

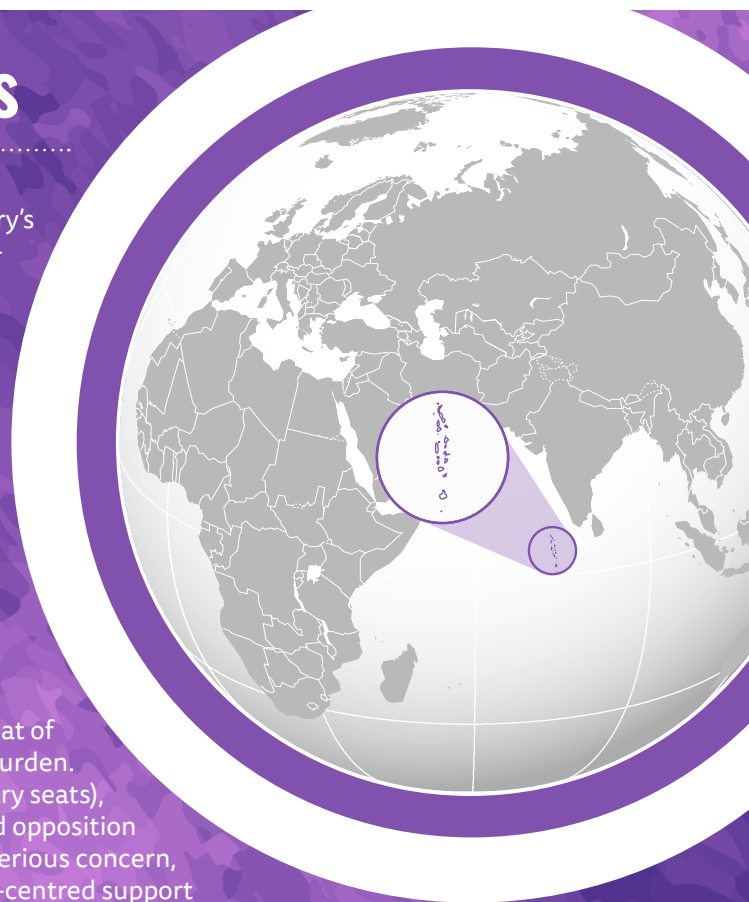
The Republic of Maldives

Women play critical yet often under-recognised roles in the Maldives' fisheries sector, particularly in relation to the country's dominant tuna industry. Although fishing itself remains male-dominated, women contribute actively across value chains, processing traditional products like *rihaakuru* (fish paste) and *hikkimaas* (dried tuna), trading and marketing fish, and engaging in informal nearshore harvesting. The extent of women's participation and their roles in fisheries vary across the archipelago, shaped by local socio-economic factors, industry presence, and infrastructure. Industrialisation of the tuna sector has reduced women's participation in some areas, while structural barriers, including limited market information and access to financial support, continue to constrain their economic opportunities and visibility.

Despite constitutional guarantees of gender equality and gender parity in basic education, women continue to face substantial barriers: a labour force participation that is half that of men, a 26% gender pay gap, and twice the unpaid care work burden. Political representation remains limited (3.2% of parliamentary seats), with women facing gendered scrutiny, online harassment, and opposition from conservative groups. Gender-based violence remains a serious concern, with implementation gaps in protective legislation and urban-centred support services limiting access to justice, particularly for rural and migrant women.

Promising initiatives offer pathways forward, including explicit gender commitments in the 2019 *Fisheries Act*, training opportunities and innovations that engage women and girls, and growing civil society and youth mobilization that signal opportunities for gender-responsive change.

This fact sheet provides an overview of the role of seafood production in the Maldives, with a focus on gender dimensions, highlighting opportunities to strengthen gender equity and women's empowerment in the sector and beyond. It is part of a series meant to offer development agency employees, government agencies, civil society groups, funders, and researchers with a snapshot of gender and fisheries to inform the planning and delivery of relevant activities these actors might be involved in or are in the process of developing.



December, 2025

Fisheries production

National data

Tuna fishing forms the backbone of the Maldives' fisheries sector, central to its economy, culture, and food security. The Maldives tuna fishery is dominated by pole-and-line fishing, a traditional method accounting for ~75–80% of the country's total tuna landings.^{1,2} Between 2021 and 2023, average annual pole-and-line catches were 135,143 tonnes—about 92% of which were skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), followed primarily by yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*), with small amounts of bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*) and other pelagic species.³ This fishery represents around one-fifth (21%) of all pole-and-line caught tuna in the world.⁴ Notably, the

“Local knowledge and observational evidence strongly suggests that several reef fish species like snappers, groupers, emperors, and jacks are heavily exploited.”

Maldives skipjack pole-and-line fishery became the first Indian Ocean tuna fishery to achieve Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification in 2012.⁵ Handline fishing contributed an average of 17,779 tonnes annually over the same period, with yellowfin tuna comprising 99% of the catch.³

Japanese longliners operated in the Maldives under a joint venture programme until 2010, when the government suspended foreign fishing licenses² in an effort to prioritise local fishing rights and support local traditional pole-and-line fishing.

Reef fisheries in the Maldives have received limited formal monitoring and data collection. However, local knowledge and observational evidence strongly suggests that several reef fish species like snappers, groupers, emperors, and jacks are heavily exploited.^a

Sea Around Us data

The Sea Around Us estimated total annual marine capture production for the Maldives' fleets as follows:^b

- ▶ Marine subsistence^c (2019) – 39,241 tonnes
- ▶ Marine commercial^d (2019) – see footnote^e

Fish consumption

Apparent fish consumption^f was estimated at 80.1kg per capita per year (2022),⁷ placing the Maldives among the highest consumers of fish globally. Maldivians obtain over 70% of their animal protein intake from fish,⁸ and almost half of the country's catch is consumed locally.^{9,10} While pelagic fish species, essentially tuna, comprise up to 87% of seafood intake, reef fish make up a significant part of local diets on islands where tourism and development are increasingly reshaping food systems.¹¹

Economic contribution to GDP

The fisheries sector contributed an estimated 4.7% to nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2023.¹² Until the 1970s, the economy of the Maldives was predominantly dependent on fishing, but its relative contribution has declined over the years with the expansion of the tourism industry. Despite this shift, fisheries remain essential for generating export earnings and supporting livelihoods on outer islands.

Fisheries are the country's main export sector, accounting for 96% of total export value¹³ and generating over USD 178 million in 2018.¹⁴ Skipjack and yellowfin tuna contribute most to export quantity and value.¹⁵

Employment contribution (all)

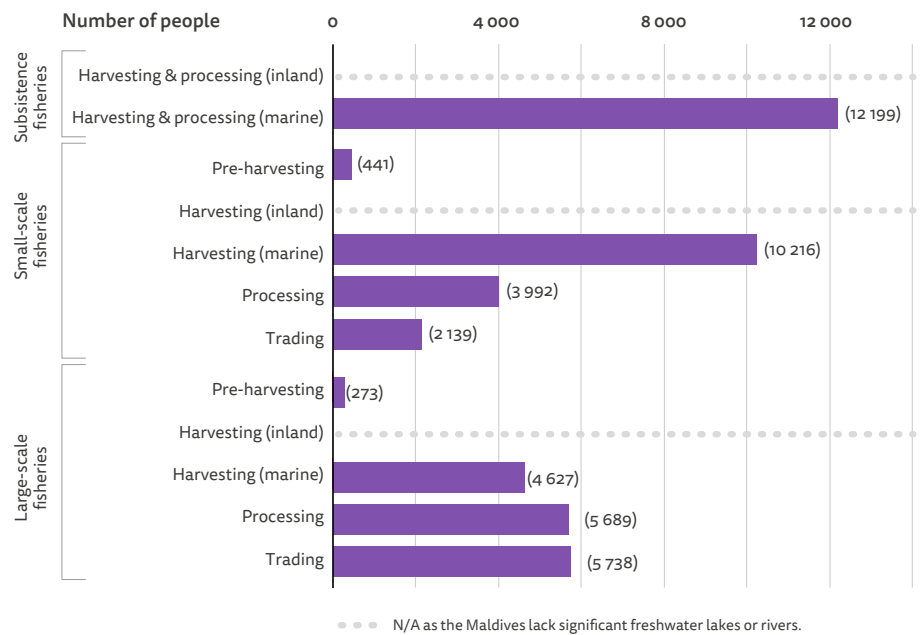
National data

Official estimates suggest that the fisheries sector employed 20% of the local workforce in 2016,¹⁶ declining to 11% by 2024.¹⁷ One study reports around 21,000 active fishers in the Maldives, with about half (9,581) engaged in tuna fisheries and the other half (10,504) involved in subsistence fishing, primarily targeting reef-associated species.¹⁰

Illuminating Hidden Harvests estimates

The Illuminating Hidden Harvests (IHH) Initiative^{g,18} estimated that in 2016, a total of 45,314 individuals^h were engaged in the fisheries sector, including pre-and post-harvest as well as subsistence fisheriesⁱ activities. Most individuals were involved in the marine large-scale fisheries (LSF)

sub-sector^j (see image below). The IHH also estimated that a total of approximately 180,119 people depended, at least partly, on fisheries or subsistence fishing: 69,024 in small-scale fisheries (SSF), 55,607 in subsistence fisheries and 55,489 in large scale fisheries.^k



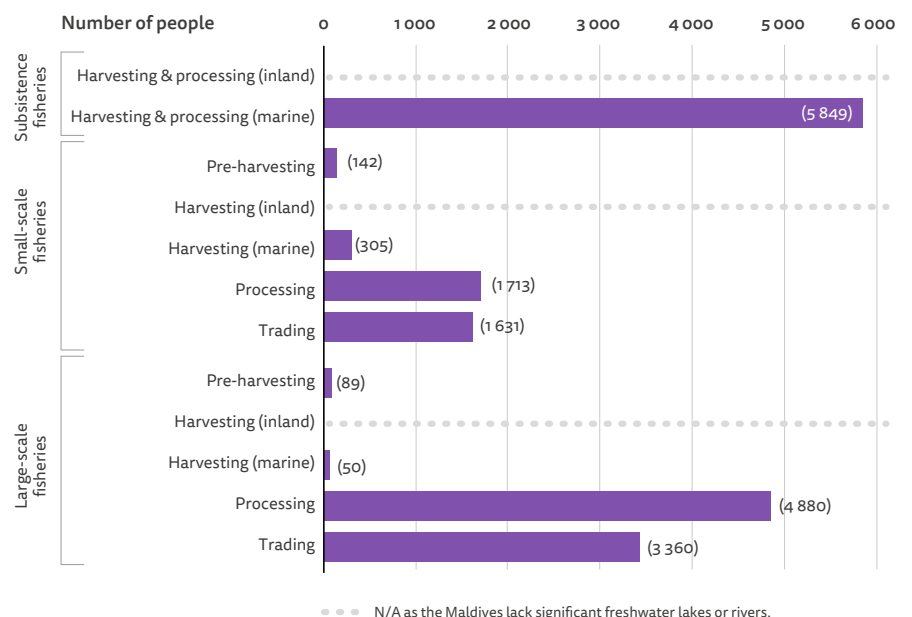
Employment contribution (women)

National data

In the Maldives, women constitute approximately 8% of the total fisheries workforce, with around 60% of these women being migrant workers employed primarily in two tuna processing factories.^l

Illuminating Hidden Harvests estimates

The IHH Initiative^m estimated that in 2016, a total of 18,020 women were active across fisheries value chains. LSF provided the greatest source of livelihoods for women in the sector (see image below), particularly in post-harvest roles. Women made up 86% of those engaged in fish processing and 59% of those involved in trading activities. Women also accounted for 48% of those engaged in marine subsistence fisheries (harvesting and processing) and they represented 43% and 76% of individuals engaged in the processing and trading activities of SSF, respectively.



“Women are active in nearshore fisheries and processing, but poor survey design and the gender of the surveyor contribute to obscuring their contributions.”

While sex-disaggregated data remain limited, women have long played essential roles in Maldivian fisheries, notably as part of local tuna value chains. Although direct participation in fishing remains largely male dominated, many women are active in pre-harvesting, processing, distribution, and marketing.²¹ A recent participatory ocean use mapping study found women actively engaged in nearshore and small-scale fisheries activities, particularly in processing, marketing, and informal harvesting, including gleaning^{n,22} for home consumption.²² These contributions are often excluded from formal surveys, pointing to gaps in data collection rather than participation.²³ The study also notes that the gender of the surveyor can significantly influence women’s willingness to participate in interviews, further highlighting how data collection methods can additionally obscure women’s contributions.²³

Regional differences and sector shifts

The extent of women’s participation and their roles in fisheries vary across the Maldives, shaped by local economies, industry presence, and infrastructure.²¹ In more urbanized areas, such as Malé, women are more likely to be in managerial, administrative, or trade-oriented positions within fisheries-related businesses. In outer atolls, they tend to engage in traditional processing and small-scale marketing. Atolls with active tuna processing industries (e.g., Gaafu Dhaalu, Laamu, and Addu) see comparatively higher levels of female employment in factory work.

“While women’s contributions have evolved with the industrialisation of the tuna sector, women remain active in local processing of tuna into traditional, culturally significant products such as *rihaakuru*, *hikkimaas*, and *valhomaas*.”

While women have held important roles in Maldivian fisheries through time, particularly in shore-based and post-harvest activities, these contributions have evolved with the industrialisation of the tuna sector. Women used to be responsible for sewing nets and cleaning landed catch; today, nets are imported and landings are made directly to processing facilities.^o Mechanization and commercialization have also substantially reduced the need for traditional processing, previously mostly done by women, leading to a decline in their labour force participation.²⁴ Similarly, women historically took part in manually beaching fishing vessels—a communal and at times ritual activity—occasionally receiving small payments or contributing proceeds to women’s committee funds.² However, this practice, too, has declined with the shift to larger boats and mechanised hauling equipment reducing the need for manual labour.²

Despite these changes, women remain active in local processing of tuna into traditional, culturally significant, and highly-valued boiled, smoked, dried, and/or bottled products, including *rihaakuru* (fish paste or stock), *hikkimaas* (dried tuna), and *valhomaas* (smoked tuna).²¹ These products are sold locally or sent to retailers in Malé, though the size and scale of these activities has declined due to falling demand and profitability.²⁵ At the household and small-business level, processing remains primarily women’s work,^p though in some cottage industries, women may also hire male migrant workers.^q

Post-harvest roles and entrepreneurship

Women also play important roles selling processed fish in local markets and sometimes managing small-scale businesses, including for dried and salted fish exports.^r However, many face structural challenges, such as limited market information, restricted access to credit, and unreliable buyers, as well as insufficient financial support and training.²⁶ Initiatives such as the e-commerce platform eDhumashi,²⁷ launched by the International Pole and Line Foundation, aims to improve women’s market access and improve their earnings (see also *Programmes or initiatives aiming to advance gender equality in fisheries* section).²⁷ The recently-established Maldives Fisheries and Ocean Resources Marketing and Promotion Corporation also supports domestic and international marketing of Maldivian seafood, including

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tuna—a product many women help process.²⁸ In parallel, the growth of the commercial tuna processing sector over the past five decades has created additional employment opportunities for women in processing factories and canneries, including the Felivaru Fisheries Complex in Naifaru, although systematic tracking of women’s roles in these facilities remains limited.²

Outside of tuna fisheries, women make several important, if less visible contributions. These include preparing food for local sale, offering hospitality services for visiting fishing crews on islands, and participating in cooperatives that support community fisheries. On some islands, like Naifaru, they have formed associations that have enabled them to better market their tuna products, including through access to credit, infrastructure for tuna processing, as well as training and leadership opportunities.²¹ The Fisherman’s Association of Naifaru, which, despite its name, is predominantly composed of women, has become a key liaison between fishers and local authorities, especially when male fishers are away at sea.²¹ Many members bring teaching skills and their networks to support local youth, community development, and the broader fisheries sector.²¹

“Historically, women played a central role in the Maldives’ once-thriving money cowry (*Monetaria cowry*) shell trade, which served as currency in many parts of the world.”

Nearshore harvesting remains part of women’s fisheries contributions on some islands, although data is limited. Anecdotal evidence suggests that women on some islands engage in shore-based fishing and gleaning, either for food⁵ or to collect shells for commercial purposes.²⁹ Gleaning for shells is typically done by hand on reef flats and seagrass meadows, or using sticks to pry shells off rocks.²⁹ Historically, women played a central role in the Maldives’ once-thriving money cowry (*Monetaria cowry*) shell trade, which served as currency in many parts of the world.¹ Women collected cowry shells in waist-deep water for six days during specific lunar periods,⁴ with collection methods including placing coconut fronds on the water’s surface to attract the shells or manually detaching them from stones where they naturally clung.⁷ The current scale of these activities is unclear, as data on women’s roles in these fisheries is limited and influenced by islands’ physical geomorphology, with some shorelines and beaches being more amenable to shore-based fishing and gleaning than others.

Social considerations

“While elements of patriarchy persist, the culture has historically afforded women certain freedoms uncommon in the region, including the right to maintain their surnames after marriage, initiate divorce without stigma, and, in pre-colonial times, even rule as Sultanas.”

Maldivian society reflects a blend of Islamic heritage and island community traditions that shape gender roles and expectations. The Maldives, a Sunni Islamic state with Buddhist and Hindu heritage, has traditionally practiced a moderate form of Islam,³⁰ though more conservative interpretations have gained influence in recent years, shaping social norms and behaviours.³¹ While elements of patriarchy persist, the culture has historically afforded women certain freedoms uncommon in the region, including the right to maintain their surnames after marriage, initiate divorce without stigma, and, in pre-colonial times, even rule as Sultanas.³² Today, women continue to hold a respected place within family and community life.³³ However, social and cultural norms continue to emphasise women’s roles as primary caregivers and homemakers, constraining their mobility, safety, and participation in leadership and economic life.

Education

The Maldives has achieved impressive gender parity in basic education. As of 2022, literacy rates stood at 98.7% for girls and 98.6% for boys (for Dhivehi language), and primary school enrolment had reached 100% with no measurable gender disparity³⁴—reflecting decades of sustained investment in the education sector. However, gender gaps remain in higher education. Women account for only 20-30% of students pursuing higher

“There is growing recognition of the urgent need to translate women's educational attainment into equal workforce opportunities to support economic and demographic resilience.”

degrees and just 30% of PhD candidates.³⁵ Multiple factors contribute to this disparity: higher education is concentrated in the capital, requiring relocation; parents from outer islands may be reluctant to send daughters to Malé or abroad due to safety concerns and prevailing gender norms; and financial barriers disproportionately affect girls from rural backgrounds.³⁵ This limits qualification level and career opportunities for rural women. While these challenges persist, gains in access to education—primarily at the primary and secondary levels—have helped drive positive social change, including delayed marriage and a declining adolescent birth rate, with factors such as the high cost of living also contributing to the latter.^w With fertility now below replacement level, there is growing recognition of the urgent need to translate women's educational attainment into equal workforce opportunities to support economic and demographic resilience.³⁶

Labour considerations

Maldivian women remain significantly underrepresented in the formal workforce. In 2024, female labour force^x participation stood at around 41%, nearly half that of men (76.4%).³⁷ Surveys in 2014 showed that while limited local job opportunities and a mismatch between education levels and available roles were cited as the main reason for being unemployed, many women also indicate that they are not economically active due to traditional caregiving responsibilities.³⁸

Unpaid care work continues to fall disproportionately on women. In 2023, Maldivian women spent an average of 19% of their day on unpaid domestic and caregiving work—twice as much time as men.³⁹ This imbalance is compounded by limited access to childcare on many islands, making it difficult for mothers to maintain full-time employment. Most economically active women are engaged in the informal economy,⁴⁰ where job security is limited and wages are much lower.³⁸ On average, Maldivian women earn MVR 22.51 (USD 1.45) less per hour than men—a gender pay gap of 26%.⁴¹ In 2023, vulnerable employment rates^y stood at 32.8% for women, compared to 14.9% for men.³⁷ Sector disparities further highlight these gaps. Although tourism represents the cornerstone of the Maldives' economy, women made up only 11% of the sector's workforce in 2023—with just 3% being Maldivian women.⁴³ Many resort jobs require workers to live on-site, a setup that conflicts with caregiving responsibilities and prevailing social norms.⁴³ A lack of family-friendly facilities further discourages women's participation. Meanwhile, an influx of foreign workers (primarily men) into tourism, construction, and fish processing has partly reshaped hiring patterns and the types of opportunities women may pursue.⁴⁴ Efforts to recruit more women in processing facilities, for instance, have faced challenges,^z though flexible work arrangements—such as those offered by one factory located in an urban setting—have enabled greater participation. This suggests that both workplace conditions and cultural expectations influence women's engagement in the workforce.^{aa} On a positive note, women made up 66% of civil service positions as of 2024,³³ with most employed in education, health, clerical, and administrative roles. However, these are generally lower or mid-level positions, with women remaining underrepresented in senior leadership and decision-making roles across both government and the private sector.⁴⁵

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Property Rights

Inheritance is governed by Islamic Sharia law, under which daughters typically receive half the share of sons. Over generations, this has contributed to men accumulating more land and assets, resulting in a large gender gap in property ownership. As of 2014, women owned only 31% of property nationally, while men owned about 65%.³⁵ In some rural islands, the gap is even more pronounced—for example, on one island in Laamu Atoll, just 23% of houses were owned by women.³⁵ These patterns are

“Maldivian prenuptial agreements, grounded in Islamic law, can help secure women's equitable divorce outcomes and address gender inequalities in marriage and ownership rights, though they remain under-recognised and underutilised.”

“Women from lower-income households are more likely to juggle informal, insecure work with unpaid domestic responsibilities, while wealthier women may have the resources to pursue business or professional careers—or choose to focus exclusively on household responsibilities.”

shaped by customary practices, where land and homes may remain with the husband's family after divorce or are passed down through male relatives. Maldivian law currently allows couples to include prenuptial agreements or dower clauses in marriage contracts to clarify how assets will be divided in the event of divorce. These provisions, grounded in Islamic law, offer women greater bargaining power in securing more equitable outcomes if a marriage ends and hold promise to help redress gendered inequalities in asset ownership.⁴⁶ However, their potential remains under-recognised and underutilised.

Despite unequal inheritance norms, there are no legal restrictions preventing women from buying or selling land, registering a business, or signing contracts, and many women do own or co-manage property and businesses. Nonetheless, unequal asset ownership can hinder women's financial autonomy and limit their access to credit—constraining their ability to start businesses or secure loans.⁴⁷ Encouragingly, the 2016-2017 Demographic Health Survey found that 63% of currently married women with cash earnings reported joint decision-making with their husbands regarding the use of their income,⁴⁸ and 80% reported participating in key household decisions.⁴⁸

Intersectionality

Women's experiences in the Maldives are shaped by intersecting geographic, social, and economic factors. There is a notable urban–rural divide, mainly between the capital area (Greater Malé) and the outer atolls. While Malé—home to about 40% of the population^{ab,49,50}—offers more employment and educational opportunities, rural islands have limited services. As a result, women on outer atolls are more likely to manage households alone,⁵² partly due to men migrating to the capital or resort islands for work. Socioeconomic status further shapes women's options: women from lower-income households are more likely to juggle informal, insecure work with unpaid domestic responsibilities, while wealthier women may have the resources to pursue business or professional careers—or choose to focus exclusively on household responsibilities.³⁵

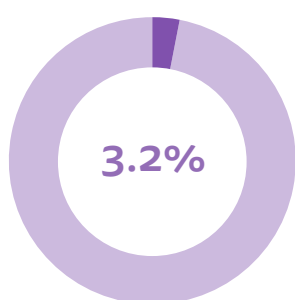
As the Maldives is ethnically and religiously homogenous, with nearly all citizens identifying as Dhivehi and Sunni Muslim, gender disparities cut across all groups. Labour migration has introduced additional layers of complexity. Migrant workers comprise about one-third of the working-age population⁵³ and play a central role in the Maldivian economy. Female migrants, often employed in teaching or healthcare, face heightened risks of exploitation or harassment. While recent policy reforms have aimed to improve migrant welfare, enforcement remains weak and many continue to experience conditions that violate domestic and international standards.⁵⁴

Women's rights and political empowerment

The Maldives has a constitutional and legal framework that affirms gender equality. Article 17 of the *Constitution (2008)*⁵⁵ legally guarantees equal rights and prohibits discrimination, including on the basis of gender. While Article 17 also allows for affirmative action to support disadvantaged individuals or groups, it does not explicitly reference women.⁵⁵ However, the Maldivian legal system blends civil law and Islamic Shariah law, particularly in personal law—with several cases highlighting the tension between traditional religious-based codes and international human rights standards, often with disproportionate impacts on women. Progressive interpretations of gender rights may be constrained by the designation of Islam as the state religion (Article 10[a]), and the stipulation that “No law contrary to any tenet of Islam shall be enacted in the Maldives” (Article 10[b]). The *Gender Equality Act (Law No. 18/2016)*⁵⁶ reinforces constitutional commitments by mandating

equal rights in employment, pay, political participation, and family life. It also requires government agencies to actively promote gender equality. The *Maldivian Communication Strategy and Action Plan (2019–2023)* also prioritises addressing unpaid care work, gender-based violence, harmful stereotypes, and women’s leadership as priority areas for communication under Sustainable Development Goal 5 (‘Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’).⁵⁷ Implementation of these legal and policy tools, however, remains uneven.

“The Maldives has a rich history of female leadership, with several queens—or Sultanas regnant—having ruled the nation.”



Percentage of seats held by women in Parliament (2024).

“Women’s political participation in the Maldives remains constrained by entrenched norms, unequal party dynamics, and gendered scrutiny, with candidates—especially younger women—facing moral attacks, sexualised rumours, and online harassment.”

Political representation

The Maldives has a rich history of female leadership, with several queens—or *Sultanas regnant*—having ruled the nation. These include Queen Rehendi Khadeeja in the 14th century,⁵⁸ who was succeeded by her sister Mariam, and two queens both named Amina Rani who ruled in succession between 1753 and 1754.⁵⁹ Travel accounts from the 9th and 10th centuries also point to a longstanding tradition of female leadership.⁶⁰

In modern times, women’s political representation in the Maldives remains limited. While women make up nearly 50% of political party membership across all parties,⁶¹ they are largely absent from leadership positions. As of the 2024 elections, women hold just 3.2% of seats in the national Parliament (People’s Majlis)⁶²—ranking the Maldives 180th out of 185 countries in terms of progress on women’s representation in parliament.⁶³ Women are similarly underrepresented in other branches: following the 2019 elections, only 5 of 85 lawmakers were women. There are no legal quotas for women in the national legislature,⁶³ and efforts to boost women’s participation have largely been voluntary. However, progress has been more notable at the local level. A 2019 amendment to the *Decentralisation Act* introduced a 33% quota for women’s participation in local councils,⁶⁴ resulting in women winning nearly 40% of council seats in the 2021 elections.⁶⁴ Yet, holding office does not always translate to influence,⁶¹ and many councillors continue to face barriers due to power imbalances, gendered stereotypes, and a lack of institutional support. Meaningful participation requires more than representation—it depends on enabling conditions such as leadership training, inclusive environments, and safe platforms for engagement.⁶¹

Entrenched cultural norms, limited access to campaign financing, and internal party dynamics continue to limit women’s full participation in Maldivian politics. Despite strong records of grassroots organising, women are frequently sidelined⁶⁵ or expected to only focus on “women’s issues.”⁶⁵ Women candidates also often face gendered scrutiny, including criticism for not conforming to traditional family and domestic expectations. They are often subject to moral attacks, sexualised rumours, as well as public and online harassment.^{66,67} These challenges are especially acute for younger candidates, who may face predatory behaviour and heightened reputational attacks online.⁶⁵ Initiatives to address these challenges include leadership training and gender quota advocacy, but progress has been slow.

Some conservative religious groups have also openly opposed certain gender rights initiatives. In 2020, extremist factions campaigned to shut down Uthema, a women’s rights organisation.⁶⁸ While tensions between rights-based advocacy and women’s rights groups do not reflect the views of all citizens, they underscore the importance of sustained dialogue, legal safeguards, and institutional support.

Despite structural barriers to gender equality, many Maldivian women have assumed influential roles across political, legal, and diplomatic spheres. Notable figures include Aneesa Ahmed, the first woman to serve as Deputy Speaker of Parliament (2004–2009), and who received national

“Despite structural barriers to gender equality, many Maldivian women have assumed influential roles across political, legal, and diplomatic spheres.”

“Reported GBV rates in the Maldives are comparatively lower, partly due to historically protective social factors, yet these safeguards are being eroded amid rapid socioeconomic change, urbanisation, globalisation, and rising religious conservatism.”

“Street harassment is often normalized, and perpetrators rarely face consequences, creating an environment where women and girls may feel unsafe or restricted in moving freely.”

and international recognition for her advocacy efforts;⁶⁹ Dunya Maumoon, former Minister of Foreign Affairs (2013–2016); Rozaina Adam, a long-serving member of the People’s Majlis (2008–2024) who championed women’s issues in Parliament⁷⁰ and chaired the Human Rights and Gender Committee; and Mariya Ahmed Didi, who was appointed as the country’s first female Minister of Defence in 2018. Aisha Shujune Muhammad and Azmiralda Zahir became the first women appointed to the Supreme Court in 2019—despite opposition from Islamist groups⁶⁴—but Zahir was suspended in 2025. Dheebanaz Fahmy made history in 2020 as the first woman appointed to the Criminal Court, and was elevated to the High Court in 2022.⁷¹ As of writing, other women holding important political positions include Fathimath Niusha (Secretary General), Fathimath Sauda (Chair of the Human Rights and Gender Committee), and Asma Rasheed (Chair of the Social Affairs Committee).⁶³

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a concerning issue across the Maldives, although its reported prevalence is lower than in many other South Asian countries.²⁴ This has been in part attributed to historically protective social factors, including flexible marriage norms, relatively equitable gender relations, and non-violent ideals of masculinity.²⁴ However, these safeguards are increasingly being eroded by rapid social, economic, and cultural shifts, including globalisation, urbanisation, and rising religious conservatism.²⁴ Economic marginalization contributes to women’s inability to leave abusive relationships.²⁴ Younger men are increasingly exposed to aggressive models of masculinity, which some adopt to assert control in contexts of social and economic uncertainty.²⁴ In addition, growing pressure on women to conform to conservative gender roles and expectations—often framed in religious terms—is further reshaping family dynamics and constraining women’s autonomy.²⁴

According to the 2016-2017 Demographic and Health Survey, 17% of women aged 15–49 reported having experienced physical violence, and 11% reported sexual violence in their lifetime.⁴⁸ In addition, nearly one in four ever-married women reported having experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence from a current or recent partner.⁴⁸ Survivors often hesitate to seek justice due to fear of retaliation, loss of child custody, and cultural stigmas.⁴⁴ Many face revictimization within a system where domestic violence is still seen by some officials as a personal issue and private matter, while emerging forms of violence, such as cyber-harassment, outpace institutional capacity to respond.⁷² Further, while around 12% of Maldivian girls are reported to have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), there is currently no specific law banning the practice.⁷³ While some religious hardliners have promoted FGM, calls persist for the government to introduce clear legal protections to outlaw it.⁶⁴

Public safety is another concern: 96% of women reported street harassment in a 2015 survey, with 60% experiencing it before age 14.⁷⁴ Such harassment is often normalized, and perpetrators rarely face consequences, creating an environment where women and girls may feel unsafe or restricted in moving freely, especially in urban areas like Malé.

Certain groups of women face heightened vulnerabilities or barriers related to GBV, due to intersectional factors like location, socio-economic status, disability, or migrant status. There is a notable urban-rural gap in access to protection: women living on remote islands or rural atolls often have less access to support services and justice.⁶⁴ Migrant women often lack legal protections, are vulnerable to harassment, and have been reported to face entrenched abuses by employers, including exploitation and unsafe

working conditions.⁴⁴ Undocumented women migrants, in particular, fear deportation if they come forward. Advocacy groups have called for GBV data collection to be disaggregated by nationality and disability, and for legal protections to be extended to non-citizens at risk of GBV.⁶⁴

Same-sex sexual activity is criminalised for both men and women under the Penal Code and Islamic law, with penalties including imprisonment and corporal punishment, though prosecutions are rare.⁷⁵ Social stigma remains strong, and LGBTQ+ individuals often face discrimination and harassment.⁷⁵

Over the past decade, the Maldives has taken legislative steps to address GBV, though enforcement remains a challenge. In 2012, the government enacted the *Domestic Violence Prevention Act*,⁷⁶ defining domestic violence as a crime and mandating state support for survivors. It also established the Family Protection Authority, which together with the Ministry of Gender, operates a helpline and handles cases in collaboration with the police. However, domestic violence itself isn't a distinct criminal offence under the general Penal Code.⁶⁴ While the *Sexual Offences Act (2014)* criminalised various forms of sexual violence, advocacy groups have raised significant concerns about exceptions to marital rape provisions and discriminatory evidentiary burdens placed on survivors.^{77,78} The *Gender Equality Act (2016)* and *National Gender Equality Action Plan* outline further commitments to combat GBV and promote gender equity. However, key provisions—such as legislation enabling affirmative action under the former—have yet to be enacted.

Despite legal advancements, implementation gaps persist. Support services such as shelters, legal aid, and psychosocial support are largely concentrated in Malé,⁷⁹ and police and judicial systems face resource and capacity constraints.⁸⁰ In response, in 2021, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women Committee called for strengthening the implementation of existing laws, improved and expanded survivor support services, training for justice actors in gender-sensitive practices, and addressing new forms of violence, including online abuse and cyber-harassment.⁶⁴

Civil society organisations such as Hope for Women and Uthema play a critical role in prevention and response efforts. They have led public awareness campaigns, contributed to legislative consultations, and provided direct assistance to survivors, often in partnership with agencies including UN Women and UN Population Fund. While some women's rights defenders have faced harassment and threats,⁶⁸ growing civic mobilisation—particularly among youth—signals increasing civic engagement and an important opportunity to expand gender-responsive platforms for change.

“Growing civic mobilisation—particularly among youth—signals increasing civic engagement and an important opportunity to expand gender-responsive platforms for change.”

Key frameworks promoting gender equality and their ratification status^{ac}

- ✓ Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) acceded in 1993. The Maldives submitted its sixth periodic report in 2019.⁴⁰ For its seventh periodic report, the Maldives opted to report under CEDAW's optional simplified reporting procedure. In the simplified reporting procedure, the process is commenced by the Treaty Body preparing a list of issues prior to reporting.^{ad}
 - ✓ CEDAW Optional Protocol^{ae} acceded to in 2006.⁴⁰
 - ✓ Beijing Platform for Action.⁸³ The Maldives submitted its progress report as part of Beijing+30 in 2024.⁸³
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Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)

SIGI^{ak} values range from 0 for no discrimination to 100 for very high discrimination;^{al} with higher SIGI values denoting higher inequality. “-” indicates no value was available for that indicator.

Given that data is missing across several dimensions of the index, no overall aggregated value is available for the Maldives.

Year	Total aggregated index value	Discrimination in the family	Restricted physical integrity	Restricted access to productive & financial resources	Restricted civil liberties
2019 ⁸⁵	-	80 (v. high)	29 (med.)	-	-
2023 ⁸⁴	-	80 (v. high)	32 (med.)	30 (med.)	-

Gender Inequality Index (GII)

The GII^{aj} value is given on a scale from 0 to 1, with 0 being 0% inequality, indicating women “fare equally” in comparison to men and 1 being 100% inequality, indicating women “fare poorly” in comparison to men. The assessment of women ‘faring equally’ or ‘poorly’ compared to men refers to their relative standing in health, political representation, education, and economic participation.

Value (2023)⁸⁶

0.309

Rank (2023)

79

(out of 172 countries)

Gender in fisheries governance

Thirty seven fisheries governance documents were reviewed,^{af,ag} covering a range of laws, regulations, policy frameworks, and management plans addressing licensing and governance across the Maldives’ fisheries sector. Three documents reference women or gender in some regard: three through explicit mention of women or gender (without feminine pronouns), none solely through the use of feminine pronouns (she/her), and none through both.

The **Fisheries Act of the Maldives** (No. 14/2019) (2019)^{ah} identifies gender equity as a foundational principle, with an aim to “pave the way for equal participation of both sexes in the fisheries sector.” Implementation measures are required to align with national gender policies, embedding equity into the sector’s legal foundation.

The **General Fisheries Regulations** (1987) allow for the registration of newly built fishing vessels in the name of “his mother, father, brother, sister or child.” Although presented through a male-default lens (“his”), the inclusion of female family members like “mother” and “sister” may imply legal recognition of women’s rights in vessel ownership and registry.

The **National Fisheries and Agricultural Policy 2019-2029** (2019)^{ai} acknowledges that women make up one-third of the national fisheries workforce. It highlights threats to their livelihoods from shifting labor

dynamics and export dependencies. Gender equality is positioned as both a guiding principle and a cross-cutting issue. This is reflected in the policy's objective to "enhance the livelihoods of fishing communities" by increasing the inclusion, participation, and contributions of disadvantaged groups, including women, and by implementing employment schemes specifically targeting women's engagement in the sector.

Threats and drivers of change in fisheries

"With 80% of its land area less than 1m above mean sea level, [...] sea-level rise is recognized as the greatest threat to the Maldives."

Several key threats to and drivers of change in Maldivian coastal ecosystems and encouraging examples of how these may be addressed are outlined below. Threats and drivers of change to fisheries may have specific gender dimensions associated with them making gender integration necessary in efforts to improve adaptation and foster resilience in the face of change.

Climate change and sea level rise - With 80% of its land area less than 1m above mean sea level, a maximum natural elevation of just 2.4m, and the majority of infrastructure and population located within 200m from shore,⁸⁷ sea-level rise is recognized as the greatest threat to the Maldives.^{88,89} Sea level rise has accelerated in recent decades—from 0.2–0.4mm per year prior to the 1990s⁹⁰ to 3.75mm per year in Malé and 2.93 mm per year in Gan in recent years⁹¹—and could reach 6–12mm annually under high emissions scenarios. Such projections would potentially lead to sea levels rising 0.5–0.9m by 2100,⁸⁷ overwhelming current coastal defences, contributing to chronic inundation and salinisation of shallow freshwater aquifers, and threatening the habitability of most Maldivian islands.^{87,92} Estimates indicate that by mid-century, flooding could damage up to USD 0.7–1.1 billion in assets, and up to USD 1.6 billion (11–18% of GDP) by 2080.⁸⁷ Impacts are expected to be particularly severe on inhabited and developed islands that have lost their ability to naturally vertically adjust to sea-level rise through sediment accretion, due to widespread anthropogenic damage to coral reefs and shoreline hardening.⁹³

Tourism infrastructure and freshwater resources are particularly at risk: 3.6–3.9% of resort land is already exposed to flooding, and freshwater lenses—essential for water security unless seawater desalination plants are systematically built on inhabited islands—are increasingly threatened by declining rainfall, salinisation from storm surges, and groundwater overuse.⁸⁷

"High public spending on infrastructure has pushed public debt to 123% of GDP (2023), constraining the country's ability to invest in climate adaptation—although strategic investments in adaptation could nearly halve projected GDP losses from sea-level rise."

The government has undertaken extensive land reclamation efforts to cope with rapid population growth and to create new resort islands and thereby support tourism-based development. However, current land reclamation practices are inadequate to face end of century extreme water levels and potentially produce costly path dependencies.⁹⁴ The government has also invested around USD 10 million annually⁹⁵ in coastal protection (see *Land reclamation* section). However, future needs are projected at USD 8.8 billion to protect all inhabited islands—unless the *Population Consolidation Policy*, which aims to relocate communities to a limited number of inhabited islands is successfully implemented.^{91,96} High public spending on infrastructure has pushed public debt to 123% of GDP (2023),⁸⁷ constraining the country's ability to invest in climate adaptation—although strategic investments in adaptation could nearly halve projected GDP losses from sea-level rise.⁹⁷

Climate change and coral bleaching - Coral reefs are central to the Maldives' ecological and economic resilience,⁸⁷ underpinning at least around 20% of national GDP through fisheries and tourism revenues.^{98,99} However, **mass coral bleaching and mortality events** linked to ocean

“Nearshore areas where many women work—such as through gleaning, processing and reef-based activities—are particularly exposed to sea level rise and reef degradation, heightening the vulnerability of women’s contributions to climate impacts.”

“The yellowfin tuna fishery lost its MSC certification in 2016 due to the Indian Ocean stock being assessed as over-exploited and subjected to overfishing, driven largely by distant water fleets operating outside the Maldivian EEZ.”

warming in 1998, 2016,¹⁰⁰ and 2024^{101,102} have had devastating effects on reef ecosystems. The 1998 El Niño event was particularly catastrophic, causing over 90% coral mortality and reducing live coral cover from 50% to below 10% on Maldivian reefs.^{100,103} Bleaching-driven changes in community composition can reduce reef structural complexity, compromising habitat integrity for reef fish and other marine organisms. Recovery capacity has diminished as bleaching events become more frequent, and ecosystem resilience is compromised by compounding stressors like sediment plumes from dredging and crown-of-thorns outbreaks.^{88,104} These threats pose particular risks to reef-dependent fisheries, including the bait fishery that supports the skipjack tuna pole-and-line fishery,¹⁰⁵ and the export-based grouper¹⁰⁶ and aquarium trade.¹⁰⁷ Both fisheries are guided by management plans that acknowledge the dependence on systems that face growing risks from human activity, including climate change, and underscore the importance of sustainable management in light of these.^{108,109} Yet it remains unclear how effectively these plans have been enforced or adapted in response to such pressures.^{am} Rising carbon emissions are expected to accelerate the frequency and intensity of coral bleaching events, preventing reef recovery and growth¹¹⁰ and increasing islands’ vulnerability to storms and flooding.¹¹¹

Nearshore areas where many women work—such as through gleaning, processing, and reef-based activities—are particularly exposed to sea level rise and reef degradation, heightening the vulnerability of women’s contributions to climate impacts.²³

A national *Coral Bleaching Response Plan* and an inter-agency task force to monitor bleaching and social-ecological impacts exist.¹⁰⁰ However, monitoring alone is not sufficient, and coordinated response mechanisms, including clear triggers linked to concrete management actions,^{an} are still lacking. In addition, while coral restoration efforts have gained pace in recent years, with multiple resorts and organizations partnering on large-scale restoration projects across the archipelago,^{112,113} the long-term effectiveness of such initiatives remains uncertain.¹¹⁴

Fisheries sustainability - Tuna fisheries face increasing climate risks, with fishers increasingly reporting uncertainty in tuna catch and effort due to erratic sea surface temperature changes.^{ao} Model projections suggest that maximum catch potential could decline by 17% under low emissions and over 90% under high emissions by century’s end,¹¹⁵ with pelagic fisheries, particularly tuna, expected to be hardest hit.¹¹⁵ These climate-driven changes could disproportionately affect local food security and women’s roles in tuna processing, as shifts in species availability and fishing locations may alter traditional post-harvest activities where women are predominantly engaged.

The sustainability of yellowfin and skipjack tuna stocks in the region is also under increasing pressure from distant water fleets operating outside Maldivian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The yellowfin tuna fishery in the Maldives lost its MSC certification in 2016 due to the Indian Ocean stock being assessed as over-exploited and subjected to overfishing, driven largely by distant water fleets operating outside the Maldivian EEZ.¹¹⁶ Skipjack tuna catches in the Indian Ocean have decreased by approximately 20% over the past decade due to overfishing and climate change.¹¹⁷ In April 2025, the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission adopted measures to limit tuna catches starting in 2026 and pledged to integrate climate change considerations into fisheries management.¹¹⁸

The livebait fishery, essential to the pole-and-line tuna industry, is

particularly vulnerable. As the tuna fishery has grown, live bait catches have increased dramatically, including through the use of bright lights and SCUBA.¹⁰⁵ Despite the existence of a national management plan drafted in 2013,¹¹⁹ limited transparency around the plan's enforcement and implementation raises concerns about the adequacy of current oversight, potentially undermining the long-term sustainability of the pole-and-line fishery.

Increasing pressure on reef fish stocks - Reef fish demand has grown in recent years, for domestic consumption, to meet export demand,¹⁰⁶ and to supply resorts in particular,¹¹ affecting the population health of local stocks. Tourism projections for the Maldives indicate continued growth in visitor arrivals, driven in part by the expansion of guesthouses and resort infrastructure—trends likely to increase demand for reef fish. Currently, these fisheries lack a cohesive monitoring or management plan. However, projects like “Laamaseelu Masveriya”, a collaboration between Blue Marine Foundation, Maldives Resilient Reefs, and Six Senses Laamu, can provide important models to incentivize sustainable fishing practices and provide local fishers with a stable market to sell seafood.¹²⁰

Recreational fishing trips offered by tourism operators have also increased substantially, further exacerbating pressure on local fish stocks—an estimated 68,000 fish were caught recreationally in 2014 alone, a figure likely higher today.¹⁰⁶

Land reclamation and coastal development - Sand dredging and land reclamation have become central to the Maldives' climate adaptation and development strategy. Over the past two decades, land reclamation and coastal engineering have reshaped over two-thirds of inhabited islands,¹²¹ to address coastal vulnerability, expand economic infrastructure, support tourism, and accommodate population growth. Yet many projects have proceeded without adequate environmental safeguards, contributing to habitat loss, reef degradation, seagrass burial, and shoreline erosion with implications for small-scale fisheries, tourism, and coastal resilience.^{122–126} Fishers have raised habitat loss caused by sand mining and dredging as a major concern.¹²⁷

The Addu City development project is one of the most prominent examples. It created 184ha of new land, 11km of coastal protection, and three new resort islands. Yet this USD 800 million project also involved dredging 5.6 million m³ of sand from the middle of the atoll, a protected UNESCO Biosphere Reserve since 2000.¹²⁸ The latest environmental impact assessment showed that the project would affect 26% of the atoll lagoon, including the burial of 21ha of coral and 98ha of seagrass meadows.¹²⁸ Despite concerns raised by local groups about the project's social-ecological costs,¹²⁸ and a court case affirming its likely irreversible environmental consequences, the project was completed in 2024.¹²⁹ Similarly, the construction of the Kulhudhuffushi domestic airport led to the burial of 70% of the island's mangrove forest,¹³⁰ impacting local communities whose livelihoods depended on natural resources from the forest, including Indigenous coir rope producers (mostly women).^{131–133} Coir rope making, or *Roanu Veshun* in Dhivehi, is a traditional Maldivian handicraft rooted in the use of discarded coconut husk fibres.¹³⁴ The labour-intensive process involves soaking and burying coconut husks in mangrove sediments or coastal areas for up to two months to soften the fibres, which are then beaten, cleaned, sun-dried, and hand-spun into strong ropes. Historically used in boat building and house construction, these ropes were also prized exports to China, Yemen, and the Persian Gulf.¹³⁴ Coir ropes continue to provide livelihoods while preserving cultural heritage through both traditional uses like hammocks (*joali*) and modern decorative applications.¹³⁴

“Over the past two decades, land reclamation and coastal engineering have reshaped over two-thirds of inhabited islands [...] yet many projects have proceeded without adequate environmental safeguards.”

“The construction of the Kulhudhuffushi domestic airport led to the burial of 70% of the island's mangrove forest, impacting local communities whose livelihoods depended on natural resources from the forest, including Indigenous coir rope producers (mostly women).”

“Recent initiatives to strengthen migrant worker protections include new corporate modern-slavery commitments, a responsible recruitment corridor between Nepal and the Maldives, and the government’s launch, together with IMO, of dedicated support services and digital grievance mechanisms.”

Ongoing developments highlight a broader tension: while national policies promote engineering-based adaptation with commitments to minimise environmental harm, many projects suffer from weak enforcement, lack of independent oversight, and poor risk integration, including sea-level rise.¹²⁴ These gaps undermine the effectiveness of adaptation measures and risk contravening the Maldives’ constitutional obligation to pursue sustainable and ecologically balanced development (Article 22).

Labour force concerns - The Maldives faces growing challenges related to its increasingly migrant-dominated workforce, primarily originating from Bangladesh and India,¹³⁵ in fisheries and related sectors. Reports indicate that migrant workers employed on fishing and cargo vessels in Maldivian waters face heightened risks of forced labour.¹³⁶ The Maldives has not ratified the *International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*, which would provide international oversight and protections for the migrant workforce living and working in the country. In 2025, World Wise Foods Group introduced a Modern Slavery statement, outlining the steps taken by the company and Natures Finests Limited to prevent modern slavery in their own-operations and supply chains.¹³⁷ They also announced the establishment of a responsible recruitment corridor between Nepal and the Maldives, including a 3rd party grievance mechanism and oversight.¹³⁷ In 2025, the Maldives government, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration, also formally opened the first Migrant Worker Resource Centre and introduced the MigrantConnect Portal, a new digital platform created to strengthen services and grievance mechanisms for migrant workers.¹³⁸

Gender in ODA allocation for fisheries

Between 2012 and 2022, the Maldives received a total of USD 4.15 million in fisheries Official Development Assistance (ODA),^{ap,aq} of which 2% (USD 0.08 million) was allocated to gender equality and women’s empowerment in fisheries (i.e. tagged with gender markers 1 or 2). No gender focussed financing for the Maldives scored as ‘Principal’ (gender marker 2). Fisheries aid to the Maldives represents 5% of fisheries aid to the Southern and Central Asia subregion, whilst gender-equality focused fisheries aid to the Maldives represents <1% of gender focused fisheries aid to the region.

Of the aid that was screened for gender markers, all gender focussed financing for fisheries in the Maldives came from Japan.

Japan

100%

Programmes or initiatives aiming to advance gender equality in fisheries

“eDhumashi is a e-commerce platform connecting women directly with buyers, enabling them to bypass intermediaries, secure fair prices, and gain direct control over marketing and branding of their fish products.”

In 2023, the International Pole and Line Foundation launched **eDhumashi**, a pioneering e-commerce platform designed to empower women fish processors in the Maldives.²⁷ It is the country’s first e-commerce app with a full Dhivehi-language version, removing key language barriers to digital access. Backed by the United Nation Development Programme’s Ocean Innovation Challenge, the platform connects women directly with buyers, enabling them to bypass intermediaries, secure fair prices, and gain direct control over marketing and branding of their fish products. The project also includes trainings on business management, digital literacy, and marketing, helping to improve transparency and traceability in fisheries value chains while enhancing economic opportunities for women.²⁷

The **Young Fishers Club** at Haa Alif. Ihavandhoo School was launched in October 2022 through the Maldives Fishermen’s Association.¹³⁹ The pilot programme enrolled 52 students from grades 7 and 8—the majority of

whom were girls—to participate in weekly sessions that built practical skills relevant to fisheries support, such as knot-tying, swimming, snorkelling, resource mapping, beach surveying, and basic marine research.¹³⁹ The Maldives Meteorological Service provided training on weather patterns and marine forecasting, and sessions also covered navigation chart plotting, GPS use, communications, and disaster preparedness.¹⁴⁰ In March 2024, 35 students (25 girls and 10 boys) graduated from the club and were awarded badges.¹⁴¹ While the programme was limited to one school, it offered a structured, hands-on introduction to the kinds of skills and knowledge that support small-scale fisheries and ocean livelihoods, particularly for girls, who are often excluded from such training. It also created space for early leadership, technical confidence, and visibility in a sector where women remain underrepresented.

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Woman fish processor involved in the preparation of tuna products that will be sold in domestic markets. Local women fish processors play significant post-harvest roles in the Maldivian tuna value chain. Photographs by Stuart Hablutzel/IPNLF.



Featured in *Intrecci resistenti* (Resilient Intertwining), these photographs highlight the resilience of local rope makers as their craft becomes increasingly difficult to sustain. Airport construction and the associated mangrove loss have reshaped the island's landscape and undermined the ecological conditions needed for coconut rope production. The images honour a tradition deeply rooted in place and community—one now upheld through care, knowledge, and quiet resistance. The exhibition of these images emerged from research undertaken by Alice Salimbeni and Beatrice Ruggieri at the National Biodiversity Future Centre, supervised by Stefano Malatesta and Marcella Schmidt di Friedberg, in collaboration with the MaRHE Centre. Photographs by Alice Salimbeni.

Endnotes

- a Co-author contribution.
- b Marine fisheries statistics are derived from catch reconstruction under the Sea Around Us - <http://www.searoundus.org/data/#/eez>. The approach utilised builds on national statistics and accounts for discards as well as sectoral catch data that often is not included in official datasets (e.g., artisanal or recreational catches). The Sea Around Us data is also utilized here as a consistent frame of reference for and to facilitate comparison across the set of countries for which fact sheets were developed as part of this project. Sea Around Us data are distinguished according to the following categories: large-scale (i.e., industrial) and small-scale (i.e., artisanal, subsistence and recreational) fisheries catches. Recreational catches were not considered here.
- c "Marine subsistence" is used by the Sea Around Us to refer to the amount of annual marine capture production landed by the subsistence sector. This consists of fisheries conducted by women and/or noncommercial fishers for consumption by one's family, and where applicable, the fraction of the commercial catch that is given to crew or the community (mainly from small-scale fisheries)¹
- d "Marine commercial" is used by the Sea Around Us to refer to the amount of annual marine capture production landed by commercial fisheries. These are fisheries whose landed catch is sold commercially (as opposed to being consumed and/or given away to the crew) and encompass both the industrial (large-scale) and artisanal (small-scale) sectors¹
- e Catch estimates are currently under review as part of ongoing data validation efforts; therefore, no specific figure is reported here.
- f The term "apparent" refers to the average food available for consumption, which for several reasons (for example, waste at the household level), is not equal to average food intake or average food consumption. The amount is calculated as production + imports - exports - non-food uses, +/- stocks variations and divided by number of people partaking of it.
- g The Illuminating Hidden Harvests project estimates are utilized here as a consistent frame of reference for and to facilitate comparison across the set of countries for which fact sheets were developed as part of this project (visit <https://oceanrisk.earth/> to access all the fact sheets).
- h Estimates calculated based on labour force surveys and Income Expenditure Surveys as part of the Illuminating Hidden Harvests (IHH) project.(18)
- i Subsistence fisheries activities, also referred to as "working for own consumption", are defined by the IHH as activities that individuals of any sex and age carried out at least once over the last 12 months in order to produce and process fish for their own final use, with no transaction occurring in the marketplace. By definition, they are considered here as small-scale fisheries. (Table 2.1).(19)
- j Small Scale Fisheries (SSF) are distinguished from Large Scale Fisheries (LSF) according to a characterisation matrix that distinguishes between fisheries according to gear use, vessel characteristics, fishing operations, types of storage and preservation of catch, employment/labour, and use of catch. The characterisation matrix allows for a standardised approach to classify and characterize fisheries at the global and regional level, allowing for high levels of variation between fisheries. SSF generally includes low-technology, low-capital, labour-intensive fishing practices. Often, the term artisanal is used to refer to small-scale fisheries. In the context of the IHH work, the term small-scale fisheries refers to the whole value chain of pre-harvest, harvesting and post-harvest activities, including subsistence fisheries and excluding recreational fisheries.(20)
- k According to Illuminating Hidden Harvests project estimates, 249,123 people belong to a household where at least one person engages in fisheries or in subsistence fishing.
- l Co-author contribution.
- m The Illuminating Hidden Harvests project estimates are utilized here as a consistent frame of reference for and to facilitate comparison across the set of countries for which fact sheets were developed as part of this project (visit <https://oceanrisk.earth/> to access all the fact sheets).
- n Gleaning is a fishing method typically done by hand and used in shallow coastal waters or habitats exposed during low tide, as well as estuarine and freshwater environments.
- o Co-author contribution.
- p Co-author contribution.
- q Co-author contribution.
- r Co-author contribution.
- s S. Yadev personal observation.
- t References in (29).
- u References in (29).
- v References in (29).
- w Co-author contribution.
- x The proportion of the population ages 15 and older that is economically active.
- y Vulnerable employment rates indicate the proportion of workers who are own-account workers or contributing family workers, lacking formal arrangements and social safety nets.(42)
- z Co-author contribution.
- aa Co-author contribution.
- ab Population projections show that the Greater Malé area is expected to host 64 percent of the resident Maldivian population by 2054.(51)
- ac Visit <https://oceanrisk.earth/> to read summaries of key conventions/policies, as well as additional information about key indicators used in this factsheet.
- ad "Some Treaty Bodies offer a new optional simplified reporting procedure to deal with the backlog of reviews and the delay in State reporting. In the simplified reporting procedure, the process is commenced by the Treaty Body preparing a list of issues prior to reporting (LOIPR) before a State submits its report. Under the simplified reporting procedure, the State party's response to the LOIPR constitutes the State report to be reviewed under that particular treaty. The aim of this procedure is to streamline the reporting process by removing the need for States both to submit a report and then respond to a list of issues and questions. It also importantly encourages States to produce more focused reports that respond to their reporting obligations under a particular treaty."(81)
- ae The Optional Protocol to CEDAW (OP-CEDAW) is an international treaty that creates additional complaint and inquiry mechanisms for CEDAW, allowing individuals to report violations and enabling the CEDAW Committee to investigate grave and systematic violations of women's rights by state parties.(82)
- af Visit <https://oceanrisk.earth/> to read summaries of key conventions/policies, as well as additional information about key indicators used in this factsheet.
- ag Sourced from the databases FAO LEX, ECO LEX, and SSF LEX. Fisheries governance documents include fisheries policies, laws, acts, plans, strategies, and regulations. A database of all reviewed governance documents can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15098509>.
- ah Governance frameworks are dynamic, and while regulations predating the Fisheries Act No. 14/2019 are no longer in effect, they were included in the analysis to support an understanding of how the policy landscape has evolved over time. This includes the General Fisheries Regulations (1987). Titles, publication dates, and legal status updates are detailed in the database <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15098509>.
- ai A feminine pronoun, "her," appears in the acknowledgement section of the National Fisheries and Agricultural Policy 2019-2029 (2019) to credit two individual contributors. Since this pronoun does not appear within the operational text of the policy, it was not included in the total count of documents using feminine pronouns.
- aj Visit <https://oceanrisk.earth/> to read summaries of key conventions/policies, as well as additional information about key indicators used in this factsheet.
- ak Visit <https://oceanrisk.earth/> to read summaries of key conventions/policies, as well as additional information about key indicators used in this factsheet.

- al Countries are classified into five groups according to their SIGI score: (1) very low level of discrimination ($0 < \text{SIGI} < 20$); (2) low level of discrimination ($20 < \text{SIGI} < 30$); (3) medium level of discrimination ($30 < \text{SIGI} < 40$); (4) high level of discrimination ($40 < \text{SIGI} < 50$); and (5) very high level of discrimination ($50 < \text{SIGI} < 100$). (84)
- am Co-author contribution.
- an Co-author contribution.
- ao S. Yadav personal observations.
- ap Visit <https://oceanrisk.earth/> to read how ODA allocations were derived
- aq Different from OECD standard methods, this is measured in disbursements from DAC countries (including EU Institutions) to recipient countries. This captures the amount of money given, as opposed to the amount of money committed. Original data was downloaded on 17th June 2024.

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