



PRESS RELEASE

Government of Maldives and UNDP formalize the 'Sustainable Economic Empowerment and Development for SMEs' project to provide economic rehabilitation amidst COVID-19, supported by Government of Japan

Project is a part of UNDP global programme in the amount of US\$1,449,360 focused on the Maldives, supported by Government of Japan

Aims to support entrepreneurship, innovation and economic diversification through development of MSMEs

Promotes green farming practices, food security and enables creation of jobs for the most vulnerable in the aftermath of the crisis

June 11, 2020. The Sustainable Economic Empowerment and Development for SMEs (SEEDS) project was signed today. Prioritizing support to households that have been directly affected, the project aims to mitigate the negative impacts of the COVID-19 crisis in the Maldives and will assist at least 2,000 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through the Business Center Corporations' outreach initiatives, as well as 250 smallholder farmers to improve food production. This economic diversification project was formulated to respond to the initial findings of a rapid livelihoods assessment jointly conducted by the Government of Maldives and UNDP, to understand the impacts of COVID-19.

"The SEEDS project is an important initiative in the country's efforts to kick-start the economy after the COVID-19 crisis. There is an utmost requirement to strengthen the resilience of the Maldivian economy, especially in primary sectors such as Agriculture. The project will support the current efforts to strengthen food security, local production; and also improve human and technical capacity to reinforce and complement the current recovery roadmap plans," said Minister of Economic Development, Uz. Fayyaz Ismail.

The Ministry of Economic Development and Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture signed the project document for the nine-month project together with the United Nations Development Programme, that will promote economic diversification through empowered MSMEs

and create a new generation of agri-businesses that are innovative, productive and practice environment-friendly agriculture.

“One of the key challenges that we face in terms of agricultural sustenance and growth is the difficulty of transportation of agricultural inputs and produce to markets. To reduce dependency on imports of agricultural produce, Maldives is forced to increase its production to reach targets of import substitution. In order to face these challenges head on, farming in Maldives is in need of rapid transformation and incorporation of modern climate-smart practices that require technical precision,” said Minister of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture, Zaha Waheed speaking at the signing ceremony held at the ministry.

The project will be implemented together with the Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture, Maldives Fund Management Corporation, Agro National Corporation, Business Center Corporation, Housing Development Corporation and Maldives Polytechnic. The project is a part of UNDP global programme, with an allocation of \$1,449,360 to support the Maldives, which will commence in June 2020. The project is generously supported by the Government of Japan and implementing partners will collaborate with the private sector and civil society, to tap into cutting-edge green technology for quick and effective economic recovery.

'We are excited to be part of the new generation that will shape Maldives' economic diversification. We expect youth and women to bring new ideas and actively participate in transforming the landscape. Technologies for low carbon and nature-based businesses exist. All we need is to grab the opportunities and make it work,' said UNDP Resident Representative, Akiko Fujii.

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