maldives Immigration on the inclusion of migrant worker employment statistics in annual reports, together with a discussion of the challenges and best practices in recruitment abroad and nationally, would be beneficial.

Impact of migration on the health-care sector. Unlike tourism, the health-care sector is not subject to a limit on the number of migrant workers it can employ due to the larger skills gap among the local population. As of April 2018, Maldives did not have a recognized faculty of medicine and was thus dependent on foreign medical personnel. Maintaining high health-care standards is a challenge, as many foreign health-care professionals working in Maldives are often doctors in their first post or those unable to secure jobs in more competitive labour markets. Due to a combination of weak career and personal development opportunities (including for their families), there is high turnover among foreign health-care professionals, especially in the atolls (i.e. outside of Male' Atoll). Attracting and retaining senior health-care specialists, including those to train and mentor future local doctors, requires Maldives to provide competitive remuneration packages, as well as good working and living conditions.

Although highly skilled health professionals can secure jobs directly, many are hired through recruitment agencies due also to a lack of public-sector human resource capacity. This can result in misinformation about employment conditions and recruitment costs. A review of the recruitment process by the Government could lead to enhanced information among applicants prior to recruitment and would contribute to an improvement in worker turnover, thus helping develop a more stable health-care system. Furthermore, greater investment in public-sector human resource strategies and capacities to increase direct recruitment would ensure more efficient skills-matching processes and recognition of qualifications.

Impact of migration on the education sector. Despite having achieved a 98 per cent literacy rate, the quality of Maldivian education needs to be improved, and inequalities in the provision of education services reduced. Compared to other key sectors, education produces more comprehensive migrant workforce statistics. Foreign nationals constitute a quarter of all teachers (up to 60% in some institutions, especially atoll schools and higher education facilities). Education also experiences a high employee turnover rate, and the sector may need to adapt to satisfy more Maldivian teachers' professional or personal expectations. By 2017, the Ministry of Education (MOE) issued a sixth amendment to the policy on teachers' recruitment, introducing a more robust public bidding process to select three recruitment agencies annually. However, the revised policy has not delivered the desired results and, as of October 2017, only one agency had been selected.

Impact of migration on the construction sector. In 2010, the sector attracted almost half of all migrants, with the vast majority being low-skilled Bangladeshi workers, followed by Indians and Sri Lankans. As many are recruited through fee-charging agents, they arrive in Maldives with a strong motivation to work and pay off migration-related debts, in addition to sustaining themselves and their families back home. Once employed, it is not uncommon for workers to abscond in search of better salaries. The high recruitment costs, which result in these migrants' indebtedness, are often coupled by low-level remuneration, which no doubt contributes to the decision to flee employers in search of better working and living conditions. The widespread practice of absconding has increased employers' operational costs, fuelled irregular migration, tarnished the recruitment industry's name and placed workers in vulnerable situations. Hence, it is recommended that the Government, Maldivian employers and recruiters, and migrants' countries of origin further investigate and address the reasons and develop remedies to absconding.

It is further recommended that Maldives Immigration, the construction sector, recruiters and diplomatic missions consider the following steps: (a) align the number of work permits issued with genuine labour shortages to ensure employers receive an adequate number of workers for the duration of employment; and (b) ensure that migrants' recruitment costs do not exceed the equivalent of one month's salary in Maldives, so as to prevent absconding and maximize workers' ability to send money home to support their families.

Migrant welfare and well-being. Part C further explores the links between migration and health, migrants' working and living conditions, as well as social integration issues.

Recruitment charges are the most significant factor raising the cost of migration. Recruitment fees tend to be highest in the most impoverished countries of origin and among low-skilled jobs. Moreover, employers are less inclined to bear recruitment costs when hiring this category of workers. Since Maldives' labour demand is primarily driven by low-skilled migrant workers from less developed countries, ensuring employers absorb recruitment fees as a part of business costs will be one of the key challenges in migration management.

Despite the obligation of employers to provide all migrant workers with health insurance, the coverage provided – especially to lesser skilled workers – is typically the most basic. Furthermore, migrant workers are usually not provided with information about their insurance package coverage in an easily understood language and may be confronted with higher charges than most Maldivians.

Moreover, there are often discrepancies between the terms stipulated in migrant workers' contracts and Maldivian legislation, as regards, for example, working hours, annual leave and other employment conditions. Variation also exists between different nationalities of migrant workers in terms of their working conditions and wages, depending mainly on skill level and how they were recruited.

Maldives Immigration, the LRA, the Employment Tribunal of Maldives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), representatives of countries of origin and local authorities are united in a common goal to enhance migrants' social and labour market integration. However, this has resulted in a siloed approach rather than in collaboration. Sustainable change can only be achieved if a multi-stakeholder approach to address issues is adopted through a working group established to develop a common vision and coordinate action.

Despite migrants' incalculable contributions to Maldives' socioeconomic development, public perception of migration has not always been positive. Often, negative narratives around migration are fuelled by a lack of reliable, accurate and publicly accessible migration data, in addition to language barriers and a lack of social inclusion and orientation programmes. Better collection and sharing of accurate data by migration stakeholders could contribute to dispelling myths and misinformation about migrants and migration that could undermine social cohesion in Maldives.

Part D: Migration Governance maps out Maldives' key migration stakeholders, as well as laws and policies that affect migrants either directly or indirectly.

International context. After a brief overview of international instruments governing migration, Maldives' cooperation in the area of migration governance at bilateral and multilateral levels is explored. Reference is made to the role of Maldives in the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons, and Related Transnational Crime and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Also covered is Maldives' participation in the consultative process that led to the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, as well as its bilateral collaboration with Bangladesh.

National legal and policy framework. Employers seeking to recruit migrant workers into Maldives are required to file a request for a "quota" with Maldives Immigration. Such quotas are determined by Maldives Immigration based, among other criteria, on information provided by the applicant.

The labour market test, once part of the quota system to assess the sufficiency of locally available workers (Maldivian or foreign nationals) before permitting entry to new recruits from abroad, was abandoned in 2011 due to ineffective monitoring of employers' compliance. Due to a lack of dedicated labour shortage assessment mechanisms and the Quota Team's limited human and financial resources, quotas granted to employers do not always reflect actual need. This results in the risk of fostering a "quota trading" system, in which a migrant worker may be subcontracted to another employer and become more vulnerable to exploitation. Investing in labour market analysis would help identify labour shortages, reduce skills mismatches, address unemployment among Maldivians and better protect migrant workers.

This section also examines rules on the admission of migrant workers and other regulations and policies that affect migrants, notably those related to smuggling and anti-human trafficking, development plans, and health and other social services. The Government of Maldives has taken significant steps in recent years to fight human trafficking, notably through the introduction of the "Prevention of Human Trafficking Act" in 2013, development of related action plans and the establishment of an ad hoc committee. With regard to health, while equal treatment for all is prescribed by law, a certain degree of inequality and gaps remain to be addressed. Moreover, in addition to the fact that it is no longer mandatory for employers to enrol migrant workers in the Maldives Retirement Pension Scheme, migrants are not entitled to any of the social security measures that citizens are entitled to. Overall, there is a need for national development strategies to integrate migration issues into plans and policies.

Institutional framework. There is a fundamental lack of data, largely attributable to limited capacity and collaboration in data collection, analysis and sharing among organizations with stakes in migration management in Maldives. Increasing information exchange and cooperation, including on data collection, analysis and sharing, would enhance policy coherence, sustainability and efficiency. Furthermore, the creation of a National Migration Data Working Group composed of organization-level data focal points, coordinated by a national data focal point, would strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Part E: Key Findings and Recommendations contains a set of key findings and specific and actionable recommendations for consideration concerning migration governance. "Practical Guidelines to Verify Progress towards Fair Recruitment and Working Conditions" can be found in Annex I and is one example of tools available to assist migration stakeholders to track progress in and identify the next steps towards aligning Maldives' migration governance with international best practices.

PART A: COUNTRY CONTEXT

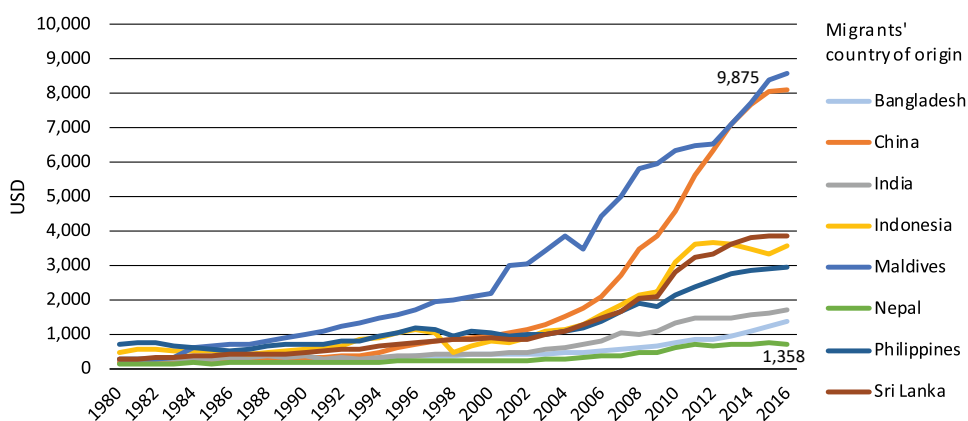
A.1. Socioeconomic development

The Republic of Maldives, which covers a total land area of 298 square kilometres, is the world's sixth smallest sovereign State. It comprises 1,192 islands, of which only 187 are inhabited and 96 per cent are each less than 1 square kilometre in land area. With more territorial sea than land, the country's economic development is largely dependent on marine resources, particularly fishing and nature-based tourism.

In 2018, the World Bank classified Maldives as an upper middle-income country. The Maldivian economy has accelerated since the early 1980s, driven mainly by its tourism sector, and national GDP has exceeded that of the principal countries of origin of migrants (Figure 1). In 2016, the Maldivian GDP per capita reached approximately USD 9,875, almost eight times that of Bangladesh (USD 1,358), the principal country of origin of migrants.

This rapid economic growth has had a positive impact on living conditions within Maldives. The gross national income (GNI) per capita increased by more than 200 per cent from 1990 to 2015, and life expectancy at birth increased by 15.6 years to 77.04 years. Poverty headcount ratio declined from 23 per cent in 2003 to 16 per cent in 2010, based on the national poverty line (World Bank, 2018).

Figure 1: GDP per capita (current USD) of Maldives and principal countries of origin of migrants, 1980–2016



Source: World Bank Database: GDP Per Capita. Available from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ny.gdp.pcap.cd?locations=MV> (accessed March 2018).

Tourism has been the driving force and leading sector during the recent Maldivian economic boom. Receipts from international tourism increased from USD 321 million in 2000 to USD 2.864 billion in 2016 (World Bank, 2017a), during which year the sector comprised 22.7 per cent (MVR 14 million) of national GDP (email correspondence with the Ministry of Tourism, 16 October 2017).

Fishing is the second most important source of income for Maldives. However, it is increasingly being threatened by overfishing, high fuel costs and rising ocean temperatures (World Bank, 2016a). With fishing providing almost 10 per cent of its food requirements, the fishing sector's vulnerability is a worrisome sign for the country's food security.

In 1980, agriculture accounted for nearly as much of the country's GDP as fishing (17% versus 18%) (May, 2016:6). However, the share of agriculture in GDP has declined due to the scarcity of arable land and freshwater, the limited size of the domestic market and high transport costs for agricultural products. Maldives imports 90 per cent of its food, except for fresh tuna (a main trade commodity) and coconuts. As such, the future of agriculture in Maldives depends on demand in the tourism sector (May, 2016:7). However, concerns about the volume, supply and the quality of locally produced food have reduced resorts' incentive to buy local agricultural products. As of 2018, resorts were buying Maldivian bananas, papayas and watermelons, and cultivating themselves or importing all other goods. Despite these issues, the primary industries still play a crucial role in generating employment both for locals and foreigners.¹

Industrial development is limited by Maldives' lack of mineral and oil reserves. In 2011, imports of fossil fuels represented a quarter of the import bill; machinery and equipment, one fifth; while animal, vegetable and food products amounted to another fifth (DNP, 2012b). However, according to the Ministry of Energy, ongoing renewable energy projects, that, by the end of 2018, will guarantee the installation of 13 kilowatts of renewable energy, will have a significant impact on the fuel bill that will be felt in the medium term.

In the arena of education, Maldives lags behind other middle-income countries in enrolment rates and educational attainment at the higher secondary level (World Bank, 2015b). A mismatch between education and training curricula and the labour market's needs has generated a paradoxical situation where labour shortages co-exist with high youth and female unemployment. Due to a lack of qualified teachers, Maldives relies on the admission of foreign teachers, especially from India.

¹ The 2014 Census indicates that 15,130 Maldivians were hired in agriculture, forestry and fishing, and 21,369 in public administration, the sector which employs most locals (NBS, 2015a).

Maldives has been progressing with regard to the main human development indicators, including those related to health (Table 1). Between 1990 and 2015, Maldives' life expectancy at birth increased by 15.6 years; the mean years of schooling increased by 2.2 years; and the expected number of years of schooling increased by 4.2 years. Maldives' GNI per capita increased by about 216.2 per cent between 1990 and 2015.

Due to the lack of medical specialists and adequate facilities, Maldivian citizens who experience more acute health problems often have to travel to India and Sri Lanka to undergo medical treatment. To decrease the dependence on expensive health treatment abroad, Maldives has started to recruit foreign health-care professionals, particularly medical doctors from India.

Table 1: Key human development indicators – Figures for Maldives

Indicator	Figure
Life expectancy at birth (years)	77
Expected number of years of schooling	12.7
Gross national income (GNI) per capita, PPP (in 2011 USD)	10,383
Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (HDI) score	0.529
Gender Development Index (GDI)	0.937
Multidimensional poverty	0.008
Employment-to-population ratio (15+ years of age)	59.9
Homicide rate (per 100,000 people)	0.9
Internet users (percentage of the population)	54.5
Carbon dioxide emissions per capita (metric tonnes)	2.7

Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Human Development Reports: Maldives". Available from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MDV>

The investment climate in Maldives has been more challenging than in other island economies due to limited access to finance and investment opportunities, unfavourable contract laws and other financial regulations (World Bank, 2016b).

In its 2016 Systematic Country Diagnostic, the World Bank (2016b) spelled out four broad challenges for Maldives to address: (a) macroeconomic vulnerabilities associated with a high reliance on imported goods and services (including labour); (b) unemployment among Maldivian youth, particularly women; (c) waste management (to mitigate the negative impact on tourism and fishing);² and (d) climate change.

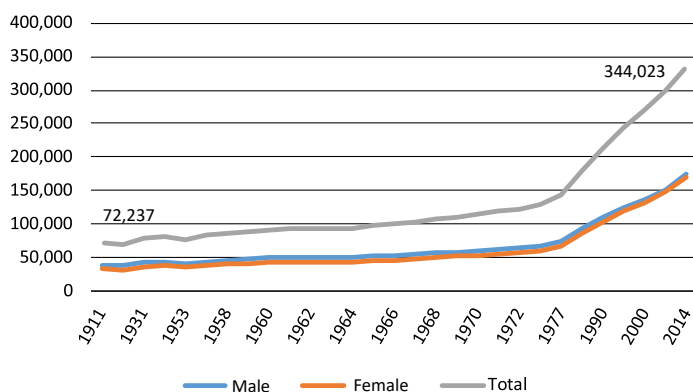
² Biodiversity-based sectors contribute more than 70 per cent of national employment; more than half of public revenue; almost the entirety of exports; and close to 80 per cent of GDP (World Bank, 2014:1). Beach erosion and climate change could jeopardize tourism. For instance, environmental damage to maritime reefs could impact on diving and snorkelling activities (May, 2016:35). The shortage of clean, potable water is already a major challenge faced by several Maldivian islands.

A.2. Population dynamics

According to data from the Maldives Population and Housing Census 2014 (hereinafter, “the 2014 Census”), the number of Maldivians nearly quintupled between 1911 and 2014, from 72,000 to 344,000, with an accelerated increase since the early 1980s (Figure 2). Although males have typically been more numerous than females in Maldives, the gender gap has gradually narrowed over the years, from 9.6 per cent in 1911 to 1.6 per cent in 2014.

Since the 1990s, Maldives has experienced a sharp decline in its non-working young population (age: 0–14 years) and a sharp rise in its working-age population (25–64 years), the main engine of any country’s economic development (Figure 3). To make the most of its potential, it is recommended that Maldives provide its population with jobs, as well as adequate training – including re-training if skills do not match labour market needs.

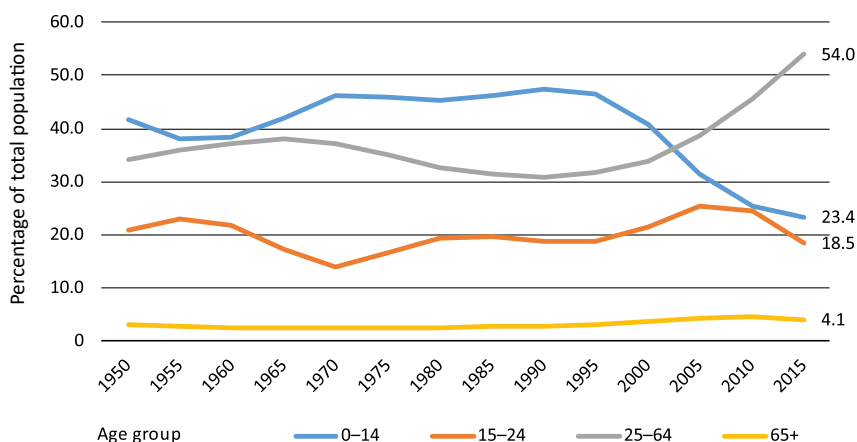
Figure 2: Maldivian population size, 1911–2014



Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Census 2014: Statistical Release I: Population and Households.

Note: Values labelled on the graph are for 1911 and 2014.

Figure 3: Maldivian population evolution by age group, 1950–2015



Source: United Nations Population Division (UNPD), *World Population Prospects 2017*.

Note: Values labelled on the graph are for 2015.

Population-related issues play an important role in Maldives, as highlighted by the 2014 Census. The census paved the way for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to “start a new conversation of population and development issues in Maldives” (May, 2016). Given the decline in both birth and death rates, the Maldivian population can no longer be classified as “very young.” While a wide majority of Maldivians are of working age, the under-15 population, which represents around a quarter of the total, will be entering the labour market in the immediate years ahead. UNFPA considers Maldives’ current demographic characteristics a unique window of opportunity, which, if supported through a combination of strong economic and social policies, could benefit the country’s development (May, 2016:10).

A.3. Labour market characteristics

A.3.1. Employment trends

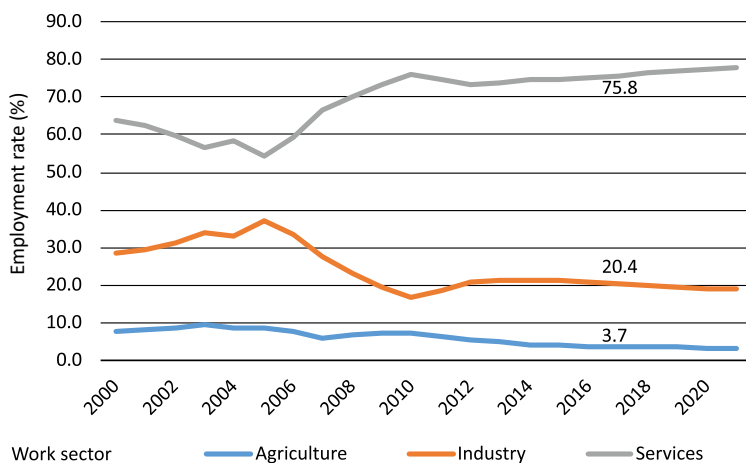
As of 2015, there were three major sectors of employment in Maldives (World Bank, 2015b): public administration, tourism and fishing. They corresponded to 17, 16 and 11 per cent of the total employed population, respectively. While the public administration sector employs mostly Maldivians, foreign nationals predominate in tourism.

Unemployment among Maldivians is more acute among women and youth, who do not enjoy as much social mobility as adult men. Gunatilaka (2013) postulated that a woman's marital status and age affect her ability to secure a job. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), despite men having a higher labour participation rate than women, the gender gap has been decreasing since 2006. Due to unemployment and their prevalence in lower-skilled jobs and wage inequality (the so-called "gender pay gap"), women have received lower incomes than men in the private sector.

Maldivian women tend to be engaged in housework, in line with traditional Maldivian perceptions of the role of women, particularly those with young children. Admission of migrant domestic workers has helped many women lighten their domestic workloads. Those able to secure jobs outside the home often work in services and, to a lesser degree, agriculture and industry (Gunatilaka, 2013:27). Women's ability to enter the workforce and remain in non-household chore activities is limited by the lack of social support policies and the underdeveloped nature of home-based and part-time employment opportunities in Maldives.

As of 2017, employment rates in services (including the tourism and hospitality sector), industry and agriculture (including fishing) were around 76, 20 and 4 per cent among women, respectively, and 65, 24, and 11 per cent among men, respectively (Figures 4 and 5). Even though Maldivian male employment rates in agriculture exceeded those in industry during the 2000–2003 period and in 2010, the role of agriculture has declined and is not expected to increase throughout the projected period. Since 2014, approximately six times as many Maldivian men worked in services than in agriculture.

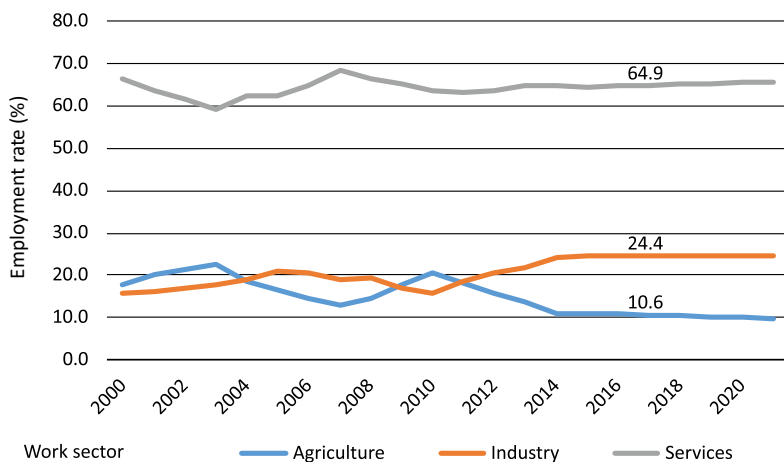
Figure 4: Female employment in Maldives, 2000–2021



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), Employment by Sector – Maldives. Available from www.ilo.org/ilostat (accessed February 2017).

Note: Values labelled on the graph are 2017 estimates. Data beyond 2017 are projections.

Figure 5: Male employment in Maldives, 2000–2021



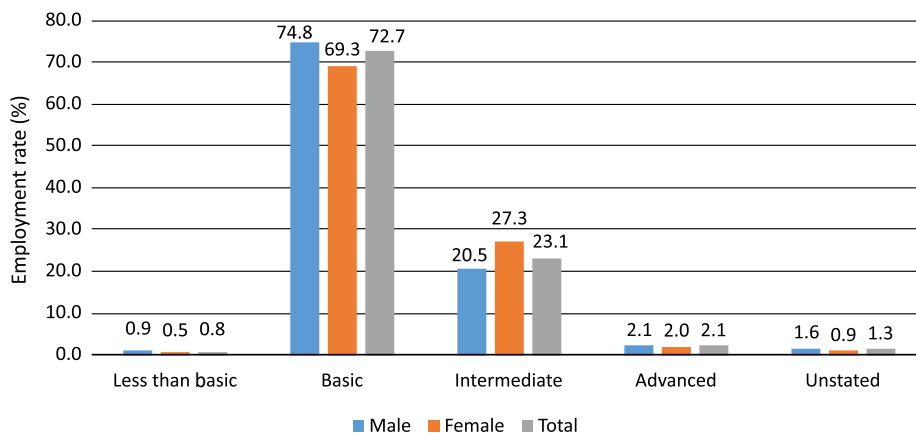
Source: ILO, Employment by Sector – Maldives. Available from www.ilo.org/ilostat (accessed February 2017).

Note: Values labelled on the graph are 2017 estimates. Data beyond 2017 are projections.

According to the World Bank, the geographic dispersion of the population, limited infrastructure (especially on less populated atolls) and uneven quality of education have made it difficult for Maldives to provide its youth with adequate training opportunities (World Bank, 2011).

Due to expectations of marrying young and working at home, many Maldivian rural women have education limited to secondary school (MOT, 2013b:196). Their education is also hampered by academic curricula favouring what are commonly considered “male career tracks.” While women could train for “male jobs,” they face obstacles due to negative social perceptions and cultural stigma. Despite their importance to the economy, tourism career-supporting studies are in short supply and are offered mostly through part-time and ad hoc arrangements (MOT, 2013b:202).

Figure 6: Employment by education level, 2010

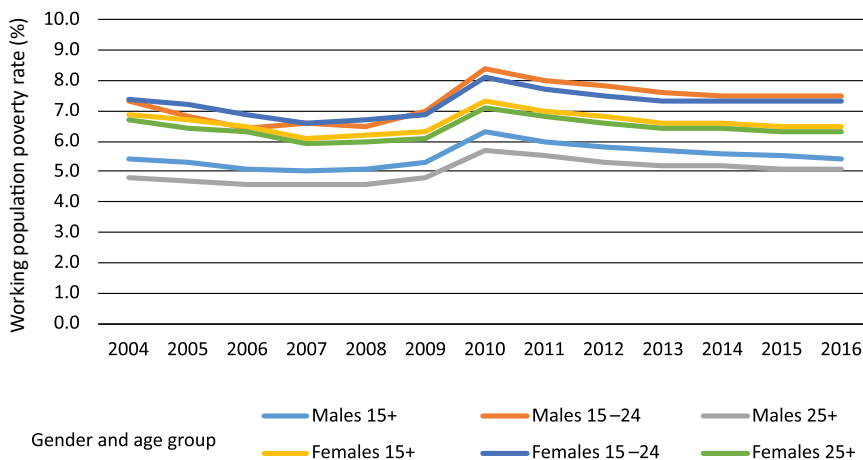


Source: Maldivian Labour Force Survey, 2010, in: ILO, Employment by Education Level. Available from www.ilo.org/ilostat (accessed February 2017).

Vocational education and training is widely held in low regard and is not encouraged by many families, who aim for white-collar jobs and managerial positions for their children. Net enrolment rates in higher secondary education have been constantly growing in recent years – from 8.6 per cent in 2006 to 31 per cent in 2017 – but improvements are still needed. Higher education enrolment in Maldives was low for an upper middle-income country. The gross enrolment ratio in higher education, corresponding to the university level or its equivalent, was about 6 per cent, similar to those in less developed countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. As a result, Maldives suffers from a shortage of adequately trained jobseekers to fill professional and managerial

positions (Figure 6) (World Bank, 2011). Generally, men have a lower working population poverty rate than women (Figure 7). For men and women, the age group with the highest working poverty rates is 15–24 years. After a peak in 2010, the poverty rates declined steadily across all age groups.

Figure 7: Working population poverty by gender and age group, 2004–2016



Source: ILO, Working Population Poverty Rates. Available from www.ilo.org/ilostat (accessed March 2017).

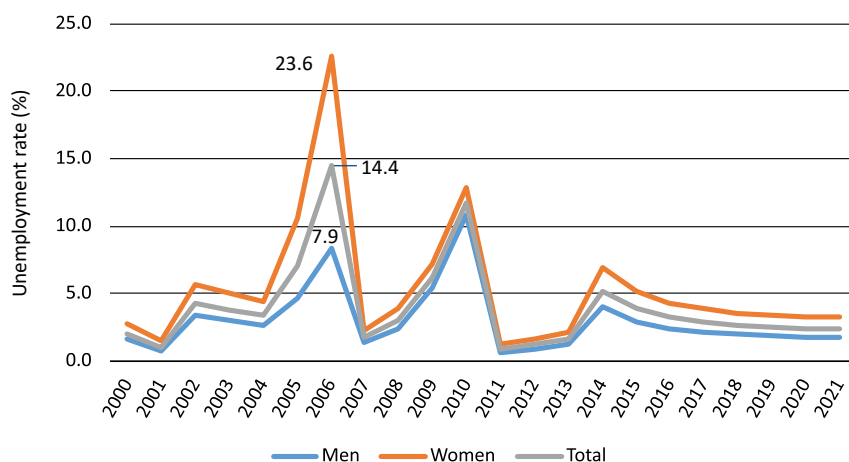
A.3.2. Unemployment

The unemployment rate among people aged 15 years and above peaked in 2006 at 14.4 per cent; in the same year, women experienced an unemployment rate three times higher than men's (23.6% versus 7.9%) (Figure 8). The rates have since decreased and are projected to fall until 2021, with women continuing to have a slightly higher unemployment rate than men. The recorded unemployment rate among the youngest working-age population (age: 15–24 years) (Figure 9) did not abate as fast as among the entire working-age population. In 2014, the unemployment rate among the overall youth population was 12.3 per cent (14.6% for women and 10.6% for men) – more than double the total unemployment rate. According to ILO projections, this trend is set to continue to 2021.³

³ These unemployment rates are based on the ILO/international definition of unemployment that considers only those available for work and actively seeking work.

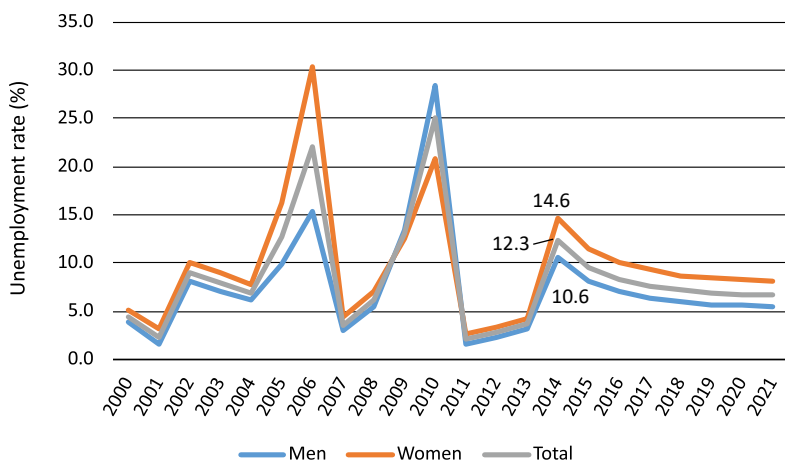
According to the World Bank (2015b), Maldivian youth aspire for high wages and lack the soft skills necessary to meet labour demands. A combination of low wages and poor working conditions, compounded by a lack of commitment and the unwillingness of young Maldivians to work in physically demanding jobs, has generated significant unemployment rates among the youth. Moreover, cultural stigma affects certain professions considered inappropriate, notably those based in resorts. Various studies have indicated that jobs that appear to be stressful, deprived of material symbols of status (e.g. an office computer and an air-conditioned work environment), or which require continuous training or significant efforts to grow professionally, are not viewed as attractive by young Maldivians. Due to the comfortable working environment, Maldivians appreciated public administration jobs, especially those based in Male'. However, securing a job in public administration is difficult, as internships are generally not offered (Gunatilaka, 2013:23).

Figure 8: ILO-modelled unemployment rates in the 15+ age group, 2000–2021



Source: ILO, Unemployment Rate. Available from www.ilo.org/ilostat (accessed November 2016).

Figure 9: ILO-modelled unemployment rates in the 15–24 age group, 2000–2021



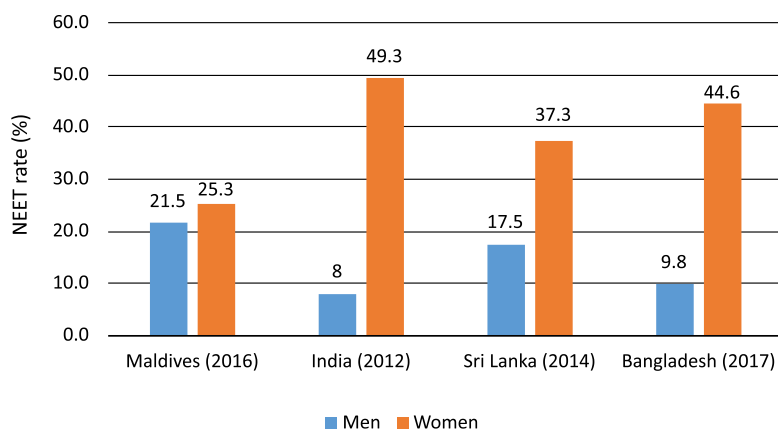
Source: ILO, Unemployment Rate. Available from www.ilo.org/ilostat (accessed November 2016).

The percentage of young Maldivians (age: 15–24) not in employment, education or training increased from 20.5 per cent in 2014 to 23.5 per cent in 2016. This increase was driven by unemployment among young Maldivian men (from 15.3% in 2014 to 21.5% in 2016). While unemployment among young women decreased (from 25.9% to 25.3%) and was lower than in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, at least for the years for which data is available (Figure 10), it was a preoccupation for Maldivian authorities.

Compared to the principal countries of origin of migrants (considering the available data), Maldives had the lowest NEET disproportion rates between young men and women and the lowest NEET rate for both genders combined (Figure 10).⁴ It is difficult to compare Maldivian NEET rates with those of the principal countries of origin because the available data does not cover the same period of time and is based on different surveys.

⁴ Available data from the four countries are not perfectly comparable since these countries collected their data in different points of time and through different surveys. The sources of data for Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka were the Labour Force Survey 2017, Employment and Unemployment Survey 2011–2012, Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2016, and Labour Force Survey 2014, respectively.

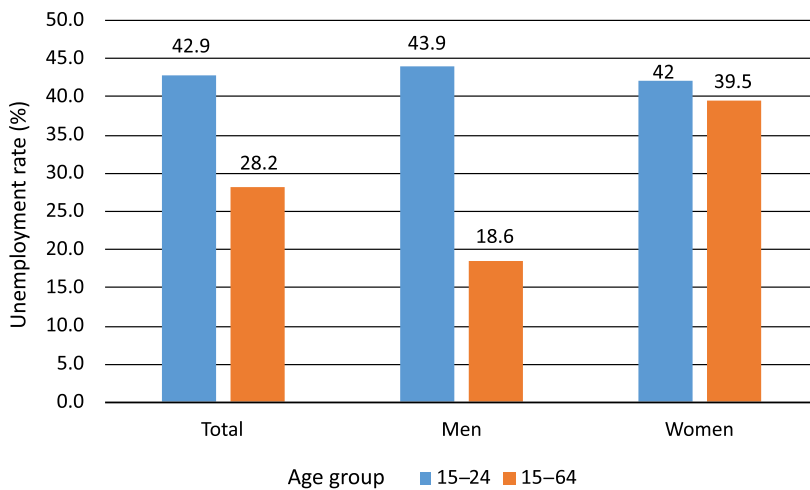
Figure 10: Youth NEET rates in Maldives and principal countries of origin of migrants



Source: ILO, Youth NEET Rate. Available from www.ilo.org/ilostat (accessed March 2017).

Data on discouraged workers (i.e. those who are able and available to work but are unemployed and are not actively seeking work) from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2009/2010 revealed that the youth population (age: 15–24 years) was 1.5 times as unlikely to actively seek a job as the overall working-age population (age: 15–64 years). Young men and women (age: 15–24 years) were almost equally likely to be discouraged (43.9% and 42%, respectively); among both men and women, the youngest age group (age: 15–19 years) was most likely to be unemployed and discouraged (53.2% and 64.7%). Nevertheless, youth NEET and discouraged workers' rates have declined in parallel with the fall in overall unemployment rates post-2010. Education and training gaps, cultural perceptions, personal motivations, a lack of work ethic and isolated workplace locations were among the reasons most often cited to explain Maldivians' unemployment and job discouragement (World Bank, 2011; Behzad, 2011; Gunatilaka, 2013:16).

Figure 11: Unemployment rates (including discouraged workers), 2010



Source: Author, based on *Household Income and Expenditure Survey Findings 2009/2010*, Table EA-2. Available from http://catalog.ihnsn.org/index.php/catalog/2317/related_materials

PART B: MIGRATION TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS

B.1. Emigration

B.1.1. Historical evolution

Emigration worldwide

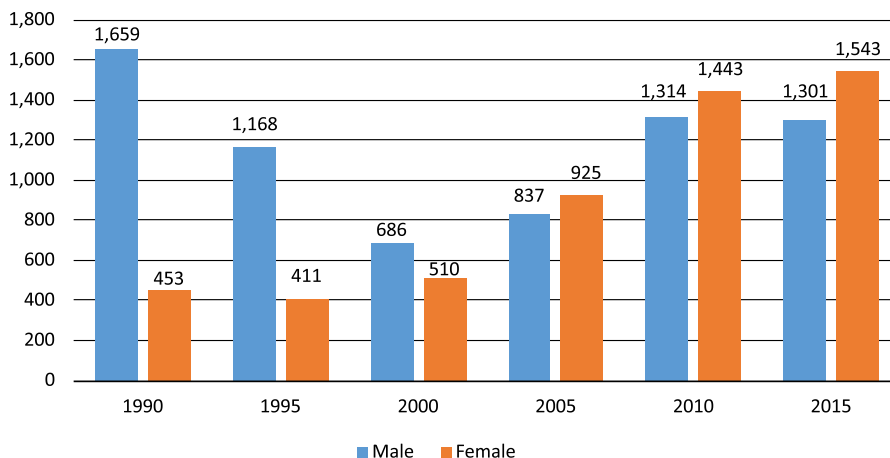
The oldest Maldivian diaspora abroad settled on Minicoy Island, India's southernmost atoll abutting the northernmost part of present-day Maldives, while the second oldest is located in the nearby Indian state of Kerala. Maldivian migration to Kerala has been large enough to warrant the opening of a Maldivian consulate in the state's capital, Thiruvananthapuram, in 2005. Maldivians have migrated to other destinations apart from India.

The World Bank Global Bilateral Migration Database contains the earliest remotely accessible records on Maldivian emigration. According to the database, Maldivian emigration peaked in 1990, with differences in respective periods and concentrations in countries for migrant men and women. Migrant women reached their highest number in around 1980 with just 458 women abroad, in contrast to men in 1990, with 1,637. The numbers of migrant women and men were larger in India (where each gender accumulated 30% of the migrant stock in 1960–2000) and Australia (30% for women and 18% for men). Beyond these two primary destinations, Maldivian women during the 1960–2000 period also migrated to New Zealand (6%), Germany (5%) and the Kyrgyzstan (4%). On the other hand, Maldivian men moved beyond India and Australia, concentrating in South Africa (6%), Switzerland (5%) and New Zealand (5%). Given the small number of Maldivian migrants in each country, Maldivian authorities and countries of destination have paid little attention to harnessing the Maldivian diaspora's resources.

More recent data from the United Nations Population Division (UNPD) shows a rise in the number of Maldivians living abroad after 2000, followed by a period of stabilization between 2010 and 2015 (Figure 12). The increase was due to the accelerated emigration of Maldivian women since 2005. In 2015, the number of Maldivians living abroad reached 2,844 and constituted 0.8 per cent of the 2014 population.

Until 2000, emigration from Maldives was dominated by males, particularly in 1990, when there were four times as many Maldivian men abroad than women. However, the number of women exceeded men from the early 2000s and by 2015 surpassed those of Maldivian men by approximately 10 per cent.

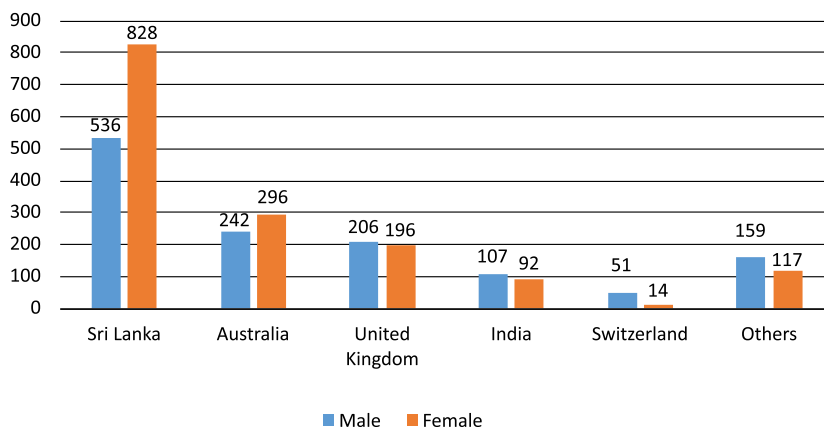
Figure 12: Number of Maldivian nationals abroad by gender, 1990–2015



Source: UNPD, International Migrant Stock: By Destination and Origin. Available from www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml

Since 2000, Sri Lanka has surpassed India and Australia as a major destination for Maldivian emigration (UNPD, 2015). By 2015, some 48 per cent of Maldivians abroad were registered in Sri Lanka (Figure 13).

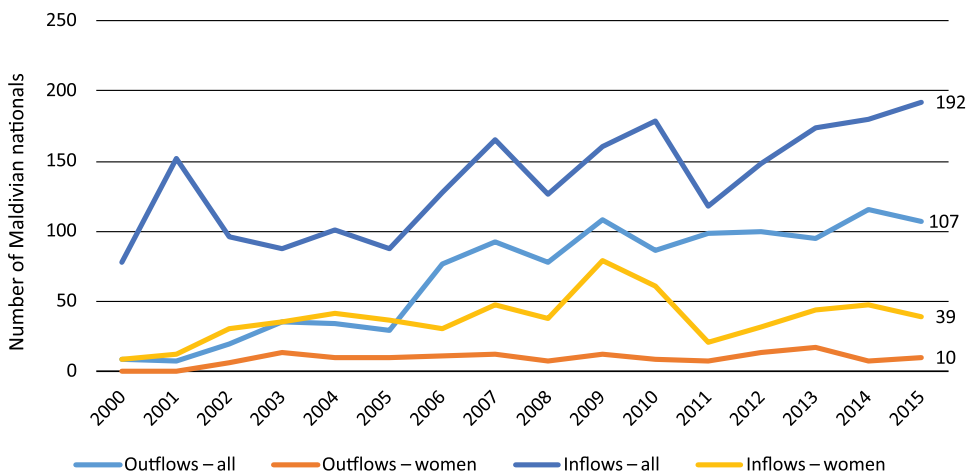
Figure 13: Number of Maldivian nationals abroad by country of destination, 2015



Source: UNPD, International Migrant Stock: By Destination and Origin. Available from www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml

Inflows of Maldivian-born people to countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have been modest, reaching their peak in 2015, with 192 persons (Figure 14). The number of Maldivians in OECD Member States tripled during the 2000–2015 period, from 218 to 791, with a relatively even gender split. Among OECD countries, the United Kingdom received the largest inflow of Maldivian-born migrants in 2000 and 2001 (77); no data is available for 2002. Admissions to other countries, including Australia (23), Japan (71) and New Zealand (24), are based on more complete data.

Figure 14: Inflows and outflows to and from OECD countries (total population versus women only), 2000–2015



Source: Author, based on Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), International Migration Database. Available from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MIG> (accessed 22 June 2018).

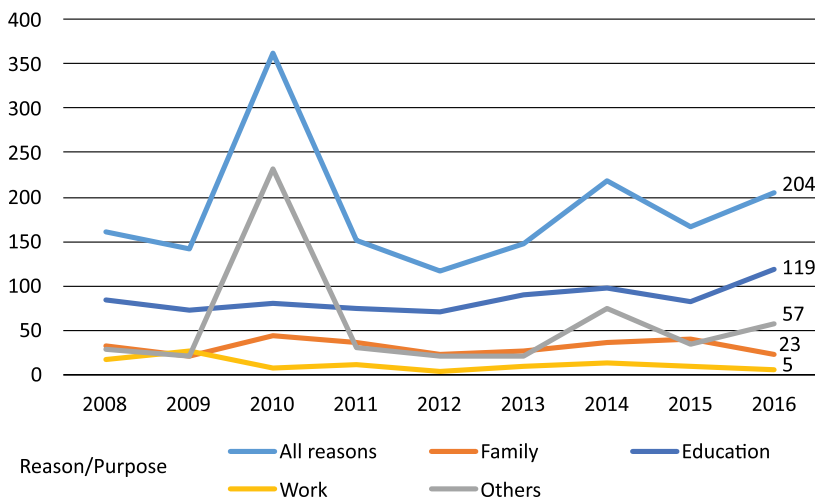
While the OECD does not provide any data on Maldivian migrant labour, some insights can be gained from Eurostat data on migrant workers in EU28⁵ countries (Figure 15).

Emigration to the European Union

The number of first residence permits issued to Maldivians in EU28 from 2008 to 2015 peaked at only 362 in 2010, declining to 204 in 2016. Since the peak was caused by a non-specific “Other” category, it is only clear that it was not due to admissions for reasons pertaining to family, work (“remunerated activities”) or education. Nearly half (46%) of permits in this period were issued for reasons of education, followed by family (17%) and work (6%). The vast majority (83%) of permits were issued by the United Kingdom, followed by Italy (3%), Germany (2%) and Sweden (2%).

⁵ EU28 refers to the European Union with 28 Member States, including the United Kingdom prior to Brexit.

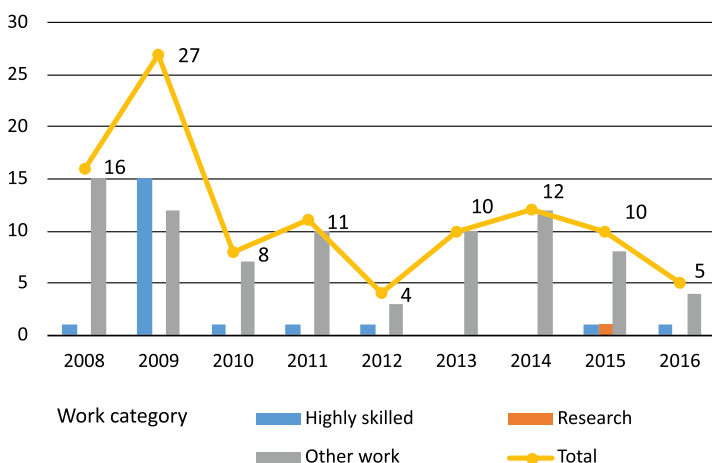
Figure 15: Number of first permits issued to Maldivians in EU28 by reason/purpose, 2008–2016



Source: Author, based on Eurostat, First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities by Reason, Length of Validity and Citizenship. Available from http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_resocc&lang=en (accessed May 2017).

Moreover, 79 per cent of all first work permits issued to Maldivians between 2008 and 2016 were granted for work other than the highly skilled (20%) and research (one permit only) work categories. However, Eurostat data does not further specify which types of work constitute the “Other” work category. Most (27 permits) were issued in the aftermath of the 2008 elections in Maldives. The number of first permits has since dropped to a modest five permits in 2016 (Figure 16).

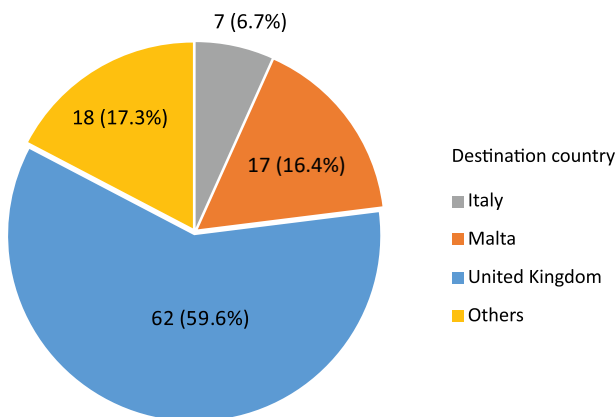
Figure 16: Number of first work permits issued to Maldivians in EU28 by type of work, 2008–2016



Source: Author, based on Eurostat, First Permits by Reason, Length of Validity and Citizenship. Eurostat. Available from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/product?code=migr_resfirst (accessed May 2017).

Some 60 per cent of all first work permits issued to Maldivians in EU28 were issued by the United Kingdom; 16 per cent by Malta; and 7 per cent by Italy (Figure 17). The number of admissions to the United Kingdom was influenced by language and cultural ties; Italy, by the openness of the Italian labour market; and Malta, by a combination of both. The absolute numbers of Maldivians admitted in EU28 were small and have declined over time.

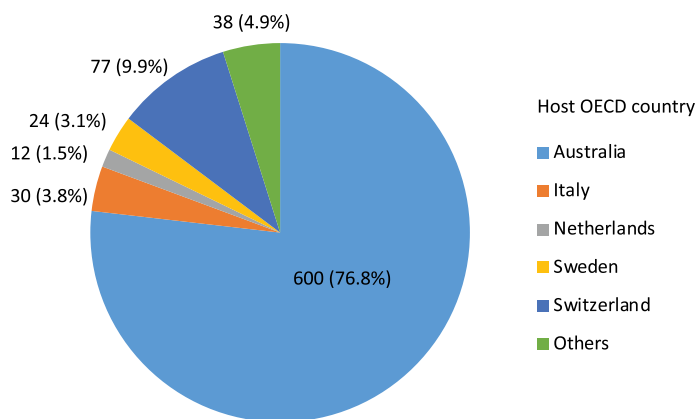
Figure 17: Number of first work permits issued to Maldivians in EU28 countries, 2008–2016



Source: Author, based on Eurostat, First Permits Issued for Remunerated Activities by Reason, Length of Validity and Citizenship. Available from http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_resocc&lang=en (accessed May 2017).

In 2015, the vast majority (78%) of Maldivian-born people in OECD countries resided in Australia (Figure 18), with a greater number of women (86% of all Maldivians in Australia) than men. While the number of Maldivian-born people in Australia dwarfed those in other OECD countries, the Maldivian population (600) constituted only 0.009 per cent of the total foreign-born stock in Australia in 2015.

Figure 18: Number of Maldivian nationals born in OECD countries, 2015

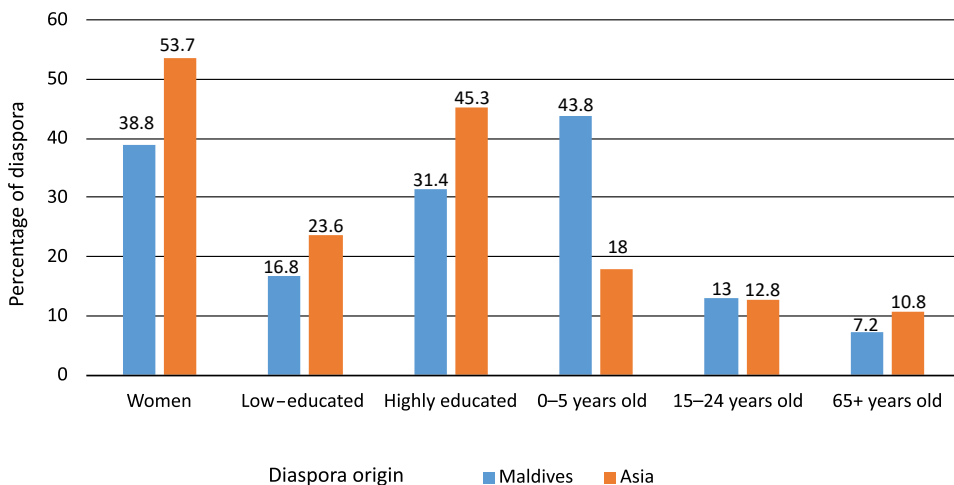


Source: Asian Development Bank (ADB), *Safeguarding the Rights of Asian Migrant Workers from Home to the Workplace*. Available from www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/230176/adb-safeguarding-rights-asian-migrant-workers.pdf

Hence, due to Australia's and other destination countries' lack of interest in contributing to an active diaspora policy for such a small part of their respective populations, Maldives should consider taking a more active role in strengthening cultural, social and economic ties with its nationals abroad to ensure their well-being and engagement with the home country.

With an estimated 1,520 nationals among almost 22 million Asian migrants in OECD countries, Maldivians constituted the smallest Asian diaspora in the OECD (0.006%) in 2010–2011 (Figure 19). By comparison, Chinese migrants comprised almost 17 per cent. Maldivians also had the lowest proportion of women in OECD countries. Maldives ranked below the Asian average for proportions of low-skilled and highly skilled emigrants, whereas it had a higher than average proportion of 0- to 5-year-olds.

Figure 19: General characteristics of Maldivian and Asian migrants in OECD countries, 2010–2011



Source: ADB, *Safeguarding the Rights of Asian Migrant Workers from Home to the Workplace*. Available from www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/230176/adbi-safeguarding-rights-asian-migrant-workers.pdf

B.1.2. Maldivian students abroad

Maldivian students in OECD countries

In 2014, compared to other Asian countries, the number of Maldivian students in OECD countries was insignificant. Apart from the size of its population, the small number of Maldivian students in countries of the OECD could be attributed to lower educational attainments in Maldives compared to the rest of Asia, including Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka (Table 2).

Table 2: Maldivian international students in OECD countries, 2014

Origin	Number of enrolled international tertiary students	Number enrolled at MA and PhD levels	Number enrolled at MA and PhD levels as a share of the tertiary total (%)	Number of graduates at MA and PhD levels	MA and PhD graduates as a share of the tertiary total (%)
Maldives	1,780	210	12	80	4
Asia (including Maldives)	1,369,270	590,360	43	114,250	8
Rest of the world	1,688,530	766,930	45	163,980	10
Total	3,057,800	1,357,290	44	278,230	9

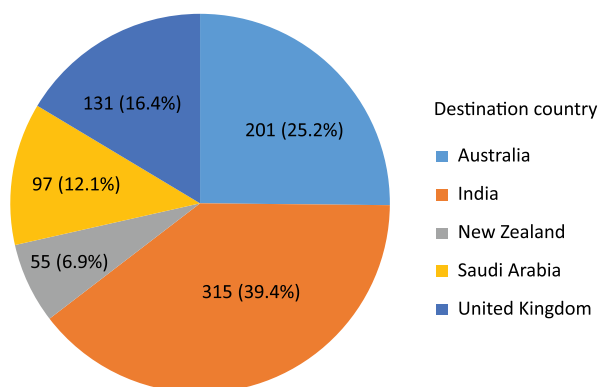
Source: ADB, *Safeguarding the Rights of Asian Migrant Workers from Home to the Workplace*. Available from www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/230176/adbi-safeguarding-rights-asian-migrant-workers.pdf

Maldivian students outside of the OECD countries

Little is known about Maldivian students outside of the OECD countries. According to 2013 UN data, nearly 40 per cent studied in India (Figure 20).

The Maldivian Minister of Health has expressed a desire to expand medical training for Maldivian students in the Russian Federation and Ukraine, as well as bring in foreign national medical specialists to train Maldivians in medicine. As of 2013, there were 39 Maldivian medical students in Ukraine and two in the Russian Federation.

Figure 20: Number of Maldivian tertiary students abroad, 2013

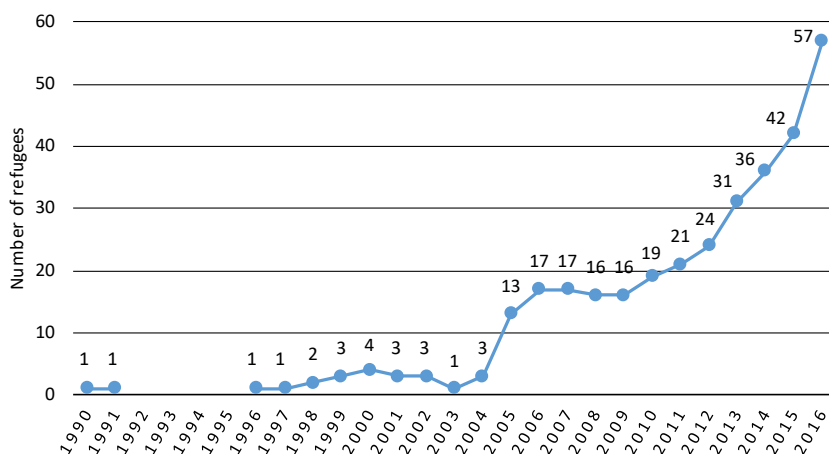


Source: Author, based on United Nations, Migration Profiles: Maldives. Available from <https://esa.un.org/migmgprofiles/indicators/files/Maldives.pdf>

B.1.3. Maldivian refugees and asylum seekers abroad

The number of Maldivian refugees and asylum seekers abroad is modest. In 2016, 57 Maldivian refugees and 39 asylum seekers were registered, principally in the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States (Figure 21).

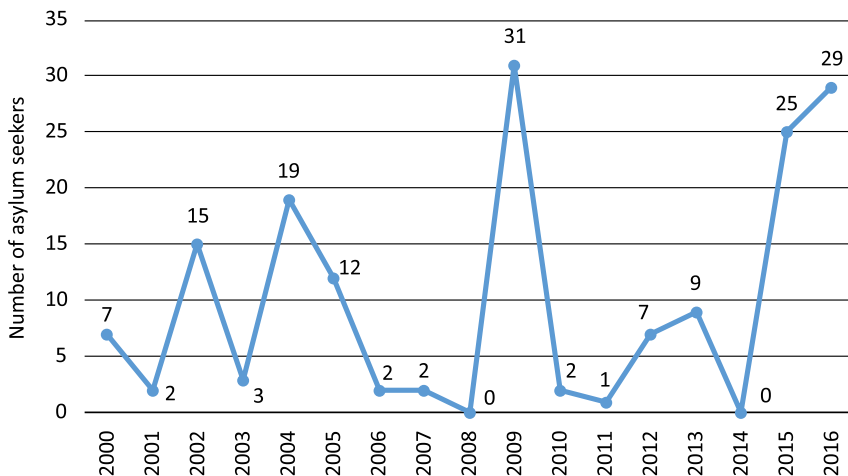
Figure 21: Maldivian refugee population, 1990–2016



Source: World Bank Database: Refugee Population by Country or Territory of Asylum. Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POP.REFG> (accessed June 2017).

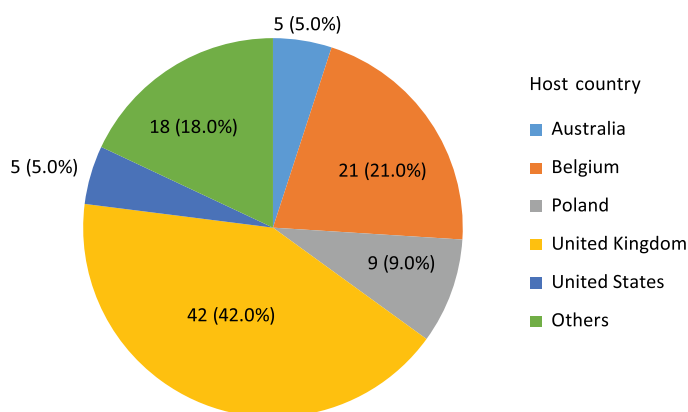
The OECD International Migration Database contains statistics on inflows of Maldivian asylum seekers between 2000 and 2015. According to the database, Maldivians sought asylum mostly in the United Kingdom (42%), along with 12 other States, including Belgium (21%), Poland (9%), Australia and the United States (5%). Asylum seekers in the OECD countries peaked in 2009, most probably as an aftermath of the 2008 elections. The number rose again to 25 asylum seekers (all admitted to the United Kingdom) in 2015 (Figures 22 and 23).

Figure 22: Inflows of Maldivian asylum seekers to OECD countries, 2000–2016



Source: Author, based on OECD, International Migration Database. Available from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MIG> (accessed 22 June 2018).

Figure 23: Average annual inflows of Maldivian asylum seekers to OECD countries, 2000–2015

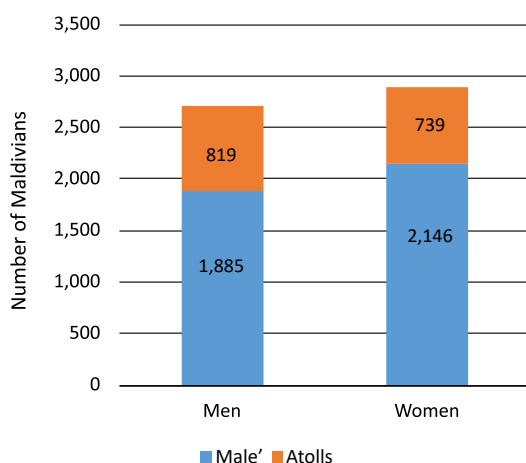


Source: Author, based on OECD, International Migration Database. Available from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MIG> (accessed 22 June 2018).

B.1.4. Non-resident Maldivians abroad

Complementary data on Maldivian emigration was provided by the 2014 Census. It identified 5,589 “non-resident” Maldivians, defined as citizens who have been living or intend to live abroad for at least one year. Former or aspiring emigrants constituted 1.6 per cent of the total Maldivian population. Some 72 per cent of them resided in Male’, while the remaining (27%) lived in the atolls. This 1.6 per cent was composed of slightly more women (52%, or 2,885) than men (48%, or 2,704), in Male’ and the atolls (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Non-resident Maldivians by gender and place of residence, per 2014 Census

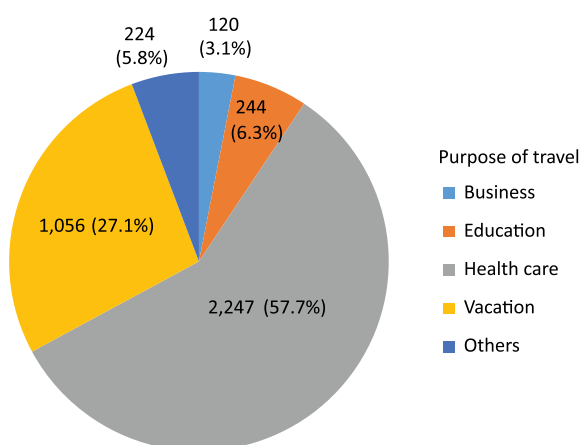


Source: Author, based on NBS, Census 2014: Statistical Release I: Population and Households, Table PP2. Available from <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/population-and-households>

B.1.5. Maldivian health and leisure travellers

As Maldives became more financially and socially stable, Maldivians transformed from migrants to travellers. According to a 2015 Maldives Monetary Authority survey, more than half (58%) of interviewees have travelled abroad for medical purposes; more than a quarter (27%) for leisure; 6 per cent for education and training; and 3 per cent for business (Figure 25). The key destinations were Sri Lanka (40%), mainly for vacation; India (39%), mostly for medical purposes; and Malaysia (6%), Thailand and Singapore (2%). Other destinations accounted for a combined 7 per cent.

Figure 25: Reasons for Maldivian citizens' travel abroad, 2015



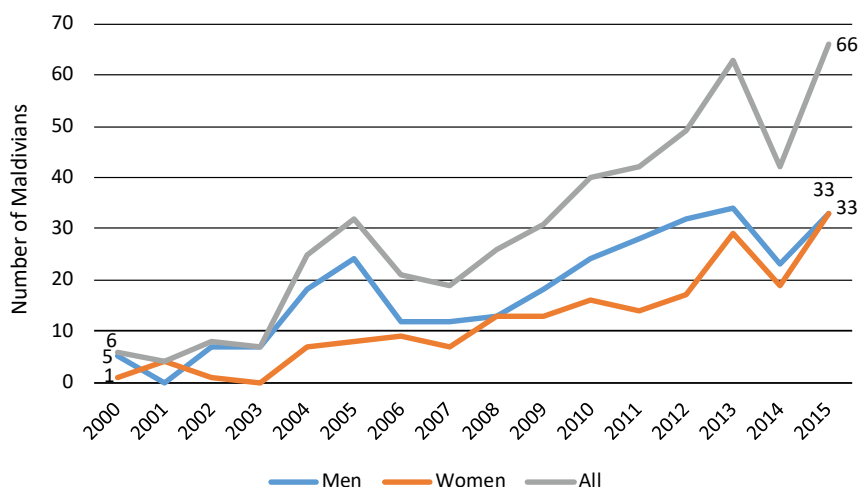
Source: Maldives Monetary Authority, Annual Report 2015.

In recent years, Maldivian migration to India, notably Kerala's capital, Thiruvananthapuram, has been motivated by specialized medical or higher education reasons. Maldivians settled in India founded the Friendship Association of India–Maldives (FAIM), among other organizations, to serve as guides to temporary Maldivian visitors. According to this association, around 100 Maldivians arrived in the city's airport daily. In 2015, several Maldivian funeral service centres opened in Kerala's capital, suggesting that some Maldivians may be undergoing treatment of more serious health conditions or spending their final years in India (*The Hindu*, 2015).

B.1.6. Naturalization of Maldivians abroad

In general, an increasing number of Maldivians acquired OECD nationalities from 2000 to 2015. In 2015, some 66 Maldivians, half of whom were women, acquired OECD nationalities, with almost three quarters taking up Australian nationality (Figures 26 and 27).

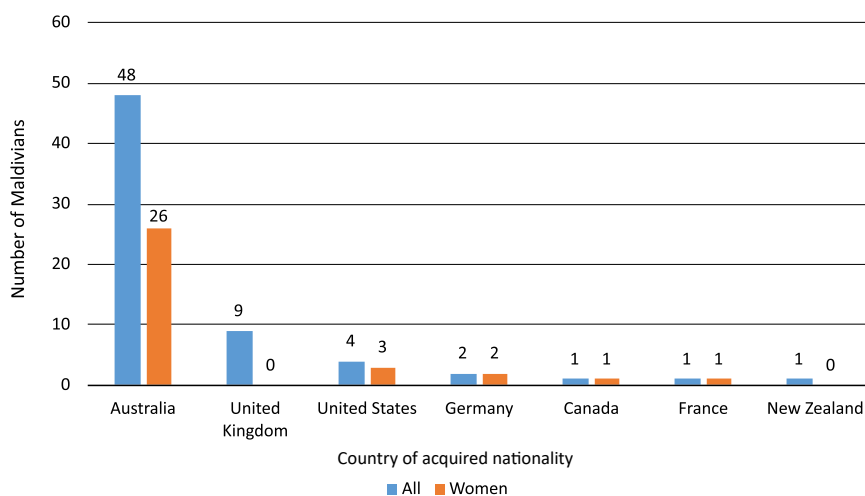
Figure 26: Acquisition of OECD nationalities by Maldivians, 2000–2015



Source: Author, based on OECD, International Migration Database. Available from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MIG> (accessed 22 June 2018).

Note: Values labelled on the graph are for 2000 and 2015.

Figure 27: OECD nationalities acquired by Maldivians, 2015



Source: Author, based on OECD, International Migration Database. Available from <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MIG> (accessed 22 June 2018).

B.2. Internal migration

B.2.1. National statistics on internal movements

At the time of the 2014 Census, Maldives had a resident population of 402,071, including foreign nationals. More than a third (38%) of this number lived in Male' and more than half (53%) was spread across 188 islands, excluding resorts. Resorts, as well as industrial and non-administrative islands, hosted a further 7 and 2 per cent of the population, respectively (NBS, 2015a:21).⁶

While Male' has witnessed the development of major health and educational facilities, as well as job growth (especially in construction, the public sector and tourism), other islands have lagged behind (NBS, 2015a: 21). Inequalities between the capital and the rest of the country were responsible for internal migration from the atolls to Male', especially in the second half of the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s.⁷ By 2006, there were 65,201 people per square kilometre living in Male', making it one of the most densely populated capital cities in the world (NBS, 2015a:21).

The 2014 Census defined "migrant" as a person who at any time in their lives had changed his/her island of usual residence (NBS, 2015a:9). At the time of the census, 44 per cent of the 338,434 Maldivians had ever changed their residence (NBS, 2015a:18) – such change mostly involved moving to Male' due to its higher state of development compared to the atolls.

If coupled with its non-administrative islands, Male' had the largest proportion of internal migrants (56%), followed by Felidhu (47%) and South Nalindhe (45%) (NBS, 2015a:19). Around 54 per cent of Maldivian internal migrants were men. An additional finding was that women were less likely to migrate to non-administrative (i.e. resort, industrial or other non-permanently inhabited) islands.

⁶ Atolls comprise administrative (permanently inhabited) and non-administrative (temporarily inhabited) islands. Resorts and islands used for industrial and other purposes are non-administrative islands (NBS, 2015a:9). The vast majority of resorts host a resident population due to limited commuting options. Maldivians who work there rarely go home outside their annual leave due to the lack of readily available transportation options (NBS, 2015a:19).

⁷ According to data from national censuses, internal migration rose in Maldives until 2006. In 2000, 18 per cent of people surveyed indicated that their place of birth was on an island different then their current residence. In 2006, this proportion doubled to 35 per cent.

Most resident Maldivians who had emigrated first moved to Male' (20%), before going abroad (10%) (NBS, 2015a:21). Migration abroad was most often driven by education and work opportunities, while migration to Male' was predominantly for education (40%), followed by return from abroad or other atolls in Maldives (14%), employment (13%) and family reasons (12%). Administrative islands attracted internal return migrants (41%), and non-administrative islands enticed workers (85%), primarily in the resort sector. Whereas men migrated primarily for work as a part of return migration or for education, women were more likely to migrate for marriage, return and education (NBS, 2015a:23).

B.2.2. Internal migration and national development

While the Maldivian economy depends on tourism and fishing, it lacks other resources for robust public services, notably in the health-care, education and food sectors. After an initial attempt to improve island infrastructure across the atolls, the focus shifted to the development of key islands and encouraging people to move to five regional centres where infrastructure could be provided more affordably and at a faster pace.

To encourage voluntary internal migration, the Government designed the Population Consolidation Programme to develop affordable housing, social services and communication infrastructure in five regional centres (namely, Dhuvaafaru, Gan, Kudahvadhoo, Maamigili and Vilufushi). People willing to relocate to these centres were promised a new housing unit and a relocation grant of MVR 50,000 (USD 3,900) (Luetz, 2017:55). Additionally, the Government promoted land reclamation, resettlement policies and income-generating activities in specified "growth centres" (Ministry of Planning and National Development in: Speelman, 2015:76). Between 2000 and 2006, some 3,356 people migrated under the Population Consolidation Programme. However, many Maldivians living in the outer islands preferred to move to Male' instead of regional centres, resulting in overcrowding issues in the capital.

While many people were willing to move to the capital, very few Male'-based residents – apart from women reuniting with their families, were interested in moving to the regional centres. They reported no interest in moving internally (despite the rising population density, living costs and crime), as the capital had the best health and educational facilities in the country (Speelman, 2015:115–116).

As a solution to overcrowding, the Government began to reclaim land from the sea, creating the artificial island of Hulhumale, which became Maldives' busiest construction site and one of the largest employers of foreign construction workers.

B.2.3. Internal migration and environmental threats

While substantial theoretical literature on the nexus between climate change and migration has emerged, there are still too few empirical studies establishing a clear causal relationship between the two (Lilleor and Van den Broeck, 2011, and Mortreux and Barnett, 2009, in: Speelman, 2015:96). Collaboration between environmental and migration researchers is needed to establish a firmer relationship between climate change and environmentally induced migration, and to collect better data (Fussel et al., 2014, in: Speelman, 2015:97). As long as host countries do not harmonize their definitions of “environmental migrants” and classify them as such, accurate and reliable data will be difficult to obtain.

Some researchers claim that migration can be a positive adaptation strategy to climate change and environmental disasters, as it can lead people to a source of income, reduce pressure on natural resources and make island communities less vulnerable to environmental shocks (Black et al., 2011, and Birk and Rasmussen, 2014, in: Stojanov, Duží and Němec, 2017:7).

With 80 per cent of its land situated less than one metre above sea level and more than 40 per cent of the population living within 100 metres of the shoreline, Maldives is vulnerable to sea level rises. Due to the small size of the Maldivian islands, most human settlements are located in inundation and beach erosion risk zones. Hence, before considering migrating to other islands, such communities can adopt simpler adaptation strategies where they live. For most Maldivians living in these areas, the threat is not immediate enough to relocate – even on the islands where they live (Stojanov, Duží and Němec, 2017:5).

A tsunami⁸ of the magnitude that occurred in 2004 is still considered a very rare event. Its impact was magnified by the fact that most of islands hit had very rudimentary or no coastal protection. Following the tsunami, the Government provided assistance to around 12,000 internally displaced persons

⁸ There were 82 people killed and 24 reported missing and presumed dead after Maldives was hit by a tsunami caused by the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake on 26 December 2004. Two thirds of the capital city, Male', was flooded during the first hours of the day. Outlying low-level atolls were significantly affected, and some low-lying islands, including some of the major resorts, were submerged by the tsunami.

(IDPs), developed national development and disaster risk reduction plans and drafted climate change adaptation strategies (UNHCR, 2014:2). According to the stakeholders interviewed, measures taken to assist tsunami-affected IDPs, while providing good-quality housing, nevertheless generated animosity among host populations who had not been offered additional resources to upgrade housing.

In fieldwork carried out in Maldives in 2013, Stojanov, Duží and Němec, (2017:iv) found that Maldivians did not perceive sea level rises as an environmental challenge. While more than half of respondents acknowledged that they may consider internal migration in the future, other factors (e.g. cultural, religious, economic and social) would influence such a decision. Older people were reluctant to move, especially without adequate compensation. Younger Maldivians were more open to migration, but only to Male' and in view of the expected higher standards of living in the capital (Stojanov, Duží and Němec, 2017:8). People have moved to Greater Male' not for climate change-related motivations, but for socioeconomic ones – notably, job opportunities, quality housing, and better health and education services (Speelman, 2015:95).

According to Stojanov, Duží and Němec's survey, only 7 per cent of those who had experienced an extreme natural event in the past chose to migrate. Others adapted by rebuilding what they had lost, taking some other action(s) or taking no action at all (Stojanov, Duží and Němec, 2017:14).

Only 2 per cent of those surveyed by Stojanov, Duží and Němec moved to Male' Atoll for reasons associated with environmental migration, while 13 per cent planned to move abroad for environmental reasons. Economic and living conditions (especially health care and education) were cited as the most important determinants of any future mobility.

In conclusion, internal migration is more likely to happen as a last rather than first recourse, or it may have a temporary rather than permanent character, with reasons including medical treatment and education. For Maldivians, especially those living on more remote islands, the decision to migrate internally may be financially and socially costly. Migrants are averse to move if they lack the assurance that migration would significantly improve their living conditions.

According to Muhamed and Fikry (interview, 2016), a still underutilized option to create more sustainable alternatives to migration to Male' would be to support Maldivians to reap the benefits of tourism, by developing and utilizing local small and medium business activities to encourage tourism establishments to embrace local products and services, instead of relying on foreign goods and

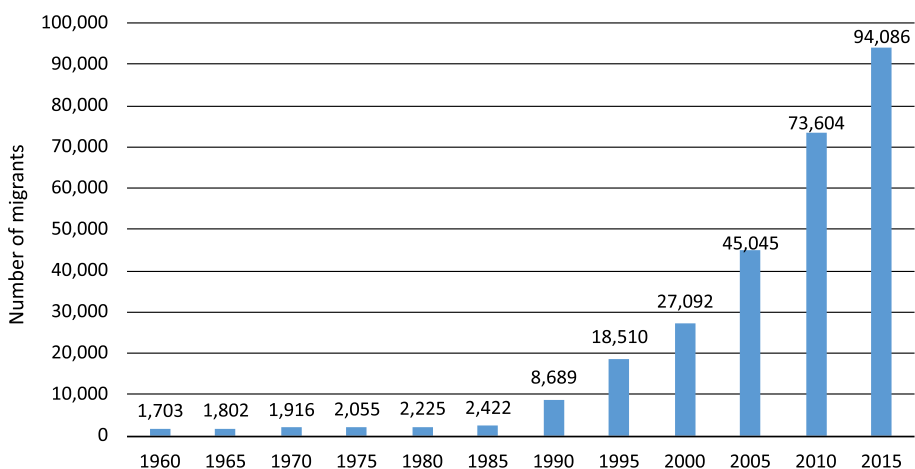
services. Policymakers can also support the development of guesthouses and other family-based tourist accommodations. Unlike resorts, which seek specific skills and require adaptation to a Western way of life, guesthouses create labour demand for the types of workers readily available in local communities, such as lesser skilled ones.

B.3. Immigration

B.3.1. Data from international and national sources

According to World Bank estimates, the flows of inbound migrants skyrocketed from 2,422 in 1985 to 94,086 in 2015 (Figure 28). While international migrants constituted 3.89 per cent of the population in 1990, it had risen to 25.87 per cent by 2015. This resulted in Maldives having the largest proportion of international migrants in South Asia.

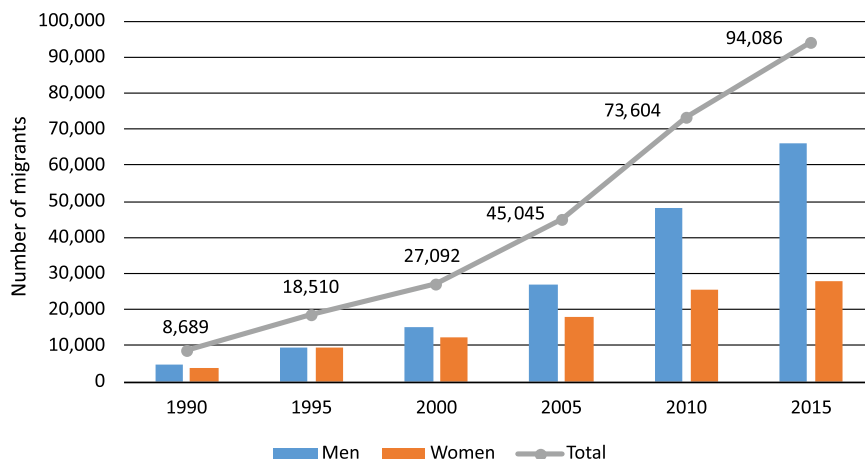
Figure 28: Estimated international migrant stock in Maldives, 1960–2015



Source: World Bank Database: Refugee Population by Country or Territory of Asylum. Available from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POP.REFG> (accessed June 2017).

The stock of migrant men has been increasing faster than that of migrant women, with the gender gap widening from 45:55 in 1990 to 30:70 in 2015 (Figure 29). This unequal evolution could have been caused by a combination of demand and supply factors, such as heightened demand for construction workers and Bangladesh's ban on female migration.

Figure 29: Mid-year international migrant stock in Maldives by gender, 1990–2015

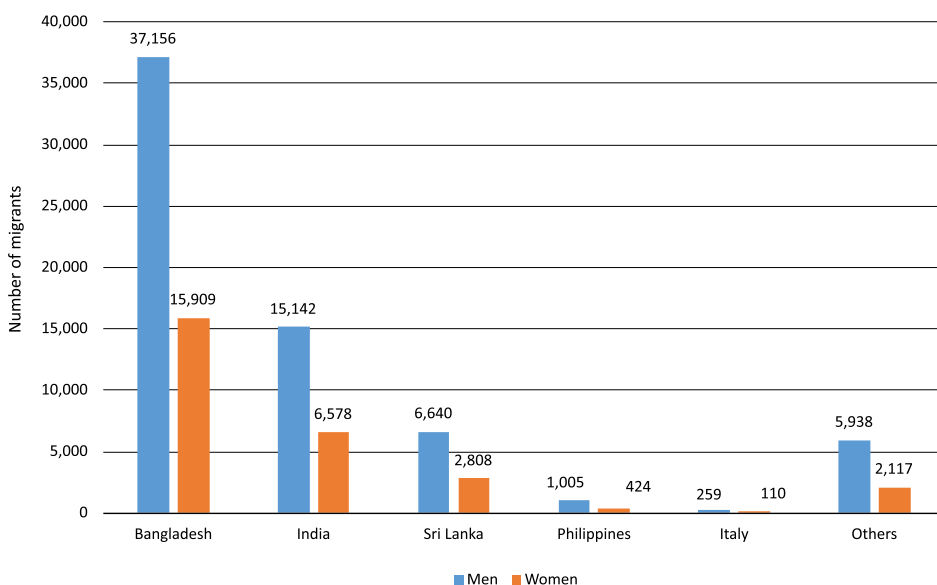


Source: Author, based on UNPD, International Migrant Stock: By Destination and Origin. Available from www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml

In 1960, migrants were composed almost exclusively of Indians and Pakistanis. By the 1980s, admissions from Bangladesh (47%) and other countries (12%) had overshadowed the presence of Pakistanis (31%) and Indians (10%). The proportion of Bangladeshis continued to grow and so did the presence of other nationalities, making migrants in Maldives increasingly more international, coming from countries beyond South Asia. In 2015, Bangladeshis constituted 57 per cent of migrants, followed by Indians (24%), Sri Lankans (11%), Filipinos (2%) and others (7%) (Figure 30).

World Bank and UNPD estimates contrast with the 2014 Census data. The census enumerated only 63,637 migrants in Maldives as of September 2014, while, according to UNPD, there were 94,086 migrants living in Maldives less than a year later. It would be worth noting that the NBS acknowledged that the 2014 Census underestimated the actual number of migrants (NBS, 2015a:6).

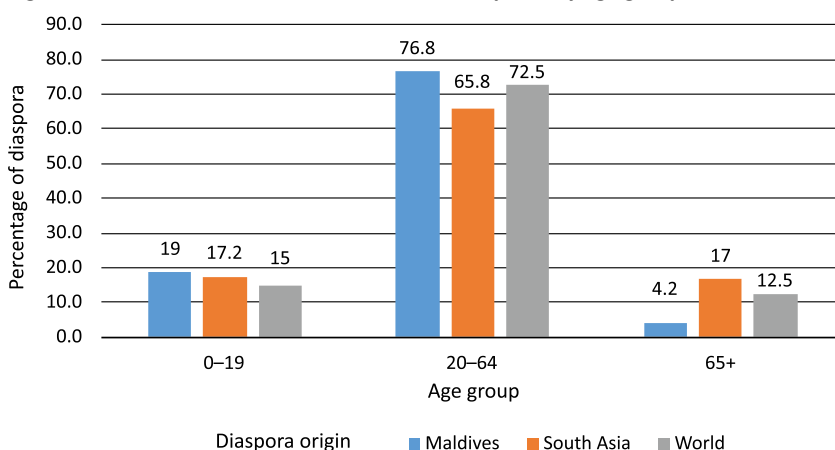
Figure 30: International migrant stock in Maldives by country of origin and gender, 2015



Source: Author, based on UNPD, International Migrant Stock: By destination and origin. Available from www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml

According to UNPD estimates, the median age of migrants in Maldives from 2000 to 2015 was 33 years; the figure was higher in South Asia and globally (38 in 2000 and 39 in 2015). In 2015, Maldives had a higher proportion of migrants in the 0–60 age bracket than South Asia and globally, and a lower proportion of migrants of retirement age (Figure 31).

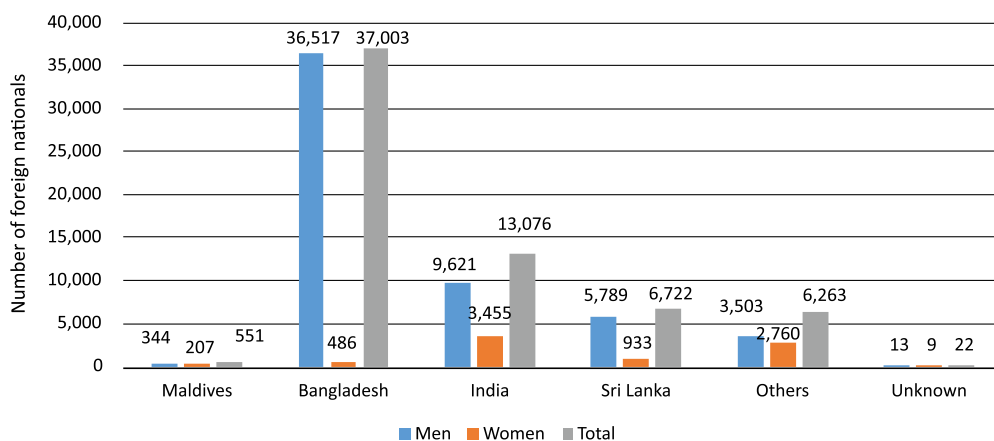
Figure 31: Maldivian, South Asian and world diasporas by age group, 2015



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, International Migration 2015. Available from www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/wallchart/docs/MigrationWallChart2015.pdf

The proportions of Maldivian men and women at the time of the 2014 Census were roughly equal (51% versus 49%, respectively). In contrast, women constituted only 12 per cent of foreign nationals. This figure is significantly lower than the UN-estimated 30 per cent (2015). According to the census, practically all (99%) Bangladeshi migrants were men, followed by Sri Lankans (86%) and Indians (73%). Among migrant women, 45 per cent were from India, 12 per cent from Sri Lanka, 6 per cent from Bangladesh and 37 per cent from other countries (Figure 32).

Figure 32: Foreign nationals residing in Maldives by country of birth and gender, per 2014 Census



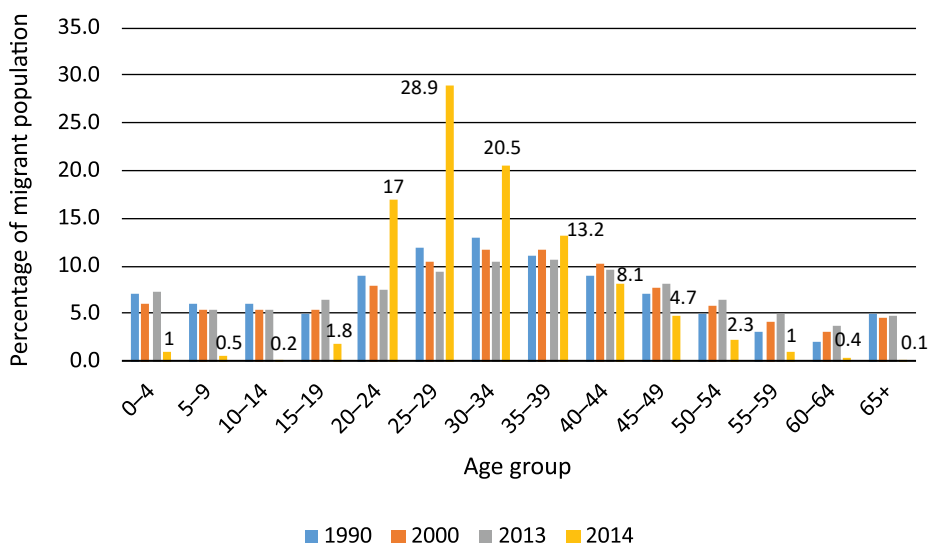
Source: Maldives NBS, Census 2014. Statistical Release II: Migration, Table MG14. Available from <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/migration>

Note: The 2014 Census equates country of birth with country of nationality, as far as the foreign population in Maldives is concerned.

According to UN data for 1990, 2000 and 2013, 77 per cent (1990, 2000) to 79 per cent (2013) of migrants were of working age (15–64 years). These figures are inconsistent with 2014 Census estimates, according to which 98 per cent of migrants were of working age⁹ (Figure 33). According to UN data, between 16 and 19 per cent of migrants were of pre-working age and 4–5 per cent were of retirement age. UN data showed an ageing trend among the migrant population in Maldives, as the proportion of migrants aged 35–64 years old increased, while those aged 5–14 and 20–34 years decreased (Figures 33 and 34).

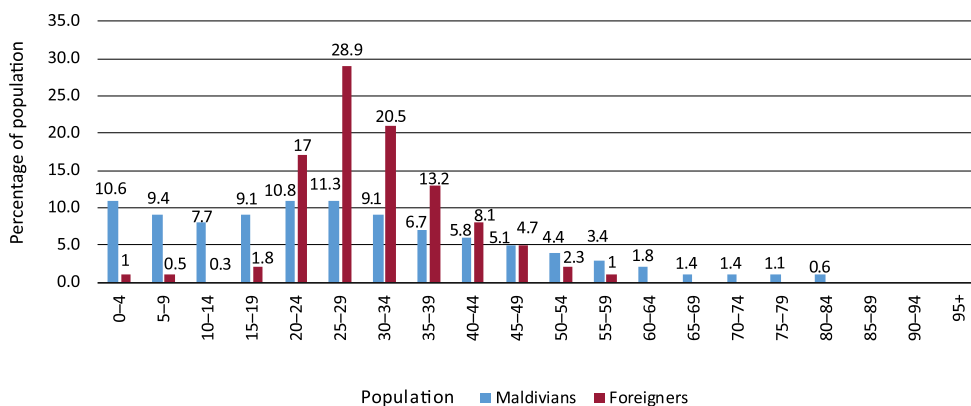
⁹ 2014 Census data could have been affected by how migrants were sampled.

Figure 33: Percentage age distribution of migrant population, per UN and 2014 Census data



Source: Author, based on United Nations, Migration Profiles: Maldives, available from <https://esa.un.org/migmgprofiles/indicators/files/Maldives.pdf>; and NBS, Census 2014. Statistical Release II: Migration, available from <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/migration>

Figure 34: Percentage distribution of Maldivians and foreign nationals by age group



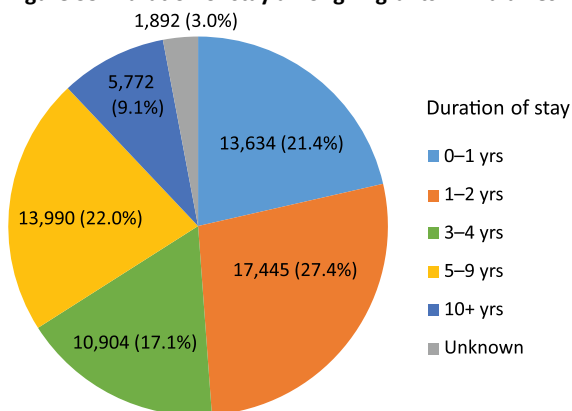
Source: Author, based on NBS, Census 2014: Statistical Release I: Population and Households, Table PP8. Available from <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/population-and-households>

Note: Values for Maldivians in the 85-89 age group onwards are <0.5% and not visible on the graph. Values for foreigners in the 60-64 age group onwards are <0.5% and not visible on the graph.

Duration of stay

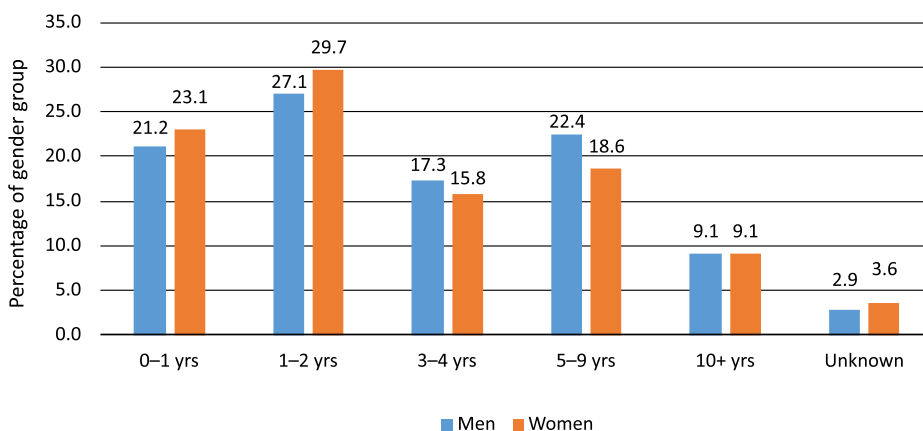
The 2014 Census only included official data on migrants' duration of stay in Maldives, spatial distribution and age. Most foreign nationals (27%) in Maldives had been staying in the country for 1–2 years; 22 per cent for 5–9 years; 21 per cent for 0–1 year; 17 per cent for 3–4 years; and 9 per cent for more than 10 years (Figure 35). The numbers were similar for men and women, with a slightly higher proportion of women who stayed for 0–1 and 1–2 years, and more men who were present for 3–4 and 5–9 years (Figure 36). Across the different nationalities, most migrants stayed for 1–2 years (Figure 37), while a slightly larger (i.e. by 1%) proportion of Indians were present for 5–9 years.

Figure 35: Duration of stay among migrants in Maldives



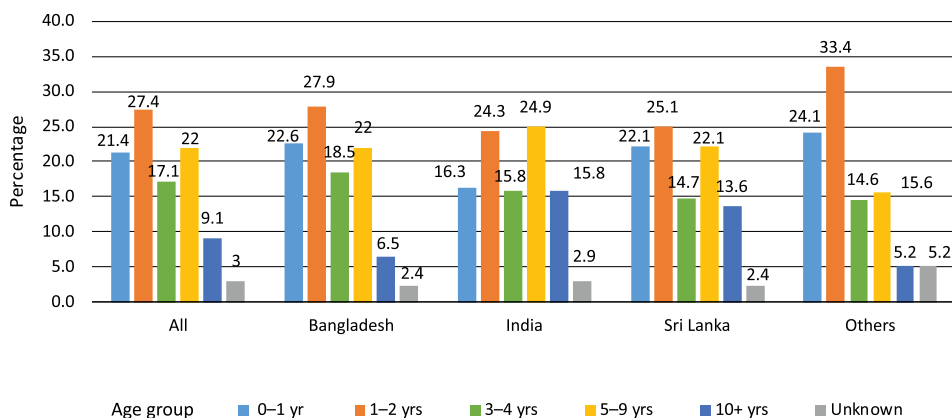
Source: Author, based on NBS, Census 2014: Statistical Release II: Migration, Table MG13. Available from <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/migration>

Figure 36: Duration of stay among migrant men and women in Maldives



Source: Author, based on NBS, Census 2014: Statistical Release II: Migration, Table MG13. Available from <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/migration>

Figure 37: Duration of stay among migrants by country of origin



Source: Author, based on NBS, Census 2014: Statistical Release II: Migration, Table MG13. Available from <http://statistics.maldives.gov.mv/migration>

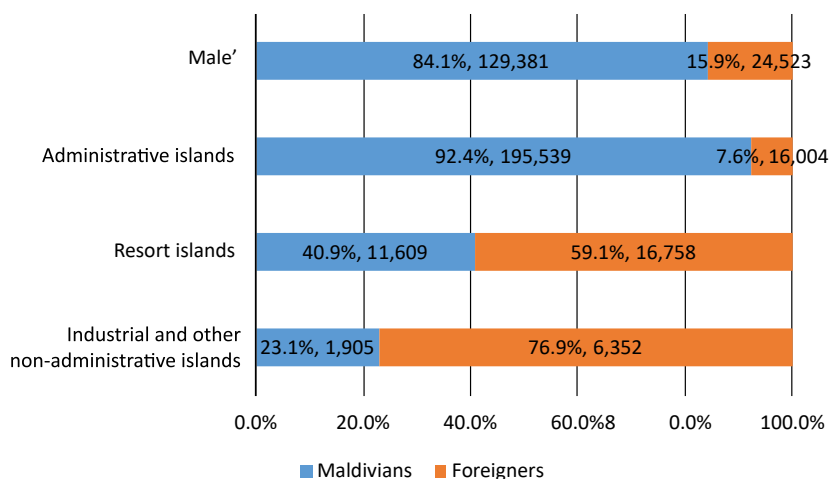
Spatial distribution

At the time of the 2014 Census, Maldives was administratively divided into the capital (Male'), 20 atolls and 424 islands (187 administrative islands, 109 resort islands and 128 industrial islands).¹⁰ Concentrations of foreign nationals were highest where Maldivians did not want or were not available to work. Hence, industrial islands had the highest proportion of foreign nationals (77%), followed by resorts (59%), the capital, Male' (16%), and administrative islands (8%).¹¹ The proportion of foreign nationals working in resorts was likely larger than reported, as resorts are not usually inclined to reveal the exact number of foreign nationals if they exceed the authorized limit (Figure 38).

¹⁰ The number of industrial and resort islands may change, as the Government releases land for new resorts or industrial production zones. For instance, by 2017 the number of resorts had increased from 109 to 128.

¹¹ Due to a lack of infrastructure and the unappealing nature of available jobs, non-administrative islands are not as attractive to local workers as resorts.

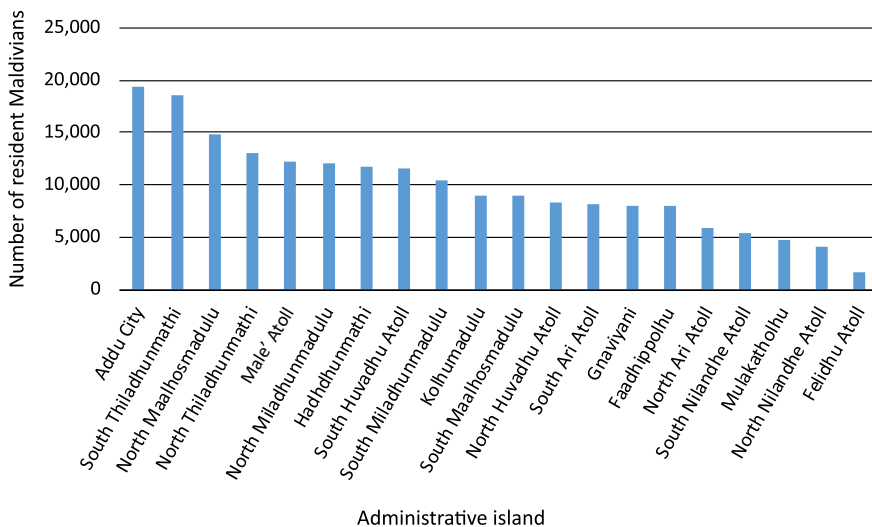
Figure 38: Spatial distribution of Maldivians and migrants outside Male', 2014



Source: Author, based on NBS, Census 2014: Statistical Release I: Population and Households, Table PP3. Available from <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/population-and-households>

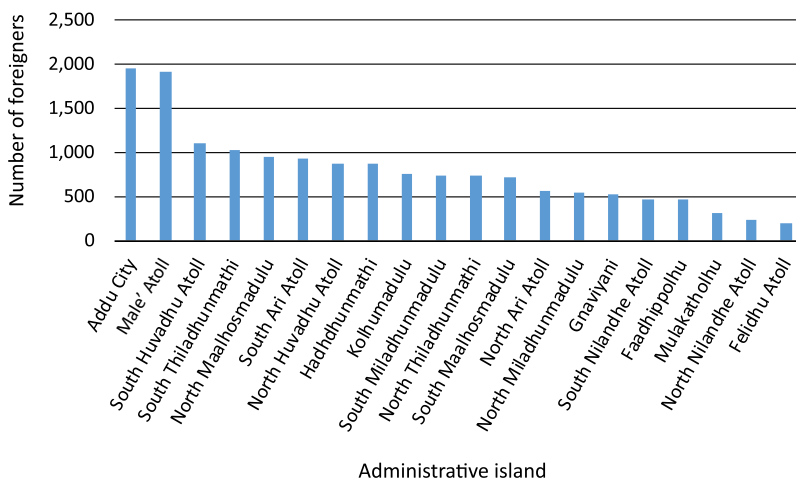
In 2014, apart from Male', where 129,381 Maldivians and 24,523 foreign nationals resided, Maldivians and foreign nationals were mostly concentrated in Addu City, with the least number in Felidhu Atoll (Figures 39 and 40).

Figure 39: Administrative islands with the largest numbers of Maldivians, 2014



Source: Author, based on NBS, Census 2014: Statistical Release I: Population and Households, Table PP3. Available from <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/population-and-households>

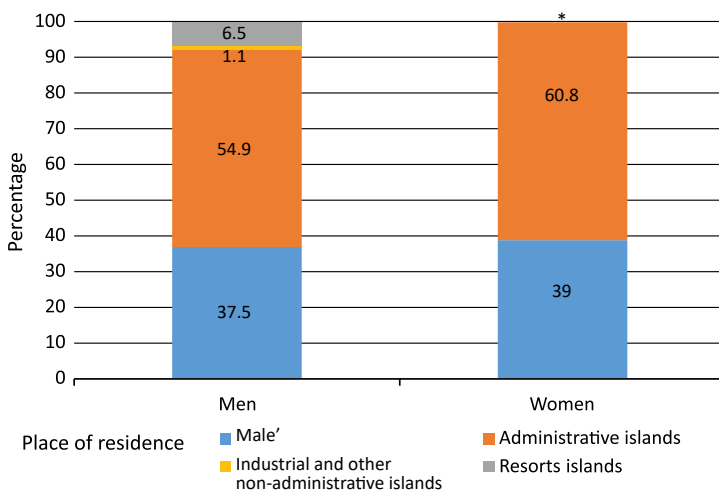
Figure 40: Administrative islands with the largest numbers of foreign residents, 2014



Source: Author, based on NBS, Census 2014: Statistical Release I: Population and Households, Table PP3. Available from <http://statistics.maldives.gov.mv/population-and-households>

More than half (54.9%) of Maldivian men resided on administrative islands, 37 per cent in Male', 6.5 per cent on resort islands and only 1 per cent on industrial and other non-administrative islands. Maldivian women tended to be more concentrated on administrative islands (60.8%), as well as in Male' (39%), in stark contrast to resort (nearly 0%) and industrial and other non-administrative islands (nearly 0%) (Figure 41).

Figure 41: Percentage distribution of Maldivian men and women by place of residence, 2014

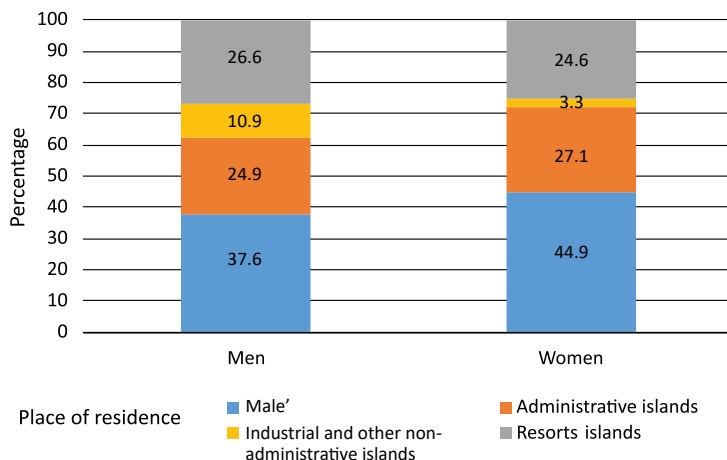


Source: Author, based on NBS, Census 2014: Statistical Release I: Population and Households, Table PP3. Available from <http://statistics.maldives.gov.mv/population-and-households>

Note: *Women living on resorts islands and industrial and other non-administrative islands account for less than 1 per cent.

As foreign women are not subject to the cultural stigma associated with working on resort and non-administrative islands, there were nearly as many foreign women working in resorts as men; by contrast, 3.3 per cent of foreign women worked on industrial and other non-administrative islands (versus few Maldivian women in both places) (Figure 42).

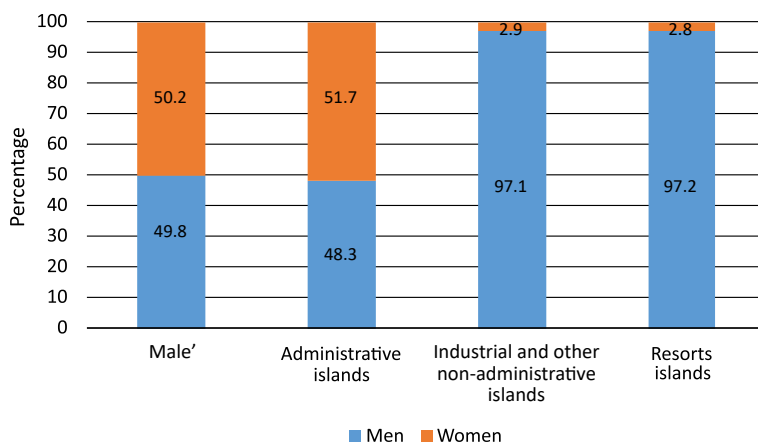
Figure 42: Percentage distribution of foreign men and women by place of residence, 2014



Source: Author, based on NBS, Census 2014: Statistical Release I: Population and Households, Table PP3. Available from <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/population-and-households>

The proportions of Maldivian men and women living in the capital and on administrative islands were evenly spread. Due to the stigma associated with women working in resorts and industrial islands, nearly all Maldivian workers on resort and non-administrative islands (including industrial islands) were men (Figure 43).

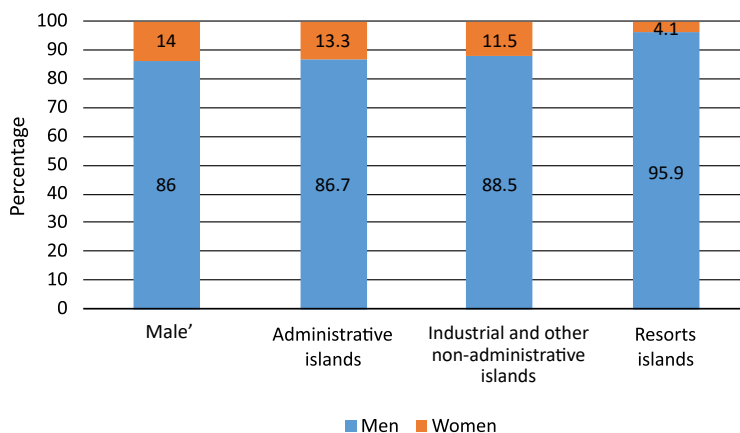
Figure 43: Gender distribution of the Maldivian population by place of residence, 2014



Source: Author, based on NBS, Census 2014: Statistical Release I: Population and Households, Table PP3. Available from <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/population-and-households>

Due to the small number of migrant women, the proportion of foreign women working was lower than that of foreign men in the four areas (Figure 44). In Male', where the proportion of migrant women was the highest, it only accounted for 14 per cent. On administrative, resort and industrial and other non-administrative islands, women constituted 13, 12 and 4 per cent of migrants, respectively.

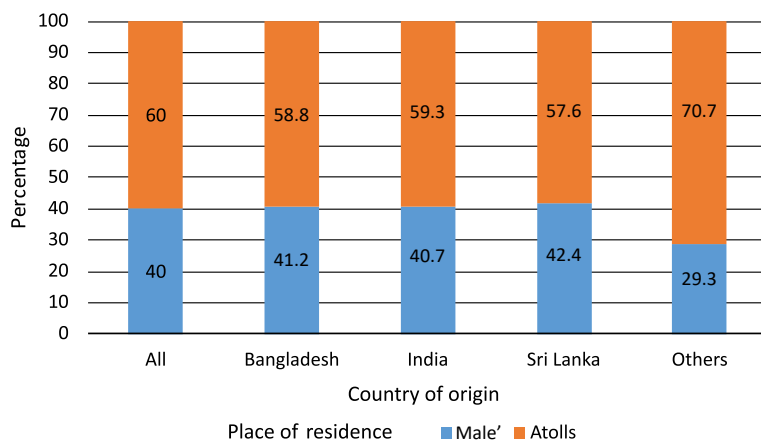
Figure 44: Gender distribution of the foreign resident population by place of residence, 2014



Source: Author, based on NBS, Census 2014: Statistical Release I: Population and Households, Table PP3. Available from <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/population-and-households>

Forty per cent of all foreign residents were concentrated in Male'. The proportions for Bangladeshis, Indians and Sri Lankans were similar, while others had greater concentrations in the atolls (Figure 45).

Figure 45: Selected foreign resident populations by place of residence, 2014



Source: Author, based on NBS, Census 2014: Statistical Release II: Migration, Table MG14. Available from <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/migration>

B.3.2. Visas and airport arrivals and departures

Maldives issues eight types of visas: tourist, diplomatic, student, business, dependent, work, resident and “special.” Since the majority of people migrate to Maldives for work, work visas are the most relevant type to the analysis of migration. The number of migrants motivated by other reasons is negligible, except for tourism. Although tourists are not migrants, the scale of tourist inflows is important, as some migrant workers have attempted to enter the country as tourists to circumvent the scrutiny set in place for migrant workers.

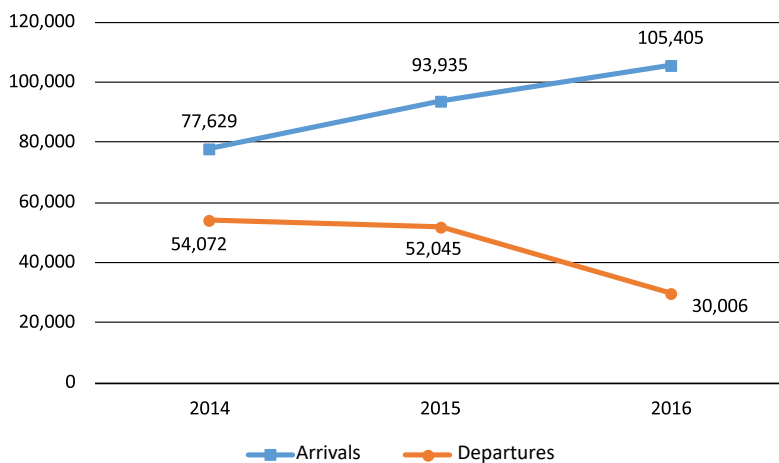
Some visa categories allow status adjustments without requiring the migrant to leave the country. In some cases, the adjustment is decided through a standard procedure; in other cases, through the consideration of special circumstances. In any case, status adjustment costs MVR 6,000 (USD 390) per amendment.

Table 3: Work visa key characteristics

Purpose	Work
Criteria	Invitation by an employer
Validity	One year (renewable)
Permissible status adjustments	To: Resident (spouse) visa From: Business, special and dependent visas
Fees	MVR 250 (USD 16) for every three months + MVR 50 (USD 3) for the permit card (one-time payment)

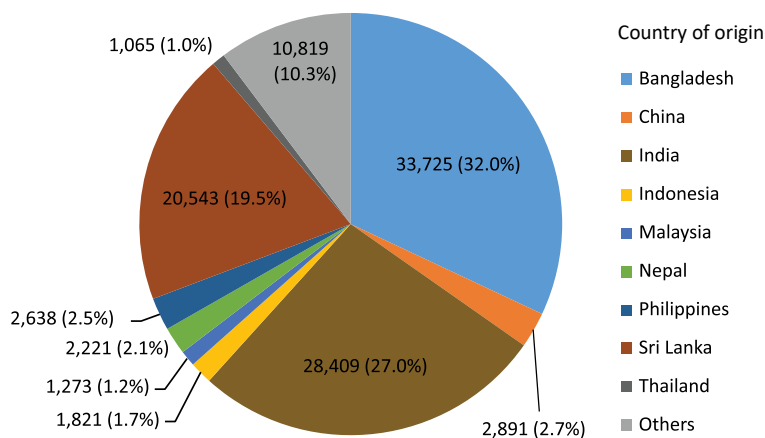
Source: Interview with Maldives Immigration, Permits and Foreign Employment Section, 17 October 2017.

Airport arrival registers did not reflect a decline in work visa holders in 2016 (Figure 46). In 2016, arrivals from Bangladesh constituted nearly one third of all arrivals, followed by those from India (27%) and Sri Lanka (19%) (Figure 47).

Figure 46: Work visa holder arrivals and departures by air, 2014–2016

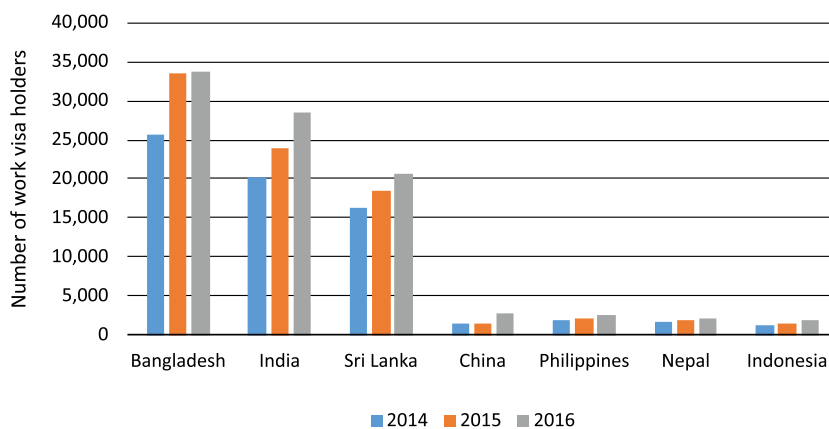
Source: Maldives Immigration arrival and departure records.

Figure 47: Arrivals of work visa holders by country of origin, 2016



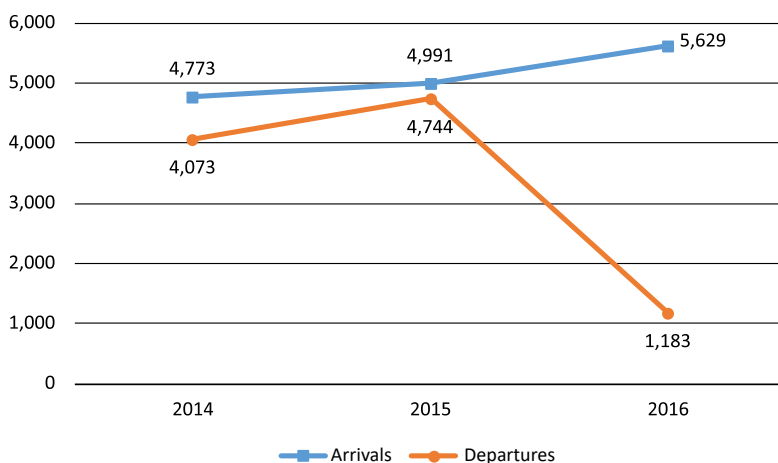
Source: Maldives Immigration arrival and departure records.

Figure 48: Arrivals of work visa holders by country of origin, 2014–2016



Source: Maldives Immigration arrival and departure records.

Figure 49: Business visa holders' arrivals and departures by air, 2014–2016



Source: Maldives Immigration arrival and departure records.

After an uptrend in 2014, arrivals of Bangladeshi visa holders have stabilized since 2015. Arrivals from China grew over time, from 2 per cent of all admitted work visa holders in 2014 to 3 per cent in 2016. Since most Chinese workers have been brought in by Chinese companies to complete specific projects, many leave Maldives as soon as such projects are completed. Hence, a long-term decline in Chinese workers' admissions is expected after this short-term spike.

As shown in Figure 49, the number of departing business visa holders has continuously been smaller than that of arriving business visa holders. According to immigration records, there was a drastic drop in departures in 2016.¹²

¹² The reasons for this alleged drop could not be verified during the course of the study.

Table 4: Business visa key information

Purpose	Facilitate business in Maldives
Criteria	Those who conduct business or work in Maldives associated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Maldivian Government Government-registered educational institutions, companies, organizations and health providers¹³
Validity	90–270 days. Extensions can be granted for up to 90 days. ¹⁴ Following the maximum period, the applicant must leave the country and re-enter. ¹⁵ Overstays are punishable with a MVR 15,000 (USD 974) to MVR 50,000 (USD 3,247) fee or deportation.
Other remarks	Authorized to work
Permissible status adjustments	To: Work visa From: Tourist and special visas
Fee	MVR 750 (USD 49) for every three months

Source: Interview with Maldives Immigration, Permits and Foreign Employment Section, 17 October 2017.

Table 5: Resident (spouse) visa key information

Purpose	Allow residence to the spouse of a Maldivian national
Criteria	Spouse of a Maldivian national
Validity	Concurrent with passport validity
Other remarks	Spouses are allowed to work. Widows are entitled to a visa if they do not remarry, that is, marriage to a Maldivian citizen does not carry citizenship or permanent residence, just long-term residence.
Permissible status adjustments	To: Special visa From: Tourist visa
Fee	50 MVR (USD 3.20) for the permit card

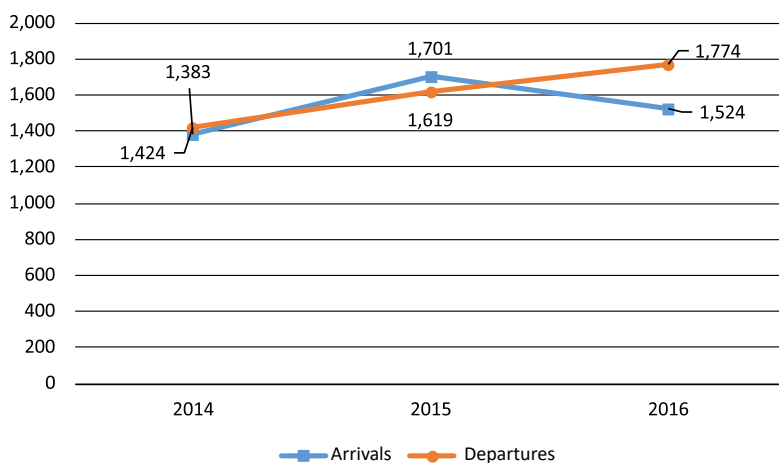
Source: Interview with Maldives Immigration, Permits and Foreign Employment Section, 17 October 2017.

¹³ Government departments and institutions, authorized schools, companies, clubs, associations, organizations health providers registered with the Government (Maldives Immigration, 2017b).

¹⁴ Maldives Immigration reserves the right to cancel visas in a number of instances, including, for example, lack of funds, or visa holder's likelihood to have a negative effect on public health, security and social cohesion.

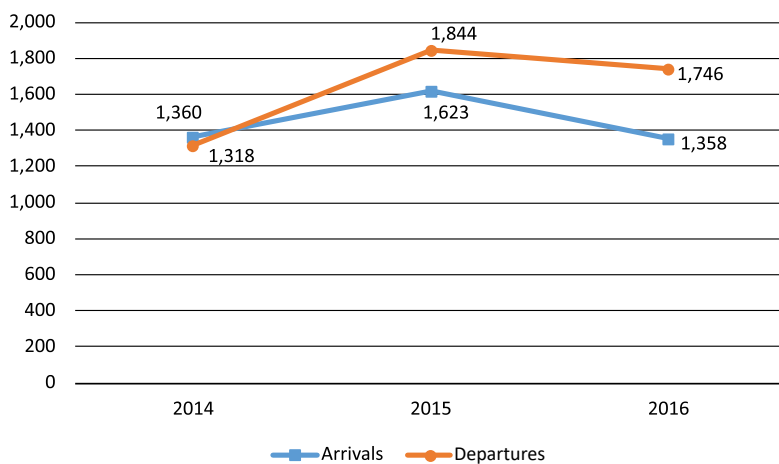
¹⁵ It used to be that the foreign national had to stay at least 30 days abroad, but not anymore as of October 2017.

Figure 50: Spouse visa holder arrivals and departures by air, 2014–2016



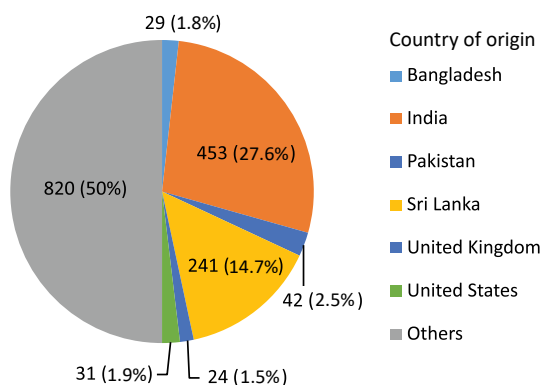
Source: Maldives Immigration arrival and departure records.

Figure 51: Special visa holders' arrivals and departures by air, 2014–2016



Source: Maldives Immigration arrival and departure records.

Figure 52: Dependent arrivals at Male' International Airport, 2017



Source: Maldives Immigration arrival and departure records.

Table 6: Special visa key information

Purpose	<p>Granted when entering or already present in Maldives to authorize:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humanitarian stay Medical treatment Continued participation in legal proceedings Participation in social, economic and cultural programmes organized by Maldivians Sports activities Stay for other reasons decided by the Government
Criteria	Letter from the relevant Government authority
Validity	Variable
Other remarks	Not authorized to work
Permissible status adjustments	<p>To: Not authorized</p> <p>From: Dependent on the circumstances</p>
Fees	<p>MVR 750 (USD 49) for up to three months +</p> <p>MVR 50 (USD 3) for the permit card (one-time payment)</p>

Source: Interview with Maldives Immigration, Permits and Foreign Employment Section, 17 October 2017.

Table 7: Dependent visa key information

Purpose	Allow entry of a spouse or children of a foreign professional working ¹⁶ in Maldives
Criteria	Immediate family member (spouse or child) of the person authorized to work as a professional in Maldives
Validity	Duration of the professional's work visa
Other remarks	Not allowed to work
Permissible status adjustments	To: Student visa From: Not authorized
Fees	750 MVR (USD 48) for every three months + 50 for the permit card (one-time payment)

Source: Interview with Maldives Immigration, Permits and Foreign Employment Section, 17 October 2017.

According to immigration statistics, there were 1,100 registered arrivals by people classified as “dependents” through Male’ International Airport in 2017 (Figure 53). More than a quarter (28%) were Indian nationals, followed by Sri Lankans (15%). India and Sri Lanka had much higher proportions of students in Maldives than Bangladesh (Figure 54).

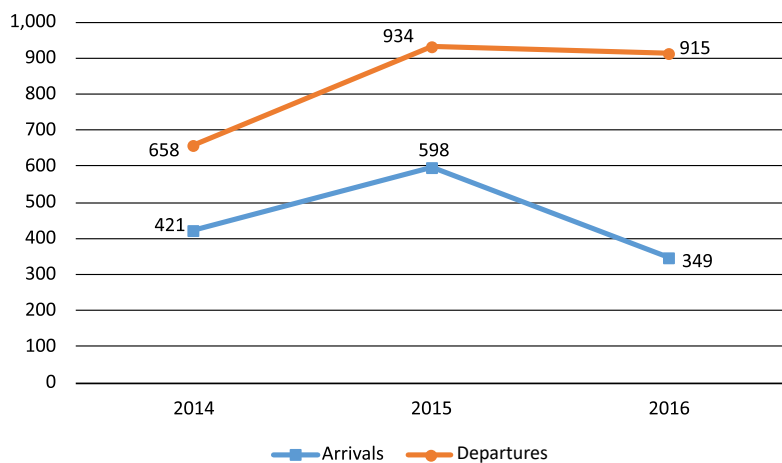
Table 8: Student visa key information

Purpose	Study
Criteria	Invitation by the authorized educational institution
Validity	One academic year (maximum)
Eligibility	Study
Other remarks	Not allowed to work (except for internships) Requires a legal guardian
Permissible status adjustments	To: Dependent visa From: Tourist visa (intention to study must be declared upon entry in Maldives as a tourist)
Fees	MVR 300 (USD 19) for every three months + MVR 50 (USD 3) for the permit card (one-time payment)

Source: Interview with Maldives Immigration, Permits and Foreign Employment Section, 17 October 2017.

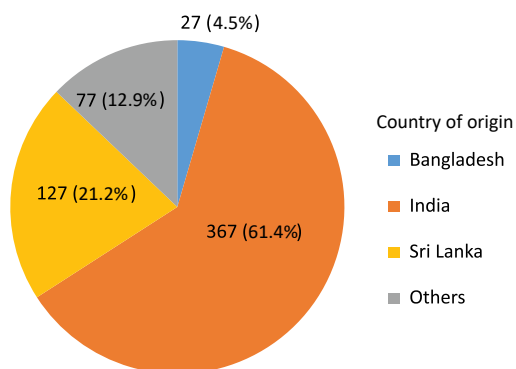
¹⁶ The list of occupations regarded as “professional” can be found on the Maldives Immigration website: www.immigration.gov.mv/forms/professional-occupation-category.pdf

Figure 53: Student visa holder arrivals and departures by air, 2014–2016



Source: Maldives Immigration arrival and departure records.

Figure 54: Foreign student arrivals by country of origin, 2016



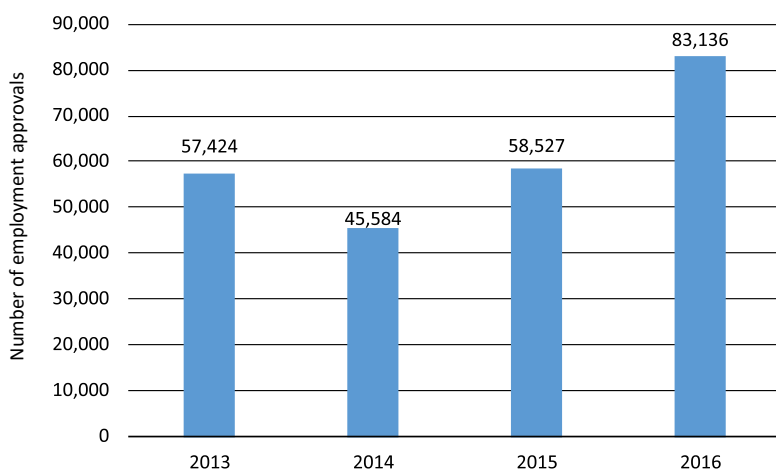
Source: Maldives Immigration arrival and departure records.

B.3.3. Labour migration

Labour migration trends can be approximated based on the number of employment approvals issued since 2013. As the data has not been verified for accuracy and publishing, it should be treated with caution and only used as a broad indicator of labour migration trends.¹⁷

According to XPAT (a Maldives Immigration-managed online registry of individuals and companies seeking to bring foreign workers into the country), on average 61,168 migrant workers were employed in Maldives between 2013 and 2016. The number of migrant workers registered in the XPAT Database increased by 44 per cent between 2013 and 2016, from 57,424 to 83,136 (Figure 55).

Figure 55: Employment approvals, 2013–2016

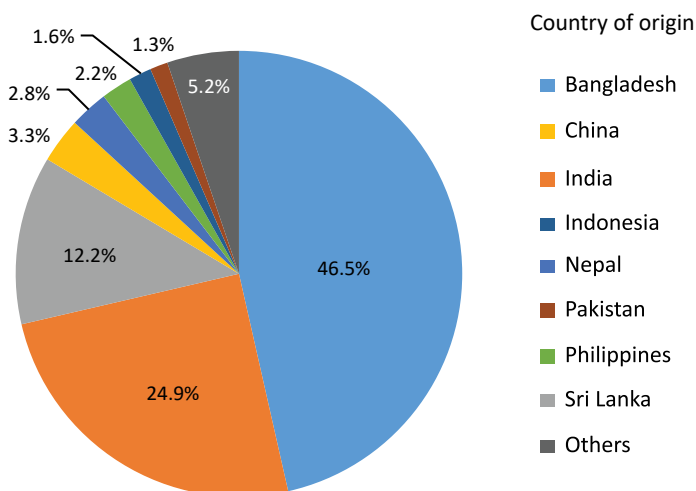


Source: Author, based on 2017 Maldives Immigration data.

¹⁷ At the time of the research, it was unclear if records had been updated to account for de-registrations and correct errors. One error frequently found concerned work sector and job classifications. The data was not recorded according to ISCO standards and it was not clear if every person was registered under the correct occupation/sector and if there was any double-counting. Some medical officers and specialists, for example, were previously registered under the wrong sector (e.g. agriculture). In addition, it was unclear what criteria were used to distinguish those registered under similar categories, such as “Hotels and Restaurants” and “Tourism.”

In 2016, Bangladeshi was the predominant nationality among migrant workers, accounting for approximately half of all employment approvals issued (Figure 56). Together with Indians (25%) and Sri Lankans (12%), they received between 83 and 87 per cent of total migrant employment approvals during the 2013–2016 period. However, the proportion of Bangladeshis decreased in 2016 as a result of a temporary halt in their admission.

Figure 56: Proportion of employment approvals issued by country of origin, 2016

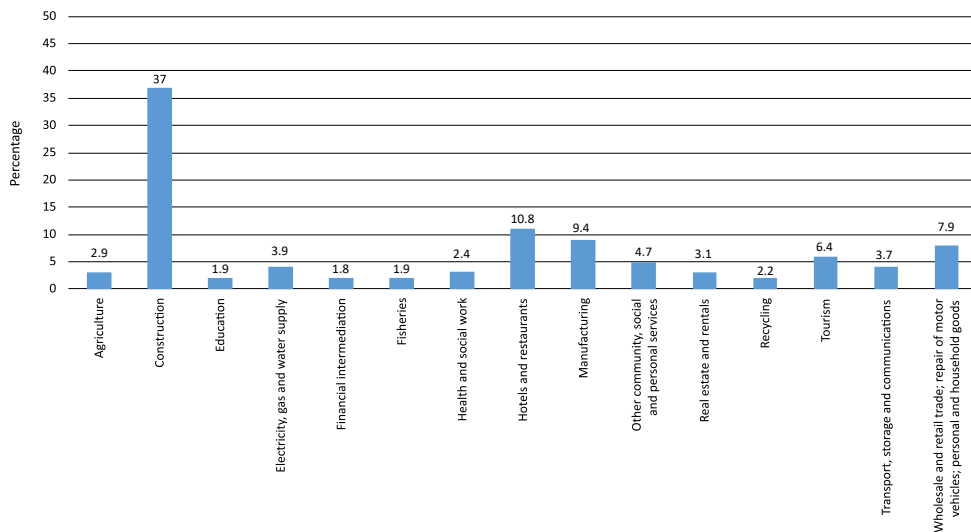


Source: Author, based on 2017 Maldives Immigration data.

The drop in Bangladeshi employment approvals was compensated for by increased admissions of Indians and, to a lesser extent, other nationalities (mainly, Chinese, Filipinos, Indonesians and Nepalese), none of which surpassed 3 per cent of the total. While constituting only 3 per cent of all migrant workers in 2016, the Chinese demonstrated extraordinary growth within a short period of time. European workers were principally represented by British, Germans and Italians. While the three nationalities were among the top 15, they accounted for less than 1 per cent of employment approval recipients overall.

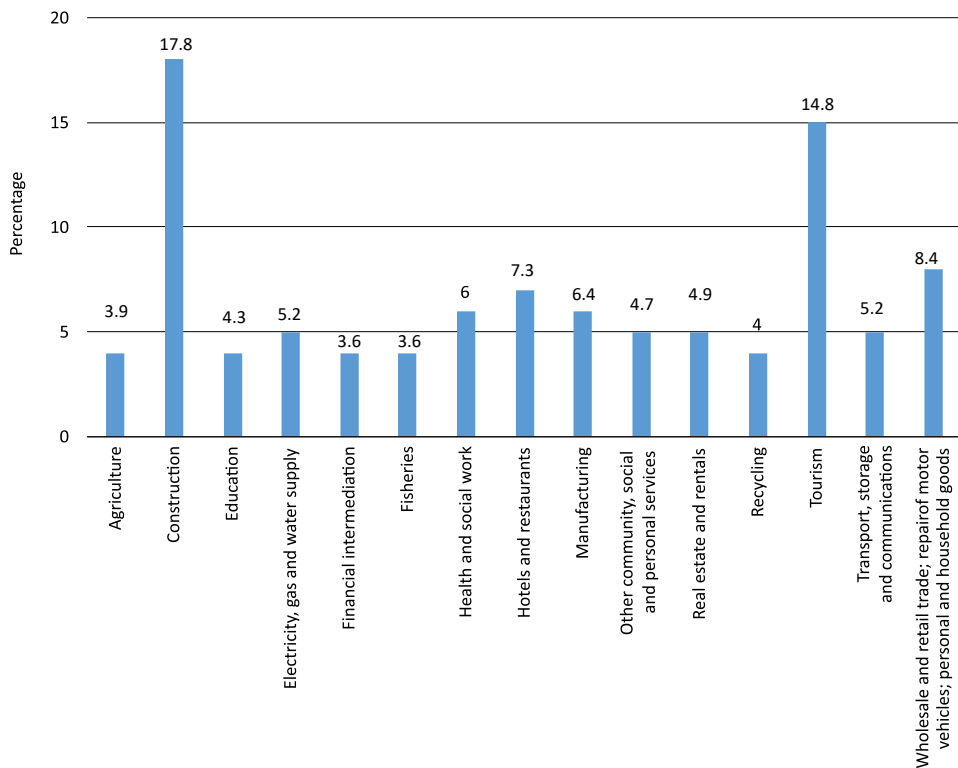
On average, more than a one third (36%) of Bangladeshis found work in construction, followed by hotels and restaurants (11%) and manufacturing (9%) (Figure 57). On average, 18 per cent of Indian workers found jobs in construction, followed by tourism (15%), hotels and restaurants (7%), and wholesale and retail trade (8 %) (Figure 58).

Figure 57: Percentage distribution of Bangladeshi workers by sector, 2013–2016



Source: Author, based on 2017 Maldives Immigration data.

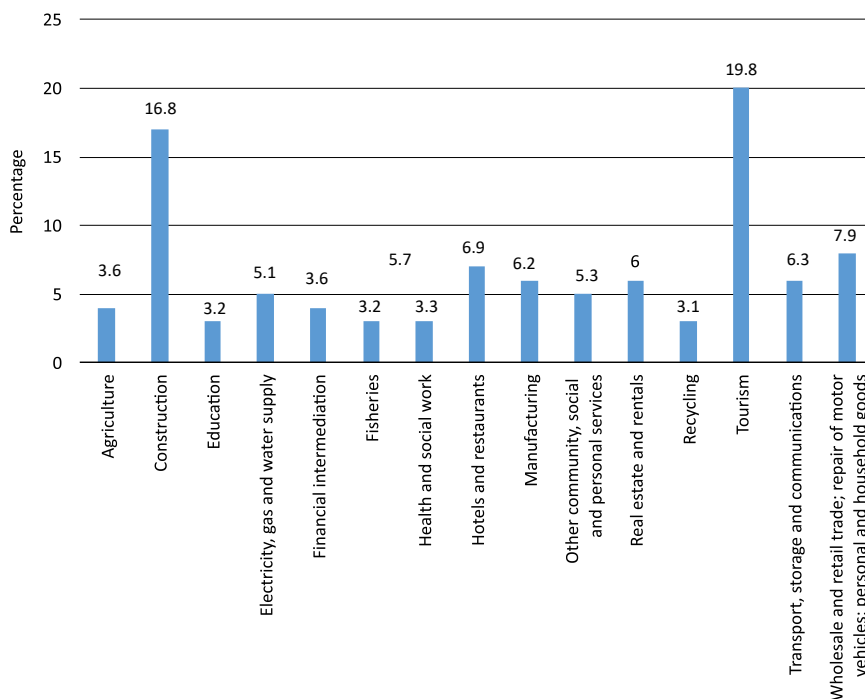
Figure 58: Percentage distribution of Indian workers by sector, 2013–2016



Source: Author, based on 2017 Maldives Immigration data.

On average, 20 per cent of Sri Lankan workers found employment in tourism, followed by construction (17%), hotels and restaurants (7%), and wholesale and retail trade (8%) (Figure 59).

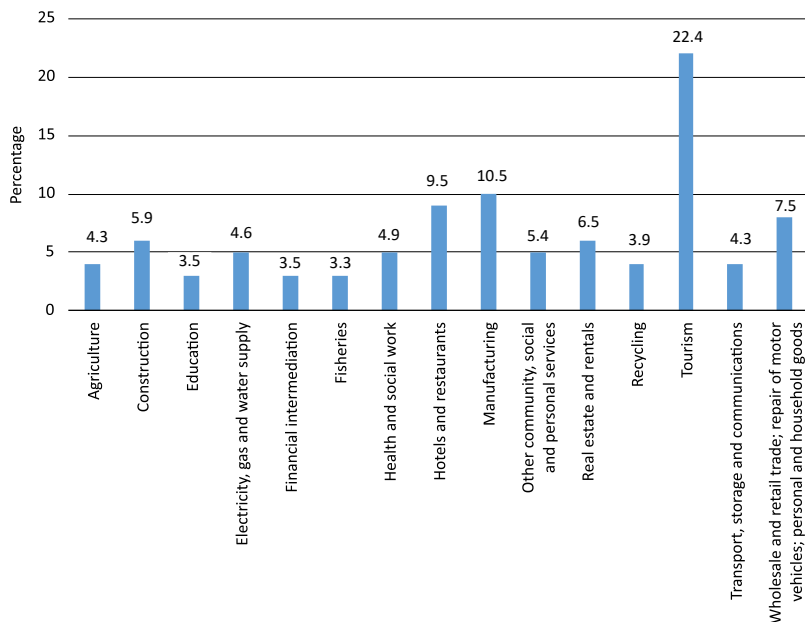
Figure 59: Percentage distribution of Sri Lankan workers by sector, 2013–2016



Source: Author, based on 2017 Maldives Immigration data.

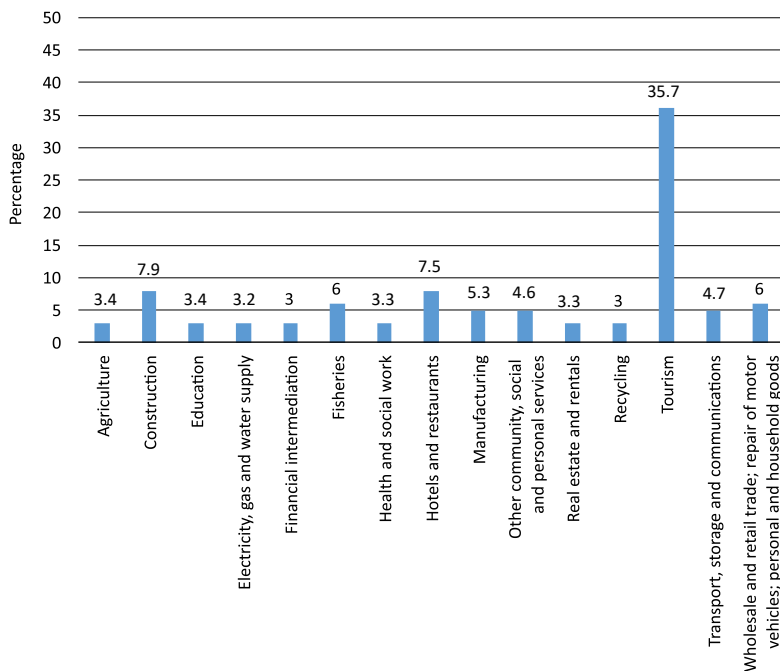
While Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian and Sri Lankan migrants had a significant presence in the construction industry, Filipinos, Indonesians and Nepalese were more concentrated in tourism (Figures 60, 61 and 62).

Figure 60: Percentage distribution of Nepalese workers by sector, 2013–2016



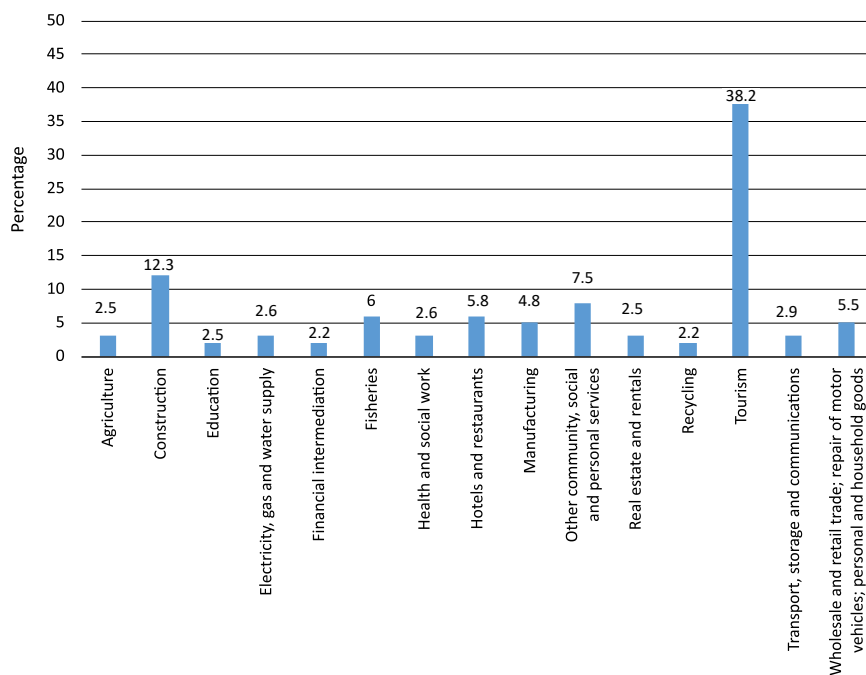
Source: Author, based on 2017 Maldives Immigration data.

Figure 61: Percentage distribution of Filipino workers by sector, 2013–2016



Source: Author, based on 2017 Maldives Immigration data.

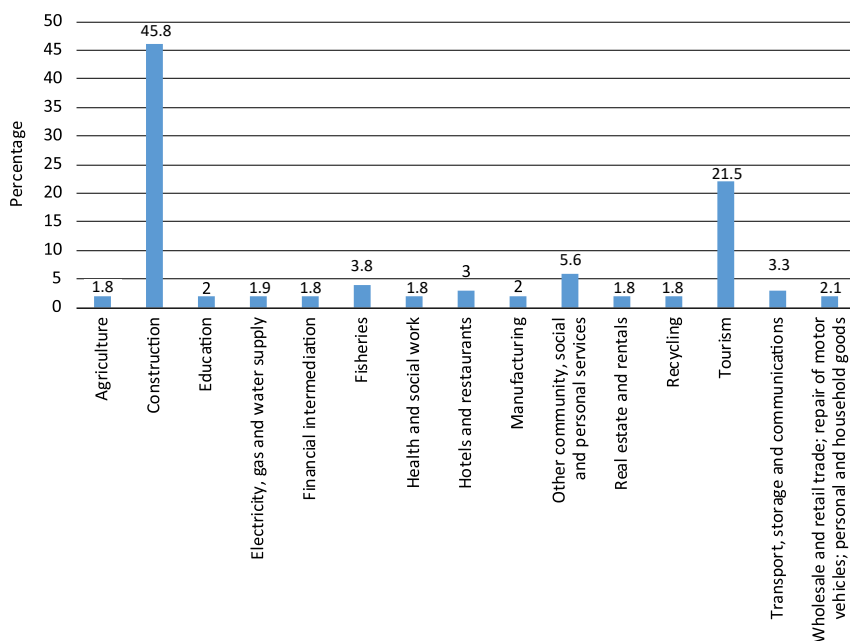
Figure 62: Percentage distribution of Indonesian workers by sector, 2013–2016



Source: Author, based on 2017 Maldives Immigration data.

By 2016, Chinese workers obtained only 3 per cent of work authorizations, yet had the highest concentration of workers in the construction sector of any nationality (46%) (Figure 63).

Figure 63: Percentage distribution of Chinese workers by sector, 2013–2016



Source: Author, based on 2017 Maldives Immigration data.

B.3.4. Refugees and asylum seekers

In 2014, Maldives received a handful of people seeking admission as asylum seekers after being detained by immigration authorities for irregular entry or departure, and this seems to be a general trend. However, the country has not:

- (a) developed an asylum adjudication system;
 - (b) adopted the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol;
 - (c) adopted any national refugee protection mechanisms.
- (UNHCR, 2014:1)

Those claiming asylum in Maldives are regarded as irregular migrants. Since the Maldivian Government and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have not developed a regular information-sharing system, little is known on how many are detained and whether they are deported or moved to other destinations. According to Maldives Immigration, four refugees from the Palestinian Territories were successfully resettled to

Sweden in 2013, with the assistance of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and IOM; in 2015, a Syrian national was successfully resettled to Canada with the assistance of UNHCR.

The Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons has recommended, among others, that Maldives “develop – in consultation with key stakeholders – policies implementing legislation, guidance documents and other frameworks, to ensure a comprehensive national response to all stages of international displacement due to sudden and slow-onset natural disasters, including climate change-induced displacement.” (UNHCR, 2012:20)

In addition to the adoption of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the two conventions on statelessness (the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness), UNHCR (2014:3) recommended that Maldives:

- (a) Develop a national refugee protection framework through the development of administrative orders/instructions and asylum adjudication or registration structures to allow asylum issues to be dealt with in an immediate, constructive, collaborative and rights-based manner;
- (b) Ensure unhindered access to persons in need of international protection to its territory and fully comply with the principle of non-refoulement.
- (c) Ensure that the detention of persons in need of international protection is only used as a measure of last resort and, where necessary, for as short as possible, and apply alternatives to detention.
- (d) Establish a regular information-sharing platform with UNHCR to enable the early identification of asylum seekers and establish appropriate response mechanisms.

B.3.5. Irregular migration

Ports of entry

Sea

Maldives has vast maritime borders that are difficult and costly to control. However, Maldives Immigration believes there is no risk of irregular migration by sea despite the effective control it has over maritime borders (Maldivian Auditor

General's Office (AGO), 2015:2). As of mid-2017, Maldives had yet to ratify the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Although Maldives does not maintain passenger maritime traffic with foreign countries, its northernmost islands are located within a day or two's sail from Indian and Sri Lankan territories. The route is not known to be used by human smugglers, but the distance does not make it prohibitive for human smuggling to flourish.

Air

According to airport immigration officials, age tampering is one of the main challenges they experience in their daily work. Maldives Immigration feels there is little it can do to prevent admission and employment of minors, because it does not have evidence to prove whether workers' passports are legitimate, or if they were issued based on illegitimate information.

Statistics on irregular entry are unclear and prone to potential inaccuracies due to imprecise classifications. According to data provided by Maldives Immigration, the number of interdicted entries due to documentation issues almost tripled in 2017 (61), compared to the two previous years. Maldives Immigration classifies illegitimate documents into three categories: forged, counterfeit and "look-alike." The first type are real documents that have been modified, while the second are entirely forged documents. "Look-alike" documents are used by people who attempt to enter the country with another person's genuine travel documents.

The categories presented in the statistics on irregular forms of entry may present overlapping numbers, since the precision of these statistics depends on the accuracy of registration, as immigration officers are often rotated and are exposed to different levels of training. Maintaining a uniform understanding of the classifications by immigration officers, controlling the rotation of immigration officers, and adequate training are recommended.

Maldives Immigration airport staff reported difficulties detecting potential irregular migrants for three reasons:

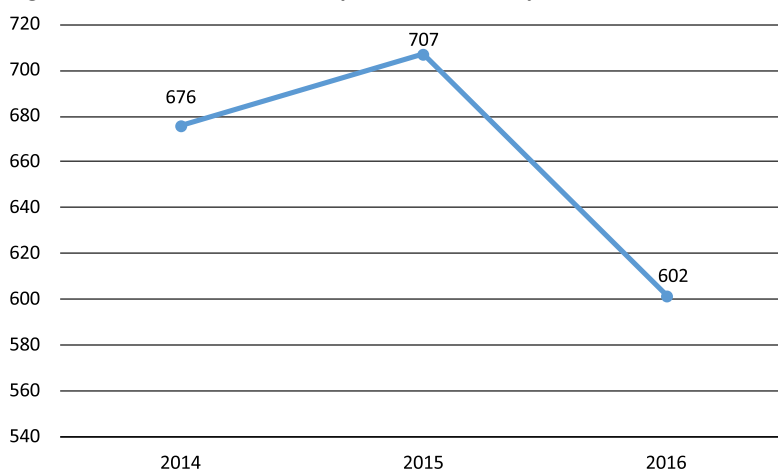
- (a) They did not have access to enough intelligence resources to keep up with irregular migration modus operandi.
- (b) The frequency and scope of training were limited.
- (c) They were subject to regular rotation, hence by the time the airport had trained them, they had to rotate to another post.

The airport immigration team expressed hope for more frequent, up-to-date and practical training for staff (as opposed to select representatives only) (interview with Airport Section staff of Maldives Immigration, Hulhumale, 21 August 2017). Additionally, when the current border management system, which registers arrivals and exits of all visa holders, is down (which happens sometimes), immigration officers at the airport cannot register people entering the country.

Due to geographical barriers and subsequent high costs of migration monitoring, most irregular migrants are only detected when they attempt to depart from Maldives. Some of those leaving the country are unaware of their irregular status, if such status was caused by the employer's negligence to pay visa fees.

As of 2017, Maldives Immigration reported that, while it would not prevent a migrant whose work permit fees are overdue from flying out, it would stop them from leaving if their visas or work cards had expired (interview with Permits and Foreign Employment Section of Maldives Immigration, Male', 17 October 2017) (Figure 64).

Figure 64: Number of individuals prevented from departure, 2014–2016



Source: Maldives Immigration Annual Reports 2015 and 2016.

Inadmissible passengers

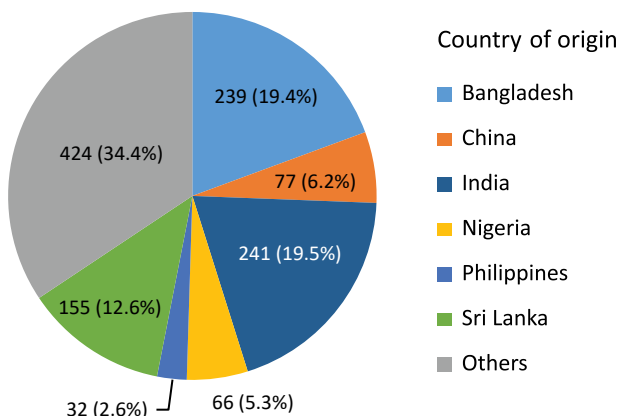
Maldives Immigration has the right to deny entry to foreign nationals who do not meet entry requirements in accordance with Immigration Act 1/2007 (Sections 8 and 29). All expenses associated with detention and removals of inadmissible passengers are borne by the carrier. The regulatory framework for proceedings to detention and removal of inadmissible passengers is outlined

in the Maldives Air Entry Regulations 2010/R-4 and in the Maldives Sea Entry Regulations 2010/R-8, which are in line with the Convention of the International Civil Aviation (Maldives Immigration, 2017c).¹⁸

There were 1,877 individuals who were denied entry in 2016 and 1,234 between 1 January and 31 October 2017. The apparent slowdown was caused by the ban on the recruitment of Bangladeshis throughout most of 2017. Bangladeshis constituted more than half of all individuals who were denied entry in 2016, dwarfing the second and third largest groups, Sri Lankans (10%) and Indians (9%).

The proportion of Indian citizens who were denied entry from the start of 2017 until the end of October 2017 doubled to 20 per cent (Figures 63 and 64). A similar growing trend was seen with other nationalities, such as Chinese, Filipinos and Nigerians.

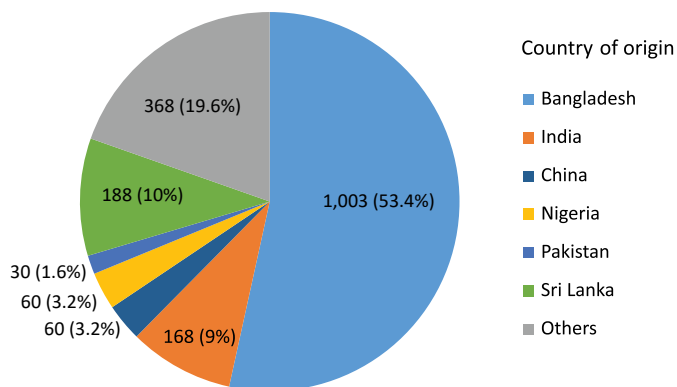
Figure 65: Number of individuals who were denied entry to Maldives, 2017 (until 31 October)



Source: Author, based on data provided by Maldives Immigration, Monitoring Section.

¹⁸ Visa regulations specify circumstances under which foreign nationals may be denied entry. These may include the lack of a valid employment agreement; threats to public health or the Maldivian State, including its social and religious values; and suspicion of terrorism (Maldives Immigration, 2017c).

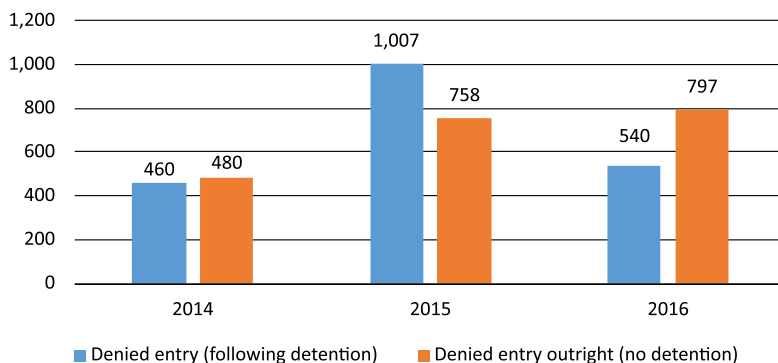
Figure 66: Number of individuals who were denied entry to Maldives, 2016



Source: Author, based on data provided by Maldives Immigration, Monitoring Section.

Some of those who were denied entry were deported immediately, while others were temporarily detained for investigation. The proportions of those detained and those immediately deported fluctuated during between 2014 and 2016 (Figure 67).

Figure 67: Numbers of individuals who were denied entry (with and without detention), 2014–2016



Sources: Maldives Immigration Annual Report 2015 and Annual Report 2016.

Channels of irregular entry

Migrant workers with a regular status may become irregular if they work without valid authorization. Unless they change their visa status, those admitted as tourists, dependents and students are not entitled to work. Most irregular workers were previously work visa holders, but have lost legal status

due to their employers' failure to comply with work visa requirements, notably, the obligation to pay a monthly fee and inform authorities if the worker was being transferred to another employer. There are also reportedly cases where employers have paid all fees and de-registered migrants prior to their expected departure, but that the migrants failed to depart.

According to information collected during the research period, the most common pathway to irregularity results from the so-called practice of "quota trading." Employers who are able to obtain permission to bring in more workers than they need, "trade" them with other employers. Migrants may or may not know they have been traded. As a matter of fact, migrants often cannot even name or identify their employer, especially if recruited through agents.

Cases of absconding migrant workers are frequent because some are convinced they would have better working conditions elsewhere. Maldivian employers may have incentives to hire workers outside legal channels, as they may have been unable to obtain a quota or wish to save on financial and administrative costs. Other reasons may include not having enough work or trust in workers and the intention to keep employment as flexible as possible. Due to their high costs, employment site inspections (or "raids") are not as frequent as Maldives Immigration authorities wish them to be.¹⁹

Self-reporting, worksite inspection and regularization

The Expatriate Monitoring and Repatriation Section (hereinafter, "Monitoring Section") of Maldives Immigration decides on repatriation procedures, be it voluntary or involuntary, depending on the means of detection.²⁰ The section handles irregular-status migrants through self-reporting, employer-reporting or detection during inspections known as "raids."

¹⁹ Raids can only be done sporadically, and employer sanctions are lax and fines are too low to act as deterrents. The penalty for illegally employing or accommodating a migrant ranges from MVR 2,000 (USD 130) to MVR 50,000 (USD 3,247). Additionally, employers are blacklisted from quota applications for only one year.

²⁰ The section was established in 2008, but due to limited funding, it ceased to fulfil its objectives until 2014 (AGO, 2015:2). Hence, it was not until 2014 that the section started to collect more systematic records. While better financed since then, it continues to suffer from a shortage of operational resources (interview with Permits and Foreign Employment Section staff of Maldives Immigration, Male', 17 October 2017).

Self-reporting

Migrants in an irregular status who wish to self-report, with an aim to leave the country or claim human trafficking victim status, may seek assistance from the Monitoring Section of Maldives Immigration in Male', open each Monday. According to the section, migrants may learn about services it provides through leaflets and public outreach events. However, at the time of the research, public awareness of the potential benefits of voluntary reporting to the section was low. A number of those who reported to the section had been referred by embassies, as well as by the airport immigration team, which prevented migrant departure due to administrative irregularities.

In accordance with the national trafficking victim identification and assistance guidelines, victims of trafficking in persons (TiP) are reported to the police. Staff at the Monitoring Section can provide assistance with orderly departure, including a free ticket home, purchased with the employer's deposit, if it is determined that a migrant is a TiP victim; alternatively, the migrant may pay for his/her own ticket home (interview with Expatriate Monitoring and Repatriation Section of Maldives Immigration, 22 August 2017).

Worksite inspection

The key objective of worksite inspections is to detect migrants who may be working without proper authorization. According to available statistics, there were 58 raids carried out in 2015 and 48 in 2016 (interview with Permits and Foreign Employment Section staff of Maldives Immigration, Male', 17 October 2017).

The implementation of raids has suffered from budgetary constraints. As of mid-2017, the Monitoring Section consisted of few operational staff. Maldives Immigration did not (and still does not) own speedboats, thus, the implementation of raids and transportation of migrants had to be coordinated with local authorities, the police or the military. While Maldives Immigration owned a van for transporting staff from the detention centre to the airport and back, it needed a more functional vehicle to transport deportees. In addition, a shortage of drivers has been a challenge at times of transport (interview with Airport Section staff of Maldives Immigration, Hulhumale, 21 August 2017).

Regularization

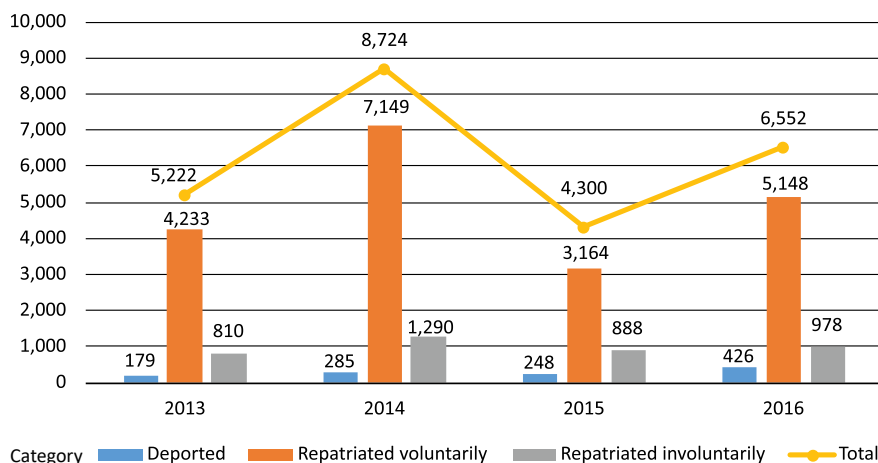
Maldives allows certain categories of irregular migrants to regularize their status on a rolling basis. There is no publicly available information on the regularization process, except for what can be gleaned from the visa regularization form that may be downloaded from the Maldives Immigration website. Regularization allows migrants to change employers, if the latter was responsible for the irregular status. However, migrants who have absconded do not qualify as they are required to report the problem before absconding with the LRA or Maldives Immigration (interview with Airport Section staff of Maldives Immigration, Hulhumale, 21 August 2017). However, migrants have reported being afraid to bring cases to authorities, as they felt that their cases may not be heard due to the lack of evidence to counter their employers' statements or because of the challenge of finding translators.

According to information collected for this research, generally few migrants are regularized. This could be due to a combination of reasons, including inadequate regularization rules, poor publicity of the regularization process and migrants' distrust of authorities. NGOs who work directly with migrants have expressed interest in being consulted on the design and implementation of regularization procedures, as they feel they could positively contribute to the process.

Repatriation

The Monitoring Section of Maldives Immigration facilitates and tracks three types of return: (a) deportations, (b) voluntary return and (c) involuntary return. From 2013 to 2016, some 79 per cent of 24,798 repatriations were classified as "voluntary," 16 per cent as "involuntary" and the remaining 5 per cent as "deported" (Figure 68). The data has been compatible since 2013 but incompatible with earlier records.

Figure 68: Number of returnees from Maldives, 2013–2016



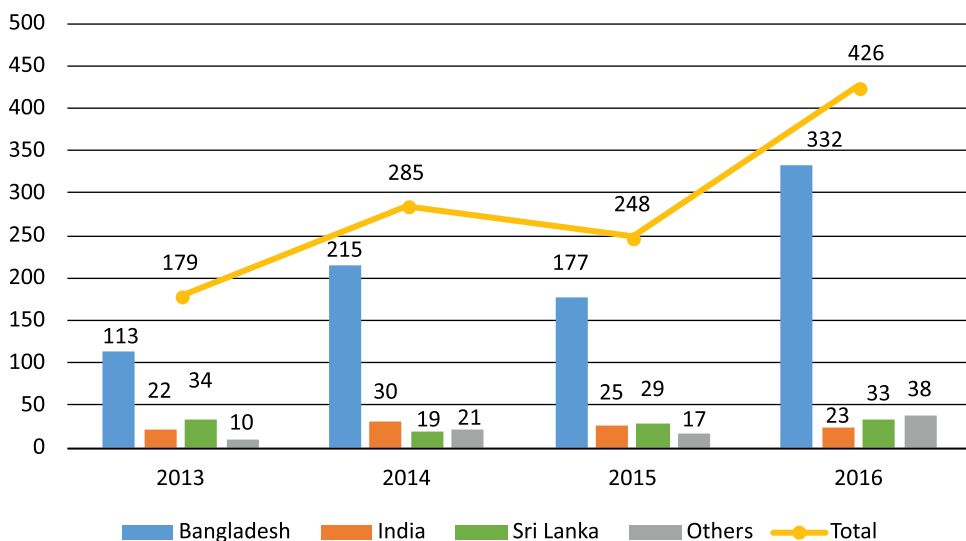
Source: Author, based on data provided by Maldives Immigration, Monitoring Section.

Deportation

A deportation is implemented due to a violation of Maldives Immigration Act 1/2007 and the regulations defining it, or due to a violation of the Constitution of the Republic of Maldives. Deportees charged with non-immigration-related criminal offences are subject to a ban on return to Maldives. The duration of the ban varies depending on the offence committed. The use of biometric technology allows airport immigration staff to prevent the entry of those registered on the watch list.

Deportations from Maldives more than doubled between 2013 and 2016, especially in connection with an influx of Bangladeshis, who represented the majority of deportees. Out of an average 284 individuals deported annually during this period, nearly three quarters (73%, or 209) were Bangladeshi (Figure 69).

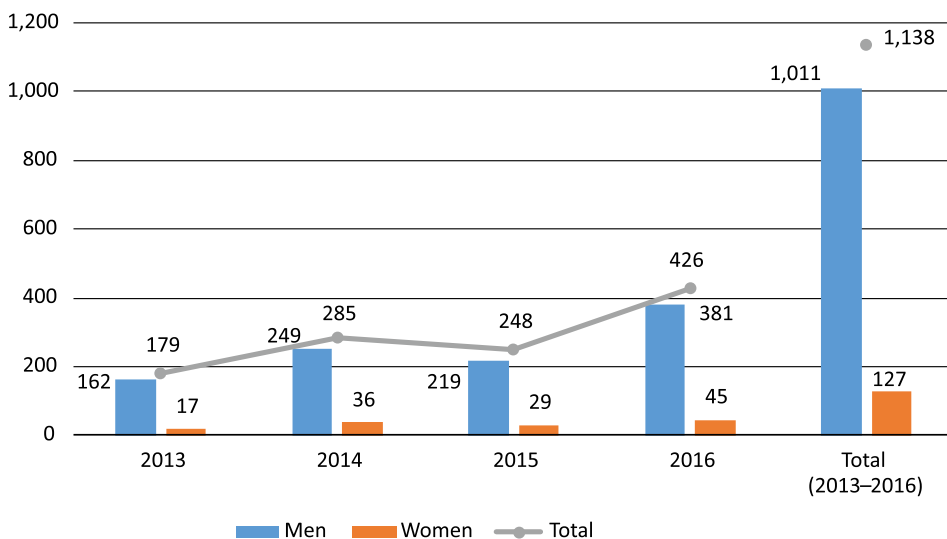
Figure 69: Number of deportees from Maldives by country of origin, 2013–2016



Source: Author, based on data provided by Maldives Immigration, Monitoring Section.

The proportion of men to women deportees changed slightly, from 91:9 in 2013 to 89:11 in 2016 (Figure 70).

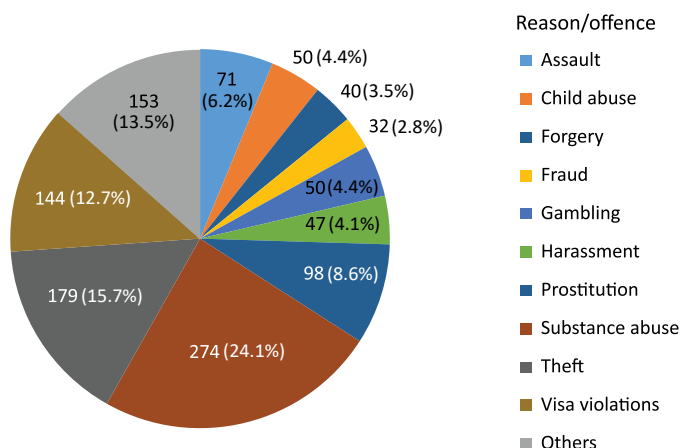
Figure 70: Deportations from Maldives by gender, 2013–2016



Source: Author, based on data provided by Maldives Immigration, Monitoring Section.

A quarter of deportation orders from 2013 to 2016 were issued due to substance abuse, followed by theft (16%), visa violations (13%) and sex work (9%) (Figure 71).²¹ Deportation data revealed 21 cases of illegal recruitment-linked deportations and five human trafficking-related deportations between 2013 and 2016.²² Since deportations are administratively and financially burdensome, it is recommended that the categorization of infringements addressed through deportation and those addressed through other means, such as monetary sanctions, be revised.

Figure 71: Total number of deportations by reason, 2013–2016 (total)



Source: Author, based on data provided by Maldives Immigration, Monitoring Section.

Voluntary repatriation

Three categories of migrants qualify for voluntary return:

- Migrants willing to assume the full cost of their repatriation, including those who fled their employer(s), as long as they have reported to Maldives Immigration before being caught;
 - TiP victims;
 - Migrants who became irregular due to their employers' fault
- (Interview with Airport Section staff of Maldives Immigration, Hulhumale, 21 August 2017)

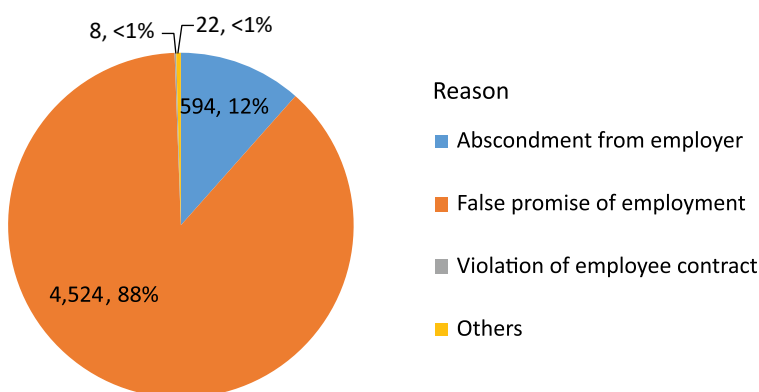
²¹ Substance abuse, including alcohol, is considered a criminal case and dealt with by police before being passed to the Monitoring Section of Maldives Immigration for repatriation (interview with Permits and Foreign Employment Section staff of Maldives Immigration, Male', 17 October 2017).

²² The figures related to these two categories of deportation have not been inserted in Figure 73 since the numbers are too small.

Migrants recognized as TiP victims and those misled by employer(s) into irregularity are exempt from covering return costs.

The vast majority (88%) of those repatriated voluntarily had received a false promise of employment, followed by those who self-reported after having absconded from their employer (12%) (Figure 72).²³ Only eight (out of 5,148) persons were found to have violated their contracts.

Figure 72: Voluntary repatriations from Maldives by reason, 2013–2016 (total)



Source: Author, based on Maldives Immigration, 2017a.

The option of voluntary return is not well publicized and migrants are not offered positive incentives to persuade them to make use of this option.

Involuntary repatriation²⁴

Involuntary repatriations concern all those who committed a migration-related offence, for example, those who did not return to their home countries at the end of their legal stay with the legitimate employer and instead started working for another employer who did not register them. Unlike deportations, involuntary repatriation does not always involve a ban from returning to Maldives.

²³ Migrants who have received false promises of employment can also regularize their status by finding an employer willing to formally employ them. However, they could not regularize their status if they are classified as having “absconded” (interview with Permits and Foreign Employment Section staff of Maldives Immigration, 17 October 2017).

²⁴ A clearer definition of involuntary repatriation and deportation is advised as, for instance, a visa violation (a migration-related offence) also leads to deportation.

On average, 992 persons a year have been repatriated involuntarily from Maldives between 2013 and 2016, with 978 (98%) to Bangladesh and only 1 per cent to India. Nearly all (973 out of 978) who departed involuntarily in 2016 were men.

Three quarters (77%) of those who departed involuntarily had visa violations, while the remaining (23%) had absconded from employers.

Unofficial estimates

The largest unofficial estimates regarding irregular migration were advanced by Burke and Rasheed (2015), who, citing the Trafficking in Persons Report 2015 of the US Department of State, argued that there were 200,000 documented and undocumented migrants in Maldives. According to the Maldives Association of Construction Agency's estimates for the same year, the number of undocumented migrants could have been between 50,000 and 100,000. In August 2016, Maldives Independent cited Maldives Immigration Spokesperson, Hassan Khaleel, as saying that out of 130,000 migrants residing in the country, 60,000 were undocumented. The migrants were thought to be mostly Bangladeshi construction workers (Moosa, 2016). The lowest estimate was put forward in 2014 by the Minister of Economic Development, who said there were 35,000 undocumented migrants in the country, based on XPAT data provided by Maldives Immigration (*Minivan News*, 2015).

Human trafficking

Maldives has been a destination, transit and source country for human trafficking and forced labour (US Department of State, 2017). The US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report 2016 claimed several thousand documented and undocumented foreign workers in Maldives have allegedly experienced indicators of forced labour, including fraudulent recruitment, confiscation of identity and travel documents, withholding or non-payment of wages and debt bondage. As of June 2018, Maldives was downgraded from Tier 2 to Tier 2 Watch List based on the US Department of State's classification system of anti-human trafficking compliance.²⁵

²⁵ On the three-tiered scale, Tier 1 indicates most and Tier 3 least compliance. Tier 3 is reserved for States that neither meet the minimum requirements to eliminate trafficking nor make concerted efforts to do so.

Available records

The Maldives Police Service started to collect statistics related to human trafficking in 2013. As of August 2017, three persons had been convicted of this crime; four cases were prosecuted; and there were two ongoing trials.

Table 9: Human trafficking cases in Maldives, January 2013 to August 2017

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of cases	2	7	4	8	1
Number of potential victims	5	13	4	13	1
Type of crime	Sexual (2)	Sexual (4) Labour (3)	Labour (4)	Labour (8)	Sexual (1)
Victim's country of nationality	Bangladesh Thailand	Bangladesh India Sri Lanka	Bangladesh India	Bangladesh India	Kenya
Perpetrator's country of nationality	Bangladesh (3) Maldives (3)	Bangladesh (4) India (2) Sri Lanka (2) Maldives (1)	India (1) Bangladesh (4) Maldives (1)	Bangladesh (14) Maldives (7)	Kenya (1)
Victim's gender	Women (2)	Women (5) Men (8)	Men (4)	Men (13)	Woman (1)
Perpetrator's gender	Men (6)	Women (3) Men (6)	Men (6)	Men (21)	Man (1) ²⁶
Status	Sent for prosecution (2)	Sent for prosecution (1) Filed (6)	Filed (3) Open (1)	Sent for prosecution (3) Filed (1) Open (1)	Sent for prosecution (1)

Source: Interview with Maldives Police Human Trafficking Team 24 August 2017.

²⁶ According to the data provided, in this prostitution case the victim was male and the perpetrator was female. The record could not be verified at the time of research.

PART C: IMPACTS OF MIGRATION ON DEVELOPMENT

C. I. Migration and economic development

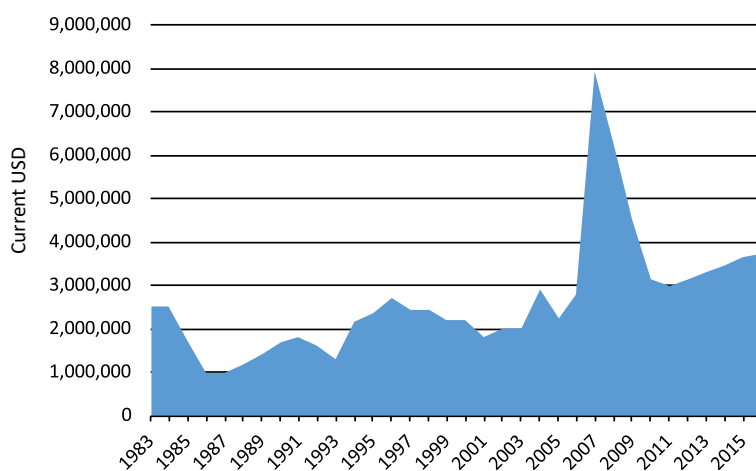
C.I.I. Remittances

As Maldives has long transformed from a country of emigration into one of immigration, it has been sending more remittances than it receives.

Remittance inflows

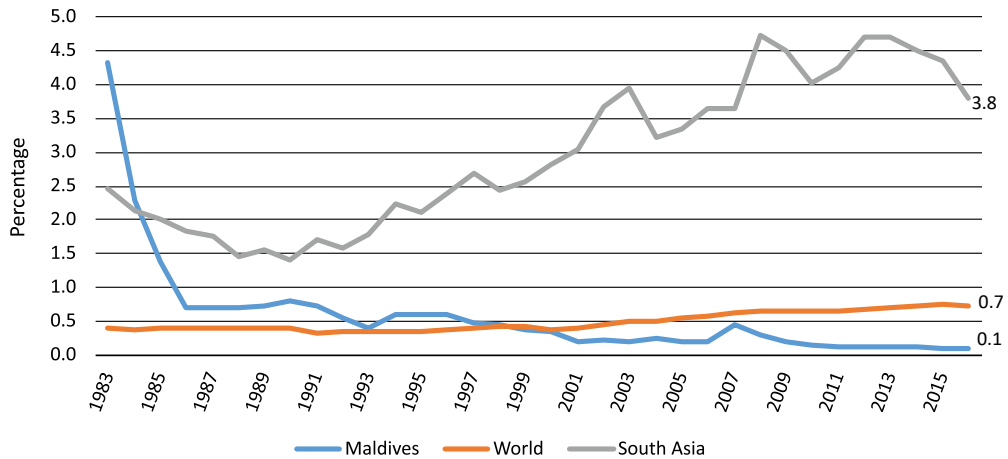
Remittances received by Maldives have fluctuated since 1983. They peaked in 2007, when nearly USD 8 million was transferred to Maldives. On average, the country received more than USD 2.5 million annually between 1983 and 2016 (Figure 73). As of 2015, Australia and India were the major source countries of remittances to Maldives, sending 50 per cent (USD 2 million) and 25 per cent (USD 1 million) of all remittances, respectively (World Bank, 2015a). As a natural consequence of the socioeconomic development of the country, the value of remittances as a percentage of Maldivian GDP has decreased over the years from 4.3 per cent to 0.10 per cent, well below the world average of 0.76 per cent (Figure 74).

Figure 73: Personal remittances received by Maldives (current USD), 1983–2016



Source: World Bank Database: Personal Remittances Received. Available from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS> (accessed June 2017).

Figure 74: Personal remittances received by Maldives as a percentage of GDP, 1983–2016

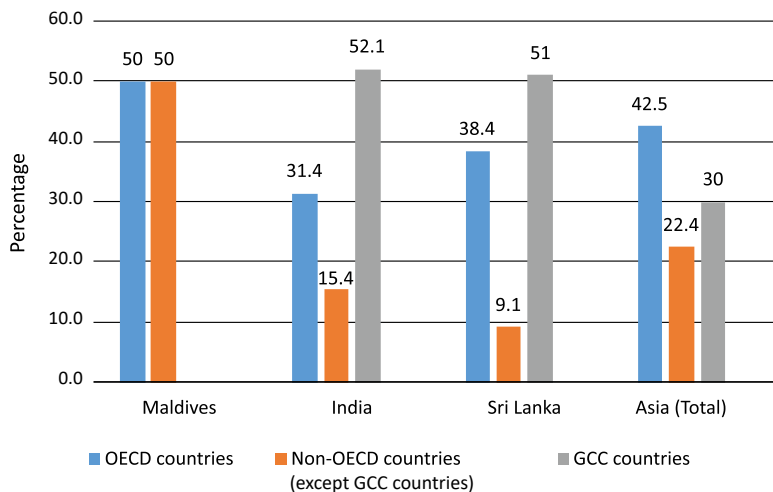


Source: World Bank Database: Personal Remittances Received. Available from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS> (accessed June 2017).

Note: Values labelled on the graph are for 2016.

According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), half of the remittances received by Maldives in 2015 came from OECD States and another half from non-OECD States. As shown in Figure 75, the numbers were different from those of other Asian States.

Figure 75: Sources of incoming remittances in Maldives, India, Sri Lanka and Asia, 2015

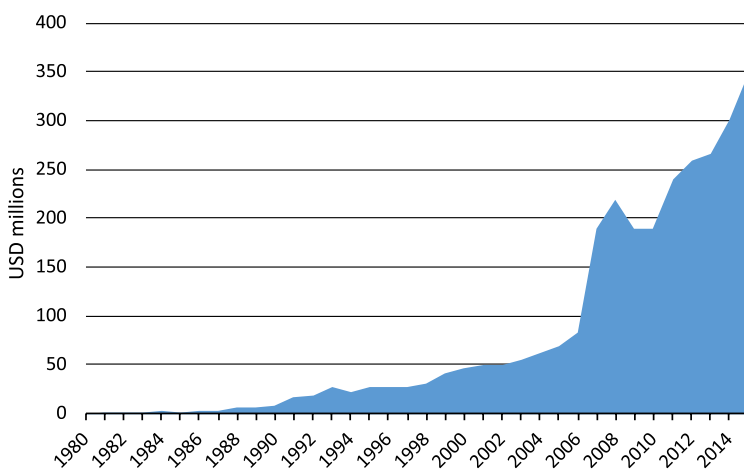


Source: ADB, *Safeguarding the Rights of Asian Migrant Workers from Home to the Workplace*. Available from www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/230176/adb-safeguarding-rights-asian-migrant-workers.pdf

Remittance outflows

According to the World Bank, except for a brief decline in 2009 and 2010, remittances sent from Maldives rose rapidly from USD 0.2 million in 1980 to USD 378.6 million in 2015 (Figure 76). This made Maldives the third largest remittance sender in South Asia, after India and Sri Lanka, and first in terms of remittances as a share of the country's GDP (Table 10) (World Bank, 2016a: 34).²⁷ In June 2017, the Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA) projected that remittance outflows in 2017 would reach USD 420.1 million.

Figure 76: Migrants' remittance outflows from Maldives (USD millions), 1980–2015



Source: World Bank Database: Migration and Remittances Data. Available from www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data (accessed June 2017).

Table 10: Top five remittance senders in South Asia in terms of percentage of GDP and absolute value, 2014

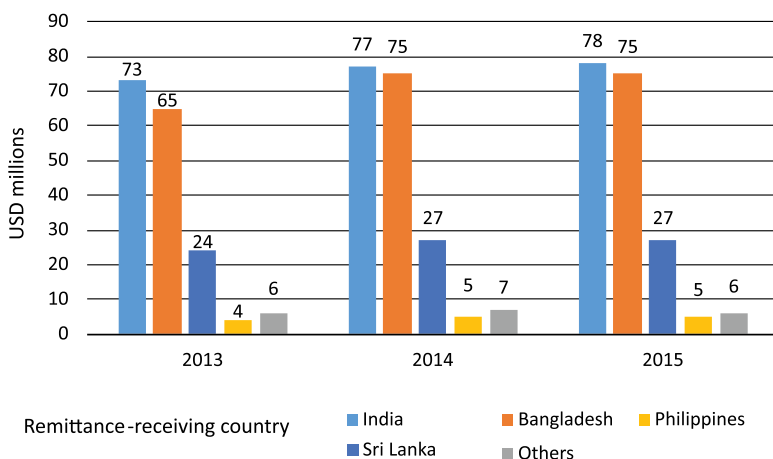
Top five countries (as a percentage of GDP)	%	Top five countries (absolute value)	USD billions
Maldives	10.6	India	6.2
Bhutan	2.5	Sri Lanka	0.9
Afghanistan	1.2	Maldives	0.3
Sri Lanka	1.1	Afghanistan	0.2
India	0.3	Bhutan	<0.1

Source: World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016*.

²⁷ Remittances from Maldives remained very modest by world standards. Remittances from Maldives constituted 0.5 per cent of remittances sent from the largest sender in the world, the United States, which sent USD 61.883 billion in 2016.

In 2015, most remittances from Maldives went to India (41%), Bangladesh (39%) and Sri Lanka (14%) (Figure 77).

Figure 77: Remittance outflows from Maldives (USD millions), 2013–2015



Source: Author, based on World Bank, Maldives: A Systematic Country Diagnostic. Available from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/340571467992519800/pdf/102283-SCD-P152631-PUBLIC-Box394829B-Maldives-SCD-non-board-version-23-10-2015.pdf>

The Maldivian Government reported that the amount of remittances migrant workers sent to their home countries was comparable to the amount that they spent in Maldives, contributing to the country's account deficit (MMA, 2016:4; UNFPA, 2016a). In an effort to increase revenue, the Maldivian Parliament in August 2016 approved a 3 per cent remittance tax and required employers to pay migrant workers their wages through Maldivian bank accounts starting 1 October 2016 (Maldives Inland Revenue Authority (MIRA), 2016). Depending on the number of migrant workers involved, employers found to be in breach of the regulation risked paying fines of up to MVR 50,000 (USD 3,242) (MIRA, 2017a:6).

The remittance tax applies to any entity through which money earned in Maldives could be sent abroad, whether via wire transfer or card-based withdrawal (MIRA, 2017a:3). MIRA affirmed it took measures to prevent tax evasion through transfers by third parties, as well as by carrying cash abroad in person. Foreign nationals caught smuggling undeclared earnings out of the country would lose the entire amount (MIRA, 2017b:7).

The Maldives Association of Tourism Industry (MATI) claimed (interview, Male', 22 March 2017) that the remittance tax would weaken employers' ability to attract foreign talent, especially managers, who may choose to work in other

countries, or demand that Maldivian companies pay them more in order to offset the tax. Of even greater concern to MATI was the requirement to pay salaries through direct bank deposits. MATI believed that if the Government needed to collect 3 per cent in yet another tax, it should collect it directly from employers to avoid having to inquire into wage transfers.

Unlike MATI, the Labour Relations Authority (LRA) saw the direct deposit requirement positively, as non-payment of wages is a key issue for the LRA. Electronic recording of wage transfers helps the LRA deal with cases quickly and affordably, as the agency would not need to ask employers to submit paper records. From April 2017 onwards, the LRA could fine employers who have not opened bank accounts for workers, in line with the remittance regulation. The LRA had no opinion on the 3 per cent charged to workers, even though it understood the risk of an increased vulnerability to abuse (interview with LRA, Male', 14 March 2017).

MIRA's regulations do not require automatic payments. It only makes bank payment as the mandatory method of releasing wages to help track payment of wages. However, as some employers have the habit of delaying the release of migrants' wages, requiring bank payments to be automatic, in addition, would eliminate delays.

The cost of remittance transactions is expensive, considering the low incomes of most migrant workers, the actual amounts remitted and the incomes of remittance recipients. Therefore, any reduction in remittance transfer costs would result in migrants keeping more of their earnings for themselves and their families. According to the World Bank (2017d), if remittance costs could be reduced by 5 percentage points (relative to the amount sent), remittance recipients in developing countries would receive USD 16 billion more each year.

Remittance costs remain high for various reasons, which include the underdeveloped financial infrastructure in some countries, limited competition within the industry, regulatory obstacles, lack of access to the banking sector by remittance senders and/or receivers, and migrants' difficulty with obtaining the necessary identity documents to send money (World Bank, 2017d). However, the single most important factor leading to high remittance costs globally is the lack of readily available information regarding how much sending remittances cost. It is also difficult for consumers to compare prices, owing to the fact that several components make up remittance transfer costs, as follows: (a) the actual transfer fee; (b) a margin taken on the exchange rate when remittances are paid and received in different currencies, and, occasionally, (c) a fee charged to

the recipient of the funds. Remittance fees may also vary according to how the receiver is paid (e.g. cash, as opposed to direct account credit), the speed of the transfer and the ability of the sender to provide information about the recipient (World Bank, 2017d). In Maldives, as mentioned, a 3 per cent remittance tax has been added on top of the aforementioned costs.

The World Bank's Remittance Prices Worldwide database (<https://remittanceprices.worldbank.org/en>) allows migrants and migration stakeholders to check remittance costs between 48 remittance-sending and 108 remittance-receiving countries. In Latin America, the publication of remittance prices has helped reduce total costs from a regional average of 15 per cent in 2000 to 5.6 per cent in 2006 (World Bank, 2017d). It has helped migrants know their money-remitting choices and send money more affordably. Even if the 3 per cent remittance tax were to remain, greater remittance transparency by providing information on remittance costs on the database, could help Maldives keep the remittance costs down and closer to UN-recommended levels.

C.1.2. Return migration and diaspora engagement

At the time of this research, there was no data on return migration to Maldives. While destination countries may track outflows of Maldivian citizens, most do not examine their next destinations. By 2017, there were no schemes to encourage the durable return of Maldivians who had emigrated abroad. (Part C.1.1 shows the evolution of remittance inflows from Maldivian nationals abroad.)

C.2. Migration, employment and the labour market

C.2.1. Tourism

Tourism generates employment in resorts, hotels, guesthouses and safari boats. Each type of establishment has different labour demands in line with its required skill set, location or prestige. Additionally, tourism generates employment in tourism-related sectors, notably construction (Ministry of Tourism (MOT), 2016a). The MOT and MATI believe the demand for labour in tourism is likely to grow, especially in resorts and tourism-related construction (MOT, 2016; MATI, 2017).

In 2016, 1.28 million tourists visited Maldives (MOT, 2017b). As of July 2017, available accommodations for tourists comprised 424 guesthouses, 128 resorts, 146 safari boats and 14 hotels (MOT, 2017a:3). As the Government

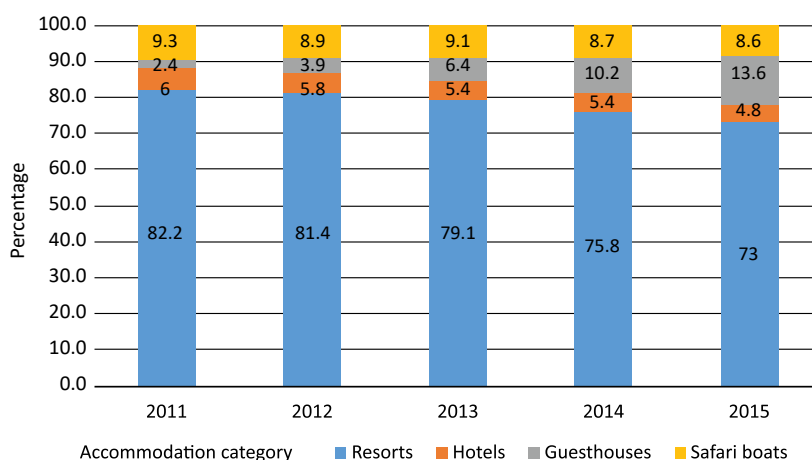
plans to open new islands for the construction of resorts (Shaahunaaz, 2017), the number of new tourist establishments is expected to continue growing, as will the demand for construction and tourism workers.

Tourism labour market characteristics

Since Maldivian tourist establishments cater largely to foreign nationals rather than domestic tourists, they seek workers with specific skills that Maldivians may not have. Of key importance is fluency in the English language, cultural sensitivity, dedicated customer service, willingness to engage in non-Islamic behaviour (e.g. serving alcohol and pork, interacting with men and treating women according to Western standards).

Operating the largest number of beds, resorts have experienced the greatest labour demand over the past several years (Figure 78). Even though this percentage has decreased over time, three quarters (73%) of all tourist beds in Maldives were located in resorts by 2015. Although guesthouses compete with resorts for its share of beds, tourists and labour, their demand for workers is much smaller than that of resorts.

Figure 78: Percentage distribution of national bed capacity by type of accommodation, 2011–2015



Source: Author, based on MOT, *Tourism Yearbook 2016*.

All resorts are located on uninhabited islands, where no human settlements (and, thus, sources of labour) exist. Since most are five-star properties, they are estimated to require at least two staff members per tourist bed (MOT, 2013a: 173). Hotels and guesthouses, being low- to mid-level accommodations located

on inhabited islands, do not need as many workers per bed as resorts. Safari boats – live-aboard floating hotels offering medium to luxury accommodation to divers – require more labour than hotels and guesthouses, but less than resorts.

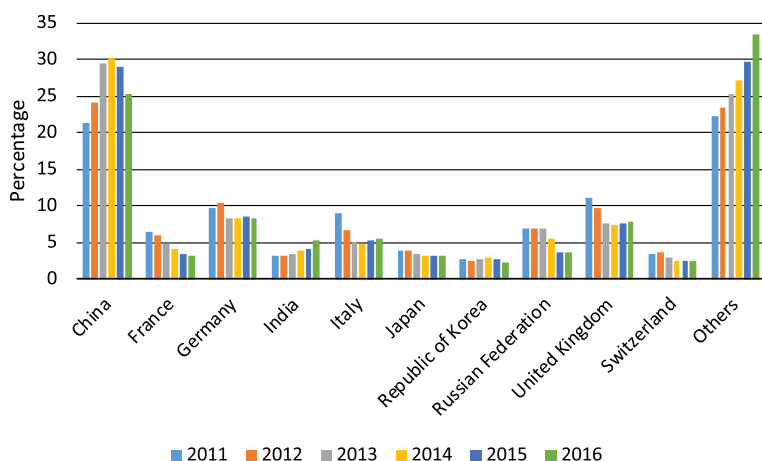
As of 2015, some 43.4 per cent of all beds in resorts, hotels and guesthouses beds were located on Kaafu Atoll, where the Maldivian capital city of Male' is located, followed by Alifu Dhaalu (13.4%), Alifu Alifu (8.3%), Baa (6.8%) and Lhaviyani (5.3%) (MOT, 2016:2). Since resorts are built on uninhabited islands, their location depends on which islands are authorized by the Government for such use. The proximity of labour or supplies is not a factor always taken into consideration by the Government or the resorts themselves, which favour more remote areas for greater prestige.

Tourism in Maldives is year-round. Between 2011 and 2015, the monthly average occupancy rate of resorts and hotels was 76.6 per cent, ranging from 57.9 per cent in June to 92.5 per cent in February (MOT, 2016:5). Despite these fluctuations, tourism in Maldives generates year-round employment and, as such, should not discourage jobseekers from applying due to assumptions of "seasonality."

In 2016, Chinese tourists accounted for a quarter (25.2%) of total visitors, followed by Germans (8.3%), British (7.9%), Italians (5.5%) and Indians (5.2%). Declines were seen in the arrivals of the top ten nationalities, except for Indians, whose share increased from 3.3 per cent in 2011 to 5.2 per cent in 2016. Outside the top ten source countries, tourists from Saudi Arabia demonstrated fast growth, rising from 0.5 per cent in 2011 to 1.7 per cent in 2016 (MOT, 2017a:1) (Figure 79).

Visitors tend to prefer resort workers of the same nationality, and this leads to a corresponding demand for labour from that country. In general, different nationalities require entertainment and food specific to their cultural tastes. For example, the wider variety of food and activities favoured by European tourists contrasts with Chinese tourists' preference for their national cuisine and a narrower range of activities. Hence, resorts that rely heavily on Chinese guests have a growing demand for Chinese cooks and other staff able to attend to Chinese tourists. Even though Maldivian resorts have sourced interns from Chinese hotel management schools, Maldivian regulations require two Maldivian interns to be trained by the hiring resort for every foreign intern recruited. Some tourists from the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia, prefer resorts to be managed according to Islamic principles. This presents a challenge for resorts that traditionally rely on Western foreign workers.

Figure 79: Percentage distribution of tourist arrivals by country of origin, 2011–2016



Source: Author, based on MOT, *Tourism Yearbook 2016* and Tourism Statistics, July 2017, available from www.tourism.gov.mv/downloads/arrival_updates/2017/July.pdf

As of May 2018, the MOT was still in the process of drafting its Tourism Master Plan for 2018 onwards. The previous master plan, developed in 2012, was primarily concerned with the sector's inability to attract local workers, especially among youth and women. In addition, it did not fully address the relationship between expanded recruitment abroad and recruitment difficulties in Maldives. Although a requirement for resort island bidders to submit a human resource development plan has been introduced, compliance to this requirement is not monitored (MOT, 2013b:183). Also, resorts are not required to demonstrate steps taken to boost local recruitment or regularly share evidence of compliance with foreign-to-local worker employment ratios.

All resorts were initially subjected to a 45:55 foreign-to-local employment ratio, which eventually shifted to 55:45 in 2012, in response to the tourism sector's claims that resorts struggled to fill half of vacancies with Maldivians. The quota is applied to the entire resort headcount and not individual job categories, as some occupations (e.g. bartending) are restricted to non-Maldivians, while other jobs, such as photography and boat piloting, are prohibited to foreign nationals.

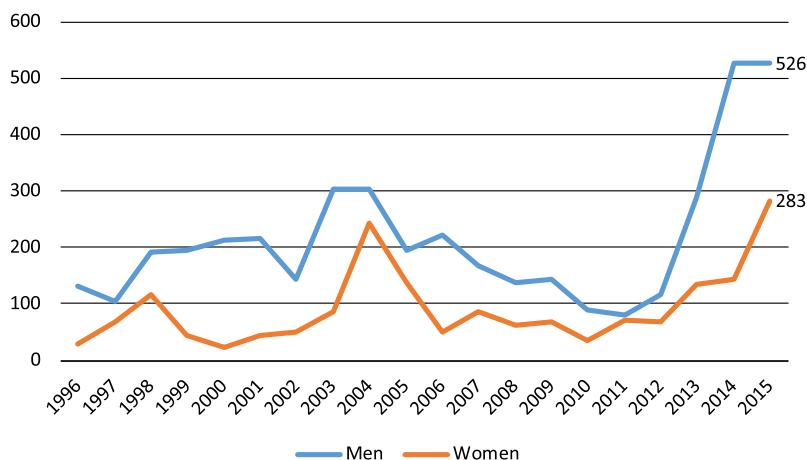
Due to the relative isolation of resorts and the difficulty of obtaining human resource data, it is unclear to what extent resorts comply with the 55:45 ratio requirement. According to the Tourism Employees Association of Maldives, some resorts have not made sufficient efforts to recruit locally. In addition, the Guest House Association of Maldives (GAM) reported that some of its members

struggle to comply with the ratio requirement, even though guesthouses are located on inhabited islands and do not have the high staffing requirements as resorts (GAM, 2017).

Work in resorts is considered by many Maldivians to be culturally inappropriate, and so recruiting from the local population remains challenging. In an attempt to encourage Maldivians to apply for positions, all resorts now have mosques and gender-segregated housing for workers (MOT, 2016).

The MOT, the MOE and the Ministry of Youth and Sports have organized public campaigns to improve the image of resort work, and have fostered internship and apprenticeship opportunities for Maldivians. However, these campaigns were generally short-lived and lacked long-term sustainability. According to MATI (interview, Male', 22 March 2017), apprenticeships and internships were too limited in number to substitute for admissions of professional workers,²⁸ and few participants wanted or could stay on to work full-time. Furthermore, these were jobs trainees did not want or did not have sufficient skills for, such as construction work. Finally, the supply of trainees was too small, as tourism education in Maldives was still rather underdeveloped.

Figure 80: Number of graduates of hospitality and tourism studies, 1996–2015



Sources: Author, based on MOT, *Tourism Yearbook 2001*, *Tourism Yearbook 2006*, *Tourism Yearbook 2007*, *Tourism Yearbook 2011* and *Tourism Yearbook 2016*.

Note: Values labelled on the graph are for 2015.

²⁸ Apprenticeship programmes typically lasted six to nine months, while internships lasted one to two months (interview with Ministry of Tourism, Male', 16 November 2016).

Despite tourism being the key driver of the Maldivian economy, relatively few Maldivians choose it for their studies or as a career path (interview with Ministry of Tourism, Male', 16 November 2016). The number of women studying tourism varied from year to year, constituting generally around half of all enrolled (Figure 80). Even though a vocational training programme was initiated in 2008, the "8,500 Placements" programme was short-lived (lasting only three years) and did not spark any more permanent initiatives. A long-term sustainable vision and planning is essential for this initiative to have real impact.

According to the MOT, the primary motivating factors for Maldivians to consider working in tourism are job security, a well-defined career path, employment benefits, non-discrimination in the workplace, and proximity to either their home islands or Male' (MOT, 2013b:185). Because Maldivian youth aspire for managerial rather than entry-level positions, the abundance of lower-level positions means that many Maldivians would have to start their careers below their expectations. As such, students are difficult to attract and retain (MOT, 2013b:183).

All workers – including Maldivians – are expected to "learn their way up" the resort career ladder. In theory, it may only take a few months to be promoted. However, resorts cannot guarantee the availability of vacancies. While certain vacancies may be filled through promotions, others must be filled with externally recruited candidates, especially when a post requires the knowledge of certain language(s) or technical skills. According to resorts, Maldivian youth tend to seek office-based employment in the city, notably either secure public administration or well-paying business jobs. In tourism, these preferences correspond to Male'-based resort administration, resort-based reception and "tip-intensive" room service jobs.

Some resorts felt that Maldivian tourism education was misaligned with their needs, due to the lack of collaboration between the tourism sector and The Maldives National University's Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Studies. According to resorts, tourism courses should provide students with more practical classes before resorts could admit them, even as trainees. They would also welcome larger government investment in mainland-based tourism education.

The expectation that Maldivian jobseekers should be better trained stems from the ease of finding and recruiting experienced candidates abroad. According to resort human resource staff interviewed, besides hard skills, foreign nationals also typically have better soft skills and the ability to thrive

in a multicultural environment, work diligently and display loyalty. The human resource departments of resorts also prize workers with excellent English, customer service skills and what could be called an “international resort mentality,”²⁹ which are considered difficult to find among Maldivians, especially outer islanders. Resort human resource staff believed that islands located close to resorts could potentially serve as a source of Maldivian workers; however, these workers’ limited hard and soft skills were not as strong as those of migrants.

The Maldivian tourism sector ascribed the weak participation of women in tourism work to the notion that Maldivian culture may be considered incompatible with some aspects of resort life. The third Tourism Master Plan (2007) reported that only 7 per cent of resort workers were women, of whom only 2 per cent were Maldivian (MOT 2013b:182). According to a resort officer, Maldivian women constituted only 3 per cent of all workers.

Relatively few Maldivian women take up tourism studies, partly because Maldivians consider tourism employment as a “second chance” career and inappropriate for women (MOT, 2013b:202 and 2014). Besides, cultural norms encourage Maldivian women to stay home, assuming household responsibilities upon graduation. Women’s engagement in the labour market is limited by the lack of incentives and tailored measures both at the policy and workplace levels. On the other hand, apart from the few resorts located close enough to inhabited islands to allow affordable commutes, most require their staff to reside on resort premises. This traditional belief has been challenged by more Maldivian women seeking higher education outside of their communities of origin. However, only a few have overcome their communities’ and families’ negative perceptions regarding work in resorts (interview with Ministry of Tourism, Male’, 16 November 2016). Those who have done so, mostly sought jobs as resort receptionists.

The most recent Tourism Master Plan (2013–2017) recommended four measures to increase local employment (especially of women) in tourism:

- (a) *Develop career paths for work in tourism.* Developing career paths for women in tourism, including at the atoll level, should start from an early age. Children could be shown positive aspects of working in tourism for balanced decision-making on whether to pursue it. Women should be encouraged to join vocational and professional courses supporting tourism careers (MOT, 2013b:208).

²⁹ The so-called “resort mentality” may include the ability to demonstrate comfort with foreign cultures and lifestyles, self-confidence, the ability to solve problems and overcome homesickness, and respect for the environment.

- (b) *Help Maldivian women feel safe at work.* Improved security at work should start from zero tolerance to harassment (especially sexual harassment) in the workplace, in line with the Employment Act and Domestic Violence Act (MOT, 2013b:217).
- (c) *Prevent/minimize staff turnover.* Focusing, for the most part, on high-end tourism, Maldives needs staff with special qualifications, technical and social, that Maldivians are said to not have. Since most Maldivians take up “easy” but “monotonous” jobs, they should be motivated and given career development opportunities (MOT, 2013b:208–210).
- (d) *Expand home-based work opportunities.* In its most recent master plan, the MOT acknowledged the need to create more opportunities for Maldivians to work in tourism without having to reside on resort premises.³⁰ The tourism sector prefers to maintain the “one island, one resort” model, but acknowledged that more support services, including ferries to and from the island, could be developed (MOT, 2013b and 2014).

The most recent Tourism Master Plan also recognized that resorts could do more to inform Maldivians of vacancies in tourism-related jobs (MOT, 2013b:173). However, the key challenge was not the lack of information about work in resorts, but, rather, adequate training, the motivation to apply for and stay on the job, and community support, especially for women candidates.

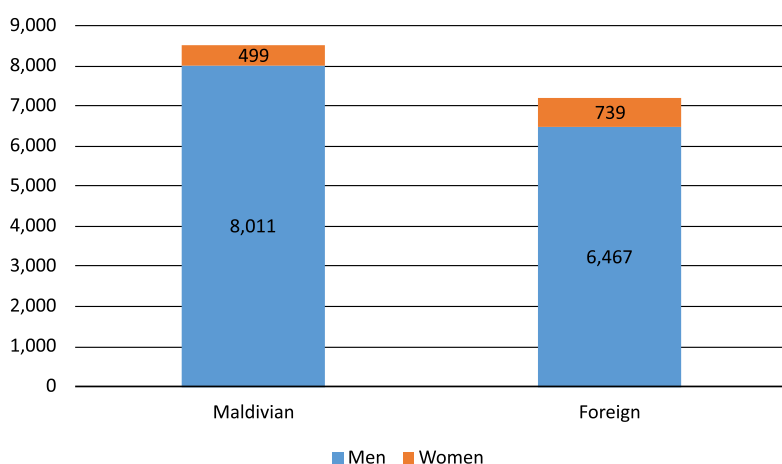
As of August 2017, the most recent data on the proportions of Maldivians vis-à-vis foreign nationals working in the Maldivian tourism sector was collected through a 2007 survey titled “Human Resource Situation in the Tourism Sector of Maldives,” carried out by the MOT. Earlier data – specifically, for 2003 and 1996 to 2000 – are also publicly available. Even though compliance with the 55:45 ratio is required by law, the Regulation on Collection of Data for the Compilation of Tourism Statistics (MOT, 2011) does not include human resource-related data.

³⁰ The tourism industry is divided on the pros and cons of building resorts in the vicinity of inhabited islands. Distant resorts have high operating costs, but attractive locations. As customers pay more, they are likely to attract fewer customers and for shorter periods of time. Resorts close by have lower operating costs, but often less attractive locations. As rates are lower, more customers are likely to be attracted and potentially for longer times (interview with MATI, Male’, 22 March 2017). Resort companies, however, depend on the Government’s decisions on which islands are available for resort construction. Thus, the Government plays a key role in helping resorts find locations close enough to inhabited islands to allow affordable commutes for Maldivian workers.

Since the MOT does not receive foreign national employment statistics from either tourist establishments or Maldives Immigration, the number of migrants and foreign nationals working in the tourism sector is unknown. When approached about the proportion of foreign nationals versus the proportion of Maldivians working in tourism, the MOT explained that approximations could be made by multiplying the number of registered beds by the number of staff said to be needed to serve them (usually two staff members per bed) (email correspondence with the Ministry of Tourism, October 2017). This formula does not provide information on how many foreign or local workers are actually employed, but instead the maximum number legally authorized to work in any given establishment. The most accurate source of data on foreign national employment in tourism, as in other industries, is the work permit register (i.e. XPAT Database) administered by Maldives Immigration.

The 2007 survey was directed only at resorts. Since participation was voluntary, only 74 out of 80 resorts responded. The key deficiency of the survey's analysis was that it made calculations even if some resorts did not provide data. Furthermore, all 74 participating resorts indicated employing at a nearly 45:55 local-to-foreign worker ratio. Given the voluntary and non-anonymous character of reporting, and that the reported ratios complied with what was legally permitted, the survey responses may or may have not reflected reality. Also, while it is uncertain how accurately responses reflected gender balance, women were much less prevalent than men, both among foreign nationals (10%) and Maldivians (5%) (Figure 81).

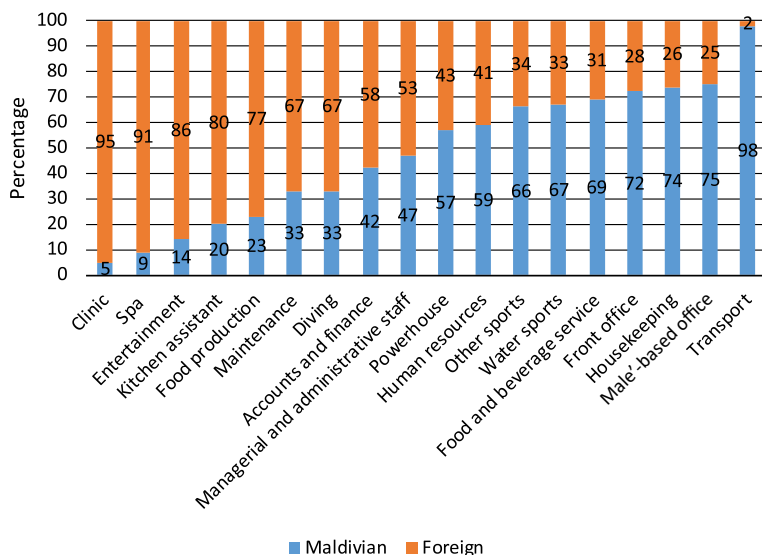
Figure 81: Number of foreign and Maldivian staff in 74 resorts in Maldives, 2007



Source: MOT, *Human Resource Situation in the Tourism Sector of Maldives*.

According to the occupational distribution data from the 74 resorts that participated in the 2007 survey, the local-foreign-worker ratio was 48:52 (Figure 82). Maldivians were most concentrated in transport, most likely due to restrictions on operating vehicles that apply to foreign nationals. In all other occupations, including office jobs in Male', Maldivians did not exceed 75 per cent of the workforce.

Figure 82: Percentage distribution of foreign and Maldivian staff in 74 resorts by occupation, 2007



Source: Author, based on MOT, *Human Resource Situation in the Tourism Sector of Maldives*.

In 9 out of 18 occupational categories, foreign nationals constituted more than half of those employed. They were most numerous among those working in health clinics (95%) and less so among managerial and administrative staff (53%). These broader occupational categories were composed of numerous subcategories. For instance, for the category “resort clinic worker,” no resort employed Maldivian nurses, only 3 per cent employed Maldivian doctors and a quarter employed Maldivians in other health-related resort-based occupations. Moreover, foreign nationals represented 91 per cent of spa workers. Maldivians were most prevalent among spa receptionists (22%) and much less so as therapists (2%); 86 per cent of resort entertainers; 80 per cent of kitchen assistants; and 77 per cent of food production workers. According to this survey, the proportions of foreign nationals (53%) and Maldivians (47%) were closest in management and administration jobs. Apart from 75 per cent of accountants being foreign nationals, the large majority of office jobs in Male' were held by Maldivians.

Probably due to the licensing requirement, only 2 per cent of transport jobs were held by foreign nationals, and transport jobs were least prevalent among migrants.

Recruitment practices in the tourism sector

Different skill levels and types of occupations employ different recruitment methods. Some workers are recruited directly online, others through recommendations from current staff, and still others through recruitment agents.

Maldivian legislation does not require employers to use recruitment agents. However, most employers rely on agents for a number of reasons, including the limited time and human resource staff that they have to deal directly with every job application. As well, employers feel that using a recruitment agent excuses them from certain responsibilities. Employers often report not knowing who else apart from their contracted agent, if any, is involved in the recruitment process, and what fees other recruitment agents may charge for the same process.

Maldivian resorts have claimed to recruit workers through web-based postings, specifically, on their own websites, social media (especially Facebook) and job portals such as job-maldives.com. However, Internet recruitment does not apply to lesser-skilled workers, such as gardeners, beach cleaners and low-ranked kitchen staff. Most low-skilled workers tend to come from Bangladesh, India and Nepal, and are recruited through fee-charging agents or subcontractors. Resort representatives interviewed for this study explained that they did not receive or pay recruitment agencies any fees. They suspected agencies may ultimately charge recruitment fees to the workers, but noted that the practice was difficult to prevent. It should also be mentioned that recruitment through agencies does not guarantee a perfect skills match.

When resorts need to recruit one or a small number of new workers, they may ask a departing employee to recommend prospective job applicants. This is an effective and preferred approach, as the departing employee who makes the referral does not get a commission and the employer does not require the recommended worker to go through an agent. A number of resort workers interviewed reported to have secured their jobs following a personal recommendation. Those who were recruited directly by the employer regarded the recruitment process as a positive experience.

According to MATI (interview, Male', 22 March 2017), tourism experiences a continuous demand for migrant workers across all skill levels (low-, semi- and highly skilled). Most lesser-skilled migrant workers come from Bangladesh³¹ and are more prevalent among construction workers and labour-intensive manual activities, such as beach cleaning and gardening. Due to the large numbers needed and the low skill levels required of these jobs, Bangladeshis are recruited mostly via agencies.

Nepalese nationals tend to be recruited for more skilled jobs, such as security officers, than Bangladeshis. In the opinion of the MATI Deputy Secretary General, the number of Nepalese workers have grown notably because of their willingness to adapt to varied and challenging work environments. Indians and Sri Lankans tend to work in housekeeping, while Thais are usually employed in spas and Filipinos in customer service (MOT, 2016).

According to the resort human resource staff interviewed, foreign workers have higher recruitment costs than local workers (Table 11). In reality, the extent of recruitment costs for local or foreign workers depends on a series of factors: (a) whether recruitment was made directly or through an agent; (b) whether it is the employer or the worker who bears recruitment costs; (c) whether additional training is required; (d) the wage gap between local and migrant workers; and (e) productivity and retention of workers. While foreign workers may require higher recruitment costs (often borne by the migrants themselves), they usually need no training or less training than local workers, are more productive and committed to the job, and accept lower wages and poorer living conditions.

Table 11: Recruitment and employment costs for Maldivian and foreign nationals

	Foreign national	Maldivian national
Recruitment costs	Varies depending on the method of recruitment. Not all categories of workers may be recruited directly, given the location of foreign nationals and the difficulty of skills verification. Employers do not usually share conditions of agreements with recruitment agencies.	Varies depending on whether the worker starts as a trainee. Recruitment costs are lowest if a Maldivian is recruited as a trainee and stays on with the employer.
Return ticket	Approximately USD 300 in the case of Sri Lankans.	Not applicable.
Medical examination	MVR 800 (USD 52) annually, plus travel allowance to an authorized clinic for the annual work authorization renewal.	Not applicable.

³¹ According to resort human resource departments, the general pattern in most resorts is Westerners and Maldivians are predominant in managerial positions, while South Asians are predominant in non-managerial ones. Indians and Sri Lankans are the most numerous among South Asians.

	Foreign national	Maldivian national
Health insurance	MVR 550 (USD 36) annually.	MVR 550 (USD 36) annually.
Visa sticker	MVR 50 (USD 3) (one-year validity).	Not applicable.
Work permit fee	MVR 250 (USD 16) every three months.	Not applicable.
Deposit	Variable.	Not applicable.

Sources: Author, based on Maldives Immigration, Regulation on Work Visa of Expatriates Coming to Work in Maldives (Registration No. R-7/2010) and Regulation on Expatriate Employment, Second Amendment of 25 October 2015.

C.2.2. Health

Identification of vacancies

Vacancies for health-care professionals are open to applicants of all nationalities who pass the entrance examination(s) and have the required professional qualifications to work in Maldives. Most come from India and, to a lesser extent, other Asian countries, including Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. However, in recent years increasingly more candidates from outside Asia – including Egypt and Ukraine – have been recruited.

Overseeing all public health-care facilities in the country, the Ministry of Health (MOH) was the largest employer of health-care professionals in the country as of 2017. The public Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH) and the private ADK Hospital were the second and third largest, respectively. Given the popularity of Male'-based IGMH, the MOH focuses on recruitment for much less advanced hospitals and clinics outside the capital.

IGMH has 1,700 staff members, of which 40 per cent (700) are foreign. The number has decreased over the two years since the Government prohibited the hospital from recruiting non-medical foreign national staff (e.g. gardeners). Registered nurses are the lowest professional category the hospital can hire from abroad.

As of 2017, Maldives did not have a faculty or school of medicine, so even foreign national medical officers (the lowest grade medical staff above medical interns) had to be recruited from abroad.³² To make up for difficulties in recruiting specialists and, more importantly, to train Maldivians, the hospital signed ten-year memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with Indian hospitals to bring cardiac, urinary and orthopedic doctors, nurses and technicians from India

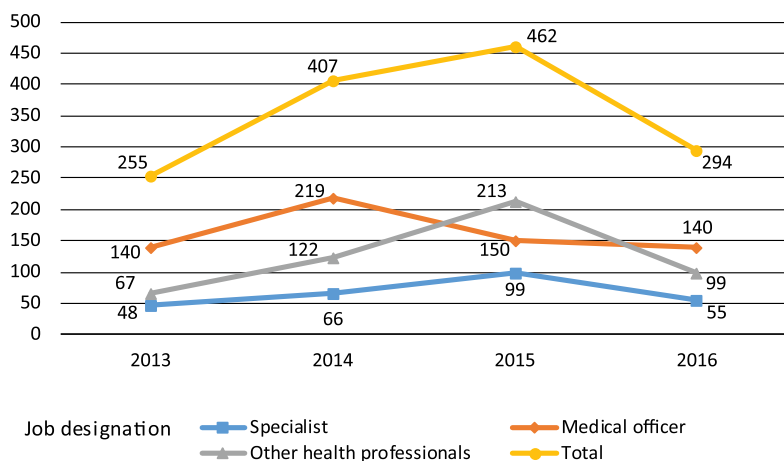
³² Bachelor of medicine and bachelor of surgery graduates must undergo a year-long internship before becoming medical officers and specialists (i.e. "consultants" and "senior consultants").

to offset potential delays, as well as skills and numbers mismatches expected from non-MOU based recruitment.

Most staff of the Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH) come from India. However, Indian doctors are no longer as easily attracted to work in Maldives as they were before 2017, as improvements in the Indian economy have made salaries in India more competitive. For IGMH, an Indian medical officer is up to 40 per cent more expensive than a Maldivian counterpart. However, since part of this cost goes towards the employee's airfare allowance, a foreign doctor may ultimately not see any financial advantage in taking up a job in the hospital. In addition, the hospital does not allow foreigners to work on a freelance basis for other institutions; locals, however, are not subject to such a restriction. IGMH cannot compete with hospitals in many other countries, especially those in the Middle East. Hence, it mainly attracts medical personnel unable to secure a higher-paying job in a more desirable destination. As a public institution subject to Maldivian civil service regulations, IGMH must perform a labour market test by advertising any job for two seven-day periods in the official State Gazette. This makes the recruitment process longer compared to private hospitals, such as ADK Hospital. IGMH has kept to the restrictions, but expects difficulties when it expands to provide specialized care in areas such as cardiology, neurology and oncology, as it will need more specialized staff.

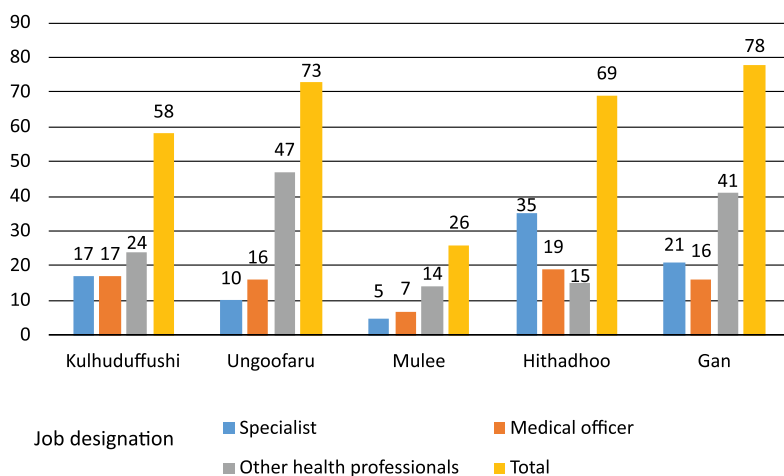
The MOH mainly recruits and places migrant workers in atoll health facilities (Figures 83 and 84). Atoll hospitals are predominantly of Grades I and II and provide services that Maldivians are qualified to deliver. However, few Maldivian workers chose to work in remote clinics. In addition, atoll facilities offer modest pay and limited professional development opportunities. Staff turnover, often due to mid-contract resignations, in atoll clinics is high and creates a steady demand for new recruits. According to the MOH (2017a), foreign nationals tend to be more motivated to stay in a job than Maldivians. Furthermore, they are typically better qualified, which often translate to higher efficiency and independence in their work. The MOH successfully addressed labour shortages until 2016, when, because of new examinations introduced by the Maldivian Medical Council (MMDC), many Maldivian and foreign doctors lost their licences (interview with MOH Human Resource Department, Male', 21 August 2017). The sudden onset of staff shortages prompted the expansion of recruitment to new countries, notably Egypt.

Figure 83: Admissions of new foreign health-care professionals to atoll hospitals, 2013–2016



Source: Interview with Human Resource Department staff at the Maldives Ministry of Health, 21 August 2017.

Figure 84: Admissions of new foreign doctors to the five main regional hospitals, 2016



Source: Interview with Human Resource Department staff at the Maldives Ministry of Health, 21 August 2017.

As of 2017, most foreign nationals admitted to work in atoll hospitals were junior doctors hired as medical officers. The numbers of specialists were low, as atoll clinics did not have adequate facilities to attract or retain them. Hithadhoo Regional Hospital, located in Maldives' second largest city (Addu), was the only one in 2016 that recruited more foreign specialists than medical officers and other health professionals.

Most doctors who were interviewed learned about vacancies through friends or family. Those who lacked personal connections could look for vacancies on the institutions' websites or general job search websites (e.g. ibay.com.mv, job-maldives.com, and bdjobs.com), or inquire with a physical or online agent.

A jobseeker searching for "health-care job in Maldives" online can find agents offering assistance either directly or via one or more other agents located in either countries of origin or in Maldives. One such agent has created a "[Doctors in Maldives](#)" Facebook page, and some doctors have set up blogs or contributed to forums. These Internet resources may provide useful information about whom to contact and how to secure a medical position in Maldives. For instance, a Pakistani doctor's blog included the contact information of a resort doctor who could facilitate recruitment. Compared to lesser-skilled migrants, doctors have higher literacy levels and greater access and familiarity with the Internet. In Ukraine, job opportunities for medical trainees in Maldives have been advertised by the Ukrainian Medical Council.

Official job advertisements specify minimum qualifications and inform workers of the need to pass a competency examination administered by the Maldives Medical and Dental Council (MMDC). They also provide basic information about benefits and work expectations. Vacancy announcements posted by intermediaries contain fewer details and often conceal employers' contact information to prevent jobseekers from bypassing them.

Foreign health personnel recruitment

At a randomly selected month during the research period (May 2017), the MOH announced vacancies for doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians and other health-care professionals, including a number of specialists. At the same time, the "Doctors in Maldives" Facebook page advertised a range of jobs offering USD 1,200–3,500 a month, plus free accommodation.³³ For such services, recruiters typically charge a non-reimbursable flat fee of USD 3,500.³⁴ Another online agent quoted USD 3,000. One possible reason for the elevated intermediary fee is the involvement of multiple recruitment agents, and another may be the inclusion of plane tickets in the agency's service.³⁵

³³ Dentists were offered USD 1,200–2,500 per month depending on their qualifications and experience; medical officers and general practitioners, USD 1,800; and surgeons, pediatricians, anaesthetists, medical specialists and psychiatrists, up to USD 3,500.

³⁴ USD 500 was paid upon submission of documents, USD 2,000 after getting an offer letter and work permit, and USD 1,000 upon arrival in Male' (Doctors in Maldives, 2017).

³⁵ The total recruitment fee requested by agents cover several services (visas, health screenings and plane tickets, among others), and it is often difficult to ascertain the breakdown.

In most cases, jobs touted by recruiters can be found by jobseekers independently. However, many jobseekers are not aware of this and recruitment agencies are often better than employers at marketing themselves. Hospitals often do not have human resource staff to advertise vacancies as widely as agents do, which is one reason why they seek agents' assistance.

In principle, the MOH, IGMH and ADK Hospital are open to workers applying directly or through an agent. In practice, employers' preferences vary according to the type of vacancy, the number of vacancies, countries of origin of the prospective hire and their recruitment processing capacities. The MOH has had more workers coming in through agents than IGMH or ADK Hospital due to the large number of vacancies they needed to fill and the difficulty of attracting workers to atoll clinics, compounded by the ministry's limited human resource staff. Despite the removal of the mandatory requirement to recruit via recruitment agencies in 2013, some agencies that previously recruited for the MOH continued to be engaged if a valid licence was obtained (MOH, 2013b:50).

While most agents provide quality services, allowing the MOH to replace workers who have failed during their probation periods, some concerns remain. Some agencies allegedly misinform candidates about the working and living conditions in the atolls and charge unreasonable fees. During the research, it was found that in order to make jobseekers more likely to pay, some agencies/agents alter official MOH forms to conceal the statement informing workers that the ministry does not charge recruitment-related fees. Some agents allegedly instruct jobseekers not to disclose details about their job placements. IGMH provides information about working conditions and contracts in an employment letter, but not before. Agencies take advantage of such information gaps by misinforming jobseekers prior to receiving employment letters. Similar to the MOH, IGMH specifies in their employment offer that it does not charge any recruitment fees. However, by the time job candidates receive this disclaimer, they are likely to have already paid at least a portion of the fees imposed by recruitment agencies. Agents do not want jobseekers to deal directly with hiring hospitals, so they reportedly conceal the identities of these hospitals.

The MOH can blacklist unscrupulous Maldivian agencies, but it has little insight and power over foreign agencies due to a lack of bilateral cooperation with countries of origin. It is aware of the pros and cons of direct and agent-mediated recruitment. As direct recruitment is more labour-intensive and time-consuming for the MOH and workers, employers and workers may be inclined to use agents. Recruitment through agencies is costly and workers often bear the costs. Since recruiters are neither equipped nor able to adequately examine

job candidates' personal and professional profiles, they pre-select a pool of potential candidates for hospital human resource departments to determine workers' hard and soft skills. Hospital human resource departments can only verify workers' non-technical skills, while technical skills verification is left to the MMDC.

One of the health-care professionals interviewed found out about a job opening through an Indian agent. The agent charged her the equivalent of USD 2,000, but she did not check around to compare with the fees being charged by other agents, believing they would be similar. The USD 2,000 included a one-way plane ticket, to be reimbursed by the hospital. This worker went through an agency, unlike her colleagues, as she did not have reliable contacts in Maldives.

Similarly, another health worker interviewed over the course of this research came through an Indian agent. Recruited in 2006, she paid USD 1,000 and believes that agent rates in India have doubled since then. According to a Nepalese health worker, agencies in Nepal charge an equivalent of one month's salary for each worker moving to Maldives.

Migrant workers without contacts in Maldives often believe that agents conduct research on vacancies and procedures, ensure that workers' application requirements are complete, and follow up with human resources staff judiciously to expedite the hiring process. Most workers trust agencies would ensure their curriculum vitae are given due consideration and believe that human resource departments find agents' involvement useful, as it relieves them from the time-consuming task of dealing with individual applicants.

Most migrants reported to have taken out a loan to pay agents' fees, whether from a family member or a commercial source. According to a Nepalese worker (who applied directly and did not take out a loan), migrants in her community paid around 10 per cent interest on loans.

Nearly all interviewed workers pointed to the important role that acquaintances or family members had in their application – from learning about the job vacancy, to sending their curriculum vitae to a particular employer and gaining the attention of the human resource department. One of the main reasons why the interviewed migrants came to Maldives was the influence of a trusted person, such as a friend or family member. Three out of eight interviewed workers believed they were selected because of their local contacts' help with following up with the hospital's human resource department.

According to the migrant workers interviewed, jobseekers with medical specializations found it easier to apply directly. However, direct recruitment has its pros and cons. On the pro side, direct recruitment allows jobseekers to bypass agents (and, therefore, cut costs) and minimizes mismatches between job candidates and job requirements. On the other hand, direct recruitment is unreliable if many candidates need to be hired over a short period (interview with MOH, Human Resource Department, 21 August 2017).

Hard skills mismatches have become more frequent with the expansion of recruitment to new countries of origin. For example, the MMDC has encountered difficulties recognizing the qualifications of Egyptians and other nationals, due to limited human resource capacities. Atoll health facilities could not offer health-care professionals adequate career development opportunities or living environments that meet their expectations. It is believed that recruitment agents unrealistically raise recruits' expectations of working conditions in atoll clinics, often resulting in premature resignations. To fill ongoing junior vacancies in the atolls, the MOH started an internship programme with Ukraine (UMC, 2013).

Recruitment agencies often fail to select workers with adequate English language skills, and there have been cases of workers being selected by the MOH but rejected by recruitment agencies. Given such challenges with recruitment agencies, the MOH decided to cease from using them. Since 2017, the MOH has been interviewing all applicants via Skype (a Web-based videoconferencing tool). The purpose of such interviews is to give candidates an accurate picture of working and living conditions in atoll clinics, as well as evaluate their ability to speak English. As of April 2018, approximately 300 Skype interviews had been conducted and 46 foreign national health-care workers, mostly medical officers, were hired through this new interview process.

IGMH allows for direct recruitment, including by posting vacancies on their website and accepting personal recommendations. However, as of June 2018, its website was still under maintenance. According to IGMH's human resource department, direct hiring is the "best" form of recruitment. However, there is no guarantee that a jobseeker does not pay any fees, especially if he/she is hired through a personal recommendation by a current employee, who may act as a fee-charging "agent."

Between 2015 and 2017, IGMH appointed 387 new migrant workers and terminated 214, that is, more half of those appointed. While some of the terminated positions were appointed before 2015, the hospital had a 55 per cent turnover rate during this period. Over half of those appointed

(62%) and terminated (53%) came from India. The second largest nationality were Bangladeshis, who constituted a quarter of those appointed (24%) and terminated (25%) (Tables 12 and 13).

Table 12: Migrant workers employed by Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, 2015–2017

Country of origin	2015	2016	2017	Total
Bangladesh	35	29	28	92
Egypt	0	5	3	8
India	113	64	64	241
Nepal	5	15	6	26
Pakistan	15	0	4	19
Ukraine	0	0	1	1
Total	168	113	106	387

Source: Interview with Human Resource Department staff at Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, 18 October 2017.

Table 13: Number of migrant workers terminated by Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, 2015–2017

Country of origin	2015	2016	2017	Total
Bangladesh	17	22	15	54
Egypt	0	1	2	3
India	30	47	37	114
Iran	0	1	0	1
Nepal	1	6	7	14
Pakistan	8	10	7	25
Russian Federation	1	0	0	1
Sri Lanka	0	1	1	2
Total	57	88	69	214

Source: Interview with Human Resource Department staff at Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, 18 October 2017.

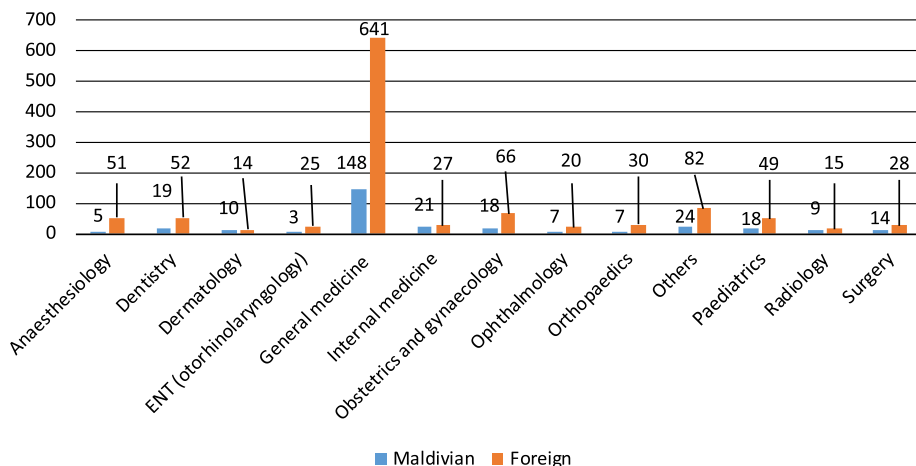
Recognition of qualifications

Requirements for health-care workers seeking employment in Maldives differ between positions. In general, a medical degree, one year's work or internship experience and a foreign medical licence are required (MOH, 2016a). Depending on the post, candidates could be asked to supply additional documents, including personal references or English language examination scores. While the MOH considers migration procedures to be largely acceptable, it has noted occasional delays in the skills recognition process by Maldives' medical councils.

Three medical councils certify foreign national health professional skills in Maldives: the MMDC, the Maldivian Nursing Council and the Elderly Health Council. Skills recognition is a two-stage process consisting of an examination of scans of a worker's educational and professional certificates prior to his/her arrival (the more time-consuming step) and confirmation of the worker's skills based on original documents, which he/she brings over to Maldives. ADK Hospital's human resource staff and workers believe post-arrival skills recognition need only take a day rather than a week, as it delayed work start dates (interviews with ADK Hospital staff, Male', 20 and 27 August 2017). During the skills recognition process, workers undergo orientation and undergo "observation" while being fully paid. Depending on the specialization, recognition may need to be renewed after one to three years (interview with ADK Hospital migrant staff, Male', 20 August 2017).

Recognition of qualifications from less common origin countries and in more specialized medical occupations has been slow (interview with ADK Hospital staff, Male', 27 August 2017), in part due also to the suspicion that some foreign-issued certifications in the past were illegitimate (MMDC, 2017a). By the end of 2016, the MMDC had registered 1,403 doctors in 37 various occupations, with around half (52%) in general medicine, followed by obstetrics, gynaecology and dentistry (around 5% each) (Figure 85).

Figure 85: Number of practitioners in MMDC-licensed medical specializations, 2016



Source: Author, based on MMDC Annual Report 2016.

Work offer and pre-departure formalities

Once selected, health workers are provided with an offer of employment, along with a copy of the employment contract, the estimated remuneration package and a two-page pre-departure flyer (MOH, 2017b). Workers must accept the offer within the next five days and report to work within the next ten days,³⁶ leaving little time for workers to clarify any points. Interviewed workers expressed a wish for ADK Hospital and IGMH to be more responsive in addressing queries during this crucial acceptance period (interview with ADK Hospital staff, Male', 27 August 2017; and IGMH, 2017a). Except for some difficulties in communication, workers were satisfied with the overall smoothness of the recruitment process handled by the two hospitals' human resource teams. Candidates selected by MOH, IGMH and ADK Hospital are expected to purchase their own air ticket, to be reimbursed if they pass the three-month long probation period.

The MOH employment letter, valid for one year, informs workers of their employment with the MOH and the condition that they must be willing to accept temporary reassignments to MOH clinics throughout Maldives, if requested (MOH, 2017a). This requirement is due to the high resignation rate in atoll hospitals. Moreover, the letter notifies prospective medical officers of the need to register for the professional examination with MMDC within six months. Workers must pass this examination within their first year of work (MOH, 2017a). According to the MOH, the examination's complexity and the inability of many candidates to pass it caused a large shortage of medical staff in 2017.

After accepting a job offer, a migrant receives an employment approval document, which, due to the lack of Maldivian diplomatic missions in a number of countries, acts as a visa allowing his/her entry into Maldives. If recruited via a private agent, a worker is expected to meet the recruiter at Male' International Airport. This is when, according to one foreign doctor interviewed, workers recruited via agencies may pay another part of the recruitment fee. The agent will then endorse the worker to the MOH. Workers who find jobs by themselves do not pay any fees and proceed to the MOH on their own accord.

Arrival in Maldives and pre-employment formalities

The MOH advises its new recruits to travel to Maldives with at least USD 500 to cover their initial expenses until they receive their first salary payment. New

³⁶ MOH (2017a) maintained that workers could be allowed to arrive later, as long as they have formally accepted the offer and communicated their arrival date. Previously, the offer of employment gave workers 15 days to accept an offer and two months to start work.

recruits are granted provisional 15-day visas and work permits. Over the course of three to five days prior to their deployment to their respective destination islands, they must register with the MOH to clear the pre-employment medical examination, register with the appropriate medical council (at the cost of the employee), obtain insurance and a work permit, and sign the employment contract.³⁷ The MOH covers accommodation costs of up to MVR 400 (USD 26) a night and transportation to the destination island;³⁸ the amount may differ from that stated in the offer of employment (Chaudhary, 2015).

New migrant doctors are expected to pass a licensure exam. The exam costs USD 200 and involves a week-long stay in Male', during which some have reported not being paid daily allowances. Those who failed the examination after the third attempt but continued to work in Maldives could be fined USD 3,400 (Chaudhary, 2015). A spike in examination failures was found to be a contributing factor in the doctor shortage of 2017 (interview with MOH Human Resource Department, Male', 21 August 2017).

As a result of a recent civil service circular, locals and foreigners admitted for work at IGMH must start at the lowest grade of the respective occupational hierarchy. This requirement is considered by some health-care staff a serious obstacle to attracting talent. The newly recruited worker may resign within the first three months of the trial period, after which they are subject to a three-month advance resignation notice. Having completed the first year, foreign doctors qualify for a month's leave and a free plane ticket home. Due to separation from their families, some of the workers interviewed preferred to be entitled to annual leave prior to the completion of one year's work.

C.2.3. Education

Approximately 35 per cent of the Maldivian population is under 18 years old, thereby making education a key area for future social investment. Even though Maldives has achieved a 98 per cent literacy rate in 2014, the educational sector faces a number of challenges reported by stakeholders interviewed during the research period.

³⁷ Working in health care, foreign doctors have been particularly concerned about the requirement to undergo an X-ray each time they renew their work permits (interview with migrant workers at IGMH, Male', 22 August 2017).

³⁸ According to MOH (2017a), workers received MVR 500 (USD 32) for accommodations and an additional MVR 150 (USD 10) for food in 2017.

Foreign teacher demand and supply

Due to the low pay and the isolation of island schools, Maldives has experienced shortages of teachers. The first foreign teachers were recruited from Sri Lanka in the 1980s, followed by the Indian state of Kerala. While wages in Maldives at the time were low compared to those in Qatar, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates, foreign nationals found it easier to secure a job in Maldives than in these (more popular) destinations. Indian teachers were willing to accept salaries that Maldivian teachers rejected, but only to obtain sufficient foreign teaching experience and eventually move to better paying destinations in the Middle East (Kumari, 2012). Hence, the turnover of foreign teachers has been a constant challenge in Maldives.

While most teachers come from India, many have also migrated from other English-speaking countries such as Australia. Unlike Indians, teachers from Western countries tend to be younger and driven by curiosity about Maldivian culture rather than by financial goals. For this same reason, they also tend to be transient (Horoshkevich, 2016). According to the MOE, as of 2017, nearly the entire demand could be met by teachers from India and Sri Lanka (MOE, 2017a). Despite regional recruitment being easier and cheaper, in large part due to lower transportation costs, the MOE has sometimes also searched for teachers in other countries, such as China, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Foreign teacher recruitment has its advocates and opponents. The former argue that foreign teachers work in places and under conditions that locals would not accept. Opponents considered them costlier than locals, especially given their high turnover rate and social integration challenges in more conservative atoll communities. A 2012 World Bank report suggested that Maldives take further efforts to recruit Maldivian teachers (Aturupane and Shojo, 2012:7).

The MOE encourages schools to recruit locally by decreasing the numbers of teachers contracted from abroad (Nasih, 2016). In 2017, only 60–100 new teachers were recruited from abroad (MOE, 2017a). Since foreign recruitment in education has proved difficult to phase out – due to difficulties in attracting locals and shortages of adequately trained local teachers – the MOE explored opportunities to train Maldivian teachers in Sri Lanka in 2017 (*The Sun*, 2017).

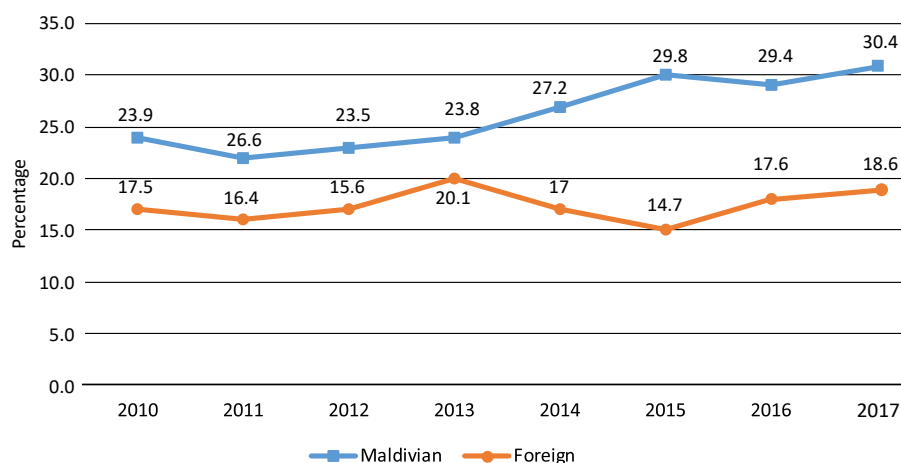
On average, 5,166 Maldivian and 2,305 foreign teachers were registered annually between 2004 and 2016. Hence, foreign teachers on average constituted around 30 per cent of all teachers in Maldives. The total annual number of foreign and Maldivian teachers has risen, the latter at a faster rate. The number of foreign teachers rose from 1,617 in 2001 to 2,224 in 2016, while the number of

Maldivian teachers jumped from 3,447 in 2001 to 6,733 in 2016. Consequently, the relative proportion of foreign teachers decreased, from a third (32%) in 2001 to a quarter (25%) by 2016.

On average, 24 per cent of all teachers in Maldives from 2010 to 2017 were employed in Male' and 76 per cent were employed in the atolls. However, Maldives is finding it increasingly difficult to attract teachers to the atolls. The percentage of teachers employed in the atolls decreased from 78 per cent in 2010 to 72 per cent in 2017.

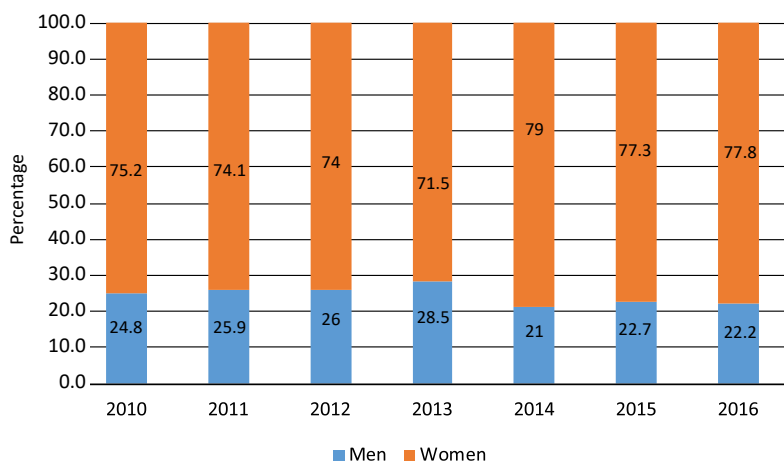
From 2010 to 2017, 27 per cent of Maldivian teachers, on average, were employed in Male' and 83 per cent were employed in the atolls (Figure 86). In the same period, 17 per cent of foreign teachers, on average, were employed in Male' and 83 per cent were employed in the atolls. This trend reflects Maldivian teachers' preference to work in the capital.

Figure 86: Proportions (%) of Maldivian and foreign teachers employed in Male', 2010–2017



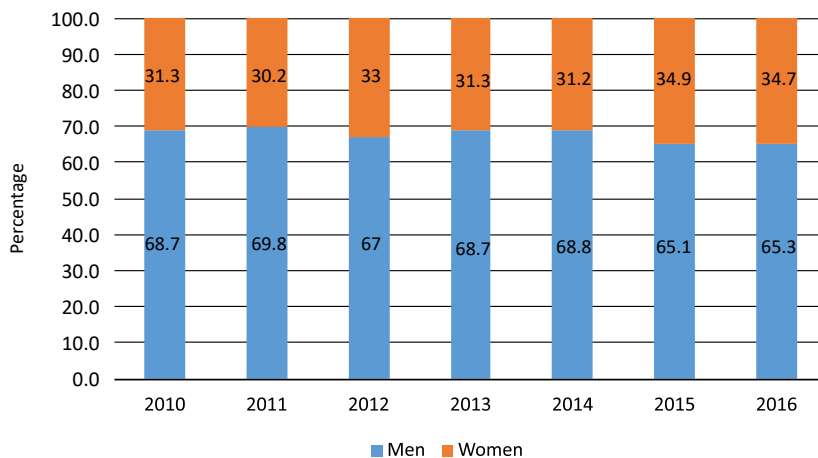
Source: MOE, School Statistics, 2010–2016. Available from www.moe.gov.mv/en/category/view/14 (accessed November 2017).

Figure 87: Gender distribution among foreign teachers, 2010–2016



Source: MOE, School Statistics, 2010–2016. Available from www.moe.gov.mv/en/category/view/14 (accessed November 2017).

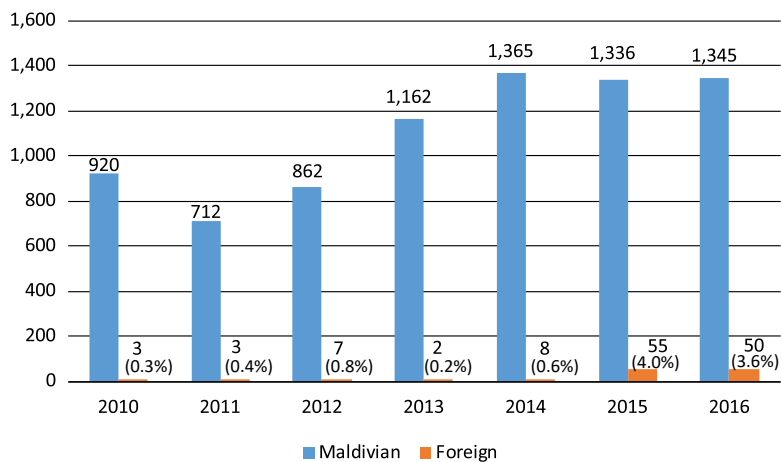
Figure 88: Gender distribution among Maldivian teachers, 2010–2016



Source: MOE, School Statistics, 2010–2016. Available from www.moe.gov.mv/en/category/view/14 (accessed in November 2017).

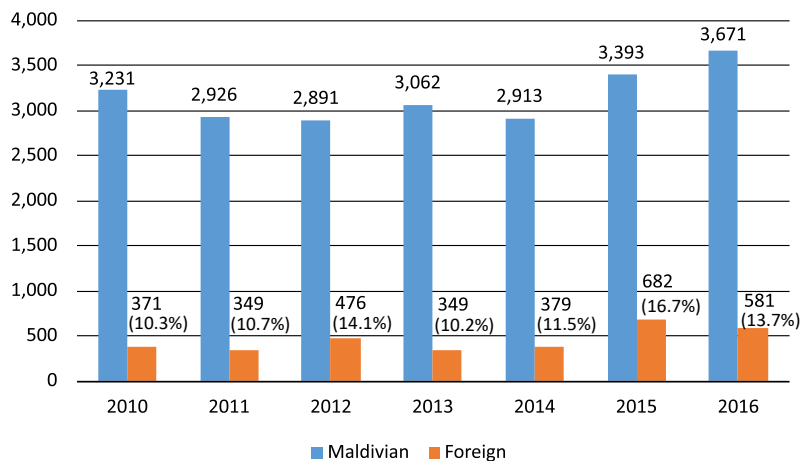
Foreign teachers are almost absent in pre-primary education (Figure 89). On average, foreign nationals constituted only 12 per cent of all teachers employed in primary teaching from 2010 to 2016 (Figure 90). Their proportion has generally grown, from 10 per cent in 2010 to 14 per cent in 2016.

Figure 89: Number of Maldivians and foreigners employed in pre-primary education, 2010–2016



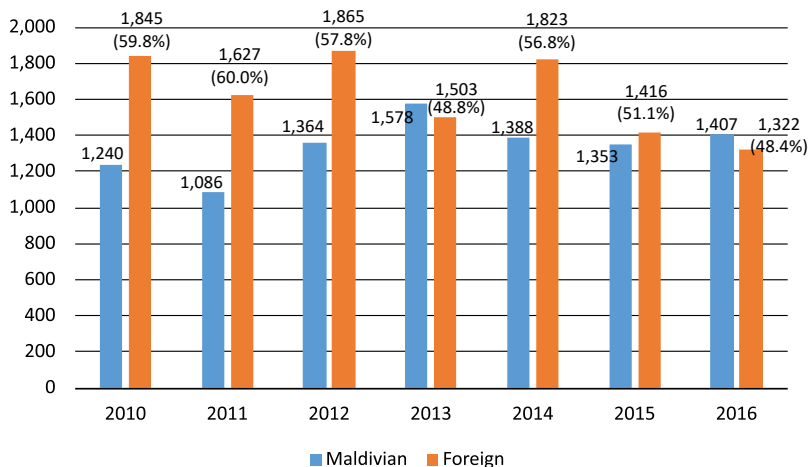
Source: MOE, School Statistics, 2010–2016. Available from www.moe.gov.mv/en/category/view/14 (accessed November 2017).

Figure 90: Number of Maldivians and foreigners employed in primary education, 2010–2016



Source: MOE, School Statistics, 2010–2016. Available from www.moe.gov.mv/en/category/view/14 (accessed November 2017).

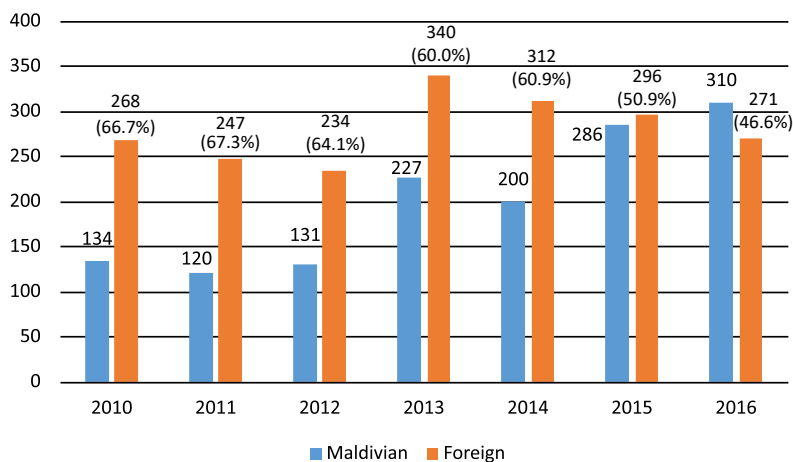
Figure 91: Number of Maldivian and foreign teachers employed in lower secondary education, 2010–2016



Source: MOE, School Statistics, 2010–2016. Available from www.moe.gov.mv/en/category/view/14 (accessed November 2017).

On average, foreign nationals constituted 55 per cent of all teachers employed in lower secondary teaching each year from 2010 to 2016. Their proportion has declined, from 60 per cent in 2010 to 48 per cent in 2016, due to improvements in the training of local personnel (Figure 91).

Figure 92: Number of Maldivian and foreign teachers employed in higher secondary education, 2010–2016



Source: MOE, School Statistics, 2010–2016. Available from www.moe.gov.mv/en/category/view/14 (accessed November 2017).

Moreover, 59 per cent of all teachers employed in higher secondary teaching from 2010 to 2016 were foreigners (Figure 92). Due to the greater increase in Maldivian teachers, their proportions have reduced consistently from 67 per cent in 2010 to 47 per cent in 2016.

Recruitment channels in education

As with doctors, foreign national teachers seeking employment in Maldives have a choice between private and public institutions. The MOE is in charge of recruitment for public schools, while private schools manage their own staffing process. Private schools (especially those in Male'), are sufficiently attractive to foreign nationals to experience small staff turnover and handle individual direct applications. Such candidates may search for "teaching jobs in Maldives" online, email required educational and professional certificates and wait for a Skype interview to be scheduled (Horoshkevich, 2016; Richard, 2016). In the public sector, jobseekers have a strong disincentive to apply directly, as they would be responsible for their own transport to Male', as well as food and accommodation during the registration and orientation period (MOE, 2017b:10).

It was not until 2012 that the MOE developed a policy on foreign teacher recruitment. In April 2017, the Maldives Auditor General's Office (AGO) published and submitted to the Government a report outlining a number of gaps to be addressed. In response to this report, the MOE drafted the sixth amendment to its policy on foreign teacher recruitment. The new policy took steps to prevent recruitment past challenges. In particular, the sixth amendment requires that MOE human resource staff handle direct recruitment, since foreign nationals should not be forced to apply through an agent (MOE, 2017b:3–5).

Based on the most recent changes to the employment policy, each year the ministry must select at least three recruitment agencies in a public bidding process (MOH, 2017a). To qualify for a public bid, agencies must have: (a) at least 100 expatriate employees (50 professionals) selected within the past three years, (b) a valid licence and (c) no records of violation of Maldives Immigration, Maldives Police Service or MOE regulations.

In an attempt to prevent unauthorized fees, the sixth amendment stipulated that agencies "shall not take any fee from any recruited professional expatriate employee, directly or otherwise, in consideration for their recruitment or any arrangement made with respect to their recruitment." Furthermore, the agency "must not get involved in the procurement of any unlawful benefits or profits during the recruitment process of the expatriate professional (employees)

under this agreement, from the recruited employees; and to ensure any third parties involved during the recruitment process adheres to the same.” (MOE, 2017b:2 and 4–5)

Despite changes to the policy, only one agency – and not three, as originally planned – was selected in 2017. The MOE would have preferred at least three agencies, as various agencies have different recruitment strategies and more agencies could have presented the whole gamut of job candidates.

The new policy specified requirements regarding the selection panel. Based on the new policy, panel members must meet minimum professional requirements, as well as rotate, so no person would participate in the selection panel more than once every five years (MOE, 2017b:6).

The ministry was apprehensive about embracing direct recruitment, claiming human resource staff shortages and logistical difficulties (MOE, 2017a). However, it acknowledged that despite six amendments to the teacher recruitment policy, collaboration with recruitment agencies was not satisfactory and referred candidates did not always meet schools’ requirements.

Furthermore, the MOE has established a register of terminated persons to prevent their re-employment (MOE, 2017b).³⁹ The ministry reported the sector was coping with currently high turnover and consequent shortages of new teachers due to high resignation and termination rates beyond its control. Multiple stakeholders interviewed explained that the high turnover rate was likely rooted in difficult working and living conditions, and poorly mediated conflicts between foreign teachers and local communities or employers.

C.2.4. Construction

Construction has been one of the three major engines of Maldivian economic growth, after tourism and fishing. Initially, the sector was primarily tied to tourism, particularly through resort-building. However, in recent years, public projects boosted construction.

In Maldives, this sector encompasses residential and non-residential buildings, civil engineering projects and resorts. At the time of the 2010 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), resorts accounted for most of the construction activities, but other projects have grown since 2000 (Rashfa,

³⁹ The key categories of termination were those who: (a) lacked competencies for the job; (b) were suspected of sexual or professional misconduct; (c) engaged in discourse contradicting Maldivian culture, moral standards or the curriculum; and (d) failed to show up after having been issued an offer letter.

2014:81). Non-residential construction encompassed public and private sector projects for the development of social infrastructure, such as health facilities, schools, offices and mosques.⁴⁰ Civil engineering included the construction of transport infrastructure, mostly maritime projects such as ports, seawalls and passages.

Residential construction was boosted by the Maldivian Government's relocation policies and by the need to repair housing units destroyed by the 2004 tsunami. More than 8,500 houses were damaged or destroyed in December 2004, of which 5,700 required repairs and 2,800 needed reconstruction (DNP, 2009, in: Rashfa, 2014:82). Most tsunami-related projects were completed by 2009, when financing became more difficult due to the global financial crisis. However, residential and non-residential construction gained speed by 2010 due to housing and infrastructure projects in the Greater Male' area, notably Hulhumale, an artificial island reclaimed from the sea to decongest the capital city of Male'.⁴¹

Construction is a cyclical business in Maldives, which depends on demand by tourism, government programmes, as well as businesses' and consumers' confidence and financing. It relies on imports of materials (cement, metals and wood) and labour (Rashfa, 2014:76). It is affected by fluctuations in raw material prices, access to bank credit, payment delays and shortages of skilled labour (Rashfa, 2014). Additionally, in 2011 a 20 per cent devaluation of the Maldivian rufiyaa and two taxes – the business profit tax (15%) and general goods tax (3.5%) – contributed to an escalation in costs and losses for contractors. Given these financial difficulties, the construction industry saw an opportunity to keep labour costs down, notably by importing workers from abroad. Moreover, as Maldives suffers from a lack of locally available building materials, almost all (namely, cement, aggregates, base materials, wood and finishing materials) must be imported, rendering the construction sector vulnerable to fluctuations in global commodity prices (Uduhu Construction, 2017a). For example, between 2004 and 2012, construction-related imports accounted for 12 per cent of total imports (Rashfa, 2014:97).

Due to these factors constraining local construction firms' competitiveness, foreign companies have found it easier to obtain capital and have undertaken larger and more complex civil engineering projects than smaller local companies have. Increasingly, more residential and resort construction projects traditionally

⁴⁰ According to the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, most public sector construction projects from 2000 to 2012 consisted of education infrastructure. However, this data only reflects the numbers of projects, not their value or number of people employed.

⁴¹ In 2010, Phase II of the Four Thousand Housing Units Programme was initiated. The programme aimed to develop 10,000 housing units to alleviate an acute shortage of housing in Male' and Hulhumale.

undertaken by local companies have been awarded to foreign firms, either as joint ventures or entirely foreign investments. Foreign companies have better access to capital and other resources, which gives them an advantage in project bidding. As of 2014, there was no adequate legal framework regarding foreign contractors operating in Maldivian construction. Guidelines on the licensing of foreign investors state that a project valued less than USD 5 million could be awarded to a foreign company as a joint venture, while higher amounts could be awarded as an entirely foreign investment (Rashfa, 2014:101).

Labour demand and supply in the construction sector

According to the most recent HIES, the construction sector employed 5 per cent of the total local labour force in 2010. Foreign employment accounted for 88 per cent of all construction workers in 2010, compared to 75 per cent in 2006. In 2010, the number of locals employed in construction declined by 18 per cent, while the number of migrants nearly doubled.⁴² Although most migrants were low-skilled, some were employed as skilled craft-level workers due to shortages of artisans (Rashfa, 2014:81). The majority of foreign nationals were from Bangladesh, followed by Indians and Sri Lankans.

Low-skilled Bangladeshi workers' conditions differ slightly between employers. Generally, Bangladeshis are paid a salary of MVR 4,000 (USD 260) and MVR 1,000–1,500 (USD 65–97) in food allowance per month, and receive free collective accommodation. According to some employers interviewed, Maldivians would not accept such low remuneration and even a higher pay would not guarantee they would stay at those jobs.

There are currently an insufficient number of Maldivians who possess the education and skills required by technical jobs, as vocational training has not been adequately developed. A number of initiatives were implemented in Maldives to train the local population until 2012, when the Ministry of Human Resources, Youth and Sports was dissolved. The largest one may have been the “Skills Training Programme,” which aimed to train 2,290 construction apprentices in 2011. Previously, the “Technical and Vocational Training Programme” trained 1,057 persons from 2006 to 2010. Externally financed programmes in Maldives tend to lack ownership and sustainability post-funding.

⁴² There were 31,866 registered foreign nationals working in the sector and an unknown number of unregistered migrants.

Recruitment of migrant construction workers

Recruitment methods and costs in the construction sector differ according to the nationality and profile of workers sought. Many of the construction workers interviewed reported having found out about the job through another person, whom they sometimes described as a “friend” (interview with construction workers, Addu City, 23 October 2017, and Hulhumale, 31 August 2017). However, even knowing who the employer was, the workers were often recruited through the intermediation of a recruitment agent.

In construction, as in other sectors, employers are willing to shoulder recruitment costs when a worker has unique skills. When employers need workers with low or readily available skills, they tend to recruit through agents. Interviewed migrant workers reported they were often in desperate need of a job and were willing to bear most of the costs associated with their migration, including security deposits, international transportation, insurance and even work permits.

When selecting more specialized workers, employers tended to participate in the interview process, conducted either in person or via Skype. As agents were not a total guarantee of adequate profile matches, employers’ participation helped to ensure the profile of the chosen worker was adequate (HDC, 2017b).

Bangladeshi construction workers reported being charged up to USD 2,000 in recruitment costs and earning USD 200–250 a month.⁴³ Indians reported paying approximately INR 60,000 (USD 935), equivalent to the maximum charge agencies in India were permitted to legally charge. As Indians earned more, being usually more skilled, they could recover recruitment costs faster than Bangladeshis. When agents provided workers with plane tickets and other migration-related documents and services, workers may have not been aware that the agents’ commission was charged to them, hidden among other costs. Many acknowledged having taken out loans, but did not specify loan terms or conditions. The lack of options and financial illiteracy made some workers even more vulnerable in some instances. (Interviews with construction workers, Addu City, 23 October 2017; Hulhumale, 31 August 2017 (Indian and Bangladeshi); Hulhumale, 31 August 2017 (Indian only))

⁴³ Bangladeshi workers in Addu City reported paying around USD 1,900 (2014), USD 1,400 (2011) and USD 1,200 (2011) for jobs that initially paid them USD 200 and then USD 250 a month. Workers who paid USD 1,400 reported remitting USD 140 a month, half of which was meant to repay recruitment costs (interview with construction workers, Addu City, 23 October 2017). Reported salaries in Male’ were similar and included free collective accommodation and meal allowances.

The salaries that Maldives' construction sector can offer foreign workers are low compared to many other countries, particularly in the Middle East. However, Maldivian admission rules are more liberal than those of destinations that can offer higher wages, such as the Gulf countries and Singapore (interview with construction workers, Addu City, 23 October 2017). While certain countries have admitted limited numbers of workers of certain nationalities, opportunities in Maldives have remained open. In addition, the administrative and financial burdens associated with labour migration to Maldives are lighter. While Maldives employers are able to attract sufficient low-skilled workers, they find it difficult to attract more skilled ones, who secure jobs in more popular destinations (interview with Maldives Association of Construction Industry (MACI), Male', 30 August 2017).

MACI representatives, in the interview, recognized that medical checks conducted abroad were not always fully reliable, but also believed that conducting them in Maldives was too time-consuming due to an insufficient number of authorized health clinics. This latter concern was most likely addressed by the new migration policy, according to which all Bangladeshi workers should undergo their initial health screening in Bangladesh.⁴⁴

Occasionally, employers discover newly recruited workers who do not possess the qualifications required for the job. The key issue, according to MACI, has been the misconceptions about the nature of the working and living conditions in Maldives. Immigration regulations do not permit the transfer of workers to another employer during the first year, even though some employers admitted to transferring them informally. To address the issue, MACI has proposed that employer and worksite transfers be authorized from the beginning of the contract.

Absconding is a key issue in construction, with workers fleeing employers because of the following reasons:

- (a) *Prospects of higher wages from another employer.* Maldives does not have a minimum wage. Therefore, workers' wages largely reflect what they are willing to accept. Workers abroad have low expectations, as they are not familiar with wage structures in Maldives and acquiesce to a lower pay in exchange for a job offer and admission into Maldives. Once on the job, workers discover that there are other employers who pay more for the same job than those who hired/

⁴⁴ The new system is called Maldives Immigration Pre-Departure Security Screening (MIPSS). More information can be found about MIPSS in sections D.1.2 and D.2.1 of this report.

sponsored them. When a worker identifies an employer who needs his services but is unable or unwilling to petition for a quota, he can negotiate with the prospective new employer a higher salary than the one provided by his current/original employer (Khaleel, 2017; Human Rights Commission of the Maldives (HRCM), 2017; interview with Shiya Maldives Agency, 16 October 2017).

- (b) *Mismatches between a worker's abilities and an employers' requirements.* Because of the minimal involvement of employers during the recruitment process and of the inadequate information that workers receive prior to arrival, mismatches between workers' skills and employers' needs are likely.
- (c) *Contract expiry.* Many employers claim that workers flee the workplace upon notification that their contracts are due to expire and they would have to leave the country (interview with Hotels and Resorts Construction (HRC) Pvt Ltd, Male', 25 October 2017).⁴⁵
- (d) *Pre-existing agreement between a worker and a recruiter.* Sometimes, a worker and a recruiter may have an agreement that the former would pay all recruitment costs to facilitate entry into the country. The worker will not work for the employer that sponsored him/her but will instead look for a higher paying job as an irregular migrant.

An employers must report a missing migrant. In such an instance, the employer loses the security deposit but not their quota and can replace the missing worker if they wish. According to interviews, many Maldivian employers retain possession of migrants' passports and work permit cards to prevent absconding. This practice is seen by many as controversial, yet it does not appear to keep workers from absconding.

MACI suggested that more frequent consultations between all stakeholders would help develop fair and transparent regulations easy to implement by all employers, regardless of sector and public or private status. In general, it has been recommended that regulations be made more business-friendly, by decreasing time and documentation burdens so that employers can easily follow the rules (interview with MACI, 30 August 2017).

⁴⁵ Some workers may fail to leave the country after being de-registered by their employers, and MACI argues that it could no longer be held responsible for a worker after it de-registers him. (Interview with MACI, 30 August 2017).

C.3. Migration and social development

C.3.1. Migration and health

As migrants in Asia face challenges accessing health services at all stages of migration – before departure, in transit, at destination and upon return – health issues have risen on the agenda of host and home countries’ policymakers (Calderón, Rijks and Agunias, 2012:1). Migration is not necessarily a health risk to either migrants or host communities. However, the more difficult the working and living conditions, the higher the probability that migrants and host communities may be exposed to health hazards.

A migrant worker applying for a work permit in Maldives (whether for the first or subsequent times) is required to undergo a medical examination, which is now conducted in Maldives – and no longer in the migrants’ countries of origin – to increase the reliability of results. Due to a heightened number of disease-positive cases among Bangladeshis, health screenings for first work permits were recently moved back to Bangladesh to decrease admissions and subsequent repatriations of Bangladeshis suspected of carrying communicable diseases.

Post-arrival health screenings take place in MOH-approved health clinics. Under normal circumstances, workers are certified as “fit to work” within three business days. However, when results are disease-positive, they undergo a secondary examination.

Health screenings aim to detect whether migrants carry one of some 30 diseases, including tuberculosis (TB), HIV, dengue and hepatitis. They are narrowly focused on determining migrants’ fitness to work rather than educating them on how to avoid health risks and seek treatment. While standard health screening tests could be performed by most clinics throughout the country, verification of positive-cases can be performed only by IGMH in Male’. The duration of this process can vary, depending on IGMH’s technical and human resource capacities.

Each medical screening includes an X-ray exam. Foreign national workers, including physicians working for IGMH, consider annual radiation a superfluous health hazard, especially when a worker has not left the country and does not have any higher potential of contracting a disease than a Maldivian worker (interview with migrant workers at IGMH, Male’, 22 August 2017).

Having cleared medical tests, migrant workers must enrol in a mandatory health insurance plan offered by Allied Insurance Company, a Maldivian firm. The insurance aims to ensure migrants are hospitalized when necessary and in the event of death their bodies are repatriated/buried. It does not aim to provide migrants with everyday treatment that would allow them to detect and cure medical conditions at an early stage.

Allied Insurance Company offers two health coverage options: basic (MVR 550 (USD 36) per year) and premium (MVR 750 (USD 47) per year). Employers are obliged to cover all migrants with the basic service, with employers and migrants to decide on enrolment beyond the basic service. Tourist resorts and companies competing for talent may choose to insure them under additional Maldivian or foreign schemes (Table 14).

Table 14: Migrant workers' health insurance

	Basic	Premium
Insurance cost	MVR 550 (USD 36) a year, covered by the employer.	Additional MVR 200 (USD 13) a year, covered either by the employer or migrant.
Coverage	Up to MVR 100,000 (USD 6,492) if admitted to a hospital, to cover the costs of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-surgical diagnostics, anaesthetics and consultations; • Pre-hospitalization diagnostics, consultations, in-hospital physician's visits (maximum of 60 days) and post-hospitalization treatment (within 31 days from discharge). 	
Extra services (X-ray, CT scan, etc.)	Unavailable.	Up to MVR 2,000 (USD 130) – available from public clinics only.
Permanent disability	Unavailable.	Additional payment of up to MVR 50,000 (USD 3,236) a year.
Death	Free body repatriation or burial in Maldives, with a MVR 30,000 (USD 1,943) benefit paid to the family of the deceased.	
Type of hospital treatment	Public (100%) or private (85%) – available from ADK Hospital and MEDICA hospitals only (both located in Male').	
Medical consultation outside of hospital	Unavailable.	

Source: Author, based on Allied Insurance, "Expatriate Insurance". Available from <https://allied.mv/personal/expatriate-insurance#tab-details>

Since it is the employers that enrol migrant workers in health insurance (and not the migrants themselves), the latter may not know the details of their health coverage packages until they go to the doctor's and discover that consultations are not covered. The customer's copy of the health insurance document, as well as the company's website, are often not written in a language that a lesser-skilled migrant would unequivocally understand.

The Maldivian health-care system is not as developed as those of other countries in the region, or even to main countries of origin of migrant workers. Medical treatment is one of the key factors for internal migration and international travel by Maldivians, including to India and Sri Lanka. Two of the country's popular hospitals – the public IGMH and the private ADK Hospital – do not offer the complete array of treatments that migrants would be able to access at home. Improvements are being made, however, with IGMH in July 2016 becoming the only hospital in Maldives to offer cardiology treatment.

Migrants residing outside of Male', especially in remote and sparsely populated atolls, are more vulnerable to health risks, since only basic clinical services are available. Tourist resorts – all of which have basic clinics – may offer migrant workers free basic onsite treatment, but for more specialized health services, the workers must travel abroad. Domestic travel is slow and costly, even in cases of non-emergency movement, as transport by boat or plane (and often both) is required. Government-required insurance does not cover medical evacuations. Allied Insurance only offers transport/medical evacuations to the nearest medical facility able to treat the condition in question under its Select Gold Scheme, which covers the insured worker for MVR 750,000 (USD 48,624) per year and costs MVR 33,400 (USD 2,165) per year (Allied Insurance Co., n.d.).

While in theory, workers' contracts allow medical leave, not all migrants can easily take leave without some kind of financial/material implication. Migrants may also be afraid of being replaced or stigmatized for being sick. Some health conditions, such as dengue, are easily treated if detected early – but harmful or fatal if detected late.

In order to purchase health insurance and see a doctor in a public facility, migrants must have legal status. Thus, apart from working and living in precarious conditions, irregular status migrants have severely limited access to primary care and practically no access to hospital treatment, even in emergency cases. Health conditions of irregular migrants are further exposed by the fact that, to avoid detection, many live and work in isolated areas. A number of migration stakeholders have advocated for granting migrants basic health care, regardless of legal status.

Even though the Health Protection Agency (HPA) collects data, it encounters difficulties providing information on the health of migrant workers.⁴⁶ No data is available prior to 2014 or on diseases other than hepatitis B, dengue,

⁴⁶ Health check-performing clinics record data on migrants' health based on the general health screening form and a couple of disease-specific forms.

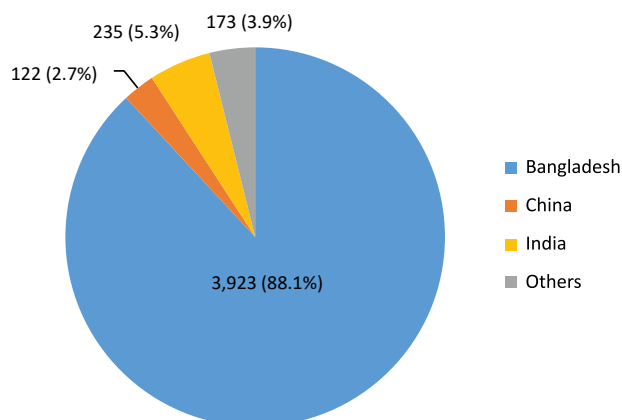
HIV, TB, malaria, filariasis and leprosy. According to HPA records, no migrant was diagnosed with any of the last three conditions. The number of diagnosed cases from 2014 to 2016 that went down the most was observed with hepatitis B (4,453), rather than HIV (45) or TB (39).

There are no publicly available migrant health data. Misconceptions about migrants' health are common and can contribute to social divides that are difficult to reverse. The first step to protect public health in Maldives is to collect and share reliable data.

Data gathered and reviewed during research pointed to a lack of distinction between the first and subsequent health screenings. Whether a migrant has contracted a disease outside or within Maldives makes a significant difference in designing the correct health and immigration policy response to the problem. The second issue is the lack of data on the proportion of those diagnosed with diseases among all examined migrants and the proportion of foreign nationals among all workers. In short, unless the MOH holds better and more complete data, there is insufficient reliable evidence to draw conclusions on the impact of migration on public health.

Between 2014 and 2016, the HPA recorded 4,453 hepatitis B-positive cases, with Bangladeshis the majority affected (88%), followed by Indians (5%) and Chinese (3%). Nearly all (99%) were men (Figure 93).

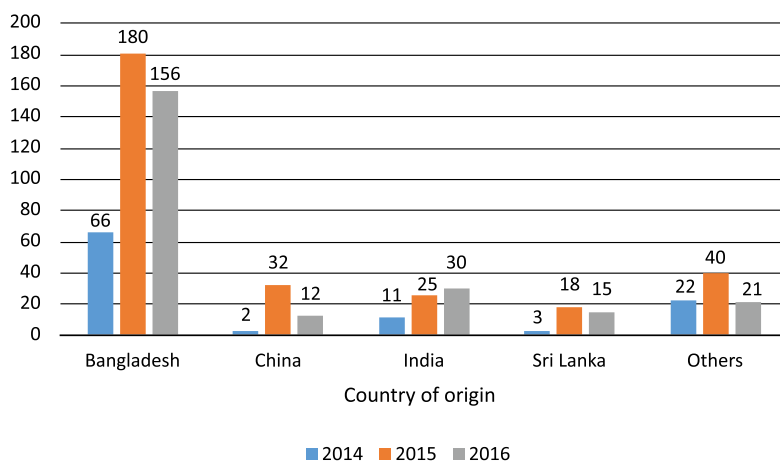
Figure 93: Hepatitis B-positive cases reported among migrants, 2014–2016



Source: Author, based on 2017 HPA data.

The absolute number of migrants diagnosed with dengue increased from 104 in 2014 to 295 in 2015 and 234 in 2016. Compared to available data on other diseases, dengue appeared to be the second most prevalent disease among migrants after hepatitis B. Higher incidences were found among Bangladeshis, followed by Indians and Sri Lankans (Figure 94).

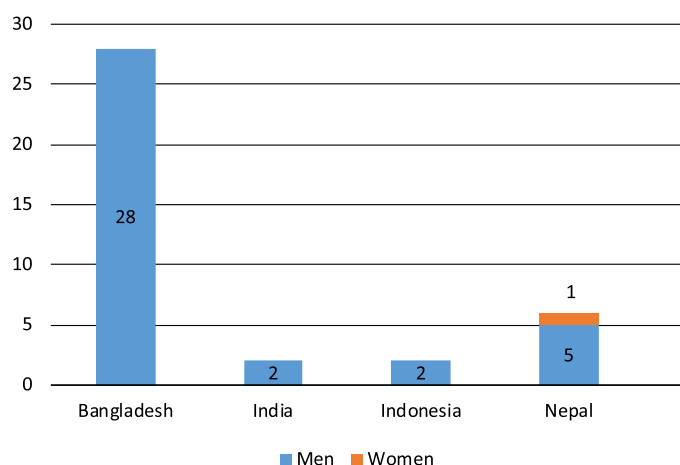
Figure 94: Number of dengue-positive cases reported among migrants, 2014–2016



Source: Author, based on 2017 HPA data.

The HPA recorded 39 TB-positive cases among migrants from 2014 to 2016, mostly affecting Bangladeshis (28) and Nepalis (6) (Figure 95). The MOH (2016c:26) believed that the incidence of TB in the general population had risen in recent years, allegedly due to poor case detection and management. Case detection was ineffective, as screening of migrants from countries with a high TB prevalence is not considered rigorous enough and the local population has refrained from seeking treatment due to fears of stigmatization (MOH, 2016b:26).

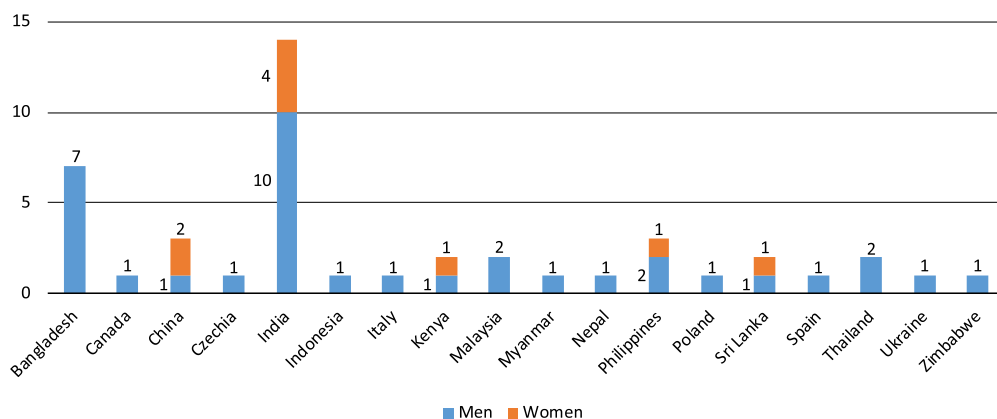
Figure 95: Number of TB-positive cases reported among migrants, 2014–2016



Source: Author, based on 2017 HPA data.

During the same period, 45 migrants were found to be HIV-positive (Figure 96). Most (14) cases were confirmed to be Indian nationals, followed by Bangladesh (7). Women from five out of 18 migrants' countries of origin were affected. The 2013–2018 Strategic Plan recommended strengthening key services – especially concerning HIV prevention – to vulnerable groups, including migrants. Over the course of the plan, 18 peer migrant educators were trained, yet no other concrete actions were taken (MOH, 2013b:29).

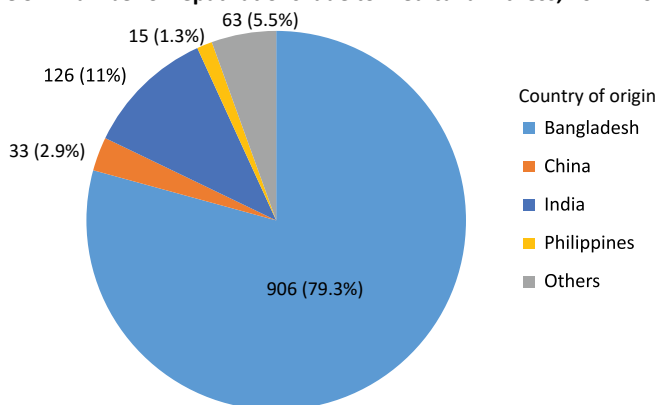
Figure 96: Number of HIV-positive cases reported among migrants by country of origin, 2014–2016



Source: Author, based on 2017 HPA data.

More than three quarters (79%, or 906) of all migrants repatriated as medically unfit (1,143) in 2014–2016 were Bangladeshis, followed by Indians (11%) (Figure 97).

Figure 97: Number of repatriations due to medical unfitness, 2014–2016



Source: Interview with Maldives Immigration, Monitoring Section, 22 August 2017.

The 2016–2021 Health Master Plan recommended the following:

- (a) Screen migrant workers for infectious diseases prior to admission to Maldives;
 - (b) Raise migrants' health-related awareness;
 - (c) Provide free essential health services to all residents, including migrants.
- (MOH, 2016b:43–46)

The first step to ensuring migrants' and host societies' health is to raise public and policymakers' ability to distinguish between migration and health myths and realities. There is persistent public perception that migrant workers carry diseases or are a burden on host countries' health-care systems. This claim needs to be substantiated by reliable data. Like in most other countries, migrant workers in Maldives tend to be "young and fit"; there is no sufficient evidence to conclude to what extent, and how they are contributing to the spread of communicable diseases. Unlike local populations, migrants are subject to regular health checks and are returned to their home countries when confirmed to be communicable disease-positive. Furthermore, migrant workers tend to underutilize health services due to a lack of time, or fears of stigmatization or job loss. Services available to migrants are limited and often paid out of their pockets, while irregular migrants do not have health insurance (Calderón,

Rijks and Agunias, 2012:3). It is recommended that the MOH conduct a short-term migrant health assessment, with a view to developing mid- to long-term dedicated migration health policy as other countries have done (e.g. Sri Lanka).

Assuring migrants' health also means enforcing hygienic living and safe working conditions. The leading cause of migrants' deaths and incapacitation in Maldives is accidents at work rather than pre-existing diseases brought into the country. The Ministry of Housing and Infrastructure is urged to publish statistics on accidents at work and engage employers, the LRA and Maldives Immigration in specific programmes to guarantee suitable standard accommodation and safe working conditions for migrants.

Maldives, as well as migrants' home countries, have a major role to play in helping migrants stay healthy by providing adequate health education, guaranteeing comprehensive health coverage, adequate working and living conditions, and ensuring social security coverage. Health checks to determine migrants' fitness to work are only a small and insufficient element of an effective migrants' health policy. For maximum effectiveness and sustainability, such a policy should be based on intersectoral and international collaboration.

C.3.2. Migrants' working and living conditions

Key issues

Migrants' working conditions may differ due to a number of factors, including skill level, recruitment method and nationality.

According to interviews with migrant workers (Hulhumale, 31 August 2017 and Addu City, 23 October 2017), foreign nationals in Maldives believed Maldivians with the same technical skills were offered access to much better jobs and wages. Employers acknowledged that if they hired a foreign national and a Maldivian for the same position, they would pay them differently (interview with HRC Pvt Ltd, Hulhumale, 25 October 2017), as Maldivians have higher salary expectations. Moreover, discrepancies are also present in terms of wages and working conditions between workers hired directly and those recruited through agencies.

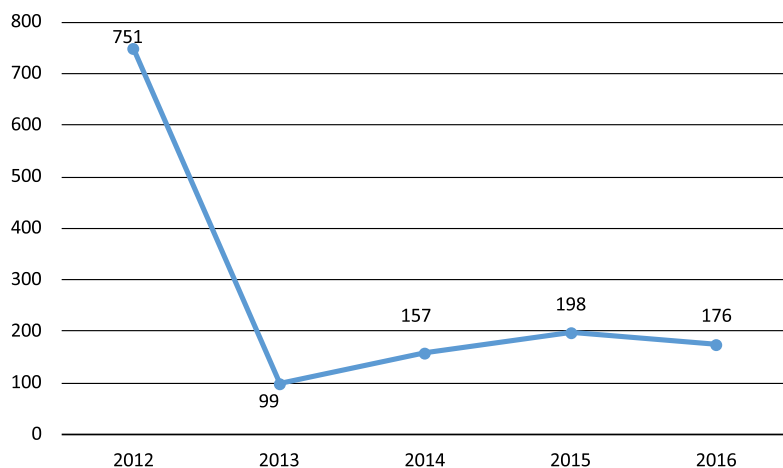
Poor promotion opportunities are another key issue contributing to staff turnover if workers have other options in Maldives or abroad. Employers may be willing to offer higher starting wages to attract workers, without any possibility of a salary raise or promotion during the course of their employment.

Highly and low-skilled workers face different issues. The former tends to face human resource-related challenges, while lesser-skilled workers' issues are more related to labour law violations. However, issues affecting high-skilled workers are even more likely to cause staff turnover and constant labour shortages, as they have more options to resign, return home or re-migrate to other countries.

Another key issue is that many foreign nationals do not receive full-employment contracts prior to their departure from their home countries, and so they arrive in Maldives with little information about the exact nature of the work they will perform, the worksite location and the working conditions. This is a contributing factor to high turnover rates and can increase workers' vulnerability. Legally recruited workers should receive copies of their employment contracts prior to their arrival in Maldives. Furthermore, contracts should not be subject to modification without migrants' explicit and informed consent, an unethical practice known as "contract substitution." While some migrants receive their employment contracts prior to departure, others arrive in Maldives with a single-page appointment letter and are only handed their work contracts post-arrival. Few migrants, and especially few low-skilled migrants (who often only have basic education and are not proficient in English), have previously familiarized themselves with Maldives' labour laws. Knowing one's contract's contents is not sufficient protection. A worker must know whether each contract provision is legally compliant. Case in point: an Indian construction worker reported having to work for ten instead of eight hours a day. Another worker reported not being entitled to annual leave during the first two years of his employment, which is in clear violation of the Employment Act.

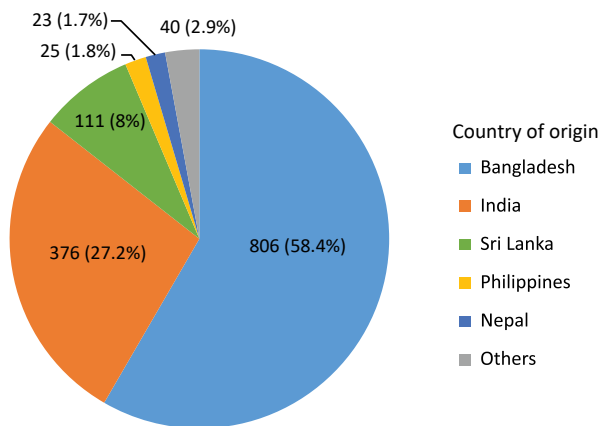
The number of LRA interventions has decreased sharply since 2012. In 2016, the LRA dealt with 176 cases, less than a quarter of those handled in 2012 (Figure 98). Over half (58%) of LRA-handled cases between 2012 and 2016 concerned Bangladeshis; this group is followed by Indians (27%) and Sri Lankans (8%) (Figure 99).

Figure 98: Volume of LRA-handled cases, 2012–2016



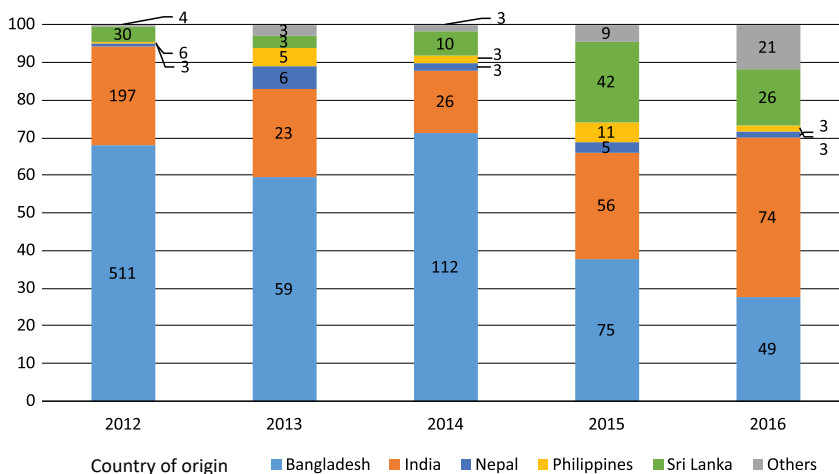
Source: Interview with the LRA, 14 March 2017.

Figure 99: Percentage distribution of LRA-handled cases by country of origin of affected worker, 2012–2016



Source: Interview with the Labour Relations Authority, 14 March 2017.

Figure 100: Number of LRA-handled cases by country of origin of affected worker, 2012–2016

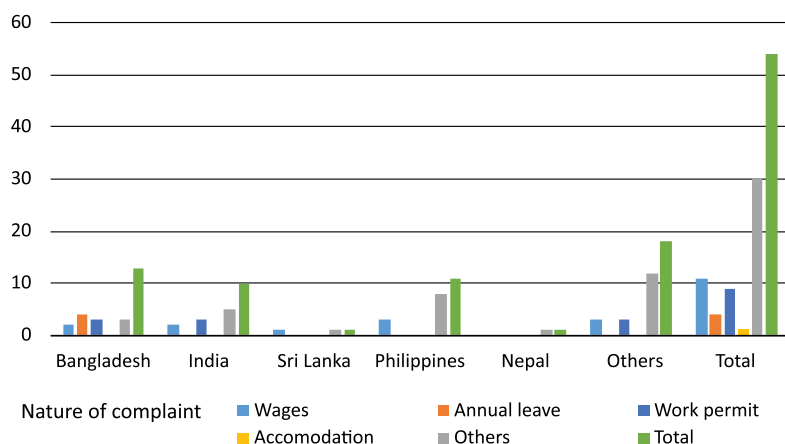


Source: Interview with the LRA, 14 March 2017.

However, the proportions of LRA-handled cases involving Bangladeshi nationals have decreased over time, while the proportions of Indians and Sri Lankans have fluctuated. Over the course of the four years, the LRA has also observed growth in the number of cases involving other nationalities, which, in 2016, accounted for 12 per cent of the total (Figure 100). Of all violations reported to the LRA, 20 per cent related to wages, 16 per cent to work permits and 7 per cent to annual leave (Figure 101).

Deception is the first infringement of labour rights most migrant workers face. According to the national stakeholders interviewed, although Maldivian employers no longer have to go through recruiting agencies, many still use agencies as they tend to offer no- or low-cost services to employers by having migrants pay their fees. Asked who funds the recruitment of lesser-skilled workers, some interviewed employers claimed it was beyond their scope of knowledge.

Figure 101: Types of cases reported to the LRA by country of origin of affected worker, 1 January to 31 July 2017



Source: Interview with the LRA, 14 March 2017.

From an employers' perspective, the greatest deception relates to mismatches between the desired and delivered profiles of new workers, while for a worker, it is the disparity between the promised and the actual working and living conditions, and, particularly, remuneration. When an employer receives a mismatched worker, they may require the recruiters for a replacement or to reassign the worker to a less attractive jobs. Workers who find themselves in worse-than-expected conditions may either officially resign or flee. (Interview with MATI, Male', 22 March 2017)

Government and non-government actors interviewed for this research reported that, up until the introduction of direct bank transfers, unpaid or delayed wages were a common occurrence. Less frequently, workers were subject to deductions they did not understand nor thought to be legitimate. A system of direct payment makes it easier for the LRA to prove late payment cases, but only when workers are able and willing to report them. Workers would be less likely to suffer payment irregularities if employers were obliged to set up automatic payments. Although employers hardly ever directly deny workers' requests for the release of their salaries, they may delay payments due to a temporary lack of liquidity. In most workplaces, there are no mechanisms to allow workers to report or escalate issues. Many may not know how to report problems or if there are any guarantees that their jobs will be protected.

Some employers withhold their workers' documents, allegedly to prevent them from absconding or to protect against theft. Even if workers are free to request copies of their documents, the need to explain why they are making such a request is an infringement on their basic freedoms. Workers' accommodation should offer secure storage facilities.

During the research period, government and non-government stakeholders reported that many workers were affected by unjustified dismissal/termination from service, yet employers claimed that many workers absconded voluntarily. The tourism industry reported that workers were unable to change employers for at least a year. More flexibility for migrants to change jobs in an organized manner is advisable, especially to better manage labour mismatches. All workers appeared to carry cell phones, many with recording capacities and access to the Internet. This means that in the case of limited funds for labour inspections, the LRA may consider encouraging workers to report through these means.

One of the main disadvantages for migrant workers across all sectors is the isolation of working in the atolls. Moreover, Maldives (and the atolls in particular) offers limited professional development opportunities, and the possibility of promotion and advanced technology are lacking. Facilities in the capital, Male', are more attractive to migrants, as they are more technologically advanced, enabling workers to test and improve their knowledge and skills. Another challenge common to many migrants is the lack of clarity and information on working conditions in Maldives. Therefore, Maldives experiences a high turnover of workers, as many are not properly informed about their work locations and conditions. Furthermore, another concern highlighted by migrant workers in different employment sectors was the difficulty in securing long-term contracts and eventual long-term residency in the country. In the absence of a "long-term resident" visa status, migrants tend to feel insecure and this reduces their ability to integrate with their host society and vice versa.

An additional challenge is the various obstacles to family reunification, which affects Maldivian health-care institutions' ability to attract and retain middle-career professionals. Although Maldives' immigration rules allow professionals to sponsor dependents, they require an employer to obtain a quota for them, as employment of dependent visa holders is not allowed. In Male', the biggest challenge to family reunification is the availability and affordability of accommodation, as accommodation is much easier to find in the atolls, but independent employment opportunities for spouses and quality schooling for children are limited (Chaudhary, 2015).

Tourism. In the tourism sector, Maldivians are less likely to be found in physically demanding positions. Due to the job's very nature requiring contact with alcohol, Maldivians are not permitted to work as bartenders on resort islands. Negative labels have become associated with certain resort jobs, making it difficult for those who may have the skills and the interest to pursue careers in these lines of work. Even though being a kitchen helper requires physical strength, it is not considered as an appropriate occupation for Maldivian men. In one of the resorts that participated in this study, of the 43 kitchen workers they employed, only three (two cooks and one helper) were Maldivian. The top executive chef was German, and most of their other cooks were Sri Lankan.

Tourist resorts are located on isolated islands that are costly for Maldivian authorities to inspect. However, despite difficulties in formal monitoring, working and living conditions in this sector are regarded as adequate. In fact, tourism employers cannot easily treat workers below minimum expectations, as workers' dissatisfaction could negatively affect relations with customers.

The comfort of staff accommodation varies with position. Workers in lower-paying jobs tend to share rooms, while those in higher-paying jobs are entitled to single rooms. Resort workers are on resort meal plans that are generally considered adequate. Having water desalination facilities, resorts bottle their own water and may have a water fountain in staff quarters.

All resorts have clinics staffed with foreign doctors. These clinics are intended to provide basic care; hence, for more specialized medical treatment, workers travel to the nearest inhabited island (Male' or abroad), depending on the type of their employment contract and insurance plan.

All resort workers are entitled to an equal share of the 9 per cent service charge that resorts collect from visitors. According to one of the resort workers interviewed, service charge bonuses may boost each worker's monthly salary by up to USD 300.

Since isolation from family and friends can be challenging, some resorts have available accommodation to rent out to migrant staff members' families at discounted rates. In most cases, however, it is the workers who travel (i.e. to their home countries) to visit their families. Resort staff are entitled to discounted fares on seaplanes that regularly connect resorts with the capital's international airport.

Health. With only two hospitals offering foreign nationals comprehensive professional development opportunities – both located in Male’ – Maldives finds it hard to attract and retain quality health-care staff. However, according to some migrant staff interviewed (Male’, 22 August 2017), ADK Hospital and IGMH offer better technology than hospitals in their home countries. In contrast, working conditions in atoll hospitals are less favourable, but due to their high staff turnover, can provide jobs for those unable to secure work in the capital.

Except during staff shortages, most workers are reluctant to work at atoll health facilities if not obligated, or only do so as a stepping stone to work elsewhere. Many consider short working hours and routine work in the atolls a major challenge to career development, both in Maldives and abroad. Hence, since working in the health sector requires constant training that atoll facilities cannot provide, staff turnover in atoll hospitals is significant and generates higher operational costs for Maldivian health facilities and instability for the Maldivian health-care system overall.

Migrant workers employed in health-care are concerned that their own health-care plans are not comprehensive, notably because hospitals charge migrants more than Maldivians. The IGMH Human Resource Department reported (interview, Male’, 18 October 2017) providing its staff with more comprehensive health-care plans than those guaranteed under migrants’ basic health insurance scheme.

The Maldivian work week amounts to 48 hours, so overtime pay is harder to earn than in many other destinations, especially on atolls where facilities are open 36 hours a week.⁴⁷ Not all foreign nationals were prepared for shift work. According to a Pakistani doctor, health-care workers in the atolls were expected to be on call and locally available even outside duty time (Chaudhary, 2015). Interviewed health-care workers recommended working time issues be more clearly explained to foreign national doctors prior to their acceptance of employment offers.

Interviewed workers perceived work in Maldives as financially attractive compared to available jobs back home.⁴⁸ However, with a salary range of USD 1,000 to USD 3,000 a month, medical officers and specialists in Maldives earned much less than in other major Asian destination countries, particularly

⁴⁷ Grade 1, 2 and 3 facilities are open 8, 16 and 24 hours a day, respectively.

⁴⁸ Interviewed ADK Hospital workers from India, Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines reported their earnings to be around double what they would earn back home (interview with ADK Hospital migrant staff, Male’, 27 August 2017).

the Middle East and Singapore (Chaudhary, 2015). These workers migrated to Maldives because the work was perceived to be “easier” than in the Middle East, where migrant workers may also face greater difficulty regarding skills recognition (particularly in Saudi Arabia) and consequent declassification to a lower professional and income status (Chaudhary, 2015).

Even with contracts in hand, interviewed workers were unclear about service allowances and overtime, as well as whether they would be paid in Maldivian rufiyaa or US dollars (both currencies were mentioned in the interviewees’ employment letters). Since Maldivian currency cannot be exchanged abroad and remittances are sent in US dollars, migrants prefer to be paid in this currency, which, however, is often not an option that employers make available to their workers. More settled workers were concerned about the lack of social security agreements between Maldives and their countries of origin, as well as the duration of their employment in Maldives, as a permanent or long-term resident visa status is not available.

Employers are required to provide health-care staff with either an accommodation or correspondent allowance. Subject to availability, medical officers recruited by IGMH are entitled to a one-bedroom apartment and specialists a two-bedroom apartment (interview with IGMH Human Resource Department, Male’, 18 October 2017). Limited accommodations in the capital, where most health employers are located, is a practical constraint on family migration and medical staff attraction and retention. Due to severe accommodation shortages, hospitals in Male’ are more likely to provide accommodation allowances, especially to junior staff. According to the hospital’s human resource staff, the housing allowance was not as financially attractive as hospital-provided accommodations, as it only covered a portion of accommodation costs (7,000 MVR (USD 454) for IGMH medical officers).

Similar to accommodation, the food allowance covers only a part of total food expenditure. In most remote islands, migrants find it challenging to adapt to a basic rice and tuna diet and water shortages during droughts (Chaudhary, 2015). Indian migrants, many of whom are vegetarian, have difficulties meeting personal food needs outside of Male’.

Long-term IGMH migrant workers reported disparities in job promotion between Maldivian and foreign nationals, and sometimes between foreign staff of different nationalities.⁴⁹ Insufficient information about promotion

⁴⁹ According to IGMH human resource staff (interview, Male’, 18 October 2017), foreign nationals were subject to the same career progression opportunities as Maldivians. Their performance was assessed every two years, and if they passed the 85 per cent threshold, they were promoted to the next grade.

opportunities and criteria concerned workers, who would rather move to a country offering lower financial benefits, but where there is greater opportunity for personal and professional advancement (interview with migrant workers at IGMH, Male', 22 August 2017).

On smaller islands, health clinic staff tend to be composed of a doctor, a manager, nurse(s), an administrative officer, a community health officer, a midwife and cleaners. The number of patients outside of Male' is limited to around 30 a day, viewed as insufficient to gain necessary training, even by junior health-care professionals.

Education. Working conditions for foreign teachers vary between Male' and the atolls and between employers. Among interviewed migrant workers who were predominantly Westerners, most who took jobs in international schools, particularly in Male', were satisfied with their positions. For the most part, they were highly driven to experience Maldivian culture and not as financially dependent as other nationals, such as Indian and other non-Westerners, who experienced various issues, notably:

- (a) Limited professional development opportunities;
- (b) Internal relocation to another school within public school system;
- (c) Restriction on geographical mobility, including to another island or returning home without prior permission;⁵⁰
- (d) Larger-than-expected workload due to extracurricular activities and unclear job descriptions;
- (e) Insufficient living allowance in Male';
- (f) Bureaucracy, lack of proper complaints' procedures and conflict-solving mechanisms.

In Maldives, foreign nationals following other religions can practice their respective faiths individually and within their respective homes, but not in public spaces where practice may conflict with government regulations. It is important that foreign nationals are made aware of this prior to taking up job positions in the country.

⁵⁰ The MOE (2017b:8) reserves the right to terminate the position of any teacher who leaves an assigned island or tries to leave the country without school's administration permission.

Table 15: Major provisions of the standard employment contract for expatriate teachers

Usual Employment Duration and Timing
One year (January to December)
Transportation
Worker's residence to the international airport: Paid for by the worker
International transportation: Paid for by the Maldivian employer/recruitment agent (MOE, 2017b:10)
Health insurance
Paid for by the employer
Worker's responsibilities
<p>Technical:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teaching (five days a week) 2. Co-curricular, supervisory and administrative duties (when requested by the school, including on public holidays), including remedial classes for slow learners and additional homework for gifted children 3. Ensuring a 75 per cent student pass rate (under penalty of immediate termination) 4. Availability throughout the entire contract, except during documented illness and authorized leave <p>Social integration:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Respect for Islam and Maldivian culture in both professional and private lives 2. Abstention from political activism in Maldives or abroad 3. Abstention from additional work, unless authorized by the employer
Salaries and allowances (MVR) per month
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Basic salary: 7,070 (teaching diploma); 8,440 (bachelor's degree in education) 2. Educational qualification allowance: 20, 25 and 30 per cent of basic salary (qualification levels 6, 7–8 and 9+, respectively) 3. Service: 2,500 4. Food: 1,800 5. Rent: 1,500
Leave
<p>(Unless authorized (e.g. for medical reasons), leave is not granted during the school year.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 30 days' medical leave 2. 10 days' family responsibility leave <p>Each time an employee leaves Maldives, he/she must leave a MVR 5,000 deposit, which could be deducted from in case of a late return to work (MVR 5,000 if later than 10 days, MVR 3,500 if later than 5 days, MVR 2,500 if later than 1–5 days).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Failure to resume duties within seven days after the approved leave period can lead to contract abrogation and forfeiture of salary or allowances for the duration of leave. 2. Before the employee leaves the country, he/she must inform his/her employer and obtain a "No objection" letter.
Probation, resignation and contract termination
<p>Resignation/Termination: immediate (three-month probation); one month (after probation).</p> <p>MOE reserves the right to replace the foreign worker with a Maldivian at any point in time. Termination costs are divided between the MOE (domestic travel and documentation) and recruitment agency (international travel, food and lodging). (MOE, 2017b:9)</p>
Death in Maldives
Unless the family requests otherwise, burial will be in Maldives. If the family requests it, Maldivian Government will cover the costs of sending the body to "the nearest destination of the home country."

Source: MOE, "Vacancy for Secondary Teachers" announcement.

Construction. As with tourism, certain occupations in the construction sector are dominated by certain nationalities. Employers claim this phenomenon is inevitable due to specific soft and hard skills that different nationalities possess. However, they also acknowledge that certain nationalities are reluctant to work in specific jobs if they are paid below their expectations or have to mix with nationals of other countries. Employers believe ethnically homogeneous teams are easier to manage and accommodate.

As elsewhere in the world, city councils can play an important role to help foster better interaction between migrants from various countries or from different areas of the same country.

Depending on the company, some workers wear protective clothing and equipment, while others wear shorts and open sandals. Helmets and gloves are not usually worn. Due to high monitoring costs, unless an accident happens, resort construction sites are not monitored and working and living conditions are only visible to those employed on-site.

Most worksite accidents, apart from deaths which usually attract media attention, go unnoticed by the public. Data on migrants' accidents and deaths are reported to the ministry responsible for the respective sector and are not necessarily shared with other government agencies, unless required.

Migrant construction workers tend to earn more in Maldives than in their home countries. Bangladeshi workers interviewed in Male' and Addu City reported earning twice as much as back home (interview with Amin Construction migrant workers, Male', 30 August 2017; interview with construction workers, Addu City, 23 October 2017), while Filipinos claimed to earn 50 per cent more, and Indians between one third and one half more in Maldives than back home (Amin Construction, 2017a).

Some workers reported that salaries have not changed since they started working in Maldives (interview with construction workers, Hulhumale, 31 August 2017), while others said a salary raise was due to a change in employer.

Interviewed workers reported different annual leave entitlements. Some were granted legislation-stipulated 30 days off and a free ticket home every year. Others were granted 45 days off and a free ticket home every two years, while others reported annual leave of 30 days, but a free ticket home every other year. It is unclear whether discrepancies in entitlements were due to nationality, occupation, company or legal status. Some workers did not know if colleagues working for different companies had different leave entitlements.

Table 16: Estimated monthly wages of workers of different nationalities

	Labourer monthly wages (USD)	Carpenter monthly wages (USD)
Bangladesh	175–250	275–300
India	300–350	400–450
Nepal	Not applicable	400–450
Indonesia	Not applicable	500–550
Maldives	600+	1,000

Source: Interview with HRCM, 23 February 2017.

One way to improve working conditions, reduce labour demand and attract more Maldivian workers is to encourage industry to adopt labour-saving techniques. By introducing such techniques and more advanced technology, the need for foreign low-skilled labour would be reduced, and more Maldivians would be attracted to less physically demanding jobs. Large companies on tight schedules are more likely to employ labour-saving techniques than small ones. Although HRC uses machinery and pre-fabricated materials, it does not see particular advantages of alternatives to labour-intensive production, whether through mechanization, rationalization or offshoring of production.⁵¹

Adoption of labour-saving techniques can also help the construction industry reduce accident rates. According to Maldives' Employment Act, the "Minister shall be notified within 48 hours in the event of death of an employee or the occurrence of an injury requiring medical care in excess of first aid care to an employee. At the time of research, no data was immediately available on construction sector accidents and deaths other than accident statistics collected during limited inspections. However, the accident toll is likely to be higher in construction than in other sectors. In the summer of 2017, three migrant construction workers died in Hulhumale alone (Shaahunaaz, 2017). The workers were reported to be wearing no protective gear, and it was unclear whether other work safety measures were put in place. MACI, in an interview (2017), proposed that migrant workers, regardless of their status, should be protected by health insurance.

Working and living conditions in the construction sector are inferior to those in tourism, in part due to the isolation of worksites from work end-users. Accommodation in Maldives, especially in Greater Male', is largely unaffordable for migrant workers. Collective housing units are often insufficient to cater to

⁵¹ Chinese companies handling large government construction projects, such as IGMH or the Male'-Hulhumale bridge, rely on prefabricated materials. However, the rationale is not to reduce labour costs, but to ensure timely delivery of a quality material as little can be produced in Maldives. (Interview with HRC Pvt Ltd, Male', 25 October 2017)

entire cadres of workers. MACI acknowledged that accommodation was a key challenge for construction workers.

Construction workers typically do not have access to kitchen facilities, and so they are dependent on canteen food, typically charging around MVR 1,300 (USD 84) a month for three meals a day in Male'. Some workers reported obtaining food allowances, while others had food costs deducted from their salaries.

Skilled construction workers (translators, architects and managers) enjoy the best working and living conditions. Depending on skills and seniority, they may have their own room in apartment complexes also used by Maldivians.

Monitoring, detection and prevention of labour law violations

When interviewed for the purpose of this research, the LRA (2017) expressed that limited resources could be maximized through the prevention of labour law violations, as Maldivian geography hinders full detection of all infractions. When alleged infractions are reported, they are difficult to investigate because workers could be repatriated before the investigation is completed. According to the LRA, migrants should not be deported until cases are investigated, as deportations close a case without determining the facts and preventing similar problems reoccurring. In a number of cases where migrants were mistreated and employers owed payments, the former were unable to claim due payments from abroad, and employers managed to avoid blacklisting. Foreign missions have been concerned about rushed deportations and workers' inability to claim employers' dues.

Interviewed government stakeholders reported that unscrupulous employers have been able to avoid blacklisting, either due to administrative inefficiencies or their ability to change corporate identities and register new companies under new names. This makes it possible for violators to continue committing labour code violations. Some employers have monetary and human capital advantages to circumvent regulations. They can use human resources or lawyers to file cases against migrants. If workers cannot lodge complaints quickly enough, employers may file for bankruptcy or take other steps to complicate timely investigations, before workers are deported.

Even if migrants could stay in the country to claim their rights, they would still experience difficulties making their claims in court, due to protracted procedures making it financially unfeasible for migrants to stay on, unless they

can continue working. According to key informants, migrants should be provided language interpreter assistance in order to have proper hearings and be protected against deportations until cases are adjudicated, where appropriate.

The Employment Tribunal is tasked with hearing employment-related cases. However, few cases involve migrants, and, according to the Employment Tribunal (2017), the problem was not the lack of cases, but poor reporting.

Most migrant workers whose rights have been infringed are in an irregular or unprotected status, which is likely to result in deportation should they report their employers. The Employment Tribunal cannot prevent migrants from deportation if they are in an irregular status. Even when employed legally, a migrant worker can lose legal status immediately should his/her employer find out that he/she has reported them. As hearings are conducted in the Dhivehi language and most migrants need an interpreter and lack resources to hire one, collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) could be forged to help migrants find pro bono interpreters.

The LRA and Maldives Immigration financial and human resource limitations preclude joint inspections. Reaching outer atolls is financially unfeasible, especially if the purpose is to conduct random checks rather than to respond to a specific and/or well-documented problem. In general, the LRA and Maldives Immigration must rely on local partners to conduct inspections – whether it is island councils, island police or respective ministries and employers' associations – and shift their focus on prevention and on the education of often unreceptive employers.

Each year, the LRA must propose a budget to be financed by the Ministry of Finance. The approved LRA budget has decreased through the years, while the number of migrant workers in country (and potential labour infractions) has increased. Adequate funds must be allocated annually in proportion to migrant worker forecasts.

Up until 2016, the LRA had difficulty enforcing economic sanctions against employers. However, since the LRA and the MIRA reached an agreement, the latter, since the spring of 2017, could freeze bank accounts of non-compliant employers. Even if the LRA and Maldives Immigration budgets were sufficient to conduct unlimited inspections, these would not be effective if migrants did not know their rights and how to claim them. In a number of countries, the missing link between migrants and authorities is civil society and local governments. A small collection of civil society organizations (CSOs) potentially able to provide

support to workers and promote the social integration of migrants is already present in Maldives. The Maldivian Red Crescent and other organizations have conducted initial work with migrants and will most likely enjoy credibility within the migration community to continue such work. However, their modest financial resources have historically been used entirely to realize projects rather than build further capacities to work in migration.

PART D: MIGRATION GOVERNANCE

D.I. International context

D.I.I. International treaty obligations

The Republic of Maldives joined the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2009 as its 183rd Member State. It has ratified 10 ILO conventions, but neither Convention C097 (Migration for Employment, 1949) nor Convention C143 (Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions), 1975). These two conventions require States to provide free assistance and information services (including health services) to migrant workers; ensure equal treatment in respect of employment and occupations, social security, and trade union and cultural rights; fight against irregular migration; and work towards family reunification. Moreover, Maldives has not adopted either of the two ILO recommendations concerning migrant workers: Recommendation R086 (Migration for Employment Recommendation (Revised), 1949) and Recommendation R151 (Migrant Workers Recommendation, 1975).

Maldives has not yet ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which prescribes equality in wages and working conditions, the right to information about jobs abroad, as well as equal access to employment services, public housing and educational institutions for migrants, regardless of their immigration status (Migration Dialogue, 2003). This UN convention also obliges States to facilitate family reunification and equal treatment for migrant family members in access to education, social and health services (Migration Dialogue, 2003).

Table 17: ILO conventions adopted by Maldives

ILO member since	2009 (183rd Member State)
Nearest ILO office	Colombo, Sri Lanka
Ratified conventions (10 out of 189) and corresponding dates of ratification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C029: Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), ratified 4 January 2013 • C185: Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (Revised), 2003 (No. 185), ratified 5 January 2015 • C098: Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), ratified 4 January 2013 • C100: Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), ratified 4 January 2013 • C105: Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), ratified 4 January 2013 • C111: Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), ratified 4 January 2013 • C138: Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), ratified 4 January 2013 • C182: Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), ratified 4 January 2013 • MLC, 2006: Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006), ratified 7 October 2014
Ratified fundamental conventions (8 out of 8) ⁵²	All: C029, C087, C098, C100, C105, C111, C138 and C182
Ratified governance conventions (0 out of 4) ⁵³	None

As discussed in Section B.3.5, Maldives lacks an asylum adjudication system and a national refugee protection system, as the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol have yet to be ratified by the country. Moreover, Maldives has not signed either the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The former ensures minimum standards of treatment for stateless persons in respect to a number of fundamental rights, including the right to education, employment, housing and public relief. The 1954 Convention also guarantees stateless persons a right to identity and travel documents, as well as the right to administrative assistance. The 1961 Convention establishes an international framework to ensure the right of every person to a nationality by establishing safeguards to prevent statelessness at birth and later in life. This treaty is therefore complementary to standards contained in other human rights treaties (UNHCR, 2014:4).

⁵² Fundamental conventions are those that cover fundamental principles and rights at work: (a) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, (b) elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, (c) effective abolition of child labour, and (d) elimination of discrimination in respect to employment and occupation. These principles are also covered by the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998).

⁵³ Governance conventions are “priority” instruments, which ILO encourages Member States to ratify because of their importance to the functioning of the international labour standards system.

A significant step forward taken by Maldives in combatting trafficking and protecting victims was made in 2015 with the ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The issue of trafficking in persons in Maldives is examined in more detail in Section B.3.5.6.

D.1.2. International cooperation

Maldives became a Member State of the United Nations in September 1965. The UN Country Team (UNCT) in Maldives consists of resident and non-resident members. There are officially four resident agencies in the UNCT: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and World Health Organization (WHO). All the other UNCT members are non-resident agencies, based (primarily) in Colombo, New Delhi and Bangkok, and may or may not have staff in Maldives. Moreover, Maldives is seeking election to the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member for the term 2019 to 2020.

The Government of Maldives has also taken part in the Global Compact for Migration consultative process. Stemming from the New York Declaration for Migrants and Refugees, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2016, the Global Compact for Migration is the first intergovernmentally negotiated agreement, prepared under the auspices of the United Nations, that covers all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner. The Maldives National Multi-Stakeholder Consultation on the Global Compact was held on 2 October 2017 with technical and financial support from IOM Maldives, under the leadership of Maldives' Ministry of Economic Development. The consultation was attended by representatives of various ministries, UN agencies and CSOs and resulted in the identification of three focus thematic areas for discussion, notably international cooperation and governance of migration in all its dimensions; smuggling, trafficking in persons of migrants and contemporary forms of slavery; and drivers of migration.

A series of recommendations emerged from this consultative meeting:

- (a) Strengthen data management systems.
- (b) Bring clarity to the mandate of government institutions to strengthen law enforcement and labour inspection regimes.

- (c) Establish partnerships with CSOs and local NGOs (such as the Maldivian Red Crescent) and with the Mental Health Division of the Health Protection Agency (HPA) to strengthen support measures provided to victims of trafficking, as well as to strengthen the referral mechanism to detect cases of trafficking and reach out to potential victims.
- (d) Use social media tools and collaborate with telecom partners to provide key messages to migrant populations in suitable languages.
- (e) As part of the Global Compact for Migration mechanism at the regional level, provide on-demand translation services or a mechanism to bridge language barriers.
- (f) Transmit system-generated messages from the migration management system to inform employers and employees when work permits or visas expire.
- (g) Implement a proper monitoring mechanism to improve the accountability of agents (nationally established agencies) and ensure that laws, regulations and procedure are followed at all stages.
- (h) The Global Compact should explore funding sources to deal with the nexus between migration and environmental degradation, given that it is an emerging global and local issue due to the impact it has on human mobility (both internally and/or externally).
- (i) Review sectoral disaster response plans to ensure migrant-focused approaches and sensitivities.

As for the country's role in regional consultative processes, Maldives is an ad hoc member of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime – a forum for policy dialogue, information-sharing and practical cooperation to help the region address the challenges of people smuggling, human trafficking and related crimes. It has raised regional awareness of the consequences of the aforementioned crimes, and its Ad Hoc Group, which Maldives is a part of, aims to comprehensively address situations on a case-by-case basis upon the request of the most affected countries, and report developments to the wider membership of the Bali Process, as appropriate.

Furthermore, Maldives is one of eight members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), established in 1985 to provide a platform for the peoples of South Asia to cooperate and work together in a spirit of friendship, trust and understanding. It aims to accelerate the process of economic and social development. The SAARC Division of Maldives' Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is responsible for coordinating the implementation of SAARC activities in the country, as well as formulating national policies related to

SAARC. The most important responsibility of the SAARC Division is to coordinate and liaise with various Maldivian Government agencies regarding preparations and follow-ups to SAARC meetings.

Except for the 2011–2016 memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Bangladesh, Maldives has not engaged in bilateral collaboration with any migrant country of origin for the admission of workers. The MOU with Bangladesh created a basis for communication regarding the admission of migrant workers, but fell short of developing specific technical collaboration mechanisms to allow stakeholders in both countries to effectively identify and tackle challenges as they arose. The MOU was not extended beyond its expiration in May 2016.

A new channel of communication and collaboration with Bangladesh has recently been established, with the main goal of streamlining and more efficiently monitoring recruitment, as well as conducting health screenings before departure. In 2017, Maldives Immigration launched Maldives Immigration Pre-Departure Security Screening (MIPSS), an online, centralized system through which the Government of Maldives implements the mandatory process of pre-departure health and security screening of all Bangladesh expatriates seeking employment in Maldives. MIPSS helps Maldivian employers employ Bangladeshi expatriates who have cleared pre-departure health and security screening. The new system is still being piloted and is likely to be extended to include migrants from other origin countries.

D.2. National legal and policy frameworks

D.2.1. Admission of migrant workers

Assessment of labour demand and employer's quota eligibility

In order to obtain work permits for their migrant workers, prospective employers must first obtain a quota, which is the maximum number of migrant workers an employer can hire during a specified period of time (AGO, 2015). The limit is not pre-set for the year, but is determined by Maldives Immigration based on information provided by the applicant.

Previously, as part of the quota system, the Government of Maldives used a standard international instrument called the “labour market test” to determine labour shortages. The test was a case-by-case determination of the availability of local workers to fill a certain job opening. It was done through a three-day advertisement period for the position among local workers before

migrant workers could be considered. It was eventually abandoned because its ineffective implementation made it unable to serve its purpose. A quota system, with no proper mechanism to assess labour shortages, does not encourage Maldivian employers to proactively look for Maldivian workers.

The MED introduced a list of occupations reserved for Maldivians – and, thus, should be off-limits to foreign nationals – based on the assumption that such a policy would attract local workers (Maldives Immigration, 2008). These jobs included taxi drivers, aircraft pilots, vessel captains and engineers, fishing boat workers, photographers, shopkeepers and cashiers and counter workers in shops, canteens, cafés and restaurants (Maldives Immigration, 2015a and 2015b). Since some jobs (particularly, cashiers, shop assistants and photographers) had been popular among migrant workers, this measure put pressure on employers to replace them on short notice, as well as on Maldives Immigration to conduct costly raids to verify employers' compliance.

Due to rapidly rising foreign employment, the tourism industry has been subject to ceilings on employment of foreign workers since 2012. As of 2017, resorts had to maintain a 45:55 Maldivian-to-foreign worker ratio, down from the original 55:45.

Based on the Expatriate Employment Regulations, the quota requirement does not apply to domestic workers. However, the regulation limits the maximum number of domestic workers to one in each subcategory: domestic servant/nanny, driver, attendant/care provider (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 1, Article 9b1–3). Furthermore, migrant workers recruited by State institutions (but not by State-owned companies) and unpaid volunteers are exempt from quotas (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 1, Article 2f).

Quota application consists of three steps:

Step 1: XPAT Database registration

Maldivian employers register with XPAT Database, an online register of any individual or company seeking to bring foreign workers into the country. Registrations are complete when employers report to one of the official immigration offices to confirm their identity through fingerprinting.

Step 2: Quota application

Once registered with XPAT, an employer may apply for a quota, free of charge. Applications can be filed directly or via an agency. Some employers use recruitment agencies to ensure that their application requirements are complete (to avoid being returned for missing documents) and that they are permitted to contract a sufficient number of workers. Some employers claim that applying through an agent is more effective. Assistance with quota applications is the first step in the employer–recruitment agency collaboration that often extends into foreign labour recruitment.

Depending on the type of work, quotas are issued with a validity of either one or two years. Under certain conditions, a quota can be granted with a validity of five years (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 2, Article 3e).

Step 3: Administrative review

A quota committee reviews quota applications made by employers. Each application contains a number of documents that, if scrutinized in detail, requires a larger and more highly trained team. Since applications are made by employers for a wide variety of occupations, they present a heavy workload beyond the capacity of the existing four-person committee. The committee is composed only of Maldives Immigration officials, precluding multisectoral and cross-cutting inputs or perspectives when determining quota levels.

The application information reviewed by the committee includes worksite address, industry/economic activity and various documentary attachments to demonstrate real labour demand.⁵⁴ When inspections are required, two out of the four committee members visit employment sites. As carrying out inspections outside the capital requires funding and coordination with local authorities, they are performed as a last resort. The quota committee issues the final approval within 15 days from the filing of the application during a three-hour-long weekly meeting. Around 60 quota applications are approved during such meetings.

Through the quotas, workers are assigned to a specific employer, occupation and worksite. The worker should be employed in line with quota authorization guidelines (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 2, Article 3a). However, a worker may move to another employer, occupation and/or worksite upon mutual agreement between the worker and his/her original employer, subject to the approval of Maldives Immigration.

⁵⁴ For instance, documents related to construction may require architectural blueprints, the estimated timeframe required to complete the project, while those related to resorts may require the number of beds.

Employers found violating quota rules risk the following penalties:

- (a) A fine of MVR 1,000–5,000 (USD 65–325) per worker for each offence;
- (b) Financial responsibility for the repatriation of affected workers;⁵⁵
- (c) Blacklisting from quota applications for one year.

(Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 2, Article 3b)

According to key informant interviews, employers able to obtain permission to bring in more workers than they need often subcontract them to others. This practice of subcontracting (also referred to as “quota trading”) leads to situations whereby the migrant workers do not have a clear understanding of who their official employer is. Hence, inadequate assessment of labour shortages hampers the Maldivian Government’s efforts to prevent irregular migration, including human trafficking, and renders migrants more vulnerable. Establishing a sound framework for determining labour shortages and ensuring quotas correspond to genuine demand is highly recommended.

Migration stakeholders, including employers, civil society representatives of countries of origin and some recruiting agencies felt the quota procedure could be streamlined. Some of the stakeholders interviewed described the quota procedure as difficult to understand, even leading some employers to resort to fee-charging recruitment agents to help them navigate the process.

Due to human and other resource limitations, Maldives Immigration can only afford to conduct pre-admission quota and post-admission inspections in easily accessible sites when well-substantiated doubts about information provided by an employer arise. According to the LRA, quota inspection committees should include rotating representatives of various government agencies (interview with Labour Relations Authority, Male’, 14 March 2017). However, assessment of labour shortages could be also improved by revising procedures for evidence submission, admission and analysis.

Foreign worker admission procedures will benefit from a re-evaluation. A reintroduction of some form of labour market test may be helpful to assess labour shortages more effectively and allow Maldivian workers to learn about job opportunities.

⁵⁵ If a worker brought in on a quota is found to be illegally employed by another employer, the employer who originally obtained the quota is responsible for repatriation costs.

Labour shortage assessments are complex and are conducted by labour market specialists in most countries, rather than migration enforcement agents. A multi-stakeholder approach is essential to best meet employers, Maldivian and foreign workers' needs. If the labour market test previously implemented (i.e. prior to the dissolution of the Ministry of Human Resources, Youth and Sports) failed to deliver expected results, the Maldivian Government could seek technical assistance from specialized agencies to redesign it. Furthermore, it could consult key stakeholders both in the public and private sectors and review existing policies to identify gaps and challenges and possible overlapping of responsibilities among institutions.

Worker recruitment and selection

In 2017, Maldives Immigration developed MIPSS to streamline recruitment from Bangladesh. Specifically, it focusses on: (a) repatriation of Bangladeshi workers unable to pass the post-arrival medical test and (b) irregularities in the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers. MIPSS intends to limit the number of Maldivian and foreign national agencies involved in the recruitment process to a few approved ones monitored by the Bangladeshi Government. Workers would also need to clear health checks in approved Bangladesh health facilities, reviewed annually by the HPA (interview with Permits and Foreign Employment Section staff of Maldives Immigration, Male', 17 October 2017).

A private company, chosen through an international bidding process, developed the MIPSS system, where individual employers from Maldives and selected agencies from Bangladesh must register. When employers need to hire migrant workers, their request must be entered into the system. The system randomly chooses a recruiter in Bangladesh, who will send a list of candidates to the employer. When the employer gives the green light, the recruiter sends the workers to pre-approved clinics for the health screening, and the employment terms are uploaded to the system (Maldives Immigration, 2018).

The new system does not directly address the key issue of workers bearing recruitment costs. Maldives Immigration is aware that workers often bear all migration costs, and that foreign agencies charge high recruitment fees and pass the responsibility of paying Maldivian work visa fees to workers. Maldives Immigration hoped that, by limiting the number of accredited recruitment agencies, it would better identify and hold them accountable.

While systems such as MIPSS have the potential to improve recruitment regulations and monitoring, they do not necessarily ensure greater collaboration

between countries of origin and destination. Carefully negotiated MOUs or bilateral labour agreements can be equally or more effective in tackling issues of interest to countries of origin and destination. This is the case for MOUs pertaining to the elimination of work agency fees, pre-departure and/or post-arrival orientation and training, profiling of workers to be recruited, facilitation of the authorization process for workers' migration, money transfer policies, pre-approval of contracts, protection of workers in Maldives, and cooperation on return and repatriation.

Since 2009, when the Employment Agency Regulations were passed, employers have been exempt from mandatory recruitment through Maldivian-based licensed agents. Although, according to the representatives of the Maldivian Association of Recruiters (interview, Male', 28 March 2017) the regulation decreased the demand for recruiters' services, many employers have continued to rely on agents because of the logistical and financial convenience. (Challenges related to recruitment in specific sectors are discussed in detail in Part C.)

Letter of appointment and employment approval⁵⁶

Before bringing in a prospective worker from overseas, an employer should issue him/her a letter of appointment to serve as an employment agreement between the two of them until a formal contract is signed. The letter of appointment should contain the items of information specified in Annex 3 of the Expatriate Employment Regulations, including the first formal indication of employment conditions, and a "No fees" clause (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 2, Article 12c).

The "No fees" clause is insufficient, as it only pertains to the employer and not the recruiter(s) involved in the hiring process. During research, an employer who recruited workers through agents reported that an unscrupulous agent manipulated the contents of the appointment letter sent to the worker by modifying the working conditions and concealing the "No fees" statement to instead say that fee would be charged.

Since recruitment agencies cannot be expected to do work free of charge, employers should recruit directly or bear migration costs themselves. The "No fees" clause should also specify which costs must be borne by employers, so that recruitment fees are not hidden among charges for other items, such as information about the job, application assistance, training, airfare and orientation.

⁵⁶ Previously referred to as "work permit," including in the Expatriate Employment Regulations.

To obtain employment approval for the prospective worker, employers, in the letter of appointment, must provide indicate the worksite location, proposed salary and job description occupation and include the worker's passport details (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Article 10c).

On a particularly busy day, the Quota Team may review up to 200 applications, which makes it difficult to detect contracts in contradiction with Maldives Immigration and labour regulations.

The Auditor General's Office found that a third of employment approvals it examined contained problems that would have resulted in rejection of the application if identified early enough. The issues concerned the following:

- (a) Discrepancies between information contained in various documents, including salary and job description (in the letter of appointment versus employment contract) or the year of birth (contract versus passport);⁵⁷
 - (b) Inadequate verification of documents: Indistinct certificates were accepted and the blue and red stamps used to demonstrate verification of documents were missing;
 - (c) Employment approvals issued for a period exceeding the contract period and for companies without administrative clearance.
- (AGO, 2015:14)

Security deposit

To ensure continuity of monthly visa payments and repatriation of a worker in case he/she overstays his/her, the employer must make a security deposit at least 48 hours prior to the worker's arrival (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 2, Article 7). The amount of the deposit is equal to an estimated cost of a one-way ticket to the home country and pre-departure detention costs (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 2, Article 7; Maldives Immigration, 2017c). An employer that fails to pay the security deposit is subject to a MVR 2,000 (USD 126) penalty and MVR 500 (USD 32) for each worker for whom the deposit was not paid in time.

⁵⁷ Year of birth becomes an important issue not only for identification reasons, but also to prevent employment of minors. Airport staff reported that there had been cases of Bangladeshi minors arriving in Maldives with passports indicating false dates of birth unlikely (interview with Airport Section staff of Maldives Immigration, Hulhumale, 21 August 2017).

Government institutions are exempt from paying security deposits. There are also no security deposits required for occupations that are exempt from quotas. Domestic workers, whose employers are exempt from the quota system, however, require security deposits. In addition, employers who bring foreign workers into the country are responsible for covering work visa costs, as well as repatriation costs if workers need to be repatriated (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 2, Article 8). Employers whose workers have left Maldives on time may apply for the deposit to be returned at deregistration.⁵⁸

The security deposit is the largest cost for an employer. Even though it is reimbursable upon a worker's departure from Maldives, some employers find it too expensive to keep MVR 8,000 (USD 520) per worker frozen throughout the worker's employment. It is acknowledged that recruiters may extract the value of security deposit from migrants, either directly or occulting it among other fees.

Worker's arrival in Maldives

A worker must arrive within 90 days following the issuance of his/her employment approval (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Article 23). All entries and departures to and from Maldives must be made through an authorized sea or airport of entry (Maldives, People's Majlis, 2007). As Maldives does not maintain international maritime connections, all workers arrive by air and the vast majority through the capital.⁵⁹

Immigration officers can refuse admission to any person based on "reasonable grounds," such as suspicion that the migrant is carrying fraudulent documents, may disrupt national harmony, has strong religious or political views, may carry contagious diseases or does not have sufficient funds (Maldives Immigration, 2017d). The Controller General of Maldives Immigration can revoke a migrant's right to enter or stay in Maldives at any time (Maldives, People's Majlis, 2007:8–9).

As a part of the admission process, workers are photographed and their fingerprints taken. The law stipulates that, with the exception of professionals, employers or their representatives (recruitment agencies) must be present at the airport to receive arriving workers (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 3,

⁵⁸ Employers may de-register workers through an "application for deposit refund," usually when a worker leaves the country, but also when authorizing the transfer of a worker to another employer or declaring a worker's death. The deposit amount may be diminished or nullified if used to cover overdue visa fees or to repatriate the worker (Maldives Immigration, 2017c).

⁵⁹ Maldives' second international airport is located in Addu City, which receives direct flights from Sri Lanka.

Article 16). However, this requirement is difficult to verify, as most employers instruct workers where to report. Some construction employers reported that workers disappeared soon after arriving in the country.

Health screening, work visa and work permit card

Since Maldivian consular presence abroad is limited, migrants enter the country with employment approvals and after being cleared medically, apply for a visa within the first 15 days of their stay (Maldives Immigration, 2017c).

Health screening can be performed at any approved health facility in Maldives. Workers are screened for a number of communicable diseases, including HIV, TB and hepatitis B. Due to the fear that migrant workers from certain countries of origin may be particularly prone to communicable diseases, requirements to undergo health screening in the country of origin (Bangladesh) were introduced in July 2017. Apart from proving they are in good health, migrants are required to be medically insured by their employers.

Even though workers are issued multiple-entry visas, they usually require an employer's approval letter to leave the country. If they intend to take leave and stay abroad for 30 days, the law prescribes that employers must notify immigration authorities (Maldives Immigration, 2017c). Some employers restrict a migrant worker's right to leave the country if not planned in advance.

A work visa card is issued for the duration of the employment agreement (usually one year), but is technically valid only for as long as the employer pays the monthly work visa fees. Employers who do not keep up with their payments risk fines and can be blacklisted from future quota applications. Late applications are fined MVR 10 (USD 0.6) per day starting on the sixteenth day after the date of submission until the third month from the worker's arrival in Maldives. If an employer does not apply for the work permit card within three months of the worker's arrival, the worker is repatriated at the employer's cost. Many employers fail to keep up with monthly work visa payments, thereby rendering workers' irregular status and restricting their ability to leave the country. Maldives Immigration supports the alignment of visa fees to the duration indicated on the visa sticker, so that migrant workers are aware of their status. It has also taken steps to prevent situations whereby workers are unable to leave the country due to the employer's negligence. In addition, a migrant worker in possession of a valid visa is allowed to board a plane to exit the country post-contract. An employer's letter of consent is no longer required. A migrant without a valid visa must go through the registration process for voluntary return (interview with Maldives Immigration, Male', 8 May 2018).

Work permit renewal and transfer of employment

Employers are required to apply for work permit and employment visa extensions before their expiry (Maldives Immigration, 2008:10). As part of the work permit renewal process, workers must renew their health screening certificates.⁶⁰

An employer found to have workers holding valid work permits officially sponsored by another employer is in violation of employment rules. All employment transfers must be formally completed with an approval from Maldives Immigration (Maldives Immigration, 2017c). Further, workers might not be transferred from one employer to another during the first year of employment.

Registration of workers with local authorities

Employers are required to register (arrival) and de-register (departure or transfer) their workers with their respective city or island councils. The councils are expected to keep a registry of expatriate workers in their respective jurisdictions. Where such councils do not exist, employers should register with the council of the nearest island that has one. Failure to register/de-register may amount to a MVR 1,000 (USD 65) fine per day (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 4, Article 24). The requirement is not strictly observed even in Male', where most migrants reside.

Foreseen and unforeseen employment cessation

A migrant worker must obtain his/her employer's permission to legally cease work. Moreover, an employer must file a request to Maldives Immigration to have the worker's permit cancelled and the security deposit reimbursed. Maldives Immigration may, on its own accord, also cancel a worker's permit.⁶¹

In the vast majority of cases, employers de-register migrant workers due to the expiry of their contracts. However, a number of work permit de-registrations occur each year due to the "disappearance" of workers,

⁶⁰ An employer who fails to apply for an extension or renewal on time is liable to pay a late visa fee.

⁶¹ Maldives Immigration may cancel a work permit: (a) for any reason, upon the employer's request, while the worker is still abroad; (b) if the worker fails to arrive within 60 days from the date the work permit is approved; (c) if the worker leaves after arriving in Maldives and obtaining the work permit; (d) when the work permit has expired or if the worker has fallen into an irregular status; and (e) if the worker is suspected of participating in an illegal activity (be it religious, political or otherwise), or is deemed a public burden for other reasons (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 4, Article 23).

particularly construction workers. Employers whose workers have disappeared or absconded should inform Maldives Immigration within 48 hours; otherwise, they are denied a quota for foreign workers for at least a year (Maldives, People's Majlis, 2016). In principle, when an absconding worker is found, his/her repatriation is covered by the security deposit (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 3, Article 20). Unscrupulous recruiters can exploit employers' fear of forfeiting security deposits in cases of absconding migrant workers by shifting the burden of paying the security deposits to the migrant worker, thus, becoming more cost-competitive compared to recruiters who abide by the rules.

An employer may successfully de-register an absconding worker after settling all overdue visa fees accrued prior to the worker's disappearance (Maldives Immigration, 2017c). Employers are liable to complete work visa fee payments due on the worker until the date of report's filing and not the date of the worker's disappearance. Hence, the longer an employer waits to report, the more money they owe to the Government (Maldives, People's Majlis, 2016: Article 17b).

Since July 2016, an employer with an absconding worker could "regularize" him/her by paying all visa fees due for the period that the worker was missing (and presumably working for this employer), plus an additional MVR 6,000 (USD 389) fee (Maldives Immigration, 2016c).

If an employer dies, a worker may return home immediately or take up to one month to find another employer in Maldives (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 5, Article 30). If a worker dies, the employer should notify Maldives Immigration and organize a burial according to the agreement in the contract. Both repatriation of the body and burial are covered by the health coverage provided by Allied Insurance Company (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 4, Article 19).

Sanctions and fines

Maldivians and foreign nationals found to have contravened the Immigration Act could be fined up to MVR 50,000 (USD 3,249) (Maldives, People's Majlis, 2007) (Table 7). The Act specifies the minimum fine for foreign nationals (MVR 15,000, or USD 975), but not for Maldivians.

Maldives Immigration may summon relevant parties for an investigation and may file a court case if any party has not settled fine payments. The maximum fine that Maldives Immigration can impose on those who fail to pay due fines is 3,000 MVR (USD 195). An employer found guilty of employing a worker with an

expired work permit may be also ordered to repatriate the worker and shoulder repatriation costs. (Maldives Immigration, 2008:Chapter 5, Article 26)

Table 18: Key employer sanctions

Item	Cost to the employer (in MVR)
Illegal employment/accommodation fine (applicable to the employer and foreign employee)	Exclusion from quota applications for one year and: First offence: 2,000–10,000 ⁶² Second offence: 10,000–20,000 Third offence: 20,000–30,000 Fourth offence: 30,000–50,000
Late visa application penalty	10 (per day)
Unpaid deposit penalty	2,000 + 500 (per worker)
Regularization fee	6,000 (per worker)
Unauthorized employment	Temporary detention and repatriation costs
Absconding of a worker	Forfeiture of the security deposit

Source: Regulation on Work Visa of Expatriates; Maldives, Regulation on Expatriate Employment, Second Amendment of 25 October 2015; and Maldives, Fifth Amendment to the Employment Act, Law No. 22/2016.

Table 19: Official migrant worker admission-related costs (without agency fees)

Purpose	Cost to the employer (in MVR)
Quota	0
Recruitment	Variable
Employment approval	0
Visa	250 (per month)
Visa card	50
Deposit	Equivalent to the cost of a one-way ticket to the country of origin
Late visa application penalty	10 (per day)
Health insurance	550 (per year)
Medical examination	750 (per year)
Visa adjustment fee	6,000

Sources: Interview with Maldives Immigration, May 2018; Maldives, Regulation on Expatriate Employment, Second Amendment of 25 October 2015; and Maldives, Fifth Amendment to the Employment Act, Law No. 22/2016.

D.2.2. Trafficking and smuggling

The Government of Maldives has made significant steps in the fight against human trafficking. In 2013, it approved the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act,

⁶² Maldives Immigration, Regulation on Work Visa of Expatriates Coming to Work in Maldives (Regulation No. R-7/2010, 12 October 2017). Unofficial translation from Dhivehi provided by IOM Maldives.

which defined, for the first time, trafficking in persons as a criminal offence that can carry a sentence of up to 15 years' imprisonment. The act criminalizes forced labour and fraudulent recruitment as acts of human trafficking. Moreover, the Maldivian Government adopted the five-year National Plan on Anti-Human Trafficking that laid out the strategic direction for a coordinated national effort to combat human trafficking.⁶³

No legal framework on smuggling has yet been developed. However, the Government is considering the inclusion of a clause on smuggling in the Maldives Immigration Act and is collaborating with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to design a national anti-smuggling law, whose draft in English has been already prepared (interview with Maldives Immigration, Male', 8 May 2018).

The Government's specific anti-trafficking efforts in 2017–2018 included an online case management system and greater access to resources and funding for its anti-trafficking unit. Also, a pre-departure screening system for Bangladeshi migrant workers was put in place to help reduce fraudulent recruitment. However, Maldives still does not fully conform to the 2000 UN TiP Protocol, as there continues to be a lack of SOPs for victim identification, protection and referral – thereby preventing proactive identification of victims, which sometimes results in their deportation. As such, the US Department of State, in its Trafficking in Persons Report 2018, recommended the following:

- (a) Increase investigations, prosecutions and convictions against all forms of trafficking, and against officials complicit in trafficking-related crimes;
- (b) Amend the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (PHTA) to bring the definition of human trafficking in line with the 2000 UN TiP Protocol;
- (c) Formally adopt SOPs for proactive identification of trafficking victims and referral to protection services, and train all relevant government officials on their use;
- (d) Re-establish the state-run shelter and consistent rehabilitation services, including psychosocial support and interpretation;
- (e) Finalize and implement the SOPs for shelter operations and victim services;
- (f) Increase efforts to monitor and punish labour recruitment agents and firms engaging in fraudulent practices;

⁶³ Maldives, Anti-Human Trafficking National Action Plan 2015–2019. Available from www.baliprocess-rso-roadmap.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Maldives_Anti-Human-Trafficking-National-Action-Plan-2015-2019.pdf

- (g) Enforce prohibitions against passport retention by employers, including government agencies;
- (h) Raise public awareness of human trafficking through media campaigns.

D.2.3. Migrants' access to health care

Health Services Act (2015)

The main objective of the Health Services Act is to ensure that health services provided by a State or private institution, through various health service centres, systems and facilities, are standardized, consistent in quality, safe and accessible to all citizens. The act covers Maldivians and resident foreign nationals and includes a non-discrimination clause that stipulates: "A user shall not be discriminated based on race, nationality, colour, gender, age, physical or mental disability, political or any other belief, financial status, family, birth place or any other [criterion]."

Health Master Plan (2016–2025)

In December 2014, the MOH adopted the Health Master Plan 2016–2025. The plan outlines principles and national health goals, as well as provides strategic guidance to public and private partners to further develop programmes and business plans to improve the population's health and develop the national health system. Critical areas touching upon migrants that need concerted future action include:

- (a) The health concerns of vulnerable groups, particularly young adolescents, pregnant women and children, people with mental health conditions and disabilities, the elderly and migrants, taking into consideration their socioeconomic positions in society;
- (b) Financing areas of inefficiency and instability in the provision of health-care services that affect universal access and coverage.

The Master Plan also identifies concrete steps to be taken:

- (a) Develop programmes to reach the migrant population and create awareness of healthy practices and behaviours;
- (b) Establish a more effective mechanism for screening foreign national migrants for communicable diseases prior to entry into the country.

D.2.4. National Development Plan

The most recent National Development Plan (NDP) was developed by the former Ministry of Planning and National Development⁶⁴ (now dissolved) in 2006. A National Strategic Action Plan was developed in 2009 by the President's Office, which focused primarily on good governance, economic development and social justice. However, there is an urgent need for a new NDP to build on the progress towards addressing gaps and challenges identified in the last ten years and design new responses and a long-term strategy, as well as mainstream migration issues into future development policies as a road map towards achievement of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The most recent NDP focused on the urgent need to reconstruct the country's infrastructure following the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. It also acknowledged the vast inequalities between Male' and other islands in the availability of educational, health services and employment opportunities, which has led to overpopulation of the capital city. The population of Male' comprises 58 per cent internal migrants who have moved from other atolls with fewer and poorer services, infrastructure and livelihood opportunities. Moreover, the plan emphasized the human rights of disadvantaged groups by developing joint activities promoting the rights of people with disabilities, women, children and migrant workers with national, regional and international partners (NDP, 2006).

D.2.5. Pension and other social security benefits

The original Pensions Act (2009) introduced the obligation of employers to register all employees, regardless of nationality, to the Retirement Pension Scheme of Maldives. The law prescribed that employers and the State contribute equally to the scheme (7% each of pensionable wages), to correspond to the basic salary. Since employers and employees were reluctant to participate due to the additional expense it entailed, the second amendment to the law (2014) made it voluntary for employers to register migrant workers in the scheme. Therefore, employers are under no obligation to provide migrant workers with a pension.

The most recent amendment to the law (2018) has allowed migrant workers to collect pension contributions at the time of their departure from Maldives. However, the rights accrued prior to the Pension Act are liquidated

⁶⁴ The mandate of the dissolved MPND has been transferred to the Ministry of Finance. Since 2012, the President's Office has been more or less steering the planning process.

at the age of 65, as was the case before 2009 (interview with Maldives Pension Administration Office, Male', 10 May 2018). Moreover, migrant workers are not entitled to any other social security benefits and social protection programmes that Maldivian citizens are eligible to, such as the disability, medical welfare and single-parent programmes.

D.3. Institutional and data frameworks

D.3.1. Ministry of Economic Development

The Ministry of Economic Development (MED) is tasked with the formulation of economic and trade policies, the regulation of trade and investment in the areas other than tourism-related investment, and the economic development of the country through the regulation and promotion of trade and investment (other than tourism investment), Immigration and Emigration, Labour, Maritime and Land Transport Sectors. The MED is a key institution in the field of migration. Since 2014, its mandate has also included labour management, in addition to migration management and anti-human trafficking victim support services. Maldives Immigration and the LRA fall under the umbrella of the MED.

D.3.2. Maldives Immigration

Maldives Immigration is a specialized agency responsible for “immigration control,” specifically, for “border protection from undesirable or harmful effects from immigrants and aliens, that might deter or disrupt the harmony and solidarity of the sovereign Maldives” and for “safe entry and exit of genuine travellers.”

Since Maldives Immigration issues all types of visas, it is the principal source of migration data. It manages three databases: (1) XPAT, (2) PISCES and (3) CBN (Table 20). Each database was created at a different time, for different purposes and by different developers. Thus, the three databases are not integrated, nor have the data they collected been integrated across time, so records are only available since 2013, when Maldives Immigration was created. While Maldives Immigration is able to enter data, it must delegate the National Centre for Information Technology (NCIT) to modify saved entries and generate reports.

Table 20: Maldives Immigration data-recording systems

Database	Type of data	Technical management
XPAT	Labour migration (quota, employment authorizations and work visas). XPAT contains Bangladesh health screening MIPSS data from mid-2017 onwards.	National Centre for Information Technology (NCIT)
PISCES	Arrivals and exits of all visa holders.	NCIT
CBN	All submitted information of visa holders.	Expired licence (The plan is to replace the system with a new database, FPPS.)
Excel	Data other than those present in the three databases (e.g. data related to voluntary and involuntary returns and raids).	Dispersed among data recorders

Sources: Interview with Maldives Immigration, 8 May 2018; and interview with NCIT, 18 October 2017.

D.3.3. National Centre for Information Technology

The National Centre for Information Technology (NCIT) is a government institution responsible for the technical aspects of data management. The centre was created to ensure that no single agency had total control over data and technical maintenance. NCIT can only modify data and produce reports upon request of Maldives Immigration. It can also modify database technical capabilities, such as integrate databases, create new entry fields to help Maldives Immigration produce new data or new types of reports based on existing data. For example, NCIT can allow Maldives Immigration to produce reports following the International Standard Classification of Occupations format based on work permit data, as well as correct any errors and prevent them from occurring in the future. Upon request by Maldives Immigration, NCIT can integrate XPAT with PISCES at an affordable cost. Integration of the three databases would be a crucial step towards ameliorating their work, preventing errors and improving report generation.

D.3.4. National Bureau of Statistics

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) employs full-time, trained statisticians and supports other agencies to collect and analyse migration data. Due to their technical capacity, most developed countries rely heavily on their respective national bureaux of statistics to process and publish government data.

The NBS published initial migration records in its annual reports for 2007–2011. It also incorporated migration questions in the 2010 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES). As of 2018, the most recent published migration data was based on the 2014 Census, which, however, suffered from an undercount.

The NBS was considering the inclusion of international migration-related questions in future surveys. As of 2018, the next opportunity for the NBS to survey migration issues is the Labour Force Survey.

D.3.5. Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health (MOH) recruits migrant health professionals to public clinics and hospitals outside the capital. The Human Resource Department of the MOH tracks its data in Excel spreadsheets and fragmentary foreign national employment data was published in MOH annual reports.

D.3.6. Health Protection Agency

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) is a part of the MOH. It is authorized to carry out health checks among migrant workers. While data on migrants' health screenings are collected, the data is not published nor shared with other institutions, except when requested. Since requests are not common, the HPA does not review data quality on a regular basis. The quality of data could be improved if the HPA starts to publish it regularly, thereby setting up a quality review mechanism to validate anything released.

Health checks are conducted in a number of authorized clinics, but records for the whole country are not immediately available. As of 2018, the health check form did not make a distinction between first and subsequent work permit screenings, thus making it difficult to determine whether a migrant has introduced a disease from overseas or acquired it in Maldives. Since requiring the health screening of Bangladeshi workers prior to their arrival in Maldives, Bangladeshi data has been stored in the MIPSS Database, developed by Maldives Immigration to streamline the process of recruiting from Bangladesh. Otherwise, records are kept in Excel spreadsheets.

D.3.7. Ministry of Tourism

Even though the tourism industry is a major employer of migrant workers, the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) does not record migrant worker data due to challenges in retrieving data from tourist establishments. Hence, the MOT uses its own formula to establish migrant worker numbers based on the number of beds tourist establishments report to have. The key shortcoming of the formula is it estimates the maximum number of migrants an establishment *could* employ, not the number of migrants *actually* employed.

D.3.8. Ministry of Education

The MOE employs migrant teachers in public schools throughout the country. It has published foreign national employment data for several years.

D.3.9. Labour Relations Authority

The LRA conducts worksite inspections to ensure migrant and Maldivian workers enjoy legally guaranteed labour conditions. Since the dissolution of the Ministry of Human Resources, Youth and Sports, site inspections have largely been limited to those prompted by incident reports due to budgetary constraints. The LRA provides relevant information to the respective ministries to be included in their annual reports. Moreover, it provides information upon request and has replaced Excel with a case management software which is currently in the data-feeding process.

D.3.10. Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The MFA does not collect data on Maldivians abroad, except when they volunteer to self-report to a diplomatic mission. As is common among all nationalities, very few do.

D.3.11. Diplomatic missions in Maldives

Similar to Maldivian diplomatic missions abroad, diplomatic missions in Maldives also do not keep records of their nationals, except when the nationals have registered voluntarily. The degree of its involvement in orderly migration management depends on the specific practices of each mission. For example, the Sri Lankan Embassy proactively verifies workers' contracts, while the Indian Embassy coordinates relevant authorities when an Indian citizen's rights have been violated. Due to the high numbers of irregular Bangladeshi migrants (in fact, the highest of any nationality), including those without documents, the Embassy of Bangladesh has devoted most of its limited resources to the administrative support of returnees. Due to relatively small migration flows, compared to other destinations, a number of countries do not have diplomatic missions or only have honorary consulates in Maldives. No diplomatic missions in Maldives are present outside Male'.

D.3.12. Local government

Local authorities, such as island or city councils, are required to maintain up-to-date registers of international migrant populations, but this is not the case in practice. In an interview (7 March 2017), the Male' City Council reported a lack of resources to run such a register, as well as to design policies concerning international migrants. As the number of migrants in Maldives are expected to rise, local governments will be under increased pressure to develop migrant integration policies. At the time of research, shortages of affordable hygienic accommodation and tensions between migrant and local populations, as well as within migrant populations of different nationalities were among the key issues that could benefit from the involvement of local governments.

D.3.13. Maldives Police Service

The Maldives Police Service created an anti-human trafficking unit, a hotline for trafficking victims to report cases and the Trafficking in Persons Case Management System. This case management system was inaugurated in 2017 and facilitates online reporting of trafficking cases.

D.3.14. Employment Tribunal

The Employment Tribunal receives employment-related cases. It receives a limited number of cases involving migrants because few migrants are able to stay in the country long enough to proceed with the legal process; some decide not to proceed because of other constraints (e.g. inability to find an interpreter). Upon request, the Employment Tribunal can prepare a summary of cases they have received.

D.3.15. International organizations

Most international organizations with direct or indirect migration mandates oversee Maldives from Sri Lanka. This is notably the case with IOM, (which has one staff member based in Male'), ILO and the World Bank. UNDP and UNICEF have representatives in Male', but have not conducted international migration-related work in the country. Periodically, these and other international organizations publish reports containing some statistical references to Maldives, from which this Migration Profile has drawn useful information.

D.3.16. Civil society

CSOs in Maldives suffer from underfunding. Although many CSOs would be interested in pursuing migration-related projects, a lack of migration expertise limits their ability to secure such funding. CSOs that are part of an international network, such as Transparency International or the Maldivian Red Crescent, can help overcome this challenge by collaborating with other bodies in applying for funding or conducting research in Maldives when funding becomes available.

Transparency Maldives is a national chapter of Transparency International, the leading global movement against corruption. Maldivian Red Crescent is a non-profit, volunteer-driven humanitarian organization that provides needed and timely humanitarian services to communities. It has worked with migrants on several projects, but has not produced reports or data concerning international migrants in Maldives. As of 2018, there was no national academic researching international migration in Maldives.

PART E: CONCLUSION

E.1. Key findings

E.1.1. Country context

Maldives relies heavily on imports of foreign goods and services, including labour. Foreign workers, mostly from less developed countries, allow Maldives to overcome labour shortages in key sectors, notably, construction, education, health care and tourism. Despite the availability of domestic workers, many Maldivians – especially young people and women – have neither worked, nor are sufficiently trained to meet labour market needs. In 2014, the unemployment rate for the youth population was 12.3 per cent (14.6% for women and 10.6% for men), more than double the total unemployment rate. According to projections by the International Labour Organization (ILO), this trend is set to continue to 2021. However, the share of young Maldivians (15–24 years) not working, in education or training (NEET) increased from 20.5 per cent in 2014 to 23.5 per cent in 2016.

Maldivians are often less willing to work in lower skilled and physically demanding occupations, and lack soft and hard skills to work in higher skilled and more technical positions, due to an educational system often misaligned with labour market needs. Hence, Maldives has been struggling to reconcile immigration governance and management with the consistent unemployment of its own population, especially women and youth. In order to attract more Maldivians into the local workforce, the following are recommended: (a) improvements in working conditions, (b) enhanced skills-matching, (c) the reintroduction of a local labour market test to determine genuine labour shortages, and (d) more relevant education and vocational training.

Maldives is progressing in terms of the main human development indicators, including those related to health. However, due to a lack of medical specialists and adequate facilities, Maldivian citizens who are experiencing more acute health problems must travel to India and Sri Lanka to undergo more specialized medical treatment. To decrease dependence on expensive health treatment abroad, Maldives recruits foreign nationals, particularly Indian doctors. Moreover, Maldives lags behind in enrolment rates and educational attainment at the higher secondary level. Due to a lack of qualified teachers, the country relies on the admission of foreign teachers, especially those from India.

E.1.2. Migration trends and characteristics

Emigration. While Australia and India were once major destinations for Maldivians, almost half of the Maldivian population abroad were living in Sri Lanka by 2015. Maldivian migrants consisted mainly of people seeking employment, followed by students (moving primarily to India, Australia and the United Kingdom) and asylum seekers/refugees, mostly registered in the United Kingdom.

Given the low number of Maldivians living abroad (0.8% of the total Maldivian population in 2015) engaging the diaspora constitutes a challenge. Destination countries typically cannot prioritize contributing to an active diaspora policy for such a small part of their populations. Even in Sri Lanka, which is home to almost half of the Maldivian diaspora, Maldivians represent only 3.5 per cent of the foreign national population.

Internal migration. Since 1998, due mainly to the high costs of delivering services to smaller and more remote atolls, Maldives' population consolidation policies have aimed to concentrate people on the larger islands (notably, Greater Male' and islands in the other five regional centres), where infrastructure is already present and services can be provided more affordably. However, these policies are not necessarily supported by comprehensive studies on the impacts of such relocations that, together with dialogue and consultations with affected communities, would provide valuable information to enhance long-term sustainability and inclusive policy planning.

With 80 per cent of its land situated less than 1 metre above sea level and more than 40 per cent of the population living within 100 metres of the shoreline, Maldives is vulnerable to sea level rises. Due to the small size of the Maldivian islands, most human settlements are located in the inundation and beach erosion risk zones. However, migration as an adaptation strategy to environmental threats and climate change is not considered a valid option by most Maldivians and other reasons to relocate internally (cultural, religious, economic and social) prevail in migration decisions.

Immigration. In parallel with its rapid economic development, Maldives has experienced an eleven-fold increase of its total international migrant population since 1990. While international migrants constituted 3.89 per cent of Maldives' population in 1990, the proportion had risen to 25.87 per cent by 2015 to make Maldives the country in South Asia with the largest proportion of its nationals living abroad. Similarly, migrants come to Maldives in search of better employment

opportunities – mainly from the less developed parts of neighbouring countries, notably, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. In 2015, Bangladeshis constituted 57 per cent of migrants, followed by Indians (24%) and Sri Lankans (11%).

Irregular migration. The system of categorization of irregular forms of entry may lead to overlapping numbers and inconsistencies. The precision of statistics depends on the accuracy of registration, and immigration officers are often rotated and are exposed to different levels of training. Due to geographical barriers and the consequent high cost of migration monitoring, most irregular migrants are only detected upon attempting to depart from Maldives. Some leaving the country are unaware of their irregular status if such status was caused by an employer's negligence to pay work visa fees. However, the most commonly trodden path to irregularity is the practice called "quota trading." Employers who are somehow able to obtain permission to bring into the country more workers than they need, often subcontract them to other employers, rendering migrant workers more vulnerable to exploitation. Absconding is another major challenge. Cases of absconding migrant workers are frequent, as some are convinced they would have better working and living conditions elsewhere.

The Monitoring Section of Maldives Immigration handles cases of migrants in an irregular status who have self-reported or have been detected during inspections. Such inspections have been suffering from budgetary constraints. However, at the time of research, public awareness of the potential benefits of voluntary reporting to the Monitoring Section was low. Migrants reported being afraid to bring cases to authorities due to a lack of evidence to counter the employers' word or challenges in finding translators. According to information collected for this research, few migrants were regularized. This could be due to a combination of reasons, including inadequate regularization rules, poor publicity and migrants' distrust of authorities.

E.1.3. Impacts of migration on development

Remittances. As numbers of Maldivian migrants have always been low, the discourse on remittances inevitably focused more on outward flows. Outward remittances represented about 10 per cent of the country's GDP in 2016 and are subject to a 3 per cent remittance tax, which has the potential of distancing Maldives from achieving Target 10.c of the Sustainable Development Goals of reducing total remittance costs to less than 3 per cent by 2030.

Migration and the labour market. Overall, the mass influx of foreign workers has made the Maldivian economy heavily dependent on migrant labour. As a

consequence of limited soft and hard skills, compounded by a tendency for many Maldivians not to accept physically demanding and low-paying jobs and a cultural stigma associated with certain occupations, Maldives has experienced the paradoxical combination of major labour shortages with high unemployment rates, especially among youth and women.

Impact of migration on the tourism sector. The tourism sector is subject to a 45:55 local-to-foreign national employment ratio, not strictly followed by all employers. This is especially evident for employers who experience difficulties with finding Maldivian workers, primarily due to the cultural stigma associated with resort jobs, isolation, as well as the lack of soft and technical skills among the local population. Data on foreign national employment in the tourism industry is difficult to realize, as the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) keeps no records of migrant workers in the sector and resorts are reluctant to share any information about employees.

According to a human resource staff member interviewed, besides hard skills, foreign nationals also typically had better soft skills than locals, such as the ability to thrive in a multicultural environment, display language skills and commitment. Relatively few Maldivian women are educated in tourism skills, partly because Maldivians consider tourism employment a “second chance” and inappropriate for women.

Regarding tourism sector recruitment, different skill levels and types of occupations follow different recruitment methods. Some workers are recruited directly online, through recommendations from current staff and others through agents. Maldivian legislation does not require employers to use agents. However, most employers in tourism do so for a number of reasons (including limited time and human resource staff overwhelmed by the volume of applications) and, by doing such, feel that they are absolved of further responsibility.

Impact on the health-care sector. Unlike tourism, the health-care sector has not been subject to any limit on the number of migrant workers that a hospital can employ due to larger skills gaps among the local population. As of 2018, Maldives did not have a recognized faculty of medicine and was thus dependent on foreign medical personnel. Maintaining high standards is a challenge, as many foreign health-care professionals working in Maldives were frequently doctors in their first post or are not able to secure jobs in more competitive labour markets. Due to a combination of weak career and personal development opportunities (including for families), foreign health-care professionals have high staff turnover rates, especially in the atolls.

Although highly skilled health professionals can secure jobs directly, many are hired through recruitment agencies due to limited public sector human resource capacity. This can result in misinformation about employment conditions and recruitment costs. The MOH sources more workers from agents than either ADK Hospital or IGMH, the other two major health-care sector employers, because of the large number of its vacancies and the difficulty of attracting workers to atoll clinics, compounded by the ministry's limited human resource staff.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) has reported that some recruitment agencies allegedly continue to misinform candidates on working and living conditions in the atolls and charged unreasonable commissions. Agencies capitalize on the fact that jobseekers have minimal information prior to receiving their employment letters and fill the gaps with inaccurate information. Recruitment agents do not want jobseekers to deal directly with hospitals, so they reportedly concealed the identities of hiring hospitals. The MOH can blacklist unscrupulous Maldivian recruitment agencies, but it has little insight and power over foreign agencies due to a lack of bilateral cooperation with countries of origin.

Impact on education sector. Despite having achieved a 98 per cent literacy rate, there are significant inequalities in the spatial distribution of schools and the quality of education they provide. Foreign nationals constitute a quarter of all teachers, with a peak of 60 per cent in some institutions, especially in atoll schools and in higher education facilities. Education has experienced a high turnover rate and the sector may be able to adapt to satisfy more Maldivian teachers' professional or personal expectations.

By 2017, the MOE issued a sixth amendment to the recruitment policy for foreign teachers, introducing a more robust public bidding process to select three recruitment agencies every year. However, the revised policy has not delivered the desired results and, as of October 2017, only one agency had been selected. The amendment also requires the MOE to maintain dedicated human resource staff handling direct recruitment, as well as prohibits agencies from charging fees.

Impact on construction sector. Construction is one of the three major engines of Maldivian economic growth, alongside tourism and fishing. According to the most recent HIES, foreign employment (composed mainly of low-skilled Bangladeshis) accounted for 88 per cent of all construction workers in 2010, compared to 75 per cent in 2006.

High recruitment costs resulting in migrant indebtedness, often combined with low levels of remuneration, are contributing factors to migrant workers fleeing employers in search of better working and living conditions. Absconding has heightened employers' operational costs, fuelled irregular migration, tarnished the recruitment industry and placed workers in vulnerable situations. Another key issue is the migrant workers' lack of awareness about the true nature of working and living conditions in Maldives, caused by recruiters making false promises and sugarcoating information. Since Maldives Immigration regulations do not permit the transfer of workers to another employer during their first year, migrants often abscond in search of better working conditions.

E.1.4. Migration and social development

Migrants and health. Employers are obliged to enrol all migrants only in basic health coverage. Moreover, many migrants are not cognizant of what their health insurance includes, as the customer copy of the health insurance, as well as the company's website are not written in a language that a lesser skilled migrant would unequivocally understand.

The Maldivian health-care system is not as developed as those of many other countries in the region. Medical treatment is one of the key factors for internal migration and international travel by Maldivians, including to India and Sri Lanka. Two of the country's popular hospitals – the public Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital and the private ADK Hospital – do not offer all types of treatment that migrants would access at home. Migrants residing outside of Male', especially in remote and sparsely populated atolls, are more vulnerable to health risks, as only basic clinical services are available. Domestic travel is slow and costly, even in non-emergency cases, as they require transport by boat or plane and often both. The basic health insurance package does not cover medical evacuation. Also, migrants must have legal status in order to purchase health insurance and see a doctor in a public hospital. Thus, apart from working and living in precarious conditions, migrants in an irregular status have severely limited access to primary care and practically no access to public hospital treatment, even in emergencies.

Regarding the collection of migrants' health-related data, the Health Protection Agency (HPA), which is in charge of migrants' health screenings, reported difficulties in providing information on the health of migrant workers. No data is available prior to 2014 or on diseases other than hepatitis B, dengue, HIV, TB, malaria, filariasis and leprosy. There are no publicly available data and misunderstanding about migrant health that can contribute to social divides is common.

Migrants' working and living conditions. A migrant's work and living conditions may depend on his/her skill level, the manner in which he/she was recruited and even his/her nationality. Also, while some migrants receive contracts prior to departure, others arrive with a single-page appointment letter and are only handed their employment contracts after their arrival in Maldives. Very few migrants, especially low-skilled workers, have previously familiarized themselves with Maldives' labour laws, who have a basic education and are not proficient in the English language.

The number of interventions by the Labour Relations Authority (LRA) has decreased sharply since the dissolution of the Ministry of Labour in 2012. In 2016, the LRA dealt with 176 cases of labour law violations, less than a quarter of the cases handled in 2012. More than half (58%) of LRA-handled cases from 2012 to 2016 concerned Bangladeshis, followed by Indians (27%) and Sri Lankans (8%).

Deception is the first infringement of labour rights that most migrant workers face. According to the national stakeholders interviewed during this research, although Maldivian employers no longer need to go through recruitment agencies, many still use them, as they tend to offer no-cost or low-cost services to employers by having migrants shoulder recruitment costs. From the employers' perspective, the greatest deception relates to mismatches between the expected and actual profile of the new worker; for workers, it is the discrepancies between the promised and actual working and living conditions, particularly in relation to remuneration.

Some employers have been reported to withhold workers' identity and/or travel documents, allegedly to prevent workers from absconding or to "protect documents from theft." Government and non-government actors interviewed for this research reported that, up until the introduction of direct bank transfers, non-payment and delays in the payment of wages were common occurrences. Direct payments will make it easier for the LRA to prove late payment cases, but only when workers are able and willing to report them.

Monitoring, detention and prevention of labour law violations. When alleged labour law infractions are detected, workers are often repatriated before an investigation is completed. Additionally, interviewed government stakeholders have reported that unscrupulous employers are able to avoid blacklisting due to either administrative inefficiency or their ability to change corporate identities and register under new names.

The Employment Tribunal is tasked with hearing employment-related cases. However, very few employment cases involve migrants. According to the Employment Tribunal, the true numbers are unknown because of poor reporting of cases.

Due to geographic dispersion of the atolls, effective monitoring is financially unfeasible. In general, LRA and Maldives Immigration must rely on local partners to conduct inspections (island councils, island police or respective ministries and employers' associations), and are advised to focus on prevention to educate employers, who are often unreceptive. The approved LRA budget has decreased, while the number of migrant workers in the country (and, potentially, labour infractions) has increased. It is recommended that adequate funds are allocated annually in proportion to migrant worker forecasts.

E.1.5. Migration governance

International context. Maldives has not ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, ILO Convention No. 97 (Migration for Employment) nor ILO Convention No. 143 (Migrant Workers' Convention). Moreover, Maldives has not adopted the two ILO recommendations concerning migrant workers: R086 (Migration for Employment Recommendation) and R151 (Migrant Workers Recommendation). Furthermore, Maldives lacks asylum adjudication and national refugee protection systems, as the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol are yet to be ratified.

On the other hand, a significant step forward in combatting human trafficking and protecting victims was made in 2015 through ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (the "UN TiP Protocol"), supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Bilateral cooperation in the field of migration governance is weak, as the only MOU negotiated by Maldives was with Bangladesh which covered the 2011–2016 period and created a basis for communication regarding migrants' admission, but which fell short of developing specific technical collaboration mechanisms.

National legal and policy frameworks. The labour market test once part of the quota system, and the procedure which employers performed prior to recruiting workers from abroad, has been abandoned. Due to a lack of dedicated labour shortage assessment mechanisms and the quota committee's limited human

and financial resources, quotas granted to employers do not always correspond to actual needs. This results in a risk of fostering a “quota trading” system, where migrant workers may be subcontracted to other employers and become more vulnerable to exploitation.

In 2017, Maldives Immigration developed the Maldives Immigration Pre-Departure Security Screening (MIPSS) Database, with the purpose of streamlining recruitment in Bangladesh and moving health screenings back to Bangladesh. While it has the potential to improve adherence to recruitment regulations and monitoring, this new system does not necessarily ensure greater collaboration between countries of origin and destination.

The Government of Maldives has made significant steps in recent years in the fight against human trafficking at the national level, notably through the introduction of the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act in 2013, the development of related action plans and the establishment of an ad hoc committee. However, challenges remain:

- (a) The definition of human trafficking in the new Act is not in line with the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.
- (b) Some institutions have yet to formally adopt SOPs for the proactive identification of trafficking victims and referral to protection services.
- (c) The shelter for victims of trafficking has not been built.
- (d) Monitoring of recruitment agencies and firms for fraudulent practices must be made stricter.

With regard to health and social protection, while equal treatment for all is prescribed by law, the inequality between migrant and local workers remain unaddressed. In addition to migrants often paying more than locals for health services, it is no longer mandatory for employers to register migrant workers with the pension scheme. Further, migrants are not entitled to any of the social security measures that citizens are entitled to.

Institutional framework. There is a fundamental lack of data, largely attributable to the limited capacity and collaboration in data collection, analysis and sharing among various organizations with a stake in migration management in Maldives. The three databases that Maldives Immigration manages are not integrated. Each was created at a different time, for different purposes and by different developers. Moreover, the data collected has not been integrated across time, and so records are only available since 2013, when Maldives Immigration was created. Maldives Immigration lacks expertise in information technology and statistics; thus, it constantly relies on the National Centre for Information

Technology (NCIT) to modify saved entries and generate new datasets, tables and reports.

E.2. Key recommendations

The following section presents recommendations on how migration stakeholders can contribute to improved data collection and migration governance. The annex titled “Practical Guidelines to Verify Progress towards Fair Recruitment and Work Conditions” can facilitate the tracking of progress towards establishing fair recruitment and working conditions for migrant workers.

E.2.1. Data management

Data collection

- (a) Current data collection frameworks in place are very fragmented and there is no central authority within the Government to champion the periodic publication of the data to increase data reliability and accuracy. The currently fragmented practice of data collection needs to be systematized and coordinated across agencies to get reliable and accurate data.
- (b) Regularly collect relevant data, in line with policy priorities, so resources are used more efficiently and accurate policy-relevant data can be provided.
- (c) Incorporate international migration questions into each Labour Force Survey and National Census. Complement quantitative data collection with qualitative surveys (for example, on factors that affect the attraction and retention of migrant workers in specific industries and occupations. This information could be based on a combination of human resource records, analyses and interviews).
- (d) Standardize data collection methods and definitions to eliminate discrepancies over time and between national and international definitions. In January 2018, NCIT and Maldives Immigration tested XPAT abilities to reformat 2013 to 2016 data into the ISCO format, to allow comparisons of data across time and internationally, as well as avoid misclassification. However, there seemed to be a misclassification compared to XPAT registration.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ The numbers of foreign nationals employed in construction was low, yet high in transportation and storage. No foreign nationals were classified in accommodation and food services, as well as in education.

- (e) Seek ways in which new actors (e.g. municipal authorities, NGOs and industry representatives) could be involved in data collection, analysis and communication.
- (f) Identify and modify duplicate or ineffective data collection mechanisms, standardize definitions and classification systems, and foster coordination between government agencies. For instance, the MOT does not receive foreign national employment records from Maldives Immigration or from tourist establishments. Instead, the MOT formulates its own definitions. One result is that the number of migrant workers actually employed is not known and only how many could be employed in line with the 55:45 ratio requirement is. A lack of coordination between the LRA and Maldives Immigration is also evident.
- (g) Implement error-reducing solutions in databases and forms, for example, scroll-downs. Also, “multiple selection” and “other” options may be enabled, if needed. “Comments” windows will be helpful for data encoders to record observations that may help to minimize errors due to misclassification, as well as track errors during analysis.

Data processing and reporting

- (a) Replace the use of Excel with specialized databases and seek current data specialists’ (in-house and external) feedback on how to develop adequate statistical software. Once databases are developed, all staff must be trained on how to use them correctly to enter data and generate reports.
- (b) Contextualize data to maximize reliability, accuracy and objectivity, particularly:
 - (i) *Relative importance (percentage)*. For instance, when communicating there were 33,725 work visa holders among Bangladeshis in 2016, disclose that they constituted 32 per cent of the total work visa holders, because the absolute number would reveal little.
 - (ii) *Long-term trends*. As opposed to snapshots, these identify relevant changes over time.
 - (iii) *Causes of shown effects*. For instance, health reports should distinguish between first health checks and renewals to identify whether a migrant contracted a disease in Maldives or abroad.

- (c) Share data internally and externally among stakeholders. If in doubt about data quality, consult with specialists, such as the National Bureau of Statistics. If annual reports contain classified data, publish migration statistics separately. Data-sharing prevents data collection duplication, enhances the transparency of an organization and helps obtain support, including through inclusion in international technical assistance projects. Sharing migration data will not have a negative effect on Maldives' external security and instead will have a positive impact on Maldives' internal security. The vacuum created by the lack of official data is filled by inaccurate estimates, which ultimately undermine social cohesion.
- (d) Make multi-purpose and user-friendly data available. For data accessibility purposes, publish it in an electronic format to allow users to download it according to their needs.
- (e) Select focal points for each data-collecting institution and one migration data focal point for Maldives. Establish a Data Focal Point Working Group to initiate regular multi-stakeholder collaboration.
- (f) Provide data focal points with regular training, in line with needs. If possible, extend training to all staff members working on data, and not just those who are highest in the hierarchy. To maximize training frequency or outreach without increasing costs, consider online training options and resources.
- (g) Familiarize staff with results/meanings of data they are collecting/analysing to boost their sense of ownership, pride and motivation to effectively continue their work.
- (h) Streamline communication channels, especially in hierarchical government environments or those with weak interdepartmental linkages, to maximize bottom-up and cross-departmental feedback. To facilitate effective data-sharing, make it easy for staff to report issues freely.
- (i) Consider making direct recruitment mandatory (or at least common practice) for the public sector. To do so, the Government must invest in human resource strategies and capacities, as direct recruitment is time-consuming and requires skills to guarantee more efficient skills-matching and qualification recognition.

For further recommendations, see Annex II.

E.2.2. Migration governance

Sustained multi-stakeholder collaboration

- (a) It is recommended that the current Project Advisory Committee become a permanent, multi-stakeholder body, to be named the Migration Governance Group of the Republic of Maldives, whose main task is to monitor the implementation of the Migration Profile's recommendations and oversee its update over time.
- (b) Greater collaboration with embassies of major origin countries would be beneficial, in terms of encouraging registration of their nationals and designing initiatives and mechanisms to strengthen migrant workers' protection and facilitate access to complaint mechanisms.

Matching migration policies with labour market and economic development needs

- (a) Design policies to attract Maldivians into the workforce. Excessive dependence on migrant labour is likely to bring negative consequences in the long term as political, economic or social changes could make reliance on foreign national recruitment costly or impossible.
- (b) Adopt labour-saving production techniques through automation, rationalization, off-shoring and other techniques. Moving from a labour-intensive to knowledge-intensive economy is a necessary condition for economic development. The ILO, Asian Development Bank and World Bank could be a valuable resource of support and expertise on this.
- (c) Expand home-based and part-time employment opportunities targeted at women. Women tend to be engaged in house chores, making it hard for them to sustain full-time jobs.
- (d) Recruit among migrant workers already present in Maldives. This labour pool consists of those in an irregular status and who would like to change employers. Maldives Immigration could play a valuable role in facilitating the regularization of foreign workers present in the country and changes of employer without time limits. IOM has long-standing expertise in designing effective regularization programmes worldwide.
- (e) Improve skills-matching through better labour market analysis, updated training curricula and better collaboration among industry, education providers and policymakers.

- (f) The quota system needs to be reformed. Establish an effective labour market test aimed to identify genuine local labour shortages. This would foster local recruitment, as well as make sure that each employer applying for a quota receives the number of foreign workers they truly need, thus discouraging the practice of quota-trading. The current Quota Team may be consulted to make the system more effective. Quota efficiency could be achieved if the quota team is enlarged, its competencies enhanced and work streamlined.
- (g) Consider introducing a two-tiered employer rating system and a corresponding two-path quota-processing system. Employers who demonstrate appropriate efforts to recruit local workers and have a spotless history of compliance with migration/employment laws would qualify for Tier 1 and requests for quotas would be given priority over Tier 2 employers. There must be heavier sanctions for employers involved in quota-trading and for those who commit severe violations of labour regulations.
- (h) Design, implement and monitor admissions of migrant workers through technical bilateral collaboration with countries of origin to guarantee continuous and effective migrant protection along the whole migration corridor. The following elements should be considered for inclusion: (a) observing the “Employer pays” principle and ethical recruitment, (b) prohibiting the confiscation of migrants’ personal documents and contract substitution, (c) joint monitoring of recruitment practices, (d) standardizing terms of employment, (e) doubling the licensing requirements for recruiters, (f) verifying and authenticating employment contracts by authorities in both Maldives and the country of origin, and (g) establishing a joint committee or focal points to monitor effective implementation of employment agreements, recognition of skills and qualifications, complaint mechanisms and provisions on return and reintegration.
- (i) Introduce a minimum standard remuneration package that not only includes wages. The absence of a minimum remuneration package leads to the deterioration of working conditions and de facto excludes Maldivian workers’ participation in this sector. Sectors that do not implement this provision should not be allowed to recruit workers from abroad.
- (j) Financial and human resources of monitoring agencies (e.g. Maldives Immigration and LRA) need to be strengthened to make sure that legal provisions are enforced. The law already includes some safeguards for migrant workers, such as the “No fees” clause, the prohibition on the confiscation of personal documents and of contract substitution. However, effective enforcement and monitoring are lacking.

- (k) Address issues concerning vulnerability identified by the Monitoring Section of Maldives Immigration, the LRA and the Employment Tribunal, which include employers' non-payment of workers' visa fees and restriction of workers' mobility, job absconding, and the abortion of Employment Tribunal cases. This would help to ensure that migrants are not negatively affected when they are not responsible for their irregular status, such as when they are prevented from leaving the country, forcefully repatriated after absconding an employer who has infringed their contracts and rights, or prevented from testifying at an Employment Tribunal hearing.
- (l) Introduce the possibility of migrants presenting their case in English before the Employment Tribunal, as well as the provision of pro bono legal counselling.
- (m) Strengthen local government involvement in migration management. Local governments' involvement could be beneficial for migrants, local governments themselves and institutions, such as the LRA, Maldives Immigration and the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives (HRCM). One of the key issues local governments could help with is monitoring migrants' living conditions, as well as the kind of work that they actually do (versus what is reported). Also, ensure effective implementation of the city council registration of migrant workers.
- (n) Design a new National Development Plan (NDP) that builds on the most recent NDP (i.e. 2006), mainstreaming migration into development policies.
- (o) Introduce a government-led Code of Conduct for labour recruiters and employers with a multilateral committee to monitor enforcement (recruiters must abide by regulations to receive a licence). Legal provisions on recruitment are present, but what is lacking is enforcement and public-private cooperation.
- (p) Align visa fee payment deadlines with the durations of visa stickers on passports, so that workers are aware of their illegal status. Migrants often become irregular unknowingly because their employers do not pay visa fees in time.
- (q) The remittance tax could be revised and only applied above a certain amount and proportional to the amount remitted.
- (r) Introduce stringent rules on occupational safety. As of 2014, there were no regulations to ensure the occupational health and safety of workers around construction sites, nor were there standard requirements for accommodations.

Integration and equal treatment of migrants

- (a) Ensure that migrants are treated equally with Maldivians and with each other. Prohibit and investigate unfair treatment and design awareness-raising initiatives on the positive contributions of migrants to the socioeconomic development of Maldives.
- (b) Improve outreach, visibility and cooperation of institutions that provide services to migrants, for example, the LRA, the Monitoring Section of Maldives Immigration and HRCM. Migrants should know which organization or department to reach out to and what each can do for them. Institutions that intend to field migrants' complaints should make it logistically easy for migrants to contact them and remain anonymous.
- (c) Require employers to sponsor a more comprehensive health insurance plan for migrants. Migrants are often required to pay more than Maldivians for the same services, and so health coverage must be extended to cover more than just the basics and include, for example, psychological support.

Partnerships

1. Enhance collaboration between the MOE and education providers and the private sector to develop up-to-date curricula and training modules aligned with the real needs of the labour market and partner with employers to organize vocational training and career guidance activities.
2. Consider collaborating with the World Bank to examine remittance costs to and from Maldives, and present proposals on how to track changes in remittance fees around the world and, ultimately, minimize them. Migrant workers would greatly benefit from access to up-to-date information and competition among remittance service providers, as they are able to compare rates and make better-informed decisions.
3. Consider collaborating with the World Bank's KNOMAD⁶⁶ initiative to determine migration costs between key countries of origin and Maldives and how to reduce them.
4. Consider collaborating with IOM to review and potentially redesign the Maldivian Voluntary Repatriation Programme, as well as test its

⁶⁶ KNOMAD is "an open, inclusive, multidisciplinary knowledge partnership that draws on experts to create and synthesize knowledge for use by policy makers in sending, receiving and transit countries. KNOMAD aims to generate a menu of policy choices, based on analytical evidence, evaluation of policies, data collection, and quality control through peer-review. It provides technical assistance and undertakes pilot projects (official website: www.knomad.org/about-us).

International Recruitment Integrity System, which can help reduce recruitment-related exploitation and human trafficking. Furthermore, the IOM Migration Governance Framework, which sets out the essential elements to support planned and well-managed migration, could serve as a useful blueprint for the Government of Maldives to enhance its entire migration governance framework.

Migrant-friendly legislation

In compiling this report, the author found migration legislation to be difficult to access, outdated and not formulated in a language that migrants could understand. The lack of available and clear information increases migrants and employers' reliance on recruitment agencies.

Short-term solutions:

- (a) Update the Maldives Immigration legislation website with current laws in the Dhivehi and English languages.⁶⁷ Remove links to any document no longer valid. Insert a link to the Employment Act on the LRA website where migrants can access it.
- (b) Create a "Frequently Asked Questions" page for employers and migrants. These questions could address what Maldives Immigration and LRA believe are causing frequent misunderstandings among migrants and employers. Key issues and processes described in legislation and of most interest to migrants and employers should be explained in a way that both parties can understand easily. Questions that employers may have include the following:
 - How can I improve my ability to find Maldivian workers?
 - What steps shall I take to bring migrant workers into compliance with Maldivian immigration and labour laws?
 - What are my rights and obligations as an employer of migrant workers from their recruitment to their return?
 - What are the best practices in migrant workers' recruitment? What is an ethical recruitment code? How do I know whether I am supporting anyone violating the code or if I am violating it myself?
 - How do I know that a recruitment agency has a valid licence?

⁶⁷ As of February 2018, some legislation titles were in English, but linked to legislation in Dhivehi. IOM Maldives has translated laws published in the Dhivehi language into English for the purpose of this research, but has not published them.

- How do I know if I am involved in human trafficking or smuggling? What would be the consequences if I were caught?
 - What should I do if a worker disappears? How can I minimize the likelihood of my workers disappearing?
- (c) Create a “Contact us” form with a scroll-down menu allowing inquiries to be routed directly to an expert. Ensure staff responsible for answering inquiries will attend to them within a maximum time period.

Long-term solutions:

- (a) Place all relevant information on one easily accessible website, or if a new website is financially difficult to develop, in a dedicated section of an existing website, for example, the Maldives Immigration website. One excellent example in this regard is the Make It in Germany website. It operates on a “Search one and done” principle and, as such, is the only resource that migrants and employers need to consult to obtain quick and easy-to-understand information regarding admission and integration in Germany. Migrants and employers using the website do not need to search and study relevant legislation elsewhere. Instead, they can describe their profiles, pose their questions by selecting a few options and receive answers relevant to their case.
- (b) In the long term, Maldivian migration stakeholders could consider developing a similar Make It in Maldives website. The initiative could be led by MED and involve collaboration from Maldives Immigration, LRA, representatives of principal sectors importing migrant workers, diplomatic representations and NGOs. Make It in Maldives could play a crucial role in providing migrants with useful information and lowering migration costs by reducing migrants’ and employers’ dependence on fee-charging agents. The website could be used as a cost-efficient replacement or supplement pre-departure orientation.

ANNEXES

Annex I: Practical guidelines to verify progress towards fair recruitment and working conditions⁶⁸

What can Maldivian authorities do to prevent recruitment practices from fostering forced labour and human trafficking?

The following guidelines can be considered when working towards ensuring fair recruitment and working conditions for all.

1. Are Maldives' policies and regulations governing the hiring and recruitment of workers consistent with the standards set out in International Labour Convention (ILO) Nos. 97, 143, 181 and 188?
2. Does Maldives regulate the activities of recruitment agencies/agents and have formal mechanisms by which they are accredited and regularly monitored?
3. Does Maldives have bilateral mechanisms to coordinate with other countries as regards the regulation of recruiters? Does Maldives collaborate with other governments on the tracking, identification and prosecution of abusive recruitment and hiring practices, such as the imposition of excessive recruitment fees, contract substitution and the fraudulent use of work visas and permits?
4. Does Maldives have mechanisms in place to monitor the working conditions of migrant workers, or formal channels through which workers are able to lodge grievances, and seek resolution of conflicts and protection against retribution? Does Maldives have mechanisms by which the workers can hold recruiters or employers responsible for fraudulent recruitment practices?

⁶⁸ There is a growing wealth of resources that can inform the design of effective and ethical migrant recruitment policies. This checklist summarizes part of the extensive fieldwork that Verité has done over the course of the past two decades across sectors and commodities worldwide. Maldivian migration stakeholders can expand and modify this example resource sheet in line with Maldivian needs. For more information on Verité's research on fair recruitment, visit www.verite.org

What should employers do when contracting recruitment agencies/agents?

Employers should consider the risks of forced labour before they contract recruitment agencies/agents. Specifically, they should:

1. Ensure that they get the services of a recruitment agency/agent that complies with the law and general ethical standards.
2. Contract only licensed and/or government-registered agencies
3. Require that recruiters follow the “Employer pays” principle. Workers should not be charged any fees, whether directly or indirectly, and whether in whole or in part. The principle that the cost of recruitment is a business cost must be observed.⁶⁹
4. Avoid working with sub-agents.
5. New employees, particularly those that have been recruited by agencies/agents, should be interviewed to determine the conditions under which they were recruited.
6. Support voluntary accreditation programmes for recruiters (e.g. IOM’s International Recruitment Integrity System).
7. Ensure that clear procedures are developed to manage recruitment agencies/agents.

How should hiring companies and recruitment agencies be held accountable?

1. Companies should hire migrant workers directly whenever possible.
2. When the recruitment, selection and hiring of workers are undertaken by a private employment agency or another third party, the company shall have the responsibility of ensuring that the agencies operate legally, are certified or licensed by the competent authority, and do not engage in fraudulent behaviour that places workers at risk of forced labour or trafficking for labour exploitation.
3. The company signs a formal contract with the subcontracted agency and performs due diligence of background-checking the agency and its partners involved in the hiring and placement of migrant workers.

⁶⁹ ILO Convention 181 (Private Employment Agencies Convention) allows exceptions to the “Employer pays” principle in the interest of workers and after consulting with the most representative employers and workers’ organizations. Verité prefers to stick to the “Employer pays” principle, which is also a standard of the International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies (Ciett).

4. Effective measures are established by the company to ensure the legal compliance of subcontractors in each jurisdiction in which they operate.
5. The subcontracted agency has a valid licence or permit in all countries where it operates, and any partners or agents working on its behalf also have valid permits or licences.
6. The subcontracted agency has not been cited or sanctioned for non-compliance with any laws in any country where it has operations; where a citation for non-compliance exists, the agency can demonstrate that it has rectified the non-compliance.
7. The company has mechanisms to ensure that no deception, fraud and/or coercion in the recruitment, placement, transport or management of migrant workers take place.
 - (a) The company, or a subcontractor acting on its behalf, provides jobseekers with accurate details of working conditions at the time of recruitment, including the nature of work, wages, benefits and duration of contract.
 - (b) Details of working and employment conditions are communicated to jobseekers in a language they understand.
 - (c) False promises are not made to applicants or workers regarding employment conditions, worksite locations, employment contract duration and earnings.
 - (d) Training is provided to workers both before departure from the country of origin and upon arrival in Maldives to ensure that they understand their own rights and employer obligations and responsibilities.
 - (e) Pre-departure orientation is conducted to review contractual obligations, terms and conditions of work and other matters, including (but not limited to) living conditions, company policies and any grievance mechanisms that may be in place for workers.
8. The subcontracted agency has an accountable officer and clear procedures to ensure that all policies are compliant with all relevant laws and regulations. This includes a current register of laws for all countries where it has operations and a mechanism that ensures the company is regularly informed of new laws and regulations or changes in existing laws and regulations.
9. The subcontracted agency has a code of conduct that prohibits forced labour and human trafficking and sets out protective measures for migrant workers. The code covers principles elaborated in relevant ILO Conventions and the Code of Conduct of the International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies (Ciett), and applies to all parties in

the chain of recruitment. The Ciett Code of Conduct is supported by an institutional structure that ensures its effective implementation.

10. The subcontracted agency has established a mechanism for confidential reporting of non-compliance, procedures for investigating and reporting of grievances, and a of protecting whistleblowers.
11. The subcontracted agency has established effective remediation procedures in verified cases of non-compliance, including mechanisms to ensure the reimbursement of workers for any recruitment fees charged.
12. The company, or a subcontractor acting on its behalf, does not use any means to restrict migrant workers' freedom to terminate their employment, for example, by levying excessive recruitment fees, requiring deposits or withholding personal documentation.

What should recruitment agencies do?

1. Know the legal requirements and necessary documentation for migrant workers in Maldives and in their countries of origin.
2. Ensure that proper legal procedures are followed and that the necessary paperwork is obtained.
3. Ensure that clear and complete information about the terms and conditions of employment is provided to migrant workers, well in advance of the signing of the employment contract, and that these are written in the employment contract in a language that the migrant worker understands.
4. Ensure that migrant workers have not been subjected to contract substitution (especially with inferior contracts or contract supplements). All terms and conditions should be detailed in the first and only version of the employment contract signed by the migrant worker. This contract must be completely transparent and well understood by the worker before being signed.

How could recruitment fees be prevented from being charged to migrant workers?

1. The hiring company should only engage recruiters, agents, and sub-agents who do not charge fees to jobseekers. Employers should have a written policy clearly declaring that workers shall not pay any amount to secure a job with them.
2. Job advertisements should include the statement that no fees shall be charged at any point during the recruitment/hiring process.

3. The company, or a subcontractor acting on its behalf, should inform jobseekers that they will not shoulder the costs for any services directly related to either temporary assignment or permanent placement.
4. The company or the Maldivian recruiter should have mechanisms in place to ensure that workers are not charged any amount for being recruited.
5. The employer should cover all recruitment and processing fees, costs and expenses, including those associated with securing identity cards, medical certificates and examinations, skills-testing, and travel back to the country of origin.
6. Workers found to have been charged fees must be repaid, and contracts with recruiters found to have charged fees must be terminated.

What criteria should a contract of employment meet?

1. A successful candidate must be clearly informed of the terms and conditions of employment and is provided with a copy of the employment contract prior to deployment.
2. A worker must be provided with a signed copy of the employment contract, in a language he/she understand, prior to deployment. The contract must be free of typographical errors and unclear formulations.
3. The company explains the terms and conditions of the contract and has means to verify that the said terms are clearly understood and fully agreed to by the worker.
4. The employment contract clearly specifies the rights and responsibilities of the worker with regard to wages, hours of work, including regular hours and overtime requirements, days off and annual leave, and grounds for termination, as well as appeal procedures consistent with local laws.
5. The details of working conditions described during recruitment are consistent with the details in the employment contract, which must include actual working conditions and job responsibilities.
6. Company policy prohibits the substitution of original contract provisions with those that are less favourable to the worker. Any amendments made to improve working or living conditions are made with the knowledge and the written, informed consent of the worker.
7. Changes to working conditions are made with the knowledge and consent of the worker. Consent is obtained voluntarily and without the threat of penalty. No change is made that in any way diminishes the worker's originally anticipated wages, benefits and working conditions, or places

the worker in a position of physical or mental risk, or other forms of disadvantage or vulnerability.

8. The employment contract clearly stipulates the rights and responsibilities of each party regarding the termination of employment.
9. The employment contract clearly specifies the circumstances in which a worker can terminate his/her contract without risk of penalty, given reasonable notice and in accordance with local laws.

What should pre-departure orientation cover?

The following information must be provided to the worker during pre-departure orientation:

- (a) Terms of conditions of work stipulated in the contract, such as wages, benefits, working hours, accommodations and legal wage deductions;
- (b) Required job skills and qualifications;
- (c) Legal requirements for migrant workers in Maldives, including medical requirements;
- (d) Grievance mechanisms in place for workers;
- (e) Employer's non-reprisal policy towards the lodging of complaints

There are a number of good practices in designing and implementing effective pre-departure orientations. One of them is the Make It in Germany campaign. The initiative could be emulated in Maldives and developed with the input of all interested migration stakeholders. It serves both pre- and post-admission purposes, thereby reducing misinformation at any point during the migration process.

What should post-arrival orientation and training cover?

Upon arrival in Maldives, migrant workers must ideally be given the following information:

- (a) Overview of the legal rights and protections provided for by the hiring company;
- (b) The scope of Maldivian labour protection laws;
- (c) Grievance mechanisms and other worker feedback channels in place;
- (d) Grounds and processes for disciplinary action, termination and repatriation.

How can workplace equality be fostered?

1. All workers, regardless of their country of origin, ethnicity, race or legal status, are treated equally in the workplace. This includes equality of treatment between migrants and non-migrants and between migrants of different nationalities.
2. Migrant workers are treated no less favorably than country nationals with respect to:
 - (a) Remuneration, hours of work, overtime arrangements, and holidays with pay;
 - (b) Membership in labour unions;
 - (c) Accommodation;
 - (d) Benefits and social insurance, including social security, maternity and sick leave, and disability and employment injury insurance.
3. The company, or a subcontractor acting on its behalf, explicitly prohibits the abuse of the vulnerable situation of migrant workers, including the threat of denunciation to authorities as a means of coercion.

What minimum wage and benefits-related rights should be guaranteed?

1. Wages specified in an employment contract must meet legal and/or industry minimum wage standards in Maldives, and wage calculations must be equitable and objective. Wage rates and payments are calculated with full transparency. The calculation and payment of wages, including legal wage deductions, are clearly explained to workers and preferably undertaken with the worker's written consent.
2. Wage payments are not deferred, delayed or withheld because this binds workers to employment.
3. Non-cash or in-kind payments do not substitute wages since this creates dependency of the worker on the employer.
4. No unlawful or unauthorized deductions are made from workers' wages.
5. Wage deductions levied for tardiness or absence are not excessive and must be commensurate with the time missed on the job, for example, ten minutes' worth of pay for ten minutes' tardiness.
6. Wage advances or loans provided to workers, along with related interest rates, comply with the law. Specifically:
 - (a) Interest rates and repayment terms are fair, such that loans can be repaid in a reasonable amount of time in short installment or financing periods not exceeding the remaining term of the contract.

- (b) In the provision of loans or advances, the calculation of interest rates and wage deductions made for their repayment are made with complete transparency to the worker.
 - (c) The terms of wage advances and their repayment are agreed to by both parties in advance and in writing.
- 4. Jobseekers, job applicants and workers are not required to participate in any form of forced or mandatory savings in order to recoup costs associated with their recruitment and recruitment-related services.
- 5. Where the company, or a subcontractor acting on its behalf, is required or requested to remit a worker's earnings to a third party, this is only done with the worker's prior knowledge and full consent, and with the provision of a receipt for the full amount remitted.
- 6. If a migrant worker is required to pay for room and board, such charges:
 - (a) Should not exceed market rates or the rate paid by local workers;
 - (b) Should not aid companies or subcontractors in earning a profit at the worker's expense;
 - (c) Cannot be used to reclaim placement fees or other fees paid by employers for worker recruitment.

How can fair working time practices be fostered?

1. Workers should not be forced to work more than the number of hours allowed by law. Effective workplace and companywide measures should be adopted to ensure full implementation and compliance with this policy.
2. All overtime work is purely voluntary, unless specifically stated otherwise in a legally recognized agreement. Workers are free to refuse to do overtime work without threat or fear of punishment or reprisal.
3. For those who agree to work overtime, a system is in place to obtain their written consent at the time of the request.
4. In cases where remuneration is based on productivity targets, for example, piece rate, workers are not forced to work more overtime hours than allowed by law in order to meet their production quotas.

How should workers' documents be handled?

1. Applicants or workers' passports, work permits and/or other personal documents are not kept or withheld for any reason.

2. If personal documents are held by the employer or a subcontractor due to legal requirements or upon request by the worker, these are immediately returned to the worker upon demand and without any preconditions. In such circumstances, the employer or subcontractor:
 - (a) Provides workers with an exact copy of personal documentation when not in their possession;
 - (b) Develops written policies and procedures to prevent abuse;
 - (c) Nominates a responsible person to ensure workers have unhindered access to their documents upon demand;
 - (d) Notifies workers of these procedures.
3. Lengthy or otherwise burdensome prerequisites for accessing one's passport or other personal documents, such as written requests, monetary deposits or waiting periods, must be prohibited.
4. Migrant workers are provided with a locked, secure storage space for personal documents and valuables.

How should financial deposits be handled?

1. Workers are not required to post a bond at the time of recruitment or at any other time during the employment period.
2. Company policy must strictly prohibit the collection of security deposits or payments.
3. The company, or a subcontractor acting on its behalf, withholds a portion of a worker's pay only where legally required.
4. In cases where the migrant worker has opted to participate in a voluntary savings scheme facilitated by the employer, the worker shall have unhindered access to and full control of all savings and monies owed at the time of contract termination.

What freedoms of movement should be guaranteed?

1. Workers must enjoy reasonable freedom of movement within their working and living environments. Any legitimate constraints on movement in the workplace are specified prior to the signing of the employment contract.
2. The presence of security personnel and/or the installation of other security measures in the workplace and/or employer- or recruiter-operated residences are not used as a means to restrict workers' freedom of movement.

3. Workers are not required to live in employer- or recruiter-operated residences as a condition of recruitment or continued employment.
4. No coercive means are used to restrict migrant workers' freedom of movement or personal freedom, including confiscation of personal documents, levying of financial penalties or security deposits, or the use of deception in wage payments and deductions.
5. Migrant workers are free to return to their home country during paid leave, without any penalty or threat of termination.

How should grievance procedures be structured?

1. Employer and recruiter policy and practice must show a functioning and effective grievance procedure available to migrant workers.
2. Effective measures are in place to ensure that migrant workers know how to use this procedure and feel safe and free from potential retaliation if they do so.
3. Where grievances are raised, effective and appropriate procedures are in place to ensure a rapid and mutually agreed settlement.

Annex II: Challenges in migration-related data collection and management in Maldives

Reported challenges	Proposed Solution(s)
Maldives Immigration does not employ trained statisticians. Hence, there is nobody with the sole responsibility, resources and time to set data collection priorities and methods to achieve them, as well as to assure data quality control.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a specialized international or national agency train an in-house statistician or hire an external one. • Ensure that the statistician has all the necessary resources to perform statistical work on a full-time basis. • Share statistical responsibilities by appointing an immigration focal point at another institution with known statistical expertise (e.g. the National Bureau of Statistics).
<p>Record updating (e.g. extensions and de-registrations) is particularly vulnerable to error. Records in Excel spreadsheets, in particular, are prone to accidental overwriting, saving of auto-suggested (but incorrect) entry, or data loss. These technical and human errors sometimes go unnoticed.</p> <p>Work under time pressure increases likelihood of erroneous data recording. If mistakes are discovered post-factum, their understanding and correction becomes a complex technical issue. As migration to Maldives grows in size and complexity, spreadsheet records will prove unsustainable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term: Lessen the workload of staff by assigning trained assistant or by modifying the tasks deemed to be most time-consuming. • Long-term: Replace Excel with a new database developed based on thorough staff feedback.
<p>Upon consultation with Maldives Immigration and the National Centre for Information Technology (NCIT), it was highlighted that the XPAT Database had been producing two errors, possibly one technical and another human:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Occupations are misaligned with the sectors (e.g. medical occupations in agriculture). b. Totals for the same data do not correspond when producing different reports based on the same data. <p>The first is likely to be a human input problem. However, it could also be caused by a technical problem that prevents entry of data in the correct field.</p> <p>The second is likely a technical problem, since the NCIT dummy dataset also produces different totals for the same data.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the causes of the problem with NCIT. If the problems are not tackled, they are unlikely to be solved, thereby making XPAT records inaccurate and limiting Maldives Immigration's or the ability of the Ministry of Economic Development to analyse XPAT trends. • After the causes of the problems have been detected and fixed, perform cleaning of records that feature potentially inaccurate data to make data collected since 2013 useful.
Databases are not integrated, and staff find it difficult to enter data correctly or efficiently.	Consult with database users, NCIT and database developers on how the databases or its components could be integrated.

Reported challenges	Proposed Solution(s)
<p>Maldives Immigration collects a number of documents, but not all of the data is entered into the database and not all the data which is entered is useful or could be analysed. Some information is scanned and stored as attachments. Hence, Maldives Immigration is able to look up individual persons' files, but cannot turn this data into statistics and analyse it.</p> <p>Some reports require NCIT's help to be generated in a desirable format. For instance, Maldives Immigration cannot easily change short-term (e.g. daily, weekly, monthly) into long-term (annual) statistics. Also, sensitive information is sometimes stored alongside non-sensitive information, thereby limiting report generation capabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess which data that Maldives Immigration is collecting are policy-relevant and which are not. • Eliminate impractical data collection to free up time to record policy-relevant data. • Consult with NCIT on how the technical capabilities of the existing databases could be expanded.
<p>Due to institutional changes and staff rotation, some of the persons who were trained in the use and management of specific databases no longer work for either Maldives Immigration or NCIT. Those who use the databases on a regular basis feel it would be useful to be deep-trained or retrained.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey the staff to know what type of training they need, making a distinction between one-time and regular training. Train the staff in exactly what they need. • Training takes various forms. It can be implemented through online videos, manuals or face-to-face.
<p>In order for data to be shared externally (or even internally), approval must be obtained from a number of individuals who do not work on the data regularly. This reduces the agency's ability to share data quickly or at all, while burdening higher officials with unnecessary responsibility.</p>	<p>Reduce the number of decision makers to the most relevant ones and ensure effective communication between them.</p>

Annex III: Key labour market characteristics of Maldives

Indicator	Value (%)
Working poverty rate, 2010 ⁷⁰	11.1
Proportion of the adult population with tertiary education, 2010 ⁷¹	1.3
Labour force participation rates, 2010: ⁷²	
• All	52.1
• Women	38.2
• Men	68
• Youth	41.9
Share of key industries in total employment, 2014:	
• Agriculture	8
• Industry	22.7
• Services	68.1
Proportion of the total population who are employed, 2010	39.7
Unemployment rate, 2014: ⁷³	
• All	5.2
• Women	5.9
• Men	4.8
Youth (age: 15–24) unemployment rate, 2010	25.4
Proportion of the youth population not in employment, education or training (NEET rate), 2010	56.4
Share of health-care expenditure not financed out-of-pocket by private households	50.9
Public social protection expenditure as a percentage of GDP	6.2
Proportion of the population above the statutory pensionable age receiving an old-age pension	89.2
Proportion of the working-age population who are active contributors to the old-age contributory scheme	19.9
Share of manufacturing employment in total employment, 2014	11.2
Proportion of the child population engaged in labour, 2010:	
• Total	2.2
• Males	2.2
• Females	2.3
Female share of employment, 2014:	
• Senior and middle management positions	20.6
• Total employment	18.5
Proportion of retirees receiving pensions, 2012	99.7

⁷⁰ The percentage of the employed population classified as “working poor” (i.e. persons who, despite being employed, live in a household whose income or consumption is below the poverty line).

⁷¹ Adult population with advanced (tertiary) education as a percentage of the total adult population.

⁷² Labour force as a percentage of the working-age population.

⁷³ Proportion of the total labour force that are unemployed. The unemployed comprise working-age persons who are without work, but are available to work and are looking for work.

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