



# PRESS RELEASE

## **New information materials launched to enhance support for victims and witnesses of crime**

*Malé, 11 August, 2021:* The Prosecutor General's Office (PGO) has launched six new handbooks that provide vital information on support and services available for victims and witnesses of crime. The handbooks cover the services of the Witness and Victim Support Unit (WVSU) of the PGO, as well as general topics such as prosecution processes and juvenile justice.

“Lack of public confidence and trust remains one of the biggest challenges faced by the Criminal Justice System in the Maldives. Reasons for this trust deficit include lack of information about how the system functions. I hope these handbooks will provide the platform to regain public trust and strengthen it. It will help the public to understand the everyday workings of the Criminal Justice System and how it works to provide security and justice for all,” Prosecutor General Uz. Hussein Shameem said, speaking at the launch.

WVSU, originally Victim Support Unit, was established by the PGO with support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Maldives. The Unit provides specialized information, support, and referral service to victims of crime, witnesses for the prosecution, and their immediate families in matters dealt with by the Prosecutor General's Office.

“Victims of crime need information and support as they navigate their way through a difficult and emotional process following their victimization. These handbooks encompass the general overview of the processes in reference to prosecution functions within the Criminal Justice System. We hope that this will assist victims in understating their role and legal rights as well as ensuring a meaningful participation with in the Criminal Justice System,” said Deputy Director General, Witness and Victim Assessment Unit Siyanath Hashim.

As part of the efforts to enhance the quality of the services rendered by WVSU and to increase awareness of the victims and witnesses regarding their role in the criminal trial, the handbooks launched today were developed by PGO in collaboration with UNDP, with the support of the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

Australian High Commissioner to Maldives, David Holly, said “Access to justice, including support for victims and witnesses, is at the foundation of a strong legal and democratic system. Australia is very pleased to support the PGO and UNDP to ensure vital information on the justice system is available to all Maldivians.”

The six handbooks developed are:

- Book 1: Role of Witness
- Book 2: Dealing with Abuse and Trauma
- Book 3: Expert Witness
- Book 4: Guide to public on prosecution process and redresses available.
- Book 5: Juvenile Justice
- Book 6: Alternative to Prosecution and Plea Bargain System

It is envisioned that the handbooks will help contribute towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through the attainment of the following objectives:

1. Enhance the quality and the effectiveness of the services rendered by WVSU of the Prosecutor General’s Office to the victims and witnesses of crime, including professional/expert witnesses.
2. Enhance the experience of the victims and witnesses of the crimes in their contact with the criminal justice system by keeping them well informed of the processes involved.
3. Strengthen the child-centered decision making in cases involving child offenders by making intelligible the expectation and the role of the child and the guardian in the prosecution stage.
4. Create public awareness on important topics such as juvenile justice, role of the witnesses, alternatives to prosecution and the route to enter into a plea agreement.
5. Enhance overall access to justice through raised awareness, particularly regarding the redresses available for victims within the justice system.

“The principles of the rule of law – equality, equity, inclusion, rights, laws and institutions – are embedded throughout the 2030 Agenda. This initiative contributes specifically towards Sustainable Development Goal 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. In keeping with the commitment to Leave No One Behind, UNDP Maldives looks forward to continuing our support to the initiative to ensure that such significant information is accessible to all,” said UNDP Resident Representative ad interim, Vera Hakim.

Following the official launch, the handbooks are planned to be disseminated via all PGO branches nationwide, as well as during awareness programs, meetings and trainings conducted by the WVSU and PGO staff, including sessions on witness preparations and sessions for parents of juvenile offenders in Malé and in the Atolls. A digital copy of all handbooks will also be available on PGO website and other relevant platforms.

Download the handbooks at: [link](#)

Being a witness: <http://www.pgoffice.gov.mv/pdf-preview-dhv?download=32>

Dealing with abuse and trauma: <http://www.pgoffice.gov.mv/pdf-preview-dhv?download=33>  
Expert Evidence: <http://www.pgoffice.gov.mv/pdf-preview-dhv?download=34>  
Juvenile Justice: <http://www.pgoffice.gov.mv/pdf-preview-dhv?download=35>  
Witness and Victim Support: <http://www.pgoffice.gov.mv/pdf-preview-dhv?download=36>  
Plea Bargain: <http://www.pgoffice.gov.mv/pdf-preview-dhv?download=37>

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