




Voluntary Local Review Report of Malé City Council, Maldives 2025: Moving towards a Safe, Inclusive, Equitable, Resilient and Sustainable Island City

September 2025





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Acknowledgement

The Malé City Council extends its deepest appreciation to all institutions and individuals whose invaluable contributions made the preparation of the Voluntary Local Review (VLR) possible.

This initiative was spearheaded by the Mayor as part of his long-term vision to transform the Malé City Council from a traditional municipal service provider into an institution that holistically addresses the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability. Mayor Azim reaffirmed Malé City's commitment to a "transformative roadmap" through the VLR, ensuring that this process serves as a strategic step toward building a sustainable and resilient future for the city.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Mayor of Malé City, Mr. Adam Azim, the Deputy Mayor, Council Members, Heads of Departments, and the dedicated staff of the Malé City Council for their leadership and guidance throughout the VLR process.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Mr. Ismail Sobah, Chief Statistician at Malé City Council, for his outstanding leadership and dedication in coordinating the VLR project on behalf of the Council. His continuous oversight of the document's preparation, along with his effective coordination with various departments for data collection, played a pivotal role in the successful completion of this initiative.

We gratefully acknowledge the Ministry of Finance and Planning, including its National Planning Department, as well as the Maldives Bureau of Statistics, for their continuous support and vital contributions in providing data, technical insights, and institutional understanding.

We also recognise the collaboration of various departments within the Malé City Council, local agencies, and stakeholders who participated in consultations and contributed their insights, making this report both inclusive and evidence based.

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Finally, we acknowledge the collective enthusiasm and commitment of all stakeholders, partners, and community representatives whose engagement ensured that the Malé City VLR reflects a shared vision for a safe, inclusive, equitable, resilient, and sustainable island city.



Foreword by the Mayor of Malé City



Adam Azim
Mayor, Malé City

This Voluntary Local Review (VLR) is more than a report; it is a declaration of intent and a commitment to action. As Mayor, I see this process as a strategic step toward smarter governance, grounded in transparency, guided by data, and committed to serving every resident effectively.

Malé City is the beating heart of the Maldives. It is where the nation's aspirations and its most pressing challenges converge: urban density, climate vulnerability, and social disparities. In this context, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are not abstract concepts; they are a lifeline for our city's resilience and prosperity. Localising these goals is essential to transforming global commitments into tangible outcomes that improve lives and strengthen communities.

This review represents a collective effort. It reflects the dedication of municipal teams who champion evidence-based decision-making, the collaboration of national institutions that recognise the value of local leadership, and the voices of our communities who remind us of what truly matters. While it provides a baseline for progress, it also sets a clear challenge: to move beyond reactive governance and invest in systems that are inclusive, resilient, and future-ready.

I extend my deepest appreciation to all partners and stakeholders who contributed to this process. The insights presented here will guide our priorities, inform resource allocation, and shape our policies. Above all, they reaffirm our unwavering commitment to ensuring that Malé City becomes a place where every resident is seen, heard, and empowered, a city where the future is built not for the few, but by and for all.



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Abbreviations

AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
ARC	Advocating the Rights of Children
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
AUDIT-C	Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test
BCC	Business Center Cooperation
BCM	Bar Council of Maldives
BP	Basic Pension
CDMP	City Disaster Management Plan
DPO	Disability Persons Organization
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DTP	Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis
DVPNS	Domestic Violence Prevention National Strategy
EV	Electric Vehicle
FPA	Family Protection Authority
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAP	Gender Equality Action Plan
GHG	Green House Gas
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HDC	Housing Development Cooperation
HED	Heavy Episodic Drinking
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
HPA	Health Protection Agency
HPV	Human Papilloma Virus
HRCM	Human Rights Commission of Maldives
ICLEI SA	ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, South Asia
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IT	Information Technology
km ²	square kilometer
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MCC	Malé City Council
MMA	Maldives Monetary Authority
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index

MPS	Maldives Police Service
MRC	Maldives Red Crescent
MRO	Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul
MSME	Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises
MTCC	Maldives Transport and Contracting Company
MVI	Multidimensional Vulnerability Index
MVR	Maldivian Rufiyaa
MWSC	Malé Water and Sewerage Company Pvt. Ltd.
NDA	National Drug Agency
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations
NPS	National Social Protection Agency
PM	Particulate Matter
RMNCAH	Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health
RO	Reverse Osmosis
SDFC	SME Development Finance Corporation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SHE	Society for Health Education
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SOE	State Owned Enterprises
STELCO	State Electric Company Ltd.
STP	Sewage Treatment Plant
TVET	Technical, and Vocational Educational and Training
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USD	United States Dollar
VLR	Voluntary Local Review
WAMCO	Waste Management Cooperation
WHO	World Health Organization





1. INTRODUCTION



1.1. About Malé City

Malé, the capital city of Maldives, is the political, economic and cultural heart of the country. Historically the “King’s Island” seat of the sultanate, it retains some of the nation’s oldest monuments such as the Hukuru Miskiiy (Old Friday Mosque) - one of the finest coral stone buildings in the world. Today, it is a bustling urban centre, facing many of the challenges of a growing urban capital, including extreme density and climate vulnerability. In 2022, Malé city was one of the world’s most densely populated cities, with the 8.3 km² island hosting 211,908 (Maldives Bureau of Statistics, 2022) residents, and along with its extended urban area (including Vilimalé and Hulhumalé islands) - nearly half the nation’s population. The city houses almost all branches of the government, the central bank, and key institutions that drive the country’s tourism-dependent economy. The Greater Malé city area consists of three islands - Malé, Villimalé and Hulhumalé.

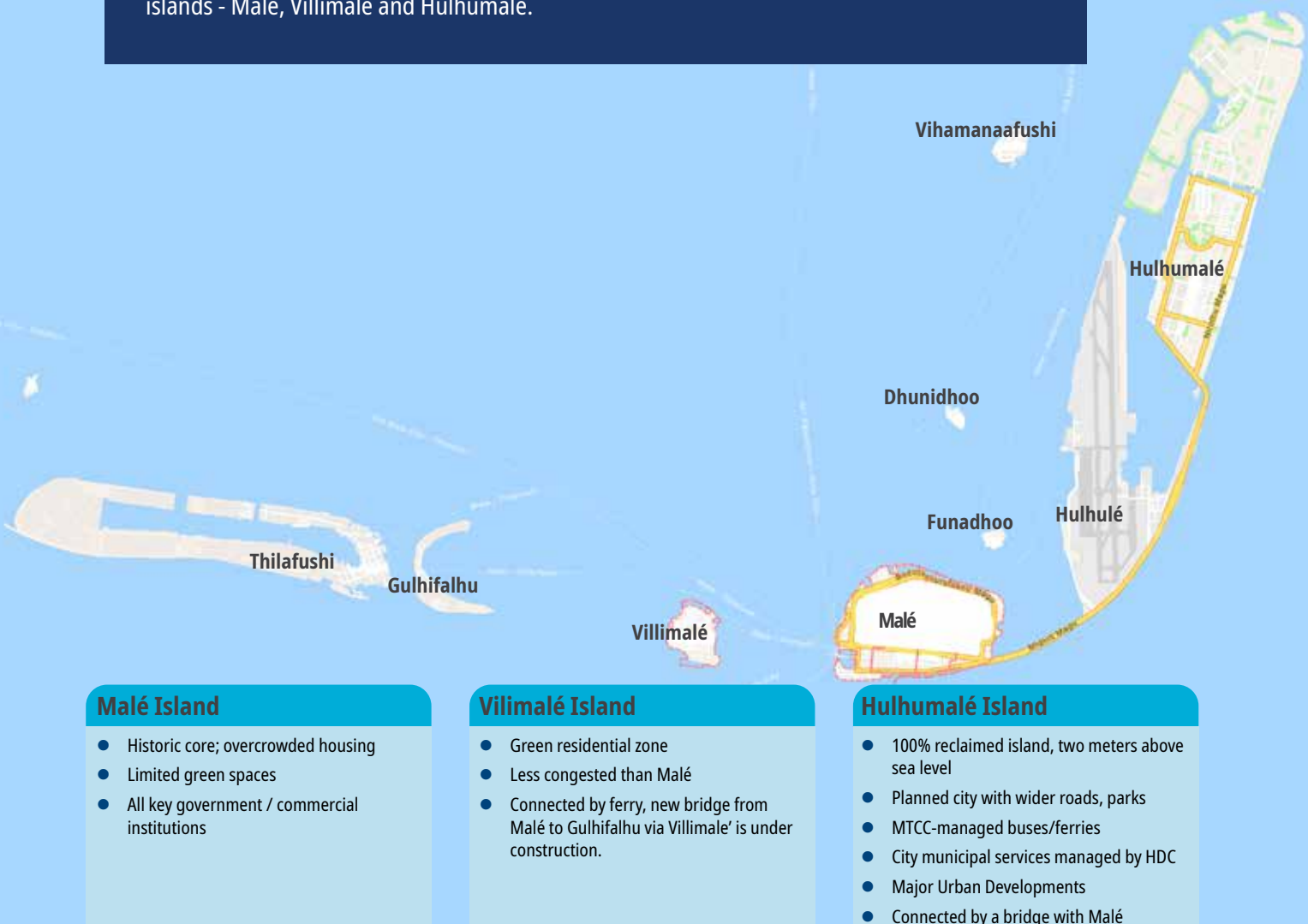


Figure 1: Map of Malé city

Basic services such as healthcare and education are most developed in Malé city, presenting both challenges and opportunities for the country. It is the nation’s social and economic hub, with nearly all banking services, tertiary hospitals and universities located within its limited geography, a reality that draws people from across the archipelago, exacerbating housing shortages and infrastructure pressures.

The city's economy generates nearly half (IFC, 2024) of the national GDP, anchored by the bustling commercial harbour, financial sector, and tourism support services, yet struggles with informal labour conditions and youth unemployment. The city hosts the President's Palace, all government ministries and agencies, the central bank and court, plus every foreign embassy. Its seaport and Velana International Airport (on Hulhulé) channel the majority of all trade and tourist traffic through Malé city. Tourism and fisheries are the mainstays of the national economy, accounting for nearly half of Maldives' GDP, so Malé city effectively serves as the gateway for these industries (IFC, 2024). The city's markets, banking sector and commercial centres bustle with activity, reflecting its role as the Maldives' commercial capital. In short, Malé city concentrates the nation's governance, finance and transit functions in a tiny area.

Urban life in Malé city (consisting of Malé, Villimale and Hulhumalé) is defined by its climate vulnerabilities. With Malé and VilliMalé sitting just one meter above sea level, and Hulhumalé just over two meters, the city faces existential threats from rising seas, while heat island effects and recurrent flooding test its resilience. Governance complexities further complicate development, with jurisdiction split between the Malé City Council and national entities like Housing Development Cooperation (HDC), Waste Management Cooperation (WAMCO), and the Maldives Transport and Contracting Company (MTCC). Multiple other state-owned enterprises (SOE) like Maldives Ports Ltd., Malé Water and Sewerage Company Pvt. Ltd. (MWSC), State Electric Company Ltd (STELCO), Fahi Dhiriulhun Corporation Ltd., SME Development Finance Corporation Pvt Ltd, etc., support the provision of services to the City. Malé city's rapid urbanisation and tourism-driven growth have strained its utilities, environment and space, underscoring the need for sustainable planning and adaptation. Despite these challenges, Malé city is fully committed to sustainable development, with a City Council working towards advancing and integrating sustainable development in its development strategies.

The Malé City Council was originally established as the Malé Municipality in 1968, as the municipal governing body of Malé city. Once the Decentralisation Act (Law No. 7/2010) came into being, there was more stress on decentralized governance to empower local councils across the Maldives. It is under this Act that the Malé City Council was formally established, inheriting the functions and assets of the former Malé Municipality.

Currently, the Malé City Council operates as an independent and autonomous body, and is empowered to own property, incur liabilities, and exercise self-governance and decision-making powers. The council is mandated to provide democratic and accountable governance, foster social and economic well-being, promote community development, and overall ensure a safe, healthy, and ecologically diverse environment. However, in order to execute its responsibilities of service delivery to the citizens, Malé City Council collaborates with national agencies and state-owned enterprises to coordinate development initiatives.

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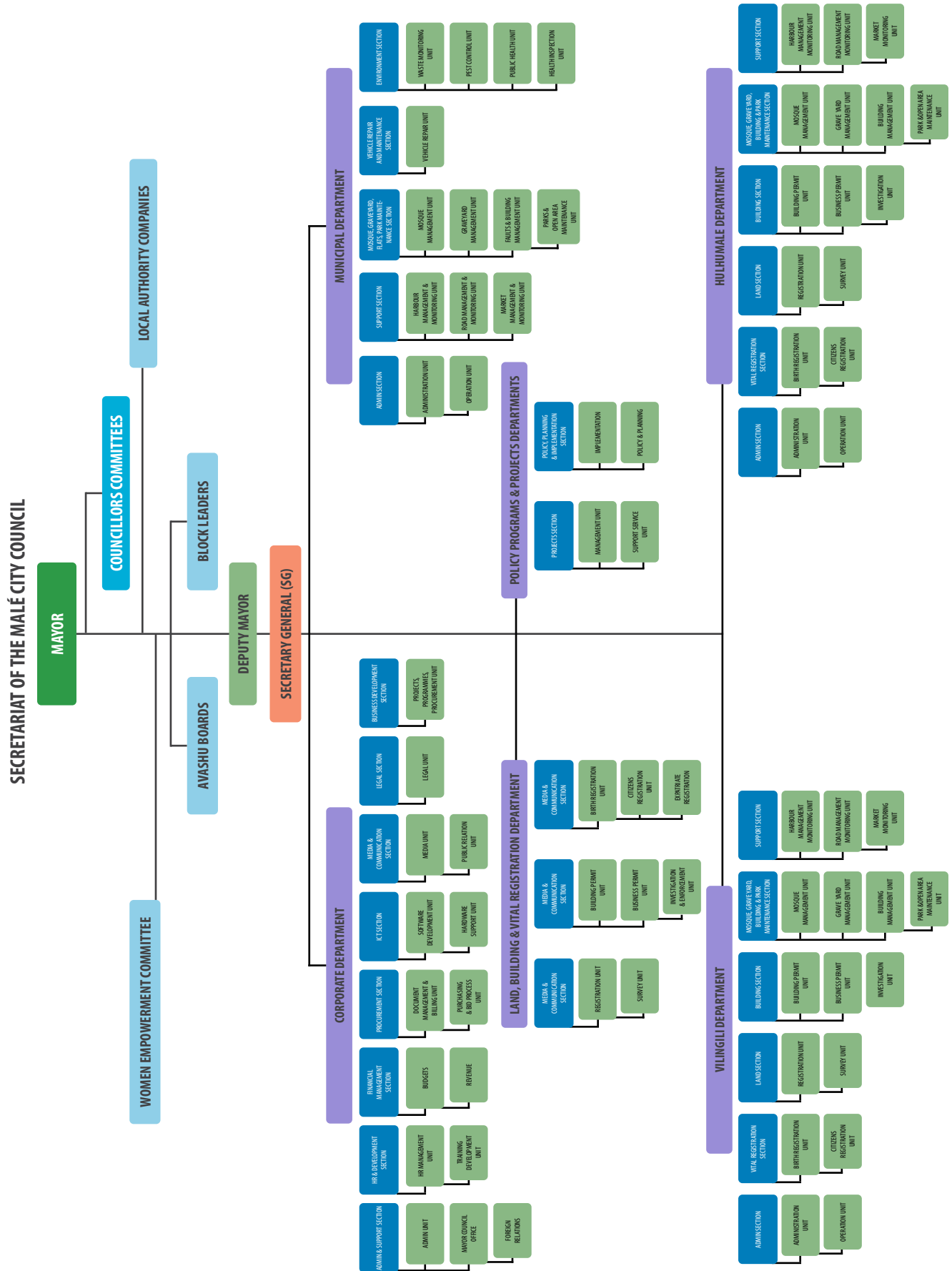


Figure 2: Institutional Mechanism of MCC



The Malé City Council has made sustainable development a central focus of its planning and policy. Recently, the city has explicitly embraced the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through its process for localising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In late 2024, the Mayor initiated the process of developing Malé city's first **Voluntary Local Review (VLR)** report with support from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, South Asia to assess SDG implementation at the municipal level through a consultative and participatory process. Based on Malé city's Strategic Action Plan, which is built around seven "vision" pillars - Digital Malé, Beautiful Malé, Housing for the People, Appealing Roads, Affluent Living, Approachable Council and Efficient Administration - the VLR represents a pivotal step toward localising the SDGs in Malé city, embedding principles of inclusion, participation and resilience into urban governance. The main objectives of the VLR of Malé city are:

- (i) Assess progress and improve planning - to evaluate SDG achievements, identify gaps, and align policies for sustainable urban development.
- (ii) Attract funding and contribute to global SDG efforts - to align Malé city's development and investment priorities with the global SDG framework
- (iii) Assess SDG alignment and guide future plans - to assess the alignment of the current Strategic Action Plan Pillars with the SDGs and provide actionable inputs for the next Strategic Action Plan (2026-2030).

1.2. Key Characteristics

1.2.1. Population and Urban Density

According to the Census of Maldives (2022), the Malé City Council area (including Hulhumalé, Villimale and the airport island of Hulhulé) was home to 211,908 people, 41% of the Maldives' population on only 8.3 km² of land. In the early 2000s, more than 130,000 residents were already living in just 5.8 km² of the main island, making Malé one of the world's most crowded cities. According to Census 2022, Malé city's population includes a significant share of foreign workers (over 24%).

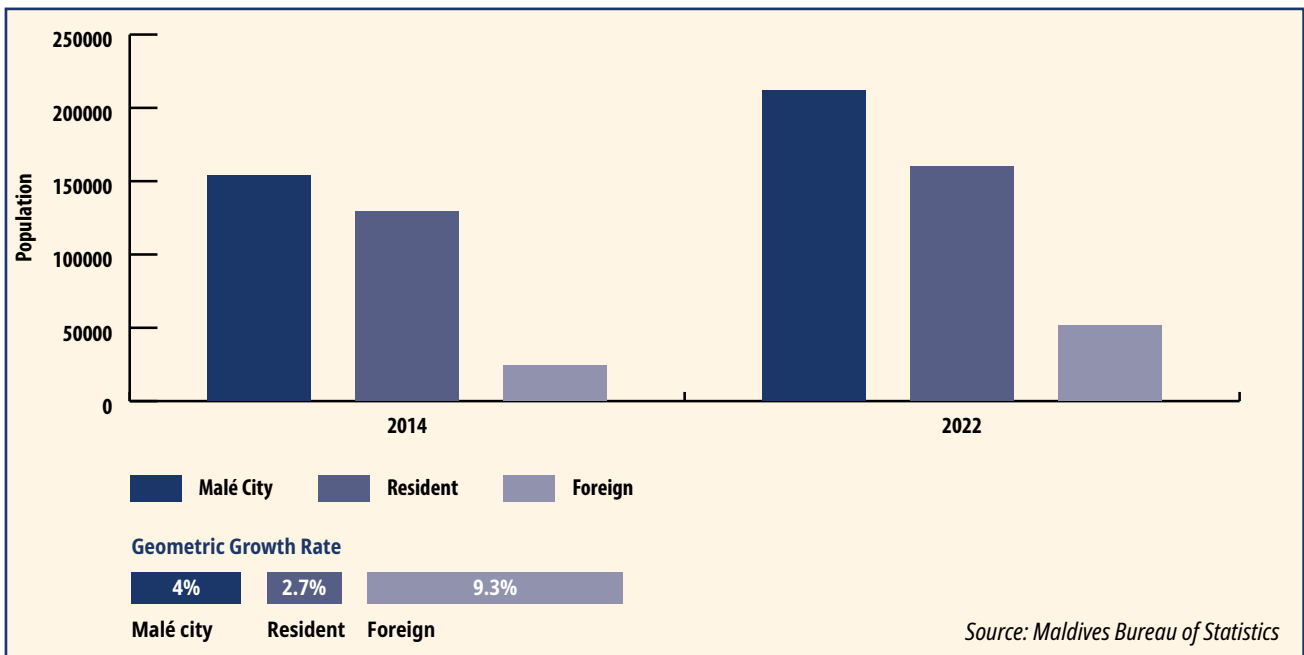



Figure 3: Growth Rate of Malé city

1.2.2. Socio-Economic Centre of the Nation

Malé city is the economic powerhouse of the Maldives, generating a significant portion of the country's GDP and serving as the central hub for finance, trade, governance, education and employment. The city's economy depends upon:

			
<p>Government and Public Services:</p>	<p>Finance and Banking:</p>	<p>Trade and Commerce:</p>	<p>Tourism Support Services:</p>
<p>Malé city hosts all major government institutions of Maldives, including the Parliament, ministries, and regulatory bodies, employing the majority of the nation's civil service workforce.</p>	<p>The Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA), all major commercial banks, and all the insurance companies are headquartered in Malé city, making it the centre of the country's financial ecosystem.</p>	<p>The city is home to the Malé Commercial Harbour, handling 96% of the nation's total imports (Maldives Customs Service, 2024), while the North Malé Harbour acts as the primary distribution point for goods across the country. The local fish market attracts a large number of fishing vessels daily, serving as a vital hub for the fisheries economy.</p>	<p>Though resorts are scattered across atolls, Malé city serves as the primary transit and administrative hub for the tourism industry. Malé city is the only offshore anchor docking area for cruise liners in the country, receiving all cruise ship calls arriving in the country.</p>

Malé city is the centre for primary and secondary education in the country. Of the 362 schools nationwide, 43 schools in Malé city cater to 38,861 students, accounting for nearly 40% of the 99,300 enrolled students. In stark contrast, Haa Dhaalu Atoll—the region with the next highest enrollment—has only 6,450 students spread across 14 islands. Malé city alone has 28 schools with an enrollment of 500 or more, while the rest of the country combined has 27 such schools (Statistical Handbook, 2025).

There is a very high student influx for higher education in Malé city from other islands. The main campuses of the 2 national universities, and a majority of all private colleges and institutions are based in Malé city, resulting in university students relocating to Malé city from other atolls, putting an additional strain on housing.

Malé city serves as the primary hub for formal employment in the Maldives, attracting a disproportionate share of jobs in public services, retail, trade, and manufacturing (World Bank, 2022), leading to internal migration from outer islands. Despite high education levels, youth (aged 15–24) experience a high unemployment rate of 9.7%, which is more than 2 times the total unemployment rate of 3.5% (Maldives Bureau of Statistics), due to skills mismatch (Youth Policy Advisory Group and World Bank Group, 2019).

Almost 50000 migrant workers (mainly from Bangladesh, India, and Nepal) working in the informal sector live in Malé city in precarious conditions, including wage theft and overcrowded housing.

Malé city faces infrastructure challenges driven by rapid population growth, limited land availability and environmental pressures. It depends heavily on reverse osmosis (RO) desalination for potable water, which is distributed through a piped supply system. Much of the city's sewage is discharged directly into the sea without treatment, raising environmental and health concerns. Solid waste is transported to Thilafushi for limited waste segregation and processing in a landfill.



The city relies on diesel generators for electricity with no large-scale grid alternatives. The ongoing Velana International Airport expansion includes plans to shift to renewables, especially solar. The airport’s development along with upgraded Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) services and seaplane terminal is expected to strengthen Malé city’s role as a regional transport and logistics hub (Airports Council International, 2024). The city has a dense paved-road network, but experiences heavy congestion due to the high number of vehicles, particularly motorcycles. The Sinamalé Bridge connects Malé, Hulhulé, and Hulhumalé, providing road access to the airport and reducing reliance on ferries. The Greater Malé Connectivity Project, currently underway, will link Malé, Vilimalé, Gulhifalhu, and Tilafushi to reduce traffic bottlenecks and support regional development (In Focus: Maldives, HVS, 2021). The Malé Transport and Contracting Company (MTCC) operates buses and ferries between Malé, Vilimalé, and Hulhumalé, although users report inconsistent schedules and frequent delays due to congestion.

Space constraints in Malé city severely limit manufacturing development. The Gulhifalhu port and Thilafushi industrial zone are being built to expand logistics and diversification capacity, aimed at easing urban pressure and catalyzing economic activity outside the main island (Swarajya, 2023). There is high internet penetration rate within Malé city with 97.3% of individuals using fixed internet broadband subscriptions (Census, 2022) fostering e-commerce and fintech growth. Hulhumalé’s planned infrastructure includes fiber-optic networks (Corporate Maldives, 2023).

1.2.3. Climate Vulnerability

The major risks from climate change in Malé city from sea-level rise and urban flooding. With Malé and Vilimalé sitting just one meter above sea level, 95% of its land area is at risk of flooding by 2100 (IPCC projections). The reclaimed area of Hulhumalé is 2m above sea level, slightly reducing the risk. Increasingly frequent tidal swells cause damage to housing in the coastal areas of Malé city, while causing disruptions to transport services (ferries). Torrential rainfall regularly overwhelms the island's drainage systems, causing flooding across the city's urbanized surface.

Malé city also experiences the heat island effect. The combination of dense concrete development covering the majority of Malé Island and minimal green space less than 3% vegetation cover creates significantly higher urban temperatures compared to surrounding areas. Daytime temperatures in Malé city with real feel temperatures between 35-40°C, creates dangerous heat stress conditions that reduce outdoor mobility during peak daylight hours, increase energy demand for cooling in houses, and exacerbate health risks for vulnerable populations.

1.3. Maldives' Position in the Global Community of Small Island Developing States

Malé city stands as a pivotal urban center in the Indian Ocean, embodying the unique challenges and aspirations of cities in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Its strategic location and administrative significance make it central to the nation's socio-economic development and proactive engagement in global climate discourse.

Maldives has been a leading voice in global advocacy for SIDS. Malé city hosted the Small Island States Conference on Sea Level Rise in 1989, which led to the landmark [Malé Declaration](#). This declaration was among the earliest international documents to emphasise the human impact on global climate change. Maldives was instrumental in the establishment of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in 1990, a coalition that continues to champion the interests of island nations in international climate negotiations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maldives).

During its tenure as AOSIS chair from 2015–2018, Maldives contributed significantly to the adoption of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, strengthening the role of SIDS in shaping global sustainability agendas.

As climate impacts intensify, Maldives, through its leadership centred in Malé city, has advocated for fairer and more accessible climate financing mechanisms for vulnerable countries. At COP28, President Mohamed Muizzu emphasised that existing financial systems are inadequate to meet the needs of SIDS and called for support from multilateral institutions and the private sector.

Additionally, Maldives champions the establishment of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI), arguing that traditional economic metrics such as GDP per capita overlook the environmental and social vulnerabilities faced by island nations (The Guardian, 2024).

In recent years, the priority of the MCC is shifting from a service delivery role to a more leadership role, that is looking to adopt and promote national commitments through local initiatives. This VLR exercise has also been an accelerator for MCC to move from a municipal service provider role and transform it into an institute that caters to the wider social, economic and environmental issues.

1.4. Malé City's Sustainability Commitments to Leaving No One and No Place Behind

Malé city is committed to advancing sustainability and upholding the SDG principle of “Leaving No One and No Place Behind.” The city faces multiple developmental and climate challenges such as limited land, rapid urbanization, and climate vulnerability, and in response is actively working towards developing an inclusive and resilient Malé city. Its principles of sustainability goes beyond environmental protection to include social inclusion, economic growth, and participatory governance.

The City Council is aligning its planning processes with the SDGs to ensure that vulnerable marginalized groups such as migrant workers, youth, women, disabled, residents of underserved neighbourhoods, etc. are included in development priorities. Recent efforts in waste management reform, digital public services, and accessibility improvements reflect this inclusive approach. Malé city is also focused on addressing spatial inequality by improving infrastructure, services, and connectivity across the city, especially for underserved areas.

As the city looks toward the 2026–2030 Strategic Action Plan, its commitment to sustainability means **investing in climate resilience, social protection, and equitable economic growth**, ensuring that no individual or locality is left behind in its journey toward a more just and sustainable urban future. In this context, the Malé City Council has begun the review of implementation of the SDGs in the city to understand its progress and gaps through its first VLR.

1.5. The VLR in the Context of Malé City Council's Next Strategic Action Plan (2026-2030)

The VLR for Malé city is aimed to be a powerful tool for informing Malé City Council's Strategic Action Plan (2026–2030), particularly in the areas of capacity strengthening, partnerships, budgeting, and capital investment planning. Conducting a VLR allows the city to assess its progress against global development targets and indicators, while tailoring strategies to its unique local context.

1.5.1. Capacity Strengthening

One of the most valuable outcomes of the VLR of Malé city has been the identification of institutional strengths and gaps. By reviewing performance on selected SDGs, the Malé City Council is able to pinpoint where skills, systems, and human resources need strengthening. The process of developing the VLR, being a consultative and participatory one, has built internal understanding and awareness of the SDG framework across local government departments, national governments and civil society to promote cross-sectoral thinking and planning. It also encouraged collaboration among different stakeholders to undertake action on the SDGs.

1.5.2. Partnerships

The VLR process in Malé city prioritised engagement with civil society and different government departments, private sector, academia, NGOs and other local agencies, laying the groundwork for stronger partnerships. It created a platform for dialogue between local government, national agencies, NGOs, civil society and development partners. Malé City Council will use the platform created for developing the VLR to regularly convene stakeholders to address shared challenges such as youth unemployment, education, healthcare or climate resilience. The platform will strengthen partnerships between different agencies of the government and with civil society and synchronize local efforts with national SDG commitments, encouraging resource alignment and policy coherence.

1.5.3. Budgeting

It is envisaged that the Malé city VLR will not only contribute to the next Voluntary National Review of Maldives but also (and primarily) to the Strategic Action Plan for Malé city to ensure that there is adequate budget and investment in the gaps identified in the SDG indicators.

Currently, in the Maldives, the central government allocates an annual grant to each local council. In spite of Malé city receiving a large share in this allocation, the central government support is only able to cover the administrative and operational costs of the council. For development projects and other initiatives beyond administrative functions, MCC relies largely on revenue generated through their own sources, such as service fees, rentals of lands and other income-generating activities. The VLR has clearly identified the goals or indicators for Malé city that are lagging, and this information can be used to allocate resources more effectively to improve transparency and can attract international development assistance, as many donors now require or prioritize SDG-linked proposals. This can support Malé city to identify financial resources to address its significant infrastructure and service delivery demands through evidence-based decision-making about capital investment. Through this VLR, Malé city commits to developing a budget that aligns with the priority SDGs identified in the report.

Malé stands as a pivotal urban center in the Indian Ocean, embodying the unique challenges and aspirations of cities in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Its strategic location and administrative significance make it central to the nation's socio-economic development and proactive engagement in global climate discourse.







2. METHODOLOGY OF THE VOLUNTARY LOCAL REVIEW



2.1. The VLR Development Process in Malé City

The 2023 Maldives National Voluntary Review report makes a strong recommendation on 'sustainable cities and communities through regional development.' It specifically states "Malé city being the capital city, needs a sustainable city strategy to lead by example to demonstrate quality living in a sustainable manner, improve quality of life and wellbeing that supports sustainable transport, facilitates decongestion, reduces overcrowding, and ensures inclusivity by improving mobility and safety for all including women, children, elderly and PWDs." The VLR process of Malé city was taken as a follow up to this recommendation.



The VLR report was developed by Malé City Council with technical support from ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, South Asia and the [United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific \(UNESCAP\)](#), in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and Planning and Maldives Bureau of Statistics. The VLR process was led by this core team. However, it was a consultative and analytical process that takes stock of progress made by the city in the achievement of the SDGs and the gaps therein. It followed an inclusive, people-centered and gender sensitive

process, bringing in the perspective of a wide range of stakeholders, both from the government sectors and the civil society. Malé city's VLR helped the city to analyze and monitor the city's progress towards achieving the global SDGs while localising the context and understanding gaps in capacity, technology and finances.

The VLR for Malé city is expected to strategically contribute to the following areas for MCC:



Assess progress in the implementation of its current Strategic Action Plan by 2030



Provide inputs to the city's next Strategic Action Plan (2026-2030)



To capacitate the local government to advocate for, develop and monitor SDG progress based on a localised set of indicators developed for the VLR report.



Strengthen partnerships between different agencies of the government and with civil society and synchronize local efforts with national SDG commitments.



Mainstream SDGs into the city's annual investment plans, ensuring financing of concrete sustainable development priorities for the benefit of citizens.

2.2. Methodology Adopted for VLR

Malé city's VLR process followed the methodology outlined in the [Asia-Pacific Regional Guidelines on Voluntary Local Reviews](#), published by the UNESCAP.

The process began in October 2024 with an official virtual inception meeting held with Malé City Council and the Ministry of Finance and Planning. In December 2024, a discussion among Malé City Council, ICLEI South Asia and UNESCAP led to the shortlisting of the SDGs based on the seven pillars of the Strategic Action Plan of Malé city and the priorities of the Malé City Council that would be reviewed as part of the VLR. In February 2025, a virtual orientation workshop was organized for the core team members to strengthen their understanding of the process to be followed to develop the VLR and enhance their knowledge of SDGs, targets and indicators as well as the reporting process for VLR. A detailed questionnaire, integrating both quantitative and qualitative questions, was developed for different government departments to provide information on the various indicators and targets of the selected SDGs.

The quantitative questions (closed-ended formats) provided a statistical measure of the indicator status and the qualitative questions (open-ended formats) helped capture insights on policies, challenges, initiatives, and contextual details supporting the quantitative data. Some missing data was sourced from the secondary online repositories and official Maldives government publications, such as the Maldives Bureau of Statistics' Statistical Archive which is an online repository of socio-economic data and administrative reports like the Census 2022 available through government portals. The data collected were analysed to understand the progress in SDG implementation in Malé city. This was followed by an in-person stakeholder consultation workshop organized in Malé city in April 2025, which brought together national and local government agencies, civil society, academicians, NGOs and youth to discuss the selected goals, targets and indicators of the SDGs that were shortlisted previously. Using the data collected and the information obtained from the consultation, a final list of SDGs was identified and analysed to prepare a draft VLR report. The draft report was shared with all the key stakeholders who were part of the consultation for further inputs as part of the data validation process over June and July 2025. The draft report was finalized by the Malé City Council after consolidating all inputs from relevant stakeholders in August 2025.

Malé city benefitted from the strong commitment by the local government leadership and the Ministry of Finance and Planning to the VLR process from preliminary review to final release and inputs from the cross-administrative, committed and competent organization and editorial team.

2.2.1. Inception Meeting

Malé City Council organized an inception meeting to officially launch the VLR process to review the SDGs in October 2024. The meeting was attended by officials from key departments of Malé City Council as well as the Ministry of Finance and Planning, Maldives Bureau of Statistics and representatives from UNESCAP and ICLEI South Asia. The meeting discussed the need for a VLR process in Malé city and presented information on the SDGs and their indicators, linkages between VNRs and VLRs, including VLR guidelines and provided an overview of the activities that would follow. Through this meeting, a nodal officer was appointed to facilitate communication between the municipality, stakeholders and technical partners. The meeting also served as an orientation for the local and national government partners to build awareness and capacity of local key stakeholders on SDGs and VLR.

2.2.2. Stakeholder Consultations

In April 2025, an orientation session for Malé City Council staff on SDGs was organized to enhance their understanding and engagement with the global sustainability framework. The session aimed to equip the City Council with the knowledge and tools necessary to integrate the SDGs into their day-to-day operations, supporting the development of the VLR for Malé city.

Following the orientation session, the Malé City Council convened a two-day Stakeholder Consultation Workshop. At the workshop, representatives from Malé City Council worked with various local government departments, national governments, civil society, academia, youth groups, and technical experts to discuss the SDG targets, and shape a

Malé city benefitted from the strong commitment by the local government leadership and the Ministry of Finance and Planning to the VLR process

shared vision for the VLR of Malé city and discuss the prospects for SDG Localisation. Senior government officials, civil-society leaders, private-sector representatives and technical experts joined hands to:

- Localise the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development within Malé city.
- Assess existing projects/ initiatives, data gaps and implementation challenges across ten priority SDGs.
- Co-create a concise vision and an enduring stakeholder engagement plan.

The event was inaugurated by Mr. Adam Azim, Mayor, Malé City Council and Mohammad Imad, Director General, Ministry of Finance and Planning. Mayor Azim reaffirmed Malé city’s commitment to a “transformative roadmap” through the VLR.

The list of participating stakeholders in the consultation meeting is attached in Annex 1.

2.2.3. Data Mapping and Linking SDGs

For its first VLR, Malé City Council conducted multiple meetings with the core team that shortlisted the most relevant SDGs for Malé city. Malé City Council, along with the consultants, developed a detailed questionnaire (Annex 2) for a number of selected organisations and agencies who have data on different indicators of the SDGs selected for the VLR.

The organisations that were approached include:

	Malé City Council		Ministry of Education
	Maldives Bureau of Statistics		Anti-Corruption Commission
	Ministry of Finance and Planning		National Social Protection Agency
	Immigration Department		Ministry of Social and Family Development
	Maldives Transport and WContracting Company		Family Protection Authority
	Telecom Authority		Human Rights Commission of the Maldives
	Maldives Police Service		Health Protection Agency
	Waste Management Corporation		Maldives Media Council
	Ministry of Climate Change, Environment and Energy		Malé Water and Sewerage Company (MWSC)
	National Drug Agency		Pension Office

However, data availability, especially disaggregated data at Malé city level, remains a constraint and data was received only from a few agencies, sector ministries and SOEs. Data management at the MCC level is also weak. On the basis of the seven pillars of the Strategic Action Plan of Malé city and the priorities of the Malé City Council, a list of SDGs to be reviewed as part of the VLR. Secondary reports and online verifiable sources were also used. The SDGs selected for the VLR of Malé City Council include:

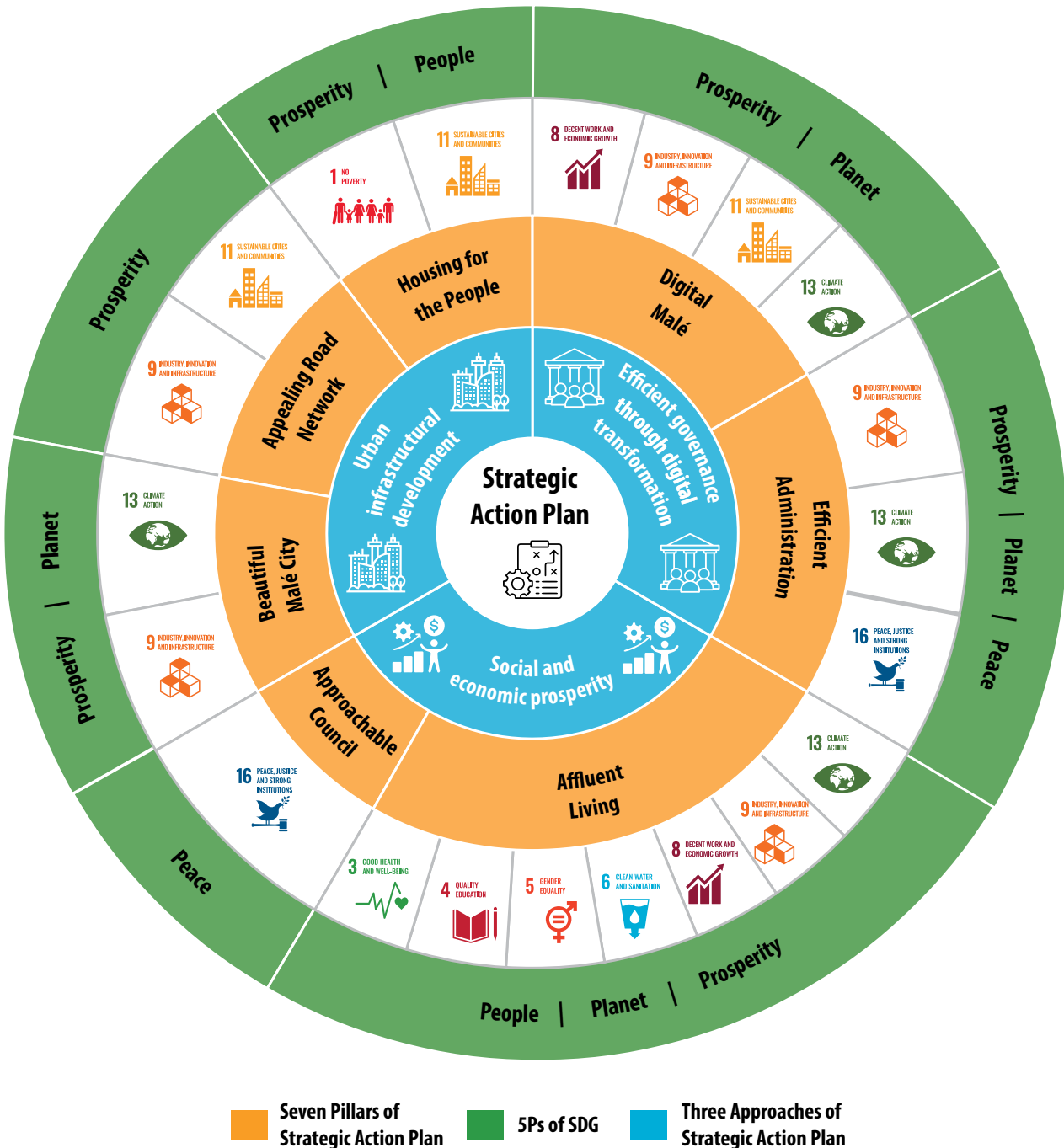


Figure 4: SDG Alignment with Malé City Council's Strategic Action Plan




Initially, SDG 4 was not included in the shortlisted SDGs, but because of a demand from the stakeholders to report on this SDG, this was also included in the full list.

2.2.4. Validation of the VLR report

The first validation meeting for VLR was convened in June 2025, bringing together the Mayor, councillors and senior officials from the Malé City Council, representatives from the Ministry of Finance and Planning, and the consulting team supporting the process. This session provided an opportunity to collectively review the preliminary data, discuss emerging findings, and the proposed way forward, ensuring there is alignment with both the city's priorities and national frameworks. Following this, the draft VLR report was formally presented to a broader group of stakeholders in Malé city in July 2025. Feedback and technical inputs gathered during this session were incorporated into the final version of the report, ensuring that the VLR reflects both the evidence base and the perspectives of key institutional partners.

2.3. Alignment with Malé City's Strategic Action Plan

Malé City Council's current Strategic Action Plan outlines seven key pillars, which can be categorised into three approaches, that are aimed at enhancing the city's liveability, resilience, and governance systems. The VLR for Malé City Council is designed as a strategic instrument to align future local initiatives with global objectives as well as the Strategic Action Plan of Malé city, ensuring that development efforts are inclusive and sustainable.

 <p>Efficient governance through digital transformation</p>	 <p>Urban infrastructural development</p>	 <p>Social and economic prosperity</p>
<p>The pillars of “Digital Malé” and “Efficient Administration” emphasize the city’s commitment to modernizing its services through digital technologies, aiming to improve service delivery and administrative processes.</p>	<p>Through the pillars of “Beautiful Malé city,” “Appealing Road Network,” and “Housing for the People,” the plan focuses on upgrading urban infrastructure for better connectivity and urban services, enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the city, and addressing housing needs to improve residents’ quality of life.</p>	<p>The pillars that deal with “Approachable Council” and “Affluent Living” highlight the need for strengthening community cohesion and increasing economic opportunities to ensure the well-being and prosperity of the citizens of Malé city.</p>

The Malé City Council's Strategic Action Plan has three main approaches:

The VLR can be instrumental in operationalizing Malé city's future Strategic Action Plan in the next few years. The report has assessed the progress that the city has made towards a selected number of SDGs, which correspond to the priorities of the Strategic Action Plan, tracking the effectiveness of the initiatives undertaken under the Action Plan. It can also help identify gaps for Malé City Council in a regular manner, allowing for timely action to address these gaps, and highlight opportunities for more efficient resource allocation. Demonstrating the commitment to SDGs can facilitate financing from external bilateral and multilateral agencies that appreciate regular and efficient

monitoring of development progress in cities.

Involving various stakeholders in the VLR process has helped to promote transparency and inclusivity, ensuring that diverse perspectives can inform policy decisions.

By integrating the data, analysis and recommendations from the VLR into its next Strategic Action Plan, Malé City Council can ensure that its development trajectory is aligned with global sustainability standards, fostering a more inclusive and resilient urban environment.

2.4. Vision of Malé City VLR

Through detailed stakeholder consultations involving national and local government officials, community groups, NGOs, academics, and youth, the City Council has identified a vision for Malé city's VLR. This vision, embodied in the city's assessment of the SDGs, seeks to guide Malé city towards sustainable and inclusive development:

A safe, inclusive, equitable, resilient
and sustainable island city.





3. MALÉ CITY'S PROGRESS TOWARDS THE SDGs



3.1. People (SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5)

Several SDGs directly address key dimensions of social well-being. Among these, **SDG 1 (No Poverty)** works to eradicate extreme poverty through social protection systems and equal economic rights. **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)** promotes healthy lives for all through universal healthcare coverage and disease prevention. **SDG 4 (Quality Education)** ensures inclusive, equitable education to promote lifelong learning opportunities. **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)** seeks to eliminate discrimination and empower all women and girls. While these four goals focus specifically on fundamental human development needs, they interconnect with and depend upon progress across all 17 SDGs to create truly sustainable and equitable societies.



3.1.1. SDG 1: No Poverty

As the nation's economic, administrative and political hub, Malé city has the largest number of jobs, attracting migrants seeking better opportunities not only from other atolls in Maldives, but also from abroad. Yet the city faces growing urban poverty challenges, with high levels of congestion, poor housing conditions and a large proportion of informality in the job sector. The city's high cost of living disproportionately affects low-income residents, particularly in informal settlements. International migrant workers, many employed in low wage and insecure job, often live in substandard accommodations with limited access to social protection. Their vulnerabilities are distinct from those of internal migrants from the atolls, who move to Malé city in search of education, healthcare and employment. While they two struggle with high living costs and limited housing options, their challenges are linked more to affordability and overcrowding than to precarious labour or legal status. The concentration of economic activity in Malé city has created stark inequalities, with vulnerable populations struggling to afford basic necessities amid the capital's high prices for housing, food, and services.



Poverty rates in Malé city remain significantly lower than national and Atolls averages, underscoring the capital's relative economic advantage. Based on the international poverty line, only 0.5% of Malé city's population falls below the poverty threshold, compared to 3.9% nationally and 7.1% in the Atolls. Similarly, as per the national poverty line, poverty in Malé city stands at 0.9%, well below the 5.4% national average and 9.6% in the Atolls. Disaggregated data reveals consistently low poverty across all population groups in Malé city, including children, youth, and the elderly. Notably, working poverty is virtually absent, with only 0.2% of employed persons below the international poverty line and 0.8% below the national line. Even among unemployed individuals and those outside the labour force, poverty rates are minimal, reflecting access to family support, informal employment, or other safety nets.

Despite these positive indicators, pockets of vulnerability persist, particularly in larger households and among female-headed households, where poverty rates, though still low, are slightly elevated.

The Maldives Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) tracks deprivations across access to healthcare, internet, education, and living standards. Specific indicators include child mortality, nutrition, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, and assets. Indicators contributing to the MPI of Malé city are based on access to healthcare, education, and housing. Only about 13% of the country's multidimensionally poor lived in the capital city, Malé, disproportionately less than Malé city's population share ([National Multidimensional Poverty In Maldives, 2020](#)). Between 2009 and 2016/17, multidimensional poverty for Maldives has reduced to one third of its original value – from 0.425 to 0.145. Similarly for Malé city it has reduced from 0.144 to 0.047 between 2009 and 2016/17.

The majority of the programs to address poverty are funded by the national government. These include the Universal Health Coverage (UHC), allowances for disability and single parents, and housing schemes such as the Binveriya scheme (focused on land for residents of Malé city) and Gendhoruveriya Scheme (focused on apartments for residents of Malé city). Social security allowances are provided to persons with disabilities, single mothers (2000 MVR per month) and the elderly. The Elderly Allowance, also known as the Old Age Basic Pension (BP), is a monthly support of MVR 5000 provided through the Maldives Pension Office to senior citizens aged 65 and above. It serves as a financial safety net for those with limited retirement savings.

There is very good access to basic services in Malé city, with almost universal coverage for basic utilities. Malé city, backed by the national government, has made significant progress in achieving universal access to essential services like education, healthcare, water, sanitation, and electricity. The Water and Sewerage Act (2014) regulates supply and private involvement. There is full access in Malé city, with major national investments ongoing. In sanitation, overall

nationally 80% of households and within Malé city 100% of households have access to sewerage lines (Census, 2022). Unfortunately, the sewerage is discharged into the ocean without treatment, in the absence of functional treatment plants. The electricity provider for all of Malé city is STELCO. The main issues with electricity provision are rising power subsidies putting financial stress on government funds and reliance on diesel-based generation, leading to emissions. However, there is a gradual shift by the national government to renewable energy investments (solar, waste-to-energy).

In July 2024, the city joined the UNDRR Making Cities Resilient 2030 initiative, committing to develop a 10-year resilience roadmap. In January 2025, the MCC formed a Disaster Management Committee and task force; however the DRR Action Plan is not yet complete. The Committee has taken tangible steps by deploying over 4,500 sandbags in flood-prone areas. Local communities cut a drainage channel during recent floods. These actions show institutional and community commitment, but the formal DRR plan is not yet adopted. Funding and regular drills are minimal, and implementation is just beginning.

An assessment of the social spending on Malé city shows that it is heavily weighted towards disability (62%) and medical welfare (23%), with much smaller lines for family-support and food assistance. This means that there are more disabled people who are seeking government assistance and welfare.

TARGET 1.1 – Eradicate Extreme Poverty

By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day

SDG INDICATOR

1.1.1 – Proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of population living below USD 1.25 /day (%)

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Overall proportion of population living below USD 1.25 per day in 2019

0.50%
Population

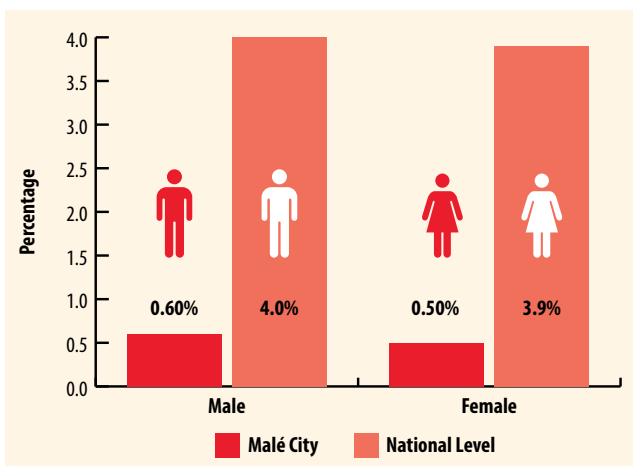


Figure 5: Population living below USD 1.25 per day by gender in 2019

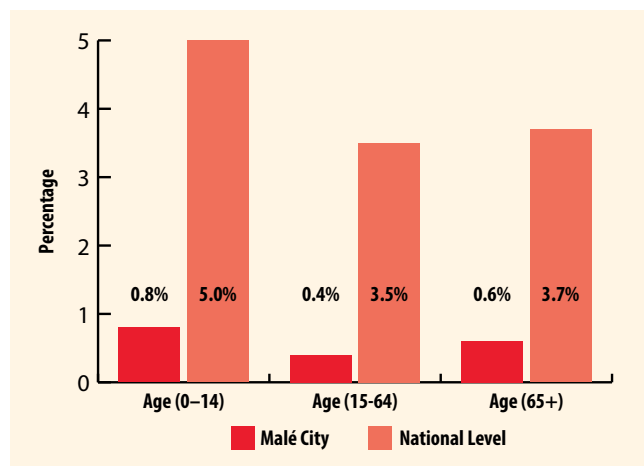


Figure 6: Population living below USD 1.25 per day by age group in 2019

Source: Maldives Bureau of Statistics

TARGET 1.2 – Halve Poverty in all its Dimensions

By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions

SDG INDICATOR

1.2.1 - Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Percentage of population living below the national poverty line (earning below MVR 74), by sex and age

STATUS (PROGRESS)

In Malé city, overall percentage of population living below the national poverty line (earning below MVR 74) in 2019

0.90%
Population

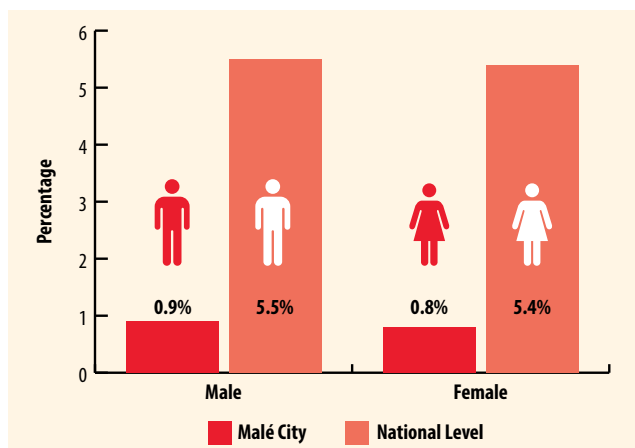


Figure 7: Population living below the national poverty line (earning below MVR 74) by gender in 2019

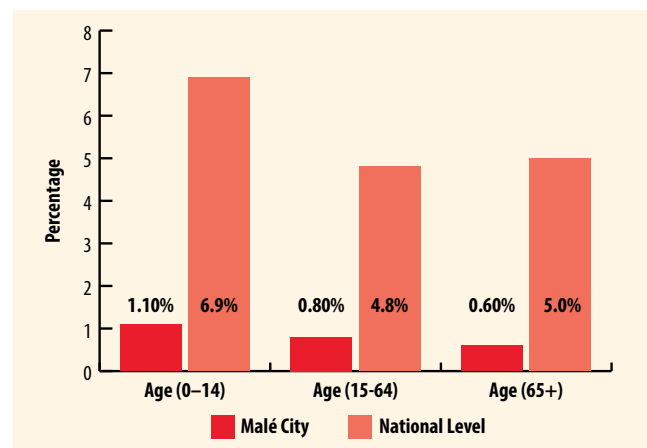


Figure 8: Population living below the national poverty line (earning below MVR 74) by age group in 2019

Source: Maldives Bureau of Statistics

The city's high cost of living disproportionately affects low-income residents, particularly in informal settlements. International migrant workers, many employed in low wage and insecure job, often live in substandard accommodations with limited access to social protection. Their vulnerabilities are distinct from those of internal migrants from the atolls, who move to Malé city in search of education, healthcare and employment.

SDG INDICATOR

1.2.2 - Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Percentage of population in multidimensional poverty (MPI)

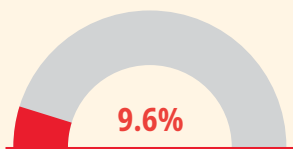
STATUS (PROGRESS)



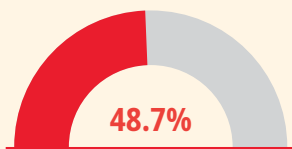
Multidimensional Poverty Index for Malé city (2020) using data collected in 2016/2017

0.047

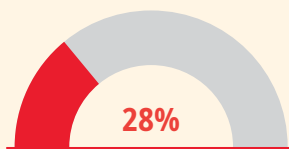
with incidence of poverty (H) at 9.60% and the average intensity (A) at 48.7%.



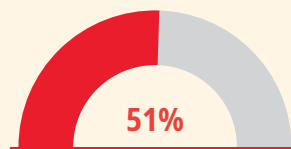
Malé city incidence of poverty (H)



Malé city average intensity (A)



National level incidence of poverty (H)



National level average intensity (A)

Source: Maldives Bureau of Statistics



TARGET 1.3 – Social Protection Coverage

Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable

SDG INDICATOR

1.3.1 - Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Number of beneficiaries by program and overall percentage of population covered

STATUS (PROGRESS)

As of December 2024: Total number of people covered under the allowance:

5,899
People



Single Parent Allowance (15.83% of total people covered)

934
People



Foster Parent Allowance (0.22% of total people covered)

13
People



Parents' Food Assistance (1.03% of total people covered)

61
People



Household Disability Allowance (82.91% of total people covered)

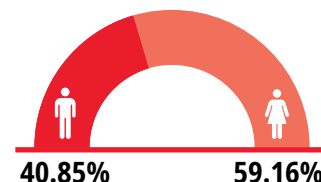
4,891
People

Percentage coverage of total population: **Approx. 2.30% of population enrolled**
(calculating using projected population for 2024 by MBS ~255,885)



Pensioners receiving Old Age Basic Pension with a registered permanent address in the Greater Malé Area (as of 31st May 2025):

1,383
People



Percentage of pensioners by gender

TARGET 1.4 – Universal Access to Basic Services

By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including micro finance.

SDG INDICATOR

1.4.1 - Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Percentage of households with electricity, safe drinking water and sanitation

STATUS (PROGRESS)

As per Census 2022



100%

Households with access to electricity



100%

Households with access to sanitation facilities



99.9%

Households with access to safe drinking water

Source: Maldives Bureau of Statistics

TARGET 1.5 – Resilience to Climate Disasters

By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related disasters

SDG INDICATOR

1.5.4 - Proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national disaster risk reduction strategies

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Presence and status of Malé city's local DRR strategy, coverage of city risks, and institutional measures (DRR committee, budget allocation)

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Malé city is in the early stages of local DRR planning - as of 2025, a draft report has been prepared, but it has not been finalised.

Source: National Disaster Management Authority

TARGET 1.b – Pro-poor & Gender- Sensitive Policy Frameworks

Create sound policy frameworks at all levels based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive strategies, to accelerate investment in poverty eradication.

SDG INDICATOR

1.b.1 - Pro-poor public social spending

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of total public social spending that targets women, children and other vulnerable groups (%)

STATUS (PROGRESS)

The budget is entirely provided by the national government.
The total allocated budget for the following programs for 2025 is:

1,018,082,181
MVR



Single Parent Allowance

78,430,00
MVR



Foster Parent Allowance

3,684,000
MVR



Food Assistance Allowance

290,000
MVR



Disability Allowance

634,310,483
MVR



Therapeutic Services Program

71,150,000
MVR



Medical Welfare

230,217,698
MVR

Source: National Social Protection Agency (NSPA)





Recommended measures to improve the status of SDG 1 in Malé city



Strengthen poverty data management systems

- Malé City Council can establish a city-wide socioeconomic database for real-time tracking of multidimensional poverty. This can be done in partnership with Maldives Bureau of Statistics or local universities to monitor access to services and pre-empt delivery gaps. The National Social Protection Agency also maintains database on different poverty related aspects, and these should be integrated into the real-time database.
- MCC can partner with NGOs to deliver targeted nutrition and education support, in addition to existing central government assistance that supports access to food and education.



Improve social protection coverage, housing affordability and basic services

- MCC can leverage town hall meetings and community gatherings to systematically collect citizen feedback on the current social protection systems and access to housing and basic services, to identify gaps in coverage of social protection measures or basic services, ensuring that any future reforms are grounded in lived experiences of residents of Malé city. MCC should develop validation mechanisms for such gap assessments.
- MCC already allocates funds for housing-upgrades through its maintenance funds for housing and for basic services, mostly from national government funds. This needs to be strengthened to focus on underserved population groups. For better housing facilities, MCC should assess the potential to introduce urban rental subsidies for low-income families and ensure the existing SinaMalé Flat Re-Development Project includes low-income housing schemes with integrated utilities.
- MCC should collaborate with the Ministry of Construction to collect data to provide subsidies for low-income families / Rent Control.
- MCC should collaborate with the economic ministry, and relevant agencies to establish standards of housing for migrants to improve the living conditions of undocumented workers.



Promote fiscal alignment and transparency

- MCC should align local budget with national SDG priorities.
- MCC should gradually increase its spending on poverty reduction and service delivery over the next 5 years, with the goal of dedicating at least 10% of the total budget to these areas by 2030.
- MCC should publish disaggregated spending data on housing, health, and education. Malé City Council to formalize a pro-poor budget target and introduce outcome-linked indicators.



Advance disaster resilience

- Malé City Council together with National Disaster Management Authority to finalize and operationalize the City Disaster Management Plan by 2026.
- Malé City Council to allocate city budget resources for early warning systems and DRR infrastructure.
- Malé City Council to partner with National Disaster Management Authority or Local Organizations such as the Maldivian Red Crescent to conduct annual community drills and awareness campaigns in high-risk areas.
- Malé City Council to integrate DRR indicators into municipal monitoring and align with national timelines.

3.1.2. SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being

Malé city serves as the country's healthcare centre, hosting all major hospitals and specialist medical facilities that serve the entire nation. This centralization creates both advantages in service availability and challenges in accessibility and capacity. The city's extreme population density contributes to public health risks, including rapid disease transmission and environmental health hazards. Anecdotal evidence from discussions with local NGOs suggest that urban lifestyles have led to rising non-communicable diseases, while mental health concerns grow among the stressed urban population, with substance abuse common among youth. The healthcare system faces constant pressure from both residents and those traveling from other atolls for treatment. Malé city faces significant pressure due to referrals and patient inflows from other atolls, leading to long wait times and overburdened specialists.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Malé city demonstrates robust healthcare infrastructure with near-universal access to skilled birth attendance and good coverage of maternal healthcare facilities. The National Medicine Policy 2024–2027 supports the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) agenda by promoting affordability, availability, and sustainable access to essential medicines and health technologies. The Aasandha Scheme forms the backbone of the Maldives healthcare system, providing comprehensive financial protection to all citizens by covering essential medical services and eliminating out-of-pocket expenses, except when care is sought at non-empanelled private facilities. The scheme even covers overseas treatment for cases that cannot be treated in Malé city and has expanded its coverage to include preventive and advanced services such as health check-ups and in-vitro fertilization. A notable gap exists for migrant workers who are not covered under Aasandha, exposing them to healthcare vulnerability. Although legal provisions exist for covering migrant workers under insurance, enforcement needs to be strengthened.

Being a small city, Malé city's health system is geographically accessible, with all facilities within a 30-minute travel radius, aligning with WHO's UHC standards. The Maldives provides free routine vaccines (e.g., measles, polio, DTP) through public health centres, which is linked to school enrolment, ensuring near-universal immunization. HPA, Society for Health Education (SHE) and the Cancer society of Maldives have undertaken cervical cancer screening camps to increase awareness and access to screening services. Screening is done in the tertiary health facilities and as outreach camps at atoll health facilities. As of 2019, screening is still being done in an opportunistic rather than a routine manner, and, at present, there is no way to ensure that all women in the target group are screened every three to five years. Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccination has been introduced into the national vaccination schedule (Maldives National Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) Strategy and Action Plan (2020-2025)). School enrolment is compulsory, creating a robust system to verify vaccine compliance, since enrolment is dependent on vaccination. Nationally, the Demographic and Health Survey of 2016-17 noted a decline from 93% (2009) to 77% (2016–17) in immunisation and a rise in no-vaccine cases from 1% to 8% (Demographic and Health Survey 2016-2017). Malé city fares better than the national average, with 82.8% of the children between 12-23 months of age vaccinated.

Overall, there is a significant gap in mental healthcare facilities, and suicide rates show that men are more affected nearly 60%, with young adults as the highest risk group with a suicide rate at 60%. Most of the mental health care facilities are outside the island of Malé, which limits access to these services, particularly for the poor. The National Drug Control Act (2020) provides a framework, but municipal budgeting and planning is not aligned to it, and so there is an absence of robust harm-reduction services and no municipal-level reintegration support for recovering addicts. The city does not track disaggregated data by gender, age group, or frequency of use.

Disaggregated data on tobacco use for Malé city are not yet available, but nationally the Maldives faces a significant tobacco burden: approximately one in four people aged 15–65 are current smokers, and 23% of the population uses some form of tobacco (35.6% of men and 7.6% of women). Alarmingly, the youngest recorded smoker is just eight years old, underscoring the urgent need for strengthened youth prevention measures. In response, the government has enacted a series of robust policies between 2024 and 2025: a "Generational Tobacco Ban" effective November 1, 2025, which will prohibit the sale and use of tobacco by anyone born on or after January 1, 2007; a ban on the import of vaping devices commencing November 15, 2024; and a comprehensive prohibition on tobacco possession, sale, and promotion starting December 15, 2024. These measures are supported by steep fiscal barriers: a 200% import duty on most tobacco products, an additional MVR 8 excise tax per cigarette or bidi on top of the standard 50% duty, and MVR 8 per ml on vaping liquids as well as a strict Advertising and Sponsorship Ban aimed at curbing tobacco use across all demographics.

The Alcohol & Pork Products Regulation 2011/R-49 governs the import/sale of alcohol and pork. The sale of alcohol is banned on inhabited islands except under special licence. Overall, there is very low prevalence of drinking and heavy episodic drinking (HED) compared with regional averages, reflecting legal restrictions and high abstinence (>

92 %). But the city has both data gaps and gaps in services for addicts. Primary-healthcare facilities do not routinely use AUDIT-C or similar tools; HPA reports no city-level alcohol-use surveillance. Unlicensed alcohol is occasionally trafficked into the city due to enforcement gaps; NDA and MPS rely on ad-hoc patrols and there is no real-time dashboard linking NDA, MPS and clinics. Public smoking violations persist due to weak monitoring. According to statistics from the [Maldives Police Service](#), Malé city has consistently recorded the highest number of drug-related offenses between Quarter 1 of 2022 and Quarter 3 of 2024. Urban centres such as Addu City, Kulhudhuffushi, and Fuvahmulah reported relatively low and sporadic figures, rarely exceeding 40 cases. These patterns underscore the concentration of drug-related offenses in the capital.

The available support centres for drug addiction near/in Malé city include:

- Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre – K. Himmafushi
- Halfway House – Hulhumalé
- Women’s Special Drug Rehabilitation Centre – Hulhumalé
- Dhaalan – Hulhumalé
- Walk-in psychosocial services: Community Service Centre and Gagan Clinic, Malé city

Existing centres report consistent waiting lists; an average of 60–70 patients pending enrolment.

TARGET 3.1 – Reduce Maternal Mortality and Ensure Skilled Birth Attendance

By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births

SDG INDICATOR

3.1.1 - Maternal Mortality Ratio

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Maternal Deaths that occurred in the past year and the rate of Maternal Mortality

STATUS (PROGRESS)

The Maldives has maintained a maternal mortality rate (MMR) below 70 since 2003, with the 2021 reported rate at 32 deaths per 100,000 live births (significantly lower than the SDG target of <70).

There is no disaggregated data available for rate of Maternal Mortality, but nationally it is 32.

SDG INDICATOR

3.1.2 - Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of births assisted by skilled personnel

STATUS (PROGRESS)

In the Maldives, 99.5% of live births in 2017 (World Bank) were attended by skilled personnel (nationally by doctors, nurses, or midwives);

According to Vital Statistic Report of Maldives 2024, all births in the country were attended by skilled health professionals. The report also shows that the majority of births (54% in 2021) were in Malé city.

TARGET 3.4 – Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health

By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being

SDG INDICATOR

3.4.2 - Suicide mortality rate (per 100,000 population)

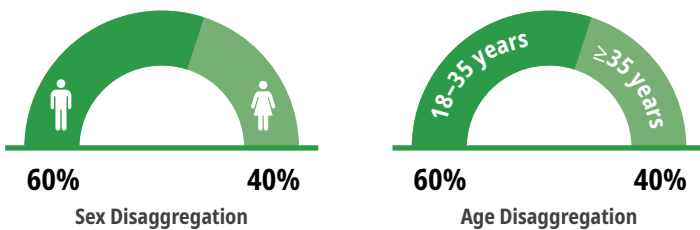
LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Suicide mortality in Malé city per year, disaggregated by age group and gender

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Malé City Suicide Data (2024)

5
Total suicide cases





TARGET 3.7 – Universal Access to Reproductive Health and their Integration into National Strategies

By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes

SDG INDICATOR

3.7.2 - Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15–19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15–19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group

STATUS (PROGRESS)

1.1

Adolescent birth rate (15-19 years) per 1000 women

0

Birth rate among adolescents (15-17 years) per 1000 women



TARGET 3.8 – Achieve Universal Health Coverage

Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all

SDG INDICATOR

3.8.1 - Coverage of essential health services (defined as the average coverage of essential services based on tracer interventions that include reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases and service capacity and access, among the general and the most disadvantaged population)

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Percentage of population with access to essential health care services and health insurance in Malé city

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Access to Health Facilities: Nearly 100% of households are within 30 minutes travel time to a health facility.



Antenatal Care (ANC - Skilled Provider)

98.9%
of pregnant women in Malé city receive antenatal care from a skilled provider



Postnatal Care (PNC)

82.7%
of women in Malé city receive a postnatal check within 2 days of birth



HIV Awareness & Testing (15–49 years)

89.4%
of the population know about HIV prevention measures

75.8% & 78.8%
of women of men
know where to test



100%
of the resident population is enrolled in the Aasandha (Health Insurance) Scheme

Source: National Social Protection Agency, Health Protection Agency (HPA), National Social Protection Agency (NSPA), Aasandha Company Ltd, Ministry of Health, WHO, Maldives National Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) Strategy and Action Plan (2020-2025), Demographic and Health Survey 2016-2017

TARGET 3.b – Support Research, Development and Universal Access to Affordable Vaccines and Medicines

Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and noncommunicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade- Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all

SDG INDICATOR

3 b.1 - Proportion of the target population covered by all vaccines

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of the target population covered by all vaccines

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Access to Health Facilities: Nearly 100% of households are within 30 minutes travel time to a health facility.

82.8%

of children age 12-23 months and children aged 24-35 months received all basic vaccines in Malé region.

Source: Maldives Demographic and Health Survey 2016-2017



Suggested measures to improve the status of SDG 3



Improve maternal and reproductive health

- Malé City Council should utilise the national maternal health surveillance system to ensure real-time tracking of maternal mortality and birth outcomes in the city using already established links with city hospitals. While there are low national rates of maternal mortality, this kind of monitoring will help to understand the city level mortality rate.
- MCC should partner with the Ministry of Health and Maldives Bureau of Statistics to expand the monitoring of maternal health indicators in Malé city to include mental health and postpartum care.
- MCC should explore partnerships to improve access to culturally sensitive services for migrant and underserved populations.



Address mental health and suicide prevention

- MCC should launch a “Break the Silence” campaign targeting young men (18–35) to reduce stigma around mental health issues and in partnership with local NGOs, operate a 24/7 mental health helpline.
- MCC should partner with local civil society organizations to train police officers in Mental Health First Aid and for providing support to trauma patients.
- MCC should pilot Youth Resilience Centers with counselling services and improve suicide surveillance.
- MCC should enhance open and green spaces for recreation and mental health of public. Such spaces should be well-maintained with access to public toilets and child-care areas.



Strengthen substance use treatment and harm reduction

- MCC should work with the National Drug Agency to expand rehabilitation coverage to at least 40% of users and establish an outpatient rehab facility and a detox wing within Malé city, either with national government support or with its unassigned budget.
- MCC should partner with local civil society organisations to launch mobile intervention units and increase outreach in high-risk areas of the city.
- MCC should work with local NGOs to raise awareness among youth on health issues of substance abuse.



Advance universal health coverage (UHC)

- MCC should publish an annual “Malé Health Access Report” including satisfaction and service metrics.
- MCC should host awareness camps for common reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, infectious diseases, and non-communicable diseases.



Tobacco control and enforcement

- MCC should enforce no-smoking zones in public areas with clear signage and penalties and train municipal inspectors to coordinate with police for enforcement of no-smoking zones.
- MCC should launch youth-focused anti-smoking education programmes.
- MCC should partner with city level cessation clinics to expand cessation services and track enforcement outcomes in a city database.



Expand vaccine access and resilience

- MCC should partner with the Ministry of Health and local NGOs to improve outreach to migrant populations and promote adult and booster vaccine coverage.

3.1.3. SDG 4: Quality Education

Education is one of the SDGs where Malé city is performing well. While the national government provides a lot of the budget and finances for the sector, Malé city being home to a majority of the educational institutes of the country, benefits the most. Overall the education infrastructure in Malé city is well established, with schools having good access to all basic services of electricity, WASH facilities, internet and facilities for people with disabilities. The majority of teachers are trained, which helps maintain the quality of learning. Malé city dominates the nation's education landscape, hosting the majority of schools and all higher education institutions. This concentration creates educational opportunities but also strains infrastructure and resources. The influx of students from other atolls for secondary and tertiary education exacerbates housing shortages.



One in every 3 children lives in Malé city (38%) - amounting to 45,252 children ([Census, 2022](#)). All children aged 5–15 in Malé city are in school (>99%), and the city also has 37.3% of the country's 2–5-year-olds enrolled in preschool. This percentage aligns with the population distribution, as more than one-third of the country's population resides in the city (Census 2022).

In Malé city, gender parity in education is largely maintained through the early years, with GPI values of 0.98 in primary and 0.97 in middle school, which is slightly higher than the national averages of 0.95 and 0.93, respectively indicating more balanced access for boys and girls in the capital. At the secondary level, Malé city continues to show relatively equal participation (GPI: 0.96), again slightly ahead of the rest of the country (0.94). However, the most notable difference emerges at the high school level, where Malé city's GPI rises to 1.20 compared to 1.41 in the atolls. This suggests that although gender gaps widen in upper secondary education nationwide, Malé city retains more male students at this level than the rest of the country. This trend also signals potential barriers to boys' progression beyond secondary education in the capital, warranting closer examination of social, economic, or institutional factors that may be contributing to the disengagement among male students.

Malé city shows a moderate overall participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training among youth (15–24 years), with higher engagement among females compared to males. These figures suggest that while school-age adolescents are still largely connected to the education system, participation drops in the older youth category likely due to transitions into the workforce, lack of flexible learning options, or limited awareness about adult education opportunities.

Malé city surpasses national averages, showcasing strong performance across language skills for both resident Maldivians and resident foreigners. The figures indicate near-universal mastery of the national language in the capital, with greater English exposure. The foreign residents' literacy (mother tongue) in Malé showcases the city's more multilingual and professional migrant population. Urban factors such as better educational infrastructure, access to schools, and language-rich urban environments back higher literacy rates in Malé city. The strong English performance reflects the city's role as the educational, administrative, and economic hub, attracting professional migrants and requiring proficiency in global languages. Foreign residents show slightly lower literacy due to diverse national origins and varying education backgrounds.

TARGET 4.1 – Primary Enrolment

By 2030, ensure all girls and boys complete free, equitable, quality primary and secondary education leading to effective learning outcomes

SDG INDICATOR

4.1.1 - Net enrolment rate in primary education (%)

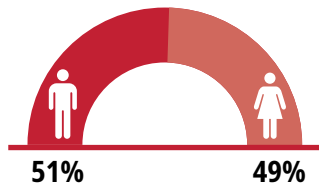
LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Net primary enrolment rate in Malé city (%)

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Total students enrolled in primary education (Statistical Handbook 2024)

37,958
Students



83.88%
Net primary enrolment rate in Malé city

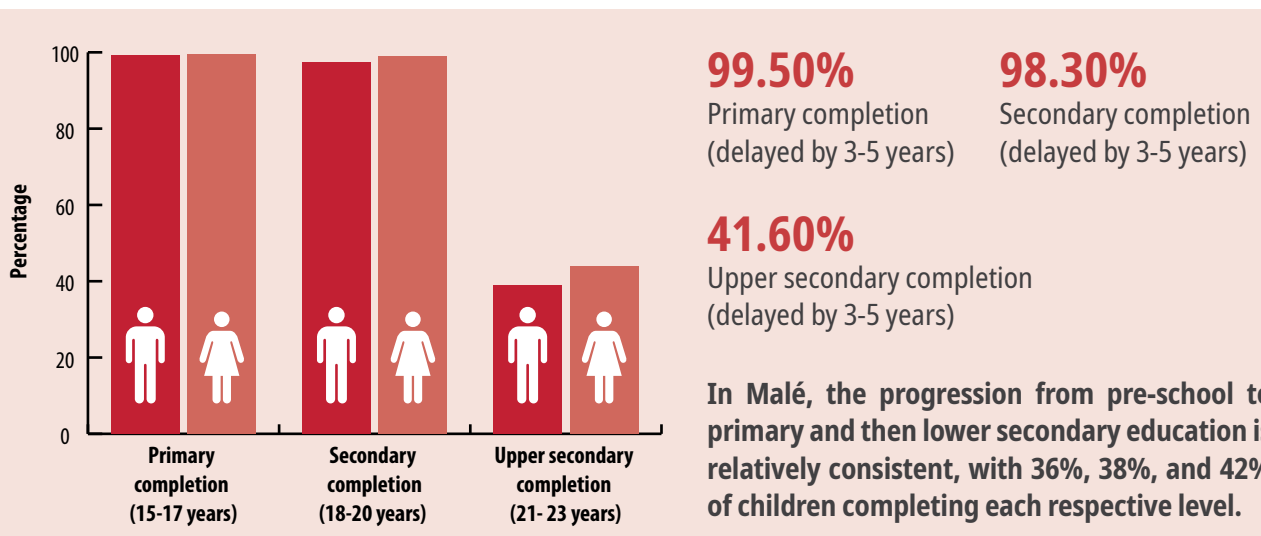
SDG INDICATOR

4.1.2 - Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Completion rate (Pre-school, primary education, lower secondary education)

STATUS (PROGRESS)



In Malé, the progression from pre-school to primary and then lower secondary education is relatively consistent, with 36%, 38%, and 42% of children completing each respective level.

Figure 9: Gender disaggregated percentage of completion at different levels of schooling

TARGET 4.2 – Universal Access to Quality Early Childhood Education

By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

SDG INDICATOR

4.2.2 - Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age)

STATUS (PROGRESS)

In Malé city, the participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age)

99.30%
Participation

99.10%
Male participation

99.50%
Female participation

99.50%
Without disability participation

99.50%
With disability participation

TARGET 4.3 – Equal Access to Quality, Affordable Higher and Vocational Education

Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex

SDG INDICATOR

4.3.1 - Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months

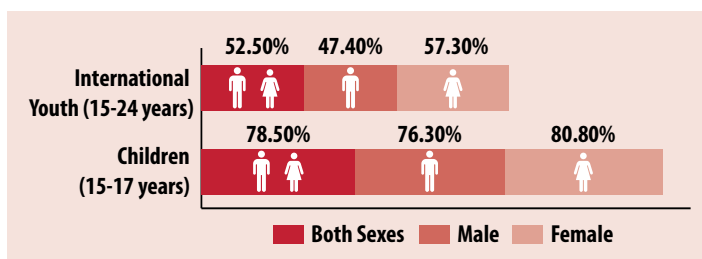


Figure 11: Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training

Source: Census 2022, Maldives Bureau of Statistics

Source: Census 2022, Maldives Bureau of Statistics

TARGET 4.5 – Gender Parity

By 2030, eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access for vulnerable groups (including disabilities)

SDG INDICATOR

4.5.1 - Gender Parity Index (GPI) in primary education

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Gender Parity Index (GPI) in schooling in Malé city

STATUS (PROGRESS)

GPI at primary level in 2022–23

0.96

18,604 girls vs. 19,354 boys across all levels

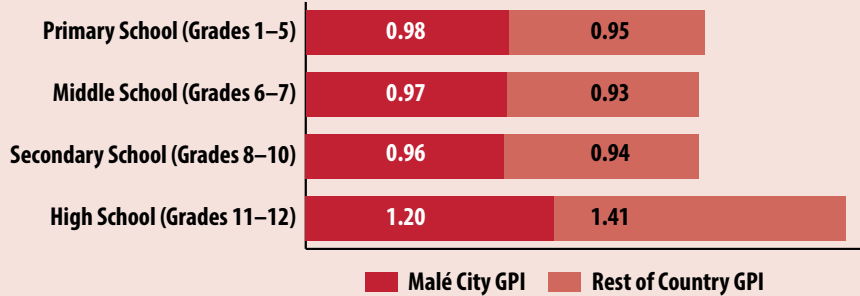


Figure 12: Gender parity index of Malé city as compared to the rest of the country

Source: Census 2022, Maldives Bureau of Statistics



TARGET 4.6

Inclusive, Equitable Education and Training Access

By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

SDG INDICATOR

4.6.1 - Proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of residents aged 10+ achieving proficiency in literacy.

STATUS (PROGRESS)

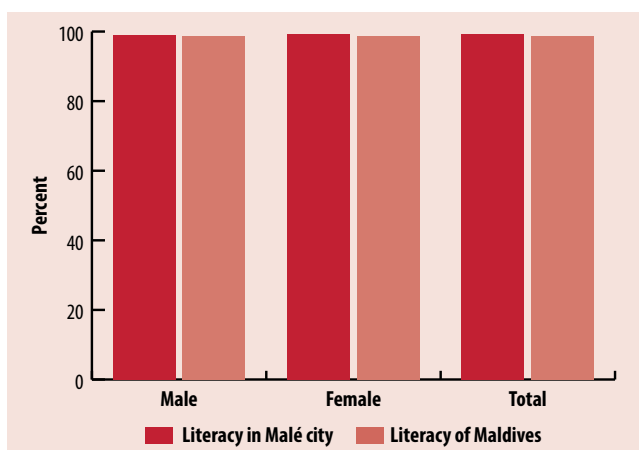


Figure 13: Literacy of resident Maldivian population in Dhivehi (10+ Years)

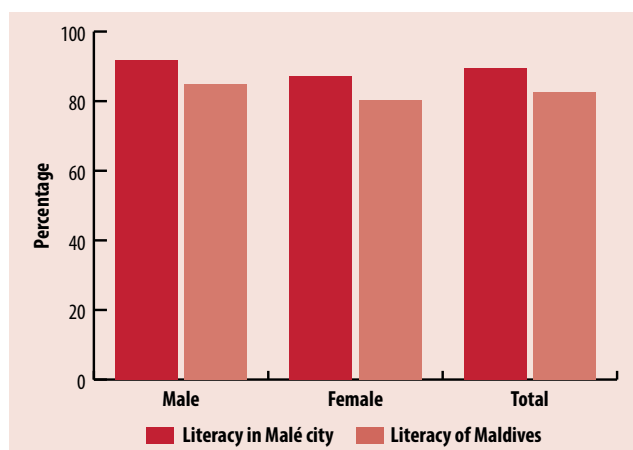


Figure 14: Literacy of resident Maldivian population in English (10+ Years)

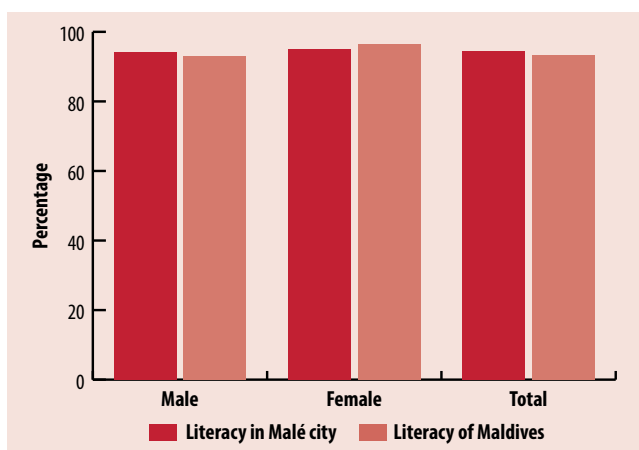


Figure 15: Literacy of resident foreign population in mother tongue (10+ Years)

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Literacy of Resident Maldivian population in Dhivehi			
Literacy in Malé city	99.1	99.3	99.2
Literacy of Maldives	98.6	98.7	98.6
Literacy of Resident Maldivian population in English			
Literacy in Malé city	91.9	87.2	89.5
Literacy of Maldives	85.0	80.2	82.6
Literacy of resident foreign population in mother tongue			
Literacy in Malé city	94.3	95.0	94.4
Literacy of Maldives	93.0	96.5	93.4

TARGET 4.a – Upgraded Education Facilities and Inclusive School Infrastructure

Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

SDG INDICATOR

4.a.1 - Proportion of schools offering basic services, by type of service

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of schools with access to:
Electricity | Internet for pedagogical purposes |
Basic drinking water | Single-sex basic sanitation facilities | Basic handwashing facilities (per WASH definitions)

STATUS (PROGRESS)



Electricity in Schools

100%
of schools fully electrified



WASH Facilities (Water, Sanitation, Handwashing)

100%
of schools have gender-segregated toilets, safe drinking water, and handwashing stations



Internet Connectivity

100%
have basic access. As of February 2018, all schools technically had access to the internet. However, internet connectivity is intermittent and weak





Recommended measures to improve the status of SDG 4



Ensure inclusive and equitable pre-primary, primary education and early childhood development

- Malé City Council should work with the Ministry of Education to implement the national early warning system in the city schools to track and prevent dropouts. Once tracked, MCC can set up a task force for ensuring the return of such children to school. MCC should disaggregate literacy data by neighborhoods or socio-economic groups to identify literacy “black spots” and address these gaps.
- MCC should work with the Ministry of Education, and private education providers and local NGOs to expand after-school tutoring programs in low-performing areas, vocational and skills-based programs, and strengthen awareness and outreach campaigns on lifelong learning opportunities, especially for school leavers.
- MCC should partner with private sector and NGOs to offer targeted short-term training and certification programmes and self defence programmes.



Promote gender parity in education

- MCC should work with the Ministry of Education to monitor the Gender Parity Index (GPI) in Malé city schools annually by grade to track disparities, not only at primary, but also at secondary and tertiary levels.



Upgrade school infrastructure for inclusivity

- MCC should partner with the Ministry of Education and complete ICT and accessibility assessments by end of 2026.
- MCC should advocate with the Ministry of Finance and Planning to secure dedicated municipal budget lines for ongoing maintenance for all schools in the city in the 2026–2027 budget cycle.
- MCC should set up community schools for children between 2.5 years to 6 years, by collaborating with NGOs.
- MCC should partner with local schools to establish school buses.



Promote education for employment

- MCC should engage with private sector and development sector to promote internships, volunteer work and exposure to students, provide career guidance and promote blue collar jobs through relevant education.

3.1.4. SDG 5: Gender Equality

The urban environment of Malé city presents both progress and persistent challenges for gender equality. While educational attainment among women has increased significantly, labor force participation faces challenges, with cultural and structural barriers limiting employment opportunities. Women in the workforce face wage gaps and occupational segregation, concentrated in lower-paying sectors. Public safety concerns, including harassment in crowded urban spaces and public transport, restrict women's mobility and participation in public life. Traditional gender roles continue to influence domestic responsibilities and care work, disproportionately affecting women's economic opportunities.



The Maldives has made notable progress in establishing a legal framework to advance gender equality, anchored by constitutional guarantees and key legislations such as the Gender Equality Act (2016), Domestic Violence Prevention Act (2012), and Employment Act (2008). These laws prohibit discrimination, protect women's rights, and promote equal opportunities in employment, governance, and justice. Additionally, national strategies like the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) (2022-2026) and Domestic Violence Prevention National Strategy (DVPNS) (2023-2027) outline policy measures to advance gender equality. Enforcement and monitoring is led by the Ministry of Social and Family Development, with support from the police, the judiciary and the prosecutor for legal action, along with oversight from the Human Rights Commission and support from NGOs for support services and awareness.

However, there are some key challenges regarding cultural bias that limit women's participation and discourage reporting of abuse, weak enforcement of the laws, fear of stigma and retaliation, lack of safe spaces and poor grievance redressal, and poor awareness of legal rights, which hinder the achievement of gender equality. Implementation gaps persist, particularly in enforcement and addressing socio-cultural barriers. Despite progressive policies, women often hesitate to report discrimination or violence due to fear of retaliation, slow judicial processes, and lack of trust in institutions. Challenges such as inadequate gender sensitivity among policymakers and weak ownership of national strategies further hinder progress. While initiatives like the National Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) and engagement with international mechanisms demonstrate commitment, strengthening legal clarity, enforcement mechanisms, and gender-responsive governance remains critical to achieving transformative change. Local frameworks align with national laws, but consistent monitoring and capacity-building are essential to ensure meaningful progress toward SDG 5.

Physical, sexual and psychological violence, from both intimate partners and non-intimate partners, is present in the city, but there seems to be a lack of reporting of these issues in formal channels, particularly when it is violence from intimate partners, because of the stigma associated with reporting these issues. As per reported data by the Maldives Police Service, out of 277 reported cases of domestic violence at the national level in 2024, 113 cases (roughly 40%) were reported from Malé city, possibly due to the higher population in the city. Shelters are not age-specific, and mental health services are limited. Children are also highly vulnerable to sexual violence, with evidence of abuse even within intimate partnerships. Child marriage is nearly eradicated in the capital, likely due to higher education levels, urban awareness, access to legal protection, and stronger enforcement of marriage laws.

The workforce composition of Malé City Council reflects both progress and persistent gaps in advancing gender equality within the institution. With women representing 57% of the overall workforce including both civil staff and contract staff, the Council has taken important steps towards gender balance in terms of numerical representation. However, the data reveals that women's participation remains concentrated in lower-ranked, administrative, and support roles, while technical, operational, and senior decision-making positions continue to be dominated by men.

This pattern is evident across both civil and contract staff categories. In the civil service, women are well represented in positions which make up a significant portion of the Council's administrative and support functions. However, their presence declines sharply at higher levels of the executive structure, with the highest rank remaining exclusively male. Female participation in technical and specialist roles within the civil service is similarly limited.

Among contract staff, women play a critical role in administrative support and community service function. These positions, while essential to service delivery, are generally lower paid and offer limited pathways for career advancement. In contrast, men dominate technical roles such as engineering, IT, and skilled trades, as well as security, operations, and senior management positions. These workforce dynamics mirror broader structural barriers facing women in the Maldivian labour market.

Women hold only 24% of managerial positions in Malé city, highlighting a persistent gender gap in leadership across sectors, possibly due to entrenched cultural norms that associate leadership with men, lack of mentorship and training opportunities for women, and the absence of supportive workplace policies such as childcare facilities. The lack of recent, disaggregated leadership data (last collected over six years ago) further impedes evidence-based policy interventions.

There is 33% representation of women in Councils by law, but in Malé city there are 10 female councilors and 7 male councilors - significantly more than the quota. There is a women's development committee (WDC) that advises the council on issues relevant for women. Challenges such as entrenched cultural biases and the absence of supportive policies, particularly around childcare, sometimes limit women's full and effective political participation.



TARGET 5.2 – End all Violence Against and Exploitation of Women and Girls

Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

SDG INDICATOR

5.2.1 – Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age

STATUS (PROGRESS)

In 2004, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) prevalence in Malé city:

0.48%

(287 cases among ~59,335 ever-partnered women)

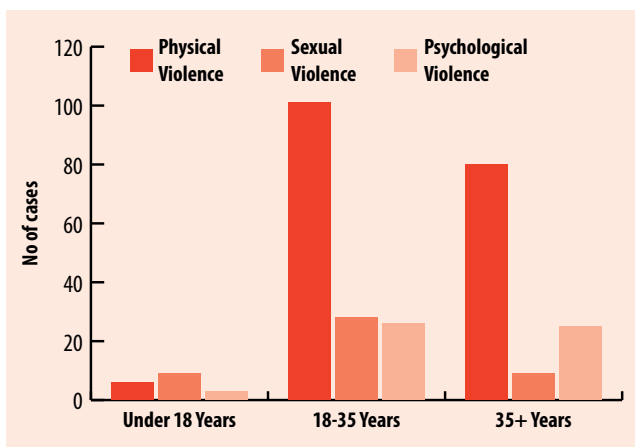


Figure 16: Intimate Partner Violence cases

Estimated female population aged 15+ (assuming ~50% female and ~70% aged 15+ based on typical demographic distributions):

Approximately 74,169 ($211,909 \times 0.5 \times 0.7$). The exact proportion of ever-partnered women is unavailable, but for estimation, we assume 80% of women aged 15+ are ever-partnered (a common global estimate), yielding ~59,335 ever-partnered women.

Intimate Partner Violence in Malé city	Under 18 years	18-35 years	35+ years	Total
Physical Violence	6	101	80	187
Sexual Violence	9	28	9	46
Psychological Violence	3	26	25	54

Source: Family Protection Agency & Maldives Police Service

SDG INDICATOR

5.2.2 - Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age

STATUS (PROGRESS)

In 2024, Non-Intimate Partner Violence in Malé city:

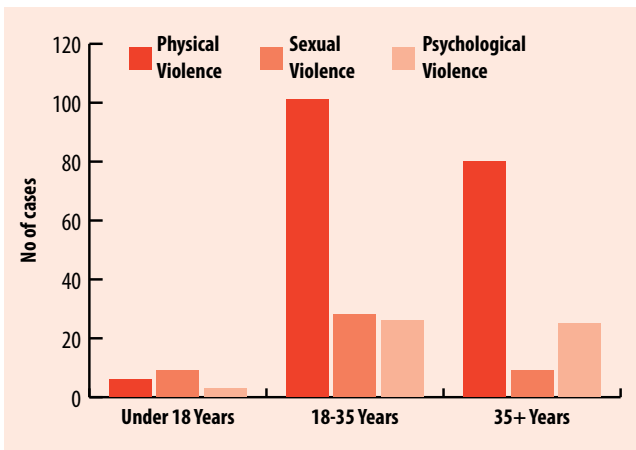


Figure 17: Non-Intimate Partner Violence cases

Intimate Partner Violence in Malé city	Under 18 years	18-35 years	35+ years	Total
Physical Violence	78	36	158	372
Sexual Violence (age unknown 1)	219	108	44	372
Psychological Violence	79	102	75	54

Source: Family Protection Agency & Maldives Police Service

TARGET 5.3 - Eliminate all Harmful Practices, such as Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation

SDG INDICATOR

5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 18

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 18 in Malé city is:

0.10%
(7 out of 6780 women aged 20-24)

Source: Census 2022, Maldives Bureau of Statistics

TARGET 5.4 – Recognize and Value Unpaid Care and Domestic Work

Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

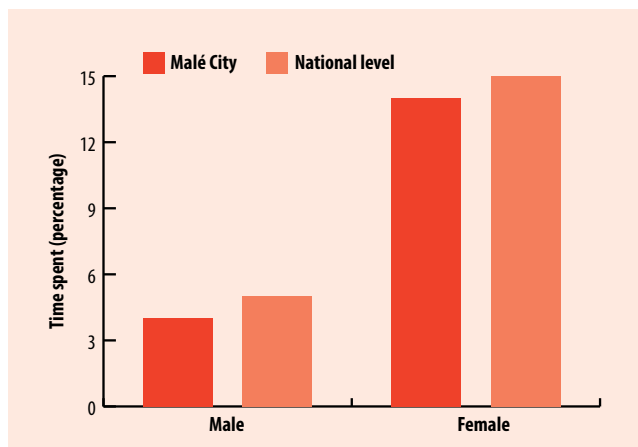
SDG INDICATOR

5.4.1 – Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex

STATUS (PROGRESS)



9%
in Malé city

10%
Nationally

Women spend 3.5 times more time on unpaid care work than men. Women have less time for paid work, education, or rest, limiting income and career growth. The higher stress, fatigue, and lower personal time for women is reflective of entrenched gender roles where caregiving is seen as “women’s work.”

Figure 18: Time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex

The Maldives has made notable progress in establishing a legal framework to advance gender equality, anchored by constitutional guarantees and key legislation such as the Gender Equality Act (2016), Domestic Violence Prevention Act (2012), and Employment Act (2008).

TARGET 5.5 – Ensure Women’s Full and Effective Participation and Equal Opportunities for Leadership and Decision Making

Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

SDG INDICATOR

5.5.1 – Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of women in Malé City Council

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Malé City Council significantly exceeds the legally mandated 33% female representation quota among its councillors, with women making up 58.8% of its councillors (10 female members compared to 7 male members).

58.8%
female councillors

184 (65.95%)

Number of female Civil Servants in Malé City Council (Maldivians)

295 (56.08%)

Number of female Contractual Staff in Malé City Council (Maldivians)

In contrast, Addu City Council has a lower but still substantial female representation at 38.5% (5 female and 8 male councilors), while Fuvahmulah, Kulhudhuffushi, and Thinadhoo City Councils each have just 28.6% female representation (2 female and 5 male councilors in each council), falling slightly below the legal requirement. This disparity highlights Malé city’s stronger performance in gender-balanced political representation at local level compared to other city councils.

SDG INDICATOR

5.5.2 - Proportion of women in managerial positions

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of women in management in Malé city

STATUS (PROGRESS)

24%

Proportion of women in management in Malé city

27.1%

Proportion of women in senior and middle management in Malé city

TARGET 5.b – Ensure Use of Enabling Technology

Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

SDG INDICATOR

5.b.1 - Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

- Proportion of female headed households using internet and fixed internet broadband subscriptions
- Proportion of households and individuals using fixed internet broadband subscriptions
- Proportion of children (15-17) who own a mobile telephone, by sex

STATUS (PROGRESS)



99.1%

Proportion of female headed households using fixed internet broadband subscriptions



97.3%

Proportion of individuals using fixed internet broadband subscriptions



81.30%

Proportion of children (15-17) who own a mobile telephone, by sex

79.40%

Female

83.10%

Male

Source: Maldives Bureau of Statistics

In the civil service, women are well represented in positions which make up a significant portion of the Council's administrative and support functions. However, their presence declines sharply at higher levels of the executive structure, with the highest rank remaining exclusively male.



Suggested measures to improve the status of SDG 5



Institutionalize gender equality and strengthen response to violence against women and girls

- Malé City Council should adopt a Gender Equality Policy to mainstream gender across all municipal services and appoint a Gender Focal Point within the Council to coordinate and monitor implementation.
- MCC should partner with the Ministry of Social and Family Development to strengthen and utilise the existing national reporting and referral mechanism for Malé city involving schools, hospitals, police, and NGOs. Awareness generation programmes can be conducted for the national referral system.
- MCC should establish a Gender and Child Protection Unit within the Council to coordinate multi-sector responses.
- MCC should develop shelters and trauma-informed services, especially for minors and the elderly.
- MCC should coordinate a city-wide training on gender-sensitive service delivery and GBV response targeting municipal staff, law enforcement, and judiciary.



Promote women's participation and leadership

- MCC should go beyond the reserved quotas in council and to introduce quotas for women in Council committees and public consultations.
- MCC should provide leadership training and mentorship programs to women



Address unpaid care and domestic work

- MCC should conduct an assessment of buildings within its jurisdiction and convert underused public spaces into affordable childcare facilities.
- MCC should partner with a local NGO to conduct public awareness campaigns promoting shared caregiving responsibilities.
- MCC should partner with Maldives Bureau of Statistics or a University to collect updated time-use data to better understand unpaid care burdens.



Empower women through technology and digital inclusion

- MCC should run digital literacy, financial literacy and online safety programs in partnership with local organizations.
- MCC should develop a partnership with Business Center Corporation (BCC) to support women-led ICT startups or other technical businesses with mentoring
- MCC should develop partnerships with telecom providers to expand public Wi-Fi access in underserved areas.



Advance anti-discrimination and inclusive policies

- MCC should ensure implementation of anti-harassment policies for all municipal staff, contractors, and service providers.
- MCC should, in partnership with the Women's Development Committee, host regular community feedback sessions to integrate women's voices into policy.



3.2. Prosperity (SDGs 8, 9)

The 2030 Agenda recognizes that sustainable economic growth and innovation are fundamental to reducing inequalities and improving livelihoods. SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) promotes productive employment, labour rights, and inclusive economic expansion, while SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) focuses on resilient infrastructure, sustainable industrialization, and technological progress. Together, these goals aim to foster equitable economic prosperity by creating opportunities for all while minimizing environmental harm.

For Malé city, these goals take on particular significance given its role as the nation’s economic hub and the pressures of rapid urbanization.

<p>1 NO POVERTY</p>	<p>2 ZERO HUNGER</p>	<p>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p>	<p>4 QUALITY EDUCATION</p>	<p>5 GENDER EQUALITY</p>	
<p>6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION</p>	<p>7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY</p>	<p>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p>		<p>9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE</p>	
<p>10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES</p>	<p>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</p>				
<p>12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION</p>	<p>13 CLIMATE ACTION</p>	<p>14 LIFE BELOW WATER</p>	<p>15 LIFE ON LAND</p>	<p>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p>	<p>17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</p>



3.2.1. SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Malé city serves as the primary employment centre of the Maldives, attracting workers from across the nation and abroad seeking better opportunities. The concentration of formal sector jobs in the capital has led to significant rural-to-urban migration, leading to congestion and stress on housing, infrastructure and services. Despite this economic centrality, youth unemployment remains persistently high, reflecting a mismatch between education outcomes and labour market needs.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



The Maldives recorded 5.1% GDP growth in 2024, up from 4.7% in 2023, driven primarily by tourism. As the economic, administrative, and transport hub of the Maldives, Malé city is a critical contributor to the national GDP through the services sector (finance, trade, public administration), tourism support industries (transport, logistics, hospitality training), and urban consumption and retail. However, there is no disaggregated data on Malé city's contribution to the national GDP from official government sources, and it can only be understood from proxy indicators of high population (which means higher spending), concentration of banks and businesses, tourism related activities that begin in Malé city, etc. The city's economy relies heavily on informal labour, particularly in construction, hospitality, retail and domestic work. Migrant workers from South Asia face particularly challenging conditions, often working without proper contracts, social protections or recourse for labour rights violations. Wage disparities between local and migrant workers remain pronounced, while overcrowded living conditions in worker accommodations present ongoing health and safety concerns.

The 2019 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) shows that Malé city has higher average hourly earnings (MVR 79.28) than the national average (MVR 74.12), but also a wider gender pay gap — 20% compared to the national 17%. A significant percentage of the population is involved in the informal sector, with more women than men. But women are mostly as entrepreneurs, rather than as employees or employers, possibly due to lack of supportive policies like childcare or lack of skills. These jobs often lack social security and fair wages. At the national level, informal employment is highest in Malé city with an outstanding share of 48.6% of the total informal employment in the country. In Malé city, women spend 7 hours a day, while men spend 9.3 hours a day in informal employment.

The Maldivian and total (Maldivian and migrant) resident population in Malé city shows a slightly higher unemployment rate but lower inactivity compared to national averages, with notable differences across sex and age groups. The overall unemployment in Malé city stands above the national rate, with young men aged 15-24 years facing the steepest challenge at 14.2%. Inactivity among residents aged 15 and over is lower in Malé city than nationwide, with both men and women more likely to be economically active in the capital.

Migrants, while vital to the local economy, may suppress wages in sectors like construction and tourism. The unemployment rate of the population including migrants is lower, which means that jobs are going more to migrants,



since many migrants come in with a visa for jobs. It could also mean that there are discrepancies in the skills of locals and job requirements. Malé city's high cost of living and competitive urban labour market discourage youth from taking low-paid jobs, leading to elevated youth unemployment; migration from the atolls concentrates working-age individuals in the capital, affecting supply and demand dynamics (UNDP, 2025); and women face persistent barriers such as domestic responsibilities, despite higher participation rates in urban settings (Maldives Common Country Analysis, 2020). Moreover, education and job mismatches widely noted in the Maldivian context has particularly affected educated youth who are unable to secure suitable employment (H.W.S. Erani, 2025) due to lack of matching skills and experience (Census, 2022).

Malé city's NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) rates are consistently lower than national averages, yet persistent gender and age disparities reveal deeper structural challenges. The reduced NEET rate in Malé city reflects better access to education and entry-level jobs particularly attractive to young men. Females are more represented among NEET youth, especially in the older age groups. There is a need to ensure a smooth transition from compulsory education to further studies, vocational training, or employment opportunities. Addressing the challenges faced by young people during this transitional period can play a crucial role in reducing the number of NEET youth. The higher representation of NEET females compared to males might be influenced by gender specific factors, such as societal norms, responsibilities, or barriers to accessing education and employment opportunities (Census, 2022). This may have future implications on poverty risks, social exclusion, and gender inequality.

Malé city serves as the financial hub of the Maldives with sufficient banking services, and a large number of ATMs and bank branches. There are also alternative financial sources such as e-money agents and mobile payment services e.g., BML m-Faisaa, and Dhiraagu Pay. The presence of 772 e-money agents/merchants in Malé city supports alternative access to financial services for cash-based users. Despite widespread adoption of digital banking, the usage of mobile money platforms such as Dhiraagu Pay and BML m-Faisaa is less documented, and certain populations (e.g., elderly, migrants, and low-income groups) may still experience barriers to usage due to limited digital literacy, language barriers, or lack of access to devices and stable internet.

The majority of adults hold bank accounts and actively use internet banking services. As of 2024, 410,000 individuals in the Maldives had at least one account registered in a bank in Maldives, of which 80% had registered for internet banking services. Of these, 96% used these services actively throughout the year. Of the unique account holders, 264,000 adults and over 28,000 minors (<18 years; 71%) are Maldivians. This is a growth of 3.7% (adults) and 3.8% (minors) compared to the previous year. The increase in accounts among minors and youth reflects the rising trend of early financial engagement and literacy. However, usage patterns may vary by neighbourhood or demographic group, with lower access to low-income, elderly, migrant, and less digitally literate populations, but no data is available at present.

The concentration of formal sector jobs in the capital has led to significant rural-to-urban migration, leading to congestion and stress on housing, infrastructure and services.

TARGET 8.3 – Promote Policies to Support Job Creation and Growing Enterprises

Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services

SDG INDICATOR

8.3.1 - Proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex

STATUS (PROGRESS)

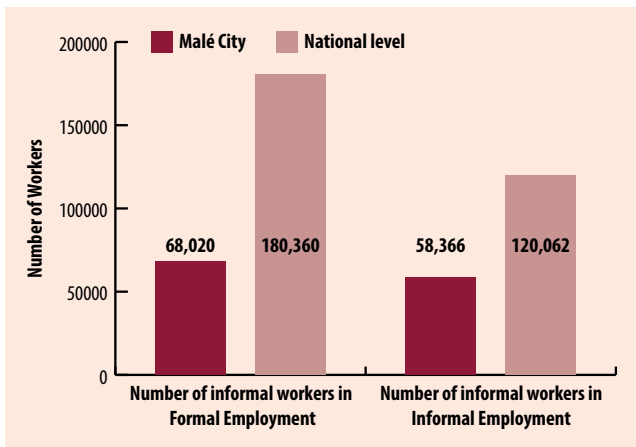


Figure 19: Number of informal workers in formal and informal employment in Malé city and at national level

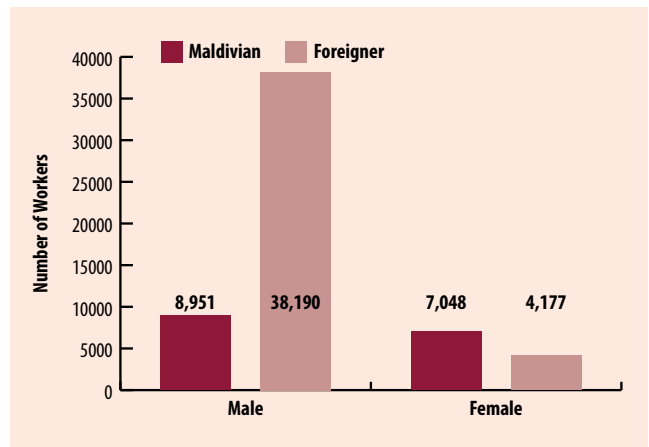


Figure 20: Number of informal workers in informal employment by gender and nationality

126,386
Total informal sector
Employment in Malé city

300,422
Total informal sector
Employment in Maldives

46.18%
Share of informal sector
employment in Malé city

48.61%
Share of Malé city
in informal sector
employment in the
country

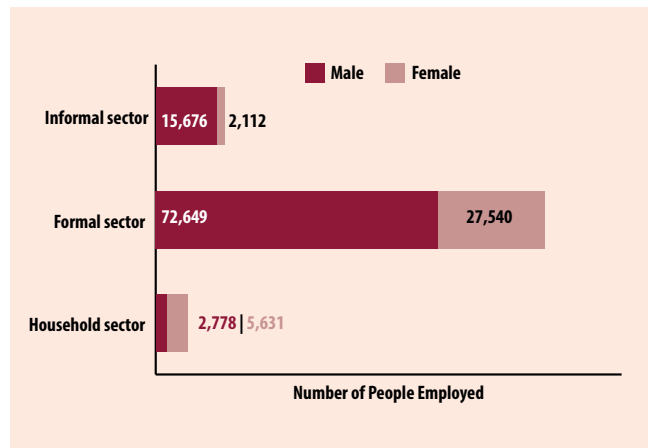


Figure 21: Sector wise employment by gender in Malé city

TARGET 8.5 – Full Employment with Decent Work and Equal Pay

By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

SDG INDICATOR

8.5.1 - Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age and persons with disabilities

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

The average hourly earnings of employees in the city, disaggregated by sex (male/female)

STATUS (PROGRESS)

The average hourly earnings of employees (in MVR) is:

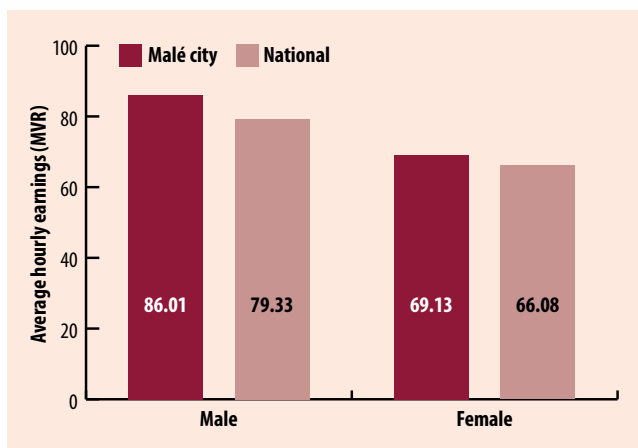


Figure 22: Average hourly earnings of employees, by gender

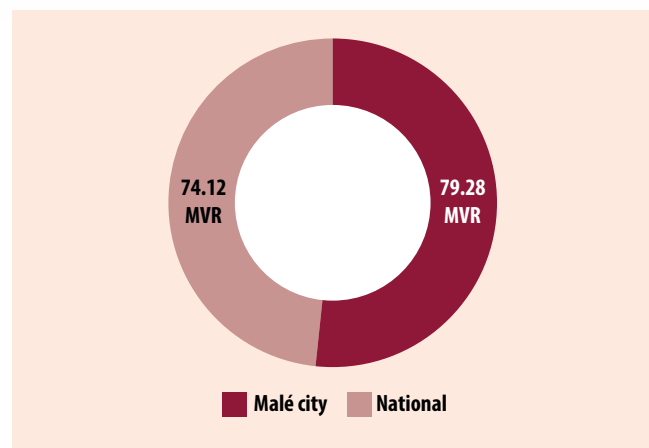


Figure 23: Average hourly earnings of employees in Malé city and at the national level, by gender

Source: Maldives Bureau of Statistics, HIES 2019



SDG INDICATOR

8.5.2 - Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Unemployment rate in the City, disaggregated by sex (male/female), for both migrants and residents

STATUS (PROGRESS)

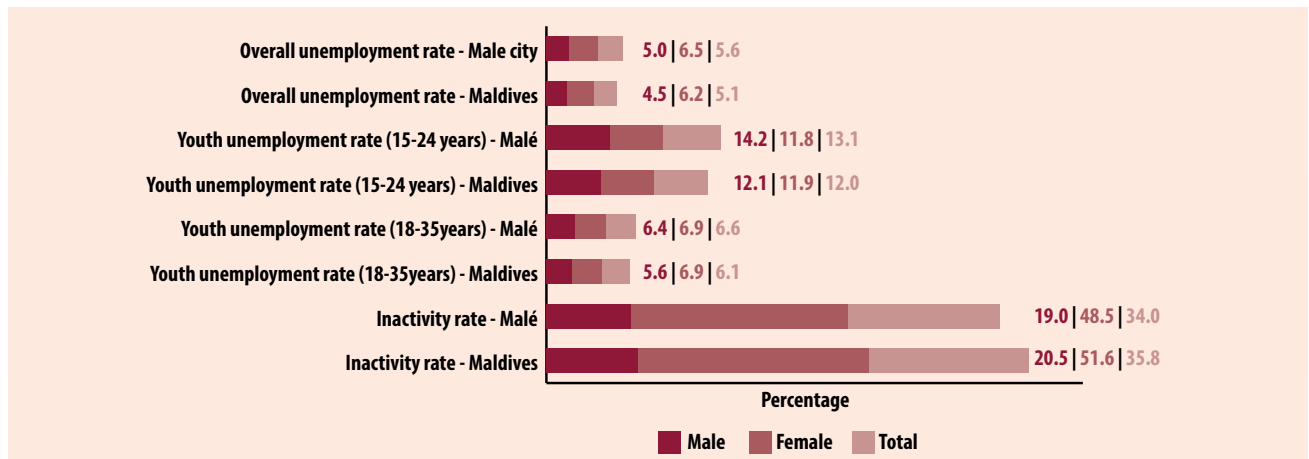


Figure 24: Unemployment rate among resident Maldivians, by gender

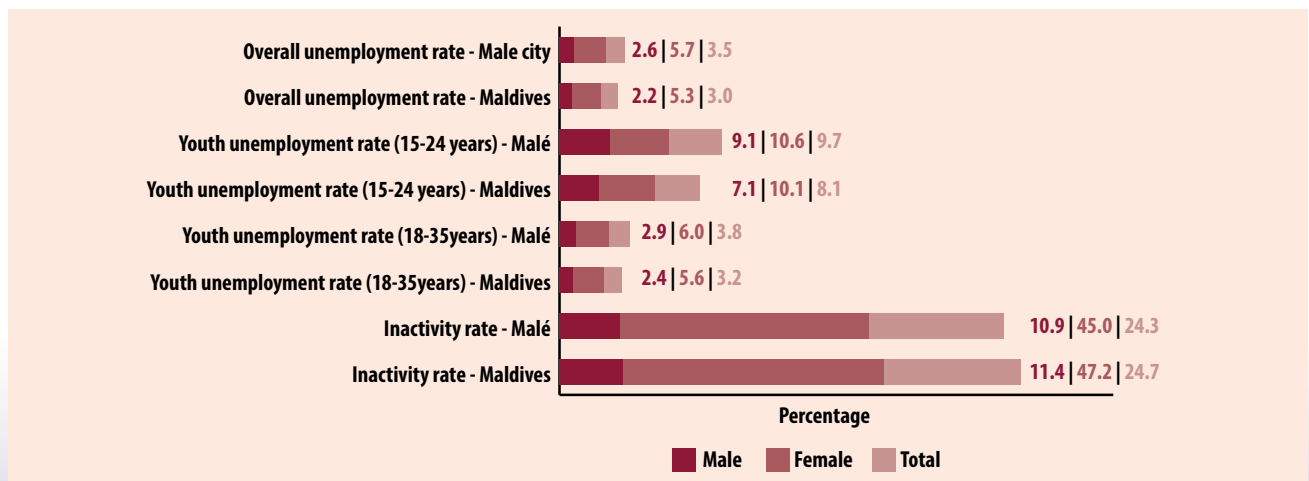


Figure 25: Unemployment rate among resident Maldivians and migrants, by gender

Source: Maldives Bureau of Statistics



TARGET 8.6 – Promote Youth Employment Education and Training

By 2030, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training

SDG INDICATOR

8.6.1 - Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

The proportion of youth (aged 15–24 and 18-35) in Malé city who are not in education, employment, or training disaggregated by gender, age and citizenship

STATUS (PROGRESS)

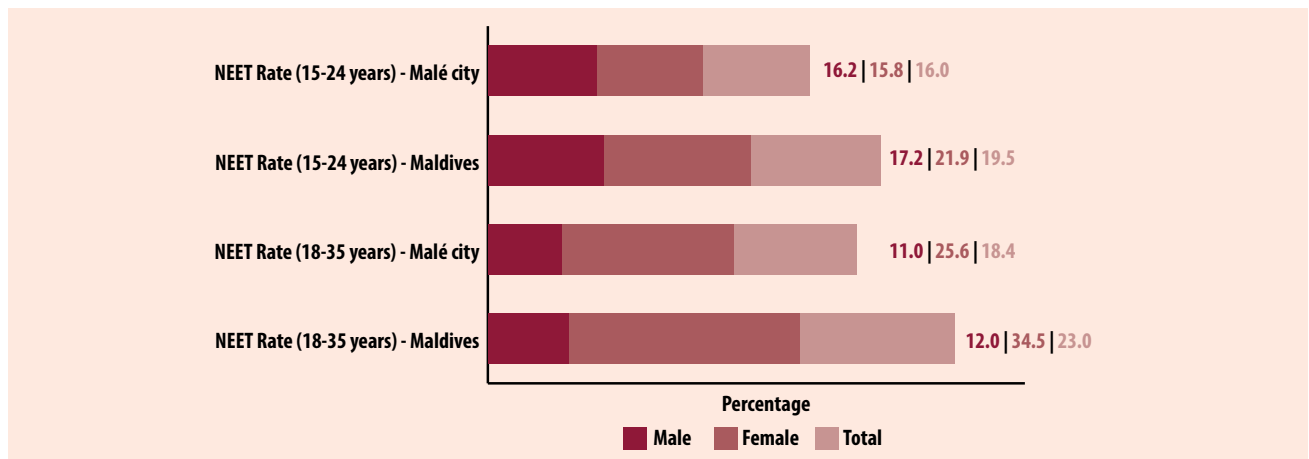


Figure 26: Proportion of youth among resident Maldivians who are not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), disaggregated by gender and age

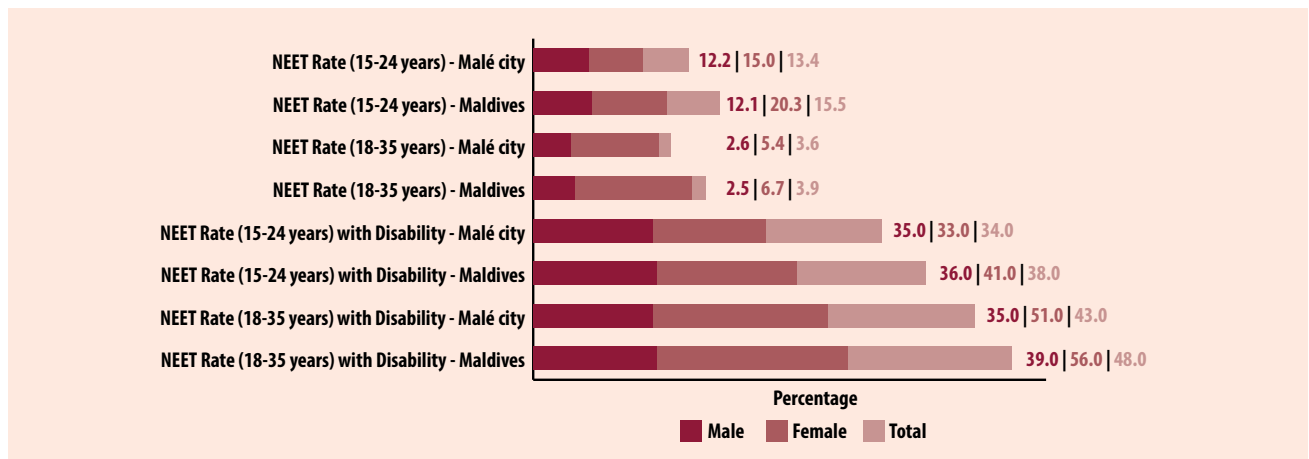


Figure 27: Proportion of youth among resident Maldivians and migrants who are not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), disaggregated by gender and age

TARGET 8.10 – Universal Access to Banking, Insurance and Financial Services

Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all

SDG INDICATOR

8.10.1 - Number of commercial bank branches per 100,000 adults and number of automated teller machines (ATMs) per 100,000 adults

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

- Number of commercial bank branches per 100,000 adults in Malé city
- Number of ATMs per 100,000 adults in Malé city

STATUS (PROGRESS)

- As of 2023, the Maldives has **188 ATMs** with a nationwide average of **65 per 100,000 adults**, of which **41%** (approximately 78) are located in Greater Malé, reflecting a concentration of financial infrastructure in the capital.
- Malé city also accounts for **18 of the 57 bank branches** and **772 of the 1,744 e-money agents** and merchants nationwide.
- This reflects strong physical access to banking services in Malé city compared to the national average. In addition, Malé city residents commonly use online banking services, which significantly increases the reach of banking to the population. However, there is no city-specific data regarding the number of internet banking users, although national level data is available.

Source: Maldives Monetary Authority





Suggested measures to improve the status of SDG 5



Promote inclusive and sustainable urban economic growth

- Malé City Council should partner with the Maldives Bureau of Statistics and other line ministries to develop city-level GDP and employment data systems.
- MCC should partner with BCC to support their existing initiatives to diversify the urban economy in areas such as ICT, fintech, green urban services, and logistics.
- MCC should partner with BCC to support their existing programmes on youth and women-led businesses with finance, training, co-working spaces, and targeted incentives. Parks and open spaces can be used to promote local artisans by holding exhibitions and artistic events to provide them with platforms for better visibility.



Support formalization and protection of informal workers

- MCC should partner with Maldives Bureau of Statistics to update data on informal employment with a gender and sectoral lens.



Address wage gaps and ensure decent wages

- MCC should partner with Maldives Bureau of Statistics or a University to conduct a Wage Equity Audit across public and private sectors.
- MCC should enforce equal pay laws and promote transparency in salary structures for its staff.
- MCC should promote affordable childcare to support women's participation in the labour force through day care and elementary care facilities.
- MCC should work with Maldives Bureau of Statistics to develop disaggregated employment and earnings data for the city by age, gender, and disability for better policy targeting.



Boost youth employment and skills development

- MCC should develop partnership with private sector in the city to launch gender-sensitive vocational training programs in high-potential sectors like IT, digital services, and care the economy.
- MCC should develop partnerships with the technical, and vocational educational and training (TVET) institutions and private employers for apprenticeships, internships and job readiness programs. MCC should facilitate youth led community projects that address issues in Malé City through grants and strengthen the voice of the youth in development planning processes.
- MCC should partner with local organizations to develop awareness campaigns to challenge restrictive gender norms and create an inclusive and supportive environment for youth to improve overall socio-economic outcomes.



Expand access to financial services and digital inclusion

- MCC should partner with a local organization or education provider to conduct financial literacy campaigns targeting women, youth, and migrants.
- MCC should strengthen digital and cyber security awareness among the public, particularly elderly, migrants, women and youth, in partnership with local organizations.

3.2.2. SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

About one third of the population of Maldives (Census 2022) lives in Malé city. Malé city's extreme spatial constraints coupled with high costs of transport and logistics, like everywhere else in Maldives, severely limit manufacturing and industrial development in the island, forcing the city to rely completely on imported goods. This makes the urban economy vulnerable to global supply chain disruptions and price fluctuations.

Malé city has built multi-lane roads and two bridges connecting the interconnected islands. The 1.39 km Sinamalé Bridge opened in 2018, linking Malé city to the airport island (Hulhulé) and Hulhumalé, and an under-construction Greater Malé Connectivity Project will add a 6.74 km causeway linking Malé to Vilimalé, Gulhifalhu and Thilafushi.

In Malé city, there are approximately 549 roads: 266 roads in Malé, 244 roads in Hulhumalé and 39 roads in Vilimalé. As of 2024, there are 119,093 active vehicles in Malé city, meaning there is 0.5 vehicles per head in the city based on the latest census. The majority (87%) of vehicles currently in use in Malé city are motorcycles, while cars account for only 6%. Notably, 71% of imported vehicles in the country are registered for use in Malé city. Of these, 71,868 vehicles (nearly 60% of the city's fleet) do not meet roadworthiness standards, reflecting both the strain on the city's transport infrastructure and potential safety and environmental risks posed by an aging or poorly maintained fleet (Islamic University of Maldives, 2025). SDG 9 looks at passenger and freight transport as an indicator that supports the movement of goods and services and indicates the level of economic development in the region. In Malé city, maritime transport for passenger movement primarily relies on ferries and speedboats, with ferries used most frequently for inter-island travel and connecting to smaller atolls, while speedboats handle shorter routes and provide quicker services within the Malé Atoll and resort transfers. Ferry services to Malé city handle substantial volumes, often carrying thousands of passengers daily, as the daily commuter demand, with nearly 5.9 million passenger trips recorded in 2024. Villimale is the busiest route, accounting for over 84% of total ferry ridership. However, freight volume data is inaccurate due to the lack of reporting from private sector operators. There is little use of public transport services like buses within Malé Island, while in comparison, public transport is commonly used in Hulhumale and Villimale, because of more planned and accessible roads built in these islands.

As the capital, Malé city hosts the central bank, regulatory agencies and most corporate headquarters. Tourism, finance and technical education facilities are centered here. By contrast, distant islands rely on smaller community businesses (e.g. guesthouse tourism) and lack Malé city's specialized services.

The Maldives has very high digital connectivity, which is strongest in urban centers like Malé city. High mobile penetration has driven a fintech boom in recent years. For example, the country's major telecom and bank firms have launched mobile wallets and banking apps where digital payments are accelerating, supported by high mobile penetration and government-backed fintech growth, as noted by a fintech analysis ([TransFi, 2025](#)). Telecom operators Dhiraagu and Ooredoo each offer mobile money services (DhiraaguPay, m-Faisaa) that are rapidly gaining users

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



(TransFi, 2025). In 2025 Dhiraagu launched an upgraded DhiraaguPay platform, with its CEO noting that telecoms are playing a pivotal role in leading innovation in the financial sector (Dhiraagu, 2025). The Maldives Monetary Authority has rolled out an instant payment system (“Favara”) for real-time bank transfers. Dhiraagu Fintech (a private subsidiary) became the first non-bank to join Favara (Dhiraagu, 2025), exemplifying how private firms in Malé city are at the forefront of building the digital economy. The government sees digitalization as a development priority. Maldives has a national digital ID and is pushing e-government services island-wide (UN Maldives, 2025). In Malé city, a higher proportion of households, at 94%, have fixed internet connections, indicating widespread availability and utilization of cable or Wi-Fi connections. Efforts can be made to promote digital literacy, maintain quality of service and ensure affordability of next-generation technologies.

Of the small-scale industries in Maldives, 38% are located in Malé city, while the remaining 62% are in the atolls. There are a total of 40,232 small enterprises (HIES 2019), with several of them operating year-round from home. According to the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, the contribution of small enterprises to the national Gross Value Added is 5.7%, with the majority of the contribution coming from wholesale/retail trade (25%), construction (19.9%) and manufacturing (12.5%). Currently, comprehensive data on the exact proportion of small-scale industries in Malé city that have a line of credit is not available. According to the Maldives Monetary Authority, the estimated share of MSMEs located in Malé city is about 16%, of which about 60% have access to institutional financing. These small-scale industries face constraints in accessing formal finance, primarily due to underdeveloped credit reporting systems and limited availability of secured lending mechanisms. The key financing institutions include SME Development Finance Corporation and Commercial Banks. While financing institutions such as SDFC have increased MSME lending with subsidized rates and longer maturities, borrowing remains difficult for informal enterprises and startups. Innovative financing products and improved credit infrastructure need to be developed for better credit facilities for the MSME sector.



TARGET 9.1 – Regional and Transborder Infrastructure, to Support Economic Development and Human Well-being

Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all

SDG INDICATOR

9.1.2 - Passenger and freight volumes, by mode of transport

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Passenger volumes handled by maritime transport in Malé city, categorized by mode of transport (in numbers)

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Maritime transport in Malé city – 2024: Total number of passengers transported via conventional ferry services in Malé city in 2024:

5,890,268



Ferry routes and number of passengers

125,582
Hulhumalé Ferry

4,982,828
Villigili Ferry

738,581
Thilafushi Ferry

43,277
Gulhifalhu Ferry

Freight volume data for maritime transport in Malé city is currently unavailable, as freight is predominantly managed by private ferry operators and is not recorded within standard ferry transport statistics.



TARGET 9.3 – Increase the Access of Small-scale Industrial and Other Enterprises

SDG INDICATOR

9.3.1 Proportion of small-scale industries in total industry value added

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Number of small-scale industries in Malé city

STATUS (PROGRESS)

According to HIES 2019, the total number of small enterprises is:

15,173
in Malé city
(40,232 in Maldives)

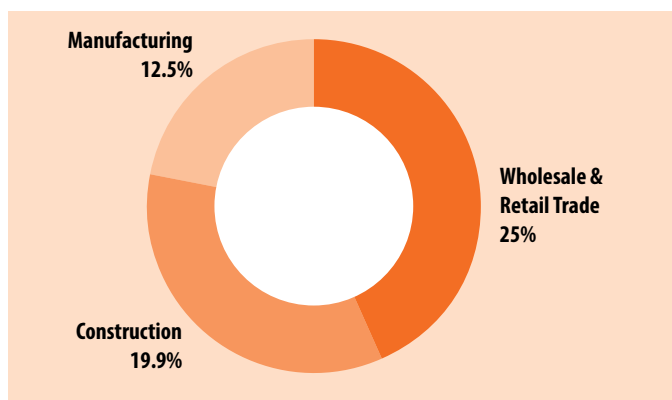
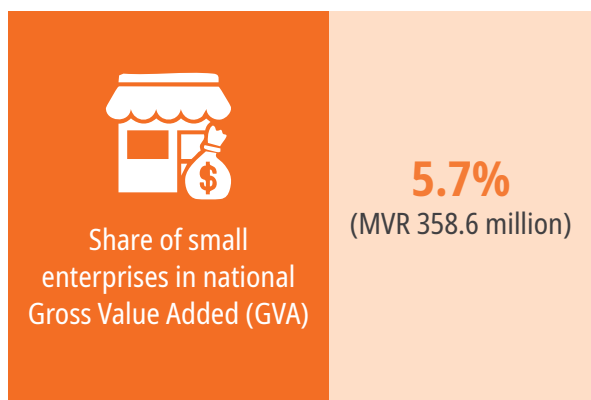


Figure 28: Top sector contributions to GVA within small enterprises

Source: Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), 2019



TARGET 9c – Significantly Increase Access to Information and Communications Technology

Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020

SDG INDICATOR

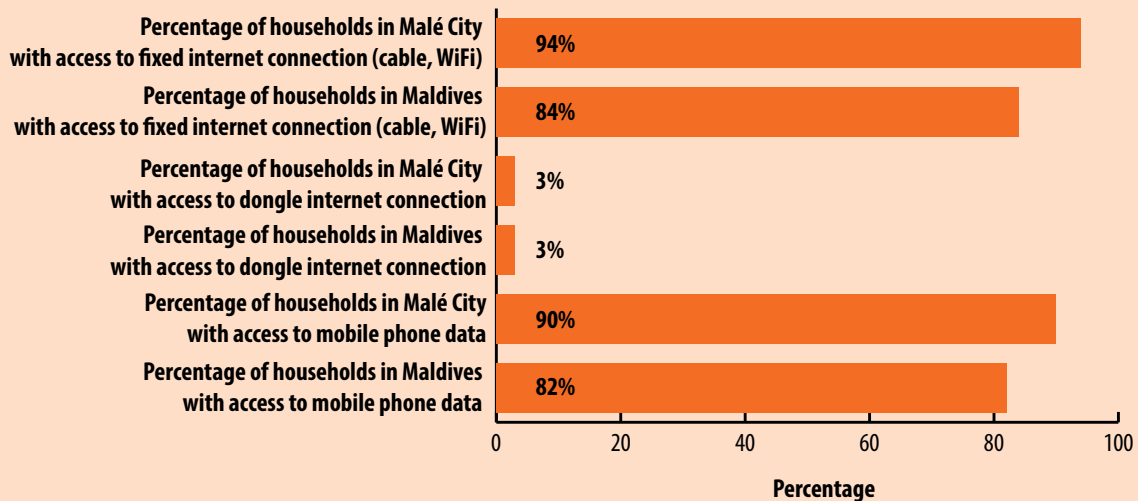
9.c.1 - Proportion of population covered by a mobile network, by technology

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

- Percentage of the population in Malé city that has access to mobile network coverage (%)
- Percentage of population having access to fixed internet connection, dongle and mobile phone data in Malé city

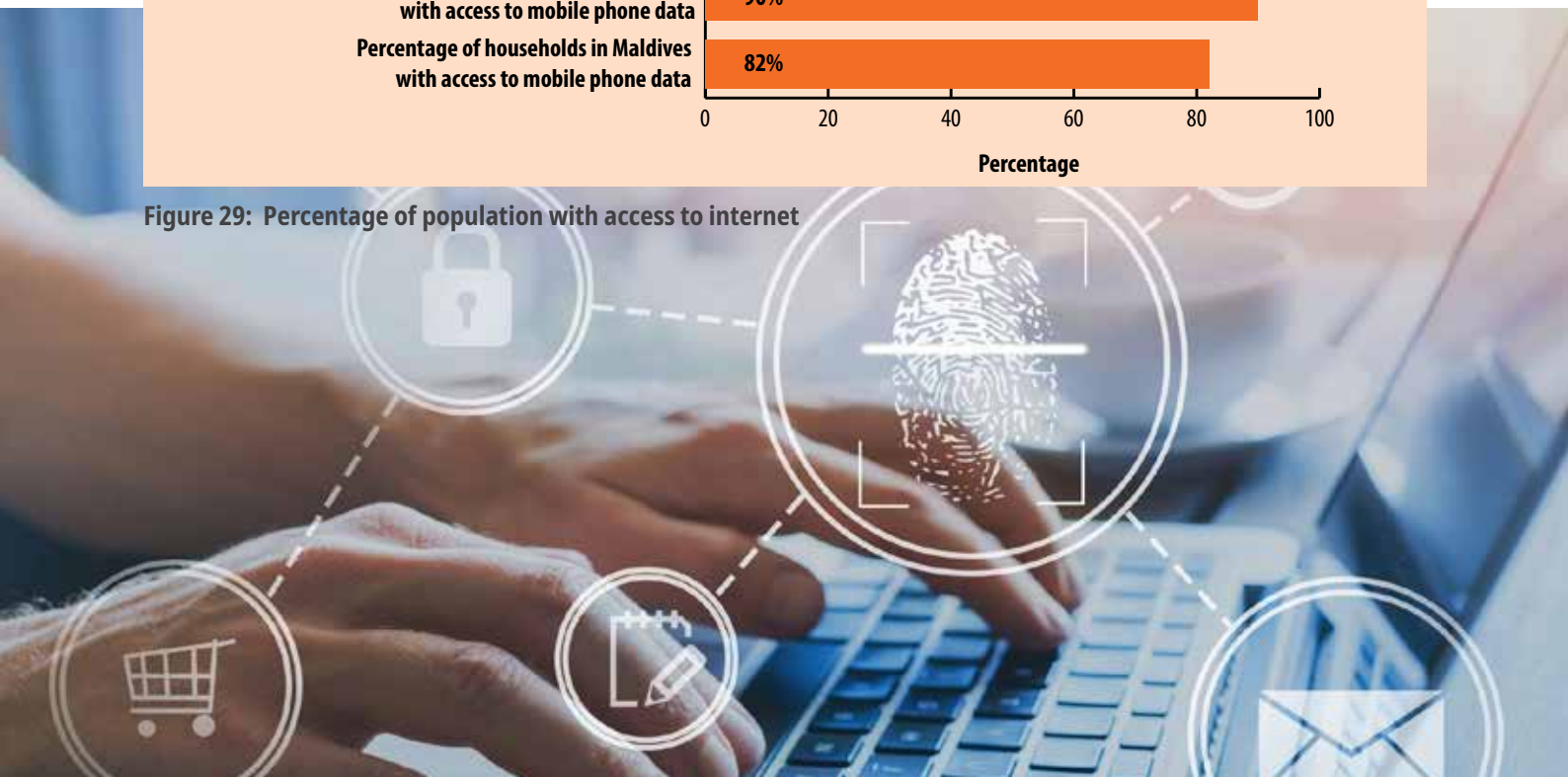
STATUS (PROGRESS)

As per Census 2022



Source: Telecom Authority of Maldives

Figure 29: Percentage of population with access to internet





Recommended measures to improve the status of SDG 9



Support small-scale industries and MSME access to finance

- Malé City Council (MCC) should partner with BCC to provide targeted capacity-building to help small-scale enterprises integrate into local markets and facilities such as shared work spaces in all wards.



Enhance MSME data and ecosystem coordination

- MCC should conduct detailed local data collection to monitor the economic contribution and financing needs of small-scale industries.
- MCC should foster collaboration between city authorities, financial institutions, and business associations in the city to encourage low rates for financing small scale start-ups.



Strengthen transport and logistics infrastructure

- MCC should use digital mechanisms for traffic management in real time and for logging complaints about city services.
- MCC to establish a formal data-sharing arrangement with private ferry operators to track freight transport volumes and trends.
- MCC to conduct periodic assessments of maritime and land transport infrastructure to ensure safety, affordability, and environmental sustainability.



Expand ICT infrastructure and digital access

- MCC to collaborate with telecom providers to promote equitable access to next-generation technologies (e.g., 5G) in marginalized communities.
- MCC to partner with local organizations to support digital literacy initiatives for the elderly and children by setting up digital training centres.
- MCC to develop partnerships with Telecom Providers that can ensure affordability of digital services for low-income users.

About one third of the population of Maldives (Census 2022) live in Malé city. Malé city's extreme spatial constraints coupled with high costs of transport and logistics, like everywhere else in Maldives, severely limit manufacturing and industrial development in the island, forcing the city to rely completely on imported goods. This makes the urban economy vulnerable to global supply chain disruptions and price fluctuations.

3.3. Planet (SDGs 6, 11, 13)

The 2030 Agenda highlights the importance of securing access to clean water, promoting sustainable urban growth, and taking meaningful climate action as reflected in **SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)**, **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)**, and **SDG 13 (Climate Action)**. These goals are closely linked, especially when it comes to ensuring that cities have reliable water supplies while also becoming more resilient and better prepared for the impacts of climate change. For Malé city, the challenge is even greater, with a growing urban population living in an already fragile environment and relying on overstretched resources.



3.3.1. SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

Malé city faces severe water security challenges as the city relies almost entirely on energy-intensive desalination plants for potable water. Groundwater contamination from saltwater intrusion and pollution has rendered natural aquifers largely unusable. Sanitation systems are under constant strain, with aging sewage infrastructure struggling to meet demand, particularly during flooding events. Water conservation efforts compete with growing consumption needs from both residents and the commercial sector.



Malé city has achieved full coverage of safely managed water services, a key SDG milestone. Coverage is city-wide, but system resilience is tested during peak demand and extreme weather. Desalinated water provides reliable supply, though the system is energy-intensive and vulnerable to fuel price fluctuations, power disruptions and climate impacts. The city needs additional electricity for desalination or greater storage of water. It is also environmentally unsustainable, since the heavily saline water after reverse osmosis is discharged into the environment. Integration of backup supplies (e.g., rainwater catchment) can enhance reliability as well as reduce the environmental impact.

As per Census 2022, in Malé city, the percentage of population depending on drinking water from desalinated water piped into dwellings is 27.97%, while 71.9% use bottled water and only 0.1% use rain water as a drinking water source. This disparity stems from deep-rooted trust issues regarding tap water and convenience habits. Overall, Malé city has achieved virtually universal access to treated water (99.9% in 2022, up from 97.3% in 2014). The majority of households in Malé city (64%) do not employ any methods to enhance the quality of drinking water. Ongoing maintenance and expansion of distribution pipelines will be critical as the population and demand grow. Malé city has achieved excellent water safety standards, with water quality being compliant with WHO guidelines for microbial safety. This reflects strong performance by water supply agency and a highly effective municipal water treatment and delivery system.

Malé city's average per-capita usage is in the order of 80–90 L/person/day, as per the Maldives Statistical Yearbook 2023 and [MWSC reports](#). To meet the growing demand, Malé city's utility (MWSC) and the government have set ambitious expansion targets, including a new 10,000 m³/day desalination plant and two new 13,000 m³ storage tanks ([MWSC, 2025](#)).

In Malé city, the highest proportion of households, accounting for 51%, have two toilets, followed by 22% with three toilets and 21% with one toilet. Within Malé city, every household is equipped with toilets connected to the sewerage system, but, there is no treatment of the collected sewerage which is largely let out in the ocean. The majority of the households in Malé city (99.8%) have access to showering facilities in comparison to 53% nationally. This is mainly due to the exclusive usage of desalinated water within Malé city for showering.

The absence of data on the proportion of wastewater safely treated in Malé city primarily stems from the city's long-standing reliance on outdated infrastructure and the limited operation of wastewater treatment systems. According to reports, Malé city's sewerage network, developed in 1988, continues to discharge approximately 15,000 m³ of largely untreated sewage daily into the sea, as most standalone treatment plants are either non-functional or not connected to this network ([Maldives Embassy](#)). Of the 66 sewer systems currently established in the country, only 23 include sewerage treatment plants (STPs); however, due to lack of technical expertise and costly operations, none of these STPs are utilized. Waste water produced is bypassed untreated into the sea through the marine outfall, subject to recommendations from Environment Impact Assessment reports ([Maldives Embassy](#)).

The Maldives Urban Development and Resilience Project will support the government's efforts to modernize Maldives' urban infrastructure, enabling its expansion while making it more climate resilient. This will include renewal of the

obsolete stormwater drainage system in the capital Malé city, the bulk of which is over forty years old and has not been functional for the past decade. The project will also fund a sewage treatment plant on the island of Hulhumalé that was reclaimed to reduce congestion in Malé city and to meet the growing demand for urban spaces in the country (World Bank, 2020). Detailed data on wastewater generation, collection, treatment efficiency, and reuse are unavailable for Malé city at this stage, highlighting a critical gap in urban water quality monitoring and reporting systems.

TARGET 6.1 – Universal Safe Water Access

By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all

SDG INDICATOR

6.1.1 - Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

- Population using safe drinking water (%)
- Households with access to piped water supply (%)
- Basic municipal water supply coverage (%)
- Households with *E. coli* contamination risk in drinking and source water (%)

STATUS (PROGRESS)



100 %

of Malé city's population has access to safely managed drinking water; potable water is delivered by MWSC via desalination and daily ISO-17025–tested treatment.



99.9%

of residents use safe drinking water via piped network managed by MWSC.



100 %

coverage of Malé city's municipal water supply zones; entire island falls within MWSC distribution network.



0%

of households in Malé city have *E.coli* contamination in both household and source water.

TARGET 6.2 – Access to the Sewerage System and Toilet Facilities

By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations

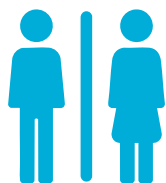
SDG INDICATOR

6.2.1 - Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services, including a hand-washing facility with soap and water

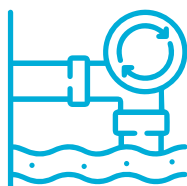
LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

- Proportion of households with toilet facility
- Proportion of toilets connected to the sewerage system

STATUS (PROGRESS)



100 %
of Malé city's households has toilet facility.



100%
of Malé city's households has toilets connected to the sewerage system.





Recommended measures to improve the status of SDG 6



Enhance water security and climate resilience

- Malé City Council (MCC) should partner with MWSC to pilot a renewable energy-powered desalination system (e.g., solar-hybrid) to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.
- MCC should promote community-level rainwater harvesting systems in public buildings and parks/parking spaces, mosques to diversify water sources.
- MCC should phase out bottled water usage in its offices and introduce refill stations and reusable bottle programs to combat plastic pollution.



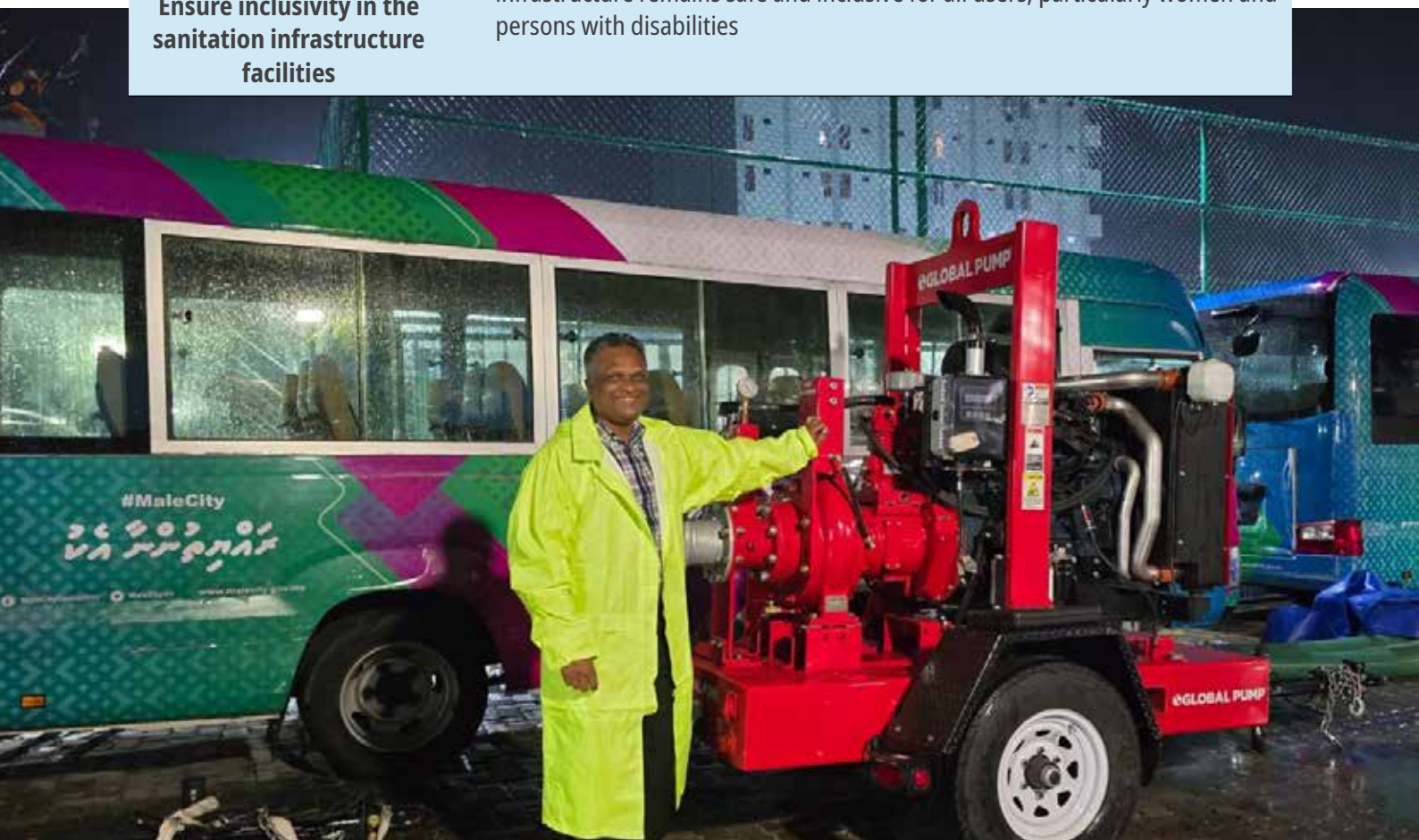
Strengthen water and wastewater infrastructure planning

- MCC should integrate climate resilience and equity considerations into water service planning, waste water treatment and emergency response protocols.
- MCC should conduct awareness on safe water practices and emergency preparedness during disruptions.



Ensure inclusivity in the sanitation infrastructure facilities

- MCC should use gender-responsive designs and universal access principles recommended by WHO, including accessible toilets with disability-friendly features such as handrails and ramps to ensure that public restroom infrastructure remains safe and inclusive for all users, particularly women and persons with disabilities



3.3.2. SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Malé city’s extreme population density and limited land area create significant challenges for sustainable urban living. The city struggles with severe overcrowding, inadequate green spaces, and overwhelmed infrastructure systems. SDG 11 addresses access to safe and affordable housing, infrastructure and services and preparedness for disasters at the city level.



Malé city faces significant challenges in ensuring access to adequate, safe, and affordable housing because of the high density in the city, forcing residents to live in overcrowded housing conditions or rent houses at exorbitant rates, putting a financial burden on residents. As an island city, there is scarcity of land and limited housing supply, contributing to substandard living environments. The average household size in Malé city is 5.5 as per Census 2022. The number of households living in buildings not intended for human habitation is 464, representing 0.7% of total households. Overcrowding is a significant problem with 8% of the households staying in overcrowded houses, flats, quarters or apartments and is a bigger problem for rented households. As per Census 2022, 31% of the population owns a house in Malé city, while 49% stays in rented houses. The average monthly rent is about 14,364 MVR. In Malé city, 60% households are male-headed compared to 40% that are female-headed, while in the atolls there is an equal distribution of female- and male-headed households. Housing shortages have led to a crisis, with poor living conditions, and limited public spaces due to competing demands for land. In 2021, the Minister of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure reported that 17,073 families in Malé city need housing. To address this shortage, the national government has already started undertaking social housing projects in the atolls as well as in Malé city area, like Hulhumale and Villimale.

Malé city has good coverage of basic services, including a well-utilized public transport system with good ridership, with about 25% of the passengers traveling free of charge, such as children, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities. The city operates a diverse fleet of public transport vehicles, with a relatively short waiting time and good accessibility for residents. Though ferry and bus networks have improved connectivity, transportation systems remain congested and contribute to air quality issues. Future plans include fleet expansion, introduction of EV taxis, and enhanced accessibility features.

The city being quite small, most residents can easily access open spaces as well. As reported in SDG 1, there is good coverage of most of the basic services, like water, electricity, sanitation, etc. Air pollution is an issue in Malé city, primarily because of pollutants transported from outside the country. The **Annual Average PM2.5 source attribution in Malé city** indicated that **30%** of PM2.5 originates from local sources (vehicular emissions, household burning, local industry) and 70% is attributed to long-range (transboundary) sources, transported from South Asia and regional emissions. In the **Dry Season (November–April)**, approximately $90 \pm 11\%$ of PM2.5 is from long-range transport, while only $8 \pm 11\%$ is contributed locally.

Malé city’s extreme population density and limited land area create significant challenges for sustainable urban living. The city struggles with severe overcrowding, inadequate green spaces, and overwhelmed infrastructure systems.

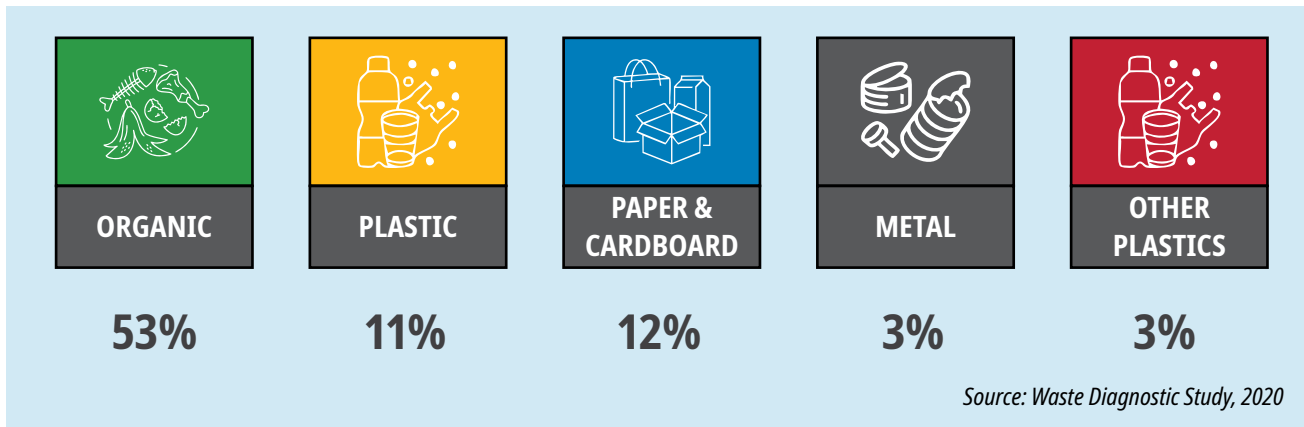
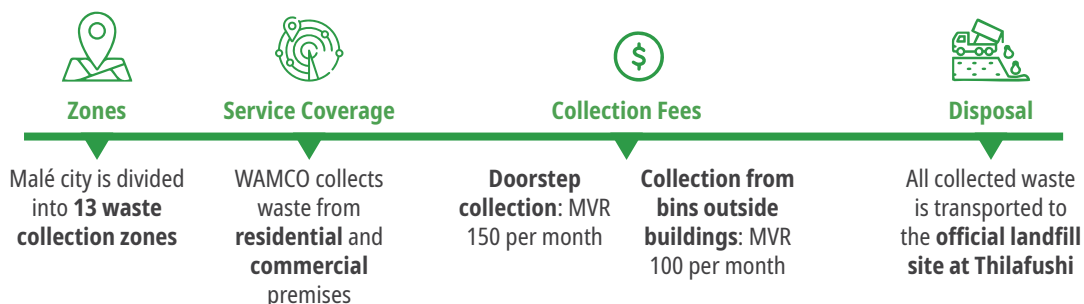


Figure 30: Waste Composition

Waste management faces big challenges in Malé city. The state-owned Waste Management Corporation (WAMCO) has provided waste management services in Malé city since December 2016. It is responsible for waste collection from the residents in Malé city, transferring collected waste from Malé to Thilafushi, and the disposal of waste at Thilafushi landfill area. For effective waste collection, WAMCO has divided Malé city into 13 zones and collects waste from both residential and commercial premises, charging a monthly fee of MVR150 for doorstep collection of waste and MVR100 for the collection of waste from the waste bins kept outside buildings, which is then disposed of at the official landfill site at Thilafushi.



Recycling in the Maldives consists of collection and segregation of recyclables, which are then processed for export. Very little recycled in the country, as statistics from Maldives Customs Service shows that approximately 7,277 MT of waste material worth over 50 million MVR was exported in 2014 ([A Regional Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan for Zone 6 in Maldives, 2019](#)). Recycling is not common due to lack of sufficient financial and technical capacity on the islands, but some recycling is carried out in Thilafushi, where manual segregation of recyclable waste takes place. The country lacks waste treatment and processing facilities, making it evident that waste management issues will not reduce unless the city starts practicing reduction and recycling of waste efficiently, since the island city does not have space to dispose of growing amounts of waste.

The city embodies the complex governance dynamics typical of SIDS capitals, where limited land area collides with overlapping administrative responsibilities. Through national government support, Malé city has developed unique decentralized service delivery models, such as its ferry-based public transport system operated by the Maldives Transport and Contracting Company (MTCC), which efficiently moves residents between islands despite spatial limitations. Bus transport within Malé Island is also managed by MTCC. The buggy services initiated by MCC could not be sustained. However, the city simultaneously grapples with “capital city syndrome”, the persistent tension between local autonomy and national oversight. Jurisdictional conflicts emerge particularly around critical infrastructure, where the Malé City Council’s municipal responsibilities intersect with national agencies’ control over ports, airport,

and housing developments. The city's governance experiments, including hybrid models for waste management between WAMCO and council, as well as the shared function of providing municipal services between HDC and the council provide valuable lessons for other SIDS capitals navigating similar institutional complexities.

The city's coastal location compounds these issues, as much of its infrastructure remains vulnerable to flooding and erosion. Freshwater resources are under threat from saltwater intrusion, which is contaminating the groundwater, forcing dependence on energy-intensive desalination plants. Malé city faces different types of natural hazards, mostly related to storms and flooding, which regularly impact lives, livelihoods and infrastructure in the city. Essential services such as water supply, electricity, schooling, and emergency access are regularly disrupted by such events. In 2024, flash floods in January caused by a record 110 mm of rain within a three-hour window, resulted in displacement of more than 200 people, with damage to households to the tune of 2.2 million MVR - one of the worst disasters according to the [National Disaster Management Authority](#). Due to impacts of previous disasters, particularly the 2004 tsunami, Malé city has made substantial progress in institutional preparedness and early warning systems. The National Disaster Management Centre formed after the tsunami of 2004, has evolved into the National Disaster Management Authority under the 2015 Disaster Management Act, integrating disaster and climate risk management. Malé City Council has prepared its Draft City Disaster Management Plan (2025), developed in alignment with the National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy under the Disaster Management Act (2015), although this is yet to be formally adopted. Once adopted, the Plan can be a vital tool for the city to prepare itself technologically, institutionally and financially to respond to disasters efficiently. Maldives has become one of the first pilot countries for the UN's Early Warnings for All initiative, launching a presidential-level roadmap and emphasizing youth involvement and equitable climate adaptation.

Malé city has responded to the threats of climate change, particularly sea level rise and the complex interplay between freshwater scarcity and urban flooding, by initiating urban development strategies that emphasize climate resilience. A critical development is Hulhumalé, an artificial island created to alleviate overcrowding in Malé city and provide climate-resilient urban infrastructure. Constructed with an average elevation of two meters above sea level, Hulhumalé represents the Maldives' long-term strategy for safe habitation in a warming world (Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 2024).

Currently, there is no specific data available on the proportion of Malé city's population living in slums or informal settlements. Only national and regional slum data for the Maldives are reported at a broader scale. According to the UN-Habitat Data Portal, the proportion of the urban population in the Maldives living in slums or informal settlements has shown minimal improvement over recent years, from 36% in 2017 to 34.8% in 2022.



TARGET 11.2 – Provide Access to Safe, Affordable, Accessible and Sustainable Transport Systems

By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety and maritime safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons

SDG INDICATOR

11.2.1 - Proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport, by sex, age and persons with disabilities

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

- Average travel time for residents in Malé city to the nearest public transport facility
- Availability of subsidized or concession fares for students, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities
- Average waiting times for buses/ferries during peak and off-peak hours
- Number and types of vehicles in the public transport fleet and the presence of inclusive design features (e.g., ramps, designated seating, safety measures) for women, children, persons with disabilities, and older persons

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Transportation service covers all of Malé city. The average travel time for residents to access the nearest public transport facility is:

10-15
minutes



Average Waiting Time for Public Transport



Public Transport Fleet (Buses)

Type	Quantity	Type	Quantity
City Bus	16	EV Bus	6
Coach Bus	18	Minibus	40
Double Deck	23		

Inclusive Design Facilities

- **Bus:** Designated seats reserved for pregnant women, persons with disabilities, and older persons
- **Ferry:** First row seats designated for pregnant women, persons with disabilities, and older persons

Source: Maldives Transport and Contracting Company

TARGET 11.5 – Significantly Reduce the Number of Deaths and the Number of People Affected and Substantially Decrease the Direct Economic Losses Relative to Global Gross Domestic Product Caused by Disasters

By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths, and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations

SDG INDICATOR

11.5.1 - Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

- Number of high-impact disaster events (floods, fires, storm surges) occurring annually in Malé city, rated by severity (scale of 1–10)
- Number of individuals directly affected by disasters in the past year
- Annual number of disaster-related deaths or missing persons reported in Malé city

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Number of high-impact disaster events (Past 5 Years):



Surface Water Flooding

8 major events (2019–2024), including:

- 31 Dec 2023: 179.7 mm rainfall (highest in 26 years)
- 12 Jan 2024: 143.4 mm rainfall

Stakeholder-rated intensity: 8.6/10 (Very High)

Impact

- Over **282 households** (out of 42571 households in Malé city as per 2022 Census) affected in a single 2024 event
- Frequent drainage failures in **Galolhu** and **Henveiru wards**



Fire Incidents

24 notable fire events during 2016–2021, continuing through 2024

- **April 2016:** hardware store fire (**MVR 2.7 million in losses**)
- **May 2021:** residential fire in Machangolhi (**MVR 1.15 million in losses**)

Intensity: 7.9/10 (Very High)

Causes

- High-density urban layout
- Lax fire safety regulations



Coastal Flooding / Storm Surges

Two major surge events, notably:

- **5 August 2023:** Rogue wave inundated roads near the Sinamalé Bridge
- **Overtopping at Industrial Village** during southwest monsoon

Intensity: 7.7/10 (Very High)

Consequences

- Infrastructure damage
- Vehicle loss
- Erosion of coastal barriers



Tsunami Risk


No tsunami in the last five years, but the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami impacted 190 islands, causing:

- **82 deaths**
- **15,000+ displaced**
- **~US\$ 393 million in damages**

Intensity: 7.7/10 (Very High)

Consequences

- Infrastructure damage
- Vehicle loss
- Erosion of coastal barriers




Cyclones / Depressions

Three to four notable storm depressions have occurred, affecting **rainfall** and **winds (indirect impact)**.

Intensity: Rated 6.9/10 (High)

Effect

- Contributed to flash floods
- Temporary transport disruptions
- Damage was not widespread



Heatwaves / Urban Heat

There are **no formally recorded heatwave events**, but, **urban heat island effect** is notable, especially in **central Malé city wards** due to **high building density** and **lack of vegetation**

Intensity: Rated 5.4/10 (Medium)

Risk trend

- **Rising maximum temperatures**, projected to increase by **+1.1°C by 2050** (baseline: 31°C)

161
individuals in Malé city
directly affected by urban
flooding in 2024

**No deaths or
missing persons**
by disasters reported in
Malé city in 2024

Table 1: Summary of Hazards in the last five years in the city

Hazard	# of Events (2019–2024)	Intensity (Risk Score)	Remarks
Surface Water Flooding	8	8.6 – Very High	Most frequent and damaging hazard
Fire	≥5 (major), many minor	7.9 – Very High	Mostly in congested residential/commercial areas
Coastal Flooding / Surge	2	7.7 – Very High	Rogue waves, seawall overtopping
Tsunami (risk only)	0 (event), high risk zone	7.6 – Very High	Proximity to Sumatra subduction zone

Hazard	# of Events (2019–2024)	Intensity (Risk Score)	Remarks
Cyclones / Depressions	3–4 (indirect)	6.9 – High	Triggered heavy rains and squalls
Heatwaves	0 (formal), rising trend	5.4 – Medium	Increasing temperatures and urban heat island effect

Source: Draft Malé city Disaster Management Plan 2025

SDG INDICATOR

11.5.2 - Direct economic loss attributed to disasters in relation to global domestic product (GDP)

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Estimated economic losses and number of households and businesses affected by property damage or employment disruption due to disasters in Malé city

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Estimated economic losses in Malé city (2019–2024)

MVR 8.89 million

Total NDMA compensation in Malé city (2019–2024)



MVR 2.15 million

Flood-related aid (to ~909 households)



MVR 6.74 million

Fire-related aid (to ~909 households)



Households Affected

- **950 households** out of 42571 were in Malé city **suffered property damage or displacement** due to **flooding and fires**.



Businesses Affected

- Not formally recorded, but **significant disruptions** were reported.



Employment Impact

- Not quantified, but **informal workers** and **small businesses** faced **repeated disruptions**.

Note: Economic losses are underestimated as current records only cover household compensation. Business and employment loss data is not systematically collected.

SDG INDICATOR

11.5.3 - (a) Damage to critical infrastructure and (b) number of disruptions to basic services, attributed to disasters

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Number of disaster-related incidents that caused damage to critical infrastructure (e.g., roads, bridges, power stations)

Number of days essential services (such as water, electricity, schools, or hospitals) were disrupted annually

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Critical infrastructure damage in Malé city (Past 5 Years):



Roads & Streets

Repeatedly damaged by **surface water flooding** (notably in 2023–2024); **erosion** and **access blockages** reported.



Sinamalé Bridge Highway

Affected by **rogue wave event** (August 2023), causing **vehicle** and **coastal infrastructure damage**.



Drainage Systems

Frequently overwhelmed, leading to **manhole overflows** and **localized flooding**.



Power Infrastructure (STELCO)

No major destruction, but facilities face ongoing risk due to **proximity to coast** and **saltwater exposure**.

Days per year when essential services (e.g., water, power, schools, hospitals) were disrupted due to disasters in Malé city:



Water Supply

Disrupted for **1–4 days/year** (2020–2024) due to **flooding and drainage failures**.



Electricity

Localized outages for **0–2 days/year**, mainly **during flood events**.



Schools

Closed for **1–5 days/year**, especially during **peak floods in 2023–2024**.



Hospitals

No closures, but partial **service strain** for **1–2 days/year** due to **access issues**.



Emergency Services

Delays in response for **1–3 days/year**, caused by **flooded or congested roads**.

TARGET 11.6 – Reduce the Adverse Per Capita Environmental Impact of Cities

By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management

SDG INDICATOR

11.6.1 - Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed in controlled facilities out of total municipal waste generated, by cities

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

- Total amount of municipal solid waste generated in Malé city annually, over the past five years
- Proportion of municipal waste collected and managed in controlled facilities

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Malé city Solid Waste Management

Sources of waste generation: households, government institutions, and the commercial sector.



Waste Generation Rates (per person per day)

Urban Areas:

- **2.8 kg** per capita per day in **Malé city** (Ministry of Tourism, 2015)
- **2.3 kg** per capita per day in **Maldives** ([A Regional Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan for Zone 6 in Maldives, 2019](#))

Household & Commercial Waste (Greater Malé)

- **1.5 kg** per capita per day (Maldives Ocean Plastic Alliance, Ministry of Environment, 2025)

National Total (Municipal Solid Waste – MSW):

- **320,703 tonnes** generated (Maldives Ocean Plastic Alliance, Ministry of Environment, 2025)

Daily Total Waste (Tonnes Per Day)

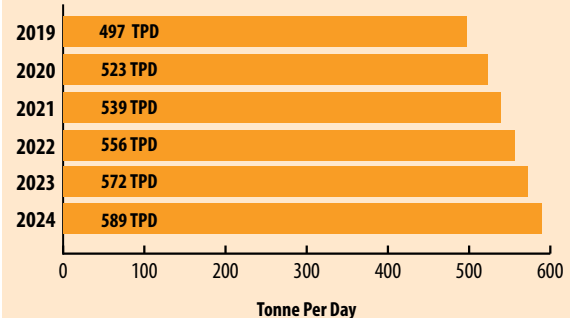


Figure 31: The estimated solid waste generation has been increasing from 2019 to 2024

Solid Waste Collection, Transfer and Disposal

- The waste generated in Malé city is **collected daily** and **transported to Thilafushi for disposal**.
- The **segregation of waste at the household level is low** (State of the Environment, 2016).

SDG INDICATOR

11.6.2 - Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g. PM2.5 and PM10) in the city (population weighted)

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) in Malé city

STATUS (PROGRESS)

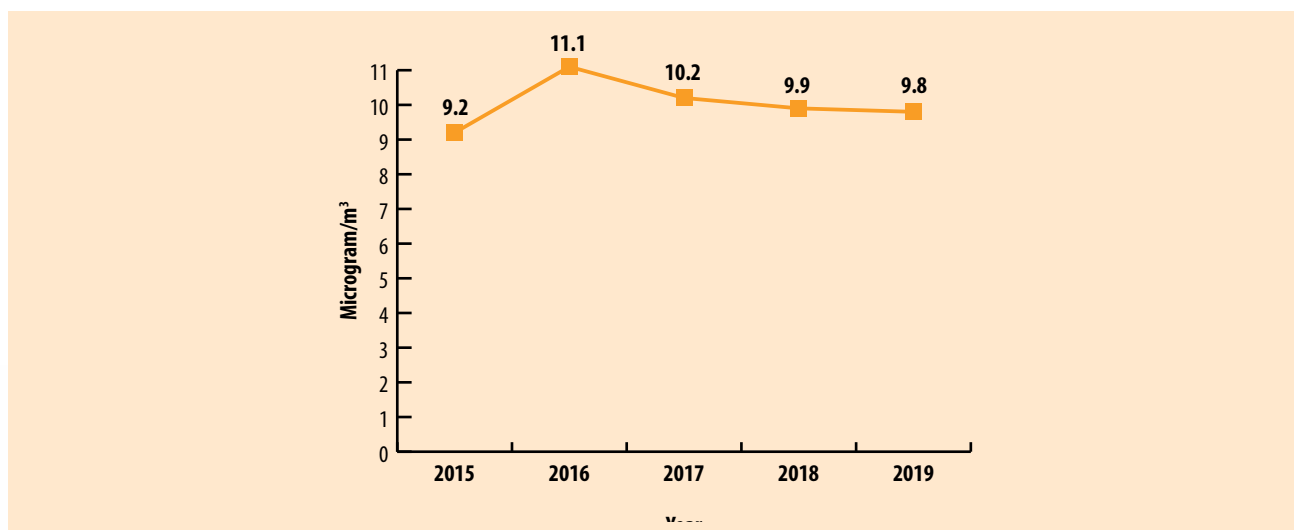


Figure 32: Time series for PM2.5 levels (2015-2019)



TARGET 11.7 – Provide Universal Access to Safe, Inclusive and Accessible, Green and Public Spaces

By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

SDG INDICATOR

11.7.1 - Average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all, by sex, age and persons with disabilities

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of open public spaces (parks, recreational areas, pedestrian zones) within the total built-up area of Malé city

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Total built-up area of Malé city ([Malé City Council Land Use Plan, 2025](#))

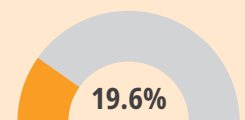


Vilimalé –
32 hectares

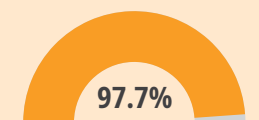
Malé –
201 hectares

Hulhumale –
402 hectares

Average share of open space for public use in the built-up area in Malé city (2020) ([Urban Indicators Database, UN-Habitat, 2025](#))



Average share of urban population in Malé city with convenient access to open public spaces in (2020) ([Urban Indicators Database, UN-Habitat, 2025](#))



SDG INDICATOR

11.7.2 - Proportion of persons victim of non-sexual or sexual harassment, by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

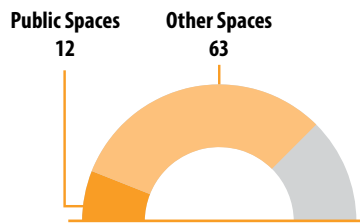
Proportion of the population reporting incidents of sexual or non-sexual harassment in public spaces within the last 12 months for Malé city

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Proportion of the population that reports experiencing non-sexual or sexual harassment in public spaces

0.1%
within the
past 12 months

Number of people that reports experiencing non-sexual or sexual harassment in public spaces in 2024 in Malé city.



Source: Maldives Police Service

SDG INDICATOR

11.b.2 - Proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national disaster risk reduction strategies

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Number of local government agencies and institutions in Malé city actively involved in implementation of local disaster risk reduction strategies aligned with national disaster risk reduction plans.

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Malé City Council has prepared its Draft City Disaster (DRR) Management Plan (2025), developed in alignment with the National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy under the Disaster Management Act (2015). The plan was prepared in coordination with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and includes hazard and risk assessments, local-level response protocols, and community-based preparedness plans in alignment with national guidelines and early warning systems. It outlines clear mechanisms for local-level disaster preparedness and resilience. However, as of now, the CDMP is in draft form and has not yet been formally adopted or implemented by the Malé City Council.

Malé City Council and 12+ agencies (NDMA, MoCCEE, MMS, UNDP, etc.) are actively involved in developing and implementing components of the draft CDMP, aligned with the National DRR Strategy (Disaster Management Act, 2015).

Various local agencies are actively involved in implementing components of the DRR strategy.

Source: Malé City Council

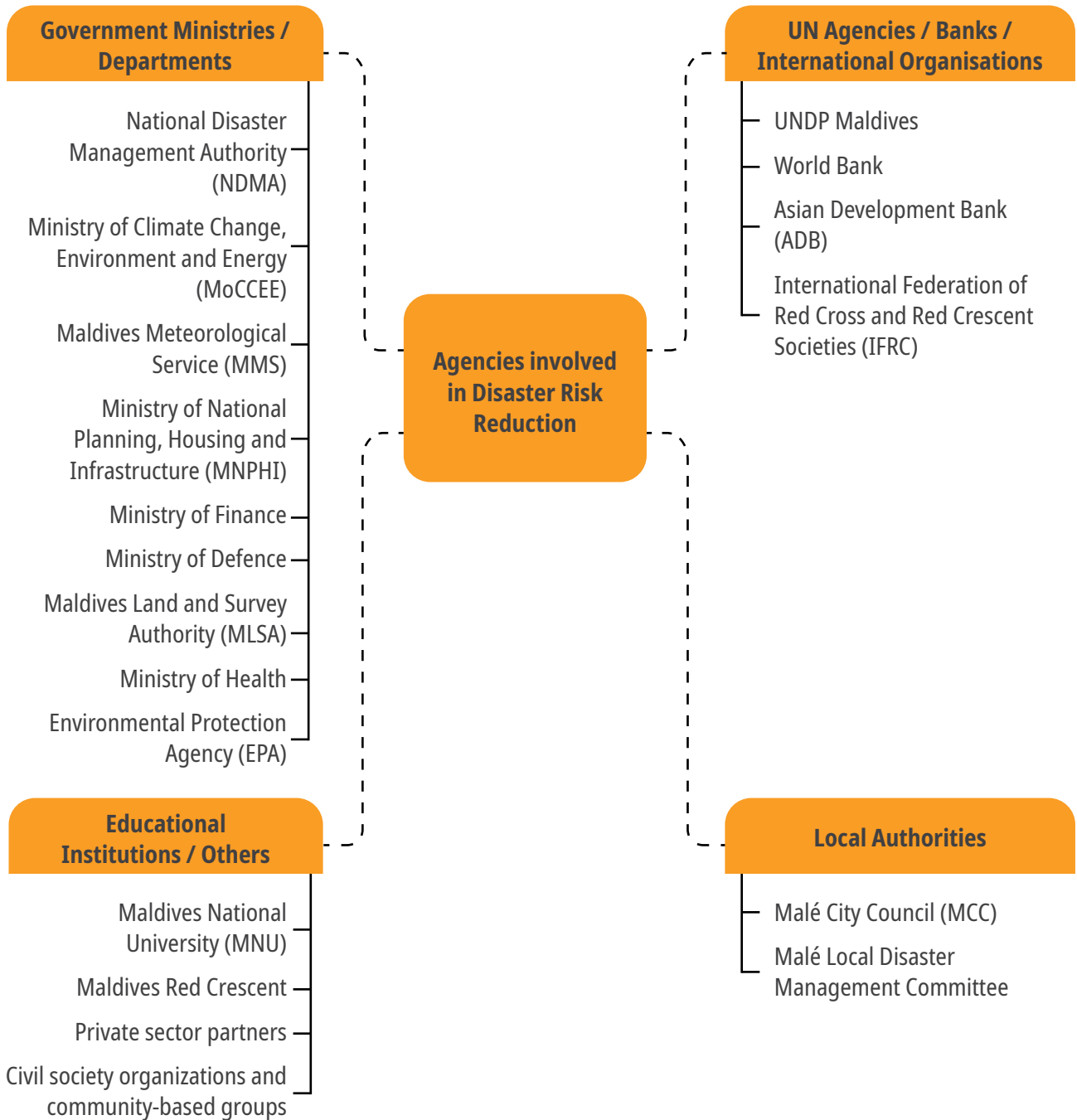


Figure 33: Agencies involved in Disaster Risk Reduction



Recommended measures to improve the status of SDG 11



Address housing challenges and urban density

- Malé City Council (MCC) should develop long-term affordable housing policy for the city in line with the development of the 20-year National Development Plan
- MCC should engage with Parliament to explore avenues to regulate the rental market to prevent excessive rent hikes and improve tenant protections.
- MCC should establish robust local systems to monitor housing conditions, overcrowding, and service access; enforcement of existing building codes; limitations to high rise buildings; and limiting the number of people living in rented apartments.



Expand and improve public transport systems

- MCC should assess the size and capacity of the public transport fleet to understand if it meets city requirements.
- MCC should work with transport providers to introduce more sustainable options, including electric buses and EV taxis in alignment with the national programme. To promote decongestion, there can be quotas for EV vehicles, while gradually phasing out fossil fuel burning vehicles.
- MCC should work with transport providers to improve universal accessibility in transportation through low-floor vehicles, upgraded bus stops, and ferry terminals.
- MCC should partner with transport providers to conduct outreach to inform vulnerable groups (PWDs, elderly, children) about free-of-charge (FOC) travel benefits.
- Malé city should work with transport providers and partner with local Disability Persons Organizations (DPOs) to train public transport staff in accessibility and inclusive service delivery. This includes promoting accessible public transport with ramps, and ensuring provisions for the visually impaired, hearing impaired, such as clear stop announcements, maps, and signage at transport facilities and vehicles/vessels.
- MCC should promote walking and cycling in the city by developing and maintaining pavements for accessibility by the elderly, children, and persons with disabilities; creating cycling routes linking schools, ferry terminals, and parks; and designating car-free routes in selected locations.
- MCC should monitor disaggregated transport access data to inform service improvements.



Protect cultural and natural heritage

- MCC should allocate a specific municipal budget for heritage preservation and conservation.
- The city council should set benchmarks for maintaining and safeguarding cultural and natural heritage sites in the city. MCC can collaborate with private sector enterprises for 'adopt a site' campaigns, raise awareness among the public and school children regarding protection and preservation of cultural sites and invest in their maintenance and upkeep.



Strengthen disaster resilience and response

- MCC should adopt and operationalize the City Disaster Management Plan (CDMP) in the next year. The Council should establish a city-level DRR coordination committee and conduct regular training and drills.
- MCC should continue the upgrading of urban drainage systems and infrastructure to reduce flood risks and service disruptions.
- MCC should ensure provision of temporary shelters or safe houses for disasters, particularly for flood displaced households.
- MCC should coordinate with National Disaster Management Authority to improve disaster impact monitoring systems, including real-time data on affected populations and infrastructure. Loss and damage data should be collected after each disaster event, for better preparation for future events.
- MCC should partner with local insurance providers to promote household and business insurance uptake for disaster risk reduction.



Improve solid waste and air quality management

- MCC should initiate the formation of a coordination committee for Solid Waste Management in Malé city.
- Malé city should coordinate with the Ministry of Tourism and Environment and WAMCO to develop a comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan for Malé city with a focus on waste reduction and reuse.
- MCC should expand local recycling infrastructure and promote household-level waste segregation.
- MCC should establish a continuous air quality monitoring system, including the tracking of PM2.5 and PM10 levels.
- MCC should work with Ministry of Transport to development a system to enforce emission controls for transport.
- MCC should partner with local organizations and use billboards to raise public awareness on pollution risks and solid waste management.



Expand and enhance green and public spaces

- MCC should conduct spatial audits and participatory planning to improve the quality and accessibility of parks and open spaces.
- MCC should prioritize universal design and safety features in green infrastructure upgrades.
- MCC should promote creative solutions like rooftop gardens and develop pocket parks to increase green cover in dense urban areas.
- MCC to monitor usage and safety in public spaces through the use of digital solutions, community feedback and disaggregated data.



Enhance safety and reduce harassment in public spaces

- MCC should partner with local organizations to launch city-wide awareness campaigns to prevent harassment, particularly against women, youth, and PWDs.
- MCC should increase monitoring of construction zones and poorly maintained buildings.
- MCC should coordinate with relevant partners to expand street lighting, traffic management, and surveillance in high-risk public areas.
- MCC should strengthen partnerships with community groups and law enforcement to make public spaces safer and more inclusive.

3.3.3. SDG 13: Climate Action

As one of the world's lowest-lying capital cities, Malé city faces existential threats from climate change, particularly sea-level rise and increased storm intensity. The city's average elevation of just one meter above sea level (except Hulhumale, which is at two meters), makes it highly susceptible to flooding, especially during high tides and severe weather events. Rising temperatures contribute to urban heat island effects, exacerbating energy demands for cooling and creating public health risks. Flooding-related disasters and their impacts have been increasing over the years. Although there are no recorded data, anecdotal evidence suggests that the city is facing climate risks of increasing temperatures and more frequent high-rainfall events. However, Malé city has not developed any green house gas (GHG) emission inventory or developed any adaptation plans for the city. The city has partnered with the National Disaster Management Authority to develop a City Disaster Management Plan, but this does not cover climate adaptation or mitigation aspects for the city. This is an important lacuna that needs to be addressed by the MCC immediately. While Malé city has implemented some adaptation measures like seawalls and the elevated development of Hulhumalé, the scale of climate risks requires more comprehensive planning and investment to ensure long-term resilience.



The Maldives' Third NDC emphasizes that education, training, public advocacy, and awareness initiatives are central components of the country's climate agenda. It also includes a strategy to provide targeted capacity building, including through training and skills development for vulnerable groups to effectively participate in climate action. The education policy and curricula are developed nationally by the Ministry of Education, Maldives, headquartered in Malé city, and Education for Sustainable Development is a formal part of the education system in the city. The National Curriculum Framework (2016) embeds environmental stewardship by covering human and environment interactions, climate change, and sustainability, that are taught through science and geography syllabus. The Ministry of Education's National Institute of Education and UNESCO have developed a "Green Schools" framework known as Fehi Madharusa, piloting climate-smart curricula in Malé city schools.

There are teacher training workshops on the Green Schools framework, encouraging teachers to inculcate climate literacy. Training programmes are conducted to prepare institutions to implement the City Disaster Management Plan by NDMA as awareness campaigns.

Students learn about the SDGs from Grade 4 onwards, with environmental systems, climate, sustainability, and resource stewardship as part of their course. The Green Schools framework also brings in experiential learning for school students. Some colleges such as Villa College, Mandhu College, Cyryx College, and Maldives National University have formal courses that are related to the SDGs and support projects by students.

Malé city faces existential threats from climate change, particularly sea-level rise and increased storm intensity. The city's average elevation of just one meter above sea level (except Hulhumale, which is at two meters), makes it highly susceptible to flooding, especially during high tides and severe weather events.

TARGET 13.1 – Strengthen Resilience and Adaptive Capacity to Climate Related Disasters

Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries

SDG INDICATOR

13.1.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters in Malé city in the last year

STATUS (PROGRESS)

In **2023**, a total of **573 people** were affected by **flooding due to rain**, including three persons with disabilities.

0.24%
of the total population

In **2024**, a total of **413 people** were affected by **flooding due to rain**

0.15%
of the total population

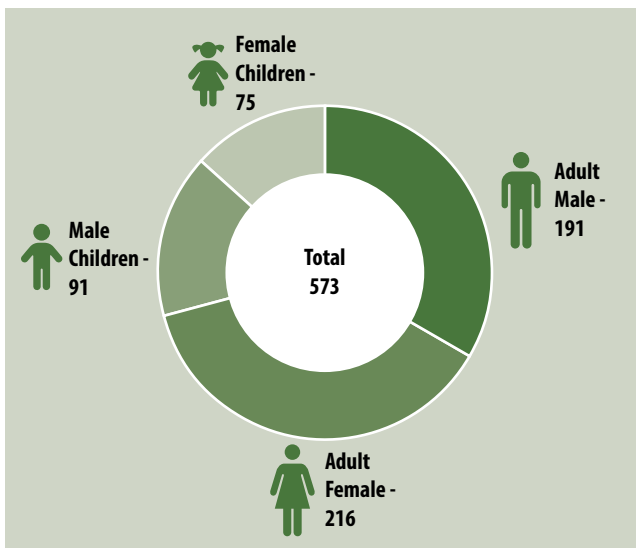


Figure 34: Number of people affected due to flooding, by age and gender (2023)

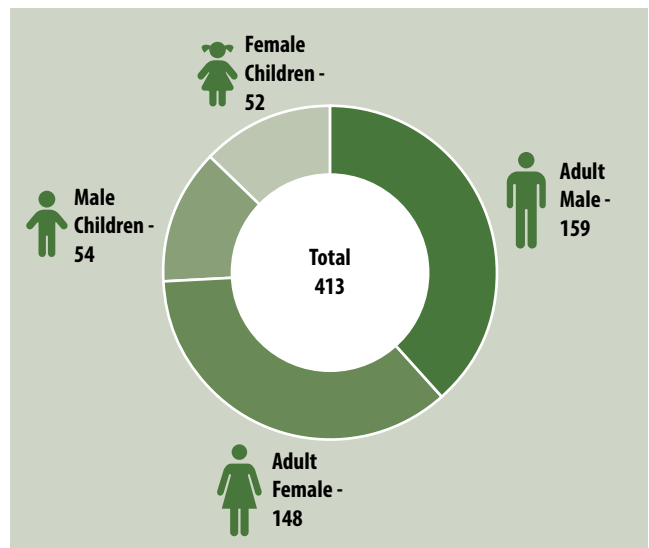


Figure 35: Number of people affected due to flooding, by age and gender (2024)



186
houses affected
in 2023



732
houses affected
in 2024

No reported deaths
attributed to **disasters** in
Malé city in 2024

TARGET 13.3 – Improve Education, Awareness-raising and Human and Institutional Capacity on Climate Change Mitigation, Adaptation, Impact Reduction and Early Warning

SDG INDICATOR

13.3.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Extent to which education for sustainable development is mainstreamed in (a) city's education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment

STATUS (PROGRESS)

- The Third NDC of the Maldives emphasises that education, training, public advocacy, and awareness initiatives are central components of the country's climate agenda. It also includes a strategy to provide targeted capacity building, including through trainings and skills development for vulnerable groups to effectively participate in climate action. ([Maldives' Third Nationally Determined Contribution, Ministry of Tourism and Environment, 2025](#))
- The Ministry of Education's National Institute of Education and UNESCO have developed a **"Green Schools" framework** known as **Fehi Madharusa, piloting climate-smart curricula** in Malé city schools.
- The National Curriculum Framework (2016) embeds **environmental stewardship** by covering human and environment interactions, climate change, and sustainability, that are taught through science and geography syllabuses.





Recommended measures to improve the status of SDG 13



Strengthen urban climate resilience and disaster preparedness

- MCC should work with the Ministry of Infrastructure to develop standards for Malé city that prioritize flood-resistant construction; and identify disaster prone sites such as schools, mosques, hospitals, etc.
- MCC should partner with local NGOs and private sector to take up initiatives for greening Malé city, using local plants as part of the landscaping.
- MCC should strengthen early warning systems and outreach to provide better information and enhance preparedness among communities.



Align local climate actions with national and global frameworks

- MCC should coordinate with the national government to develop a localized climate action plan aligned with Maldives' NDC 3.0.
- MCC should identify specific city-level measures that can contribute to national climate mitigation and adaptation targets and allocate funds for implementation of actions to achieve these targets.



Establish a GHG inventory and monitoring system

- MCC should develop a city-level GHG Inventory Management Plan.
- MCC should develop IPCC-compliant and Global Protocol for Community-Scale Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventories (GPC) methods to ensure comparability and quality.
- MCC should develop city level data collection procedures for tracking emissions in energy, transport, waste, and water sectors.



Promote climate education and public awareness

- MCC should partner with all schools to include climate change and sustainability awareness programs into the academic year.
- MCC should incentivize environmental actions with reward systems such as Fehi faiy and establishment and recognition of Environment Champions.



3.3.4. SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

The 2030 Agenda recognizes that peaceful, inclusive societies and strong global partnerships are essential for sustainable development. SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) promotes effective, accountable institutions and access to justice for all, while SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) emphasizes the importance of collaboration to achieve the broader SDG framework. These goals are particularly relevant for urban centers like Malé city, where social justice and governance challenges intersect with rapid urban development.



Malé city faces unique governance challenges as both the national capital and a local municipality, creating complex jurisdictional overlaps between city and national authorities. Anti-corruption efforts are a priority, with the city working to enhance transparency in public procurement and municipal service delivery through digital systems and citizen oversight mechanisms. Urban crime rates, while relatively low compared to global cities, show concerning trends in drug-related offenses and theft. The city’s dense living conditions amplify tensions around resource allocation and public space usage, requiring careful conflict management approaches.

SDG 16 deals with institutional systems in Malé city that support justice for all. There is limited transparency regarding the MCC budget. Every year during the annual town hall meeting, MCC shares a summary of their projects and budget. Although this information is included in the city council annual report, it is not accessible for public review. The MCC budget is not prepared in a participatory manner with the engagement of the public. Participatory budget planning can support efficient allocation of resources for better resolution of local issues. There are reservations for women to be part of the council, and MCC exceeds the quota in its Council, but there are no reservations for other groups such as youth or people with disabilities.

In addition, there are challenges regarding accountability and corruption. Although official sources show low rates of corruption, there are limited anonymous channels for reporting. Bribery is most common in public procurement systems, and this can raise costs and undermine fair competition. There is no data on the number of businesses that face corruption or bribery demands. There are also no mechanisms to measure public satisfaction with services provided by the MCC or people’s perceptions regarding inclusive planning and governance mechanisms for Malé city.

Malé city regularly witnesses gang-related violence, youth vulnerability, and records physical, psychological and sexual violence. Official figures for child sexual abuse are low. It is possible that there is underreporting of cases and data gaps that are masking actual figures. There are several channels to report and seek help for child abuse, but there is limited awareness about these channels. Some of these channels include:


CHILD PROTECTION AND SUPPORT SERVICES IN MALDIVES


“1412” Child Help Line
– report any violence against children 

Maldives Red Crescent (MRC)
– humanitarian aid, psychosocial support, first aid for survivors 

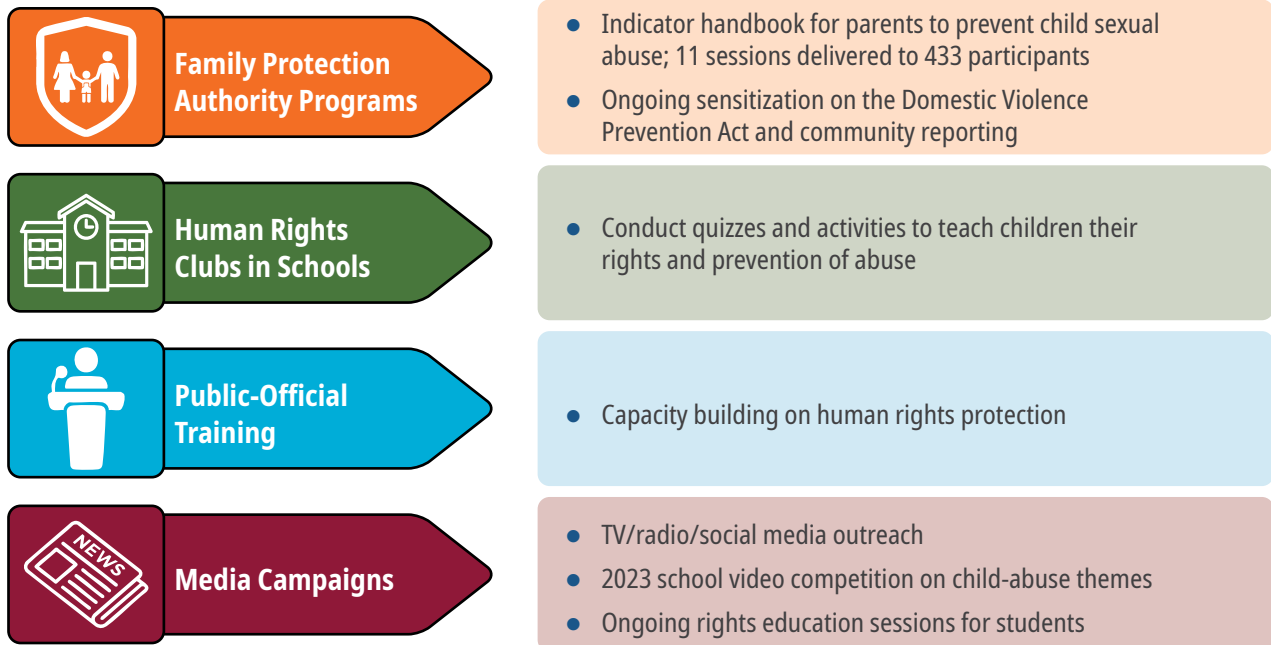
“Ahan” Mobile App
– direct reporting of child-abuse incidents 

Advocating the Rights of Children (ARC)
– legal advocacy and programs against abuse and exploitation 

Society for Health Education (SHE)
– counselling, psychosocial, sexual/reproductive health, and health education 

Family Protection Authority (FPA)
– free legal aid and counselling for domestic-violence survivors 

AWARENESS INITIATIVES FOR PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE IN MALDIVES



Malé city has achieved near-universal birth registration coverage through a well-structured, accessible, and efficient system. Birth registration is mandatory under city regulations, requiring parents or guardians to submit documentation to the City Council within 7 days of birth. All births take place in medical facilities, which issue a standardized Hospital Birth Form for verification. The City Council uses this form to validate and track registrations, ensuring accuracy and minimizing omissions. Digital and physical submission options further enhance accessibility and administrative efficiency, promoting equity across all population groups. In 2024, only 32 newborns were unregistered, indicating a high compliance rate but also highlighting the need for sustained community outreach.

Official data on disputes are not accurate, with limited information on the dispute type (property, family, employment, commercial), disaggregation of disputes between formal (courts, police, legal aid) vs. informal resolution mechanisms (mediation, elders, religious leaders) or on resolution times and perceived effectiveness. There is also insufficient data on the barriers faced by residents in accessing formal or informal channels of dispute resolution, such as higher costs, and lengthy resolution times. The Human Rights Commission of Maldives also reports on incidents of discrimination on grounds of physical ability or gender, although reporting is low due to lack of awareness, accessibility, and trust in remedial systems. Physical inaccessibility is a critical barrier: for example, 79% of buildings lack ramps or slopes, severely impacting persons with disabilities. The Human Rights Commission of Maldives (HRCM) conducted a Wheelchair Accessibility Research in 2021, but only two of their 10 recommendations to improve accessibility have been fully implemented so far.

Malé city endeavours to ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms. While no incidents of killing or torture reported, have been both formal and anecdotal accounts indicate intimidation of journalists such as unlawful detention, death threats, and arson threats. This suppresses free expression and risks journalistic safety. While law enforcement has responded to threats and symbolic protections exist, enforcement remains uneven and impunity persists.

However, MCC is showing active involvement in international municipal networks such as ICLEI and UCLG, representing local interests in global platforms.

TARGET 16.1 – Reduce Violence Everywhere

Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

SDG INDICATOR

16.1.3 - Proportion of population subjected to (a) physical violence, (b) psychological violence and/or (c) sexual violence in the previous 12 months

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of Malé city’s population has experienced (a) physical violence, (b) psychological violence, or (c) sexual violence in the past 12 months

STATUS (PROGRESS)

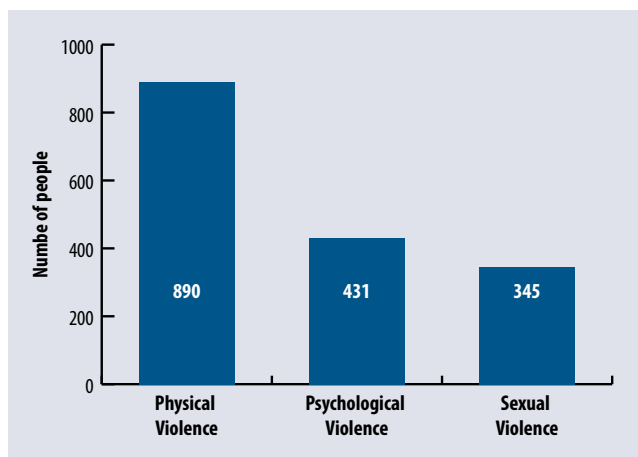


Figure 36: Number of people in Malé city experiencing violence (2024)

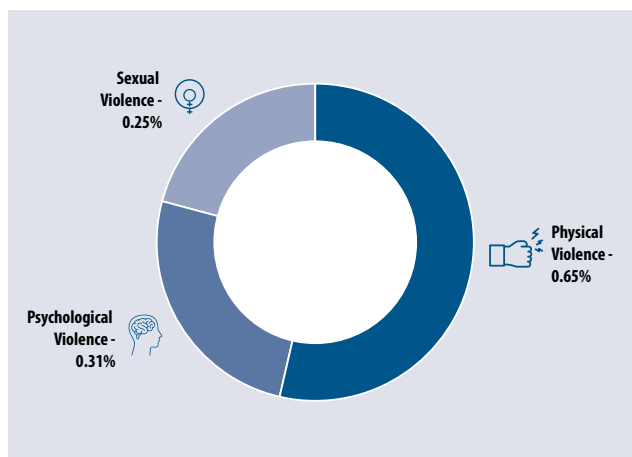


Figure 37: Proportion of population experiencing violence in the Malé city

Source: Maldives Police Services



TARGET 16.2 – Protect Children from Abuse, Exploitation, Trafficking and Violence

End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children

SDG INDICATOR

16.2.3 - Proportion of young women and men aged 18–29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Number of officially reported cases of child sexual violence (below age 18) annually

STATUS (PROGRESS)



Police Reports
(2024)

6 cases
of child sexual
violence recorded



Commission
Investigations
(Jan–Dec 2024)

0 cases
reported to the
Human Rights
Commission /
Family Protection
Authority



Data Gaps

There is no reliable count of Malé city's child population to calculate rates



TARGET 16.3 – Promote Rule of Law and Ensure Equal Access to Justice for All

Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all

SDG INDICATOR

16.3.3 - Proportion of the population who have experienced a dispute in the past two years and who accessed a formal or informal dispute resolution mechanism, by type of mechanism

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Proportion of Malé city's population who experienced a dispute in the past two years and accessed a formal or informal resolution mechanism

STATUS (PROGRESS)

143 cases

disputes reported in 2024

10%

proportion of city population in 2024

TARGET 16.5 – Substantially Reduce Corruption and Bribery

Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms

SDG INDICATOR

16.5.1 - Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Percentage of Malé city residents who, in the past 12 months, paid or were asked for a bribe when contacting a public official

STATUS (PROGRESS)

22

reported cases
(3% of adult residents)

Most affected sector

Public procurement

Common motives

speeding up services, avoiding penalties, gaining preferential treatment (2023 survey)

Source: Maldives Police Services

Source: Maldives Police Services, Anti-Corruption Commission

TARGET 16.7 – Ensure Responsive, Inclusive and Representative Decision-Making

Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

SDG INDICATOR

16.7.1 Proportions of positions in national and local institutions, including (a) the legislatures; (b) the public service; and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions, by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Policy in place to ensure more inclusive and diverse representation in Malé City Council

STATUS (PROGRESS)

Gender quota established at national level for local council with

33%
seats reserved for women.

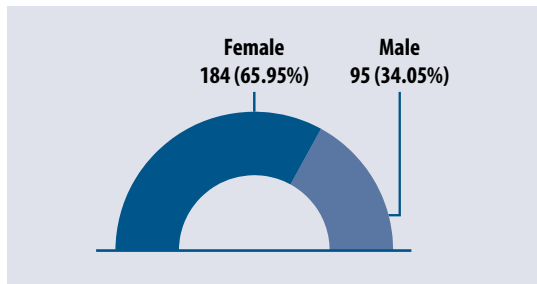


Figure 38: Percentage of civil servants in MCC by gender (Maldivians)

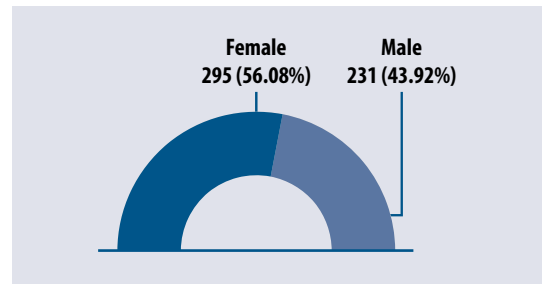


Figure 39: Percentage of contractual staff in MCC by gender (Maldivians)

Source: Malé City Council



TARGET 16.8 – Strengthen the Participation in Global Governance

Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

SDG INDICATOR

16.8.1 - Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Number of international organizations in which Malé city is a member or participant

STATUS (PROGRESS)

1. ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability
2. United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
3. Strong Cities Network
4. MCGG 2030
5. CityNet
6. Sister city agreements and collaborations:

Partnerships	Existing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fuzhou, China (cultural and economic cooperation) ● Shenzhen, China (economic and technological collaboration) ● Suzhou, China (enhanced cooperation in governance, planning, and urban services)
	Negotiation Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ankara, Turkey (foster bilateral ties and shared urban experiences) ● Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (build strategic cooperation around city governance, infrastructure, and cultural exchange) ● Islamabad, Pakistan (collaboration on mutual urban priorities and strengthening regional ties)
	Additional Cooperation Discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pingtian, China (a pilot zone for Taiwan-China integration)

Source: Malé City Council

TARGET 16.9 – Provide Universal Legal Identity

By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration

SDG INDICATOR

16.9.1 - Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Percentage of children under 5 registered with a civil authority

STATUS (PROGRESS)

99.6%
of children under 5 are registered

68
Unregistered births due to neonatal death

8,589
Birth Certificates issued in 2024

9,948
Birth Registries in 2024

TARGET 16.10 – Protect Fundamental Freedoms and Ensure Access to Information

Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

SDG INDICATOR

16.10.1 - Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months

LOCAL INDICATOR FOR MALÉ CITY

Number of verified cases of serious violations against journalists, media personnel, trade unionists, and human rights advocates in Malé city over the past 12 months

STATUS (PROGRESS)



Grave Violations

Killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, torture:
0 verified cases reported in Malé city during the past year.



Restrictions on Freedom of Expression and Press

Several cases of arbitrary detention and harassment:

- Police **assaulted** and **detained several journalists** while they were covering protests in March 2023.
- Dozens of **journalists reported threats**, including death threats sent via SMS, particularly in relation to coverage of gang violence.
- Media houses such as RaajjeTV and Channel 13 received anonymous arson threats in April 2024.



Existing Protection

- Maldives Media Council registered with official mandates to defend media rights.
- Maldives Police investigates threats to journalists, including cases of facility arson.

Source: Malé City Council

Source: Human Rights Commission of Maldives (HRCM)



Some of the measures to be undertaken to improve the status of SDG 16



Reduce violence and strengthen prevention

- MCC should work with Maldives Police to facilitate workplaces for ward-level police stations
- MCC should partner with Maldives Police to create a violence heat map to identify hotspots and guide targeted interventions
- MCC should work with Maldives Police Service, particularly ward police stations, to develop policing programs in youth-dense and high-risk areas of the city
- MCC should partner with local organizations to develop a city level trauma counseling and psychosocial services for survivors of psychological and sexual violence
- MCC should partner with NGOs to launch city-led awareness campaigns focused on violence prevention, especially targeting adolescents and young men



Protect children from abuse and exploitation

- MCC should advocate with the National Government to equip police, healthcare workers, and teachers with training on child-friendly reporting and trauma-informed care
- MCC should partner with NGOs to run a public information campaign to raise awareness of helplines and reporting channels
- MCC should hold quarterly data reviews and an annual forum to track service uptake and adjust interventions



Improve access to justice and legal services

- MCC should partner with Bar Council of Maldives (BCM) to conduct a public campaign to inform both residents and transient populations of Malé City about available legal services and options in the city
- MCC should work with Department of Judicial Administrations (DJA) to publish City specific date on dispute resolution
- Malé city should partner with local organizations to conduct legal clinics in the city at least twice a year
- MCC should publish a quarterly access-to-justice dashboard with user feedback and resolution metrics



Improve responsiveness and public service quality

- MCC should simplify its process and procedures to make access to services user friendly. It should also strengthen Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and internal procedures to fast track service for public
- MCC should conduct biannual public satisfaction surveys, disaggregated by ward, demographic group, and service type
- MCC should conduct civic education and civil rights awareness regularly through town hall meetings
- MCC should quarterly audit municipal service locations for accessibility; retrofit infrastructure accordingly
- MCC should launch a real-time dashboard to monitor service wait times, complaints, resolution rates, and upcoming works



Combat corruption and promote transparent governance

- MCC should develop an e-procurement system with publicly visible bid and award information
- MCC should form an independent committee to audit high-value contracts
- MCC should move more citizen services online with clear service standards and published fees
- MCC should run public awareness campaigns on rights and how to report bribery or misconduct
- MCC should publish an annual Bribery Index to track complaints, outcomes, and risk areas



Ensure inclusive and participatory decision-making

- MCC should establish a permanent consultation group representing youth, women, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, and CSOs
- MCC should conduct annual perception surveys on inclusiveness and responsiveness in decision-making



Strengthen Malé city's role in global governance and transparency

- MCC should regularly report on Malé city's international commitments and participation in global networks
- MCC should build institutional capacity to engage in urban diplomacy and multilateral platforms



Promote Fundamental Freedoms






- MCC should develop a reporting mechanism for journalists and human rights defenders in the city to log threats faced by them in the city
- MCC should create a joint database with Maldives Police to monitor threats and incidents against journalists
- MCC should partner with NGOs to run city-wide awareness campaigns on press freedom, anti-discrimination laws, and reporting mechanisms




















Promote non-discrimination and inclusion






















- MCC should coordinate with HRCM to fully implement HRCM accessibility recommendations across public infrastructure
- MCC should integrate anti-discrimination modules into all city-led awareness programs
- MCC should establish a transparent and responsive mechanism for following up on discrimination complaints

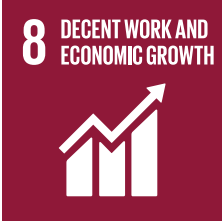























3.4. Colour Coding Matrix based on Progress of the SDG Indicators

















	SDG achieved (100%)
	SDG almost achieved (90–99%)
	Challenges remain (61–89%)
	Significant challenges remain (31–60%)
	Major challenges remain (≤30%)

SDG	Target	Progress
	1.1.1 Percentage below international poverty line	
	1.2.1 Percentage below national poverty line	
	1.2.2 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)	
	1.3.1 Percentage of allowance coverage	
	1.4.1 Percentage of service coverage	
	1.5.4 Presence and status of local DRR strategy, coverage of city risks, and institutional measures	
	1.b.1 Proportion of MCC's spending on sectors benefiting vulnerable groups	
		

	3.1.2 Proportion of births assisted by skilled personnel	
	3.4.2 Suicide rates by gender and age	
	3.5.1 Percentage of people affected by substance use	
	3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate	
	3.8.1 Universal Health Coverage	
	3.b.1 Proportion of children enrolled in school with completed routine immunization	
		

SDG	Target	Progress
	4.1.1 Net primary enrolment rate	
	4.1.2 Completion rate (pre-school, primary education, lower secondary education)	
	4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning	
	4.3.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training	
	4.5.1 Gender Parity Index in schooling	
	4.6.1 Proportion of residents aged 10+ achieving proficiency in Dhivehi literacy (Resident Maldivians), English literacy (Resident Maldivians), and mother tongue literacy (Resident Foreigners)	
	4.a.1 Proportion of schools with access to electricity, internet, computers, disability infrastructure, drinking water, sanitation, and handwashing facilities	
	4.c.1 Proportion of trained teachers in basic and secondary education	
		
	5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15+ in Malé city subjected to intimate partner violence	
	5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18	
	5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex	
	5.5.1 Proportion of Women in MCC	
	5.5.2 Proportion of women in Management in Malé	
	5.b.1 Proportion of individuals in Malé city who own a mobile telephone, by sex	
		
	6.1.1 Population using safe drinking water, Households with access to piped water supply, Basic Municipal water supply coverage, Households with E. coli contamination risk in drinking and source water	
	6.2.1 Access to the sewerage system and toilet facilities	
	6.3.1 Proportion of domestic and industrial wastewater flows safely treated	
		

SDG	Target	Progress
	8.3.1 Proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex	
	8.5.1 Average hourly earnings by gender	
	8.5.2 Unemployment rate in the City, disaggregated by age, sex, disability and citizenship	
	8.6.1 Youth NEET rates by gender	
	8.7.1 Proportion and number of children aged 15-18 years engaged in work	
	8.10 Local Indicator Number of commercial bank branches and ATMs per 100,000 adults	
		
	9.1.2 Passenger volumes handled by maritime transport, categorized by mode of transport	
	9.3.2 Proportion of small-scale industries with a loan or line of credit	
	9.c.1 Percentage of population with access to mobile network coverage	
		
	11.2.1 Local Indicator Proportion of population with convenient access to public transport	
	11.5.1 Number of high-impact disaster events, affected individuals, and deaths/missing	
	11.5.3 Number of disaster-related incidents damaging infrastructure and days of essential service disruptions	
	11.6.1 Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed in controlled facilities	
	11.6.2 Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (PM2.5)	
	11.7.1 Proportion of open public spaces within the total built-up area	
	11.7.2 Local Indicator Proportion of population reporting harassment in public spaces	
	11.b.1 Presence of a local disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategy/ article outlined in the National Policy	
11.b.2 Number of local government agencies and institutions in Malé city actively involved in the implementation of local disaster risk reduction strategies		
		

SDG	Target	Progress
	13.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters	
	13.2 Existence of a localized adaptation and mitigation plan of Malé city	
	13.2 GHG emissions inventory	
	13.2 Climate education in schools	
		
	16.1.3 Proportion of population experiencing violence	
	16.2.3 Number of child sexual violence cases	
	16.3.3 Proportion accessing dispute resolution	
	16.5.1 Percentage of Malé city residents reporting bribery	
	16.7.1 Policy in place to ensure more inclusive and diverse representation in MCC	
	16.8.1 Number of International Organizations in which Malé city is a member or participant	
	16.9.1 Percentage of children under 5 registered with a civil authority	
	16.10.1 Violations against journalists, media personnel, trade unionists, and human rights advocates	
		





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4. LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND (LNOB)



Leaving no one behind (LNOB) is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has developed the LNOB Platform to support member States in identifying the groups that are left furthest behind in SDG indicators. The Platform is based on a supervised machine learning algorithm that analyzes nationally representative household surveys and disaggregates SDG indicators. For the VLR of Malé city, ESCAP analyzed 8 indicators using the 2022 Census. The analysis focuses only on the local Maldivian population living in Malé city including Hulhule, Hulhumale and Vilimale.



Figure 40 below provides an overview of inequality in eight indicators linked to several SDGs. The first four indicators on the left represent opportunities, while the remaining indicators on the left represent barriers. For opportunities, the ideal situation is that everyone (100%) has access, while the ideal situation for barriers is that nobody (0%) experiences them. Anchored around the average for all of Malé city (dark gray bar), Figure 40 presents group averages for the furthest behind (orange bar) and the furthest ahead (blue bar) individuals and households. The

distance between the two groups signals the extent of inequality of opportunity. For instance, the gap is smallest in unemployment but largest in labour force participation.

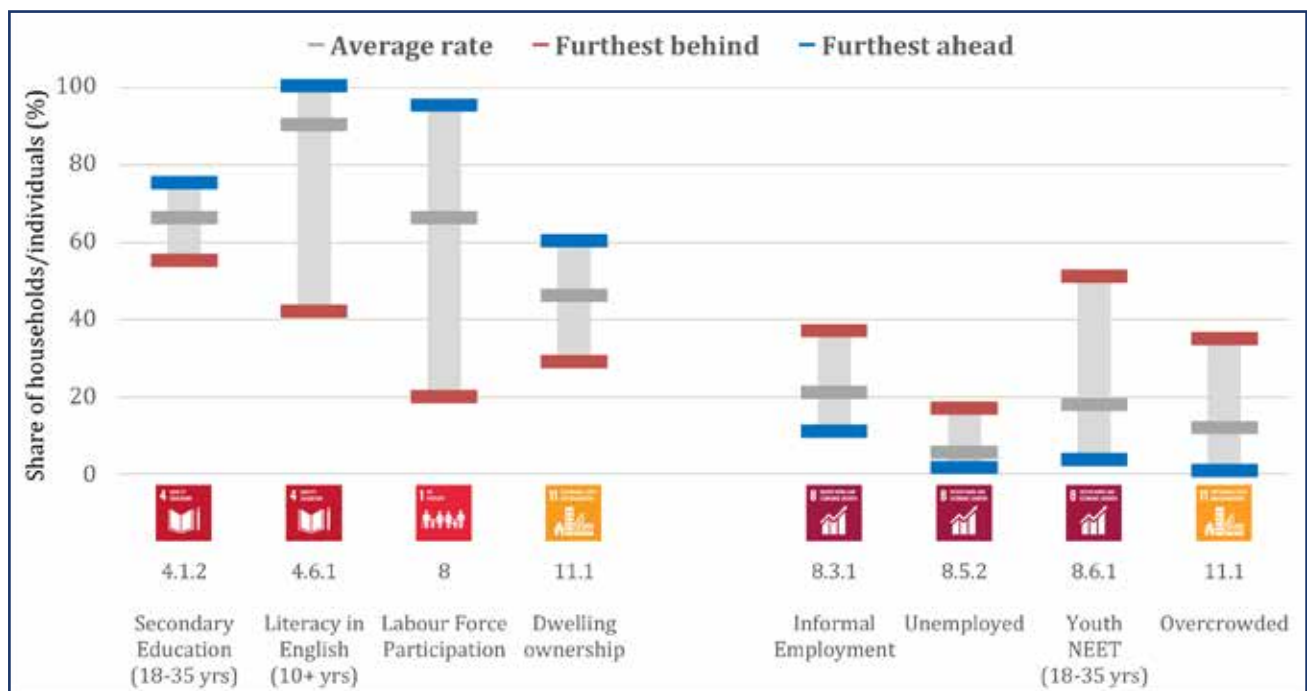


Figure 40: Gaps between furthest behind and furthest ahead groups in opportunities in Malé city (2022)

Note: ESCAP calculations based on the 2022 Census of the Maldives. All indicators are measured at individual level except for the last indicator “overcrowded” and “dwelling ownership” which are analyzed at the household level.

Among the opportunity indicators, 66 per cent of youth aged 18-35 completed at least secondary education in Malé city. Among the furthest behind group, however, only 55 per cent completed at least secondary education. Among the furthest ahead group, 75 per cent completed secondary education. The gap between the two groups is 20 percentage points. The next section will unveil the intersection of circumstances that represent these two groups.

Since everyone in Malé city are literate, the analysis focused on literacy in English. Ninety per cent of individuals in Malé city aged 10 and above are literate in English but the gap between the furthest behind and the furthest ahead is rather wide at 58 percentage points. The largest gap overall is in labour force participation in Malé city, reaching 75 percentage points. About 46 per cent of the households own their dwellings in Malé city. Twenty-nine per cent of the furthest behind own their dwelling, compared to 60 per cent among the furthest ahead.

Among the barrier indicators, inequality is highest in youth not in education, employment or training (NEET). While 51 per cent of the furthest behind youth are in NEET, compared to less than 4 per cent of the furthest ahead youth are in NEET. As noted earlier, the gap in unemployment is relatively small, but the rate is ten times higher among the furthest behind (17%) than the furthest ahead (1.7%) in Malé city. On average 21% of the employed Maldivians are in informal employment. This prevalence increases to 37% among the furthest behind but falls to 11% among the furthest ahead. While almost no household among the furthest ahead live in overcrowded dwellings, over one-third of the furthest behind do so.

Who are the furthest behind?

The LNOB algorithm identifies the furthest behind and the furthest ahead groups based on the intersection of circumstances that leave people behind. These circumstances may occur at the individual level, such as age, gender, disability, nationality and education, or at the household level such as ward of residence, wealth or number of children. [Table 2](#) highlights the furthest behind groups and presents the intersection of circumstances that identify them in each SDG indicator elaborated earlier.

Overall, different groups are left behind in different indicators. In secondary education completion among youth, males living in poorer households are left furthest behind. The furthest ahead group consist of females without any disability and living in richer households. In the case of English literacy, the furthest behind are older Maldivians (aged 50 and above) with no formal education, while the furthest ahead are younger Maldivians (aged 15–35) who are enrolled in or have completed at least secondary education.

In employment-related indicators, there are gender gaps in labour force participation and youth not in education, employment or training. While women with less than secondary education are left behind in labour force participation, almost all men aged 25+ with tertiary education and living in Vilimale, Hulhule or Hulhumale participate in the labour force. Tertiary education is a critical factor: labour force participation rate reaches 74 per cent among women with tertiary education compared to less than 40 percent among women without it. In the case of NEET, women aged 32-35 and with less than tertiary education are the furthest behind, while almost none of the men in the same age and educational group are in NEET. Unemployment affects Maldivian youth aged 15-24 the most, especially if they are living in Vilimale and Hulhumale. Women aged 25+ are also at a disadvantage in unemployment, especially if they do not have tertiary education. Informal employment is the highest among lower educated Maldivians. Informal employment is lowest among tertiary educated men with no disability who live in relatively richer households in Hulhumale and Hulhule.

For household-level indicators, overcrowding is most prevalent among households with three or more children—over one-third of these households live in overcrowded dwellings. By contrast, childless households residing in Vilimale or Hulhumale are the least likely to face overcrowding. In the case of dwelling ownership, the furthest behind are poorer Maldivians who have secondary or tertiary education and at least one child in the household. Less than one third own their dwelling. The furthest ahead group consists of households with two or more children living in Vilimale or Hulhumale, with male headed households in this group are much more likely to own their dwellings than female headed households.

The LNOB analysis has not been conducted for a range of other SDG indicators such as access to basic drinking water, basic sanitation, electricity, clean fuels for cooking, mobile phone ownership and internet usage because no household was found to be left behind in these indicators.

Table 2: Shared circumstances of furthest behind and furthest ahead groups by indicators

Indicator	Furthest Behind										Furthest Ahead											
	Furthest Behind	Average	Furthest Ahead	Wealth	Ward	Education	Sex	Age	Disability	Nationality	Number of Children	FB Size	Wealth	Ward	Education	Sex	Age	Disability	Nationality	Number of Children	FB Size	Reference Population
Completed secondary education or more (18-35)	21	51	75	Bottom 40	Hulhumaale		-	-	-	Foreigner		7%	Top 60	Malé and Hulhule		Female	-	-	Maldivian		14%	86,195
Literacy in English (10+)	37	78.3	99	-	-	No education	-	33+	-	Foreigner			-	-	Secondary or Tertiary	-	<35	No	Maldivian		35%	187,663
Labour Force Participation	30	76	100	-	-	Less than secondary education	Female	-	-	-		7%	-	-	-	Male	25+	No	Foreigner		23%	173,041
Unemployment	13	3.5	0	-	-	-	-	15-24	-	Maldivian		10%	-	-	-	-	-	-	Foreigner		27%	130,976
Youth NEET (18-35)	34	12	0	-	-	-	Female	33-35	-	-		6%	-	-	-	Male			Foreigner		33%	86,195
Overcrowded	35	12	1.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 or more	15%	Top 60	-	-	-	-	-	-	No children	19%	37,835
Dwelling Owned	11	43	63	-	-	-	-	-	-	Foreigner		8%	-	Hulhumaale	-	Female	-	-	Maldivian	2 or more	5%	37,835
Informal Employment	92	46	12	Bottom 40	Hulhumaale	-	-	-	-	Foreigner		6%	-	Hulhumaale, Vilimaale and Hulhule	Male	-	-	Maldivian		6%	126,386	



SHAHEEDH HUSSAIN ADAM BUILDING





5. POLICY AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT



The achievement of the SDGs in Malé city depends on effective partnerships across government levels, private sector actors, and civil society as advocated by **SDG 17**. While **SDG 17** has a number of indicators that are to be monitored at the national level, it promotes partnerships that can support local action as well. Current collaborations between the MCC and national agencies on projects like waste management and transport infrastructure demonstrate both the potential and challenges of multi-stakeholder approaches. International partnerships have been crucial for climate adaptation projects, including coastal protection and resilient urban design. However, more systematic engagement with local communities and businesses is needed to address persistent gaps in the achievement of the SDGs. As the political and economic centre of the country, Malé city is well positioned to foster innovative partnerships that can benefit both urban and rural populations across the Maldives.



The achievement of the SDGs in Malé city is deeply connected to the legal, policy and institutional frameworks that affect localisation of the SDGs, and partnerships that enable and support implementation at the local level. As the political, economic, and administrative hub of the Maldives, Malé city operates within a complex governance landscape, with multiple sectors that fall under the shared responsibility of national and local governments. This section provides suggestions for strengthening the enabling environment in Malé city to localize and deliver on the SDGs.

5.1. Partnership with National Government on SDG Implementation

Malé city's VLR is closely aligned with the Maldives' national SDG framework and commitments. The analysis conducted for this report shows that across the SDGs assessed, Malé city's local government initiatives are mostly aligned with national-level goals and targets, though implementation is uneven and progress varies significantly across sectors.

The Council has structured its development efforts around the 2030 Agenda, with linkages evident between its Strategic Plan and national priorities. The VLR process confirms that for key goals like SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 8, and SDG 11 Malé City Council's interventions are directly contributing to national indicators.

- **SDG 3** and **SDG 4** show strong alignment, with Malé city hosting the majority of the country's health and education infrastructure. The concentration of these services has led to urban stress and congestion, and Malé city needs integrated urban planning solutions to address these challenges.
- **SDG 8** and **SDG 9** are moderately aligned. Malé city acts as the engine of the national economy, but formal employment creation and infrastructure investment are still nationally driven, highlighting the need for enhanced local fiscal autonomy and targeted national investment in Malé city's urban services.
- **SDG 11** and **SDG 13** are also moderately aligned, but limited local authority over land use and housing development often handled by national agencies impedes Malé city's capacity to fully localize climate and urban resilience targets.
- Goals such as **SDG 1** and **SDG 5** are partially aligned; national policies exist, but the Council lacks the mandate or financial resources to address structural issues like affordable housing, although it takes certain steps towards social protection or gender-responsive development through the allowances for women and the elderly.

These findings point to a critical need for stronger vertical integration, where national strategies are systematically localized and resourced. Malé City Council's limited authority over critical policy areas such as housing, energy, waste management, and public transport—despite being directly responsible for service delivery and frontline engagement with communities. This disconnect reveals a structural governance gap that constrains the city's capacity to act on shared priorities, even when local ambitions align closely with national goals.

This VLR showed that the absence of formalized coordination mechanisms, such as joint planning frameworks, or shared data systems has hindered Malé City Council's ability to align its programs with national SDG targets. The Council faced repeated challenges in accessing timely and disaggregated national data, underscoring the systemic disconnect in data sharing between local and national levels. The lack of devolved authority in sectors like housing or transport further restricts the city's ability to design and implement context-specific solutions.

By investing in structured local-national partnerships, aligning financing flows, and enabling effective data sharing between levels of government, the government can unlock the full potential of cities like Malé city as strategic actors in delivering the 2030 Agenda.

5.2. Challenges for Sustainability Efforts in Malé City

MCC faces several intersecting challenges that impact urban sustainable development in the city. The high density of the city, large population of migrants, informality, limited access to basic urban services, and climate vulnerability make sustainable urban development a complex problem, particularly when interconnected with institutional challenges.

The primary challenges that the city faces, in the context of sustainable urban development and the achievement of the SDGs, are outlined below:



5.2.1. Regulatory and Institutional Challenges

MCC operates within a decentralization framework that grants local governments legal authority but in practice leaves many core urban functions under the control of national agencies or state-owned enterprises. Critical urban functions in Hulhumale is managed through the Housing Development Corporation (HDC), transport across the city by the Maldives Transport and Contracting Company (MTCC), and waste management by the Waste Management Corporation (WAMCO). While these entities play an important role in service provision, their overlapping mandates with the Council reduce MCC's ability to lead integrated urban development and weaken accountability to citizens. The result is a fragmented governance landscape in which responsibilities are blurred, and coordinated planning is difficult to achieve.

The dynamics of waste management are a good example. Although WAMCO is formally responsible for disposal services, its pricing structure places institutional users at fee levels several times higher than those faced by households. This has led to low compliance by offices and enterprises, with bulk waste—such as furniture and appliances—often abandoned in public spaces. In practice, it is Malé City Council that must respond, absorbing the financial and operational burden of clearing these materials without having the authority to shape policy or cost recovery mechanisms. This illustrates how national–local overlaps in responsibility can create operational pressures for the Council while leaving accountability diffuse.

These governance constraints are compounded by limited collaboration, both between MCC and national agencies and within the Council itself. Internal departments frequently work in silos, with little joint planning or shared monitoring, resulting in inefficiencies and duplication of effort. The Council also lacks an institutional mechanism for mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals. No staff are dedicated to SDG coordination, and integration of targets into departmental plans remains inconsistent. Monitoring of progress is ad hoc, limiting the Council's ability to track outcomes or make evidence-based budget and policy decisions.

The challenges faced by Malé city are symptomatic of broader systemic issues in the decentralization framework. Fiscal devolution remains incomplete, with councils heavily reliant on annual central transfers. Predictable, formula-based grants do not work, and local borrowing powers, though permitted in law, are tightly constrained. This leaves

councils with little scope for long-term investment planning. Administrative arrangements further complicate matters: councillors and administrative staff are often subject to different lines of accountability, weakening local decision-making. Gaps in capacity particularly in financial management, procurement, monitoring, and environmental and social safeguards remain a critical constraint across councils.

For Malé city, these systemic issues are especially acute. The city carries the most complex service delivery responsibilities in the country but must operate within the same fiscal and institutional framework as much smaller island councils. Without clearer mandates, stronger inter-agency coordination, and additional technical and human capacity, MCC cannot fully meet the demands of its urban population.

Looking ahead, strengthening Malé city's role within the decentralization system will require reforms at two levels. At the city level, the Council should establish structured agreements with national agencies and SOEs, improve inter-departmental coordination, and invest in dedicated capacity for SDG integration and monitoring. At the national level, reforms to fiscal transfers, local government financing, and mandate clarity are needed to ensure that decentralization enables rather than constrains sustainable urban governance. Addressing these gaps will be critical if Malé city is to deliver coherent, accountable, and resilient development in line with national commitments and the 2030 Agenda.

5.2.2. Financial Challenges

MCC continues to operate within the broader fiscal framework set by the national government, which limits the Council's autonomy over revenue generation and capital investment. While central transfers provide the bulk of its budget, these funds are often earmarked for recurrent expenditure and project-specific initiatives. This structure restricts MCC's ability to commit resources to long-term priorities such as climate resilience, institutional strengthening, and sustained social programming. The reliance on project-based financing also makes it difficult to build predictable multi-year plans or invest consistently in municipal staffing and capacity.

At the same time, MCC occupies a unique position among local councils. It receives the largest allocation of national resources, and it has begun to expand its fiscal space through own-source revenues such as land rents, service fees, and property management. Importantly, MCC is also among the few councils designing projects with the potential to leverage development finance and private investment. This dual advantage—substantial government transfers combined with opportunities to crowd in additional resources—positions MCC to use its budget more strategically in advancing the SDGs.

To make full use of this potential, stronger planning and budgeting practices are essential. In particular, MCC should:

- Align its budget framework more deliberately with the SDG priorities identified in this VLR, ensuring that allocations respond to evidence of service and infrastructure gaps.
- Use discretionary budget lines to support forward-looking, multi-year initiatives such as climate adaptation, digital transformation, and municipal capacity building—areas that are often underfunded in short-term project cycles.
- Develop and package priority projects in ways that can mobilize co-financing from development partners and private investors, particularly in housing, sustainable transport, and green public spaces.

By shifting from a primarily expenditure-oriented approach to one focused on investment planning and outcomes, MCC can translate its comparatively larger resource base into tangible progress for residents. More importantly, it can set a precedent for how local governments in the Maldives can align municipal finance with national commitments and global development agendas.

5.2.3. Human Resource Challenges

MCC faces human resource shortages in key technical areas such as data management, urban planning, climate adaptation, gender responsive development and digital services. The city is already facing dense population growth with pressure on housing, sanitation, transport, education, and healthcare systems. In particular, solid waste disposal, road congestion, and affordable housing remain pressing issues, and the city has identified these as their priority issues in their Strategic Action Plan. All these issues will be further challenged by growing climate risks in future, and a well prepared municipal staff is essential to take care of these growing challenges. Sea-level rise, recurrent flooding, saltwater intrusion, and the heat island effect threaten Malé city's liveability. Lack of technical capacity of municipal officials to assess risks to urban systems and their impacts on social and economic development can be a major deterrent for Malé city's sustainable development plans. Skill shortages in data analysis, GIS, climate risk modeling, financial planning and monitoring and evaluation are critical to sustainable development in Malé city. MCC faces high staff turnover and staff recruitment does not always respond to the local technical needs.

The City Council has no internal training plan. One of the reasons for this is inadequate budget allocation, with no dedicated line items for staff training on technical or management issues. Such limited budgets can also mean that municipal staff are not able to use national or international training opportunities. Discussions during the VLR process have revealed that both municipal staff and civil society have a limited understanding of SDGs and the means of integrating them to municipal development plans or projects.

5.2.4. Data and Knowledge Management systems

There are limited institutional systems for monitoring, evaluation, and data management in the MCC, although it has a statistician, which can greatly facilitate data management. Most departments lack digital data repositories, and rely on manual systems. In case of staff turnovers, this method leads to loss of institutional memory. This hampers evidence-based policymaking and limits the Council's ability to track progress and linkages to SDGs effectively. Projects that are undertaken by MCC do not have any indicators that correspond to SDGs, that can facilitate the data collection for SDG progress monitoring. Such a system can help MCC to regularly assess and report their progress. During the VLR development process, it was observed that disaggregated and reliable data is generally difficult to obtain. Among the different sectors analysed for the VLR report, only the waste management and infrastructure sectors have some disaggregated data that is locally available. The Maldives Bureau of Statistics maintains a certain level of disaggregated data. However, it was not common for MCC to access and use such data. A fire incident in 2024 led to the loss of a huge amount of data and information maintained in hard format in MCC, stressing the need for the Council to move towards software based data management systems.

5.3. Localising the SDGs in Malé City

In order to implement the SDGs at the local level, it is essential for MCC to institutionalise them in their development plans and internal policies. As of now, there is no dedicated policy for SDG integration in Malé city. However, there are several existing policies of MCC that can help to align the city's development with the SDGs.

Since 2010, the city has developed Community Development Plans (CDPs) which have become a key instrument for planning and implementing development projects in Malé city in consultation with community members to ensure that they reflect local priorities and requirements. These CDPs directly support the achievement of the SDG 11 and also promote public engagement and ownership in the city's development.

The Digital Malé Initiative began in 2021 as part of the Strategic Action Plan, and aims to introduce modern digital services for residents, including a centralized information portal and 24-hour call centre. Since there is little manufacturing and industrial development in Malé city, this initiative is supporting the fintech economy, catering to SDG 9.

In 2021, the Clean Roads Project was started with an aim to enhance urban cleanliness and waste management through public cooperation by the MCC. This project supports the SDG 11 in the city, working for a cleaner Malé city. Similarly, the Affluent Living Program that was started in 2021, focuses on providing employment opportunities for residents, reducing reliance on foreign workers, and enhancing livelihoods. This strongly supports SDG 8. The Beautiful Malé City Initiative includes urban beautification projects such as park renovations, tree planting, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, again catering to the SDG 11 and SDG 13.

However, one of the most important policies developed under the Strategic Action Plan is the Efficient Administration Policy that is promoting revised structures and oversight committees for better governance. These policies and initiatives demonstrate MCC’s commitment to aligning local governance with the global SDG framework, addressing various aspects of sustainable urban development, economic growth, and improved governance.

5.4. MCC’s Financial Strategy for Achieving SDG Targets

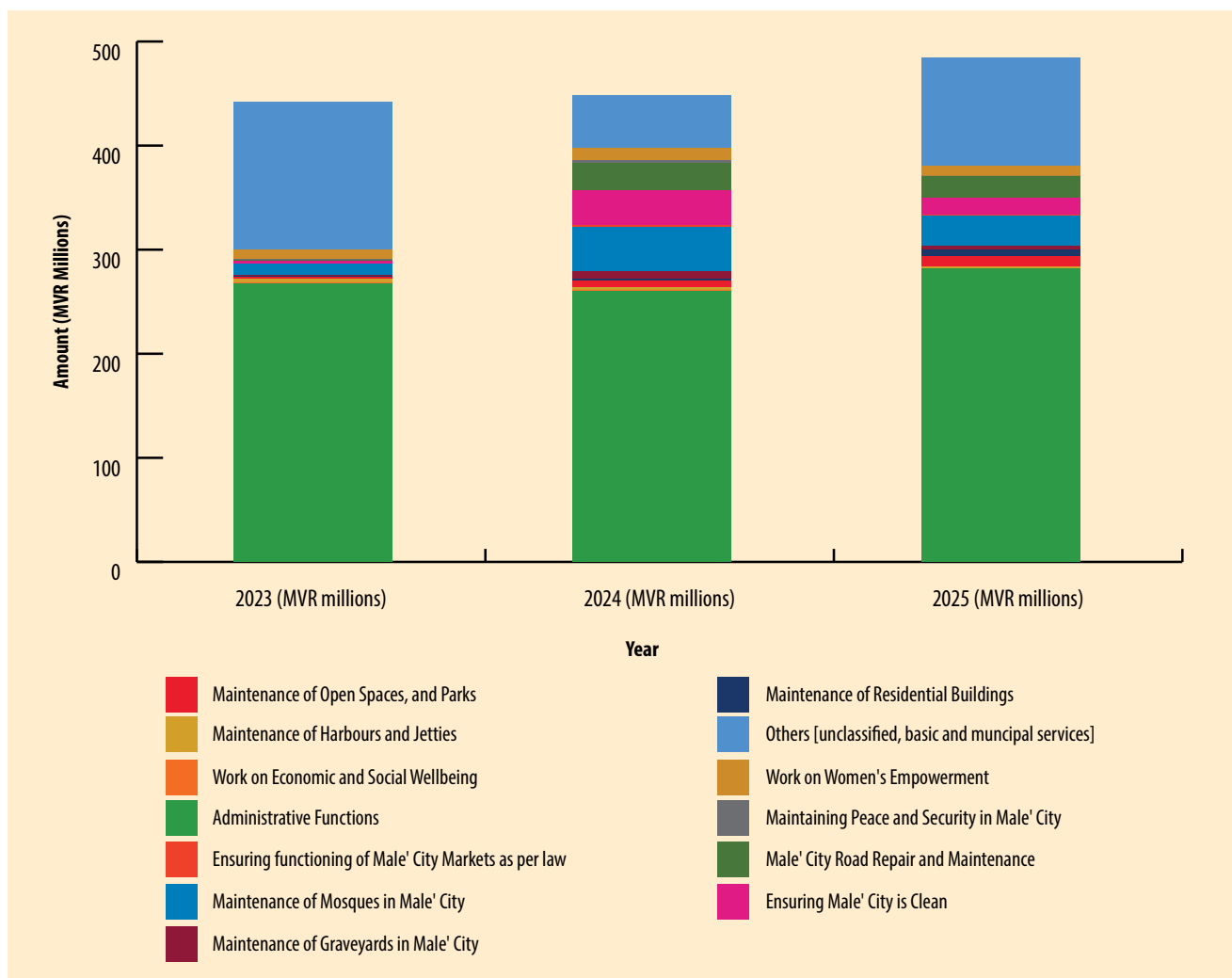


Figure 41: Malé City Council Budget Composition by Year (2023-2025)

MCC's budget allocations from 2023 to 2025 reveal shifting priorities in urban governance, service delivery, and infrastructure investment. The breakdown across key sectors, Administrative Functions, Economic and Social Well Being, Harbours and Jetties, Open Spaces and Parks, and Residential Buildings reflects both institutional continuity and emerging commitments to livability and resilience. These trends carry implications for the city's alignment with the SDGs, particularly in a context of high population density, climate vulnerability, and infrastructure strain.

Administrative Functions remain the dominant expenditure, absorbing MVR 267 million in 2023, dipping slightly in 2024, then rebounding to MVR 284 million in 2025. This sustained investment underscores the Council's emphasis on institutional stability, a prerequisite for effective service delivery and governance. From an SDG perspective, this aligns with SDG 16, reinforcing the need for capable local governance structures to manage urban challenges.

However, the modest and fluctuating allocations for Work on Economic and Social Wellbeing, ranging from MVR 86,000 in 2024 to MVR 692,000 in 2025, suggest tentative engagement in socio-economic programming. While these funds could support SDG 1, SDG 8, and SDG 10, their limited scale raises questions about impact. If this is a strategic priority, future budgets may need to integrate more robust social protection or livelihood initiatives, possibly through partnerships with central government or development actors.

The steady decline in Maintenance of Harbours and Jetties from MVR 3.8 million in 2023 to MVR 1.1 million in 2025 could reflect completed projects or a deprioritization of maritime infrastructure. Given Malé city's reliance on marine transport, this trend warrants scrutiny, as underinvestment may eventually strain connectivity and trade, undermining SDG 9 and SDG 11. If this decline is due to shifting priorities rather than reduced need, supplementary funding from national or regional sources may be necessary to maintain critical port functions.

Conversely, Maintenance of Open Spaces and Parks sees a sharp increase from MVR 2 million in 2023 to over MVR 10 million in 2025. This signals a growing recognition of green spaces as essential urban infrastructure, particularly in a congested city where recreation and climate resilience are pressing concerns. The trend strongly supports SDG 11, SDG 13, and SDG 3, as accessible public spaces contribute to livability, mental health, and heat mitigation. Moving forward, ensuring these spaces are equitably distributed and climate-adaptive will be key.

The more than threefold increase in the budget for Maintenance of Residential Buildings highlights a focus on improving living conditions, a critical need in a city facing severe space constraints and aging infrastructure. This aligns closely with SDG 11. However, given Malé city's housing pressures, the Council may need to complement physical maintenance with broader housing policies, such as zoning reforms or partnerships for affordable housing development.

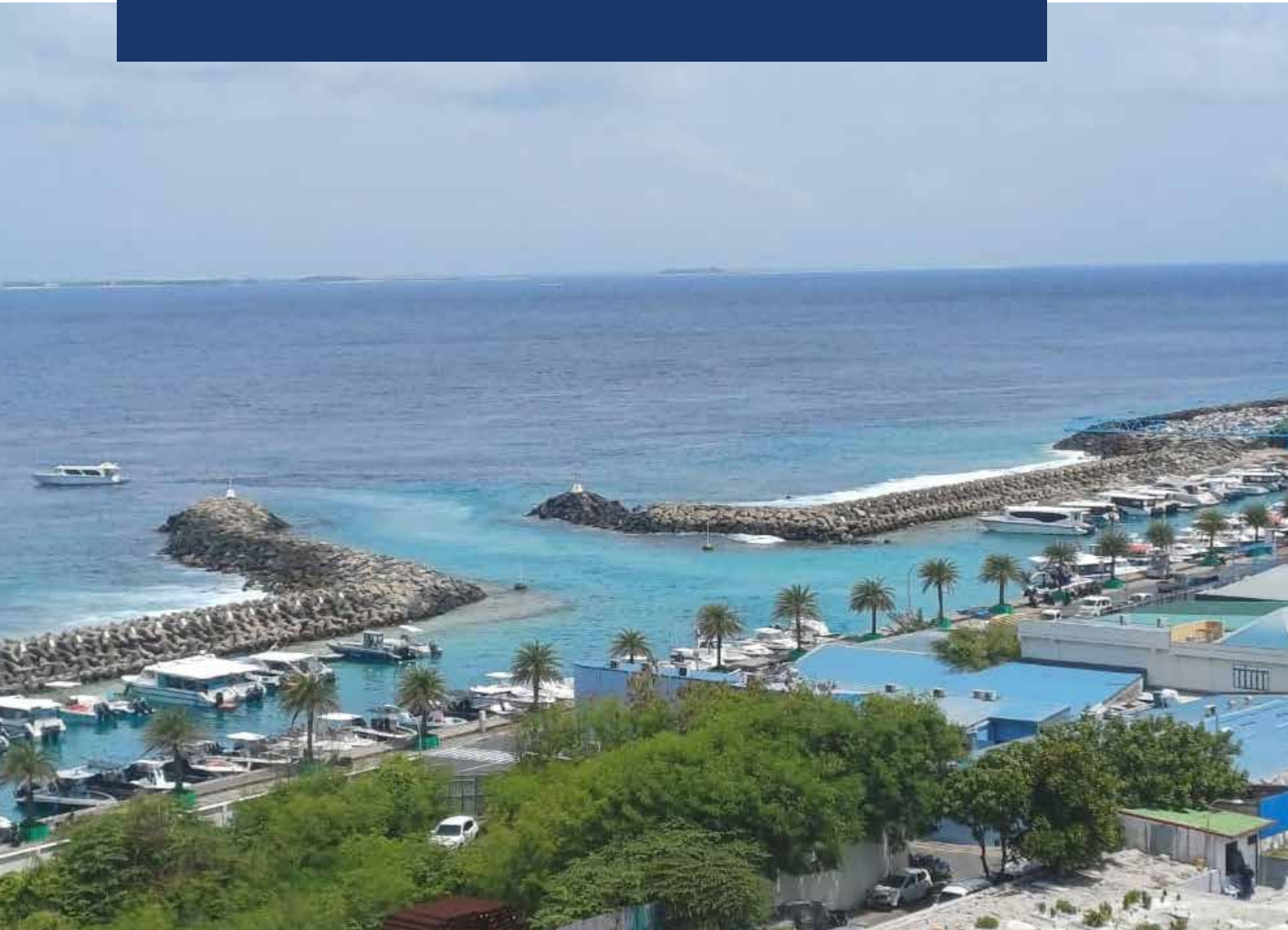
The MCC's budget demonstrates a balancing act between maintaining core functions and addressing emerging urban needs. The shifts toward public spaces and housing are positive, but sustaining progress will require more deliberate linkages to national SDG frameworks and inclusive development strategies.



6. WAY FORWARD



The VLR of Malé city has provided an assessment of the **SDGs 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13** and **16**, evaluating all relevant targets and indicators. This assessment has revealed that while Malé city is undertaking multiple projects and actions that are supporting these SDGs and addressing their targets and indicators, there are still gaps due to regulatory, technical, financial and institutional challenges. There are limited supportive policies and regulations that encourage the adoption of SDGs and their assessment through the work of MCC, and the Council also lacks technically qualified staff, financial resources and institutional data management mechanisms that can support the achievement of the SDGs for the city.



Malé city is faring relatively well on **SDG 1**, with poverty levels remaining very low, supported by national social security measures. The largest share of spending is on health, since every citizen is covered under the Asaandha health insurance scheme. Basic services such as education, health care, water and sanitation facilities, and electricity, are widely available although the local DRR action plan is yet to be finalised and adopted formally.

In case of **SDG 3**, basic healthcare is relatively well established with 82.8% vaccine coverage, a wide network of health facilities and an adequate number of healthcare workers. However, mental health services remain underdeveloped.

Substance abuse is quite common in Malé city, and there are limited facilities for rehabilitation of addicts. Due to the stigma associated with substance abuse, accurate data on addiction and recovery is not available at the city level. Smoking is also common in Malé city, with public campaigns yielding little results despite the presence of strong regulations.

Under **SDG 4**, the city shows good performance with high levels of school enrolment, strong gender parity, and most schools having good basic facilities. Most schools have disability-friendly facilities, and infrastructure. Teachers receive training the quality of education is generally high.

SDG 5 analysis has shown that there are well developed policies on gender equality and prevention of discrimination and for women's safety, but implementation is limited by socio-cultural barriers. Violence against women is present and underreported due to stigma. Women continue to spend more time on unpaid care work. Although a 33% quota ensures women's presence in politics, this does not necessarily translate into greater influence in decision-making.

The analysis of **SDG 8** shows that there is limited information on GDP growth rate at the city level, although Malé city contributes a significant portion to the national GDP, which was 5.1% in 2024, driven mainly by tourism. Access to banking services is good in Malé city. There is a small percentage of population that is employed informally; more women than men are informally employed. Gender disparities persist, with women earning almost 20 MVR less than men per hour, facing higher unemployment, and being more likely to be classified as youth not in education, employment, or training. Monitoring of child labour is weak and implementation of legal provisions remain questionable.

With regard to **SDG 9**, passenger transport, particularly ferries, is well recorded, but there is little information about freight which is largely managed by the private sector. There are also a number of small scale industries that are mostly homebased, and contribute to the local economy. There is also widespread access to mobile services, which is important for the growing fintech economy in the city.

SDG 6 analysis shows excellent access to water supply systems, though the supply is expensive because of dependence on desalination plants. **SDG 11** analysis shows that there is significant overcrowding particularly in rented accommodations, leading to a housing shortage in the city, but there are good public transport systems with 25% of the ridership availing free or concessional services for disabled, elderly or children. The Malé Disaster Management Plan shows extensive records of damage and loss of life and property due to different disasters, but real time monitoring at the city level is lacking. Average air quality is poor with PM 2.5 levels above safe thresholds mainly due to pollutants from overseas, and local vehicular emissions. Green cover in the city is limited, but it is accessible to most residents since the city is very small in area. In terms of **SDG 13**, Malé city is highly vulnerable to climate-related risks, including sea-level rise, flooding, and urban heat island effects, but a dedicated climate action plan has yet to be developed.

Regarding **SDG 16**, data shows that there is gang related violence, drug abuse and corruption in Malé city.

The VLR for Malé city has identified the existing sustainable development strategies, indicators, and action plans to localise the SDGs. Malé city is interested in advancing sustainable development in different aspects of the city including quality of life, urban development and urban governance, with a vision of becoming a well managed city with a happy and prosperous community. The VLR assessment has helped to identify a few recommendations for the city to focus on as the means of implementation of the SDGs in Malé city.

6.1. Policy Recommendations

Malé City Council’s first VLR highlights that while progress is being made across several SDGs, gaps remain due to institutional, financial, and regulatory challenges. Moving forward, the Council should focus on a set of strategic priorities that cut across the SDGs and can guide the development and implementation of the 2026–2030 Strategic Action Plan.

 <p>Promote inclusive, people-centred urban planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen mechanisms for community participation, including youth, women, migrants, and persons with disabilities, in planning processes. Institutionalise participatory tools such as neighbourhood consultations and citizen scorecards. <p>Indicative measure: proportion of new municipal projects developed with documented citizen input.</p>
 <p>Strengthen data systems and evidence-based decision-making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a municipal data management unit to collect, analyze, and publish disaggregated data for SDG monitoring. Improve data-sharing agreements with national agencies and SOEs. <p>Indicative measure: annual SDG progress report with at least 70% of indicators supported by disaggregated data.</p>
 <p>Enhance climate resilience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate climate risk screening into all major infrastructure and housing projects. Prioritize investments in drainage, coastal protection, and renewable energy. <p>Indicative measure: percentage of capital projects with climate risk assessments completed.</p>
 <p>Expand green, open, and recreational spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue scaling up park rehabilitation, urban greening, and tree-planting initiatives. Promote walkable and pedestrian-friendly streets through traffic calming and streetscaping. <p>Indicative measure: square meters of green space per capita in Malé city.</p>
 <p>Drive digital transformation and smart governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digitize key municipal services (licenses, permits, payments, grievance redressal). Build staff capacity for digital tools and data-driven planning. <p>Indicative measure: percentage of core municipal services available online.</p>
 <p>Institutional strengthening and capacity building</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digitize key municipal services (licenses, permits, payments, grievance redressal). Build staff capacity for digital tools and data-driven planning. <p>Indicative measure: percentage of core municipal services available online.</p>

6.2. Technical Recommendations

The VLR process has not only helped MCC take stock of progress on the SDGs but also highlighted critical capacity gaps that must be addressed to move from planning to sustained implementation.

Malé city must strengthen its data management systems to maintain data on SDGs so that the next VLR can be produced more efficiently, with little or no external assistance. The city council also needs to enhance the technical capacity of its staff to undertake VLRs regularly.

A digital data management system can greatly facilitate this process, providing reliable data for decision making for development plans of Malé city. This will ensure that Malé city's development is both evidence based and sustainable, supported by effective monitoring of ongoing projects.

Technical trainings for city council staff on urban resilience, climate resilience, inclusive service delivery and development will support the achievement of the SDG targets. Building staff capacities in GIS, database management, and digital M&E platforms will be particularly important in formulating future VLRs.

Malé city will establish an SDG Cell for coordination and monitoring, with a dedicated taskforce to coordinate planning, reporting, and stakeholder engagement across departments. The digital data management system will be used to track the SDG indicators in alignment with national systems and VNR frameworks and the Strategic Goal of Malé City Council. The City Council will equip the cell with full-time staff trained in results-based management and data visualization.



6.3. Public Engagement

Currently, there is no formalized consultation process integrated within MCC's development planning process. The SDG Cell will ensure that there is continued stakeholder engagement beyond the VLR process.

While MCC has made efforts to engage stakeholders during the VLR, including Ministries, youth groups, and NGOs, ongoing engagement mechanisms are not institutionalized. Cross-sector partnerships remain ad hoc rather than systematized into Council workflows.

The SDG Cell will create a platform for engaging with the local communities, civil society and other government agencies that are engaged in various aspects of Malé city's development process. Regular consultations will be held to provide updates on the progress of SDGs and also for the City Council to gather inputs on the development projects of MCC that have been undertaken or are planned.

6.4. Financial Recommendations

The financial assessment of MCC has revealed that there is no dedicated budget for SDG implementation. Training finance teams in SDG tagging and results-based budgeting techniques will be critical to ensure that resources are allocated based on evidence and identified gaps.

It is important for the finance teams to allocate budgets to poorly performing indicators of SDGs, based on data from the digital data management system for SDG monitoring so that budget allocation is fair and evidence based. It is also essential for the finance teams to understand the budget spent on different sectors at the national level, so that allocation of local budgets can complement, rather than duplicate, national investments and ensure that unfunded priorities are addressed.

An important aspect in Malé city is the shared governance system with national agencies as well as other public parties. The City Council has identified the need for collaboration and coordination with these agencies for better development of the city. It is envisaged that setting up institutional processes as well as the digital data management systems with trained staff in the SDG Cell would greatly facilitate MCC to undertake developmental activities. These include beautification of the city, road and housing development, basic services, health and education and local economic growth in a sustainable and inclusive manner that effectively leaves no one behind in their pursuit of a happy and prosperous life.



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