

Chapter 5: Maldives

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Population (1989): 200,000

Population Growth Rate (1980-88): 3.0% per annum

Land Area: 298 square kilometres

Sea Area: 100,000 square kilometres

Total Number of Islands: 1,096 (of which 202 inhabited)

GNP per Capita (1987): US\$300

Year of Independence: 1965

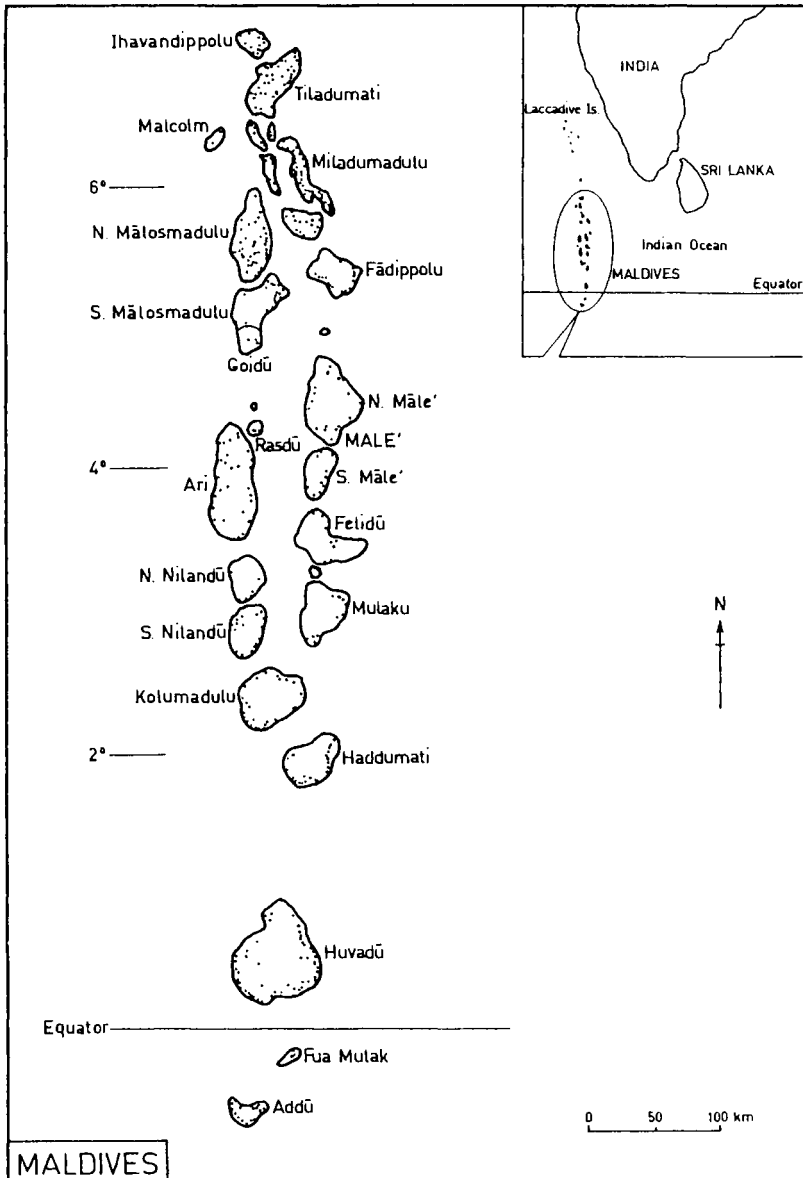
Primary School Enrolment Rate (1989): 80%

Human Development Index (1987): 0.692

The Republic of Maldives is located in the Indian Ocean, to the south-west of Sri Lanka. The country has a population of 200,000, and feels both small and isolated. Development problems are exacerbated by spread of the population over a wide area and a large number of islands. However, Maldives does have some characteristics which make development planning less complex than in other states. For example almost everybody shares the same religion, Islam; and the national language, Dhivehi, is spoken throughout the country. Also, about a quarter of the population lives in Male', the capital.

Maldives became independent in 1965 after having been a British protectorate for nearly 80 years. The economy is primarily dependent on tourism and fishing. Significant economic inputs are also derived from foreign aid.

Responsibility for primary and secondary education is shared between the government and the private sector. Although in recent years the government sector has greatly expanded, it still covers only 40 per cent of the total number of institutions. Maldives has no university, and all tertiary students must therefore go abroad.



1. Government and Public Administration

The government of Maldives is headed by an executive president who is elected for a period of five years. The executive branch of the government consists of the Office of the President together with various line ministries and departments. Heads of the ministries and some departments have direct access to the President, though heads of other departments must report through their respective ministers.

The government has nine ministries. This number is determined by developmental and personal factors. The functions assigned ministerial status include those which are of crucial importance to the economy, such as tourism, fishing, education, health, industry and transport. Ministerial status is also assigned to functions considered important to the governance of a modern independent state, such as foreign affairs, defence and justice. Functions such as communications, information and broadcasting have remained executive departments because their organisational goals and activities are more limited.

As in all small states, personalities are significant determinants of whether a government agency is a ministry or a department. Within ministries and departments, kinship, loyalty and patronage significantly influence the allocation of positions to individuals. As the country becomes more developed, however, there is increased pressure for efficiency and recognition of merit.

2. Responsibilities of the Ministry of Education

Until the early 1970s the principal functions of the Ministry were administration of three government schools in Male', and testing and certification of entrants to government jobs and to trades requiring special certification. Schools did exist outside Male', but they were private enterprises and were largely left to operate by themselves.

In an effort to strengthen and to broaden the Ministry of Education, international assistance was sought in the early 1970s. UNDP, Unesco and Unicef helped formulate development projects, and an Educational Projects Office was set up for implementation. This office later became the Educational Development Centre (EDC), the 'professional arm' of the Ministry.

The development and expansion of education has required many new activities. These include state-financed programmes of school construction, curriculum development, textbook production, teacher training, and distance education. In 1980 a new primary school syllabus was drawn up, and all primary schools are now required to teach the

National Primary School Curriculum. Most new schools were on the outer atolls. By 1990 the Ministry of Education administered 40 schools in the outer atolls and 10 schools in Male'.

3. Organisation of the Ministry of Education

The 1980s also witnessed establishment of some specialised agencies within the Ministry. Teacher training was separated from the Educational Development Centre to form an Institute of Teacher Education; the book production unit became the Printing Division, and the non-formal education section became the Non-formal Education Unit. Each new unit formulated its own dossiers and successfully attracted external finance.

The organisation chart of the Ministry is presented in Figure 5.1. The Ministry is divided into sections known as Divisions and Specialised Agencies. The seven Divisions are:

- Supervision & Services,
- Planning & Monitoring,
- Institutions Male',
- Institutions Atolls,
- Budget & Administration,
- External Relations & Scholarships, and
- Construction,

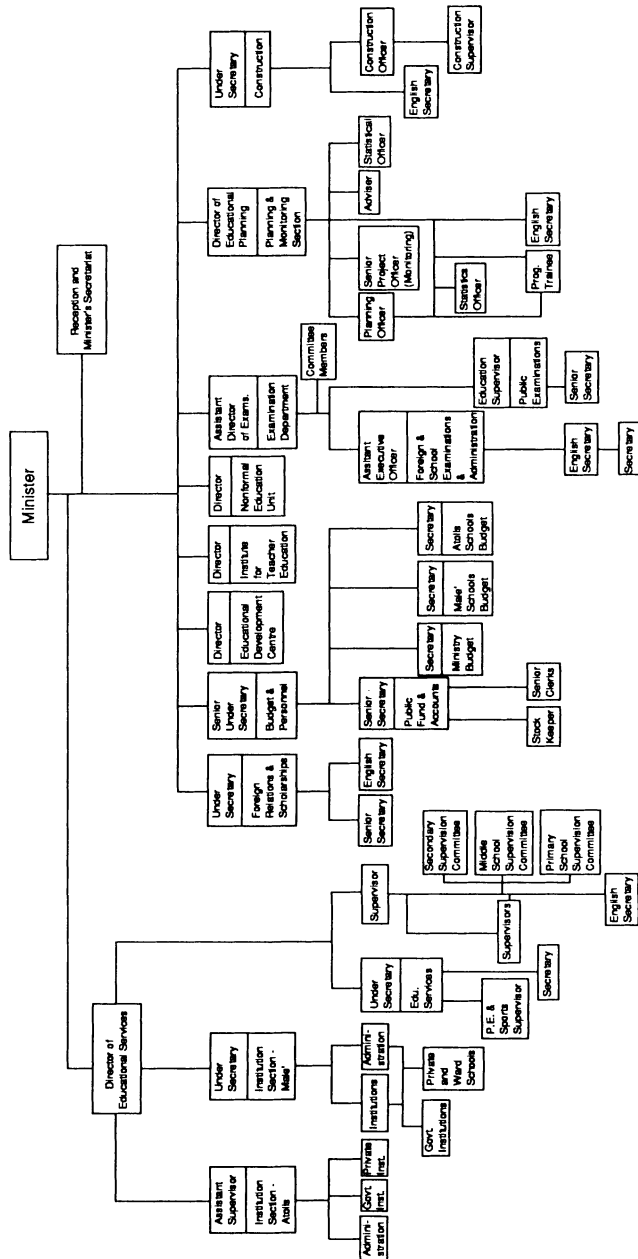
The seven specialised agencies are:

- The Examinations Unit,
- The Printing Unit,
- The Educational Development Centre,
- The Institute for Teacher Education,
- The Non-Formal Education Unit,
- The Centre for Management & Administration, and
- The Centre for English Language Teaching.

In addition, the Minister has his own Secretariat for administrative functions.

In Maldives, the role of the Minister differs from that in most other countries. The heads of the divisions and specialised agencies report directly to the Minister, who is not only the political head of the Ministry but also the professional and intellectual leader. This is made possible by an absence of marked distinctions between political, civil

Figure 5.1: The Ministry of Education, Maldives (1989)



service and professional functions.

The flat top of the Ministry of Education, in which the heads of 14 divisions and specialised agencies report directly to the Minister, is to some extent a result of historical and political factors. While at first sight the structure would not appear optimal, it can work more easily in a small than in a large state. More people are directly known to the Minister in a small state than in a larger one, where relationships are more formal and impersonal.

Among those who report directly to the Minister are administrators, under secretaries, senior under secretaries, deputy directors, and directors. Although they have different job classifications and salary scales, their functional ranks as heads of divisions and specialised agencies are similar.

4. The Divisions of the Ministry of Education

To understand the organisation of the Ministry more clearly, it is useful to explain the functions of each of the seven divisions. Table 5.1 shows the establishment of these divisions and of the Minister's Secretariat. There are altogether 74 posts, though some are unfilled.

Table 5.1: Establishment of the Divisions of the Ministry of Education, Maldives

Division	Profes- sional	Adminis- trative	Clerical	Total
Supervision & Services	5	4	3	12
Planning & Monitoring	1	6	3	10
Institutions Male'	1	2	3	6
Institutions Atoll	1	2	4	7
Budget & Administration	-	5	16	21
External Relations & Scholarships	1	2	2	5
Construction	1	3	3	7
Minister's Secretariat	-	3	3	6
TOTAL	9	25	37	74

(a) The Supervision & Services Division

This division is responsible for the supervision of all government schools, and for organisation of extra-curricular activities, inter-school

tournaments, competitions, workshops, seminars and other activities to improve the quality of education. The function of a school inspectorate has not been adequately performed by the section so far due to the lack of qualified staff. The division is now investigating the potential of committees of part-time staff, teacher educators, curriculum developers and senior teachers. This experiment is being tried in Male', but no system exists for supervision of schools in the outer atolls.

The Supervision & Services Division also prepares policy-support information for the National Education Council. This is a policy-planning function which arguably would be best served by the Planning & Monitoring Division. As will be noted below, however, this division is rather weak.

The Supervision & Services Division is headed by the Director of Education Services, who is assisted by an Under Secretary. A separate wing of the Division contains the Unesco National Commission.

(b) The Planning & Monitoring Division

The primary functions of the Planning & Monitoring Division are to collect and publish data on enrolments, facilities and teachers. The division has an advanced educational management information system, though as yet it has limited capacity for analysis. The division is small, and is often preoccupied with day-to-day implementation. The division has only one professional officer, who is supported by a statistics officer, two readers, one programmer, three clerks and a typist. Although ideally the division should evaluate as well as plan projects, in practice it lacks the capacity to do so.

The preparation of the first education plan, the Human Resources Development Plan (1985-95), required considerable inputs of external expertise. Unfortunately local expertise was not systematically developed in the process, with the result that educational planning became a one-time effort. In the absence of continuous review and revision, the first education plan rapidly became irrelevant.

Because the Planning & Monitoring Division is weak, policy-makers often find that a more useful source of information on educational needs and priorities is the community itself. In a small, transparent and accessible society the complaints of parents and other citizens can easily reach the highest authorities, and sometimes they have a rapid impact on policies. Recognising the value of community inputs, the Ministry of Education has organised several seminars and conferences. One recent gathering was entitled the National Convention for Consultations on Education. It was held in 1989 to obtain public

views on education.

(c) Administration of Schools in Male'

Because about a quarter of the total population lives in Male', the largest and best schools are located there. A separate division in the Ministry is responsible for administration and financing of these schools. The head of the division is a Senior Under Secretary, who is assisted by three Secretaries, two Education Officers and two clerks.

In addition to recruitment of teachers, this division looks into complaints, handles transfers, and maintains records on all teachers recruited by the Ministry. Systematic record-keeping and easy retrieval of information is necessary to increase the efficiency of this section. It requires staff development and a more effective management information system.

Rapid expansion of the education system has brought excessive reliance on expatriate teachers. About 50 per cent of the primary school teachers in Male' and over 90 per cent of the secondary school teachers in the country are expatriates. Recruitment of teachers from Sri Lanka for the 50 government schools takes about half the time of at least two officials in the division for administration of Male' schools. The Maldives High Commission in Sri Lanka helps with recruitment. The absence of diplomatic representation elsewhere in the region is to some extent a constraint on recruitment from other countries. Because it is a poor and small state, in the short run Maldives will not be able to increase its diplomatic representation. To help solve this problem the Ministry envisages use of commercial firms and the assistance of the Ministries of Education of friendly countries.

(d) Administration of Schools in the Atolls

Of the 50 government schools, 40 are located in the outlying atolls. Heads of these institutions are directly responsible to the head of the division specifically concerned with the atolls. The division is responsible for recruitment, transfers and maintenance of records on all employees in these institutions. Except for the recruitment of expatriates who serve in atolls, the functions of this section are similar to those of the division for the administration of Male' schools. Immediate problems of administration and record-keeping are also similar, but the distance of the schools from Male' creates special problems. These include the procurement and distribution of materials for physical

maintenance and construction. It is also difficult to provide regular supervision.

The division is staffed by an Assistant Supervisor, two Secretaries, one stock keeper and three clerks. The ratio of officers to schools is less favourable than in the division for administration of Male' schools.

(e) The Administration & Budget Division

This division is responsible for financial control and supervision of the Ministry, its specialised agencies, and the 50 government schools. Approval of annual budgets and expenditures is channelled through this section. The division also handles maintenance, procurement, recruitment and terminations. It covers the payrolls of the 68 Ministry employees and 500 teachers, and maintains the accounts for local and external funds.

Because of the high degree of centralisation, the work of the division is a key to the operation of the whole system. However, stringent financial regulations and the serious consequences of mismanagement or oversight make jobs in the section somewhat unattractive, which in turn causes high turnover. Finance clerks and secretaries do receive special salary incentives and overtime payments, but the general education level of employees in finance and administration remains lower than that in other sections.

Because of the difficulty in recruiting staff with adequate familiarity of financial rules and regulations, and because of high turnover, this division always has vacant posts and thus problems of workload. Staff commonly have to stay after hours just to get the minimum necessary work completed. However, in a small island the homes of employees are close to their offices. This facilitates such overtime work.

(f) The External Relations & Scholarships Division

The primary functions of this division are the coordination of international assistance for education, the placement of students in overseas institutions, and the administration of scholarships. Again, the work of this division is hampered by the lack of diplomatic representation. Records are maintained on all recipients of fellowships offered through the government, but the division requires a better information system on aid programmes, overseas courses, and the students in foreign institutions.

(g) The Construction Division

In recent years school construction and the provision of facilities have been major Ministry activities. In 1989, for example, the Construction Division managed over 20 projects. Contracts are issued by this division, and the implementation is monitored and supervised with engineering support from the Office of Physical Planning & Design (OPPD).

Lack of expertise in contract management and site supervision, coupled with procedural constraints on the timely procurement of building materials and supplies, have in some cases caused expensive delays. Many of the construction projects are in outlying islands where field supervisors are difficult to find. As a result, the head of this section has to travel extensively, sometimes with long absences from the office.

5. Issues in Management and Administration*(a) Job Definition and Appraisal*

Individuals in small countries are often required to undertake multiple functions which in larger countries would be performed by several people. The overall functions of a Ministry of Education in a small country are not very different from those of a larger country. But the number of highly-skilled persons available to carry out those functions is much smaller in a small state. As a result, a typical administrator is required to perform multiple functions. For instance, an Under Secretary in charge of administration of schools may be required also to forecast student enrolment, engage in policy research, and interview candidates for teaching posts.

There are some advantages in having multi-functional administrators. Most obviously, scarce human resources are used more efficiently. Also, the multi-functional administrator develops a broader understanding of the organisation, and is able to fill in for colleagues. But one disadvantage is that the administrator's actual work time is divided over many disparate activities, with the result that the span and depth of attention given to individual tasks is limited.

Officials are often required to look after the functions of colleagues who for various reasons are temporarily away from work. Senior officials must be able to fill in for others and perform many different functions, and are thus required to remain generalists. On the other hand, more junior officials may be expected to acquire specific skills, e.g. in purchasing, supervision and data processing.

All positions in the Ministry of Education have job descriptions.

Whenever a new position is created a job description is prepared and sent to the Office of the President, which is responsible for the employment of government personnel. However, the job descriptions do not always work as intended, either because the descriptions are too vague or because of the frequent requirement to carry out functions assigned to other officers.

Because of the critical shortage of manpower, jobs are often created to suit available persons. Familiarity and experience count most in appointment to senior positions, though merit is also an important attribute. Individuals are often put through a subtle process of weighing up, a process known locally as *vakaru jehun*. Personnel appraisal becomes a subjective and invariably a process of testing of loyalties and performance. Improvement of appraisal procedures will require more objective and reliable criteria, and the adoption of standards of acceptability and excellence.

(b) Control of Schools

Although it might be assumed that smallness of scale permits greater control of schools, in practice this does not seem to be the case. Indeed, small-country interactions are sometimes more complex. Government schools which are thought to be exclusively under the control of the Ministry of Education are also exposed to other pressures. Other government departments and community organisations exert considerable influence on the schools. Under these conditions, however much the officials in the Ministry like to think that they have full control of schools, in reality the Ministry is only one of several sources of influence. In a small community, the number of people who know each other is proportionately greater than in a larger community. Family and friendship connections significantly influence government processes in small states.

At present, the Ministry of Education has no regional or atoll offices. However if the current rate of expansion continues, some decentralisation will be required for efficiency and effectiveness. The problems of remoteness and isolation prevent the authorities in Male' from operating a good system of supervision and control. Decentralisation of educational administration will necessitate substantial strengthening of atoll-level administration. It will of course further stretch the limited stock of appropriate manpower, but in the long run will be unavoidable.

The great distances of ocean between the islands create an additional constraints on supervision, which is at best irregular. In some

cases, the most effective form of supervision and monitoring is through officials of other ministries whose work has taken them to the remote islands. Often, the Ministry of Education receives comments from heads of other departments through official and unofficial channels.

(c) Manpower Constraints

In contrast to larger and more developed countries, in Maldives the available pool of suitable manpower is small. Recruitment for professional and administrative positions usually requires a good deal of personal appeal and convincing. Positions remain vacant for long periods because it is impossible to identify suitable candidates.

The shortage of manpower in the Ministry makes it extremely difficult for officials to devote time to long-term scenarios. Due to the pressures of day-to-day administration, the usual mode of work is one of crisis-management rather than carefully-planned implementation.

Although it might seem obvious, it has sometimes been forgotten that serious consideration has to be given to manpower constraints before any new function is undertaken by the Ministry. Experience shows that when new functions are incorporated hastily, manpower is difficult to obtain and existing human resources have to be spread more thinly. Lack of appropriate personnel has obstructed longstanding plans to incorporate research functions at the Educational Development Centre. It has also prevented the Atoll Education Centres from taking up teacher education and in-service functions.

Due to the absence of tertiary education in the country, very few Maldivians are able to obtain a higher education. But although few people are highly specialised in their fields, this lack of expertise is compensated to some extent by experience and practical insight. Several senior officials have served in the education sector for long periods. At least 50 per cent of the senior administrators in the Ministry agencies have over 10 years' service in the education sector. In Maldives, reliance on expatriates to fill senior government positions is not an acceptable practice. However, international expertise in education is widely used in technical assistance programmes.

Civil servants in Maldives are expected to have multiple salaries because single salaries can barely meet the cost of living. Many officials have more than one job in the government, plus one or more external sources of income. This situation is made necessary and possible by the critical shortage of skilled and educated labour. On the positive side, the system enables the government to gain the services of scarce labour which would otherwise choose more attractive private sector

employment. However, when the working day is divided into different jobs in different places, every job becomes a part-time assignment. The amount of time and attention devoted to a particular job is necessarily limited, and multiple jobs mean divided loyalties. To reduce division of loyalties, officials in high positions tend to take multiple jobs within the government or else to own private businesses.

In a situation where no one is available on a full-time basis, strategies have to be devised to get essential work completed. These include the appointment of *ad hoc* committees and task forces.

(d) Professional Development

Few officials have received pre-service training which is directly related to the posts they hold. Staff development activities are not well established because of the lack of national infrastructure for manpower development in management and administration. In-service training is given through short courses in other countries. Staff in senior positions have adequate training, although there is some mismatch between training and job assignments.

Top positions in the functional sections of the Ministry are not filled by people who have had extensive training in job-related fields. A systematic plan for staff development is needed to enhance the Ministry's ability to manage and develop the education system. Such a plan is essential to improve not only the efficiency and effectiveness of the Ministry but also for the organisation and management of the education system. Questions of quality improvement, internal efficiency and extended coverage cannot be adequately addressed without strengthening organisational and administrative capabilities.

Extreme specialisation is not necessarily an advantage in promotions because top positions in the organisation require a general knowledge of all functional activities. This type of general knowledge is usually obtained through long years of service where horizontal linkages among the functional sections are well established. Weak linkages and frequent turnover of senior staff result in the loss of institutional memory and make it very difficult to build a general knowledge of the entire organisation.

(e) Management of International Assistance

In small countries where educational development is heavily dependent on international assistance, aid administration and management is

crucial. In Maldives, the securing of international assistance clearly involves in addition to the Ministry of Education the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Planning & Environment.

The demands of international development organisations on the Ministry of Education of a small state are debilitating and sometimes overwhelming. Some of the most efficient manpower is engaged most of the time in providing information for donor agencies. Often routine functions are pushed aside due to the pressure of urgent external demands. The sudden onslaught of the World Conference on Education for All in 1990 is a case in point. Preparations had to be made at the expense of routine but important functions. Unfortunately, most of the large international development organisations are not adequately sensitive to small states' special needs in educational organisation and management.

Once aid is secured, the actual administration of projects requires careful monitoring and reporting. A good deal of the work of United Nations projects is shared between the UN agencies and the government implementing agency.

International assistance for education also involves an essential knowledge component. This includes information on the sources, types and conditions of aid, and on the mediating role of technical experts in policy formulation. National capacity for the collection and use of information on aid agencies and programmes is limited. The most readily available sources of information on training programmes are a Unesco publication entitled *Study Abroad*, and randomly selected college prospectuses. Since there is no university education in the country, Maldives relies heavily on international scholarships. This results in less predictability, relevance and control over the transfer of knowledge.

The function of technical experts in policy processes is crucial in small states. Because Maldives has few local experts in the specialised fields of education, there is a tendency for excessive reliance on international experts. The nature of external expertise may be indicated by the activities, duration and sponsorship of the principal visitors during 1989:

- music teaching (two weeks, Unesco),
- mathematics education (two weeks, Unesco),
- primary education (six months, Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation),
- nonformal education (six months, United Nations Fund for Population Activities),
- education planning (two weeks, Unicef),

- basic education (two weeks, Unicef),
- education statistics (three days, Unesco),
- English language teaching (two years, British Council),
- English language teaching (one week, British Council), and
- project planning (three weeks), United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

Successful utilisation of technical assistance depends strongly on the abilities of Ministry counterparts. External assistance is better utilised when the local counterparts are able to gather relevant information and make it available to the experts. In this way Ministry officials act as gatekeepers, directing and facilitating or at times obstructing access to knowledge and information. So the impact, let alone success, of international experts is often a function of the quality of the counterparts.

6. Conclusions

The problems of educational development, including its organisation and management, are amplified by small scale, geographic isolation, and the scarcity of human and material resources. In small communities like Maldives, interpersonal relations strongly influence the organisation and management of both private and public sector enterprises, including the Ministry of Education. For example, even if they are not related to decision-makers, the fact that people live close to each other makes it possible for them to approach decision-makers at home or on the road and thus to make informal appeals. This has both negative and positive sides. The amount of time devoted to investigating specific complaints tends to be high; but the school system may be much more personalised and sensitive than in large countries.

In Maldives, the problems of small size are exacerbated by the scarcity of high level expertise. This increases the country's dependence on international expertise even in such crucial areas as planning and policy formulation. At the same time, the effective use of international expertise depends on the quality and competence of national counterparts.

It is also found that the critical shortage of high level staff with training in organisational development, management and administration is reflected in the use of outdated methods of organisation and record-keeping, even with the availability of efficient office automation and information systems. Technology can certainly be harnessed to reduce the problems of small states; but it cannot solve everything.

Finally, because Maldives is geographically isolated, it has few

avenues for regional cooperation. Such cooperation as does exist is mostly with Sri Lanka, a much larger state. There are few avenues for the types of mutual support among small states found in the South Pacific and the Caribbean.