

REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

TERMS OF REFERENCE

INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANCY TO FACILITATE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION FRAMEWORK

I. Background

The Maldives has a population of around 436,000 people dispersed across 188 islands. The country has been a development success, enjoying robust growth coupled with considerable advancements in infrastructure and connectivity. GDP per capita reached \$11,890 in 2018, a remarkable 10.75% annual average growth rate since 1978. The economy continues to grow at over 6% annually, led by construction, tourism, communications, transport, and fisheries. It has also provided high quality and affordable public services for its people, resulting in impressive health and education indicators with a literacy rate approaching 100% and life expectancy of over 77 years. Although lack of comparable data precluded calculation of a Human Capital Index, it is believed that the Maldives would rank relatively highly or even highest among countries in the South Asia region.

The geographical dispersion of the Maldives makes service delivery difficult and, coupled with its small population and economy, limits opportunities for job creation and economic diversification. The Maldives is also the most exposed country in the world to inundation from rising sea levels and storm surges. While the country is fortunately exposed to a small range of natural disasters, managing the risk of sea level rise (and to a lesser extent damaging storms and droughts) is a concern for the sustainability of income streams and assets.

Despite the country's relatively promising poverty and inequality indicators, the Maldives still faces challenges in the social sector. Among the major challenges are the high proportion of youth who are either unemployed or discouraged from job-seeking, and the low female labor force participation rate. A shortage of jobs commensurate with the aspirations of young jobseekers contributes to a sense of dissatisfaction and isolation, especially among youth who have invested heavily in their education and find few opportunities to use it. Job opportunities are especially limited in the atolls. The trend to resettlement in greater Malé is also bringing many (mainly working-age) people to urban areas, putting stress on public services, transport and utilities and driving up the cost of housing. The social pressures these conditions create may increase the susceptibility of youth to drug abuse and gang-related activities.

While the Maldives has developed a reasonably integrated and well-functioning social protection system over the past decade, with clear legislation and policy coherence, there are nevertheless gaps and inconsistencies in the portfolio of social protection programs.

For example, existing cash transfer programs are categorical, excluding destitute individuals who do not fall within these categories (i.e. disabled, elderly, single or foster parents). Accordingly, there is no mechanism to channel temporary relief to most of the population if their circumstances require it (for instance, following job loss, a macroeconomic or policy shock, or a natural disaster). Finally, fiscal sustainability and implementation challenges need to be addressed in a strategic manner given the high degree of population dispersion and high travel costs.

Reflecting its upper middle-income status, the Maldives needs a social protection system that provides income support and opportunities for economic inclusion for the poorest and most marginalized, while providing all citizens protection against unanticipated shocks and opportunities to save for their retirement. The government has recognized this need in its Strategic Action Plan 2020, which calls for the development of a National Social Protection Framework to coordinate and guide the future development of social protection in the country. This Framework is being developed as part of the Maldives Capacity Building Technical Assistance Project, financed by the World Bank.

II. Objectives

The objective this Consultancy is to facilitate the process of preparing a National Social Protection Framework for the Maldives. The Framework will comprise the following:

- (i) Definition of a clear, common vision for social protection in the socio-economic context of the Maldives;
- (ii) Statement of the high-level objectives of the government's social protection system;
- (iii) Lower-level objectives including target groups and program features;
- (iv) Structure of the existing social protection system from legislative and administrative perspectives;
- (v) Review of existing programs and their functioning including delivery systems;
- (vi) Identification of gaps and/or overlaps in programming and current delivery systems;
- (vii) Proposed measures to resolve the gaps and overlaps; and
- (viii) A time-bound action plan to implement these measures.

The development of the Framework will be led by a Steering Committee chaired by the Ministry of Economic Development, with representation of key social protection agencies (including the Ministry of Finance, the National Social Protection Agency, and the Maldives Pension Administration Office). A Technical Committee will also be established comprising representatives from the above and other key institutions, with the role of handling the required inputs and outputs for this consultancy. A broad range of government and non-government stakeholders, community members and sector specialists will also be consulted throughout the development process.

The Consultant will be responsible for guiding the preparation of the Framework, drawing on their extensive technical expertise and familiarity with international best practice on social protection.

III. Responsibilities of the Consultant and Expected Deliverables

The Consultant will be responsible for ensuring the Framework development process is technically sound, consultative and inclusive. The indicative work plan is as follows:

1. The Consultant will facilitate a two-day **inception workshop** (organized and financed by the Project), bringing together a broad range of stakeholders to inform them about social protection and brief them on the planned Framework development process. Moderated by the consultant, the workshop would discuss the subject of social protection in its widest terms (including examples from international best practice), seek inputs on the common vision and high-level objectives of the Framework (parts (i) and (ii) of Section II above), discuss the preparation timeline, and field any contributions stakeholders wish to make regarding the process or the Framework. Separate sessions will be held on social assistance, social insurance, labor market programs and delivery systems. At the conclusion of the initial visit, the Consultant will present the Steering Committee with an inception report outlining plans for the diagnostic and Framework development process and adjust the plans based on the feedback of the Steering Committee.
2. The Consultant will then undertake a **comprehensive diagnostic of the existing social protection system** in the Maldives, including social assistance programs, social insurance programs, labor market programs and delivery systems, using an internationally accepted diagnostic tool. The diagnostic will draw on administrative and quantitative data, as well as qualitative data such as focus groups, personal interviews, etc. It is important that a wide consultation be carried out prior to preparing the diagnostic, to ensure feedback is obtained from a range of stakeholders. The diagnostic will be presented as a written report, accompanied by PowerPoint presentations for technical and non-technical audiences. In addition, the Consultant will be expected to present preliminary findings to the government's technical working group for feedback.

The diagnostic will include, but is not limited to, the following aspects:

- (i) Description of the current welfare situation of Maldivians and identification of the most vulnerable groups;
- (ii) Enumeration of the main risks faced by Maldivians – including economic vulnerabilities, social vulnerabilities, and exposure to natural shocks;
- (iii) Examine all existing social protection programs, including their design, implementation arrangements, coverage and targeting vis-à-vis the poor and vulnerable;

- (iv) Focus especially on gender gaps and aspects of social protection programming intended to address these gaps;
 - (v) Review the public expenditures on social protection programs, their distributional incidence and fiscal sustainability;
 - (vi) Examine the adequacy and challenges of the current delivery systems (identification, registration, targeting, case management, payment and grievance redressal); and
 - (vii) Recommend ways that the government can improve the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of social protection programs and the social protection system to respond to risk and vulnerability in the Maldives and promote national development objectives.
3. Following preparation of the diagnostic, the Consultant will facilitate a series of **validation workshops** (organized and financed by the government) with citizens and policy makers in Male, Hulhumale, Addu City, Kulhudhufushi and Fuvuhmulah, at which the findings of the diagnostic will be presented and discussed, and any feedback incorporated into the final version.
 4. During the validation workshops, the Consultant will also present on international best practice models that could be considered in the Maldivian context. The output of the workshops will be a **summary report** describing the agreed definition of social protection, its scope, a sketch vision for the future of social protection in the Maldives in terms of programs, systems and financing, and presentations of the key results for technical and lay audiences.
 5. The consultant will subsequently develop the outputs of the validation workshops into a **draft National Social Protection Framework**, in close consultation with the NSPF Technical Committee. The consultant will present the draft Framework to the Steering Committee for feedback, and subsequently revise and finalize the document.
 6. The Framework will be launched by the government once complete. The Consultant will be present for the launch to answer questions and assist with planning for the implementation phase.

IV. Timeline

The consultancy is expected to last for a period of approximately 9 months, with the consultant expected to provide about 12 weeks (60 days) full-time equivalent work.

V. Administration and Payment Schedule

The consultant will be contracted by the Government of Maldives under the Capacity Building TA Project, and will report to the head of the Steering Committee. The consultant

will be expected to submit a financial proposal comprising compensation for time plus travel, accommodation and incidental expenses (see also ‘Travel’ below).

The proposed payment schedule is as follows:

Phase	Deliverable	Expected delivery date	Payment (% of total)
1. Inception	Facilitation of inception workshop and delivery of satisfactory inception report	Week 6	10%
2. Diagnostic	Participatory evaluation of existing SP programs resulting in diagnostic report validated by stakeholders	Week 14	25%
3. Validation	Presentation of diagnostic to technical and non-technical audiences. Summary report of validation workshops outlining core elements of Framework	Week 18	25%
4. Framework	Final National Social Protection Framework incorporating feedback from Technical and Steering Committees, and presented at launch event	Week 26	40%

VI. Inputs Provided to the Consultant

All expenses related to the workshops and their planning will be covered by the government. In addition, the government will facilitate domestic travel required for the Consultant to visit a representative set of atolls for data gathering and validation.

Data required for the diagnostic will be provided by the government to the Consultant where possible, or summaries of data prepared by the government for the Consultant in the case that raw data cannot be shared.

VII. Travel

The consultant should within their bid – as a separate line item – budget for travel, accommodation and incidentals for four visits to Maldives during the assignment:

- (i) **Inception phase:** mission of about 1 week, to conduct the inception workshop and start collecting data for the diagnostic;

- (ii) **Diagnostic phase:** mission of 2-3 weeks to interview key informants and hold technical working groups on key findings from the diagnostic with the government technical team;
- (iii) **Validation phase:** mission of 1 week to Male and three atolls to discuss the final draft Framework with a broad range of stakeholders;
- (iv) **Launch:** mission of 1 week to Male to launch the Framework.

VIII. Required Qualifications

- (i) Post-Graduate Degree in Public Policy, Development Policy, Economics, or other relevant field in the social sciences.
- (ii) At least fifteen years of progressively responsible professional work experience in the development, implementation, supervision, research, analysis and evaluation of social protection programs in developing countries.
- (iii) Experience in social protection policy development and advocacy.
- (iv) Experience in facilitating policy development working groups and conferences.
- (v) Experience in small island states would be a plus.
- (vi) Fluency in English.
- (vii) Demonstrated ability to deal sensitively in multi-cultural environments.
- (viii) Excellent diplomacy and demonstrated political acumen.