



Answers to Issues and Questions with regards to the 2nd and 3rd Combined periodic CEDAW report, raised by the Pre-session working group of the CEDAW Committee.

**GOVERNMENT OF MALDIVES
26th September 2006**

Ministry of Gender and Family
Government of Maldives
Republic of Maldives

1) Details about the process and preparation of the report:

The initial CEDAW report was published and widely circulated among the general public and the government and non-governmental organizations in 2002. The concluding comments of the CEDAW Committee were also included in the published version of this report. A consultation on CEDAW was held for Gender Equality Council members and gender focal points in 2002. Following that in preparation to draft the second and third combined report, the Ministry of Gender and Family forwarded the concluding comments to all the stake holder ministries once again to get an update of the current situation. Specifically the Ministry of Gender and Family highlighted the different parts of the concluding comments that were relevant to each specific ministry or agency and forwarded it to them to get the update. These agencies include the Ministry of Justice, Attorney General's Office, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, former Ministry of Human Resources, and the former Ministry of Defense and National Security. The draft report was prepared considering the responses the Ministry received from each of these line ministries. Once the draft report had been prepared, it was once again circulated among all the stakeholders including UNDP and UNFPA for comments. At the time this report was being prepared there were no other national or international NGO's working for women's development operating within Maldives. The comments of these agencies provided additional information with regards to the current status of women in Maldives. After incorporating these comments the report was finalized and forward to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to submit it to the United Nations CEDAW committee. As a rule we have never presented any of the UN conventions periodic reports to the People's Majlis (Parliament). However we can see the importance of this and in future would share the report with the People's Majlis before submitting them to the CEDAW Committee.

2) Status of the Convention in the domestic legal system

The Maldives is a dualist country, which means the international instruments the Maldives is signatory to takes effect in domestic law only when domestic legislation is adopted. While CEDAW has not been incorporated by legislation into domestic law to date, existing laws have been reviewed to identify discrepancies with CEDAW, as groundwork to introduce domestic legislation which would incorporate CEDAW into domestic law.

The Maldivian Constitution embraces Islamic jurisprudence, and the latter is also a means to interpreting the former, especially in personal law matters. Where there are conflicts between the provisions of the Convention and those of the Constitution, the provisions of the latter will prevail.

The new Maldivian Penal Bill was drafted after the consultations on the criminal justice system review conducted in 2004 by the Attorney General's Office (page 8 of the report) and currently the new Penal Code is being considered by the Majlis for adoption. This new Penal Bill gives consideration to the majority of issues raised by the criminal justice system review report (The review report in available in electronic format if required) including issues related to gender discrimination.

3) Progress towards repealing legislation that prohibits women from the office of President and Vice-President of the country and reservations to Article 16 of the CEDAW.

The Maldivian Government recognizes the importance of removing its reservations to CEDAW. This is reflected in the “Reform Agenda” presented by His Excellency, President Maumoom Abdul Gayyoom, and the suggestions submitted to the Special Majlis (the Constitutional Assembly) by the President. However, the reality is that this issue is seen more as a religious issue than a gender issue by a majority of members, at both the Special Majlis and the Majlis. Hence it is difficult to offer assurances that the constitution which is currently being drafted will take a particular form. Reform Agenda is still under debate by the Special Majlis and the time frame to adopt the Reform Agenda is till the end of 2008.

Efforts have been made in the past to sensitize high level government officials including cabinet members on gender issues which includes a session on gender and CEDAW conducted by the Ministry of Gender and Family facilitated by an international expert in 2002 and another two day workshop on what CRC and CEDAW means conducted by the National Human Rights Commission, also facilitated by an international expert in 2004. Another seminar on CRC and CEDAW is planned for parliamentarians in December 2006.

With regards to Article 16, Maldives does not in practice have reservations to all clauses of the Article. In practice the reservations are only with regards to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship, adoption of children and inheritance. It should be noted that work is underway to develop alternate methods for adoption in working towards implementing the CRC.

4) Constitutional provisions on fundamental rights including non-discrimination on the ground of sex with minimum reservations to accommodate the Islamic Shariah:

According to the Sharia all people, irrespective of sex, are equal, and should not be discriminated. The differences that materialize in law and in social relationships are due to interpretations and perceptions of Sharia. Hence what is put forward in the Reform agenda recognizes this and generally advocates for fundamental rights which includes non-discrimination on the ground of sex.

5) The Government’s strategy to strengthen the judiciary and other law enforcement agencies with regards to violence against women and in the area of gender issues:

As mentioned above a majority of the laws are under revision or planned for revision including the Penal Code, Family Law and the Law on the Rights of the Child, Police Act, Evidence Act, Citizenship Act, and thus it is expected that laws would be strengthened to provide more protection and justice to victims of violence against women.

In 2005 UNFPA office in Maldives conducted a review of the justice system and the existing laws with regards to violence against women and the report highlighted major

areas that needs to be strengthened and new developments that needs to be incorporated into the jurisprudence. Apart from this emphasis is being given to build the capacity of the law enforcement agencies, specially the Family and Child Protection Unit of the Police.

Since the initial training held for the Family and Child Protection Unit of the Police with regards to domestic violence in 2003, a second training program was conducted in 2005. This training workshop was facilitated by the Domestic Abuse Liason Officer from Scotland-Border Police.

Much of the focus now with regards to violence against women, is the capacity building of the newly established referral organizations and protection services in Maldives. Hence 4 doctors from the Indhira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, an official from Child and Family Protection Services of the Ministry of Gender and Family and one official from the Special Crimes Unit of the Maldives Police Services are going to attend a training held in India on forensic evidence regarding domestic violence and violence against women in early October. With the newly drafted Evidence Act and Penal Bill which allows forensic evidence to be used in courts, this training would provide these officials with the basic knowledge on collecting forensic evidence and how these can be best used in providing assistance and justice to victims of abuse.

6) Mandate and activities of the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives: Has it dealt with issues relating to gender equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex?

The Commissions mandate was redrafted in 2005 and the new mandate states that the Commission should:

- a) Investigate any complaints about an act of violation of an individual's human rights or leading to a violation of human rights, if lodged by the victim or by another person or entity with the permission or request for the victim, and take necessary action, in accordance with this Act to stop such violations.
- b) If any person's or entity is found to be negligent in preventing human rights violations, the Commission shall investigate and take necessary actions in accordance with this Act.
- c) If any administrative rules/regulation is reported to contradict human rights, the Commission shall investigate and take necessary actions in accordance with this Act.
- d) If Commission receives a complaint alleging human rights violation by a government agency, Commission shall investigate and take necessary actions in accordance with this Act.
- e) Promote a culture of respect for human rights and take steps to protect and promote human rights.
- f) With regard to laws and regulations being formulated by the government, advise the government, advise the government on human rights aspects of such laws and regulations with a view to promote and protect human rights.
- g) To identify existing laws and regulations those contradicts human rights and bring to the attention of the government.
- h) To advice and recommend to the government which regional and international human rights instruments should be signed and ratified.

- i) To actively participate in the formulation and compilation of new human rights treaties.
- j) To increase awareness among Maldivian citizens about protection and promotion of human rights.
- k) To conduct research on human rights issues.
- l) Publicise the Commission's view and recommendations about protection of human rights through the media.
- m) In addition to the above, undertake other necessary actions to protect human rights.

Since its establishment in 2003, according to the Commission, it has dealt with a number of cases with regards to gender discrimination. However statistical data on the number of cases are not available at the moment. The Committee conducted a seminar on CEDAW and CRC for top government officials and NGOs in 2004 and according to the Commission their major reason for holding this seminar was to increase awareness and accountability of the government with regards to CEDAW and CRC.

The Commission also conducted a national research with regards to human rights in Maldives in 2005. A number of issues regarding discrimination are highlighted in this report.

7) Adoption of the Draft Plan of Action referred to on page 7 of the report and the National Policy on Gender Equality:

The National Policy on Gender Equality was approved and passed by the cabinet on 5th April 2006. The policy is published for distribution to all stakeholders.

With regards to the *Draft Action Plan*, efforts are made to work according to the draft *Plan of Action* produced during the training/information sessions for senior government officials and gender focal points regarding CEDAW. However it is important to note that all the parties of the Gender Managements System who are mandated to adopt and work towards the action plan is not currently strengthened enough to fully cooperate and work accordingly towards gender mainstreaming.

8) Details about the Gender Management System (GMS):

During the course of the past 3 years GMS has proved to be inefficient due to various constraints. The biggest challenge is the limited understanding and gender sensitization among senior government officials mandated to carry out the work required by the GMS. Of the three major structures of the GMS ie, the Lead Agency (Ministry of Gender and Family), the Gender Focal Points and the Gender Equality Council, the only fully functional structure is the Lead Agency. With the creation of Gender Focal Points in each of the government ministries and agencies and the stakeholder NGOs, as mentioned in point 7 above, a very comprehensive training workshop was conducted for all the focal points with the help of an international gender expert. Similarly following the gender focal points training, a half day session was also held for top government officials. Since the Gender Equality Council (GEC) is made of the top government officials the session provided information on gender issues and gender sensitization essentially to the GEC members. Most of the members of the GEC are no longer in the cabinet and as gender focal points have also been changed by the different stakeholder ministries in numerous occasions it is a challenge for the Ministry of Gender and Family to provide ongoing training for the new focal points. Generally the observation of the Lead Agency is that at

present there is a strong need to improve both motivation as well as capacity to upkeep a Gender Management System in Maldives for the time being.

Hence the Ministry of Gender and Family is planning to formulate a national working committee with representatives of all the stakeholder ministries and agencies in an effort to mainstream gender issues. The ministry already has a Multisectoral Committee which has proven to be more effective in mainstreaming and looking into the rights of the child in Maldives and thus learning from this experience the ministry is working to re-strategize and formulate a gender equality technical committee.

9) Why Temporary Special Measures has not been taken to increase the number of women in decision-making positions and in legislative bodies.

The government of Maldives has adopted a gender equality policy early this year. With its publication, efforts will have to be made to orient top government officials (most of them are recently appointed) to gain cooperation and understanding between the different government ministries in order to mainstream gender concerns. It is worth noting that the President has continuously demonstrated gender equality by assigning half women and half men to the seats in Majlis and Special Majlis. Although quotas for women in policy making level have not been used, government has taken measures to assign women to senior management levels including atoll chiefs and island chiefs. However, it has been difficult to find women willing to accept some of these senior posts. More work needs to be done to encourage and lobby women to accept such offers.

10) Discriminatory Practices and Stereotypes.

Currently the main strategy used to combat discriminatory practices and stereotypes is through advocacy and sensitization by means of Information, Education and Communication materials such as leaflets, posters, videos, radio programmes, teledramas and information bulletins in addition to continuous sensitization workshops.

More recently the Ministry of Information and Arts has produced serial dramas, TV and radio spots and docu-dramas on gender issues in the past 3 years. So far 3 serial dramas and a number of TV and radio spots have been produced and aired by Television Maldives (national television station) and Voice of Maldives (national radio station). The Ministry of Information and Arts is currently working on producing a feature film with gender based violence as the major theme.

Even though much of the local media material produced are still far from gender sensitive it is worthwhile to note that a positive change is apparent in some of the materials produced. A lot of work is being done to raise awareness, sensitize and train the media to produce more effective advocacy material by the Ministry of Gender and Family and through regional gender experts, and by the Ministry of Information and Arts. Very often the Ministry of Gender and Family is consulted in the production of these media materials and some of the recommendations of the Ministry are reflected in the final output.

Due to limited number of NGOs working in the field of gender, collaboration worth reporting has not taken place. However, the Island Women's Development Committees (206 in the country with around 4000 members) support the work of the Ministry to reduce discriminatory practices and stereotypes in the islands.

11) More information about the increasing number of women in areas of work that are traditionally considered to be men's and the number of women in the cabinet, Majlis and the Special Majlis.

Traditionally exclusively male dominated areas of work such as the field of law, are no longer completely dominated by men anymore and the number of females working in this field are increasing. Similarly the number of women employed in the tourist resorts and hotels has increased from 3 percent in 2003 to 4.5 percent in 2004. Since resorts islands are kept isolated from the general public the dominant cultural beliefs do not easily approve of women working in the resorts as they are located in separate islands. So the fact that the number of women working in the resorts and hotels are increasing itself is a positive change. When we review the types of jobs occupied by females in these resorts it is worthwhile to note that few women are employed in the managerial level and also in other areas such as maintenance and in highly skilled jobs. (One woman is employed as a chief engineer at the Hilton Hotel. She is married and has two children.) Such examples though few, help to provide the younger generation of Maldivians with a different viewpoint and role model.

With regards to the political sphere there are 4 women in the cabinet of 22, 6 women in the Majlis (Parliament) out of 50 and 11 women in the Special Majlis (Constitutional Assembly) out of 113. Hence women comprises of 13.6 percent of the cabinet, 12 percent of the Majlis and 9 percent of the Special Majlis.

12) Steps taken to enact laws on domestic violence and marital rape, in accordance with general recommendation 19 on Violence against Women.

As mentioned in issue no. 2 above, majority of the laws relevant to gender equality are being reformed or under reformation. The Penal Bill, is currently under debate by the Majlis and it classifies marital rape as an offence. It however, does not criminalize violence against women. However, the Penal Bill includes an intricate sentencing guideline, which could be used, in instances of violence against women.

One of the biggest challenges for Maldives with regards to violence against women is the limited scope of the permissible evidence in court. An Evidence Act which recognizes forensic evidence and minors as witnesses has been drafted and will be sent to the Majlis shortly. Similarly a law on the rights of women is also planned for drafting in January 2007.

13) Additional steps taken to encourage reporting of cases of violence against women.

A Family Counseling Unit has been established in the Indhira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (the main referral hospital in the capital island Male'). This unit makes an initial assessment and refers women who need additional assistance to other counseling services including the Ministry of Gender and Family, Society for Health Education (SHE, and NGO). This unit was established in August 2005.

Currently the Maldives does not have any temporary shelters or refuges established for victims of abuse. However in severe cases young girls who have been abused by family and/or relatives have been temporarily housed in the children's home (Villingili Kudakudhinge Hiya) which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Gender and Family.

The Ministry of Gender and Family is currently working towards establishing Social Protection Service Centers in every atoll and wards of Male' to outreach the rural island

populations and the different and these Centers would also provide temporary shelter for victims of severe violence and abuse. One Atoll Social Protection Services Center has already been established in the southern most atoll in July this year. Currently twenty five social service managers for these Centers are being trained in a Sri Lankan University. for 1 year. Concurrently discussions are underway to develop a social workers training course in the Faculty of Education in Maldives to train social workers to work in these Centers. More Social Protection Centers are expected to be established by mid 2007 and by the end of 2008 all twenty Atoll Centers are expected to be fully functioning.

Psychological counseling is being provided by the Child and Family Protection Services of the Ministry of Gender and Family. Similarly the Society for Health Education (NGO) also has a counseling unit which also deals with domestic violence cases.

14) Details on number of cases recorded since the establishment of the database:

To date 30 gender based violence cases have been reported to the Ministry of Gender and Family between 2001-2006. There is a referral system established at the Family Counseling Unit in the Indhira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, where by a monthly report of all cases reported to the unit are forwarded to the Ministry. However these cases are not recorded in the Ministry's database as yet. Nor are the cases reported to the police included in the database. The Ministry has plans in its three year strategic plan (2006 – 2008) to establish a more comprehensive database and has already sought financial support from UNICEF.

15) The gender concerns addressed in the draft discussion paper on the criminal justice reform.

Much of the issues addressed are with regards to lifting the CEDAW reservations, the limitations in the current penal code with regards to permissible evidence in court and the absence of any laws and regulations with regard to marital rape, domestic violence and violence against women.

16) Information about charges filed against Ms. Latheef and the outcomes of the trial. Also information on the allegations of the police brutality and ill-treatment in detention investigation and the results of this investigation.

Ms. Latheef was charged under s.6(2) of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (Law No.: 10/90), with reference to s.2(6) and s.2(7) of the same Act.

The Criminal Court sentenced Ms. Latheef to 10 years of imprisonment.

Ms. Latheef was pardoned by the President, and released on 23 August 2005.

(Details of the case is available if required)

The Government of Maldives requested the Human Rights Commission to investigate the allegations of the police brutality and ill-treatment in detention investigation. Information regarding the results of the investigation is not available to us at the moment.

17) Exploitation of prostitution and trafficking.

The Attorney General's Office has dealt with prostitution cases in Maldives in the last three years. Even though prostitution is considered a crime the current penal code does not have a specific code that deals with prostitution or trafficking and thus these cases are handled under the article on 'disobedience'. Therefore statistical information on the number of prostitution cases that have been reported so far is unavailable due to the coding problem.

Unofficial reports by police officials and other sources confirm that prostitution is on the increase especially with the rising drug addiction problem in Maldives. Currently there

are no rehabilitative services provided for prostitutes. However, work is underway to hold discussions between the Police, Ministry of Gender and the Attorney General's Office on how to best deal with the situation and priority action required to effectively deal with the problem.

There are also unofficial reports of trafficking which would also be looked into along with the issue of prostitution in these discussions. Recently the Minister of Gender and Family has made a statement to the media regarding her concern for the growing numbers of prostitution. The government will make every effort needed to curb this social issue.

18) Legislations that deal with trafficking:

Currently there is no legislation that deals with trafficking. But it is expected that legislations would be developed or strengthened in the near future to deal with this issue. (See above)

19) Steps envisaged by the government to address existing gaps in women's access to higher education and the obstacles to adopt temporary special measures to increase women's access to higher education?

Adopting temporary special measures is vital to address the gaps in women's access to higher education. However; without increased gender sensitization among stakeholders and the general public it is unlikely that the government could adopt such measures. Generally the argument is that the existing merit based system in providing scholarships is fair and non-discriminatory and caters to both sexes equally.

Currently the Ministry of Education has a special scholarship scheme for girls from the islands to complete their higher secondary education at the government higher education institute (Center for Higher Secondary Education) in Male' the capital. The rationale behind this scheme is to encourage girls to attain better grades and thus increase their chances for scholarships for higher education.

20) Measures taken to increase the number of females in vocational courses especially in non-traditional fields of study and training.

Increased gender sensitization and advocacy is required in this area. An advocacy leaflet was produced on the occasion of the 2005 International Women's Day by the Ministry of Gender and Family, advocating for the recruitment of more female students in these non-traditional fields. No time bound strategy has been developed as yet to increase the number of female students in non-traditional fields.

According to the Ministry of Education there are plans underway to increase vocational opportunities in the schools including consideration of a vocational stream. A pilot project on the introduction of vocational streams in secondary schools is currently underway and initial reports confirm that participation of females in this stream is significantly high. The ratio of girls to boys for this programme is 84:95.

21) Information on Employment Skills Training Project and the loan schemes conducted for women by the Ministry including the total number of women who have been beneficiaries of this scheme.

The goal of the Employment Skills Training project is to increase the number of Maldivian men and women with entry level occupational qualification and skills for employment or for self-sustaining livelihood initiatives. As most of the sectors continue to rely heavily on expatriate employment, the aim of this project is not to replace

expatriate workers but rather it is to ensure that Maldivian men and women have equal opportunity of employment should they desire.

With regards to the Ministry of Gender and Family's micro credit loan scheme, a total of 60 loans had been disbursed to the women in Male' since the scheme was initiated in 2000. A further 35 loans will be disbursed to island women by the end of September 2006.

22) Details of how the government intends to achieve gender equality in the field of employment.

The government does not have a specific strategy laid out to achieve gender equality in the field of employment. However as mentioned earlier, the Ministry of Gender and Family has been producing advocacy material to raise awareness to increase the number of women in the employment field. As in most areas, gender sensitization at a broader level is required to achieve greater gender equality in employment.

23) Details on the working conditions of women in both the formal and informal sector, on pay inequalities, on incidence of sexual harassment and on the de facto situation of women in the informal sector.

There are no pay inequalities between men and women in the formal sector and the working conditions are not particularly biased against women either. However there is limited information of the situation in the informal sector.

With regard to reporting of sexual harassment, the Ministry of Gender and Family has received a total of 8 cases majority of which could not be legally dealt with since existing labour laws do not criminalizes these types of offences. In some of these cases the women were relocated to a different department or the offender was relocated to a different job by their supervisors. However this only applies to the formal sector. In the informal sector there is very little that could be done to provide justice for these women.

24) Details on how the national development plans or poverty reduction strategies integrate a gender perspective and how they contribute to the implementation of the CEDAW.

The 7th National Development Plan (7NDP) lays down the government strategy for national development from 2006 – 2010. Gender is considered as a cross-cutting issue and thus one of the guiding principles of the 7NDP is promoting gender equality, which states that “*special attention would be given for the empowerment of vulnerable groups by expanding their capabilities and opportunities and all policies shall support gender equality in the development process*”.

Specifically the plan addresses:

- a) Protection of sexual and reproductive health,
- b) Right to information and family planning services.
- c) Equal access to economic assets such as land and housing.
- d) Increasing opportunities to pursue vocational and tertiary education,
- e) Equal labour market opportunities,
- f) Freedom from violence
- g) Increased representation at all levels of governance.

25) Gender gaps identified by the government surveys on reproductive health and actions taken to address these gaps.

Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2001

- 97% of births were attended by trained medical personnel.
- More than 51 percent of women were anaemic (1% severely anaemic, 10 % moderately anaemic, 41 % mildly anaemic).

Note: Overall the indicators show a marked improvement in health and welfare of the children during the five years preceding the survey and for most of the indicators the situation of female children is slightly better. Please note that this survey was conducted in 2001 and the present status may be different.

Reproductive Health Survey 2004

(Follow-up survey to Reproductive Health Survey 1999)

- Knowledge on at least one sign of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) rose from 35% in 1999 to 48% in 2004.
- The proportion of women having more than 4 antenatal care visit had risen from 62% in 1999 to 91% in 2004.
- Seventy percent of pregnant women were attended by a gynecologist during ANC visit.
- In 2004, 85% of women delivered with a skilled birth attendance.
- There was a 37% unmet need for contraception.

Maternal Mortality in the Maldives – A five year Synthesis Report 1997-2002

- Number of maternal deaths has declined from 16 in 1997 to 8 in 2002.
- Maternal mortality ratio has declined from 258.7 per 100,000 live births in 1999 to 160.29 per 100,000 live births in 2002.
- Deaths due to direct obstetric causes is being replaced by indirect causes.
- Almost half of the maternal deaths (during 1997-2002) were those deliveries at home. This is a reflection of the large number of home deliveries that used to take place in earlier years of 1997-1998.

Note: The Maternal mortality ratio of 2005 is at 72.4 per 100, 000 (Source: Vital Registration System, Ministry of Health)

26) Details of the reproductive health strategy including the specific targets and timeframes.

The goal of the national reproductive health strategy (2005-2007) is ‘reproductive health and rights for all Maldivian women, men and adolescents. There are seven thematic areas of reproductive health identified in the strategy:

- a) Safe motherhood and newborn care
Goal: to improve pregnancy outcome for mother and newborn and to maintain maternal mortality at under 100 per 100,000 live births.
- b) Family Planning
Goal: Ensure easy access to safe, affordable and effective methods of family planning and information.
- c) Adolescent sexual and reproductive health
Goal: Improve the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents (10-19) and young people (15-24) in the Maldives.
- d) Sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS

Goal: To maintain the current low prevalence of STIs and HIV/AIDS in the Maldives.

e) Gender based violence

Goal: To strengthen prevention and management of cases of gender based violence in the health care setting.

f) Partnering with men in sexual and reproductive health

Goal: To improve understanding of men's own SRH needs and acceptance of their partner's needs, choices and rights in SRH.

g) Reproductive morbidities, including infertility and cancers.

Goal: Increase access to prevention and management services for reproductive morbidity.

27) Results of the study carried out by the Ministry of Atolls Development on income generation for women.

The study did not specifically deal with income generation for women as mentioned in the periodic report submitted. However the report on income generation highlighted the importance of income generation activities for women in the islands. The report calls for special measures that need to be undertaken at the national level to facilitate income generation activities for women and to address their general empowerment. It also calls for targeted skills training programmes such as support systems and access to credit and other development initiatives in order to improve the well being of the most disadvantaged group – the poor. (The report is available in electronic format if required)

28) Results of the Family Law review.

According to the review there are some major shortcomings in the codified Family Law with regards to gender equality. However it also points out that the Family Law puts emphasis on the equality of men and women in certain Articles while in other Articles it clearly lays out, distinctive, gender stereotypical roles for men and women.

It further states that even though the Family Law does provide some provisions for women, due to gendered discursive practices influenced by gendered notions that weigh on judicial reasoning, the way that the law is experienced by women dis-empowers them and thereby inhibit the full development and advancement of women.

As mentioned earlier, the Family Law is currently being reviewed and the government is already working towards incorporating the findings of the Family Law review in revising the law.

29) Governments action plan with regards to polygamous marriages.

Since polygamous marriages are allowed according to the Sharia Law, the government cannot ban polygamy. However in the gender sensitizations workshops conducted by the Ministry of Gender and Family the rationale behind allowing polygamous marriages by the Sharia is explained by the means of a religious scholar and the obligations set forth for men who enter polygamous marriages according to the Sharia. Similarly as mentioned in the report there are steps taken by the Family Court itself before granting a polygamous marriage to anyone.

30) Measures to publicize the Optional Protocol.

The Optional Protocol was only activated on 13th June 2006. On this occasion a supplement containing the text of the Optional Protocol and an explanatory note

regarding the articles set forth in the Optional Protocol prepared in the local language, were published in two of the widely read local newspapers. In addition an information session on the Optional Protocol was held for the media personnel on 11th June. The Optional Protocol would be published along with the latest CEDAW report after it has been considered by the CEDAW committee in 2007.

Moreover a regional meeting on the CEDAW Optional Protocol is going to be held in Maldives in November 2006. This would also provide more publicity to the public with regards to the Optional Protocol.
