

# REVIEWING THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM OF THE MALDIVES 2020

Documentation of process  
and results



# REVIEWING THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM OF THE MALDIVES

## Documentation of process and results

This is a study of how the Maldives National Statistical System (NSS) was reviewed as part of the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific run by United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) supported by Department for International Development (DFID). This study was developed by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of the Maldives and ESCAP. It documents the context and process followed to support

other countries thinking of conducting a national review. Such reviews are a valuable way to engage stakeholders and develop evidence-based inputs to strategic planning processes and regular monitoring. This study is one of the five studies of successful projects that aims to advance statistics and is prepared for other countries who may wish to replicate the project for the review of their existing NSS.

### Authors:

Ashiyath Shazna and Aminath Mushfiqa Ibrahim  
(NBS, Maldives),  
Michael Biddington and Jessica Gardner (ESCAP)

### Reviewers:

Rikke Munk Hansen and Eileen P. Capilit (ESCAP)

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## Acronyms

DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NSCC	National Statistical Coordination Committee
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
NSS	National Statistical System
PARIS21	Partnerships for Statistics in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century
RPES	Asia-Pacific Regional Programme on Economic Statistics
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRM	Statistics Regulation of the Maldives
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNSD	Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations

# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015, ESCAP and UNSD undertook a review of the Maldives National Statistical System (NSS). Requested by the Government of the Maldives, it was to inform development of the next National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) for 2020-2029. The review was made possible through the Asia-Pacific Regional Programme on Economic Statistics (RPES).

## National context and drivers for a review

The Maldives statistical system comprises a central statistical office – the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) – and at least 15 government agencies contributing to the production of official statistics in a decentralized way. The system is governed by the 2013 Statistics Regulation of the Maldives. Data users include government agencies, development partners, civil society, academia and the public sector.

The first NSDS, covering the period 2010-2019, was proving challenging to implement and its mid-term point provided a good opportunity to review progress. The Sustainable Development Goals – relatively new at the time of the review – also provided an important context from which to consider national statistical capacity. The NSS had seen much change since the early 1990s

with increasing capacity and less reliance on donor support. The NSS review, also referred to as ‘the review’ in this document, would provide a comprehensive and timely analysis to plan for the next decade.

## Review process

The review involved six stages:

1. Developing the assessment questionnaire
2. Stakeholder consultation and information gathering
3. First mission of review team and meetings with stakeholders
4. Drafting the review report
5. Second mission for validation of findings
6. Finalizing and launching the report

Stakeholder engagement was key with initial meetings to encourage buy-in, information gathering through a questionnaire, and a range of consultation and validation meetings. Draft versions of the report and recommendations were circulated for discussion and feedback.

The final report was launched at a seminar for Small Island Developing States in Nadi, Fiji from 1 to 3 August 2017.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> More information on the launch of the final report is available from: <https://www.unescap.org/events/inter-regional-seminar-national-statistical-systems-reviews-small-island-developing-states>

## Outcomes of the review

The review delivered a template for an effective NSS in the Maldives. It highlighted strengths and weaknesses along with practical suggestions to strengthen official statistics. Main findings and recommendations were:

- The Statistical Regulation of the Maldives needs improvement with a new law recommended to increase independence and effectiveness of the NSS.<sup>2</sup>
- There were significant gaps in administrative data. The review found the NBS is not able to exercise its authority over administrative data as an important source of official statistics.
- Establishment of a National Indicator Set was recommended to clarify data priorities, responsibilities and where to direct resources. Once agreed, a data gap analysis will reveal where action is most needed.
- Coordination was an issue. The review found that NBS lacks the identity and visibility needed to ensure professional independence and allow it to exercise its authority to coordinate the NSS. Several national coordination mechanisms were recommended.
- Although an NSDS was in place, in practice, it was not having the intended impact. A comprehensive multi-year or annual programming for official statistics production is lacking. A Statistical Council at national level was recommended to oversee development of an annual programme.

- Economic statistics was reviewed in detail and findings and recommendations relating to national accounts, government finance statistics, external trade statistics, balance of payments, prices, and business statistics were provided.

### Lessons learned:

- Reviews should be conducted regularly to identify strengths and weaknesses in the NSS and enhance the system to meet current needs
- Engagement of all key stakeholders across multiple levels is required for an NSS review to be successful
- Strong political and policy level support throughout the process are required for review recommendations to be implemented
- The review needs to cover all aspects, including economic, social and environment statistics along with the institutional and legal environment of the whole NSS

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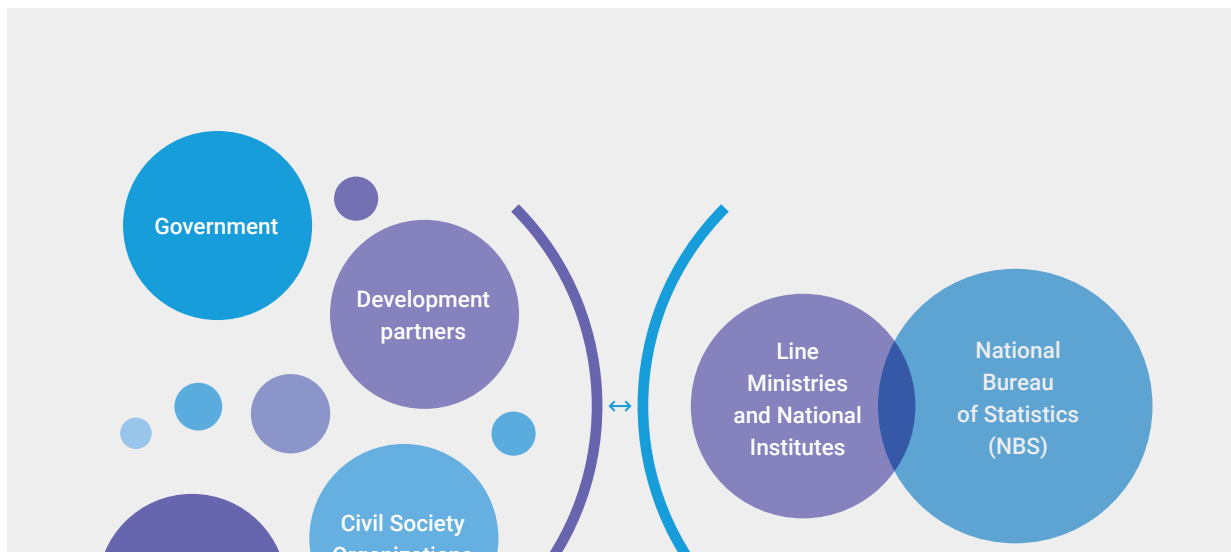
2 Since the review was published a new law has been drafted and is likely to be before parliament in 2020 for adoption.

## II. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The National Statistical System (NSS) of Maldives is decentralized and complex. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) is the lead agency for official statistics, under the Ministry of National Planning and Infrastructure. They work closely with line ministries and agencies to provide a hub for quality assurance and coordination of national data production. They also work on the collection,

compilation and dissemination of statistics from censuses, surveys, and through administrative sources and registers. Driving the demand for, and eventually using official statistics, are various data users from government, private sector, civil society and academia (Figure 1). Both data producers and users form the national statistical system.

Figure 1. Users and producers of official statistics in the Maldives



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