



Ministry of Higher Education,
Labour and Skills Development



National Human Capital Needs Assessment REPORT SUMMARY 2024

Copyright and Acknowledgments

Copyright © 2024

By Ministry of Higher Education, Labour and Skills Development
Umar Zahir Office Building, 5th Floor, Hulhumalé, Malé City, Maldives.

All rights reserved. The document or extracts from this publication may, however, be freely reviewed, quoted, reproduced, or translated, in part or in full, provided the source is given due acknowledgement. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the Ministry of Higher Education, Labour and Skills Development.

Published by: Ministry of Higher Education, Labour and Skills Development.

Authored by: Nexia Maldives Pvt. Ltd., Malé, Maldives.

Research and Authoring Team:

Hamid Sodique, Team Leader and Economic Expert
Fareeha Shareef, Technical Advisor
Maleeka Salih, Social Sector and Research Expert
Mohamed Inaz, Sustainability Expert
Dheena Shareef, Researcher & Project Coordinator
Mohamed Shafy Rasheed, Researcher

Critical Review from the Ministry of Higher Education, Labour and Skills Development by:

Dr. Abdulla Phairoosch, Former Minister of State
Dr. Abdulla Nazeer, Minister of State
Sharmeela Abdul Gafoor, Manager, SAILS Project
Naima Mohamed, Manager – Gender and Safeguards, SAILS Project

Layout and Design: Ahmed Fayaz / Nexia Maldives. Cover: Fathimath Najeel

CONTENTS

STATEMENT FROM THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, LABOUR AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	03
FOREWORD	04
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	05
SOURCES OF DATA AND REPORT STRUCTURE	05
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT AND KEY CHALLENGES TO SUSTAINABLE GROWTH	05
KEY FINDINGS:	06
NATIONAL WORKFORCE OVERVIEW	06
SKILLS SUPPLY IN THE MALDIVES	06
WORKFORCE, OCCUPATIONS AND SKILLS LEVEL	07
LABOUR DEMAND ANALYSIS	08
KEY FINDINGS: SECTORAL OVERVIEW	08
LABOUR DEMAND VS SUPPLY GAPS	11
HUMAN CAPITAL NEEDS FORECAST	12
FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH	13
CONCLUSION	13
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GENERAL SKILLS AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MALDIVES	13
SECTOR-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS	15
APPENDIX – C: GLOSSARY OF TERMS	17

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ALMPs	Active Labour Market Programmes
ATO	Asian Transport Outlook
CAGR	Compound Annual Growth Rate
CDSS	Centre for Defence and Security Studies
CGE	Computable General Equilibrium
CoPS	Centre of Policy Studies
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSTI	Civil Service Training Institute
DAI	Digital Adoption Index
ECG	Electrocardiogram
ENT	Ear, Nose and Throat
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HCI	Human Capital Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HEI	Higher Education Institute
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICU	Intensive Care Unit
IGMH	Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISCED-11	International Standard Classification of Education
ISCO-08	International Standard Classification of Occupations
IUM	Islamic University of Maldives
MBS	Maldives Bureau of Statistics
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MMA	Maldives Monetary Authority
MNSDA	Maldives National Skills Development Authority
MNU	The Maldives National University
MOE	Ministry of Education
MoED	Ministry of Economic Development
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education, Labour and Skills Development
MQA	Maldives Qualifications Authority
MQF	Maldives Qualifications Framework
MSME	Micro-, Small & Medium Enterprises
MVR	Maldivian Rufiyaa
NALOs	National Assessment of Learning Outcomes
NCDs	Non-Communicable Diseases
NCPL	National College of Policing and Law Enforcement
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RTL	Raajje Transport Link
SAP	Strategic Action Plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SME	Small & Medium Enterprises
SOEs	State-Owned Enterprises
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocation Education and Training
UHCI	Utilisation of Human Capital Index
UMIC	Upper Middle-Income Country
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VUEF	Victoria University Employment Forecasting

STATEMENT FROM THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, LABOUR AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

It is with great pride that I present the Maldives Human Capital Needs Assessment Report, a pivotal study that will shape the future of workforce development in the Maldives. This report, conducted with the technical assistance of the Sustainable and Integrated Labor Services (SAILS) Project, funded by the World Bank, serves as a vital guide for policymakers, educational institutions, and industry leaders in making informed decisions about human capital development.

As we strive for sustainable development and economic prosperity, investing in our people remains at the heart of our national agenda. This comprehensive study illuminates the critical challenges and opportunities in building a skilled and adaptable workforce. It provides key insights into labor market trends, skills gaps, and the evolving demands of various industries, enabling us to design targeted policies and educational programs that align with the future of work.

The findings of this report underscore the importance of collaboration between the government, private sector, and educational institutions to bridge skill gaps and enhance employment opportunities. By fostering an ecosystem that supports lifelong learning, skills development, and innovation, we can unlock the full potential of our workforce and drive sustainable economic growth.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the World Bank, the SAILS Project team, and all stakeholders who contributed to this crucial assessment. Your dedication and expertise have been instrumental in producing a roadmap that will guide us toward a more resilient, inclusive, and prosperous future.

Together, let us take meaningful action to develop our most valuable resource – our people.

Dr Ali Haidar Ahmed

Minister

Ministry of Higher Education, Labour and Skills Development



FOREWORD

It is with great pride that I present the National Human Capital Needs Assessment Report, a comprehensive analysis addressing the critical needs and challenges of the Maldivian workforce. This report provides a strategic roadmap for advancing human capital development, offering valuable insights to bridge gaps in education, skills training, and employment opportunities.

The findings emphasise pressing issues such as skills mismatches, regional and sectoral disparities, and the urgent need to align education and training systems with labour market demands. Addressing these challenges requires swift, coordinated efforts to ensure sustainable growth and equitable opportunities for all sectors and regions of the country.

This study was initially initiated by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, and I acknowledge their valuable contributions in shaping this research and defining the parameters for the survey. I also extend my deepest gratitude to the World Bank for their invaluable technical assistance in conducting this study. Their expertise and collaboration have been instrumental in the development of this report, which will guide policymakers, industry leaders, and educational institutions in implementing targeted reforms. This report is timely, as the government finalises its Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028 and the Ministry continues its commitment to the “Employment for All” policy. Our initiatives focus on developing human resource capacity in highly technical fields to prepare the workforce for future-ready demands.

By implementing the recommendations outlined in this report, we aim to establish a resilient workforce that can thrive in an evolving economy, reduce dependency on foreign labor, and contribute to inclusive and sustainable national development. Together, we can ensure that the Maldives achieves its full potential by leveraging its most valuable asset—our human capital.

Dr. Abdulla Nazeer

Minister of State for Higher Education,
Labour and Skills Development



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a comprehensive, multi-faceted study to assess the National Human Capital Needs of the Maldives. The purposes of this study are multi-fold: namely, to produce a roadmap for national training priorities; assess employment potential and skills requirements at sectoral and occupational levels in different regions of the country; profile the current and potential workforce at educational levels; evaluate the current supply of training and skills development; provide an occupations listing; and analyse prevailing training and salary gaps.

The scope of this study covers: the main strategic sectors based on national economic plans, policy frameworks and existing labour demand studies; the working-age population, including the employed, unemployed, active jobseekers and the potential labour force; NEET youth; and the current training landscape and provisions.

Sources of data and report structure

The study draws on both primary and secondary data for its analyses. Secondary data sources include the following: datasets on working-age population and the working population from the Census 2022; income data from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2019; the National Jobseekers Listings for the year February 2023– February 2024; and datasets on graduates from Maldivian TVET and HEIs from the Ministry of Higher Education for the years 2019–2023. Primary data sources include: a nationally representative public survey of 1,639 Maldivian respondents aged 15 to 60 years; 25 individual and 20 group key informant interviews comprising 112 individuals and 50 institutional entities in total; structured interviews with non-representative sample of 152 businesses selected for key characteristics; and 6 focus group discussions (FGDs) with a total of 62 participant youth aged between 16 to 28 years in selected islands.

The key components of this report are as follows: an analytical description of the development context and key challenges and considerations for human capital development for sustainable growth; an overview of the workforce and supply of labour; an overview of selected economic sectors in the Maldives and an analysis of labour demand; an overview of the cross-sectoral gaps and priorities and future labour demand.

This report also provides a list of strategic recommendations in each section of the report, based on the study findings. The findings and recommendations of this report are intended to guide effective delivery of education and employment services by the relevant institutions, with the goal of achieving more inclusive and sustainable growth and national development by optimally leveraging the country's assets – human capital, natural assets, and financial resources.

Human development context and key challenges to sustainable growth

For the purposes of this study, the definition of human capital is understood as comprising the aggregate knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes that people in a country possess, acquired through a life-long learning process that takes place across the lifetime and in many settings and contexts. Equally, developing human capital is taken to be a multi-sectoral endeavour, requiring understanding of the current development context, achievements, and challenges.

The Maldives has achieved impressive results across several measures of human development. From one of the poorest countries in the world in the 1970s, it attained upper middle-income status by 2011, largely due to the development of its high-end tourism industry and its investments in health and education. Access to basic utilities and infrastructure is generally high across the country. On the World Bank Human Capital Index (HCI), the country performs relatively well at 0.596, a score largely driven by its positive health outcomes and high primary education enrolment rates. However, adjustments for low utilisation of human capital and the quality of education affects these scores. Regional and gender inequalities on measures related to human capital are deep and profound, highlighting a critical need for targeted policymaking and transformative interventions.

Policymaking and intervention initiatives must address the structural, economic, and social challenges facing the Maldives. The country's small-island geography—characterised by widely dispersed islands with low populations—makes service provision time-consuming and costly, infrastructure development challenging, and economies of scale difficult to achieve. These issues are further exacerbated by limited affordable transport and travel options. Additionally, extreme climate vulnerability poses serious threats to the nation's physical integrity, economy, and overall well-being. There is an urgent need for effective, future-oriented policymaking and interventions to build resilience, strengthen local capacities, and advance climate change mitigation, adaptation, innovation, and management.

The Maldives has one of the fastest ageing populations in South Asia. Internal migration has resulted in growing urban populations while rural communities become smaller and older. An interplay of skills shortages, low wages, and demanding working conditions has led to a large migrant workforce, which plays a vital role in the Maldivian economy. Food insecurity remains a persistent challenge due to the country's limited cultivable land and poor soil quality. The fisheries sector is in relative decline, and the agriculture sector remains minimal. Transformative and innovative efforts are urgently needed to revitalise these sectors and strengthen local capacities for sustainable growth.

Economic diversification, enhancing the tourism sector, revitalising the fisheries sector, strengthening domestic markets and the MSME sector, effective macroeconomic policy management, and fostering technological adoption and capacity building are key economic challenges for the Maldives. Social development challenges include the need to expand evidence-based policymaking and improve governance

practices. Critical areas for capacity building include data science, data-driven resource allocation, and fostering meaningful citizen engagement. Healthcare issues are increasingly pressing due to the ageing population and anticipated climate-induced health risks. Inadequate preparedness within the healthcare system to address these challenges could prove costly and undermine the gains in human capital development achieved through positive health outcomes.

Low levels of women's participation in the labour force highlight the underutilisation of available human capital and talent. This limits women's ability to reach their full potential, actively engage in society, achieve financial independence, and secure savings for old age. Similarly, young people are under-represented in the workforce, which may contribute to social isolation and alienation. These economic and social challenges underscore the need for targeted interventions and further efforts to enhance human capital development and utilisation.

Key Findings:

NATIONAL WORKFORCE OVERVIEW

Working-age population: The Census shows the working-age population to be 411,219, of which 42 percent reside in the Malé region and 32 percent are resident foreigners. The overall working-age population in the Maldives has an extreme gender imbalance (68% men and 32% women), largely due to high numbers of working-age migrant men. Thirty-eight percent of the working-age population are aged 35-54 and only 16 percent are aged 15-24 years, suggesting a predominantly mature working-age population. Census data indicates that 7 percent of individuals in the working-age population live with a disability.

Labour force: Of the working-age population, 75 percent are in the labour force (n=300,422), over 97 percent of which are employed, indicating a low unemployment rate of 2.3 percent. The employed labour force comprises 57 percent Maldivians and 43 percent foreigners. The analysis indicates that foreigners are more likely to be employed in low-skilled elementary roles which Maldivians may not be willing to undertake and in jobs where highly qualified technically skilled Maldivians may be in short supply. The migrant population is expected to continue growing.

Unemployment: Of those in the labour force, 9,324 individuals are unemployed in the Maldives, with 62 percent aged 15-34. The unemployed population is almost entirely Maldivian, which is unsurprising as migrants are required to have employment for visa purposes. Atolls located further from Malé have the highest rates of unemployment, while those in the central atolls have the lowest. The unemployment rate amongst the Maldivian workforce is 3.3 percent.

Outside the labour force: A quarter of the working-age population are outside the labour force (n=101,473), of which 70 percent are women of working-age. Women are unable to join the labour force primarily due to family responsibilities, though many may be engaged in informal, home-based or freelance work. The non-participation rate for working-aged women is higher outside the Malé region (54% vs 48%). Sixty-six percent of those with a disability are outside the labour force.

NEET youth: A total of 10,416 youth aged 15-24 are classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). Census data show a significant decrease from 2014 to 2022 in the proportion of youth aged 18-35 (from 28% to 23%) and in those aged 15-24 (from 27.9% to 19.5%). People with disabilities constitute a significant group within the NEET youth population.

Top employers: The top three employers in the Maldivian economy are tourism and hospitality (24%), construction (14%), and trade (11%) sectors. These are also the top employers of migrant workers. The top three sectors with the highest percentage of Maldivians are public administration and defence (94.5%), trade (55.7%) and tourism (35.4%). Maldivians are more prevalent in all other sectors, such as education, health, transportation, electricity and gas supply, and ICT.

Workforce gender disparities: Gender-disaggregated data show significant workforce disparities within most sectors. Men significantly outnumber women in industries such as construction (95.5%), agriculture and fisheries (91.9%), tourism and hospitality (89%), and in most of the other sectors. Women make up the majority of the labour force in education (80%), health and social work (71%), manufacturing (64%), working in extra-terrestrial organisations (62%), and administration and support services (57%).

Income earned: Data from the HIES 2019 show that eighty percent of people in the country earn below MVR 15,000 per month. The most common income range is between MVR 5,000 and MVR 9,999 (34%). Approximately a quarter earn below MVR 5,000 (24%), while another 23% earn between MVR 10,000 and MVR 14,999. The data highlights significant regional and gender disparities in income levels.

SKILLS SUPPLY IN THE MALDIVES

Literacy and education levels: The Maldives enjoys a high literacy rate with 98.7 percent of the Maldivian population aged 10 years and above literate in their mother tongue, and 81 percent literate in the English language. Seventy-five percent of the population 15 years and above have achieved secondary education or higher and 11 percent of the population have achieved a degree or higher qualifications.

Secondary education: The national enrolment rate for higher secondary education is 44.5 percent. The enrolment of 50.4 percent for girls and 38.9 percent for boys also show a stark gender disparity in the continuity of education beyond the age of 16. A report on National Assessment of Learning Outcomes (NALOs) from 2019 indicates the quality of education is below standard. 37.8 percent of the students in Grade 4 and 43.2 percent of students in Grade 7 failed to achieve the minimum pass percentage of 40 percent.

Tertiary education: Almost a quarter of the workforce have attained higher educational qualifications, with 13.1 percent having a certificate/diploma and 10.7 percent a degree and above. Over the last decade, access to tertiary education has expanded but largely within the Malé region. Women enrol and complete higher education at higher rates than men. The Education Sector Analysis report published in 2019 highlighted several areas for improvement in higher education, including issues of governance, regulatory oversight and quality.

TVET: TVET is beset by a number of challenges although its performance and coverage has extended significantly over the past decade. Further improvements are still needed, particularly through joint collaborative work between public providers, private sector initiatives, and community organisations that strengthen education-industry linkages and exposure, starting in early and primary education. To ensure that individuals from the atolls outside of Malé can access practical training and apprenticeships, educators need to consider a combination of remote and hybrid teaching methods.

Fields of study: The range of courses available in the Maldives cover all levels from 1 – 9, as determined by the MQF of the MQA, and are related to different fields of study. There is a large number of levels 1-3 courses in the sectors of tourism and hospitality and of construction, engineering and technology, though enrolment numbers are relatively low. Courses that can be done online such as business and management related studies are more popular. Health and education related courses are also well-attended.

Interest in further education and training: Data from the Human Capital Needs Assessment (HCNA) Survey showed that with increasing age, the interest and willingness to engage in education and training declined. The most common reasons for having interest in education or training included employability, career progression, and financial betterment. The decision not to pursue further education was shaped by a combination of factors such as personal obligations, attitudes towards study age, satisfaction with current qualifications, financial constraints, and external factors such as work demands and programme availability. Gender and regional differences in reasons given for pursuing or not pursuing education were notable.

Preferred study modes: The HCNA study shows a clear preference amongst respondents for flexible and accessible study modes. More than half of the respondents preferred online study modes, whilst a quarter preferred on-campus full-time study. Balancing competency standards and optimal training conditions for different courses against student preferences is a crucial design component.

Career choice and guidance: The survey data show that three-quarters of respondents cited their interest and passion as an important driver of career choice. Other factors included talents and skills, financial goals and stability, potential for career growth and values and beliefs. Younger respondents are generally more positive while older respondents display increasing levels of dissatisfaction about available career guidance.

WORKFORCE, OCCUPATIONS AND SKILLS LEVEL

Occupational group workforce distribution: Using the ISCO-08 classifications, the Census data showed the occupational group distribution across the workforce as follows. The largest proportion of workers in the national workforce is in the category of elementary occupations (19%), followed by services and sales workers (18%), technicians and associate professionals (16%), and crafts and related trades workers (15%). Professionals and managers constitute 10 percent and 8 percent of the workforce respectively. Clerical support workers and plant and machine operators, and assemblers make up 5 percent of the workforce each. Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers (3%) and those in the armed forces (1%) constitute the smallest proportions of the national workforce.

Skills distribution: These figures show that the proportion of high-skilled workers within the workforce (generally categorised under major groups 1-3 in the ISCO-08) is high at 32 percent, against the global average of approximately 20 percent. Medium-skilled workers (generally in the categories 4-8 in the ISCO-08) constitute 46 percent of the workforce. The share of those in elementary occupations within a population is higher than the global average of 15 percent.

Regional disparities: Eighty percent of the armed forces, 60 percent of managers, and 55 percent from each of the two categories of professionals and clerical support workers are based in the Malé region. On the other hand, 95 percent of agricultural, forestry and fishery workers, 65 percent of elementary occupational workers, and 64 percent of crafts and related trades workers are based in the atolls. The relatively sparse level of high-skilled workers in the regional zones outside of the Malé region is cause for concern.

Gender disparities: Men make up the significant majority of the workforce in each of the occupational categories with the exception of professional positions. More than 90 percent of the workforce in the categories of armed forces, agricultural and fishery workers and plant and machine operators are men. Approximately 75 percent of managers, technicians and associate professionals, and services and sales workers are men. Women make up the majority of the workforce in the professional category (59%), primarily as preschool and primary teachers, other teaching professionals, nurses and midwives. When these education and healthcare-related occupations are removed, the situation is reversed, with 58 percent of the professional workforce being men.

Maldivians and migrants: Over 60 percent of the workforce in the categories of elementary occupations and of crafts and related trades and half of the services and sales workforce are migrants. Maldivians make up the significant majority in all other occupational categories. The data shows that there is a need to target interventions towards occupation groups 5-8 to raise the number of competitively skilled Maldivians in these groups. These are semi-skilled occupations; most of the courses available that relate to these occupations are only at level 1-3.

LABOUR DEMAND ANALYSIS

Most common problems for MSMEs: Findings regarding labour demand were obtained from a smaller-scale non-representative survey of 152 businesses and employers from selected islands in different regions, comprising mainly MSMEs. Businesses noted labour shortages, financial services and quality of labour to be the most common critical problems and see labour issues as a key hindrance to their growth.

Top recruitment methods: The most common recruitment method was advertising on websites or social media (53%), followed by seeking recommendations or candidates through relatives and friends. The least common methods included searching for potential employees through education or training institutions (1.3%), offering work experience placements (2%), and attending job fairs (2.6%). Encouraging employers to better target potential employee groups, expand their search methods, and explore alternative approaches could help bridge the gaps between skills supply and job requirements.

Desired employee attributes: When assessing key job attributes, a significant majority of businesses cited positive attitude (80%) and communication skills (75%) as essential. Other important attributes included job-specific technical skills (69%), educational qualifications (51%), critical thinking skills (35%), and relevant work or internship experience (25%). Businesses that prioritise soft skills may need to implement stronger, more explicit on-the-job training, well-designed orientation programmes, and ongoing mentoring schemes. Additionally, improving employers' ability to assess job-specific talent during interviews and identify potential candidates is another important area for development.

Matching employee concerns: While businesses identified remuneration (55%), interesting work (48%), and opportunities for further skill and capability development (40%) as key factors in maintaining a productive and skilled workforce, concerns commonly raised by young people, such as flexible work arrangements, work-life balance, and effective leadership and management, were less frequently mentioned. To attract a larger potential workforce, employers may need to consider offering flexible work arrangements, family-friendly policies, and strong leadership and management practices.

Engagement with education and training providers: The survey revealed that 79 percent of businesses noted no engagement with education and training providers. Others provided work experience to students (12%), providing apprenticeships/ traineeships to school and college graduates (10%), providing internships or project work (8%) and participating in research projects with colleges or students (3.3%). In addition, 13 percent noted that they participated in workshops/ training initiatives of educational institutes.

Wages across sectors: Earnings varied across sectors. A consistent pattern is the evident regional and gender-based income disparity. Women are overwhelmingly clustered in the lowest income brackets, in sectors such as construction, accommodation and food service activities, agriculture and fishing, ICT, and wholesale and retail trade. In the Malé region, men generally earned higher incomes in sectors such as ICT and wholesale and retail trade. In contrast, regions such as the North Central and South Regions show a stark concentration of

both genders in the lowest income brackets, particularly in agriculture and fishing.

KEY FINDINGS: SECTORAL OVERVIEW

Tourism and Hospitality Sector: The sector is the biggest employer in the Maldivian economy, engaging 23.6 percent of the working population. Eighty-four percent of the workers are employed in resorts. People are more likely to reside in resorts than commute (87% vs 13%). Men make up 87.9 percent of the workforce in the sector, while women constitute 12.1 percent. At present, 64.6 percent of the sector's workforce comprise foreigners compared to 35.4 percent Maldivians. There are more young Maldivians aged 15-24 years in the workforce than foreigners, but many appear to leave after the age of 24 years. Stakeholder representatives noted that many young people (aged 15-24 years) join the sector for a short period of time, earn and save money, and then move on to other work or establish their own businesses.

Maldivians are likely to enter the industry for a variety of reasons; to earn money for capital, experience something different, broaden one's own horizons, develop a career in hospitality; many leave after the age of 24 and only some stay long-term. The tourism industry conceptualising resorts as similar in some respects to cruise-ships as a transient workplace for many people may be useful. Concerns about working in the industry range from resort operator preference for migrants, lack of relevant skills, experience and qualifications amongst the local population, prevalent stereotypes about resort life and religious concerns and a reluctance to leave their communities and travel away. Special attention needs to be given to retention of women in the industry.

The further development of the tourism industry, including sustainable tourism, domestic tourism, eco-tourism, and local guesthouses and hotels require additional skilled labour and strategies for attracting and developing human capital. Another key concern is that of climate-proofing the industry through mitigation, adaptation and innovation. These efforts demand specialist skills, which should be incorporated into a national initiative to develop expertise related to anticipating and managing the impacts of climate change.

The sector's workforce is highly concentrated in service and sales roles (34.1%), with minimal representation in managerial (8.3%) and professional roles (2.4%). A number of relevant fields of study can be identified that could meaningfully contribute to the sector if skills specialisation programmes or course electives were made available to those interested in pursuing careers in the tourism and hospitality sector. These courses include accounting, architecture, building and civil engineering, electricity and energy, environmental sciences, finance, banking and insurance, language acquisition, marketing and administration, motor vehicles, ships and aircraft, protection of people and property, sports, and transport. For example, electives offered within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) or programmes provided by industry players and professionals could help build sector-specific skills specialisation options for all the fields of study identified above.

Data from the HIES 2019 show that the median salary in the sector to be MVR 7,750 with a standard deviation of MVR 7,890. The majority of people working in this sector were more likely to earn in the lowest

two income brackets; 80 percent of women and 56 percent of men do not earn above MVR 9,999. Despite being a significant contributor to the economy, the figures show that workers in this sector do not earn a substantially higher salary in comparison to other sectors.

Construction Sector: The construction sector is the second-largest employer in the Maldives, accounting for 14 percent of the working population. Ninety-nine percent of the workforce are men, and 85 percent are foreign workers. The sector is closely aligned with government infrastructure projects, private sector residential initiatives, and tourism development. Ninety-four percent of painters, building structure cleaners, and related tradespeople are foreigners, as are 90 percent of mining and construction labourers. In contrast, more than 80 percent of managers, architects, planners, surveyors, and designers are Maldivians. These figures suggest that Maldivians are more likely to work in high-skilled positions within the construction sector when they choose to join it.

The construction sector in the Maldives presents a complex landscape shaped by several critical factors affecting local and foreign labour dynamics. Foreign contractors often bring their own labour forces and resources whose skills and capacities match the project they have undertaken, so that requisite skills are within the workforce, and they are able to deliver projects to standard and timely.

There is scope to promote the construction industry amongst the local workforce especially in the highly skilled and medium-skilled categories, however this requires working partnerships and agreements with a range of construction companies (both large and small) and financing for small- and medium-scale companies to provide apprenticeships and to enable their growth. The construction sector also faces significant challenges related to climate resilience. Building practices in the Maldives must evolve to address the risks posed by rising sea levels and extreme weather conditions. There is an increasing demand for skills related to climate-resilient construction methods, such as flood-resistant building designs and sustainable materials.

Half of the construction workforce has never attained formal education (49.5%), and only 4.3 percent hold degrees or higher qualifications. Just 17.2 percent have completed secondary education, while a small proportion have achieved higher secondary education (4.2%) or vocational training (5.8%). Although certificate courses are available for many of these occupations, the standards may be too low to ensure that individuals are adequately skilled for modern, large-scale construction works. On the other hand, the number of Maldivian managers in the industry indicates that higher-level qualifications are helping to integrate the local workforce into the industry at various levels.

The HIES 2019 dataset shows that the median salary in the sector is reported to be MVR 8,000, with a standard deviation of MVR 7,943. Workers earning in the lowest two income brackets comprise the majority of respondents (56%), and there is considerable variance in income distribution across different groups. More than a third of respondents earned between MVR 10,000 and MVR 24,999 (36%), while 8 percent earned above MVR 25,000, suggesting that construction work is likely to offer better earning potential.

Education Sector: The education sector in the Maldives employs 6.7 percent of the working population. Education is delivered through a system of public and private schools and colleges. Maldivians comprise 87 percent of the workforce, with women accounting for 74.3 percent. The majority of the education sector's workforce is classified under high skill levels (64%), with very few classified under low skill levels (8.2%) or medium skill levels (7.2%).

Within general education, there are teacher shortages, challenges in workforce retention, and difficulties in ensuring an equitable distribution of teaching staff across the country. TVET is an area of growing demand nationwide, particularly for teaching and training staff. There are also shortages in skilled labour for higher education, especially in terms of qualified teaching staff for full-time positions in secondary and higher education—a noted concern.

Greater efforts are needed to produce vocational teachers, secondary school teachers, university staff, and academics within the country. There is a pressing need for a forward-thinking approach to incorporating advanced technologies and scientific methods into educational practices. Educators should be encouraged to adopt innovative teaching strategies, particularly for online teaching, distance education, and other methods of delivering meaningful skills to individuals in remote islands.

Secondary school teachers must have knowledge of the wide range of occupations available in the Maldivian economy. For students who leave school early, providing support to help them connect with industry leaders at the national or local level can prepare them for future employment. Additionally, the growing integration of technology into educational environments is driving an increased demand for technical and associate professionals. There is a rising need for teachers and lecturers specialising in clinical and technical professions, including environmental sciences, engineering, medicine, and nursing, among other fields of study.

The median salary in the sector is reported to be MVR 8,340, with a standard deviation of MVR 5,924. There is greater variation in earnings across the five lowest income groups for both men and women. A third of women and half of men reported earnings in the range of MVR 10,000 to MVR 24,999.

Health and Social Work Sector: The health and social work sector employs 4.6 percent of the working population in the Maldives. Seventy-five percent of the workforce are Maldivians, and 65 percent are women. However, the difficulty of retaining women in the workforce, particularly nurses, was noted. In earlier decades, women relied heavily on their parents (especially mothers and grandmothers) and extended family members for childcare during work hours. Work demands were fewer (fewer hours per day), and work was structured more flexibly. To retain women in the workforce, there is a pressing need for trustworthy and high-quality childcare alternatives. Retaining the female workforce is paramount; for instance, there is currently a shortage of over 400 nurses across the country.

At present, the key concerns regarding human capital in the sector are related to the changing healthcare needs of an ageing population, the rising prevalence of non-communicable diseases, and the ability to keep up with advancements in global medical technologies. There is a need to support local doctors and nurses in undertaking specialised training

and providing opportunities for continued professional development, particularly in regional hospitals.

There is also a growing need for health-related technicians and associate professionals. ICT professionals are essential for integrating healthcare-relevant ICT technologies, medical advancements, and patient information management systems. Related technical roles include developing advanced skills to maintain hospital equipment and ensuring that hospital buildings and facilities remain in good condition. Climate resilience is also crucial in managing health impacts associated with climate change. Extreme weather events and shifting climate patterns can exacerbate existing health issues and create new challenges for healthcare services.

The median salary in the sector is reported to be MVR 10,300, with a standard deviation of MVR 8,460. Fifty-five percent of women working in the health sector earn between MVR 10,000 and MVR 24,999. This is the only sector where, across all regions, women were able to match or exceed men in earning potential. However, differences in earning potential across the regions remain significant.

Wholesale and Retail Trade Sector: The wholesale and retail trade sector in the Maldives employs 11 percent of the working population. Seventy-five percent of the workforce are men, and 55.7 percent are Maldivian. The distribution of skill levels shows that 55.3 percent of the sector's workforce have medium skills, 26.2 percent have high skills, and 15.6 percent have low skills. The wholesale and retail trade sector in the Maldives is characterised by a diverse employment landscape with a focus on frontline and management roles, reflecting the sector's operational needs and evolving market demands.

There is growing demand for modern marketing strategies and digital engagement. A shift in attitude towards embracing technological advancements and customer-centric strategies is essential. The sector has experienced rapid growth in digitalisation and e-commerce, driven by the expansion of domestic online platforms and marketplaces, as well as offshore sellers offering tourism services consumed within the country. Distribution systems and networks for goods and services are also an essential component for improving trade within the country. Developing such systems and networks requires expertise and innovation. Findings from interviews indicate a growing demand for roles in the sector, particularly for occupations in marketing, digital and technological skills, and distribution system development.

The median salary in the sector is reported to be MVR 7,500, with a standard deviation of MVR 10,668. Sixty-two percent of workers report earning an income below MVR 10,000, including 81.4 percent of women and 50.2 percent of men. Thirty-nine percent of men earned between MVR 10,000 and MVR 24,999, compared to only 16.4 percent of women.

ICT Sector: The ICT sector in the Maldives employs 1.1 percent of the working population. This sector is characterised by a predominant presence of Maldivian workers, who make up 91 percent of the workforce, and men, who account for 68.5 percent. The distribution of skill levels within the sector shows that workers are predominantly highly skilled (60.6%) and medium-skilled. This highlights the sector's reliance on highly skilled individuals to manage and advance technological infrastructure.

The Maldives ICT sector remains in its early stages, with growing interest among the youth to engage in this developing field. To ensure its growth and sustainability, it is crucial to integrate young talent into the workforce and improve digital literacy and skills across the population. Providing opportunities for further ICT skills development and the utilisation of advanced technologies to enhance services, support infrastructure, and expand the sector is also essential.

The sector is recognised for its potential to drive green, resilient, and inclusive growth in the country, given its small-island geographical dispersion and widespread internet coverage (although improvements in download speed and access to 4G and 5G networks are still needed in some parts of the country). Moreover, there has been a significant shift to online services, with the introduction of e-payment systems, telemedicine, online education, and e-commerce activities.

The ICT sector in the Maldives plays a pivotal role in the country's technological infrastructure and digital advancement. The current employment landscape within the sector reveals a diverse distribution of roles, with a notable presence of telecommunications and broadcasting technicians, who are essential for maintaining and enhancing communication networks and broadcasting systems. This underscores the sector's foundational reliance on a robust technological framework. Despite the increasing number of graduates in ICT-related fields, the total number of graduates remains relatively small compared to the sector's workforce size. To address this gap and support sector growth, it is essential to expand ICT education and training opportunities. Developing specialised courses in telecommunications, software development, and ICT support will be crucial in preparing the workforce for these evolving roles.

The ICT sector boasts the highest median income at MVR 13,485, offering the highest average earnings among the sectors analysed. The standard deviation is MVR 5,895. However, gender disparities in income are notable. Half of the women working in this sector earn below MVR 5,000, whereas only 7.7 percent of men do so. Additionally, a quarter of women in this industry earn between MVR 5,000 and MVR 9,999, compared to most men in the sector who earn between MVR 10,000 and MVR 14,999 (38.6% compared to 3.7% of women).

Agriculture and Fishing Sector: The agriculture and fishing sector in the Maldives employs 3.5 percent of the working population, with Maldivians comprising 78 percent of the workforce. The skill levels indicate that 87.6 percent are classified as medium-skilled workers, 5.5 percent as high-skilled workers, and 5.2 percent as low-skilled workers.

The fisheries sector is recognised as integral to the Maldivian economy due to its significance in employment and livelihoods, value-added production, and foreign exchange generation through exports. The agricultural sector largely consists of subsistence and supplementary-income farming. Nonetheless, it is valued for its key role in strengthening food security and supporting the socio-economic viability of households.

The National Fisheries and Agriculture Policy 2019–2029 outlines sectoral priorities for sustainable natural resource management, increasing market access, economic growth, and enabling institutional capacity building. The policy highlights measures to strengthen operational systems and capacity within the fisheries and agriculture

sectors. Implementing these priorities requires enhanced human capacities and skills development throughout both sectors. While several initiatives have been undertaken to improve skills and build capacity in these fields, public reception has been muted.

Although the sector is seen as having potential for creating employment opportunities, particularly for unskilled and semi-skilled workers, sustainable growth can only be achieved by promoting training and capacity building for those already engaged in agriculture. Acquiring farming knowledge, understanding business techniques, and achieving financial literacy are skill sets that can help workers achieve effective growth in this sector.

The current workforce distribution indicates a gap between traditional job roles and emerging industry requirements. The dominance of fishery workers, hunters, and trappers reflects a workforce primarily oriented toward conventional practices. However, evolving sectoral needs, such as the demand for cooling systems maintenance and refrigeration, underscore the necessity for skill development in technical and specialised areas. Addressing these gaps will require targeted educational and training interventions.

Key informant interviews and group discussions reveal a general lack of optimism about significant advancements in the sector. Many stakeholders believe that substantial progress is unlikely, partly due to the prevailing disinterest among youth in pursuing careers in these fields. As noted in the interviews, educational institutions and training programmes need to adapt to evolving requirements to equip the workforce with relevant skills.

The agriculture and fishing sector has a median income of MVR 6,000, the lowest among the reviewed sectors. Eighty-eight percent of women in this sector earn below MVR 5,000, compared to 33.7 percent of men. Nineteen percent of men earn between MVR 10,000 and MVR 14,999, compared to 8.4 percent of women.

Transport Sector: The transportation sector in the Maldives accounts for 6.5 percent of the working population. The Maldivian workforce in the sector is predominantly local, with 81.1 percent identified as Maldivians. The majority of the workforce is male, at 87.8 percent. Forty-eight percent of the workforce is categorised as medium-skilled, reflecting the dominance of semi-skilled occupations across the sector. High-skilled workers, classified at skill levels 3 and 4, make up 29.7 percent of the sector workforce, while 15.3 percent are low-skilled.

This sector plays a critical role in the country's economy, particularly due to the archipelagic nature of the Maldives, which relies heavily on transportation services for inter-island travel and commerce. As one of the key growth sectors in the Maldives, the transport sector includes a well-established aviation industry for inter-atoll travel, which is currently expanding. More recently, initiatives have been undertaken to establish a public ferry system connecting islands within key zones. Additionally, the expansion of road systems has enabled the introduction of bus services.

The ongoing and anticipated expansion of the sector requires skilled workers capable of delivering the services demanded by its growth. Upskilling workers to meet these demands across all transport subsectors—including aviation, ferries, road networks, and

ports—is essential. The transport sector has also begun integrating ICT technology, creating a need for ICT professionals and service providers. Designing effective transport systems that address the structural challenges posed by geographically dispersed and small populations remains a critical issue. A lack of local capacity to maintain and repair transport infrastructure and equipment was also noted, particularly at the regional level.

The transport sector has a significant role to play in addressing climate change, both in terms of mitigation and adaptation. The lack of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies poses significant risks to sustainable growth and increases the likelihood of damage and losses to the sector and, consequently, the economy.

LABOUR DEMAND VS SUPPLY GAPS

An analysis of the mismatch by level of education was conducted using the Census 2022 dataset, comparing individuals' highest levels of education to the expected educational qualifications for their occupations. The findings revealed varying degrees of undereducation, matched education, and overeducation across the occupational categories examined.

The findings showed a high prevalence of undereducation in the following occupations: technicians and associate professionals (53%), skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers (56%), craft and related trades workers (54%), managers (47%), and plant and machine operators (45%). This suggests that a significant proportion of these occupations rely heavily on informal skills, experience, or on-the-job training.

The proportion of workers with matched education was highest in professional occupations (62%), managers (53%), clerical support workers (68%), and service and sales workers (56%), indicating that a significant portion of workers tend to meet expected requirements. The data also revealed significant levels of overeducation in certain occupations, particularly in elementary occupations (44%), clerical support workers (26%), and technicians and associate professionals (16%). This points to challenges in job mobility or limited opportunities for workers to access roles that fully align with their educational qualifications. Targeted interventions can help address issues of overeducation, such as assisting individuals in identifying and applying for relevant job opportunities, or providing upskilling initiatives where technical or practical skills are lacking.

An analysis of the skills mismatch—how individuals' qualifications align with the skill requirements of their roles—provides further insights. At skill level 1, which typically includes low-skilled jobs, 73 percent of the workforce is underqualified, meaning they had no schooling or only early childhood education, while 27 percent are well-matched. At skill level 2, the majority of employees (54%) are well-matched to their roles, but 29 percent are underqualified and 16 percent overqualified. At skill level 3, 43.1 percent of employees are matched, 43.2 percent are overqualified, and 13.6 percent are underqualified. For skill level 4, which includes high-skill roles, 66.6 percent of employees are appropriately matched, yet 33.4 percent are overqualified. Both under- and over-qualification highlight inefficiencies in the system, with some individuals underperforming due to inadequate qualifications, while others' skill sets are not fully utilised.

The following labour demand gaps were identified from the overall analyses:

- Demand for skilled workers: Many sectors, such as construction, healthcare, and education, require a workforce equipped with specialised skills and hands-on experience to meet industry standards and address sector-specific challenges.
- Unfavourable working conditions: Unfavourable working conditions contribute to labour demand gaps in tourism and construction sectors. Many Maldivians find resort jobs unappealing for long-term careers, and young workers (18–24 age group) tend to leave the tourism sector after a few years. Similarly, manual labour in construction is unattractive to Maldivians, though semi-skilled roles may be more appealing.
- Regional infrastructure deficiencies: A lack of regional infrastructure to support education, training, and innovation makes it difficult for employers in areas outside Malé to meet their demand for skilled labour. Conversely, economic growth in these regions is hampered by the structural challenges of small-island geography and diseconomies of scale, which suppress labour demand and limit job opportunities.
- Barriers to MSME growth: MSMEs face challenges such as labour shortages, limited financial and business advisory services, and insufficient infrastructure. Improved transport systems and better accommodation options for students and workers could help address these issues and meet the demand for skilled local labour.
- Emerging sector skills deficits: As the Maldives diversifies its economy into ICT, innovative technologies, and climate adaptation, there is a growing need for specialised skills in these fields. The education system has been slow to adapt to these demands, resulting in significant skill deficits.
- Soft skills and practical work experience: A lack of soft skills training, practical work components, and exposure to industry standards are significant barriers to job entry and career progression in key sectors. These skills are critical for employment and growth.
- Disconnect between education and industry: A disconnect between educational institutions and industry stakeholders leads to missed opportunities for collaboration. This results in graduates who are underprepared for the realities of the job market. Industry stakeholders need to clearly define the skill sets and standards they require and collaborate with educational institutions to align curricula with market needs. Internships and apprenticeships can provide students with practical experience and industry exposure.
- Gender barriers: Cultural and societal norms, combined with a lack of appropriate childcare alternatives, restrict women's participation in the workforce, even though they are well-educated. This gender imbalance perpetuates inequality, reduces workforce efficiency, and widens the labour demand gap.

HUMAN CAPITAL NEEDS FORECAST

A labour demand and supply projection was made based on historical data from the Maldives Bureau of Statistics (MBS), including Census 2014, Census 2022, HIES 2019, and trends identified in the Human Capital Needs Assessment. The labour demand calculation utilised historical data analysis and sector-specific assumptions. The primary data source for this projection was the Census 2022 dataset and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at constant prices, segmented by type of economic activity for the period 2003–2022, as reported by the MBS. The key metric used in this forecast was the percentage change in employment between 2014 and 2022, which provided a foundation for understanding sectoral economic trends over recent years.

The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of employment was calculated for each sector using employment data from the 2014 and 2022 Census to estimate future labour demand. This measure reflected the annualised employment growth rate during this period and facilitated the calculation of employment levels from 2023 to 2034. Employment projections were generated using an exponential growth formula applied to 21 economic sectors, providing a data-driven foundation for labour demand forecasts.

The projections highlight rapid expansion in key sectors such as construction, accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail trade, transportation, and human health and social work activities. Each of these sectors demonstrates substantial growth potential based on historical employment trends and GDP growth rates. The projections help reflect on implications for labour demand, workforce readiness, and policymaking aimed at ensuring sustainable economic development.

An examination of the projected labour demand for certain sectors, namely, electricity, gas, and air conditioning supply; water supply, sewerage, waste management, and remediation activities; real estate activities; and arts, entertainment, and recreation reveal significant variances in their expected employment growth trajectories based on the unadjusted CAGR employment rate. Additionally, sectors with the least projected growth in labour demand, such as agriculture, fishing, and manufacturing, highlight structural challenges, shifts in economic priorities, and the need for targeted interventions to revitalise these industries.

On estimating the Maldivian labour supply, calculation of new labour market entrants based on individuals turning 15 from 2023 to 2034, reveals a gradual decline in the number of potential new entrants to the workforce. This trend reflects demographic shifts and a reduction in the population of younger age groups, which could have profound implications for the country's workforce and economic growth. With fewer young individuals entering the labour market, the growth of the Maldivian working-age population may slow, potentially impacting productivity and economic expansion. These trends underscore the importance of integrating foreign workers into the labour market to maintain economic growth while simultaneously enhancing the capacity of the Maldivian workforce through improved education and training programmes.

The government of the Maldives would greatly benefit from adopting a comprehensive labour forecasting model to address the country's evolving workforce challenges. Such models are essential for predicting future labour market trends, guiding economic policy, and informing education and workforce planning strategies. As the Maldives continues to experience rapid economic growth, particularly in tourism, fisheries, and infrastructure development, the demand for skilled labour is increasing significantly. A forecasting model, such as the VUEF model used in Australia, could help the government anticipate future labour market trends, identify skills shortages, and align education and training programmes with the needs of key sectors.

FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

An overview of human capital development strategies and policies indicates that to effectively build and utilise human capital for growth, a three-pronged approach can be adopted. This approach comprises: 1) enriching education, training, and skills development; 2) assisting transitions to work; and 3) maximising enabling working conditions. Considering human capital development strategies and policies through these three components can provide a structured and effective pathway to achieving sustainable growth.

Conclusion

The report highlights that investments in human capital are critical not only for economic returns but also for achieving broader socio-political benefits such as improved health, social cohesion, and an informed citizenry. In the Maldives and elsewhere, the positive correlation between human capital development and economic growth is evident, with higher levels of investment in education, skills development, and health leading to a more productive and resilient workforce. While the tourism sector remains the backbone of the economy, other sectors such as construction, ICT, and health services have demonstrated potential for growth. However, these sectors face challenges related to skills shortages, inadequate training programmes, and a lack of alignment between educational outcomes and labour market needs. The findings of the assessment have significant implications for policy and development in the Maldives.

Firstly, there is an urgent need to develop and implement Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) that address the skills gaps identified in key sectors. These programmes should focus on supporting Maldivians, particularly youth, in entering the workforce by providing skills and training that align with market demands. Secondly, the government must prioritise targeted investments in education, training infrastructure, and technology, especially in regions outside the capital, to reduce regional disparities and promote inclusive growth. Businesses must also examine their workplace practices and offer family-friendly, flexible arrangements to attract and retain local talent, particularly among working-age women.

By addressing the identified gaps and implementing the recommended actions, the Maldives can build a more resilient, skilled, and adaptable workforce capable of thriving in the economy and meeting the challenges of the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GENERAL SKILLS AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MALDIVES

1. Integrating career development into current education:
 - a. improve overall quality of secondary education by investing in building capacities of secondary school teachers.
 - b. provide opportunities for further professional development of in-service teachers.
 - c. improve access to quality teaching and learning resources online and in both English and Dhivehi.
 - d. implement effective assessments of capacity building interventions and follow up on identified problem areas.
2. Introduce systematic work exposure and experience from primary school onwards:
 - a. introduce age-appropriate concepts of work and jobs in local communities and in broader regions.
 - b. invite a diverse range of workers from different skill sets and occupations to speak at school or in class.
 - c. conduct visits to different local businesses, workplaces and educational institutions.
 - d. introduce concepts of lifelong learning.
3. Develop range of career pathways information for individuals aged 15 years and older:
 - a. ensure information reflects existing job markets and regional economic opportunities, including required skills and qualifications for different paths.
 - b. provide information about local services related to employment, entrepreneurship, and further education opportunities accessible to students.
 - c. develop interactive web-based programmes, audiovisual materials, or booklets to help adolescents and young adults explore their interests and the job market.
4. Offering skills development and support to navigate the transition to a first job, training placement or apprenticeship:
 - a. provide school-leavers, drop-outs and other children unable to continue their studies with information and material on how to find first jobs, further training and apprenticeship opportunities.
 - b. develop school leavers information kits (as booklets and online resources).
5. Developing a skills training framework for core competencies across different skills domains:
 - a. address cognitive, social, digital, manual, management, and administrative skills, as these positively impact future jobs and earnings.
 - b. offer training at different levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced.
 - c. focus on teaching practical, demonstrable skills rather than introductory or awareness-raising programmes (e.g., "teaching to read, not an introduction to the alphabet").

6. Shared responsibility with industry partners in developing the workforce:
 - a. institutions mandated to provide training and skills development should initiate dialogues on workforce development.
 - b. include a broad range of stakeholders in these dialogues.
 - c. government bodies and independent authorities should play convening, guiding, and negotiating roles.
7. Developing a skills training framework for sector-specific competencies across different domains:
 - a. for each occupation and skill level, create clear training plans to meet cross-sectoral and sector-specific skill requirements.
 - b. understand the skill levels, expected competencies, and the type/duration of learning workers need to achieve proficiency.
8. Developing dual TVET systems that share apprenticeships and trainees:
 - a. develop shared collaborative programmes of learning and training that involve apprentices and trainees being taught jointly by industry partners and TVET providers
 - b. enable employers to identify, recruit and nurture talent for their workforce.
9. Implementing subsidised apprenticeship and mentoring programmes:
 - a. provide fee subsidies to firms collaborating with TVET providers to supervise and guide trainees and apprentices.
10. Developing career guidance websites that provide information across all industries:
 - a. include detailed information about various industries, skills requirements, and tools to help users assess their skills against industry demands.
11. Establishing online interactive platforms for job search guidance:
 - a. include information on effective interview techniques, application letter writing, and resume preparation in both English and Dhivehi.
12. Improving existing jobseeker websites and conducting regional job fairs:
 - a. enhance the current website with input from industry partners, jobseekers, and successful applicants.
 - b. organise job fairs at the regional level to advertise vacancies and share skills requirements, application procedures, and other relevant information.
13. Providing tailored assistance and support for underrepresented groups:
 - a. offer personalised assistance to individuals struggling with career decisions or job searches.
 - b. provide feedback on career choices, résumé writing, and job interview skills.
- c. extend additional support to people with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, those returning to work, or those changing careers.
14. Improving retention and workforce stability:
 - a. enhance job satisfaction through targeted professional development programmes and career advancement opportunities.
 - b. engage employers in discussions on staff motivation and job satisfaction.
 - c. encourage employers to invest in good management practices and skilled managers.
 - d. promote a supportive work environment with work-life balance, competitive pay, and clear career progression pathways.
 - e. address high living costs and physical isolation in remote atolls by offering housing allowances, transport subsidies, and improved living conditions.
15. Promoting gender equity:
 - a. implement policies supporting work-life balance.
 - b. provide childcare facilities.
 - c. ensure equal pay for equal work.
 - d. offer flexible work arrangements, such as part-time work or job shares.
 - e. encourage women to take leadership roles and enter skilled professions.
 - f. support women's networks and leadership development programmes.
 - g. encourage men to join sectors traditionally dominated by women.
 - h. promote further education among adolescent boys and young men as much as among girls.
 - i. study and address the aspirations and experiences of NEET (not in employment, education, or training) youth.
16. Ensuring regional equity:
 - a. decentralise training programmes and educational resources while maintaining quality.
 - b. foster collaborations between urban and regional centres.
 - c. encourage professionals and skilled workers to provide learning opportunities for youth in atolls outside Malé.
 - d. use innovative approaches, such as distance learning, online training, and residential components, to overcome access barriers.
 - e. develop audiovisual resources to support remote learning and field trips for students in underserved areas.
17. Advancing fair workplace conditions and decent work:
 - a. ensure fair conditions for both Maldivian and migrant workers, aligning with SDG 8.
18. Building employer capacities:
 - a. strengthen employers' capabilities in recruitment, management, and employee training.

SECTOR-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

19. Tourism and Hospitality

- a. TVET and HEIs should collaborate with industry partners and workforce representatives to develop skills and competency frameworks and training plans for suitable occupations and jobs in the sector.
- b. implement a TVET system that supports new graduates and apprentices during their initial employment period in the industry, particularly in resorts.
- c. sector leadership should recognise that workforce transience may remain a feature of the Maldivian (resort-based) tourism sector and plan accordingly.
- d. establish interlinkages between resorts in regions outside Malé, local islands, and HEI providers.
- e. develop alternative sourcing and procurement arrangements to ensure broader participation of workers and businesses in the resort and tourism industry.
- f. promote domestic tourism.
- g. develop a marketing strategy to attract workers to the tourism industry.
- h. provide targeted support to women in the industry.
- i. prepare the workforce for climate adaptation and mitigation measures.

20. Construction

- a. strengthen the capacities of educators, teachers, and trainers delivering construction-related courses and programmes.
- b. review current partnerships and apprenticeship agreements to enhance systems and methods for skills transfer.
- c. provide targeted support for the local construction industry.
- d. protect the rights of migrant workers within the construction workforce and industry.
- e. encourage women to enter occupational groups 1–5 in the construction sector.
- f. integrate climate adaptation concerns into construction-related curricula.

21. Education

- a. increase the number of secondary school educators.
- b. establish a dedicated cadre of vocational education staff.
- c. enhance student support and career guidance in secondary schools and HEIs to reduce dropout rates.
- d. improve the quality of education in higher education and TVET institutions by supporting teachers and teaching professionals through continuous professional development.
- e. address gender and regional inequalities in secondary and higher education.
- f. integrate climate change concerns into educational curricula.

22. Health

- a. establish specialist education programmes to address current healthcare concerns, such as NCDs and ageing populations.
- b. promote continued professional development for in-service staff, particularly in regional hospitals and healthcare institutions.
- c. increase the number of community and public health and social workers.
- d. retain women in the healthcare workforce through flexible work arrangements and the provision of childcare facilities.
- e. raise awareness about the impacts of climate change on health.
- f. increase the cadre of technicians and support staff in healthcare institutions.

23. Wholesale and Retail Trade

- a. incorporate technology and innovation into the trade sector.
- b. provide support for SMEs and self-employed individuals.
- c. prepare the sector for climate change impacts.
- d. enhance social and customer management skills across the workforce.

24. ICT

- a. expand HEI teaching and training capacities to meet the growing demand in the ICT sector.
- b. offer digital literacy courses for secondary school students, graduates, and the wider population.
- c. build capacities for installing and maintaining ICT-related hardware and software, including protections against cybersecurity and climate risks.
- d. recognise the cross-sectoral relevance of ICT and support ICT specialists in collaborating with professionals from other sectors.
- e. encourage greater participation of women in ICT roles.
- f. address regional disparities in ICT sector employment.

25. Agriculture and Fishing

- a. encourage participation in the sector and provide support for individuals already engaged in agriculture and fishing.
- b. develop a distribution network for agricultural products within the country and promote the consumption of locally produced goods and services.
- c. introduce training in processing, manufacturing, crop harvesting, transportation, entrepreneurship, and business development skills for agriculture workers.
- d. build a professional cadre of specialists, educators, and trainers within the sector.
- e. organise regional events and conferences to enable workers to share experiences, learn from one another, and understand global and regional issues impacting the sector.

26. Transportation Sector

- a. upskill existing workers and train potential workers for expansion across all transport subsectors, including aviation, ferries, road networks, and ports.
- b. integrate innovation into transport solutions, including digital technologies and climate adaptation measures.
- c. train workers for the effective design, maintenance, and repair of transport systems for people and goods.

APPENDIX – C: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CONCEPT	DEFINITION
Working-age population	Persons above the age 15 years of age who are employed, unemployed and those who are not in the labour force.
Working population	Persons above the age 15 years of age who are actively engaged in employment.
Unemployed population	Persons above the age 15 years of age who actively seeks employment or is available to engage in work but not employed.
Labour force	Persons above the age 15 years of age who are either employed or unemployed.
Outside labour force	Persons above the age 15 years of age who is not working and are not actively seeking work.
Foreigner	Persons above the age 15 years of age who reside in the Maldives for the purpose of earning, seeking jobs, or outside labour force.
Unemployment rate	Proportion of unemployed people to the those who are in the labour force.
International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities	International framework followed to classify economic activities into categories based on the nature of their production processes and the goods or services they produce.
International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) Major	Classification and grouping of occupations based on the similarity of tasks and duties performed in a job.
International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) Sub-Major	Groups are more specific than the Major groups and serve as an intermediate category between the broad Major groups and the more detailed Minor groups.
International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) Minor	Provides a finer level of detail in the classification of occupations.
Occupation skill level	The degree of complexity and range of tasks associated with a particular job or occupation, determined by education, training, and experience required to perform the job, and the level of responsibility and autonomy involved.
Workforce equilibrium	Without significant shortage or surpluses, balancing the supply of labour (working population + unemployed population) by the demand for labour (the number of jobs available) within an industry, sector, or economy.
Accommodation and food service activities	Businesses and services that provide lodging, meals, and beverages to customers. Covers hotels, resorts, restaurants, cafes, bars, and other establishments involved in catering and hospitality services.
Construction	Businesses and activities involved in building, repairing, and renovating structures such as residential, commercial, and industrial buildings, as well as infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, and utilities. Includes construction companies, contractors, and specialised trades.
Agriculture and fishing	Businesses and activities related to the cultivation of crops, raising livestock, harvesting timber, and fishing. Covers farming management, aquaculture, and commercial fishing, focusing on the production of food, raw materials, and related resources.
Social sector - education and health	Services and institutions focused on providing education and healthcare to individuals and communities. Includes schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, clinics, and other organisations that deliver educational programmes, medical care, and social services.
Information, communication, and technology	Businesses and services that develop, produce, and manage technology and communication systems. Covers software development, telecommunications, internet services, data processing, and IT consulting, playing a crucial role in enabling digital communication and information management.



Ministry of Higher Education,
Labour and Skills Development
Republic of Maldives



Nexia
Maldives

mohe.gov.mv
nexia.mv