



VIOLENCE PREVENTION & RESPONSE AN INTEGRATED PART OF PROGRAMMING IN THE MALDIVES



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Maldivian Red Crescent



CANADIAN RED CROSS CROIX-ROUGE CANADIENNE

RED CROSS RED CRESCENT Seven Fundamental Principles

HUMANITY

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, co-operation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

IMPARTIALITY

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

NEUTRALITY

In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

INDEPENDENCE

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

VOLUNTARY SERVICE

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

UNITY

There can only be one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

UNIVERSALITY

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is world-wide.

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Canadian Red Cross, 2016

Cover photo:

*Daniel Cima, American Red Cross
Mother and son affected by the 2004
Asia Tsunami.*

BACKGROUND

The Maldivian Red Crescent (MRC) is among the youngest members of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. The National Society was formally created in 2011, in the aftermath and recovery of the 2004 Asia Tsunami.

Following a number of workshops and assessments on violence prevention and response between 2005 and 2011, MRC in partnership with the Canadian Red Cross, implemented a violence prevention project in several locations across the country from 2012-2015.

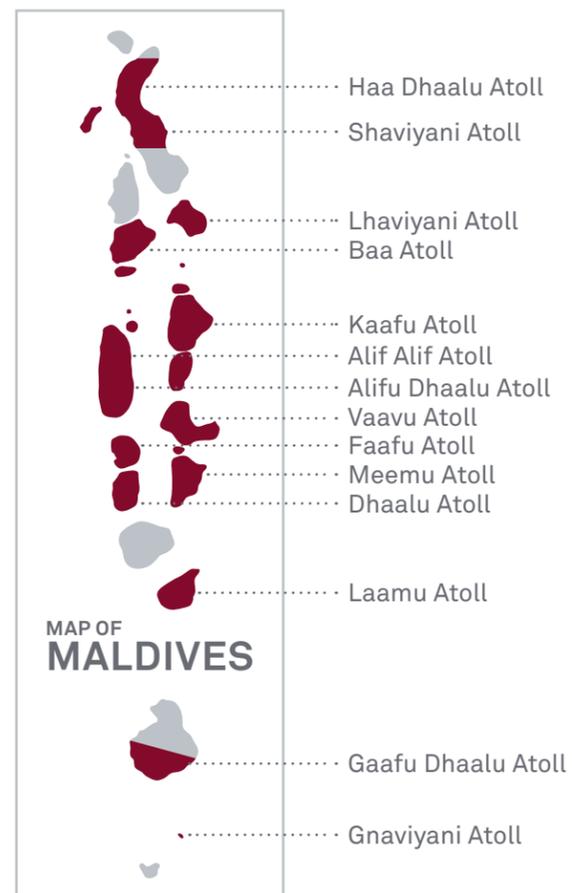
The two overarching objectives of the project were to:

- build protective systems within MRC to ensure the safety of the people it serves and its own volunteers and staff from violence including exploitation.
- support local communities to build the capacity to prevent physical, sexual, psychological and gender-based violence against children.

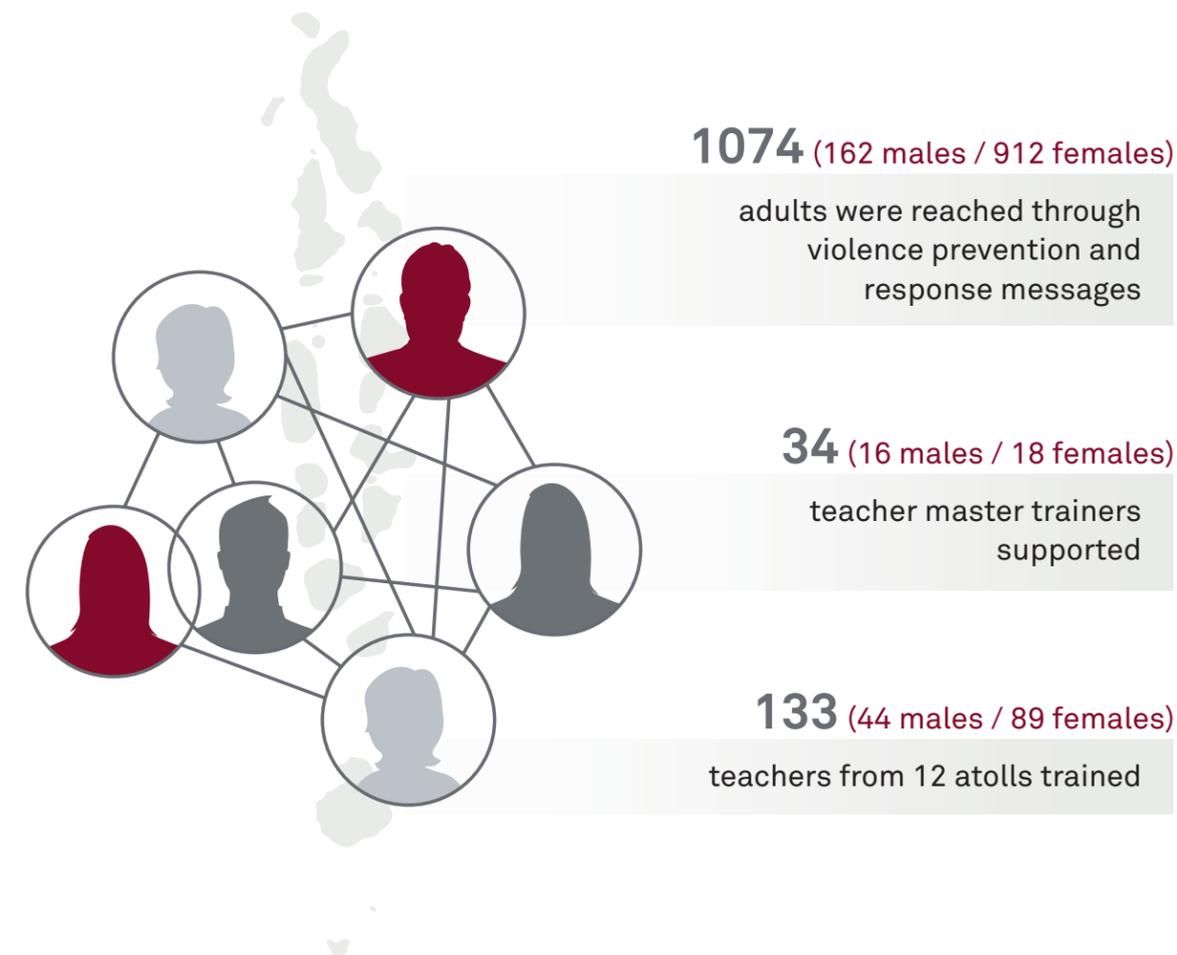
Specific actions taken by MRC have included:

- Improving internal protection systems within the MRC through the development of a Code of Conduct Policy, Child Protection Policy, Anti-harassment Policy, and related education to volunteers and staff;
- Integration of violence prevention and response into community-based programming;
- Developing partnerships with local government, media, non-governmental agencies, and community leaders.

The project was implemented in: (See Map of Maldives)



PEOPLE REACHED



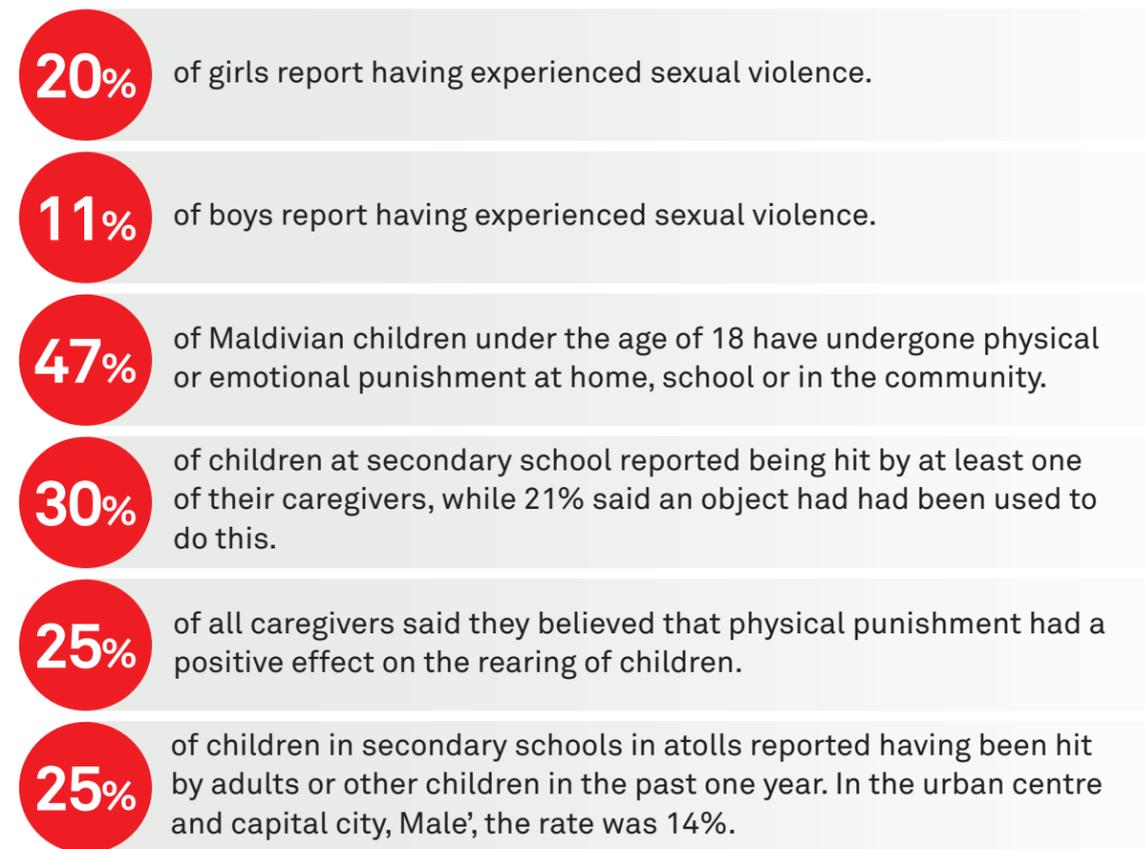
THE PROBLEM

Physical, sexual, psychological, and gender-based violence are, like in many places around the world, a significant problem in the Maldives. The violence disproportionately affects boys, girls and women. The human, economic and community-development consequences are profound.

A 2007 study conducted by the *Maldives Ministry of Gender and Family* recommended to: *Promote primary prevention, with an emphasis on developing, implementing and evaluating prevention programs that prioritizes the prevention of child sexual abuse and changing the behavior of men.*¹

¹Fulu, E. (2007). *Maldives study on women's health and life experiences*. Maldives Ministry of Gender and Family.
²<http://minivannewsarchive.com/date/2011/02/21>.

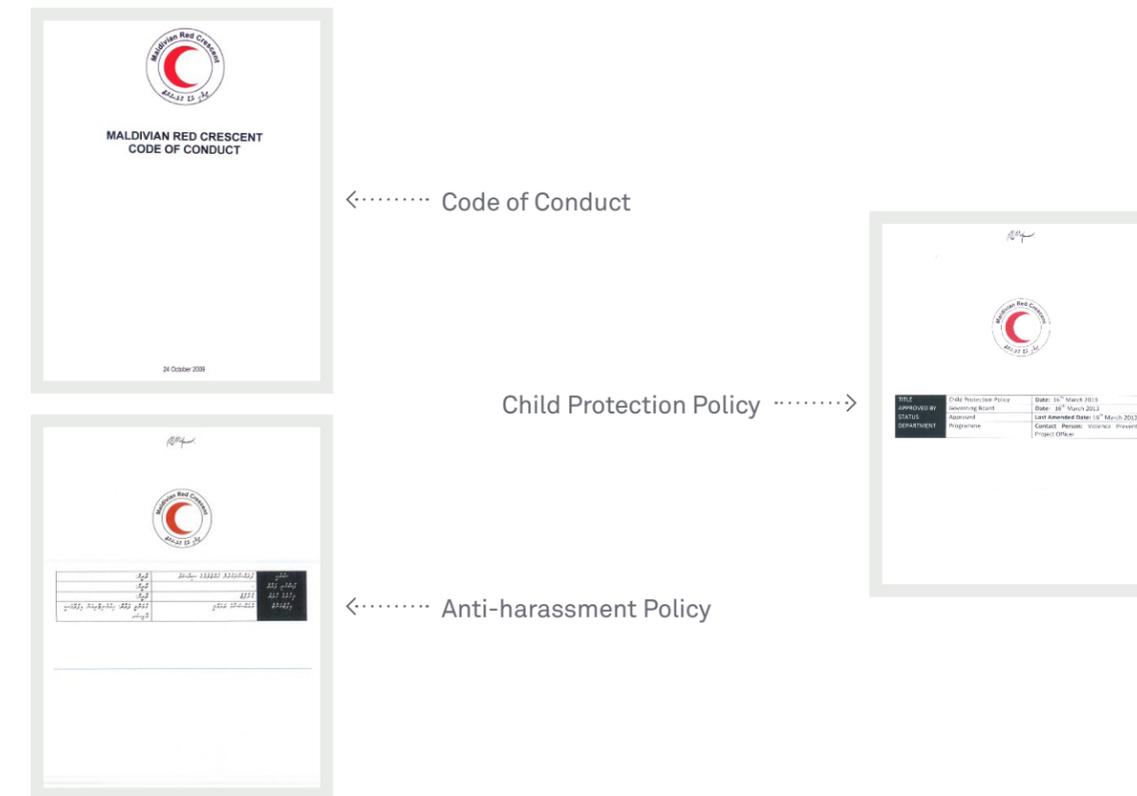
At a child protection conference held in the Maldives in 2011, UNICEF released its preliminary findings of a National Violence against Children study. The study found²:



TOOLS DEVELOPED AND USED IN THE PROJECT

INTERNAL PROTECTION POLICIES

A collection of internal protection policies were developed by MRC to help ensure that the people they serve in communities, and their own volunteers and staff stay safe from all forms of violence including abuse and exploitation.



IFRC AND CANADIAN RED CROSS “TEN STEPS TO CREATING SAFE ENVIRONMENTS” MANUAL AND TRAINING PACKAGE

The “Ten Steps” package of training and guidance notes was used to assist the process in identifying a plan of action to develop protection policies. In particular, the Ten steps are to:

1. Understand the problem of violence
2. Recognize people’s vulnerability and resilience
3. Define protection instruments
4. Create a prevention team
5. Complete a risk assessment
6. Develop policies and procedures
7. Educate adults, youth, and children,
8. Respond to disclosures of violence,
9. Meet the challenges, and
10. Maintain safe environments.



IFRC COMMUNITY-BASED HEALTH AND FIRST AID MODULE

The primary tool used by the Red Crescent to reach out to communities was the IFRC global Community-Based Health and First Aid (CBHFA) program module on Violence Prevention & Response. Through consultations with communities and partners, MRC adapted the global tools to meet local realities. Fourteen lesson cards were developed on preventing and responding to physical, sexual, psychological and gender-based violence against boys, girls and women.

Maldivian Red Crescent “Ten Steps” Manual



Maldives Red Crescent Handbook for preventing violence against children (VAC)



All children deserve to be safe



Key actors in any violent situation – the perpetrator, victim and bystanders



Sexual violence can be with or without touch



Family violence is unsafe for all

Maldivian Red Crescent community-based health education tools

MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

As part of the project, MRC helped to develop an inter-agency media campaign for the annual “16 days of activism against gender-based violence.”



Campaign poster for 16 days of activism against gender-based violence

LESSONS LEARNED

The MRC violence prevention and response project provided a number of important lessons learned for building internal protection systems and for supporting communities to build capacity to protect children from violence.

INTERNAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

1 Senior leadership is essential. MRC was able to prioritize the development of a protection policies such as a code of conduct, child protection policy, anti-harassment policy, and screening policy due to clear and vocal leadership from its senior management. Their ownership of the project meant that internal systems were put within strategic planning and there was accountability for planned actions.

2 Team work is essential. The development of new internal policies that apply across all programs required substantial collaboration between departments like Human Resources, Disaster Management, Youth, and Health in order to reflect the different realities of the work of the National Society. MRC from the start of the project, organized an internal, cross-departmental working group to jointly develop, implement and monitor the work on protection policies related to violence prevention and response.

3 Implementation needs to adjust according to on-the-ground capacities. Originally the project was designed to have volunteer focal points in each MRC branches to lead training and capacity building around the internal protection policies. However, it became clear that the developing pool of volunteers were competing with other priorities, especially during disaster season that limited their ability to provide consistent support. As such, MRC re-oriented their approach to provide more support from their headquarters and to narrow the scope of project sites until more time was available for volunteers.

COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMMING

1 Partnerships are a priority. Not only do partnerships allow for multiple agencies to leverage their strengths and have a coherent approach to protecting people from violence, partnerships also allow access to locations that might be too challenging for any single organization to reach. This is especially true in the Maldives where the country is made up of thousands of small islands and many only accessible by plane or long-boat trips. MRC was able to implement the violence prevention and response project in communities due to its partnership with the Ministry of Education. Trained teachers were able to again train other teachers as part of their ongoing work and to reach adults in remote communities as part of their regular travels and work with the Ministry of Education. A total of 133 (44 male / 89 female) Ministry of Education teachers were trained.

2 Changing the approach might become necessary. When the project was initiated, it planned for community-based volunteers to deliver protection messages in select communities. However, in piloting that approach it was determined some of the volunteers were struggling to talk about some of the sensitive themes, like sexual violence. This was coupled with challenges to retain trained volunteers, especially young people who are mobile in order to seek education and work opportunities. A partnership was then developed with the Ministry of Education and teachers began delivering education sessions as part of their on-going work in schools. This has led to far more reach and higher quality delivery.

3 Focus on priority areas is important. One of the elements of the project was to support youth to implement local micro-projects to enhance the safety of their schools and communities. This was re-considered and eventually left out of the project in order to focus more on the delivery of community-based education once challenges with the original model of working through community volunteers were identified.

4 Role of men needs to be enhanced. Adult women and men are the key target population of the project. This is because for girls and boys to be safe, it is adults who must stop using violence against children. Men in particular are essential because most forms of violence against other men and against boys, girls and women are inflicted by men. However, reaching out to men has been challenging. Although many community sessions have been delivered at evening time when both women and men are available, there have been significantly less men who join the discussions. This is likely due to beliefs by men that protecting children is a female issue. In response, MRC has identified a number of tactics to reach more men such as using sporting events and religious services, although these approaches still need to be tried in local communities.

5 Messaging needs multiple routes. The themes of physical, sexual, psychological and gender-based violence against boys, girls, women and men are sensitive and can be hard to discuss openly. As such, it is important to have multiple routes to communicate messages. MRC in partnership with the Ministry of Education, had direct conversations with communities using locally adapted education materials and complemented this with media partnerships. For instance, the media professionals were trained and a media campaign launched with other agencies.

6 Sustainability is an ongoing effort. MRC is very committed to addressing violence and has taken several steps to continue their work to protect boys, girls and women from physical, sexual, psychological and gender-based violence. This includes building the theme into their Strategy 2020 that sets the priorities for the work of the National Society. The Red Crescent is also continuing to partner with the Ministry of Education to support teachers to reach parents, starting conversations with other agencies like the Family Protection Authority, Ministry of Transport, Police, and Correctional Services. Yet these collaborations all require time and resources. Therefore, to be successful they require ongoing leadership direction, technical support, and planning to integrate violence prevention and response into larger programming.

CASE STUDY: Partnering with Teachers to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children

“Education on violence against children is not widespread in the Maldives but it is so relevant for us,” says Mr. Faheem who is a teacher that trains other teachers as part of his work with the Maldives Ministry of Education. He works on the island of Kuludhufushi

located on the Haa Dhaal Atoll. Like many locations in the country, the atoll can be time consuming, expensive and hard to access.

In order to reach even hard-to-access locations such as Haadaal Atoll, MRC formed a partnership with the Maldives Ministry of Education. As part of this in 2014 and 2015, thirty-four experienced female and male “leading” teacher trainers (i.e. teachers who have high-level experience and mentor other teachers in the country) participated in a detailed four day training on the Red Crescent violence prevention and response module. The interactive and intensive training covered the types of violence against children, local laws, social determinants of violence, prevention strategies, and how to handle disclosures and make referrals to local



“I am convinced that there are many others that can be helped by this message in our community”

support systems. Teachers at the training felt much more prepared to discuss violence against children and increased their commitment to addressing the problem, as described by one female teacher, *“I realized that I have a huge responsibility in my community to prevent violence. I now know how to handle a situation if a child shares an experience about violence.”*

Since being trained, Mr. Faheem has reached many groups of parents in his own community and has traveled to nearby islands on his own initiative to also reach out to parents in those communities. In addition, he explains, *“As a leading teacher, I am sometimes invited as a resource person to train other teachers on various topics. Whenever I get such an opportunity, I always make it a point to request from the organizers to add time for discussing violence against children.”*

Mr. Faheem notes that many experiences stand out from his efforts. For example, during one conversation with parents, a mother approached him after the session, *“tears were pouring down her face”* and she confided that her six year old son had been sexually abused by her own 18 year old daughter. Mr. Faheem continues, *“The boy’s father was hesitant to get*

help because of fears of shame and legal consequences. The mother said she wanted this to STOP NOW, even if it meant separation and disruption in the family.” He supported the mother to report the violence to local authorities and referred her for psychosocial support. *“If I was not trained by the Red Crescent, I would not have been able to help this mother. I am convinced that there are many others that can be helped by this message in our community,”* says Mr. Farheem.

The success of the work with schools has led to requests from the Ministry of Transport, the Police and the Maldives Correctional Services to work with MRC to train taxi drivers, police officers and prison inmates on how to prevent and respond to physical, sexual, psychological and gender-based violence.

CASE STUDY: Working with Media Partners to Reach Adults and Children

As host to a popular television show, Mr. Rilwan is a well-known media personality in the Maldives. He is also a volunteer with MRC and champion for preventing and responding to violence.

His experience with MRC began when he joined a workshop on “the role of

media in violence prevention” hosted by the Maldives Broadcasting Commission in August 2014. Following the workshop, and due to his keen interest, Mr. Rilwan joined a more intensive four day training, facilitated by the Red Crescent, for the Ministry of Education on violence prevention and response against children.

Since the training, Mr. Rilwan has used his media presence to help promote the protection of boys, girls and women. He shares, “Whenever I can take the opportunity, I somehow try to communicate short messages of violence prevention during my show,” and he adds, “it’s a difficult problem but the training I received from the Red Crescent has been very useful for me. I hope through our media messages many lives have been touched.”



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In addition to using his own show as a platform, he also has also been an active volunteer in the community holding discussions with parents, training school teachers, and including the messages in his volunteer work with the Scouts.

During one training, Mr. Rilwan remembers a mother who “was quite disturbed about the way her husband disciplines their children. The husband was using physical punishment to discipline their children and she disagreed with him about that and the violence prevention session had reinforced her beliefs. She wanted help to find a solution to help educate her husband. She left with ideas after discussing with me and having access to local referral systems.”

MRC has also partnered with a number of local non-governmental agencies to organize media campaigns as part of the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence that occurs in November and December.

Violence is Preventable.

