Digital Mapping & Analysis

MALDIVES

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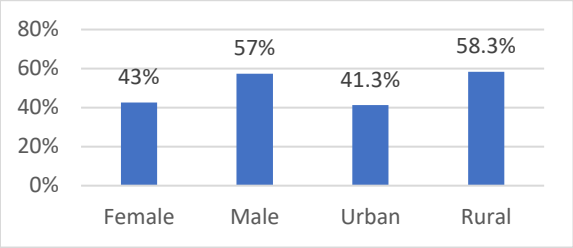
Purpose of this Document

To support the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia's integration of digital tools, technologies, and best practices into Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) programming, this Digital Mapping outlines the existing digital interests, needs and challenges across Maldives. This document outlines the country context, media, digital habits and preferences, emerging trends and recommendations on leveraging the existing opportunities gathered through secondary research.

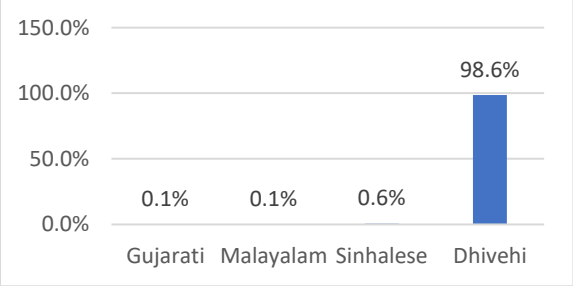
This document can inform digital SBC programme design, development, and implementation at country-level based on the available insights and data from recent years.

Demographic Overview[i]

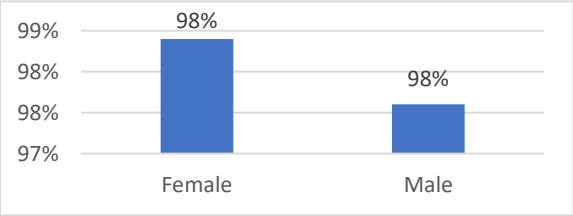
Total Population: 522,600



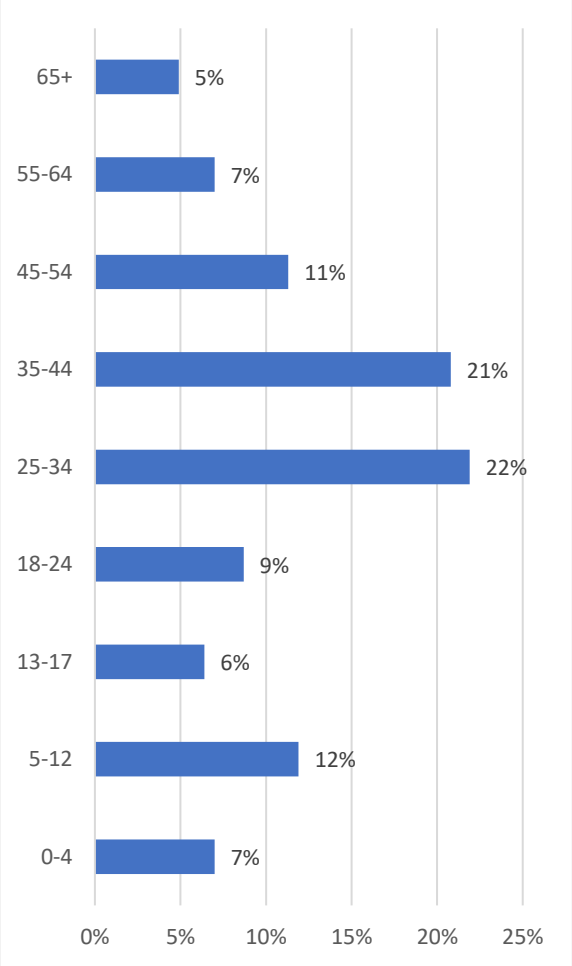
Majority Spoken Languages[ii][1]



Literacy Rate (2021 figures)[2]: 99.7% for the population (15 and above)[iii] [iv]



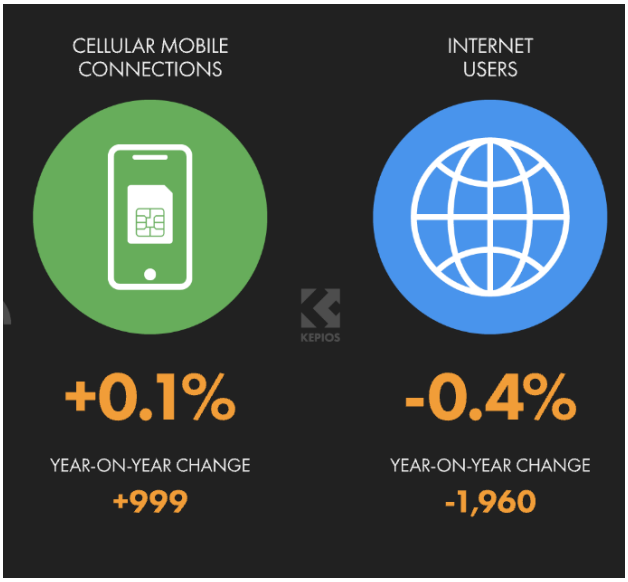
Age Demographics



[1] English is widely spoken in the Maldives, but no accurate data was available.
[2] No recent data found

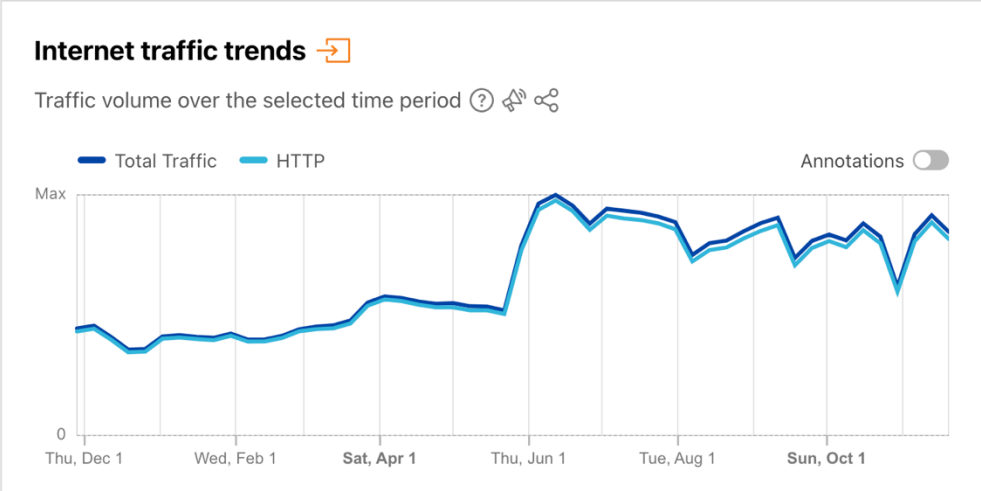
Digital Connectivity

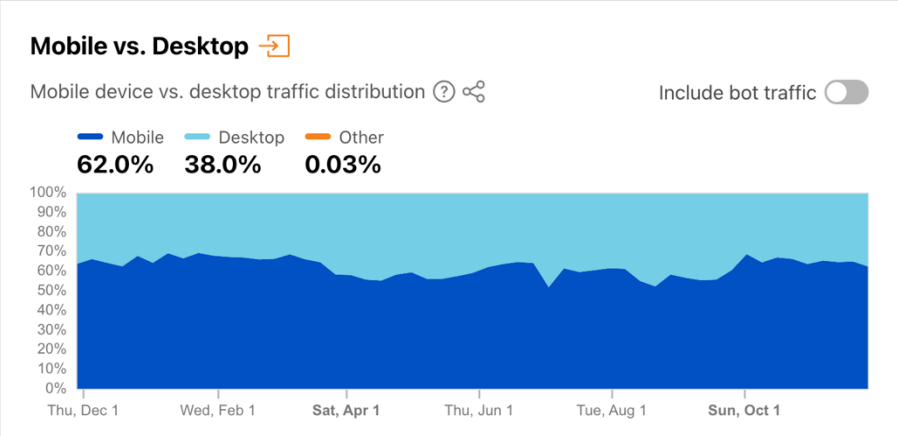
The Maldives has a relatively high level of digital connectivity (ahead of other countries in South Asia), 85% (448,400) (342,700 in 2022[v]) of the population uses the internet and there were 812,300 (810,400 in 2022[vi]) cellular mobile connections at the start of 2023[vii] (*the number is greater than the actual population likely due to people having more than one device*). The country's telecommunications infrastructure has been rapidly developed in recent years, with the government investing heavily in the expansion of mobile networks and the installation of fibre-optic cables.[viii] Average mobile internet connection speed is 71.40 (48.31 Mbps in 2022[ix]), and the average fixed internet connection speed is 10.45 (10.57 Mbps in 2022[x]); this is fast enough for video streaming[xi]. Mobiles (71.6%), laptop/desktop computers (26%), and tablets (2%) are the devices used to access the internet.[xii] 83.2% of cellular mobiles have 3G, 4G, or 5G broadband.[xiii]

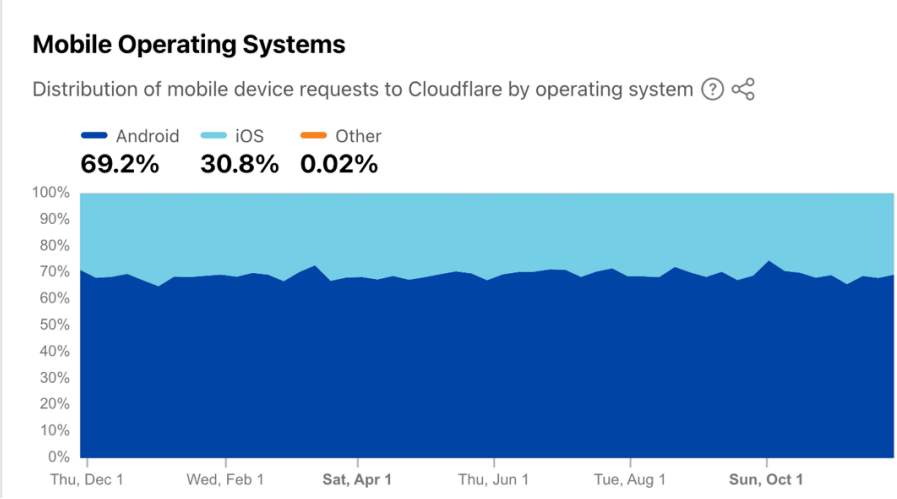


Digital Growth[xiv] (compared to 2022)

Trends to Note (from Nov 2022 to Nov 2023)[xv]







Digital Divide

Gender Divide[xvi]

World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2023 noted that parity has receded in the Maldives, but the Maldives (along with Bhutan and Sri Lanka) have the region's highest parity scores on the Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex. Maldives is one of the countries with the least representation of women in parliament (less than 5%). Maldives is 5th in the region on the Global Gender Gap Index ranking by region, 124th globally (out of 146 countries) and has a score of 0.649 (on a 0-1 scale), a +0.001 change from 2022.[xvii] For sub-index of Education Attainment, the Maldives has a score of 0.984, 0.962 for health and survival and 0.512 for economic participation and opportunity.[xviii]

While significant progress towards equality is noted in Maldives, such as a National Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP 2022 – 2026) which outlines policies that will ensure equality, equal opportunities and justice for all,[xix] there are still challenges when it comes to bringing women and girls online. There is limited or no information available on the exact data but in the Accelerating Gender Equality: Towards a #DigitALL Maldives, Nepal & Sri Lanka virtual event, Women in Tech representative listed a few barriers and challenges, such as low level of digital literacy (women and girls are hesitant to use digital tech), the shift of banking services and e-commerce online (which means that women are excluded - the World Bank also noted that there is as an important gender divide in account access and use of financial services[xx]), the prevalent gender norms and stereotypes, lack of policies and regulations to protect women and girls who come online (online harassment and safety) etc.

Discrepancies in connectivity

Internet speeds are almost two times faster in the capital than in the atolls. Compared to the 83% with access to broadband internet services in Greater Malé area, only 51% of households in the atolls have broadband access and internet speed also differs (less than 10 of the larger islands are connected with fibre optic cable networks and in outer atolls, 30% population is living more than 50 km from a fixed transmission link).[xxi] Even though these islands are home to a majority of the country's population, infrastructure gaps hinder connectivity in outer islands that are already at risk of falling behind in access to opportunities, markets, information, and services.[xxii]

Lack of Affordability: High Cost of Data and Devices

The price of a monthly subscription for a 5GB fixed broadband plan is high at about 3.1% of Gross National Income (GNI) per capita[xxiii] (UN Broadband Commission recommended target is of 2%). In comparison, the cost of 1GB of mobile broadband data as a % of GNI per capita stands at less than 2% (2020 data)[xxiv] and for 2022, the average price of 1GB of mobile data stood at 0.33% of average income[xxv]. This can be seen in the Communications Authority of Maldives (CAM) data, where the number of total fixed broadband subscriptions in September 2023 was 94,312,

and the total mobile broadband subscriptions were 287,642.[xxvi] Competitive constraints in the telecommunication industry have contributed to the lack of affordable services.[xxvii] Furthermore, it is also worth noting that the high cost of devices is also a barrier to bridging the digital divide (according to the A4AI Smartphone Affordability Database 2021, smartphone prices stood at around 90% of the GNI per Capita in Maldives[xxviii] and for 2023, it stood at 152% of the average income[xxix]).

Low levels of digital literacy

The World Bank report on South Asia's Digital Opportunity pointed out that there is no comprehensive data to ascertain the digital literacy rates in Maldives, nor any gender segregated data. However, it also referenced to a rapid assessment by UNDP and Ministry of Economic Development Maldives during covid-19 where half of Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) interviewed stated that they 'did not have a single digitally-literate employee'.[xxx] Moreover, Maldives Financial Review published a series of articles focusing on the 'Digital Divide' in Maldives and it stated there is limited digital literacy among the Maldives' workforce; with only 5% of tertiary graduates pursuing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs, Maldives lags when compared to other small island developing states.[xxxi]

Security (related to data)

Maldives was ranked 177 out of 194 countries measured, with a score of 2.95 in the 2020 Global Cybersecurity Index, lower than other South Asian countries.[xxxii] Maldives does not have an already established legislation or infrastructure to protect users' data or privacy and there is no framework to protect networks and users from cybercrimes. But Maldives is at an advanced stage of introducing general personal data protection laws.[xxxiii]

Lack of trust in technology

There is a lack of trust among Maldivians in technology, which can be noted through the limited number of small businesses that have digitalised. Furthermore, the lack of awareness and digital skills combined with no data privacy or protection laws and cybersecurity measures for financial systems has contributed to a limited number of digital users.[xxxiv]

Slow uptake: Digital financial services (DFS) and e-commerce

There has been good growth in Digital Financial Services (DFS) in Maldives, with private service providers, such as banks and telecommunication companies, and public services embracing and introducing electronic and digital payments and mobile money etc. According to the 2018 World Bank Findex Survey, a quarter of adults in Maldives had a mobile money account, and 68% of adults reported making or receiving digital payments (*no recent data available on this*)[xxxv] and according to another source, 60.6% made a digital payment in 2022[xxxvi]. Digital financial services are playing an increasingly important role in the Maldives as the government and private sector seek to improve financial inclusion, circumvent geographic barriers, and increase access to financial services for citizens and businesses.[xxxvii] However, there are limited DFS products tailored for specific audiences like women entrepreneurs.

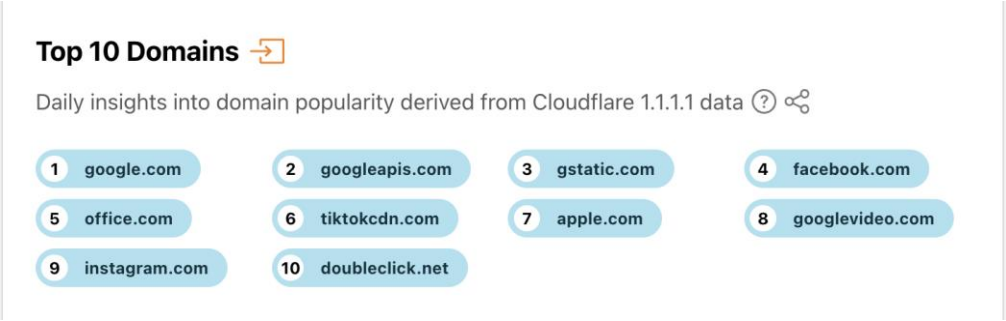
E-commerce is underdeveloped in the country, and it is noted that the 'absence of integrated and real-time payment settlements is a major bottleneck in the development of e-commerce, fintech and other online services solutions'[xxxviii] and the focus has been on cash-on-delivery for e-commerce activities. The absence of legal and regulatory frameworks hinders the promotion and growth of digital government and e-commerce. For example, no legislation exists for electronic transactions, privacy, data protection, or cybercrime.[xxxix]

Digital Communications

Telecommunications

The Communications Authority of the Maldives (CAM) is the official regulating authority of the communications sector.[xl] The top two telecommunications companies are Dhiraagu and Ooredoo.[xli] As per January 2023 data by CAM, the total number of mobile subscriptions stood at 728,821 (postpaid: >214k and prepaid: >514k), but no further segregated data was available.[xlii]

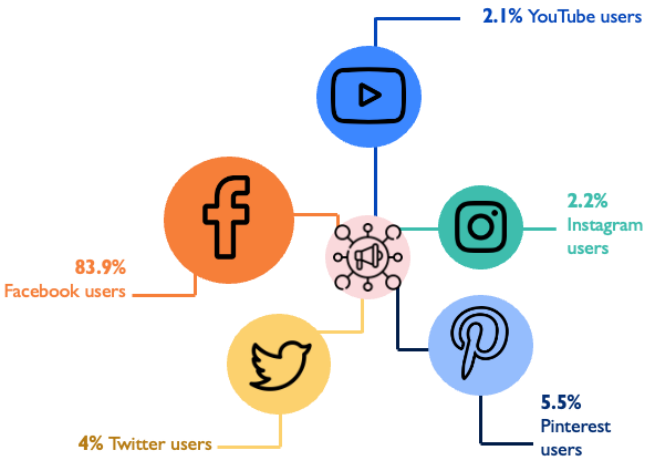
Domain insights (Nov 2022 to Nov 2023)[xliii]



Social Media

71% (372,400) of Maldivians are social media users, with 355,800 users over the age of 18.[xliv] 40% of the users are female and 60% are male.[xlv]

**Reference for the figure*[xlvi]



% of social media users that access third-party websites/information via clicks or taps on links published in social media platform

Social Media Platform Overview

	User Demographics	Usage Purpose
Facebook	• 296,200 users[xlvii] • 38% Female, 62% Male[xlviii] • Largest user group is 25-34	To connect with friends and family, share updates, and stay informed about what's happening in their communities. Additionally, it is a popular platform for businesses/organizations to connect with customers and promote their products & services. The Maldives also has a large tourism industry, and many tourists use Facebook to communicate with locals and to post information about their holiday experiences.[xlix]
Instagram	• 198,600 users[l] • 43% Female, 56% Male[li] • Largest user group is 25-35	To share photos and videos of daily lives and experiences. The Maldives' tourism industry leverages this platform to promote it as a tourist destination.[lii]
Linked In	• 130,000 members[liii] • Largest user group is 25-34	LinkedIn is a popular platform for Maldivians to connect with other professionals, expand their networks, and advance their careers.[liv]
YouTube	• Data not available	People in the Maldives use YouTube to watch music videos, keep up to date with trends, learn new skills, explore content by individuals/organisations and stay connected with their favourite creators and communities.[lv]
Twitter	• 120,000 users[lvi] *User group data not available*	To communicate with others, share news and information, express opinions and thoughts, and stay informed about current events. Additionally, Twitter is a popular platform for businesses and organisations to promote their products and services, and for individuals to network and connect with others in their industry or field.[lvii]
TikTok	• Data not available	Popular amongst the young population.

Social Messaging Applications

Viber and WhatsApp (*user data unavailable)* are two of the top social messaging applications in the Maldives. Facebook Messenger has 219,100 users[lviii] 40% of the users are female, and 60% are male.[lix] Another top messaging application is Telegram (data not available).

Social Media Key Influencers[3]

The top ten key influencers, as identified by the criteria indicated in Annex 1, have been identified below. Local macro influencers, who are celebrities or key opinion leaders will be the priority criteria used for this digital mapping. As they have the most potential for meaningful partnerships with UNICEF, reaching target communities is likely with this cohort. However, key influencers may need to be re-identified depending on the Country Office priorities and the evolving nature of social media influencers.

Influencer	Social Media Platform	Number of Followers	Category	Type of Content
Zippo Sippe	TikTok	601.5K	Travel	Videos
Shamvaan	Instagram Twitter	Instagram – 35.1K Twitter - 33	Travel Celebrity	Social Posts Videos
Huda Faheem	Instagram Twitter	Instagram - 14.8K Twitter – 45	Lifestyle Celebrity	Social Posts Videos
Ashhal	Instagram Twitter	Instagram – 12.9K Twitter - 4	Lifestyle Celebrity	Social Posts Videos
Riish Rebecca	Instagram	8550	Lifestyle Celebrity	Social Posts Videos
Shaii Aminah	Instagram	8041	Lifestyle Celebrity	Social Posts Videos
Yasmin Rasheed	YouTube	22.1K	Animation Key Opinion Leader	Videos
Husan Azim	YouTube	21.5K	Entertainment Celebrity	Videos
Jamiyyath Salaf	YouTube	16.4K	Religious Key Opinion Leader	Videos
Jaffer Ali	Twitter	11.4K	Entrepreneur Key Opinion Leader	Social Posts
Markus	Instagram	I7459	Lifestyle Celebrity	Social Posts
Hassan Saaid	Instagram Facebook Twitter	Instagram – 14.5K Facebook – 24K Twitter – 82	Athlete	Social posts
Ahmed Adeeb	Instagram Facebook Twitter	Instagram – 10.8K Facebook – 20K Twitter – 3.2K	Politician	Social posts

[3] Social influencer statistics may have changed since they were last checked in January 2023.

Online Groups

Group Names	Social Media Platform	Number of Members	Category	Type of Content
BUY AND SELL.MV	Facebook	78.7K	Buy & Sell	Social posts
Maldives	Facebook	61.8K	Travelling International Travelers	Social posts
Mum's Aid	Facebook	41k	Online Space for women	Information Sharing
Job-Maldives.com	Viber	33.1K	Career opportunities Job Postings	Messaging
Maldivian	Viber	8.9K	N/A	Messaging
Bitcoin Maldives	Telegram	2.2K	Bitcoin	Messaging
Maldives Gamers Community	Facebook	3.5K	Online gaming	Social posts
PUBG Maldives	Facebook	3.1K	Online gaming	Social posts
PUBG Mobile Maldives	Facebook	3.9K	Online gaming	Social posts
INFINITY ESPORTS MV	Discord	463	Online gaming	Voice over Internet Protocol Instant messaging

Traditional Media Platforms

The Maldives has a relatively small but active media landscape, with a mix of government and independent outlets. The primary form of broadcast media in the Maldives is television, with state-run Public Service Media operating Television Maldives (TVM). There are several private television stations, including Raajje TV and VTV.[lx] Radio broadcasting is also present, with state-owned Radio Maldives and private radio stations such as Villa Radio and Voice of Maldives.[lxi]

Streaming Services/VOD

Netflix seems to be the most accessed VOD (online streaming platform) noted in Maldives (though concrete data on subscribers in Madlives is not available).[lxii] Though to note, there are 39.48 million subscribers of Netflix in the Asia Pacific region as of 2023.[lxiii] Other

platforms such as Amazon Prime and Hulu are available in Maldives (though no data available on the number of subscribers). Disney+ is not available in Maldives.[lxiv]

Gaming Community and Platforms

- Ooredoo Nation - The Gamers' Land was launched in the Maldives by Ooredoo (Mobile Network Operator), 'to enable the gaming community and connect them to the endless opportunities of the rapidly budding industry.' It enables access to various gaming gift cards worldwide, including iTunes, Nintendo, and PlayStation. Gamers can also directly activate mobile data packs for widely played games such as PUBG, Garena Free Fire, Mobile Legends, Call of Duty, and Roblox.
- Some Social Online Groups and Pages:
  - Gamers Association for Maldives E-sports
  - Maldives Unified Gaming
  - Maldivian Gaming League
  - Maldives Gamers Community

Digital Tools

Education

The Maldives has made significant investments in digital education tools in recent years, with a focus on providing access to technology and resources for students and teachers. The Ministry of Education has introduced several digital initiatives to support remote learning, such as:

- The **Digital Teacher** training initiative: launched by The Ministry of Education, in partnership with the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) with the aim to train 1,000 K-12 Master Trainers in the Maldives to be proficient in digital technologies to build more engaging online learning experience for students. [lxv] The initiative is part of a large-scale teacher training programme that UNESCO MGIEP initiated in January 2021 to train 15,000 teachers by 2021 across countries in South Asia.[lxvi]

- **Hologo:** a digital education start-up which combines augmented reality, virtual reality and immersive learning experiences for teachers and students alike.

- During the covid-19 pandemic, with support from the Global Partnership for Education, in partnership with UNICEF Maldives, the Ministry of Education introduced **Telekilaas classes** that were broadcasted nationwide with the assistance of television stations and internet service providers.[lxvii]

- **Filaa:** is an online platform to share learning resources for schools across the Maldives.[lxviii]

- Additionally, the Maldives has also been promoting the use of Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Google Classroom and Moodle to support virtual classrooms and online learning.[lxix]

It is worth mentioning that despite the efforts of the government, access to technology and internet connection (as found through this mapping) remains a challenge for many islands of the Maldives, which is a major limitation to the uptake of these digital education tools.

Health

The Maldives government has been promoting the use of mobile health (mHealth) solutions, such as mobile apps that provide information on health and wellness, to improve access to healthcare for citizens in remote areas.[lxx] But historically, the introduction of digital heath tools and projects have noted low uptake and success. Such as the Integrated Human Development Project (HDP) in 2004, funded by the World Bank, but difficulties in implementation due to technical issues (inefficiencies in internet bandwidth for example) resulted in the end of the project. And in 2010, the 'Medical Kiosk' project, funded by the Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation, and implemented by the Ministry of Health, aimed to deliver telemedicine kiosk carts and additional equipment at 35 locations, including 32 remote islands stopped after only managing to train the specialists and procure the hardware.[lxxi]

Though not a Maldivian platform, ODoc is a good example of a digital health tool that can serve hard-to-reach or underdeveloped areas in terms of healthcare facilities.[lxxii] Maldives' Mobile Network Operator Ooredoo partnership with ODoc, a Sri Lankan telemedicine platform that connects patients to doctors, revealed that Maldivian doctors are to be added to the platform in the future. It is worth noting that due to the geography of Maldives, residents must travel to either the nearest Island or the capital for healthcare services and they also tend to travel to neighbouring countries, such as Sri Lanka and India.[lxxiii]

Other examples:

- 'Dhirithi' portal: launched by the Maldives Food and Drug Authority (MFDA) 'to speed up and ease the provision of MFDA's services to the public'.[lxxiv]

- Covidsafe: launched in September 2021, it is the 'official portal' used to generate COVID-19 digital certificates in the Maldives. It provides real-time updates and information, verification of the authenticity and status of vaccination, PCR test results, etc.[lxxv]

Child Protection

Not a lot of data is available on protection tools and platform in the Maldives. Further research is needed in this area to ascertain the availability of digital resources for protection.

- 1412 toll-free call centre and the Ahan mobile application: launched in 2017 by the Ministry of Gender and Family and Maldives Police Service, in partnership with

UNICEF, to report cases of violence against children in geographically dispersed island communities with limited access to services. [lxxvi]

Digital Ecosystem and Infrastructure[4]

The Maldives has a rapidly developing digital ecosystem, with a focus on increasing access to technology and digital services for citizens and businesses. The government of the Maldives' 2019-2023 Strategic Action Plan (SAP) outlines certain policy priorities for the country's digital transformation. These priorities include[lxxvii]:

1. Modernize the governance mechanism of the ICT sector to prepare for a digital economy.
2. Establish digital infrastructure, platforms and ecosystems capable of providing ICT solutions that are more efficient, secure and consistent.
3. Modernize government services through digitalization for data-driven policy-making and efficient delivery of information and services.
4. Encourage digital innovation and create a conducive environment for businesses to thrive in a digital economy.
5. Develop a digital-ready workforce and build human capacity in the ICT industry.

The government has implemented initiatives such as e-governance and digital financial services to improve efficiency and transparency.[lxxviii] Given the high penetration of mobile phones, there has been good uptake in digital services such as mobile banking and e-commerce. The Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA) has also been actively promoting the use of mobile banking and e-wallets.[lxxix]

Artificial Intelligence

While there are currently no laws regulating artificial intelligence, the Government of Maldives sees artificial intelligence as a way to help it tackle unique challenges facing the country,[lxxx], such as collecting information and data, monitoring, and managing ecosystems across the country's islands.[lxxxi] Some government agencies have started adopting AI, such as the Maldives Customs Services, which enhances its operations and data by implementing its own AI HS recommendation algorithm.[lxxxii] Within the telecommunication industry, the Maldivian telecommunication company Ooredoo Maldives developed an AI-powered digital care assistant called Evee to help customers access and use Ooredoo's services.[lxxxiii]

Regulations promoting Digital Transformation and Inclusion

The MMA has issued regulations and guidelines to promote the growth of digital financial services, ensuring customer protection and preventing money laundering. These regulations include[lxxxiv]:

[4] Specific data around the percentage of population using online financial services and products could not be found.

- Guidelines for mobile banking services: sets out requirements for customer identification, transaction limits, and security measures.
- E-payment regulations, which govern the use of digital payment systems and e-wallets.
- Anti-money laundering regulations require financial institutions to implement 'know-your-customer (KYC) and anti-money laundering (AML) procedures'.
- Cybersecurity regulations set out requirements for data protection and incident response.

The Maldives "does not have any officially recognised national legislation about cybercrime."[lxxxv] The absence of a Cyber-Emergency Response Team (CERT) or a dedicated institution governing the financial sector 'has also made it difficult to identify sector-specific threats and for market players to share knowledge, experience, and know-how.'[lxxxvi] However, the country does have laws and regulations in place to address cybersecurity issues such as:

- The Penal Code Act of 2014: main law that is used to prosecute cybercrimes after an update in 2014.[lxxxvii] In 2023, an amendment was put forward to include 'unauthorized access to computer data and cyber crimes' in the Penal Code.[lxxxviii]
- Electronic Transactions Act: provides the legal framework for electronic transactions in the Maldives, including using digital signatures and electronic documents. It also includes provisions related to electronic payments and the protection of personal data.[lxxxix]
- Prevention of Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism Act: prohibits and prevents money laundering and the financing of terrorism activities, as well as designates roles and responsibilities of government institutions to monitor and regulate financial activities.[xc]

Challenges, Opportunities and Recommendations

Challenge/ Opportunity	Narrative	Recommendations
Challenges		
Geographical divide	The distribution of the population across the atolls means that some locations are not commercially viable for high-capacity network connectivity with current capacity.[xci]	• Partner with local organizations/relevant authorities/tech firms to conduct research to identify and address connectivity gaps in remote and rural areas (map the digital footprint). • Establish partnerships/dialogue with CAM/policy/decision makers and mobilise them to invest in further developing telecommunications infrastructure to atolls (ensuring fibre optics cables), expanding coverage and improving the quality of connectivity in remote islands. • Develop and implement solutions that expand connectivity to remote and rural areas via alternative means such as creating

		local access community networks, community-led networks and satellite-based internet solutions. • Implement initiatives that bridge the gap between online and offline communities, such as all SBC interventions ensuring that communities can be guided/referred to online via offline means (or vice-versa). Do a service mapping to ensure that SBC digital interventions are linked to relevant support, and this also reduces the online and offline gaps (a community being reached online should be able to get support offline and vice-versa). The loop should be completed.
Lack of up to date and enabling digital policies	There is a need for important updated regulations relating to electronic transactions, privacy and data protection, and cybersecurity. This contributes to the lack of confidence in how secure the environment is for digital transactions and use of data and digital technology.[xcii]	• Advocate for policies and regulations that promote digital innovation and adoption. • Promote online safety in all digital interventions and activities that target everyone in the community: partner with local private sector organizations/relevant authorities to raise awareness about online safe practices (specific target audiences) and develop secure digital platforms (or secure the already operational ones).
Low levels of digital literacy and skills	Many citizens in the Maldives, particularly in remote areas, lack the digital literacy and skills needed to effectively use digital technology. This can make it difficult for them to access information and services online, or to participate in the digital economy.	• Advocate for recent and relevant data to ascertain the situation of digital literacy and skills in Maldives (segregated by gender). Support the relevant authorities/partners to carry out the research (nationwide). • Advocate for a balanced curriculum to improve both traditional and digital literacy skills. • Partner with the Ministry of Education (and any other relevant authority) to develop digital literacy programs in schools and communities. Use gamification and interactive learning tools to make digital literacy programs engaging and fun. • Strengthen the capacity of teachers, educators and parents on digital skills as part of the ongoing SBC interventions. And train them to provide digital literacy programs to communities and schools (TOT). • Promote online safety in all digital SBC interventions and activities: promote the already existing regulations, policies and mechanisms in the platforms most frequented by the communities. • Given the active users on social media and other online 'hangouts' such as YouTube and Discord, leverage this to develop digital literacy skills: promote the use of social media for educational purposes. For example, Facebook Groups can be used for collaboration, co-creation and discussions etc. • Partner with tech companies and organisations, especially women-run and focused, to establish platforms and tools (such as online courses, games, training, hubs, labs, centres etc) that can improve digital literacy and that can be sustained. Apply design thinking when creating digital tools and platforms to improve literacy skills. • Partner with the gaming community as an entry point to build digital literacy and skills and promote online safety.
Gender Digital Divide	There is limited or no information available on the exact data but following on from the few barriers and challenges noted in the Accelerating Gender Equality: Towards a #DigitALL Maldives, Nepal & Sri Lanka virtual event by World Bank.	• Assess the situation of girls and women in Maldives: carry out formative research (identify KABP, barriers, challenges hindering the move to digital and opportunities and best practices that can be emulated to bring girls/women online) etc. • Establish a social listening mechanism for the 'refine and testing' process for every digital intervention. • Collaborate with the gender focal points/section and develop a digital SBC strategy (based on the learnings from the research) as a foundation to bring girls and women online; address the negative gender norms (and the hindering social and cultural norms), educate the men/fathers/mothers/community and religious leaders/other

		decision makers on the positive outcomes of ensuring girls/women have access and devices, create STEM programs/tools/platforms for girls, advocate for/create women/girls only safe online spaces, ensure online safety is a core part of the interventions/discussions etc • Embed the discourse about girls' access to digital into the ongoing parenting programmes (or as part of any new intervention). • Advocate for policies and regulations that protect girls/women online. • Develop specific programs, in partnership with the relevant ministries and women/girls, private sector organisations etc, to encourage and promote digital entrepreneurship culture among women/girls. • Partner with women entrepreneurs to reach and engage with girls/women in urban and rural areas and encourage the use of digital technology as a source of livelihood and education. Embed online safety as part of this intervention/interaction along with providing up-to-date digital skills training. • Establish (in consultation with the women/girls) digital centres/hubs/labs/platforms, and partner with local private sector organizations to develop gender-sensitive digital platforms. • Mobilise influencers, religious leaders and activists to advocate for online, and device, access for girls/women. • Partner with tech companies to promote their safety measures/safeguarding tools to parents as a stepping stone to bringing girls online. • Gaming is an entry point to building digital literacy and skills. • Partner with telecoms to: provide connectivity to girls/women: such as special data packages or zero-rated apps/content. Especially for women/girls in rural or remote areas. And expand the reach of existing digital and e-learning platforms, specifically targeting girls/women in rural areas to develop their digital literacy and skills.
Opportunities		
High broadband and mobile internet penetration	There is a lot of opportunity to leverage the high mobile penetration and use it to digitally integrate different sectors.[xciii] This can include improving the delivery of health and education services across the many islands.	• Leverage high broadband and mobile internet penetration by developing digital platforms, providing mobile-based digital literacy programs etc. • Partner with private sector/universities and vocational training centres to provide digital skills training (shared-value partnerships).
Reach of Telecos/Mobile Network Operators (MNOs)	The Maldives has a relatively high level of digital connectivity (ahead of other countries in South Asia), 85% (448,400) of the population uses the internet and there were 812,300 (cellular mobile connections at the start of 2023[xciv]	Partner with CAM and telecos/mobile network operators to: • Expand the reach of digital interventions and programmes, particularly in remote and underserved areas. • Provide subsidised or zero-rating (no data cost for user) for specific interventions/programmes/activities/community. • Develop and implement data-driven interventions to bridge the digital divide. • Use their micro-segmentation on high-engagement channels to target communities and people for specific digital interventions.
Potential to Support in Combating	With the prevalent challenges in the South Asia region, and especially for the Maldives, related to climate change, there is a	• The use of digital technologies can support in assessing the impact of climate change and offer opportunities to mitigate and adapt, create early warning systems, support in monitoring the overall situation, create data management systems to

Climate Change	potential for digital technologies to support the Maldives Climate Change Policy Framework (MCCPF).[xcv]	develop and monitor trends (use of AI tech), reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG), raise awareness, mobilise youth and other target audiences etc. • Collaborate with the relevant sections in UNICEF to brainstorm how to leverage digital technologies and tools to support the work on climate change. • Embed the discourse about climate change into the ongoing parenting programmes (or as part of any new intervention). • Partner with relevant authorities/CSOs/private sector to implement programmes that focus on leveraging digital technologies and tools to respond to the pressing situation of climate change in Maldives. • Partner with youth-led organisations to co-create and deliver digital solutions to tackle climate change. Embed online safety as part of this interaction/intervention. Ensure that mental health is a core component of every digital intervention/activity. • Partner with online streaming services such as Netflix or Amazon or Hulu (whichever is most used in the country) to create edutainment programmes to raise awareness around the issue. • Establish a social listening mechanism for the 'refine and testing' process for every digital intervention. • Utilise the gaming platforms for advocacy and awareness raising.
Tourism-led economy drives technological development	Digital technologies are specifically important for the services-led economy of Maldives. They can support geographic decentralisation, economic diversification, and decarbonisation.[xcvi] The Maldives' government has also been promoting the use of digital platforms for tourism and business development through initiatives such as e-wallets and mobile banking to increase financial inclusion and reduce dependency on cash.[xcvii]	• Tourism is the main industry in the Maldives, so partnering with tourism and/or youth tourism influencers may help reach key communiies. • Develop targeted programmes that leverage the tourism industry to promote digital innovation and adoption, especially for women and girls.
Existing and renewed interest in AI		• Leverage this interest by collaborating with the relevant authorities/private sector on using AI for social and behaviour change. Keeping in mind the ethics and risks: work together on ethical and protection issues and on leveraging the technology for children and other communities. • Brainstorm the use of AI in the existing digital tools and technology being utilised in the Maldives CO for engagement and reach. • Invest in AI capacity building, internal and for target audiences, such as youth (for example as part of social mobilisation for climate change). • Partner with AI start-ups and organisations to develop digital solutions (and elements) to enhance SBC work. • Leverage the existing AI-powered platforms and tools: partnerships, content support etc.

Annex 1 – Key Influencer Criteria

For the purpose of this document, key influencers have been defined in three ways - by the number of followers, types of content, and level of influence.

Defining influencers by the **number of followers** can be categorised into four types.

- **Mega influencers** are people with a large number of followers, usually over 1M followers on at least one social media platform. Mega influencers tend to be celebrities who have gained their fame offline, however some will have gained their followers online and through social activities.
- **Macro influencers** usually have 40,000 to 1M followers on social media platforms. This group tends to have high profiles and can be great for raising awareness on issues. It may be easier to connect with macro influencers, as there tends to be more of them than mega-influencers.
- **Micro influencers** have between 1,000 to 4,000 followers and tend to be ordinary everyday people who have become well-known and popular for their knowledge about a specific topic. This means that their followers tend to be interested in that specific topic. These influencers tend to have smaller followings but higher engagement and influence with their followers.
- **Nano influencers** have less than 1,000 followers and tend to be experts in a highly specialized or technical field. Similar to the followers of micro influencers, they tend to have smaller followings but higher engagement and influencer with their followers. However, they will not have as much influence as micro influencers as they have less followers.

Defining influencers by **types of content** which can be categorised into four types.

- **Bloggers** tend to have the most authentic, active, and engaging relationship with their followers.
- **Video makers** are popular types of content, and most tend to create and share videos on YouTube.
- **Podcasters** are the newest form of content to start generating followers and is growing increasingly popular.
- **Social posting only** is rare and tends to happen in parallel with other types of content creation.

Defining influencers by **level of influencer** which can be categorised into two types.

- **Celebrities** can sometimes lack credibility with specific target audiences, or around certain types of topics.
- **Key opinion leaders** are industry experts that can also be considered influencers who gain credibility among followers and people in general due to their technical expertise, qualifications, position, and experience. Key opinion leaders can include journalists, academics, industry experts, and/or professional advisors.

Macro and micro influencers, who are celebrities or key opinion leaders will be the priority criteria used for this digital mapping. As the potential for meaningful partnerships with UNICEF, to reach their target communities seems most likely with this cohort.

Annex 2 – Digital Public Goods (DPGs) case studies

UNICEF Ghana

UNICEF's Ghana office is a Pathfinder and runs the StartUp Lab, which assists sustainable entrepreneurs to develop their products and business models. The lab also serves as an incubator for open source startups and educates those considering it. The objective is to prepare DPGs from the StartUp Lab to apply for UNICEF's Venture Fund investment. The Country Office evaluates the StartUp Lab's solutions through its programmatic sections and collaborates with national institutional partners to incorporate open-source work into broader policy solutions.
UNICEF employs various tools, including the StartUp Lab, Venture Fund, and Innovation Hubs, to support innovation at different stages. In Ghana, the UNICEF Country Office used this system to uncover and advance two DPGs: Bisa App and EduNOSS, as well as DPG nominee Project Konko. For more information visit this site.

UNICEF Philippines

UNICEF Philippines started their DPGs Pathfinding Pilot in early 2021 with two objectives. Firstly, to discover how existing technical country capacity can be advantageous to DPGs and improving Technology for Development (T4D) that are relevant to UNICEF and the government's programmes. And secondly, developing a tool that would allow the sharing of knowledge and capacity among sectors. For more information visit this site.

UNICEF Innovation Funds

UNICEF Innovation funds exclusively invest in open-source technology solutions from new and emerging companies. Through its investments, UNICEF is strengthening communities, increasing the number of DPGs, and having an impact on children. For more information visit this site.

Safe YOU: Virtual Safe Space for Women

Safe YOU was launched in Northern Iraq (Kurdistan) in partnership with UNFPA Iraq and UNFPA Armenia in 2021. With the help of UNICEF Innovation, Safe YOU was recognised as a Digital Public Good (DPG), a digital tool aimed at achieving sustainable development goal number 5 (Gender Equality) as set by the United Nations Secretary General's 2020 Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. Safe YOU aims to be a key resource for evidence-based policy-making through our sophisticated AI data analysis system. This will lead to the prediction & prevention of Violence Against Women & Girls. For more information, visit the site here.

Annex 3 – UNICEF Digital Platforms

U-Report is a messaging tool that enables young people to interact with and raise their voices on issues that are important to them. It is operated by local government, organizations, and young people who record gather information, tips, and opinions from mobile device users on a range of issues. Based on the data and insights gathered by U-`reporters, the results are shared with the relevant communities and stakeholders. For more information on U-Report, visit this site. Access UReport South Asia here: https://southasia.ureport.in/

RapidPro collects data via short message service (SMS) and other communication channels (e.g. voice; social media channels, such as Facebook Messenger, Telegram, WhatsApp) to enable real-time data collection and mass-communication with target end-users, including beneficiaries and frontline workers. The technology allows users to design, pilot, and scale direct mobile outreach services without the help of a software developer in both normal development contexts and humanitarian emergencies.
For more information on RapidPro, visit this site.

Internet of Good Things (IoGT) aims to build people and communities' knowledge by closing the digital divide. For more information on IoGT, visit this site. Access South Asia IoGT here: https://sa.goodinternet.org/en/ or the Pakistan site here: https://nanhayqadam.org/ur/

All Children Learning is a regionally focused platform designed to strengthen assessment capacity and learning. The platform offers four different guidance's (government, emergencies, development, and teaching) to improve the users' assessment capacity and learning. For more information on All Children Learning, visit this site.

OKY app: the world's first menstruation education and period tracker app co-created with girls, for girls. Access here**:** Oky Nepal and Oky India

Bebbo app, developed by the UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, is an application that supports responsive, positive parenting. It aims to provide comprehensive information about early childhood development and parental care in a parent-friendly format. Bebbo also supports the dissemination of messages and information related to COVID-19 prevention and protection for children. For more information**: https://www.bebbo.app/about-us**

USupportMe: part of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing Portfolio at UNICEF. It is an app for on-demand psychosocial support services. After successful pilots in East and Central Asia, we're scaling up this innovative solution to meet its full potential.

UNIlearn: online national learning and knowledge-sharing platform which hosts dynamic education, skills, and other content from different states in India and from other countries.

AGORA is a platform that provides learning opportunities to UNICEF's staff, partners, and supporters. The learning opportunities range from specific thematic areas to strategies to languages to career support. For more information on AGORA, visit this site.

INFORM provides UNICEF and partners with a turnkey solution for field-based data collection, management and visualization. Inform supports UNICEF's strategic outcomes and strengthens our position as the global leader in data for children.
For more information: visit this site.

UNICEF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Endnotes

Definitions to Note:

- **Fixed Broadband Internet**: High-speed connectivity for public use of at least 256 Kbit/s or more in one or both directions (downloading and uploading). It includes cable modem Internet connections, DSL Internet connections of at least 256 Kbit/s or higher, fibre and other fixed broadband technology connections (such as satellite broadband Internet, Ethernet LANs, fixed-wireless access, Wireless Local Area Networks, WiMAX, etc.)[xcviii]
- **Mobile Broadband**: Mobile broadband technology allows for a wireless wide area network (WWAN). In simple terms, it provides wireless high-speed Internet access to portable devices by way of radio towers.[xcix]
- **Data**:
- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per Capita**: is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes (less subsidies) not included in the valuation of output, divided by mid-year population.[c]
- **Unbanked**: people with no bank account[ci]
- **Underbanked**: people with insufficient access to banking[cii]

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