

### *Evaluation of the European Commission's Co-operation with Maldives - ref. 1280*

#### *Abstract*

*The European Commission's support to Maldives during the period 1999-2009 has been found relevant to the country's needs but was dispersed over too many sectors and islands and therefore the impacts and visibility were diluted. EC support achieved positive results in terms of improvements in the Government's capacity to meet its international trade commitments and had a significant contribution to the implementation of democratic, transparent, free and fair elections in the Maldives. The support aiming to strengthen the civil society has been less successful. The Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development approach implemented by EC at national level was found to be consistent. However, at island level the consistency of the approach was less obvious.*

#### **Subject of the evaluation**

This evaluation assesses the European Commission's support to the Maldives during the period 1999-2009.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide an overall independent assessment of the EC's past and current cooperation relations with Maldives and to identify key lessons in order to improve the current and future strategies.

#### **Methodology**

The evaluators examined over 218 relevant documents and organised interviews with over 78 key people. Fourteen islands were visited in order to cover all types of support activities. Information from documents, interviews and field visits was cross-checked as far as possible, in order to arrive at solid, evidence-based findings.

#### **Main conclusions:**

1. EC Country Strategies and Indicative Programmes have been relevant in relation to the priorities of the Government of Maldives and needs of the population. However, **the EC support was dispersed over too many sectors** and islands and therefore the **impacts and visibility were diluted**.
2. Post-tsunami, the EC has implemented a **consistent Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) approach at the national level**. At the island level, the application of LRRD principles was less obvious, as the EC support addressed different elements in different islands, and therefore LRRD consistency depended on complementary activities of the Government of Maldives or other donors. Whether LRRD principles are observed at local level depends on the responsiveness of the overall national reconstruction planning to LRRD principles.
3. The EC has provided **effective support to GoM to meet its international trade commitments**, in trade policy formulation and in co-ordination and negotiation of agreements. It enhanced GoM's capacity to implement World Trade Organisation (WTO) requirements and to monitor WTO developments. However, changes of staff have impacted on the retention of newly-acquired skills and capacity resulting from Technical Assistance (TA) interventions;

4. The **EC support for the preparation of the presidential and parliamentary elections helped significantly** to implement democratic, transparent, free and fair elections in the Maldives, allowing the transition to a democratic government. The successful election support produced expectations of further EC support for the upcoming local elections.
5. EC contributions to **strengthen civil society organisations** capable of dialogue with the Government of Maldives (GoM) and to lobby for democratisation and good governance have so far been **limited**. Even though a number of relatively new Maldivian NGOs have already proved their capacity in these fields, they are not yet represented at the atoll or island levels.
6. The strategic and programme frameworks are not sufficiently consistent and interlinked and this has a negative impact on the quality of monitoring and reporting. The complex administrative and regulatory procedures represent an important factor causing delays during the implementation. Experience of programme implementation has shown that, under the difficult logistical conditions of the Maldives, **projects managed at the national level** are more easily monitored and tend to **perform better** than projects being managed from outside the country.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Maintain more strategic focus by limiting it to a **maximum of two priority areas** (sector concentration) implemented in a limited number of atolls/islands that have already benefited from earlier EC-funding (geographic concentration). This way the already existing investments will be protected. Suitable sectors for mid- to long-term EC support are the environment/climate change sector and, as an option for a second priority area, the good governance/decentralisation sector;
2. In post-disaster situations, where EC support is aligned to national recovery priorities, **responsiveness of national plans to LRRD principles should be examined** and discussed with the responsible government institutions and other involved stakeholders;
3. It should be **examined how the capacity** already acquired by the Government of Maldives in the framework of the EC trade related Technical Assistance (TA) projects can **be retained and institutionalised** in order to ensure its sustainability. This could include an examination of the on-the-job training provided, resources and deliverables prepared, as well as policy papers prepared.
4. The EC should quickly **mobilise a new election TA team** with a strong focus on civic education activities and specific measures to encourage and support women to become candidate in the coming local elections.
5. Future co-operation in the field of good governance can build on the existing capacities of NGOs **and integrate these organisations into project implementation.**
6. Ensure that programme management for the implementation of future programmes will be **based in Male.**

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