



### A. HOW IS THE COASTAL ZONE DEFINED IN THE COUNTRY?

An agglomeration of 1,192 islands, the coastal zone in Maldives includes the total land area of each island.

### B. HOW IS THE COASTAL ZONE REGULATED?

Though there is no exclusive regulation for governing the coastal zone, given the country's geography and its vulnerability to climate change and natural hazards, regulations involving various development activities in Maldives have coastal components. The issue of coastal management is also addressed by various plans and programmes:

- **National Environment Action Plan:** The National Environment Action Plan (NEAP) was drawn up by the government in 1989 with the objective of integrated environmental management. The plan, effective for every 5-year period, primarily focuses on achieving six strategic results: making the islands resilient to climate change by adopting measures to cope with climate adversities, developing rich ecosystems, maintaining healthy communities, ensuring safe water, building environmental stewardship and working towards a carbon neutral nation. Proposed measures for developing resilience include protecting critical infrastructure from sea level rise and flooding, protecting human settlements by developing coastal protection and flood control measures, developing climate resilient cropping system, strengthening regulatory and institutional capacity for coastal zone management and improving disaster preparedness. The plan also aims to tackle one of the most critical issues concerning the coastal areas which is solid waste management, by developing solid waste management facilities suitable for a particular locality. It also aims to develop a national waste management policy and facilities for wastewater treatment.

- **National Adaptation Program of Action:** The National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA), 2007 is primarily an adaptation policy framework to address the impacts of climate change. The program developed with support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) aims to provide a framework for climate change adaptation that will enhance the resilience of the islands in the face of predicted climate hazards. Priority adaptation measures as identified by the program include building capacity for coastal protection, coastal zone management and flood control; improved planning for coastal infrastructures such as ports, harbors and jetties; developing measures for fresh water availability; protection of critical coastal habitats as corals and integrating climate change adaptation into national disaster management framework.

### C. WHAT IS THE CLEARANCE PROCESS FOR A COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT?

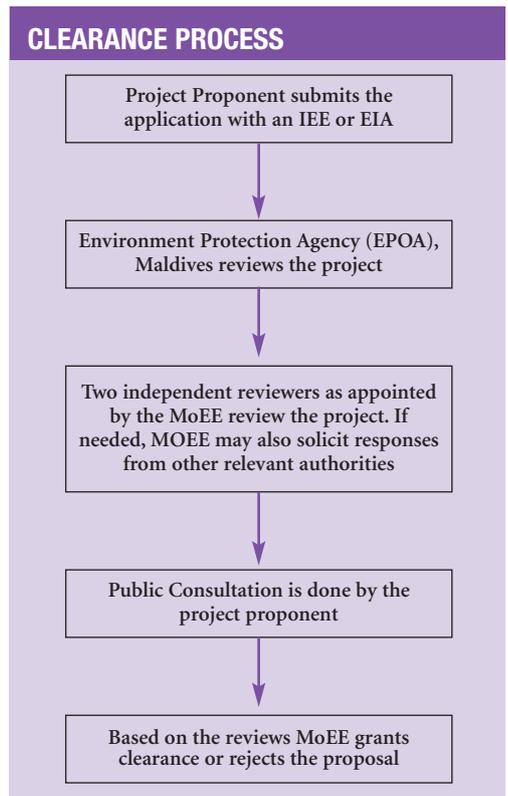
- The process of permitting activities in the coastal area is given under the provisions of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations, 2007. The EIA regulation outlines the procedure to apply for an EIA, approval process by the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MoEE) and finally a decision regarding the approval or denial of a proposed activity. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of the MoEE is responsible for implementing the EIA Regulation.

- Schedule D of the EIA Regulations provides a list of developmental projects that require an EIA and an approval by the EPA. The procedure (*see: Clearance process*) is as follows:

- The project proponent prepares an EIA or an Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) report based on the proposed activity and the same is submitted to the EPA for evaluation. The EIA is evaluated taking into consideration factors that are critical for the sustainability of the island. Evaluating criteria include presence of critical ecosystem as identified by the Ministry, capacity of the island in terms of its size and geography, prospects of having a 20 metre wide

no-development buffer zone, vegetation cover, presence of beaches, marine access, comparative location of the project area with respect to other atolls and islands.

- Upon satisfactory review by the EPA, the report is further verified by at least two independent reviewers as appointed by the MoEE. Depending on the nature of the proposed project, the Ministry also solicits responses from other relevant authorities.
- The EIA is made public to ensure a comprehensive review process. The Regulation also requires the project proponent to undertake a public consultation process.
- Upon completion of the review process, the MoEE issues an Environmental Decision Statement accepting or rejecting the project.
- However, in incidents of any undesirable impact that a project might cause on the environment, the Ministry can terminate the project without providing any compensation to the project proponent.



■ Besides the EIA regulation, tourism projects in Maldives also require an additional permit from the Ministry of Tourism by Maldives Tourism Act (Law no. 2/99). The law outlines provisions for activities related to tourism that can be permitted in the islands. The law determines zones and islands that might be used for the development of tourism/resorts in the Maldives. Allocation of land is typically settled by a bidding process in response to public tender held by the Ministry. Land is leased to the party that submits the best-qualified bid. Development in the leased land can only take place after the land is registered at the Ministry of Tourism and a license is issued by the Ministry to operate the resort.

**D. ISSUES/PROBLEMS WITH COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT IN MALDIVES AND WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE**

- As Maldives is a small island nation, coastal management in Maldives includes environmental and ecological concerns, livelihood issues and economic factors tie in to the matter of coastal management. Though the threats that this coastal nation faces are well recognized, the economic needs often come in the way of addressing them. The following are to be considered for managing the coasts in a sustainable manner:
  - The type of activities permitted in the coastal areas is somewhat loosely outlined. Though what kind of activities require an EIA is mentioned, but further demarcation on what kind of activities can be permitted within a certain distance in the coast needs to be specified.
  - Enhancement of regulatory and monitoring capacity to protect critical coastal habitats such as corals which are threatened by over-use as building materials and other uses.
  - Developing sustainable alternatives to land reclamation for accommodating the increasing population and associated development pressure.