

**Workshop on the organization of
National Statistical Systems and user-producer relations for
Countries in South Asia**

Country Paper

Maldives

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Introduction

Maldives is a small-island developing nation situated in the Indian Ocean and belonging to the region of South Asia. It consists of about 1190 tiny islands scattered across 26 coral atolls stretching from 7° 6' 30" North to 0° 41' 48" South, between 72° 33' 19" and 73° 46' 13" East. Of these 194 are inhabited (Census, 2006). The total population of the country as reported in the census of 2006 was 298,968 persons with a sex ratio of 103 males per 100 females.

Maldives witnessed significant social and economic development during the past two decades. The economy grew by 7.6% in 2007, an impressive recovery after the tsunami. Despite a sharp drop in fish catch which reduced GDP growth by 1.5 percentage points, tourism sector grew by about 10%. The tourism sector currently shares a little less than one-third of GDP.

Inflation, as measured by the national consumer price index, averaged 7.4% in 2007 compared with 3.5% in the previous year. As the country imports almost all the commodities it consumes, such as petroleum, food, and construction materials, global commodity prices, especially of petroleum, affect domestic inflation and tourism's cost structure.

GDP is projected to grow by 8.3% in 2008, bolstered by additional resorts becoming operational and a consequent steady increase in tourists. A rebound in the fish catch to normal levels is also assumed in line with expert opinion. Growth is likely to be at 10.3% in 2009. With higher global oil prices, inflation is penciled in at about 6.0% in 2008 and 2009. With continued growth in tourism and a rebound in fish exports, the current account deficit as a share of GDP will stabilize and then improve in 2009.

Improving coordination in National Statistical System

THE CURRENT STATISTICAL SYSTEM OF MALDIVES

The statistical system of the Maldives is decentralized, with the various government ministries and agencies generating statistics through censuses, surveys and through by-product of administrative and regulatory functions.

The Statistics Division of the Ministry of Planning and National Development (MPND) occupies a key role in generating all-purpose statistics of population and households and businesses through censuses and surveys; and in compiling the national accounts of the Maldives. It has the critical role of coordinating the statistical activities in the country. The coordination role should ensure that all the agencies generating statistics follow common definitions and standards and hence take lead in developing statistical manpower resources in the country to undertake these activities in the most effective way. Furthermore, it should also take the lead in developing statistical manpower resources in the country.

The following are the ministries and agencies that generate the statistics and the ministries/agencies collecting or publishing them:

Table 1: Overview of main statistical data sets compiled by Ministries and Agencies

Ministry/agency	Type of Statistics	Source of statistics
MPND/ Statistics Division	General purpose statistics	Censuses and surveys of population, households and establishments
	National accounts	Compilation from various sources
Maldives Monetary Authority	Balance of Payments	Compilation from various sources
	Financial and monetary statistics	By-product of administrative and regulatory functions on banks and other financial institutions
Ministry of Finance, Internal Revenue	Government finance statistics	Budget and statement of government revenue and expenditure
Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture	Fisheries, agriculture, sand and coral mining	Questionnaires to vessels and atoll offices and by-product of administrative and regulatory functions
Ministry of Construction and Public Works	Construction statistics (<i>government construction</i>)	Results of construction bidding and other by-products of administrative functions
Ministry of Trade and Industry	Register of companies, partnerships and proprietorships (<i>list and annual reports of profit and loss and balance sheets of companies</i>)	By-product of regulatory function of providing license to operate and monitoring operations
Ministry of Health	Vital registration and health statistics	By-product of service delivery and regulatory functions
Ministry of Education	Education statistics	By-product of service delivery and regulatory functions
Ministry of Higher Education, Employment and Social Security	Manpower, labor and employment statistics (<i>expatriate labor, vacancies and job seekers, and overseas training of government staff</i>)	By-product of regulatory and administrative functions
Ministry of Defense and National Security	Defense and national security	By-product of administrative functions
Ministry of Tourism	Tourism (<i>tourists, resorts and tourism manpower</i>)	By-product of regulatory and administrative functions
Ministry of Justice	Judicial statistics	By-product of regulatory and administrative functions
Maldives Customs Service	External trade statistics	By-product of administrative functions

Statistical coordinating committee

The Statistical Coordinating Committee was established in 2000 with representatives from of all the key ministries, departments and agencies. It enabled the key organizations a forum to discuss and share information on important statistical activities that have been conducted or planned by their organizations.

The meetings of the Statistical Coordinating Committee are chaired by the Minister of Planning and National Development. Members of the Committee comprises of senior level officials including deputy ministers, permanent secretaries and executive directors or senior level officers dealing with areas related to statistics of their sector.

Since the main committee has got 35-40 members at all times, the Statistical Coordinating Committee has been split into two sub-committees for technical sittings. The Socio-demographic sector committee and the Economic sector committee separately attend the issues related to their respective areas. Hence meetings become more focused. Meetings and discussions on general issues relating to both the committees are attended by the entire committee.

Statistics regulation of the Republic of Maldives

The statistics regulation of the Republic of Maldives was formulated in 1999. The purpose of this regulation is to standardize the data collection, compilation, publication and utilization of statistical data in the Maldives. In addition, this regulation ensures the confidentiality of information, minimize respondent burden and avoid overlap of data collection operations. The Ministry of Planning and National Development is responsible for the execution of the regulation.

Under the statistical regulation the information obtained from the data collection operation requires a standardized coding system or classification in compliance with international or national standards. Any newly developed coding systems or a classification has to be acceptable to the Ministry of Planning and National Development.

The information identified, as designated statistics shall only be published with the permission from the Ministry of Planning and National Development. Under the regulation, the statistical information obtained from the data collection operation can only be published as aggregated totals, in accordance with the principles of statistical compilation. Information obtained shall not be disclosed or published in a manner that will disclose the identity of the provider. Confidentiality must be accorded to any information that is obtained from permitted data collection operations, which would disclose the identity of the provider.

Survey approval process

The statistical regulation of Maldives requires all government, non government and individuals to take permission to conduct surveys and censuses from the Ministry of Planning and National Development. An application for approval must be submitted to the Ministry of Planning and National Development, 4 (four) weeks prior to the commencement of the survey. MPND will then evaluate the application and permission will be given after 1 week of the submission of the completed survey approval form.

Autonomy of National Statistical Offices

In 1978, the government of Maldives recognized the necessity for the systematic collection of administrative, enterprise and household data for the purpose of macroeconomic and sectoral monitoring, management and planning of the Maldivian economy. This recognition led to the creation of the National Planning Agency that has been upgraded and integrated within a ministry, currently the Ministry of Planning and National Development. With the increasing importance to timely and reliable statistics, a separate section under the Ministry was formed in 1980 named as statistics section. The SS was then upgraded in 2006 to a division with four sections and 9 sub-units.

The organization of the statistical service in Maldives is of a decentralized nature. As a result it requires strong co-ordination and established links between the various agencies. Hence, regulatory framework is required to prevent duplicate and limit expensive data collection exercises by different government agencies and enhance the sharing of statistics maintained by various organizations. At present MPND is drafting the statistics act which could be in place in 2010 as required by the 7 National Development plan of the country.

How can we increase user engagement?

MPND actively explore ways to increase the user engagement in statistics. This is partly carried out through the statistical coordinating committee established with representatives from key ministries and agencies. At the beginning of each calendar year members are advised to share with other members the statistical survey and other data collection schedules, which are then discussed in the committee. This would help reduce duplication of data collection activities. Furthermore, it helps to maintain the quality of statistics collected, by sharing the methodologies and various classifications used by ministries and agencies.

The members are also required to present details of various statistical activities and projects which the ministries and agencies are actively involved in.

The user feedback is also taken into account to improve the quality of statistical publications. In this regard, user feedbacks are taken from the users of the Statistical Year Book of Maldives.

MPND is also committed to prepare and publish statistics in a user friendly manner and incorporate user friendly technology integrating data with maps. One of the latest such application is the MaldivelInfo software. This is an indicator based database easily executable in MS Windows environment. It is also designed to extract indicators with maps, charts, tables, and users are able to produce presentation slides using the software. User feedbacks are taken into account in the new developments of the software.

MPND also take feedback of users from the participants of statistical workshops and training programs conducted by us. The MPND website also disseminates statistics and the user feedback can be given to SD by emails and telephone.

How useful are administrative data for statistical purpose

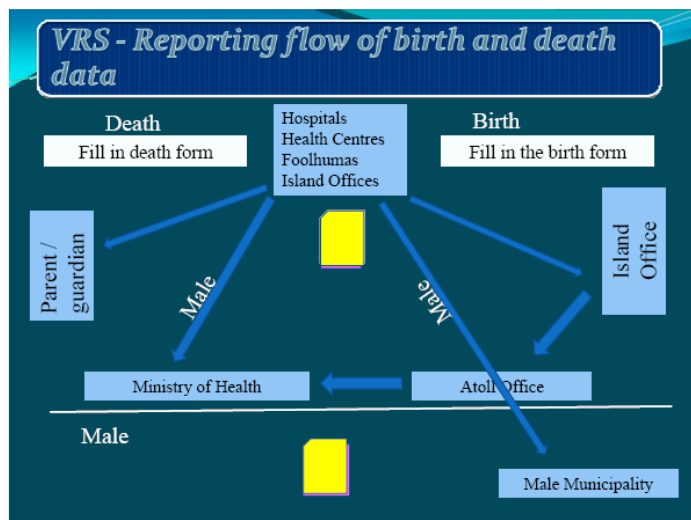
With a decentralized statistical system various government ministries and agencies generate statistics through censuses and surveys and as by-products of their administrative and regulatory tasks.

The Ministry of Planning and National development compiles and publishes the annual series of the Maldives Statistical Year book which includes comprehensive statistical information on various aspects of the economy and social conditions in the Maldives. The data are gathered from various ministries and agencies and these data are collected as a by-product of administrative and regulatory functions of these respective ministries and agencies.

Table 1 shows the organization and the type of statistics maintained by them. The following are some important administrative data and how it is used for statistical purposes.

Vital registration and health statistics

Vital registration is undertaken by the island offices using standardized forms provided by the Ministry of Health. These forms are then transferred via Atoll Offices to the Ministry of Health, which in turn process the data to derive key indicators on birth and death rates, mortality rates by cause, infant, child and maternal mortality, and age specific mortality rates. It is a legal requirement to report deaths and births in the country (law enacted in 1993).



As part of the service delivery and regulatory function of the Ministry of Health, it generates statistics derived from vital registration and on the delivery and facilities of health services from hospitals health centers and private health clinic. The ministry collects these data through the atoll offices and various service delivery points, processes the data and release the statistics to government agencies and international institutions, with an average lag of six months after the reference period. Using several types of reporting forms, the ministry generates statistics, incidence and prevalence of diseases, health facilities and services delivery, manpower and basic health services including immunization and hospital related statistics.

Health Information System (HIS) consists of various subsystems. They are:

- Vital Registration System
- Diseases Surveillance
- Immunization
- Nutrition
- Safe Motherhood
- Reproductive Health and Family Planning
- Hospital data and other service based data

Education statistics

The Ministry of Education generates statistics as part of its service delivery and regulatory functions. In general, education statistics are collected annually as a survey, by sending questionnaires to all schools in the country. The ministry regularly collects the following information from all schools:

- Student enrolment (by age, grade, sex)
- Number of teachers (by qualification, level, region)
- Staff characteristics at schools
- In-service training of teachers
- Number of classes by session
- New entrants to grade one
- Number of school leavers at different levels
- Allocation of subject period to teachers
- Facilities available
- Number of classrooms, toilets, water tanks, etc
- Income/expenditure

The statistics on number of schools, enrolment by level, teachers etc, are released annually by the Ministry of Education in their Annual Education Statistics Yearbook in print and electronic media. Data on other educational establishments are collected through registration process.

Labour statistics

The Ministry of Higher Education, Employment and Social Security collects statistics as by product of its administrative and regulatory functions. It is in charge of giving quota for foreign workers working in the country and allocation of overseas training of government personnel. It also collects information on secondary school graduates, employment, vacancies advertised and job seekers.

Data on expatriate employment are collected through two forms – application for quota (to be completed in order to get or to increase quota to bring expatriates) and application for work permit (to get permission to bring expatriates). Information on expatriates collected through these forms includes: name, address, passport number, application date, employer's name/company, sex, type of employment, work site, visa duration, occupation and salary.

Statistics collected on expatriates employed is available on a monthly basis under "facts and figures" on Ministry of Higher Education Employment and Social Security website. Annual statistics on expatriate employment is also published in the Statistical Yearbook of Maldives (SYB).

Ministry of Higher Education Employment and Social Security also disseminates statistics on job vacancies, job seekers and overseas training, by the ministry and through their website.

Data on government employment are maintained partly by the Civil Service Commission of the Republic of Maldives and the public service division of the President's Office. Information on number of temporary and permanent employees by sex and sector of employment are published in the SYB.

Law and order statistics

The database maintained by the Ministry of Defence and National Security covers various aspects of law and order, one of which is crime statistics. These statistics are derived from police and other law enforcement authorities in the country. Weekly reports on these statistics are provided to relevant ministries on selected topics. Statistics on accidental deaths are published periodically in the annual Statistical Yearbook of Maldives.

Judicial statistics

As by-product of the judicial function of the Ministry of Justice, it collects and release statistics on judicial cases handled by the courts in Male' and all the other islands of the country. The statistics cover marriages and divorces, finished and unfinished cases, new assigned cases. The data on convicts by different crimes are disaggregated by age and sex.

The ministry maintains the Judicial Information Management System. The statistics generated are feedback to the judicial courts for information on their performance. Most recent and up-to-date statistics are provided to the Office of the President on a weekly and monthly basis. They are also distributed to international organizations.

Role of NSO in analysis, including the provision of micro data.

The Statistics Division (SD, acting as NSO) of the Ministry of Planning and National Development (MPND) occupies a key role in generating all-purpose statistics such as population and households and businesses through censuses and surveys; and in compiling the national accounts.

MPND is responsible to conduct the Population and Housing Census in every 5 years. The summary tables and analytical reports are compiled and published in print and electronic media. MPND also publishes the database on the ministry website.

The Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (HIES), Vulnerability and Poverty Assessment surveys and Economic Surveys are the most important regular statistical surveys conducted by MPND/SD. The results and analytical reports are also published along with database in both print and electronic media.

Adjusting the statistical organization to emerging statistical issues

The need for statistics has been acknowledged and accepted by almost every sector. There is a great demand for statistics by all agencies, including public, private and NGOs. Need for quick results of the surveys and census are been

expressed by all users. With the rapid economic and socio-demographic development, timely data is very much on demand. Therefore, the latest technology in data processing, data transfer, data presentation and dissemination is highly desirable.

Therefore, in the last census of population and housing, scanning with ICR software was used to speedup the data entry process. Data sets containing micro-data has been provided to researchers and data-users. Soft versions of all statistical publications have been produced and made available for the users. Software specialized in data dissemination like DevInfo has been customized with available data and encouraged its use by holding workshops and demonstration sessions for various groups including journalists, news reporters, high level and middle level officials in the government, business organizations and groups.

Human resource and unavailability of staff at atoll level and island level is a major obstacle for the development of statistics. All our staff are stationed in the centre and so far the efforts to keep statistical officers at local level has not been well understood or recognized by the government authorities. Therefore, our dependency on the administrative staff without much knowledge on statistics at island offices, schools and health centres causes lot of delay and unreliable data. We require at least one statistical officer to be stationed in each atoll immediately and one in each island as we go on. This proposal has been submitted to the concerned authorities every year, and hope for a positive outcome in a near future.

Human resource development is one of the key areas where lot of work still has to be done. At present lack of specialized tertiary education in the country hinders to get the qualified staff. Since the entry level staff comes straight from high-schools, specialized statistical training has to be provided during the initial period of employment. The SD of MPND with the financial assistance of affiliated institutes like the United Nations Statistical Institute for the Asia and the Pacific, (UNSIAP) have been conducting regular short term statistical training courses and in-country courses. They greatly benefit to achieve the basic level statistical training to our new staff. We also conduct basic training courses focusing statistical staff to ministries and agencies as well as Atoll/Island office staff.

However, much needed academically qualified staff in specialized fields is a constraint that we need to address urgently for Maldives to keep pace with the developments in an ever changing world.

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