



The logo for the 2013 International Youth Day features the words 'UNITED NATIONS' in orange and 'INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY' in blue and purple. The year '2013' is inside a purple speech bubble that overlaps the 'O' in 'YOUTH'. Below the logo is the theme 'Youth Migration: Moving Development Forward' in blue.

Youth Migration: Moving Development Forward

Background

The International Youth Day (IYD), celebrated on 12 August each year, was established by the United Nations in 2000 as a means of raising awareness of issues affecting young people around the world. Each year the Secretary-General of the United Nations decides upon a theme for the Day on the basis of issues of concern to young people. The theme for 2013 is 'Youth Migration: Moving Development Forward'.

For this year's International Youth Day 2013, the United Nations Secretariat (DESA) and the International Labour Office (ILO), with the support of the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund Secretariat (MDG-F), are co-organizing an event to celebrate the Day. The event will bring together young people, civil society organizations and UN and other experts to discuss issues relating to youth migration.

Who are Youth?

United Nations defines those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth. The Maldives Government defines youth as those persons between the ages of 18 and 35 years.

How big is the youth population?

43% of the world's population is under the age of 25. People under 25 constitute 30% of the population in developed nations and 60% in the least developed countries.

49% of the Maldives population is under the age of 25¹

22% of the Maldives population is between the ages of 15 and 24 years, the largest age cohort out of which 49% are girls¹

Nearly half of the youth population lives in Male.

Why youth migration?

Young people make up a significant share of the global number of international migrants. In 2010, there was an estimated number of 27 million international young migrants. While migration can often offer valuable opportunities and contribute to the development of communities and society at large, it can also pose risks and lead to unacceptable situations, including discrimination and exploitation.

¹ Statistical Year Book of the Maldives, 2012

For young people, the decision to migrate is often related to their transition to adulthood. Internal or international migration can open up avenues of opportunity, including access to decent jobs. However, for some young people migration can expose them to several risks, including lack of access to basic rights, exploitation, unprotected jobs. This can also be due to limited access of young people to information on rights and entitlements of migrant workers. Very little is known about the livelihood opportunities and the risks associated to migration of young people, the policies and measures that help them reap the benefits and contribute to development of both countries of origin and of destination, and the mechanisms that exist for migrant workers to avoid falling into risky situations.

Key Messages on Migrants

Human Rights of Migrants: Migrants are not just statistics. They they are human beings with human rights that must be respected and promoted. Priority actions include: 1) promoting the ratification of all core international human rights and labour rights instruments and their implementation, 2) calling for national action plans to promote awareness of migration realities and to combat xenophobia and discrimination against migrants and 3) implementing existing frameworks to enhance access to social protection and social services by migrants. Maldives is party to various international instruments including the ICPD Programme of Action; as well as legally binding conventions, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

The vision cited in the Health Master Plan (2006-2015) states that “the Maldivian population is a healthy population who are health literate and practice healthy lifestyles, and have easy and effective access to quality health services in the region where they reside which is covered by a health care financing mechanism” and the policy stated in the same document recognizes health as a human right and states that there is no discrimination on account of the person’s gender or socio economic status.

A large number of expatriate population lives in Male. Records show for every three Maldivians, one person is a migrant. Majority of the migrants are in the unskilled category and nearly 43% of the migrants work in the construction industry. Majority of the expatriates are from Bangladesh (56%) and India (23%), There is very little access to obtain health services. To obtain visa and work permit, employers are required to take a basic health insurance package with a premium of MVR 30,000 to cover hospitalization only.

A lot of Maldivians migrate to neighbouring countries for education and medical reasons. Some migrate for work, but there is no proper record of the number and details. Internal migration has increased. Nearly half live in Male and the remaining distributed to other atolls (ICPD Beyond 2014). Main reason for migration into Male is for better education followed by employment (Migration Study, 2003)

Female migrants: Currently, females comprise about half of all international migrants. The participation of women in migration has raised both prospects and challenges. Female migration can advance gender equality and women's empowerment through opportunities that it opens for greater independence and self-confidence, but it can also result in exploitation and abuse. Women migrants who work in unregulated and the informal sectors of the economy are at greater risk of exploitation and abuse. Some become the victims of traffickers. Country delegations should call for the recognition of gender equality as an integral part of the process of policy making, planning, programme delivery and monitoring at all levels. They should underscore that protection of human rights and access to legal and health services, including reproductive health services, are important when it comes to addressing the challenges faced by female migrants. Majority of the expatriates are male (92%, 2011)²

In the Maldives, the Society for Health education provide sexual and reproductive health services for married expatriate population including provision of contraceptives according to health regulations. Voluntary counselling and testing and other information and services are provided through biannual fairs.

Young migrants: According to the latest statistics from the UN Population Division, globally, 12.4 per cent of international migrants are 15-24 years old. Youth migration can be a chance for new opportunities. But it can also result in greater vulnerability for young people, many of whom find themselves with less family and social support, faced with a greater likelihood of abuse, and the temptation to experiment with risky behaviors. A particular challenge for young migrants is access to appropriate and affordable health-care services. Of particular concern are the many young women who fall prey to traffickers and are afraid to seek medical treatment, including reproductive health services. Countries should underscore that to maximize the potential development benefits of youth migration, it is essential to include young people in the migration and development discourse and to ensure that their particular needs are met.

Expatriate growth rate in Maldives is 20%. If there are no hard policy decisions to change the situation, the expatriate population will outnumber the local population by 2018.

² Ministry of Human Resources, Youth and Sports,