



**BROKEN
CHALK**

Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the United
Nations Human Rights Council 4th Cycle – 50th Session

Right to Education

Country Review: Maldives

Submitting Organization: BROKEN CHALK

April 2025

By Alessia Bruni

Harmonielaan 63, 1111 PE

Diemen, Netherlands

+31687406567

upr@brokenchalk.org

www.brokenchalk.org

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Broken Chalk is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 that monitors and minimises worldwide human rights violations in education. We aim to promote universal and equal access to education for all.

We encourage and support achieving societal peace with our international sponsors and partners by advocating for intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarisation, and tackling educational inequalities.

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I. Introduction

1. Broken Chalk has drafted the report that follows. This is a stakeholder contribution to the Fourth Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for the Maldives. This report will focus on the right to education in the Maldives, as Broken Chalk aims to combat human rights violations in the educational field.
2. In the Maldives, schooling is mandatory for children aged 4 to 16, with free education guaranteed for preschool, primary, and secondary education. The educational system is structured into multiple levels: pre-primary, primary, lower secondary, higher secondary, and tertiary education. Private and public institutions have formed the national education system.ⁱ
3. Although there is decentralisation in addressing the geographically dispersed populations, the education system in the Maldives is centrally managed by the Ministry of Education, which sets national standards, policies, and curricula. The Ministry retains primary authority, adhering to national priorities and maintaining uniform quality.ⁱⁱ
4. The Maldives has articulated multiple goals for its educational system, focusing on quality, inclusivity, gender equality, and alignment with global standards. The government aimed to address the disparities in educational outcomes between urban and rural areas, with a focus on providing quality education for individuals with disabilities.ⁱⁱⁱ With the aid of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, the Maldives launched the Maldives Education Management Information System, aiming to track educational development and ensure a high level of quality education.^{iv}
5. Despite advancements, the Maldives' educational system still faces significant challenges, including geographical challenges that further complicate the equality of education between remote and urban island communities, as well as the recruitment and retention of qualified educators.^v Furthermore, gender inequality persists as young women are restricted due to cultural and socio-economic barriers.^{vi}
6. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with local education stakeholders, has designated Equity and Inclusion as the key reform agenda and established a roadmap for transforming the education system. In partnership with UNICEF and the World Bank, the government has secured US\$9.5 million through the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to support education and learning transformation in the Maldives.^{vii}
7. The key elements of this agenda (THAIBA) include promoting inclusive education, enhancing basic literacy and numeracy skills, and integrating digital learning and transferable skills. Additionally, the reform focuses on creating multiple learning pathways that emphasise 21st-century skills, improving the quality of teaching, and establishing safe learning environments within schools.^{viii}

II. Brief overview of the last UN-UPR cycle

8. The Maldives was last reviewed in November 2020. The country received 259 recommendations, 187 of which were supported, and six recommendations pertained to the Right to Education.^{ix}
9. Of the recommendations made regarding education, Broken Chalk is pleased to note that all were supported. In the context of education, the recommendations addressed prevalent topics, focusing on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all, with an emphasis on the inclusion of marginalised groups, including children with disabilities and girls, as well as improving educational infrastructure in remote islands.

Furthermore, the importance of aligning national educational standards with international frameworks was addressed.^x

10. The Maldives 2020 national report for the UN-UPR review highlighted the state's commitment to advancing education. Efforts to address previous challenges included the enactment of the Education Act (2020), which mandates free education for both primary and secondary education, along with the provision of free textbooks and special allowances for schools that enroll children with special needs. Furthermore, the development of an inclusive Education Policy to integrate children with disabilities into mainstream education, with teacher training.^{xi}
11. The Maldives has continued its initiatives in addressing challenges in education. They introduced the Strategic Action Plan (SAP), which focused on and emphasised educational quality and equity. This action plan included enhancing teacher training, expanding access to early childhood education, and improving educational structures around the island. Moreover, this action plan prioritises digital platforms to improve remote education and promote inclusivity for children with disabilities. It includes targeted policies and programs designed to bridge the gap between urban and remote areas, as well as initiatives to train teachers in inclusive teaching practices.^{xii}
12. Since the last UN-UPR review, challenges remain due to geographic disparities and resource allocation. However, the Maldives continues to collaborate with international organisations and commitments under the UPR framework to improve educational access in the Maldives. The advancement of their Sustainable Investment Goals and the Strategic Action Plan highlights the continued initiatives to enhance the education system and provide a framework that aligns with international standards, offering improved teaching and learning methods in the Maldives.^{xiii}

III. Inclusion of Marginalised Groups

13. The Maldives has made efforts to eliminate barriers to education for students with Special Educational Needs by implementing the inclusive education policy in 2013. However, this has remained a challenge due to the Maldives' lack of trained teachers to offer inclusive education. The policy aimed to ensure equal opportunities for all children by modifying current teaching methods and providing resources for children with disabilities.
14. While the policy addressed and introduced measures for the integration of students with disabilities, the limited teacher training and the lack of funds have hindered the success and effectiveness. A 2024 study revealed that educators are often unprepared to address the various disabilities that these students face, and the educators lack effective strategies in their teaching methods to address these various learning disabilities. As a result, many students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms face marginalisation.^{xiv}
15. The Maldives have continued to embrace inclusivity following the amendment made to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2024. These amendments ensured that children with disabilities are provided with the least restrictive environment and that educators are trained to offer suitable learning and teaching environments for these children.^{xv}
16. Furthermore, policies in the Maldives continue to evolve to ensure quality education, as exemplified by the Inclusive Education Policy developed by the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. These policy frameworks ensure and highlight the importance of offering

education to all individuals without discrimination. Equal opportunity is provided for students who may have learning disabilities and for those who do not.^{xvi}

17. Despite the many legislative and policy frameworks made in the Maldives, students with learning disabilities still face challenges due to inadequate teacher training. The insufficient training of educators has impacted their ability to meet the needs of these learners, which will affect the success of providing inclusive education. Educators often lack the necessary skills, knowledge, and mindset, creating a persistent barrier to inclusive education that must be addressed. The Disability Act offers modifications to the curriculum for students with disabilities; however, educators often struggle to adjust due to a lack of knowledge and resistance to incorporating diversity in their classrooms.^{xvii}

IV. Geographic Disparities

18. The Maldives is dispersed geographically, comprising 1,200 islands. This has created educational disparities in both the quality and access to education. Schools in urban areas, such as Male, the capital of the Maldives, offer more benefits to students due to better resources, a higher number of teachers, and superior infrastructure. In contrast, schools in remote islands face significant challenges due to limited infrastructure, scarce resources, and teacher shortages.^{xviii}
19. In 2022, the Ministry of Education introduced satellite education to address educational disparities in three remote islands. This initiative allowed educators from central islands to offer online education, ensuring that students received quality education despite the prevalence of infrastructure and resource shortages.^{xix}
20. Studies find that students are moving to Male, the capital of the Maldives, to take advantage of the educational facilities offered, as many of the islands in the Maldives are sparsely populated, creating challenges in providing education. The remote educational facilities lack essential resources, including learning materials, extracurricular programs, and inadequate teaching tools, as well as poor internet access and poorly run or insufficient infrastructure. These challenges contribute to academic regression in these remote islands compared to the urban facilities.^{xx}
21. Transportation and accessibility on the remote islands remain a challenge, as students must use travel methods that affect their ability to attend school due to long-distance travel, which contributes to dropout rates and higher absenteeism.^{xxi}
22. Access to education in the remote islands has affected many students' ability to receive quality education, leading to higher rates of students not completing secondary education compared to those in islands with better educational opportunities. The lack of higher educational institutions outside the capital of the Maldives leaves students who have completed their education with few options for further studies, due to logistical or financial constraints, as well as a shortage of quality higher educational facilities.^{xxii}
23. The Maldives have made efforts to reduce geographic disparities through the Maldives Education Management System (MEMIS), which monitors educational performance and any gaps that may exist. The system ensures that all students and citizens receive a high-quality education by tracking their progress and offering a management and planning system. With the support of UNICEF, the Maldives aims to ensure that national educational policies are met. However, the development of infrastructure on these remote islands and the logistical restraints involved incur high costs, which limit the full implementation of these programs.^{xxiii}

V. Teacher Shortages and Quality

24. The Maldives has faced challenges due to a shortage of qualified teachers, particularly in rural and remote islands where resources are scarce. In response to these challenges, the Maldives introduced digital learning environments, including virtual classrooms, following COVID-19, an approach adopted by many schools worldwide. The Maldives, along with UNICEF and the Ministry of Education, has developed a forward plan for teacher training in online education, as it contains long-term benefits for the educational system in the Maldives, particularly in rural islands. ^{xxiv}
25. The quality of education on the remote island is a significant concern, as students often lack access to essential subjects or skills, resulting in gaps in their education. The Maldives took the initiative in launching its National Teacher Training Programme, aimed at addressing educator shortages. This initiative aims to encourage students to pursue a career in teaching that will equip them with the necessary skills to educate future students in the Maldives, thereby enhancing education by providing trained teaching personnel. ^{xxv}
26. According to UNICEF, the average pass rate at the lower-secondary level is 20 percent lower in the remote islands than in the capital of the Maldives. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education noted that 40 percent of students in fourth and seventh grades had failed to achieve a pass in their exams. Educators in the Maldives lack the necessary skills to educate students using modern methods, which contributes to the regression of learning abilities among students. The capital of the Maldives continues to receive high application requests due to the resources and skills it offers. In contrast, educators on the remote islands face significant challenges, as teaching personnel often lack the opportunity to provide modernised education due to a lack of adequate learning materials, infrastructure, or knowledge. ^{xxvi}
27. The challenges in the Maldives, primarily due to the lack of trained educators and inadequate infrastructure, position students to face difficulties as the educational system struggles to keep pace with their population growth. Vulnerable persons with disabilities, indigenous people, refugees, and individuals who are placed on the remote islands face continued challenges. ^{xxvii}
28. Due to these challenges, the UN has emphasised the importance of countries adhering to the Sustainable Development Goals, precisely Goal 4, which focuses on quality education. The Maldives has taken a personal initiative to provide inclusive and equitable quality education for all. This encompasses providing teachers with training, inspiring locals to pursue a career in teaching, offering education to those with learning disabilities through programs and policies, and, lastly, ensuring that those on remote islands who suffer from a lack of resources are provided with quality education. ^{xxviii}

VI. Recommendations

29. Broken Chalk advocates for national research on educational disparities resulting from geographic isolation to inform government policies and spending aimed at addressing challenges in remote island communities.
30. Broken Chalk advocates for increased financial and academic support for disadvantaged and remote-based students to promote inclusivity, ensure equal opportunities and reduce dropout rates.
31. Broken Chalk commends the Maldives government's efforts in expanding digital learning platforms but calls for extending access to students in remote islands—broken Chalk

- advocates for investment in technological infrastructure in rural areas to ensure equal and quality education.
32. Broken Chalk acknowledges the tracking of educational progress through the Maldives Education Management Information System (MEMIS) but calls for further analysis on the efficacy of academic programs and policies.
 33. Broken Chalk advises the Maldives government to establish continuous professional development programs specifically for teachers within the remote regions to improve the quality of education.
 34. Broken Chalk further emphasises that policies related to teacher training and educational materials should be coordinated across the islands to avoid disparities and ensure equal education for all.
 35. Broken Chalk recommends incentives for higher teacher salaries, housing benefits and career advancement opportunities to attract and retain high-quality educators in disadvantaged regions.
 36. Broken Chalk promotes further targeted improvements in infrastructure and technological integration, aligning with the Maldives' Strategic Action Plan (SAP) to ensure equal access to educational materials.
 37. Broken Chalk recommends that the Maldives government strengthen financial assistance programs to alleviate financial constraints on families in remote regions, ensuring all children have access to quality education, resources, and opportunities.
 38. Broken Chalk further advises the state to provide additional support in specialised teacher training and resource allocation for students facing disabilities and to facilitate their educational needs.
 39. Broken Chalk stresses the importance of educational policies in meeting and addressing the implementation of initiatives that promote gender equality and access for marginalised communities.
 40. Broken Chalk encourages the further examination and publication of current programs aimed at reducing gender disparities to ensure efficiency and improve access to quality education for women and girls in rural and remote islands.

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