



The local government system in Maldives



Key facts

POPULATION (Census 2006): 298,968
AREA: 300 sq km
CAPITAL: Malé
LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION TO GDP: -
CURRENCY: Maldivian rufiyaa (MVR)
HEAD OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT: President Mohamed Nasheed
FORM OF GOVERNMENT: republic
PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM: unicameral
STATE STRUCTURE: unitary
LANGUAGES: Dhivehi (official)
NATIONAL ELECTIONS: legislative: **last:** 2004; **turnout:** - **next:** 2015
 general: **last:** 2008; **turnout:** - **next:** 2013
LOCAL ELECTIONS: **last:** Feb 2011; **turnout:** c.70%; **next:** 2014

1. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

The Maldives is a democratic republic with a unicameral parliament known as the People's Majlis. The head of state and government is the president who, together with the vice-president, is directly elected by universal adult suffrage for a maximum of two five-year terms. The People's Majlis currently has 77 members elected from multi-member constituencies for a term of five years, with the number of representatives being determined by the constituency population size: two for the first 5,000 citizens and one additional representative for every additional 5,000 citizens. The cabinet is appointed by the president from the members of the People's Majlis.

2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2.1 Constitutional provisions:

Local government is provided for in Chapter VIII of the constitution.

2.2 Main legislative texts:

The main legislation regulating local government is the Decentralisation Act 2010 and the Local Council Election Act 2010.

3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 Local government within the state:

Local government is two-tier, comprising island councils and city councils which are all accountable to an atoll council.

3.2 Ministerial oversight:

The Local Government Authority Department within the Ministry of Home Affairs has responsibility for local government and advises atoll councils on the formulation of regulations and by-laws. In the case of a dispute between two councils or over an issue the Local Government Authority has arbitration powers.

3.3 Council types:

There are 20 atoll councils, two city councils (Malé and Addu) and 66 island councils.

3.3.1 Atoll councils: These are mandated to oversee administrative and development work and to coordinate and monitor the activities and functioning of the island councils. The atoll council comprises members elected for a three-

SUMMARY

The Maldives is a democratic republic and has just launched its local government system. It has two spheres of government: national and local. Local government is provided for in Chapter VIII of the constitution and the main legislative texts are the Decentralisation Act 2010 and the Local Council Election Act 2010. The Local Government Authority Department within the Ministry of Home Affairs has responsibility for local government, which has two tiers: island councils and city councils, all of which are accountable to an atoll council. There are 20 atoll councils, two city councils (Malé and Addu) and 66 island councils. The councils have the power to charge fees or rents for the services they provide and can seek loans as well as create financial instruments such as bonds, bills and securities to

fund development activities. Every year the councils are allocated funds from the state reserves for office administration, provision of services and development projects, and revenue generated from state facilities within a council jurisdiction is allocated to that council. Atoll councils must establish and maintain a registration of islands and their lands, assist island councils in seeking technical and financial assistance; and administer and implement any projects in the Atoll Development Plan that have not been assigned to a particular island council. City and island councils' responsibilities include providing roads, waste disposal, pest control, water, electricity and sewage systems; primary healthcare and pre-school education, and educational and vocational programmes for adults.

Table 1. Distribution of councils and population (Census 2006)

Atoll/city	Island	Population (Census 2006)
Malé	n/a	103,693
North Thiladhunmathi (HA)	n/a	13,495
South Thiladhunmathi (HDh)	n/a	16,237
North Miladhunmadulu (Sh)	n/a	11,940
South Miladhunmadulu (N)	n/a	10,015
North Maalhosmadulu (R)	n/a	14,756
South Maalhosmadulu (B)	n/a	9,578
Faadhippolhu (Lh)	n/a	9,190
Malé Atoll (K)	n/a	15,441
North Ari Atoll (AA)	n/a	5,776
South Ari Atoll (ADh)	n/a	8,379
Felidhe Atoll (V)	n/a	1,606
Mulakatholhu (M)	n/a	4,710
North Nilandhe Atoll (F)	n/a	3,765
South Nilandhe Atoll (Dh)	n/a	4,967
Kolhumadulu (Th)	n/a	8,493
Hadhunmathi (L)	n/a	11,990
North Huvadhu Atoll (GA)	n/a	8,262
South Huvadhu Atoll (GDh)	n/a	11,013
Gnaviyani (Gn)	n/a	7,636
Addu Atoll (S)	n/a	18,026
TOTAL	21	298,968

Source: Statistics division of the Department of National Planning¹

year term from the electoral constituencies of the administrative divisions within its boundaries. The president and the vice-president of the atoll council are indirectly elected by a secret ballot of the elected members of the council.

3.3.2 City councils: City councils must have a population of more than 25,000, the necessary capacity to deliver the appropriate services and a minimum level of gross productivity as specified by central government from time to time. There are two city councils, with between them a total of 17 councillors.

3.3.3 Island councils: Every inhabited island in the Maldives, except islands where city councils are being established, is governed by an elected island council which prepares island development plans in consultation with the community, and submits them to the atoll council. They are also mandated to take all necessary measures to establish a safe and peaceful environment in the island in collaboration with the police. Island councils comprise elected members from that particular island.

3.4 Traditional leadership:

No information has been provided for this edition.

4. ELECTIONS

4.1 Recent local elections:

The latest local elections were held in February 2011, with a turnout of approximately 70%.

The tentative results for Atoll councils are as follows:

- MDP - 48 seats, 37%
- DRP - 67 seats, 52%
- DQP - 1 seat, 1%
- Jumhoore Party - 5 seats, 4%
- PA - 1 seat, 1%
- Individual - 8 seats, 6%.

The tentative results for Island councils are as follows:

- MDP - 324 seats, 35%
- DRP - 427 seats, 46%
- Jumhoore Party - 11 seats, 1%
- Adhaalath Party - 15 seat, 2%
- Individual - 155 seats, 17%.

4.2 Voting system:

All councillors are elected by the first-past-the-post system.

4.3 Elected representatives:

The total number of council seats is as follows: 17 city council seats (Malé and Addu), 132 atoll council seats and 942 island council seats. Only Sunni Muslims are eligible to stand as councillors as it is a requirement for citizenship.

Island councils comprise elected members from that particular island. Islands with a population of less than 3,000 elect five members; those with populations from 3,000-10,000 elect seven members; and those with populations over 10,000 elect nine members.

4.4 Women's representation:

Each island council will have a women's development committee which will advise the island on key women's issues, including:

- Income generation and development of women
- Women's rights
- Religious awareness amongst women
- Political participation by women
- Higher education for women
- Women's health
- Collecting information and statistics on women's issues.

5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

5.1 Legal requirement:

The Local Government Act 2010 states that atoll councils have responsibility to 'with community participation, provide guidance and support in planning island development plans and provide community recommendations to all relevant stakeholders in planning development programmes'.

5.2 Implementation:

The first councils were elected 1st February 2011, therefore there has been insufficient time for implementation.

5.3 E-government:

No information has been provided.

6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There are currently no associations of local government in the Maldives.

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The presidents of each atoll, island and city council are tasked with 'establish[ing] and maintain[ing] friendly relations and cooperation between the council, and state institutions, Government authorities, associations, and groups' and 'communicat[ing] the decisions of the council' to the other relevant local authorities.



8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

The Local Government Authority within the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Finance and the Auditor General all have authority to scrutinise councils' accounts and finances.

9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

9.1 Locally raised revenue:

Councils have the power to charge fees or rents for the services they provide. Such fees are determined in consultation with the people of the area. They include:

- Monthly fees for electricity, water, waste disposal and island-level communication services
- Annual fees for vehicle and vessel registration and licensing
- Trading licences and harbour fees (eg anchoring, loading and unloading goods)
- Rent for land, reefs and lagoons, or buildings and other council property.

Councils can seek loans from financial institutions to fund development activities, offer council assets as loan securities and create funds for other undertakings. They can also issue financial instruments such as bonds, bills and securities and sell these on the stock market to fund development activities.

9.2 Transfers:

Revenues generated from state facilities set up or facilitated by national authorities in a city area or administrative division, without council involvement, will be allocated to the respective atoll or city. The finance ministry will decide on the allocation.

Every year all councils are allocated funds from state reserves for office administration, service provision and development projects. These funds are allocated based on the following criteria, and are released on approval of the council budget:

- Population and usage levels of land, harbours and lagoons
- Council expenditure on service provision and development projects
- Distance between the central island of the administrative division, islands where the services and facilities are based, and any other islands within the administrative division
- Amount of revenue generated by the council.

9.3 Local authority staff:

The Maldives Civil Service Commission, in consultation with councils, is responsible for appointing and disciplining all staff working in council administrative offices and ward offices.

10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

Councils are empowered to enter into contracts and business ventures with various parties in order to provide the services mandated to them. They are also tasked with fostering the growth of tourism, fisheries, agriculture and other industries.

10.1 Atoll councils:

- Establish and maintain a register of all islands and their lands which fall within the administrative division and provide this information as required by the national land registration authority
- Assist island councils in seeking technical and financial assistance
- Provide consultancy to island councils as required
- Administer and implement any projects in their atoll development plan that have not been assigned to a particular island council
- Provide any services that have to be rendered to more than one island in the administrative division
- Provide any assistance and cooperation required by state institutions and government offices established in the administrative division.

10.2 Island and city councils must:

- Build and maintain roads and maintain street cleanliness
- Organise and maintain systems for waste disposal, pest control, water, electricity, and sewage
- Build and maintain wharves, and operate any ferry terminals
- Alleviate land erosion problems and maintain any jetties and breakwaters
- Provide primary healthcare and other basic health services
- Provide pre-school education and organise and run educational and vocational programmes for adults
- Administer the island library and official archive, preserve old and historical documents and, using modern technology, provide access to information
- Maintain social centres, playgrounds or sports fields and provide sporting facilities, public parks and entertainment services

- Run centres to provide social security services, supporting vulnerable groups such as victims of domestic violence, senior citizens and people with special needs
- Allocate land, maintain a register of land and buildings, and monitor any building work undertaken
- Maintain mosques, cemeteries and historical places and promote and revive culture
- Provide the island with adequate lighting at night
- Establish emergency services.

References and useful websites

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