

A Vision to accomplish the President's reform agenda through a new local governance structure in the Maldives

1. While the Maldives is a unitary state, powers will be devolved to island and atoll councils for the delivery of local services under a local governance act.
2. Each inhabited island will have a 100% elected island council. The person who wins the highest number of votes will become the chairperson of the council. He/she will be the political head of the island.
3. Each atoll will have an atoll council. The chairperson of the island council will represent the island in the atoll council. The chairperson of the atoll council will be the Atoll Chief. Under the guidance of the chairperson of the atoll council, a Chief Executive Officer will manage the affairs of the Council.
4. Island council will be responsible for the delivery of island level services. Atoll councils will facilitate, coordinate and monitor activities of island councils. Atoll councils will be responsible for delivery of atoll level services.
5. Some of the local services and responsibilities identified for possible immediate devolution are:
 - a. Construction and maintenance of roads
 - b. Environment and waste management
 - c. Maintenance of harbour
 - d. Establishment and maintenance of electrification, water, sewerage, internal transport and local telephone networks
 - e. Primary health care
 - f. Management of community pre-schools
 - g. Community centers, sports facilities, parks and recreational services
 - h. Sustainable utilization of community land, reefs and lagoons
 - i. Management of Social Protection Service Centers
 - j. Allocation of community and residential land in accordance with approved land use plans
 - k. Maintenance of mosques
 - l. Maintenance of historical sites and cultural centers
 - m. Monitor island and atoll level co-operatives
 - n. Develop and implement island/atoll development plans
 - o. Approve annual budgets of island/atoll councils
 - p. Management of community assets
 - q. Formulate island/atoll level regulations, standards and policies in accordance with national laws, policies and standards

5. Island/Atoll councils will be given powers to levy and collect fees for municipal and other services provided by the council in accordance with national laws and regulations.
6. Under the guidance of the Atoll Chief, each island/atoll council will also be given powers to enter into contracts and associate with private sector and other partners for delivery of service and development such as the establishment of electricity power generation utilities, and water and sewerage facilities.
7. Councils will be provided the following funds and allocations from the national budget:
 - a. Allowances for council members
 - b. Salaries of the council staff and other recurrent and capital costs up to a level agreed with the central authorities (to begin with local councils will be provided with not less than the present recurrent and capital costs of atoll and island offices)
 - c. Development block grants determined in accordance with national criteria (which will take into account population size, land and sea area, vulnerability and poverty level and existing resources)
 - d. Special grants for specific purposes as determined by relevant ministries/authorities
 - e. Up to 40 percent of government income from island/atoll resources
 - f. Up to 60 percent of income from new sources identified and facilitated by the councils
 - g. Fees for municipal services, vehicle and vessel license fees, business license fees, and land rents of community lands
8. Island and atoll development plans will be developed for each island/atoll with community consultations. The incorporation of island/atoll development plans into national development plan should be mandatory under a national law.
9. A national institute for capacity building for local governance will be established. Island/atoll council capacity building will be the responsibility of the institute. This institute will also undertake research related to local governance and will also develop performance appraisal, monitoring and incentive based mechanisms for local councils.

Benefits of the proposed local governance reforms

1. More transparency in the allocation of national resources and therefore increased trust by communities in the Government and its affairs
2. Enhanced equity in the distribution of national resources
3. Strengthen the country's democratic reforms by supporting local democracy
4. Increased trust from the international community for Government's commitment on reforms
5. Empowering the people (via directly elected councils) accelerates pace of development and contributes to the reduction of poverty
6. Government comes closer to the people and therefore will be more accessible and more responsive to the people's needs
7. More efficient and effective provision of services
8. Communities become more active and dynamic in the development of their communities
9. Encourage the spirit of volunteerism
10. NGOs empowered and play a more active role in community development
11. Enhanced opportunity for partnering with private sector for local development
12. Increase in the access to international resources, especially donor assistance for the development communities
13. With the devolution of resources, functions and functionaries, local council members (not national politicians/cabinet) will be accountable to the communities regarding the services and responsibilities devolved.