



Italian Red Cross

MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT 2023



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A very special thanks to our sister National Society, Italian Red Cross (ItRC), for providing us with the funding support, as well as technical expertise for the entirety of the process.

FOREWORD BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF MRC, FATHIMATH HIMYA



As a National Society that has always strived to reach the most vulnerable, supporting the migrant communities in the Maldives has been a key priority for MRC from the very beginning. In recent years with the increase in the number of undocumented migrants and with the onset of Covid19 pandemic we have further expanded on these efforts through our work with the Italian Red Cross (ItRC). According to the National Census 2022, 26% of the population of the Maldives are migrants, of whom over 63,000 individuals are believed to be undocumented migrants. This Migration and Displacement Needs Assessment Report is a crucial step taken towards enhancing our understanding of the current living and working conditions of migrants and identifying their needs, as well as the barriers they face in the Maldives.

The IFRC Global Strategy on Migration 2018 - 2022 targets that 75% of all National Societies must undertake assessments of needs and integrate migration into their strategic planning.

As such, the MRC Strategic Plan 2019-2030, which shapes the long-term direction of the organisation, recognizes undocumented migrants, female migrants, and labor migrants as vulnerable groups. We work to address the issues faced by migrants in the Maldives in line with the Strategies, through targeted efforts such as the Migration and Displacement Needs Assessment.

This report helps us to comprehend the gaps in the needs of migrants which will assist us to better plan and deliver our services to the migrant communities. It supports us in developing a vital understanding of how we can improve the provision of these essential services and how to adapt to changing circumstances. The findings of the report also support the development and design of relevant programming, providing us the building blocks needed to develop targeted activities to migrants. The Migration and Displacement Needs Assessment Report could not have come into fruition without the support and guidance of our Partner National Society the ItRC. The partnership over the past years has enabled us to provide crucial services to the most vulnerable migrant in our communities.

We express our gratitude to ItRC, IFRC, the RCRC GML, technical consultant Dr. Fazeela Waheed, and volunteers and staff of MRC - our collaborations and partnerships have provided us with the resources, insight, and guidance to continue our endeavors to improve the lives of migrants in the Maldives.

FOREWORD BY THE ITALIAN RED CROSS

It is with great pleasure and a sense of achievement that we present this Migration and Displacement Report, marking an important milestone in the partnership between the Maldivian Red Crescent (MRC) and the Italian Red Cross. Since the inception of our collaboration through the Humanitarian Dialogue on Migration in 2019, we have made significant strides together, and this report stands as a testament to our joint efforts.

This comprehensive report not only highlights the progress we have made but also sheds light on the crucial role it plays in delivering essential services to migrant communities in the Maldives. It provides us with invaluable insights and perspectives that will enable us to continue assisting them in a relevant and efficient manner.

The report represents a solid foundation upon which we can build, and it reinforces the significance of the training provided to our dedicated staff and volunteers at MRC. Their commitment and dedication have been instrumental in carrying out the broader Migration Support project, and this report serves as a compass guiding us towards its success.

We recognize the importance of addressing migration and displacement challenges in an ever-changing world, and our partnership has equipped us with the tools, knowledge, and collaborative spirit necessary to navigate these complex issues. Together, we stand ready to face the future, armed with the lessons learned and insights gained from this report.

We extend our gratitude to all those involved in this collaborative effort, from the hardworking staff and volunteers of MRC, whose unwavering support and expertise have been invaluable. It is through such partnerships and shared determination that we can make a lasting difference in the lives of those affected by these challenges.

 **Riccardo Bagattin,**
Regional Representative for Asia Pacific, Italian Red Cross

This project and the results achieved so far represent a concrete way to express through action the principle of Universality. As National Societies, part of one International Movement, we share the responsibility to support and build each other; it is our duty to assist, particularly where we can bring an added value building on acquired knowledge, experience, and skills, defining solutions addressing common challenges. We are indeed one of the biggest Community of Practitioners and, through knowledge sharing, we have the power to change and save lives!

 **Fabrizio Damiani,**
International Cooperation and Relations, Italian Red Cross]

TERMINOLOGY

Term (Preferred by IFRC)	Definition or Description	Source
Country of destination	In the migration context, a country that is the destination for a person or a group of persons, irrespective of whether they migrate regularly or irregularly.	IOM, International Migration Law Glossary, 2019
Country of origin	The country of origin is the country from which an international migrant departs in order to take up residence in another country, the country of destination. The country of origin may be the country of birth of the migrant, or their country of habitual residence prior to migration.	IOM, International Migration Law Glossary, 2019
Country of transit	In the migration context, the country through which a person or a group of persons pass on any journey to the country of destination or from the country of destination to the country of origin or of habitual residence.	Adapted from International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, 1990
Displacement	The movement of people from their home or place of residence as a result of armed conflict, violence, human rights abuse, natural or man-made disasters. The displacement may be within their own country or across borders	UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998
Host community	A country and its local, regional and national governmental, social and economic structures, or a social community or household that temporarily hosts migrants, refugees or internally displaced people (IDPs).	IFRC, Migration and Displacement Needs Assessment: Guidance for Asia Pacific National Societies 2021

Term (Preferred by IFRC)	Definition or Description	Source
Internal migration	The movement of people within a country involving the establishment of a new temporary or permanent residence.	IOM, International Migration Law Glossary, 2019
Internally Displaced Person (IDP)	A persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.	UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998
Irregular migration	Includes irregular entries, but also refers to a person residing in a destination country without authorisation, because their permit or visa has expired, or when a person works in a destination country without being authorised to do so.	IOM, International Migration Law Glossary, 2019
Labour migration	Movement of people from one country to another, or within their own country of residence, for the purpose of employment.	IOM, International Migration Law Glossary, 2019
Migrant	A person who leaves or flees their habitual residence to go to new places – usually abroad – to seek new opportunities or safer and better prospects. Migration can be voluntary or involuntary, but most of the time a combination of choices and constraints are involved.	IFRC Policy on Migration, 2009

Term (Preferred by IFRC)	Definition or Description	Source
Migrant worker	Someone who moves from one country to another, or within their own state borders, for the purposes of employment or financial opportunities.	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990
Regular or documented migrant	A person authorised to enter and to stay pursuant to the law of that State or to international agreements to which that State is a party and who is in possession of documents necessary to prove his or her regular status in the country.	Adapted from the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990
Returnee	A person who returns to a place, especially after a prolonged absence, for example a migrant or refugee who returns to their place of origin. A person may return voluntarily or be deported against their will.	IFRC, Migration and Displacement Needs Assessment: Guidance for Asia Pacific National Societies, 2021
Smuggling (of migrants)	The procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the [irregular] entry of a person into a state of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident". Smuggling, contrary to trafficking, does not require an element of exploitation nor coercion, or violation of human rights.	The Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, 2000
Signatory	A 'Signatory' to a treaty is a State that provided a preliminary endorsement of the instrument and its intent to examine the treaty domestically and consider ratifying it.	OHCHR, 2014

Term (Preferred by IFRC)	Definition or Description	Source
Stateless person	A person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law.	UN Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, 1954
State party	A 'State party' to a treaty is a State that has expressed its consent, by an act of ratification, accession or succession, and where the treaty has entered into force (or a State about to become a party after formal reception by the United Nations Secretariat of the State's decision to be a party).	OHCHR, 2014
Trafficking in persons	The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. A person may be trafficked within a country or across international borders. A child will be recognised as trafficked if they have been moved within a country, or across borders, whether by force or not, for the purpose of exploiting the child.	The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, 2000

ABBREVIATIONS

MRC	Maldivian Red Crescent
FPA	Family Protection Authority
RCRC GML	Red Cross and Red Crescent Global Migration Lab
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ItRC	Italian Red Cross
MoED	Ministry of Economic Development
MoGF	Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services
The Movement	IFRC, ICRC and NS
MPS	Maldives Police Service
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NS	National Society
PILC	The Public Interest Law Centre
SHE	Society for Health Education
TiP	Trafficking in Persons
TM	Transparency Maldives
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
HPA	Health Protection Authority
LRA	Labour Relations Authority
OHCHR	The Office of the High Commissioner for Humans Rights

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Migration and Displacement Needs Assessment was carried out to achieve the following objectives: to map and analyse stakeholders, identify barriers to accessing essential services, and to comprehend the living and working conditions of migrants across the Maldives. In collaboration with the RCRC GML, one more objective to understand the migrant communities' perspectives on receiving services from humanitarian actors and service providers at various capacities was pursued. The methodology included individual surveys, desk-based research, and consultative meetings with key stakeholders regarding their services to the migrant communities.

The report explores the context of migration in the Maldives, recognized as a destination country for migrants with the total population consisting of 25% of migrants. Furthermore, the report reflects on displacement in the Maldives, which occurs in a smaller scale, due to climate related factors such as flooding and man-made disasters such as fires. Additionally, a brief review of local legislature, regulations, and procedures was also conducted to understand the gaps. Furthermore, key actors, their services, roles, and responsibilities in relation to migration, with a note on how services can be accessed is highlighted through the stakeholder mapping.

The assessment was focused on collecting data pertaining to migrants' access to healthcare, legal and regulatory services, as well as social and employment needs. Key findings indicate difficulty in accessing basic services due to a variety of reasons, including, lack of insurance, proper documents, and lack of information on how to access services. Other notable concerns include a significant percentage of participants (58.9%) reporting issues related to passport possession by employers and a lack of data regarding female migrants.

Following the critical insight unveiled into the challenges faced by migrants, the recommended short-term interventions are targeted towards ensuring that the fundamental and urgent needs of migrants are met promptly. Further suggestions for creating inclusive and accessible services in the Maldives and to foster a more informed and supportive environment for migrants are also proposed.

INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

The Maldivian Red Crescent (MRC) is an independent, voluntary, humanitarian organization, established on the basis of the Maldivian Red Crescent Law [Law 7/2009]. MRC is the 187th member of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) recognized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Our primary objective is to provide humanitarian aid and to prevent and alleviate human suffering in close cooperation with government and local partners working towards the same goal.

Our main strategic areas are Strengthen Emergency Response, Strengthen First Aid and Psychosocial Support, Facilitate Planning for Resilience, Promote Health and Wellbeing in a Changing Environment, Foster Humanitarian Values and Volunteerism, and Organizational Development & Sustainability. The Maldivian Red Crescent aims to be the Nation's leading humanitarian organization, with Units spanned across the Maldives, successfully rolling out service delivery initiatives. They are our direct links with the Maldivian community.

MRC has been working to support the migrant communities through various initiatives since its

inception. Under its Strategic Plan 2019-2030, MRC aims to continue to work closely with migrants to extend protection and relief during emergencies, increase access to health risk information and services, and promote the integration and acceptance of migrants in the community through better social inclusion. Additionally, MRC also seeks to build the capacity of migrants by carrying out First Aid and Psychological First Aid trainings directly targeted for the community.

As providing humanitarian assistance to migrants is a key focus area of MRC, in line with the IFRC Global Strategy on Migration 2018-2022, MRC conducted a Migration and Displacement Needs Assessment in 2022. The purposes of carrying out the Assessment are to better understand the need of the migrant communities and to identify the most relevant areas of interventions and services required by the migrant communities for future programme implementation and for the improvement of existing services. The key objectives of the Assessment and an overview of how they were achieved are highlighted below.

— Objective 1. To map and analyse stakeholders.

Stakeholders and their roles in working with migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) was identified under this objective. Furthermore, gaps in existing services and the effectiveness of these services were analysed. Existing target community knowledge capacities on accessing essential services were also assessed.

— **Objective 2. To identify barriers to access essential services.**

An analysis of the barriers for migrants in accessing healthcare services, financial and banking services, relevant embassies, government services, legal and law enforcement services as well as an evaluation of the existing legal policies and frameworks at the national and international level was carried out.

— **Objective 3. To understand current living and working conditions of migrants across Maldives.**

The results of Rapid Assessments conducted by Maldivian Red Crescent during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which included methods of access to food and WASH facilities (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) were used as the primary source of reference to achieve this objective. Current living and working conditions were also appraised along multiple dimensions to get a wholistic idea via the Survey and Rapid Assessments.

— **Objective 4. To understand migrant communities' perspectives on receiving services from humanitarian actors and service providers at various capacities.**

In partnership with the RCRC GML, one section of the Survey questionnaire was designated to understanding migrants' perceptions of and trust in humanitarian actors and service providers at various capacities.

Target Audience

This report is intended for stakeholders in the process of implementing programs and policies related to Migration and Displacement in the Maldives, including government bodies, NGOs, and International Organizations.

The Red Cross Red Crescent Approach to Migration & Displacement

Taking a purely Humanitarian approach, all Movement components consisting of the IFRC, the ICRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies) strive to focus on providing assistance and protection to migrants in vulnerable situations, without compromising their rights and dignity, while empowering migrants in their search for sustainable solutions. Promotion of social inclusion and interaction between migrants and host communities is also a key priority of the Movement components. To achieve this, the aforementioned Migration Policy of the IFRC states the following **10** principles:

- 1 Focus on the Needs and Vulnerabilities of Migrants
- 2 Include Migrants in Humanitarian Programming
- 3 Support the Aspirations of Migrants
- 4 Recognize the Rights of Migrants
- 5 Link Assistance, Protection and Humanitarian Advocacy for Migrants
- 6 Build Partnerships for Migrants
- 7 Work Along the Migratory Trails
- 8 Assist Migrants in Return
- 9 Respond to the Displacement of Populations
- 10 Alleviate Migratory Pressures on Communities of Origin.

(International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2009).

The Role of Maldivian Red Crescent

As a National Society, in providing assistance to migrants, MRC operates within the 7 Fundamental Principles of the Movement (**Annex 1**) and within the Migration Policy of the IFRC. More specifically, as an auxiliary to the government, MRC supports the government in filling the gaps in providing humanitarian assistance to migrants in vulnerable situations regardless of their legal status when and where necessary. This includes supporting the State in ensuring migrants' access to essential services to secure their safety, wellbeing, dignity both in normal times and times of crises.

In responding to displacement, MRC works closely with the National Disaster Management Authority and other key stakeholders to provide emergency life saving assistance to those affected by disasters.



Male' City Unit volunteers & IfRC delegates during the data collection process, 2022

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

— Individual Surveys

An Individual Survey Questionnaire (**Annex 2**) was used to gather information directly from migrants. The questionnaire was in English with images wherever possible and with Bengali translations as the majority of migrants in the Maldives are from Bangladesh. Due to unavailability of volunteer translators in other languages and the time constraints, the questionnaire was not translated to any other languages.

To overcome any potential challenges of language or literacy barriers, teams of volunteers who were trained and oriented to the Assessment procedure, tools and objectives were deployed for in-person data collection with the support of 3 regional offices: Male' City Office, Kulhudhuffushi City Office, and Addu City Office. With the support of 23 volunteers, including migrant volunteers who spoke Bengali and Hindi, the Survey was conducted in 5 islands: Male' City, Hulhumale', Thilafushi, Addu City, and Kulhudhuffushi City. A total of 166 questionnaires were collected during a period of 3 months from October – December 2022.

The locations were selected based on population density and Census 2022 reports on resident foreigner populations. As per the Census 2022,

more than half of the population of Male' and Hulhumale' consists of internal & foreign migrants, while the resident population of industrial island Thilafushi is primarily made up of foreign migrants. 8.04% of Kulhudhuffushi City & 19.73% Addu City consists of foreigners and data on Maldivians who migrated to these islands is not available.

The Survey (**Annex 2**) was later revised to a format that could be filled in directly by participants. This version in English was shared directly with migrants via the MRC migrants community group on Viber and a request for the Survey to be shared widely was made. Only 5 responses were collected by this method, and the opportunity to respond was left open till April 2023. Individuals responded from 4 different locations; Male' City, Hulhumale', Rah Falhu Huraa, and V.Fulidhoo.

All individuals participating in the survey were required to provide informed consent prior to the commencement of the survey. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the survey at any given time as they saw fit. No identification and sensitive data were gathered at any point in the research for protection purposes.

— Participants

Participants were selected from amongst individuals identifying as migrants regardless of nationality, including Maldivians. All participants were required to be above the age of 18.

The significant participant selection bias demonstrated in the results may have been affected by Maldivians not identifying as migrants, despite internal migration.

— Desk-based and Primary Research

Complementary to the survey, MRC with the support of IOM, in a joint effort to establish a Migrant Resource Centre, carried out meetings with several key government and non-government stakeholders to determine the services provided by the organisations to get a holistic idea of the current situation. During the meetings MRC provided information to the stakeholders regarding the Migration and Displacement Needs Assessment and collected information on the services provided by the organisations.

Where available, information regarding the services of organisations were verified and collected from their official websites and channels of communication.

— Validation Process of Findings, Recommendations and Report

Assessment findings were validated and shared through internal and external consultative meetings with all contributing parties including, IFRC, IIRC, RCRC GML and technical research consultants to discuss findings and recommendations. By engaging with these stakeholders, the accuracy and reliability of the findings were assured.

CONTEXT OF MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT IN THE MALDIVES

There are 2 main aspects of migration to be considered in the Maldives, relying on volume of migration, and these are 1) internal migration of Maldivians from other islands to the Greater Male' Region and 2) immigration of migrant workers to the Maldives.

Currently, 132,371 international migrants are believed to reside in the Maldives making up 26% of the population according to the provisional results of the National Census 2022, and making the Maldives a regionally recognized destination country for migrant workers (Maldives Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Leading countries of origin of migrant workers are Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines & Sri Lanka (IOM, 2018). Additionally, the Census results show a large disproportionality in terms of sex distribution of migrants, as demonstrated in Figure 1. Population distribution of migrants in the Maldives by sex.

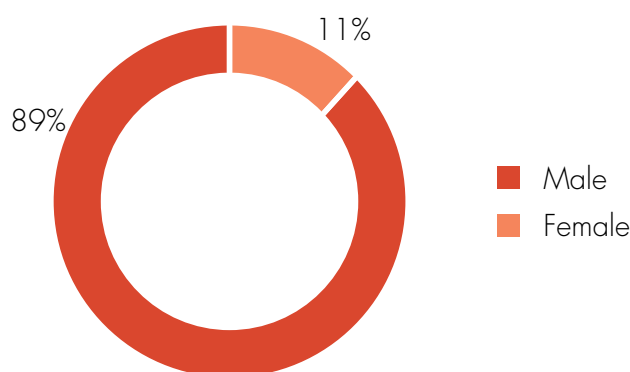


Figure 1: Population distribution of migrants in the Maldives by sex

It is noteworthy that there was an effort from the government to be inclusive of those with irregular status during the conduction of the Census. However, the current preliminary results do not provide an indication of the total number of migrants with irregular status which is estimated to be at about 63,000 (IOM, 2018). Majority population (61.4%) of the resident foreigners are distributed across non-administrative islands, resorts, and industrial islands while 51,030 (38.5%) reside in the 8.3km² Capital City of Male'. While migrants constitute 25% of the population of Male', about 37% are internal migrants making Male' City one of

the most densely populated cities in the world with an astounding total population density of 25,558 people per square kilometre (Maldives Bureau of Statistics, 2019). This population density leads to sparse living spaces and extremely high rent prices for most of the residents, with internal migrants from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and migrants in manual and domestic work having to suffer the worst consequences of the deplorable living conditions. This includes unsafe food preparation spaces, overcrowded living spaces, unsafe structures, and lack of proper WASH facilities.

In addition to the living conditions in the Male' City, living situations in designated labour quarters in resort islands under construction, industrial islands, and construction sites are particularly unfit for occupation in terms of safety. This includes makeshift accommodations on dangerous construction sites and boats as well as living spaces made of shipping containers, as discovered in Rapid Assessments conducted by MRC in 2020 and 2021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also notable that the labour force of the construction industry entirely consists of migrants and the majority population of industrial islands such as Thilafushi and Gulhifalhu in the Greater Male' Region are also migrants.

The main purposes for internal migration include marriage, education, healthcare, and socio-economic opportunities. Migrants, mainly migrate for the purpose of work and contribute to the tourism, fisheries, agriculture, education, healthcare, and construction industries in the Maldives. (IOM, 2018). Migrant workers engaged in manual work tend to be subject to unlivable wages, lack of access to healthcare, food and water, documentation issues, discrimination from service providers, poor working conditions, forced repatriation, withholding of passports, unlawful termination, and wage theft (Human Rights Commission of The Maldives, 2020).

While voluntary migration and immigration is common, internal population displacement due to external or internal factors is uncommon. The most significant displacement to date occurred following the impact of the 2004 tsunami, displacing about 10% of the population of Maldives. (Patel & White, 2006).

In recent times, the most common causes of internal displacement have been floods and fires. Infrastructure vulnerabilities, non-adherence to fire safety standards in buildings and warehouses, high population density in urban areas, climate

change, and urbanization have increased the frequency of such incidents, resulting in extensive damage and displacements. In 2019, the largest fire in Male' City displaced 300 individuals (IFRC, 2019), while in 2022, the deadliest recorded fire in Male' City led to the tragic loss of 10 lives and the displacement of about 60 individuals (NDMA, 2022). Although significant displacement was recorded in these two incidents, many more fire incidents have been reported in the past few years with smaller numbers of displacements. Flooding incidents due to heavy rain and storm surges in recent years have also led to the displacement of hundreds of individuals across the country.

While Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) due to disaster are provided various means of assistance, Maldives does not recognize refugees and asylum seekers and lacks protective mechanisms in these cases, creating a stark disparity in the levels of support available with regards to different forms of displacement.



**Volunteers from Addu City Unit
carrying out the assessment, 2022**

Review of Local Legislature, Regulations, and Procedures

While non-discrimination clauses are common in Maldivian legislature, there are certain areas, such as the application of minimum wage, which is not afforded to the migrant worker at the current time.

Overall, the review of the local legislature shows comprehensive legal protections afforded for migrants in terms of employment, social protections, healthcare, and access to justice. However, a gap can be observed between what is afforded and what is implemented, potentially due to a lack of resources of implementing bodies and due to a lack of access to information on part of the migrants themselves. Employer knowledge regarding the laws can also be presumed to be

limited as evident from the findings of this report, where employers hold employee passports while it is considered as exploitative conduct in the Anti-Human Trafficking Act.

It is also noteworthy that the Ministry of Economic Development has been in the process of drafting a Labour Migration Policy and a National Migration Policy in 2022 through a consultative process with local stakeholders including CSOs and International Organization for Migration. There is potential for possible amendments to procedures and laws to take place following the adaptation of the policies.

The legal frameworks offering protection and rights to migrants at all capacities are listed below.

- 1** Immigration Act (Law No. 1/2007). (Unofficial English translation available online)
- 2** Employment (7th Amendment) Act (No. 15/2022). (Unofficial English translation available online)
The Employment Act has been amended for the 7th time and the most recent amendment was in 2022. The following are a list of regulations regarding the implementation of the Employment Act.
 - 2011** (MDV-2011-R-106011) Employment Approval Regulations (2011/R-22).
 - 2010** (MDV-2010-R-85766) Employment Tribunal Regulation, 2010.
 - 2009** (MDV-2009-R-85765) Employment Agency Regulation, 2009.
 - 2009** (MDV-2009-R-85767) Expatriate Employment Regulation.
- 3** Anti-Human Trafficking Act (Law No. 12/2013). (Unofficial English translation available online)
- 4** Family Act (Law No. 4/2000). (Unofficial English translation available online)

Ratified International Conventions

The Maldives has ratified several international legal instruments relating to human rights and humanitarian treaties that offer protections to vulnerable populations including migrants. The table below highlights the relevant ratified conventions and treaties in the Maldives up to date.

- 1 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, **1996**
- 2 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, **1966**
- 3 The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, **2016**
- 4 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, **1984**
- 5 Convention on the Rights of the Child, **1990**
- 6 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto, **2000**

However, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Maldives has yet to ratify 60 Conventions and Protocols (**Annex 3**) relating to the rights of the workers and 2 out of those are conventions relating directly to the rights of the Migrant Workers as stated below.

- 1 The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, **1990**
- 2 Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), **1949**

Furthermore, it is imperative to note that Maldives has not yet ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. At the moment, there are no national protection mechanisms for refugees and no asylum adjudication system (UNHCR, 2019).

In the absence of relevant ratified conventions and established domestic mechanisms, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, can face several challenges in accessing legal means of protection, assistance, and essential services. Structured legal processes are vital to reduce their vulnerabilities and uncertainties.

STAKEHOLDER MAPPING & ANALYSIS

This component of the assessment was done to identify key actors, their services roles, and responsibilities with regards to migration. Additionally, how their services can be accessed is also highlighted where relevant.

It is to be noted that the list of services, roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder is not an exhaustive list but a list covering only those relevant to the area of migration. Lastly, the column regarding accessibility is with regards to how an individual seeking the services can access the service provider, as such information that is not publicly available has not been included.

Government			
#	Name of organization	Roles and responsibilities/services	Services accessible at/ through
1	Maldives Immigration	Issuance of visas	https://imuga.immigration.gov.mv/ https://workpermit.egov.mv
2	Ministry of Economic Development (MoED)	Issuance of quota to employers, Employment Approval	https://xpat.egov.mv/
3	Ministry of Defence – Anti-Trafficking in Persons office	Capacity building of stakeholders in the area of TiP	Currently not accessible
4	Maldives Police Service (MPS)	Law enforcement	9500125 (Police Human Trafficking Hotline) Available outside regular office hours & calls to the number are not free of charge
5	Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services (MoGF)	Lodging cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) & child abuse	Toll free hotlines: 1421 & 1412

#	Name of organization	Roles and responsibilities/services	Services accessible at/through
6	Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital	Healthcare services	Accessible on site
7	Island/Atoll Councils	Management of public spaces and access to public spaces (i.e., parks)	Generally accessible on site
8	Family Protection Authority (FPA)	Temporary shelter provision for Domestic Violence (DV) survivors, raising awareness & provision of information regarding DV law and protection mechanisms	3010551 - calls to the number are not free of charge
9	Health Protection Authority (HPA)	Conducting programs aimed at safeguarding public health and preventing the spread of infectious diseases	3014494 - calls to the number are not free of charge
10	National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)	Responding to disasters, reducing community vulnerabilities and building resilience.	3333456 - calls to the number are not free of charge

Local and International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Foundations

#	Name of organization	Roles and responsibilities/services	Services accessible at/through
11	Public Interest Law Centre (PILC)	Provision of legal aid in civil cases, research on migration	Regular mobile legal aid clinics and accessible through direct referrals
12	Transparency Maldives (TM)	Provision of legal aid in civil cases, research on migration	Accessible through direct referrals
13	Mission for Migrant Workers Maldives (MMWM)	Advocacy, awareness, capacity building, & relief distribution	Health camps and outreach activities

#	Name of organization	Roles and responsibilities/services	Services accessible at/through
14	Society for Health Education (SHE)	Healthcare services, advocacy, awareness, capacity building, & relief distribution	Generally accessible on site
15	Family Legal Clinic	Probono legal aid in areas of family law and domestic violence law, and workplace sexual harassment.	9977771 - calls to the number are not free of charge
16	Max Planck Foundation for International Peace and Rule of Law	Capacity building of legal service providers and law enforcement on matters relating to provision of access to justice for migrants	N/A

Independent and autonomous statutory bodies

#	Name of organization	Roles and responsibilities/services	Services accessible at/through
17	Labour Relations Authority (LRA)	Observing compliance with Employment Act and relevant regulations. Creating awareness and provision of technical information and advice regarding the Act and relevant regulations. Informing the relevant Minister of any issues arising due to matters that have not been provided for in the Act and regulations and issuance of regulations governing employer-employee relations.	Accessible on site
18	Bar Council	Probono legal services	3333990 - calls to the number are not free of charge

#	Name of organization	Roles and responsibilities/services	Services accessible at/through
19	Human Rights Commission of the Maldives (HRCM)	Investigate violations of human rights. Protect, preserve and promote human rights. Raising community awareness on human rights	https://hrcm.org.mv/en/contact Toll free hotline: 1424
20	Employment Tribunal of Maldives	Adjudicating disputes arising between employee and employer in the work environment and any matters ascribed to the Employment Act	Available on site

International Organizations

#	Name of organization	Roles and responsibilities/services	Services accessible at/through
21	International Organization for Migration (IOM)	Responding to the humanitarian needs of migrants, internally displaced persons, returnees and host communities through humanitarian direct assistance, recreational activities, and a variety of other efforts	N/A

Stakeholders of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

The IFRC, together with National Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), make up the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The three components of the Movement work closely together and coordinate our work in line with our Fundamental Principles to reach people and communities that others are unable to.”

#	Name of organization	Roles and responsibilities/services	Services accessible at/through
22	Maldives Red Crescent (MRC)	Humanitarian services	Toll free hotlines: 1458 (Migrant Support Helpline) & 1425 (MRC hotline) Services are also accessible via health and legal camps and during outreach activities
23	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)	An international membership organization that unites 191 Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies and supports them through a global secretariat. The mission of the IFRC is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies.	https://www.ifrc.org/ https://www.ifrc.org/our-work/disasters-climate-and-crises/migration-and-displacement/programmes
24	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	The ICRC is an independent, neutral organization ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of war and armed violence. It takes action in response to emergencies and promotes respect for international humanitarian law and its implementation in national law.	https://tracetheface.familylinks.icrc.org/ https://www.icrc.org/en/migrants https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/protected-persons/internally-displaced-persons

#	Name of organization	Roles and responsibilities/services	Services accessible at/through
25	Red Cross Red Crescent Global Migration Lab (RCRC GML)	The Global Migration Lab seeks to ensure that the voices, expertise and experience of migrants and the communities in which they live, work and transit are amplified to guide and inform migration policy and operations, and that research on migration builds on evidence from people directly affected.	N/A

Foreign Missions

#	Name of organization	Roles and responsibilities/services	Services accessible at/through
26	High Commission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh	Passport, visa, expatriate welfare, death and birth registration, emergency travel documents	Accessible on site
27	Sri Lankan Embassy	Process passport applications, Process visa applications, Issuing emergency travel documents, Registration of marriage, birth, and death, Police Clearance Certificate (PCC)	3322845 3313546
28	Indian High Commission	Visa services, employment contract attestation services, Birth Certificate services, OCI card, Police Clearance, Police Clearance Certificate, Affidavit for Child's Passport, Renunciation of Indian Citizenship and Surrender of Passport	7361452 Welfare Officer can be contacted by Indian citizens seeking emergency assistance & regular services are accessible on site.

#	Name of organization	Roles and responsibilities/services	Services accessible at/through
29	Embassy of UAE	Visa services	3005665
30	Consulate of South Africa	Visa services, Passport services, Notarial services and legalization, Civil registration, Emergency documents	3337792 7778280
31	Honorary Consulate of Federal Republic of Germany	Emergency Travel Documents for EU citizens	Available on site
32	Embassy of Japan	Visa services	3300087
33	Consulate of the Philippines	Visa services, Passport services, Notarial services and legalisation, Civil registration, Emergency documents	7771785
34	Netherlands honorary consulate	Point of contact in case of emergencies	3323069
35	Embassy of China	Visa services	N/A
36	Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Passport and visa services	Accessible via agent (VFS taseel)
37	High Commission of Pakistan	Passport and visa services, registration of pakistani children born abroad	3323005
38	Honorary Consulate General of Turkey	Visa, passport, document legalization, emergency travel document and assistance	3322719 7255272
39	British High Commission	Emergency Travel Documents, reporting cases of concern	Available Online
40	Consulate of Seychelles	Visa, passport, document legalization, emergency travel document and assistance	3006885

Community

#	Name of organization	Roles and responsibilities/services	Services accessible at/through
41	Migrants and their families	N/A	N/A
42	Host Communities	N/A	N/A

Businesses

#	Name of organization	Roles and responsibilities/services	Services accessible at/through
43	Local Businesses	Employers	N/A
44	International Businesses	Employers	N/A

FINDINGS FROM SURVEY

A total of 171 Individuals responded to the Survey from 7 locations – K. Male’ City, K. Hulhumale’, K. Thilafushi, Rah falhu huraa, V. Fulidhoo, Hdh. Kulhudhuffushi City, S. Addu City – of this total, 3 surveys were incomplete. The following results reflect the data obtained from the 168 completed questionnaires.

Demographics

Individuals from 8 countries responded to the Survey, with only one identified as an internal migrant. Among the 168 respondents, 159 (94.6%) were male, with the majority originating from Bangladesh (72.0%). The skewed gender distribution across nationalities (Figure 2. Gender distribution by nationality) is notably reflective of the general population distribution data reported in the National Census 2022 (Maldives Bureau of Statistics, 2022). It’s worth mentioning that two individuals opted not to disclose their gender.

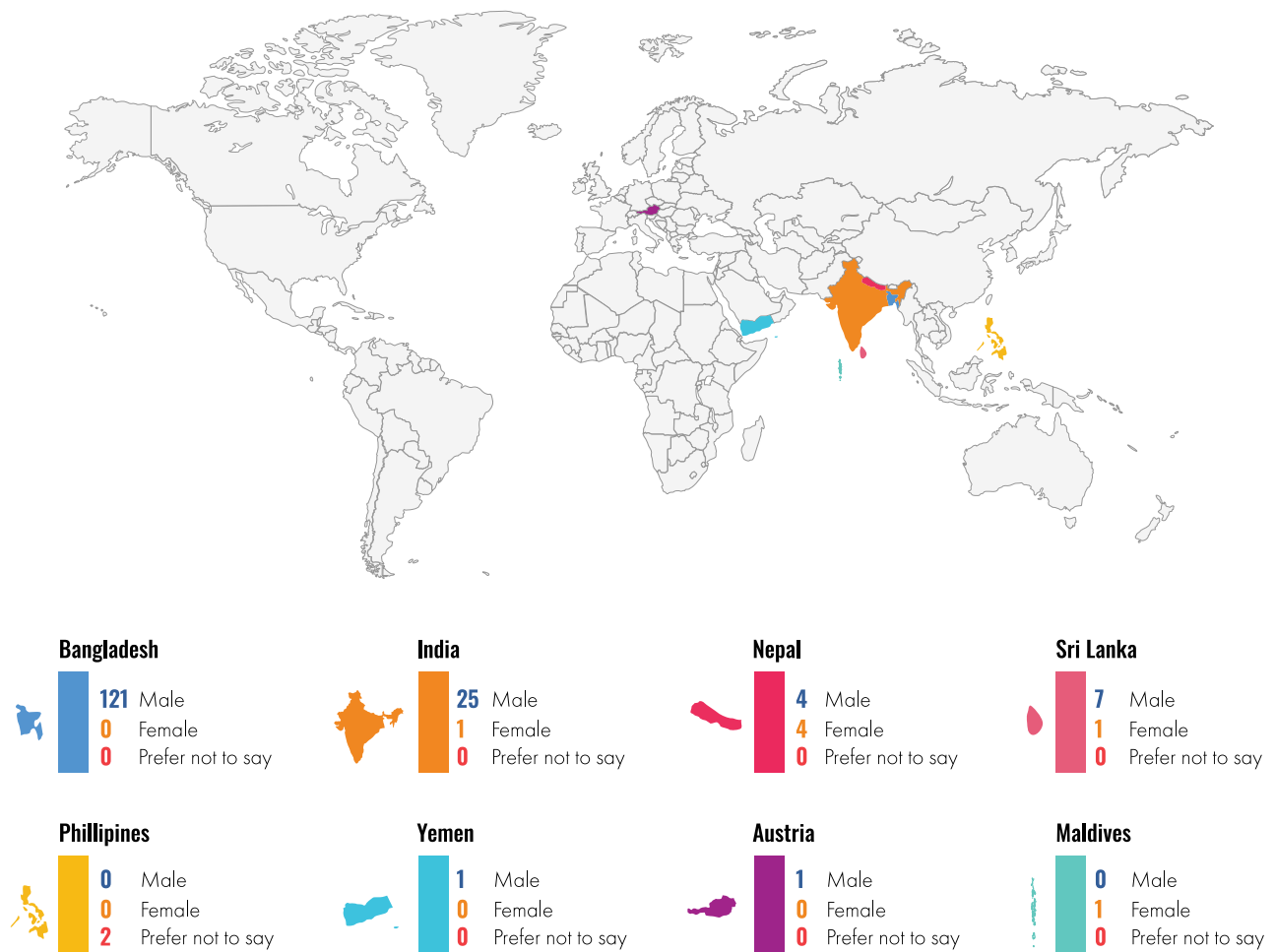


Figure 2. Gender distribution by nationality

In terms of age, almost half of the respondents (48.8%) fell within the 25-34 age range, followed by a quarter (25%) in the 35-44 age group. The survey included 43 respondents in the age categories of 18-24 (12.5%) and 45-54 (13.09%) respectively. Only 2 respondents (1.1%) were above the age of 55. Age information was missing in one survey.

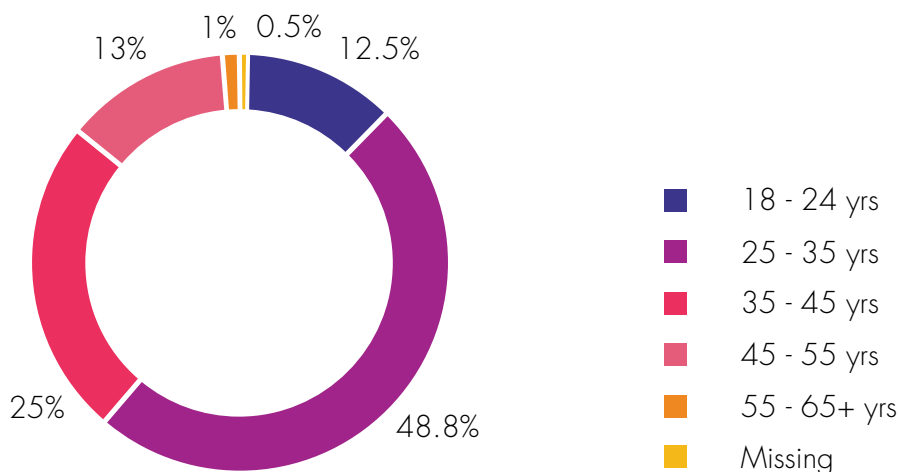


Figure 3. Age distribution of Survey respondents

— Dependants and Family

A significant majority of participants (95.8%) stated that their family is not in the Maldives with them. Information regarding the location of family was not available in one questionnaire.

In response to Survey question "How many dependents do you support?", a substantial number of participants (39.3%) responded that they support five or more dependants. Additionally, 19.6% of the respondents support four dependants, 20.2% support three dependents, 11.9% support two dependents and 4.1% support one dependent. The remaining 4.1% support none, while information on number of dependents was not reported by one individual.

— Duration in Maldives

Participants provided the following insights in response to the question, "How long have you been in the Maldives?". 8.9% noted a stay of less than a year, while 7.1% completed a year (1 – 2 years). The majority of respondents have been here for over 3 years, with 36.9% reporting 3-5 years, 29.8% of the participants reporting 6-9 years, and 17.3% reporting 10 or more years.

Documentation Status

The survey data reveals a diverse range of identification documents among the participants, with individuals holding more than one form of identification. The most commonly held form of identification is a passport, with 125 respondents (74.4%) possessing this document. Work permits follow closely, reported by 113 participants (67.3%). Government issued Regularization Cards are held by 11 individuals (6.5%), while MRC Beneficiary Cards and National IDs of their respective countries of origin are reported by 9 (5.4%) and 65 (38.7%) respondents, respectively. Driving Licenses are possessed by 22 individuals (13.1%), while Birth Certificates are held by 27 participants (16.1%). On the other hand, 14 respondents (8.3%) indicated having no valid ID documents, while 9 (5.4%) mentioned having only expired documents. Two participants (1.2%) chose not to disclose their identification status. The data provides a comprehensive overview of the variety and distribution of identification documents among the surveyed individuals.

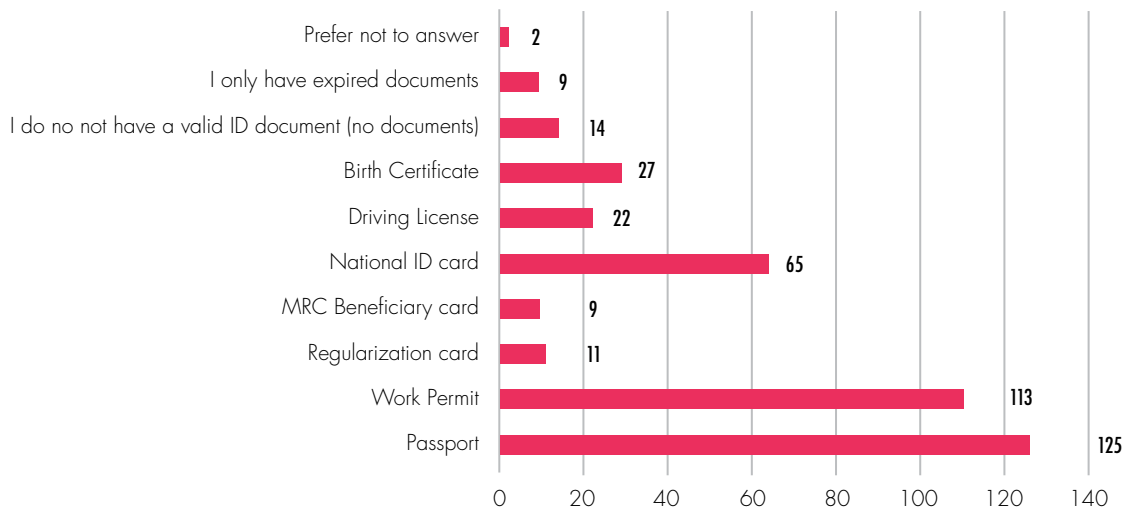


Figure 4. Distribution of Identification Documents amongst survey respondents.

Access to Passport

In this subsection, data collected in response to the following questions is analysed in combination; “Can you access your passport if you needed it?” and “Is your passport with your employer?”

Out of the 168 participants, 132 (78.6%) participants reported that they can access their passports if needed. However, 99 (58.9%) of those participants confirmed that their passports were not in their possession and with their current employer. It is noteworthy that there is a 4.2% discrepancy between the figure reported for those in possession of passports in the previous question and the figure reported in this question for those who can access their passports if necessary. A possible miscommunication may have led to this discrepancy.

4 (2.3%) individuals reported that their passports were with their previous employer. 3 (1.8%) individuals answered that they do not know if they can access their passports if needed. Additionally, 2.9% of respondents either chose the option “prefer not to answer” or left the question blank. Furthermore, 1.2% of the respondents selected “not applicable” and did not select “passport” as a form of Identification document they possessed in the previous question.

Employment Status

The largest group of participants, comprising 106 individuals (63.1%), were employed in the private sector. Another 26 respondents (15.5%) worked for daily wages, 29 (17.3%) reported being self-employed, and 15 (8.9%) were employed by the government. Notably, 5 individuals (3.0%) stated they had no income source and were currently unemployed; among them, one specifically attributed unemployment to a lack of documentation, stating that the agent that facilitated their arrival was in possession of his documents. It is to be noted that individuals reported more than one form of employment, showcasing a diversified employment landscape.

Furthermore, the sole internal migrant who participated in the survey noted that they were not reliant on government subsidies due to age, disability, or single motherhood.

— Findings on access to needs & knowledge

■ Social

Participants were asked to identify their social priorities and needs. Among the identified priorities, access to the internet and communication devices was highlighted by 111 respondents (66.1%), followed by appropriate shelter and housing identified by 99 participants (58.9%). Subsequently, 86 respondents (50.6%) emphasized the need for food and other necessities, while 71 participants (42.3%) expressed a priority for clothing. Providing for family was considered a priority by 67 individuals (39.8%)

Time with friends and free time were acknowledged as almost equally important as indicated by about 34% of respondents. Additionally, the need to not be subject to discrimination was considered as a need by 23 participants (13.7%). Notably, 22 participants 13.1% replied with “not applicable” and 4.8% did not provide a response.

In terms of access to social needs, only 56 participants out of 168 (33.3%) reported being able to access all their social needs, while 65 participants (38.69%) reported that they could access over 50% of their social needs. 30 participants (17.9%) reported that they could only access half of their social needs, while 10 participants (5.95%) reported being able to access less than 50% of their social needs. 7 respondents (3.5%) noted that they could not access any of their social needs.

■ Healthcare

Participants were asked to identify their healthcare priorities and needs. Among the responses, 110 respondents (65.4%) noted that they considered health insurance a necessity, while 62 individuals (36.9%) considered knowledge about where to access healthcare without proper documentation a need. Furthermore, 79 of the respondents (47.0%) considered free health screening a priority need, while 30 individuals (17.6%) considered mental healthcare as a need. Additionally, 36 participants (21.4%) selected ‘not applicable’ for this question, and one did not respond.

In terms of access to healthcare needs, only 59 participants (35.1%) reported being able to access all their needs, while 43 participants (25.6%) reported being able to access over 50% of their healthcare needs. 31 participants (18.5%) reported that they could only access half of their healthcare needs, while 19 individuals (11.3%) reported being able to access less than 50% of their healthcare needs. Additionally, 16 respondents (9.5%) noted that they did not have access to any of their healthcare needs.

Financial constraints were stated as the primary reason for not being able to access healthcare services, with 35 participants (20.8%) expressing that services were deemed expensive or unaffordable. A notable 27 participants (16.1%) reported buying medications from the pharmacy without prior consultation, while 14 individuals (8.3%) cited a lack of proper ID documents as a barrier. Additionally, 12 respondents (7.1%) indicated that they had recovered without the need for formal treatment. Furthermore, 23 individuals (13.7%) reported never experiencing the need to consult a doctor before purchasing medications. A substantial portion of the respondents, 76 participants (45.2%), marked their response as “not applicable,” indicating varied circumstances. Interestingly, time restrictions due to long work hours were highlighted by only 1 participant (0.6%). Lastly, 22 participants (13.1%) did not provide a response.

When asked about insurance coverage, 84 individuals (50%) responded that they were covered by health insurance, while of 66 respondents (39.3%) stated that they were not covered by any insurance. 18 respondents (10.7%) were unaware of their coverage status. The lack of insurance coverage corroborates the previous finding regarding financial constraints in accessing healthcare services.

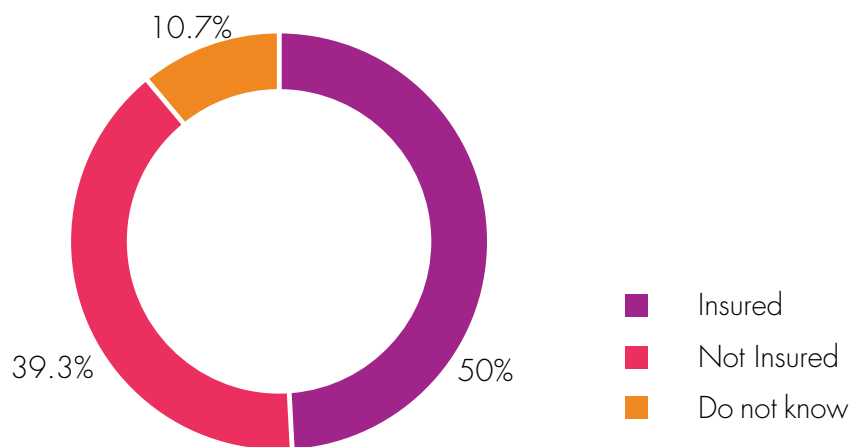


Figure 5. Health Insurance Coverage

Participants were asked if they had ever sought services at any healthcare facilities in the Maldives and 115 respondents (68.5%) stated that they have, while 52 participants (30.9%) stated that they never had. For participants who responded ‘yes’, a follow up question of where they accessed the healthcare services was asked. Out of those that had visited healthcare facilities 89 individuals (52.9%) accessed it exclusively via government hospitals including regional hospitals and health centres. 12 respondents (7.14%) stated that they accessed healthcare at both government and private facilities. Additionally, 20 respondents (11.9%) stated that they only sought healthcare in private clinics and hospitals, while 37 respondents (22.0%) selected ‘not applicable.’ The small discrepancy between the number of individuals who responded ‘yes’ and those who answered the follow-up question indicates a possible miscommunication, potentially attributable to language barriers.

Employment

Participants were asked to identify their priorities and needs regarding employment. The majority of participants (85.9%) reported appropriate wages as a priority need, followed by stable employment, which was reported by 91 respondents (54.2%). Stable employment was defined to participants as having clearly defined jobs roles and responsibilities. The third priority was reported as job security by about half of the respondents (52.6%). Safety in the workplace was considered as a need by 76 respondents (45.2%), while 64 respondents (38.1%) reported regular work hours as a need. 35.7% considered having a proper work permit and visa as a need. 32 individuals (19.0%) responded that none of the above needs were applicable to them, and one respondent left the question unanswered.

In terms of access to employment needs, 54 participants (32.1%) reported being able to access all of their needs, while 52 participants (30.9%) reported that they could access over half of their needs. 30 participants (17.9%) reported that they could only access half of their needs, while 22 respondents (13.1%) reported that they could only access less than half of their employment needs. 7 respondents (4.2%) noted that they could not access any of their employment needs, and 3 participants (1.8%) did not provide an answer for the question.

Legal and regulatory services

When participants were asked to identify what their needs and priorities were in terms of legal and regulatory services, the majority (45.8%) selected 'not applicable', followed by 60 respondents (35.7%) noting that access to legal advice and counsel was a priority. Another 58 participants (34.5%) identified accessibility to immigration and work visa services as a priority. This was followed by the need to access regularization and work permit services, reported by 45 participants (26.8%). Security from detention & deportation was considered a need by 41 individuals (24.4%). 2 individuals (1.2%) refrained from answering the question.

Participants were asked if they knew the process for acquiring a visa, and the majority (58.3%) responded that their agent or employer handles their paperwork. In contrast, 35 individuals (20.83%) reported that they do not know the process. Almost an equal number of individuals (19.6%) reported that do know how to acquire a visa. 2 individuals (1.2%) did not provide an answer.

The next question posed to the participants was regarding their knowledge of access to pro bono legal services, and a similar trend was observed. The majority of participants responded (51.2%) that their agent or employer handles their paperwork. Another 55 respondents (32.7%) reported that they do not know about pro bono legal services, while 13.1% reported that they do know. 5 respondents (2.9%) preferred not to answer.

The third query was regarding the process for acquiring a work permit, and the majority of respondents (58.9%) stated that their paperwork was handled by their agent or employer. 37 participants (22.0%) noted that they were unaware of the process, and 30 participants (17.9%) reported that they knew the process for acquiring a work permit. 2 individuals (1.2%) chose not to respond.

The final question was regarding knowledge of legal advice and counsel, and half of the respondents (50%) stated that their agent or employer would be responsible for handling their paperwork. 57 participants (33.9%) reported that they did not know how to access legal advice or counsel, while less than a quarter (11.9%) stated that they knew how to access legal advice. 7 individuals (4.2%) refrained from providing an answer.

For all four queries, the majority (over 50%) responded that their employer or agent was responsible for the process. The graph below demonstrates respondents' knowledge regarding legal and regulatory services.

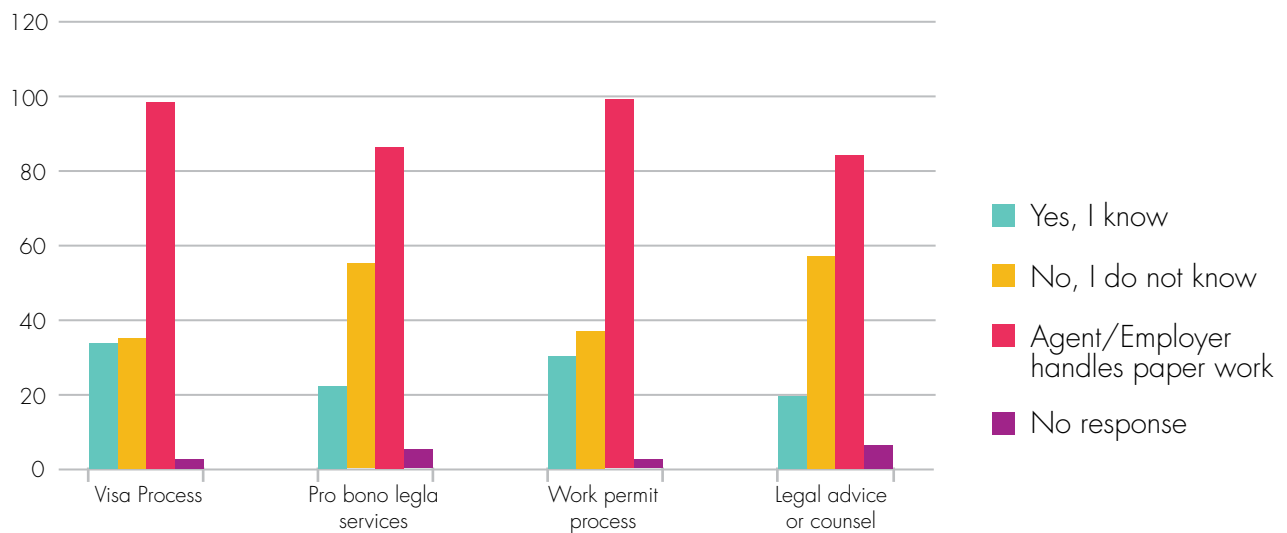


Figure 6. Knowledge regarding legal & regulatory services

Findings on information and access to humanitarian assistance from MRC

Participants were asked if they ever received any assistance from MRC. 60 participants (35.7%) responded that they had never received a service, while 51 participants (30.6%) stated that they had been recipients of a service from MRC. Additionally, 33.9% reported that they were not familiar with MRC and its services.

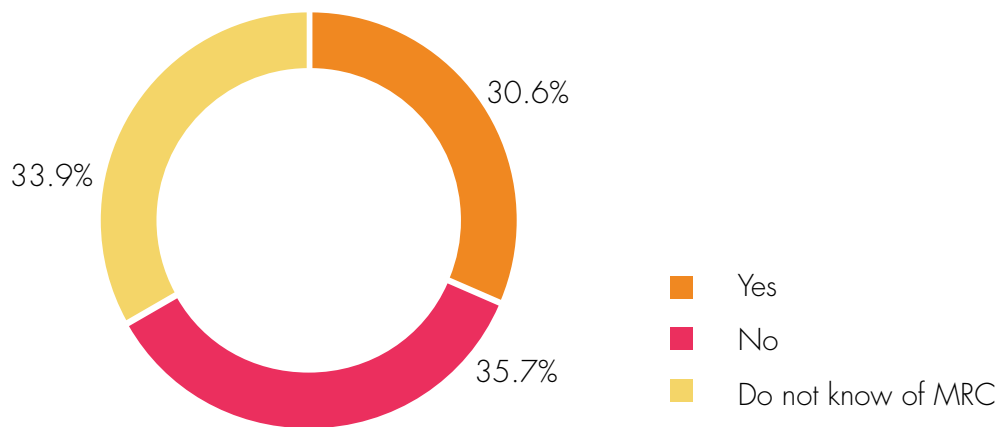


Figure 7. Individuals who received assistance from MRC

Participants who received assistance were then asked to identify the type of assistance they received from MRC. Most of the beneficiaries (29.8%) reported to gaining access to healthcare (vaccines and screening), followed by access to information (via 1458, loudspeakers, posters), noted by 47 participants (27.9%). 34 individuals (20.2%) were beneficiaries of hygiene materials and 12 individuals (7.14%) received food assistance. It is to be noted that most respondents received more than one service from MRC.

Reasons for why participants had never accessed services from MRC are discussed in further detail in the case study below.

RCRC Global Migration Lab – Trust Research: Case Study of Migrants’ views in the Maldives

The Case Study is an extract from the RCRC GML Report “Migrants’ Perspectives: Building Trust in Humanitarian Action” as it was written by the RCRC GML based on country level data gathered during this Migration and Displacement Needs Assessment (Arias Cubas, Hoagland and Mudaliar, 2022). This broader project explored migrants’ lived experience and perspectives on trust in the context of various forms of humanitarian assistance and protection across 15 countries.

Case Study: Migrants’ views in the Maldives

Survey findings provide important insights into who migrants trust (or not) in the Maldives (see Figure 8). Migrants were more likely to trust family and friends (74%) to do the right thing, followed by other migrants (61%) and religious leaders (57%). In contrast, migrants were least likely to trust journalists and the media (32%), followed by local community organisations (39%) and government leaders (40%). The Red Cross and Red Crescent actors and other humanitarian organisations sat somewhere in between this spectrum: 55% of migrants surveyed either ‘trust mostly’ or ‘trust very much’ the RCRC, while 41% either ‘trust mostly’ or ‘trust very much’ other humanitarian actors. However, there was also a degree of mistrust or ambivalence against humanitarian actors: for instance, around a quarter of migrants declared that they either ‘do not trust all’ or ‘do not trust very much’ the RCRC (21%) or other humanitarian actors (26%), while at least a quarter more declared a degree of ambivalence (‘neutral or don’t know’) towards the RCRC (25%) or towards other humanitarian actors (33%). This resonates with the broader research findings that highlight that while trusted by many, neither RCRC nor other humanitarian actors are universally trusted by migrants.

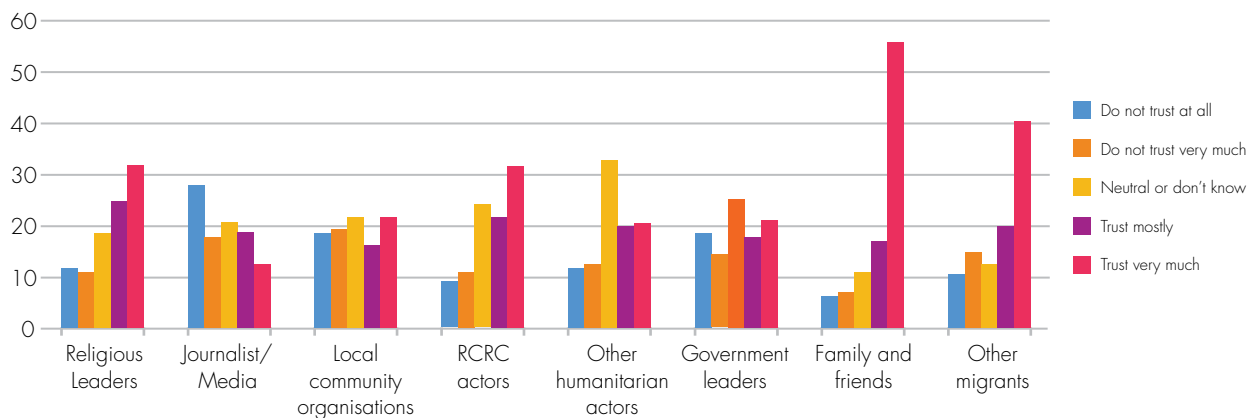


Figure 8. Maldives: How much do you trust this group to do the right thing?

Looking into more detail into migrants' perceptions of humanitarian action, data reveals an important contradiction: while only 27% of migrants received any form of protection or assistance from MRC (primarily in the form of access to healthcare, information, hygiene materials or food), the majority expressed a positive opinion on key aspects of humanitarian support (Figure 9). For instance, eight out of ten migrants (80%) declared that they 'always' felt treated with respect by MRC (and other humanitarian actors) and that they 'always' felt safe when accessing services from MRC (and other humanitarian actors). Possible explanations for this include: migrants had received assistance and support from other organisations (and thus their perceptions on issues related to respect or safety were a reflection of those experiences); migrants had not received support from MRC (or other humanitarian organisations) but had positive interactions or experiences in other contexts; or migrants' perceptions on humanitarian support and assistance were a reflection of their hopes and expectations (instead of on their actual lived experience).

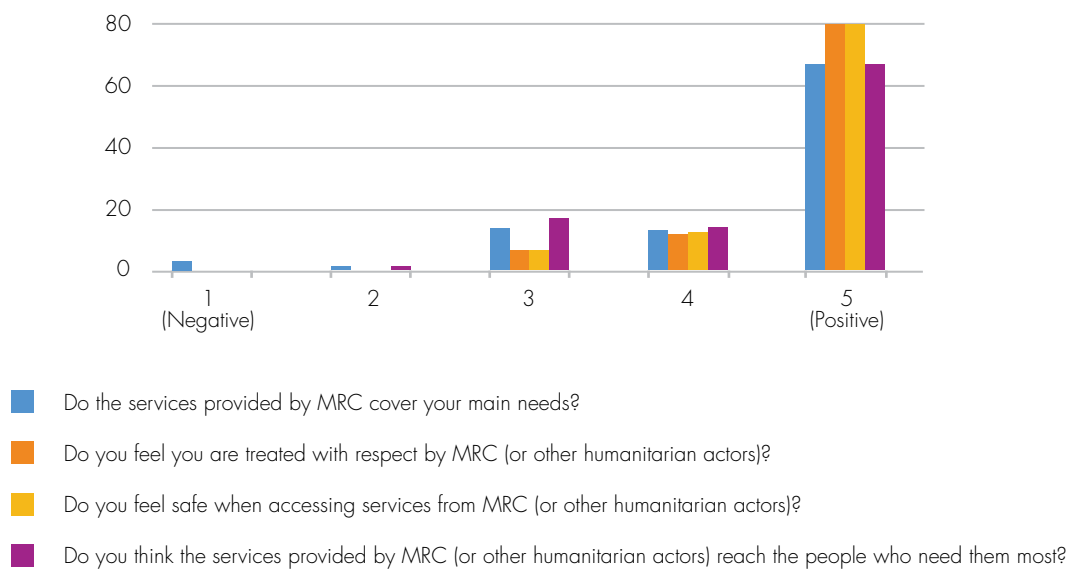


Figure 9. Maldives: Migrants' perceptions on humanitarian support and assistance.

Lastly, important lessons emerged from the perspectives of those who had not received any form of support or assistance from MRC (73%). More than a third (39%) stated they 'had never heard of MRC' as the reason why they had never received assistance (Figure 10). Other key factors behind limited access were also related to issues of awareness: about one in ten migrants were not sure how to reach the MRC (13%) or were unsure of the services provided by the organisation (9%). This resonates with findings across other countries, which highlighted issues relating to awareness as a key barrier to accessing humanitarian support and assistance. This emphasises the need for further engagement with migrants to ensure everyone – irrespective of legal status– has the knowledge and information required to access humanitarian support and assistance when needed.

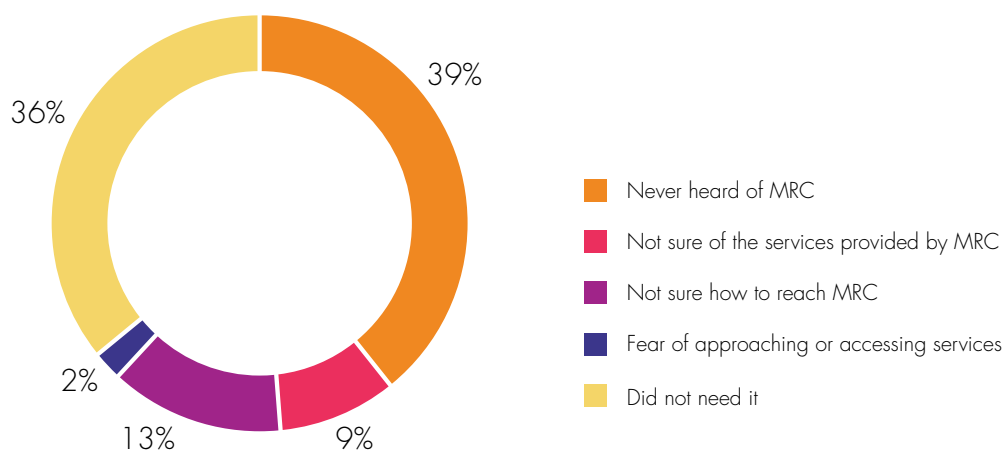


Figure 10. Maldives: If you have never received assistance from MRC, please state why not?

KEY THEMES AND CONCERNS

1 Documentation concerns & protection gaps:

Over 58.9% of the participants of the study reported that their passports were with their employers beyond the necessary processing of the visa or work permit. Additionally, a significant number of individuals indicated that their paperwork was handled by their agent or employer (Figure 6. Knowledge regarding legal & regulatory services). These figures are concerning as it indicates a lack of knowledge among employers and potentially within the migrant communities regarding the international and local laws.

Furthermore, people who are undocumented, face an increased the risk of being deprived of their basic rights and protections afforded by the local legislature, in a situation where they are not able to prove their legal status in the country. Furthermore, undocumented migrants are vulnerable to various forms of exploitation including sexual and labour exploitation.

2 Issues of accessibility to justice:

A lack of awareness materials in languages other than the local language and in diverse modalities regarding the rights and protections afforded to migrants within the local legal framework has been noted, indicating a significant barrier to accessing justice and information.

Furthermore, services provided in local tribunals and courts are exclusively mediated in the local language, and there is a shortage of official translators and pro bono legal service providers to assist migrants in seeking justice in the Maldives, especially in cases of disputes related to employment.

3 Issues of accessibility to healthcare:

In terms of healthcare access, it is concerning that 39.3% of participants reported not having insurance, and an additional 10.7% were unaware of their insurance status. Local regulations currently mandate payment through credit or debit cards or a limited range of insurance options at government hospitals in the Greater Male' region. This policy excludes cash payments, creating a significant barrier for uninsured migrants seeking access to government healthcare facilities. This is cause for concern as the majority of migrants reported that they sought healthcare at government facilities and the data was gathered prior to the policy taking effect. Other notable barriers to healthcare access include the high cost of services, the easy availability of over-the-counter medications, and a lack of proper documentation.

4 Lack of data on needs of female migrants:

Throughout the process of the Assessment several efforts to increase the number of responses from female migrants were made with the support of stakeholders. Despite the endeavours, the attempts were unsuccessful.

One of the reasons why female migrants may not have been reached is due to a lack of female volunteers in the field engaged in conducting the Assessment. Another reason could be that they were inaccessible during the field surveys, due to the nature of their work in the domestic sector, causing them to usually be constricted to households, due to the nature of their responsibilities.

5 Migration management, detention, and deportation:

Migration management, detention, and deportation fall under the 4th strategic goal of the Maldives Immigration Strategic Plan 2020-2024. In line with this goal, Maldives Immigration has increased raids and established a detention facility. Their priority as stated in the plan is to “facilitate the removal of illegal migrants in a humane, effective and orderly manner” (Maldives Immigration, 2020). The execution of raids and subsequent detention of migrants with irregular status is now in effect by the Maldives Immigration in partnership with Ministry of Economic Development (MoED).



Figure 11. Immigration social media announcement

Official immigration social media channels have also communicated that individuals without proper paperwork will face restrictions in moving from one island to another (Figure 11. Immigration Announcement). The potential implications of this policy may include limited access to healthcare and justice for migrants residing in islands without proper facilities. In addition to potentially, discouraging individuals from seeking assistance and protection out of fear of deportation and detention. Furthermore, the information regarding migration management, detention, and deportation, are only available in English and Dhivehi, presented in written form on social media platforms, potentially rendering it inaccessible to many members of the migrant communities.



Kulhudhuffushi City Unit volunteers conducting the assessment, 2022

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommended actions, grounded in the findings of the assessment, are categorized based on priority. Each recommendation highlights the beneficiaries and stakeholders relevant to the action where appropriate.

Immediate priorities:

This first category of recommendations is proposed to address immediate challenges requiring urgent attention within the next six to twelve months.

1 Increase overall awareness and outreach efforts.

The report's findings suggest that a lack of access to information leads to various challenges and issues for migrants, employers, and service providers. These challenges include miscommunication, difficulties in service delivery and receipt, legal issues, and protection concerns. To create a community where there are predominantly positive interactions among stakeholders, improved access to information in various modalities and languages is recommended.

As such, prioritizing the allocation of resources by MRC to ensure the production of Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials to inform migrants on their basic rights in the Maldives, community health risks, and travel safety in terms of health risks and Trafficking in Persons (TiP) concerns is advisable. Additional efforts to raise awareness and sensitization amongst employers, healthcare workers, stakeholders engaged in protection sector, and legal professionals, on their roles and responsibilities are also advisable. These activities can potentially lead to a reduction in discrimination faced by migrant workers in the receipt of essential services.

Furthermore, to enhance access of the migrant communities to information and to facilitate their access to essential services such as healthcare and legal redress mechanisms, MRC should also consider expanding translation and referral services.

2 Facilitate regular access to basic healthcare, legal, and regulatory services.

Migrants often encounter a unique blend of challenges in accessing fundamental and essential services, particularly healthcare, legal assistance, and regulatory services. The report identifies the issues stemming from an absence of insurance, language barriers, costly services, lack of awareness about regulatory procedures, and lack of proper documents. In light of the identified issues and to promptly address these hurdles, it is recommended to implement mobile Humanitarian Service Points (HSP) in key islands where migrants can easily have access to these services. Modalities of facilitating these services can be explored by MRC in collaboration with key partners and stakeholders.

Short-term priorities:

These recommendations are geared towards solutions that can be implemented within one to two years.

3 Increase Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) efforts of MRC.

While the findings of the assessment provide a good starting point for the design of future services and programs, further opportunities for meaningfully engaging the migrant communities in all stages of our work should be considered. This proposal aims to ensure that the services designed and delivered by MRC are relevant to the needs of the migrant communities. Small steps such as collecting feedback following the delivery of a service or prior to the rolling out of a service are recommended in the short term. Increasing CEA efforts can also contribute to building more trust between MRC and the migrant communities.

4 Inclusion of migrant youth in regular programming of MRC and other stakeholders.

One key takeaway of the assessment is that the larger proportion of migrants in the Maldives are youth. As such, it is highly advisable to make considerations for the inclusion of migrant youth in MRC programming and activities. This extends to initiatives led by other key stakeholders, including service providers to the migrant communities, government, and employers. These considerations can include encouraging volunteerism and providing professional development opportunities, such as facilitating the participation of migrant youth in workshops and training sessions.

5 Create avenues for social interaction between members of the local community and migrant communities.

It is recommended to explore ways to establish avenues for socialization between locals and migrants as a means to reduce prejudice and subsequent discrimination. Facilitating social interactions can foster understanding between communities and contribute to building a more resilient community overall.

6 Secure resources for detention monitoring and provision of psychosocial support for migrants in detention facilities.

Based on the findings of the assessment regarding the detention and deportation of migrants without proper documents, it is advisable for MRC to broaden the scope of its migration support services by incorporating a detention monitoring component with the support of the ICRC. Additionally, devising mechanisms for delivery of psychosocial support to individuals in detention facilities is also recommended, to ensure both mental and physical wellbeing of detainees.

Long-term priorities:

These recommendations are centered around actions to be addressed within the next two to five years. They are designed to foster sustainable systematic change and to address root causes to create a lasting impact.

7 Conduct further comprehensive research on the provision of mental health support to migrants.

Further research needs to be conducted to understand best practices for offering mental health support to the migrant communities. Currently, MRC and other mental health service providers encounter various challenges, such as language barriers in providing this service. Therefore, systematic exploration of practices by other National Societies and service providers in different countries is recommended.

8 Advocate for inclusive laws, policies, and regulations, as well as the ratification of important international conventions.

It is imperative to ensure that laws, policies, and regulations are inclusive and non-discriminatory to achieve sustainable systematic change, especially in sectors providing essential services. As such, it is recommended that MRC and NGOs operating in the field increase advocacy efforts to secure comprehensive healthcare coverage for migrants, better access to legal redress mechanisms and protection services. Additionally, where existing laws, policies, and regulations are inclusive, advocacy for equitable implementation of such laws is advisable.

Furthermore, increased humanitarian diplomacy and advocacy efforts from MRC and other key stakeholders to ensure the ratification of important international conventions pertaining to the rights of migrant workers and their families, refugees, and asylum seekers, are also recommended. These can be timeless instruments that can contribute to the creation of positive and impactful change in ensuring a wholistically inclusive, resilient, and supportive society.

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ANNEX

1 7 Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

HUMANITY	The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours – in its international and national capacities – to prevent and alleviate suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for every human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation, and lasting peace amongst all peoples.
IMPARTIALITY	The Movement makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class, or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.
NEUTRALITY	In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.
INDEPENDENCE	The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.
UNITY	There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.
UNIVERSALITY	The Movement, in which all National Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

2

Individual Survey



Version 1:

Individual Questionnaire: Migration & Displacement Needs Assessment



Version 2:

Individual Questionnaire: Migration & Displacement Needs Assessment

3

Conventions and Protocols Not Ratified by the Maldives.

C012 - Workmen's Compensation (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 (No. 12)

C014 - Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921 (No. 14)

C077 - Medical Examination of Young Persons (Industry) Convention, 1946 (No. 77)

C078 - Medical Examination of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations) Convention, 1946 (No. 78)

C081 - Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)

C088 - Employment Service Convention, 1948 (No. 88)

C094 - Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Convention, 1949 (No. 94)

C095 - Protection of Wages Convention, 1949 (No. 95)

C097 - Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97)

C102 - Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102)

C106 - Weekly Rest (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1957 (No. 106)

C110 - Plantations Convention, 1958 (No. 110)

C115 - Radiation Protection Convention, 1960 (No. 115)

C118 - Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention, 1962 (No. 118)

C121 - Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964 [Schedule I amended in 1980] (No. 121)

C122 - Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122)
C124 - Medical Examination of Young Persons (Underground Work) Convention, 1965 (No. 124)
C128 - Invalidity, Old-Age and Survivors' Benefits Convention, 1967 (No. 128)
C129 - Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129)
C130 - Medical Care and Sickness Benefits Convention, 1969 (No. 130)
C131 - Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131)
C135 - Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971 (No. 135)
C139 - Occupational Cancer Convention, 1974 (No. 139)
C140 - Paid Educational Leave Convention, 1974 (No. 140)
C141 - Rural Workers' Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141)
C142 - Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142)
C143 - Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143)
C144 - Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144)
C148 - Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention, 1977 (No. 148)
C149 - Nursing Personnel Convention, 1977 (No. 149)
C150 - Labour Administration Convention, 1978 (No. 150)
C151 - Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151)
C152 - Occupational Safety and Health (Dock Work) Convention, 1979 (No. 152)
C154 - Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154)
C155 - Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155)
C156 - Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156)
C157 - Maintenance of Social Security Rights Convention, 1982 (No. 157)
C159 - Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159)
C160 - Labour Statistics Convention, 1985 (No. 160)
C161 - Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161)
C162 - Asbestos Convention, 1986 (No. 162)

C167 - Safety and Health in Construction Convention, 1988 (No. 167)
C168 - Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment Convention, 1988 (No. 168)
C169 - Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)
C170 - Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170)
C171 - Night Work Convention, 1990 (No. 171)
C172 - Working Conditions (Hotels and Restaurants) Convention, 1991 (No. 172)
C173 - Protection of Workers' Claims (Employer's Insolvency) Convention, 1992 (No. 173)
C174 - Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention, 1993 (No. 174)
C175 - Part-Time Work Convention, 1994 (No. 175)
C176 - Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176)
C177 - Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177)
C181 - Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181)
C183 - Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183)
C184 - Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184)
C187 - Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187)
C188 - Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188)
C189 - Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)
C190 - Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)
P029 - Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930
P081 - Protocol of 1995 to the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947
P089 - Protocol of 1990 to the Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1948
P110 - Protocol of 1982 to the Plantations Convention, 1958
P155 - Protocol of 2002 to the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981

