SIPCA

Scaling Impact of a Play-Based Child-to-Child Approach to Make Pre-School to Primary School Transition Fun and Inclusive

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SCALING IMPACT OF A PLAY-BASED CHILD-TO-CHILD APPROACH TO MAKE PRE-SCHOOL TO PRIMARY SCHOOL TRANSITION FUN AND INCLUSIVE

ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF MALDIVES

THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO

SIPCA

Scaling Impact of a Play-Based Child-to-Child Approach to Make Pre-School to Primary School Transition Fun and Inclusive

SIPCA Play-Based Child-to-Child Implementation Project Overview Report

November 2026

Islamic University of Maldives

SIPCA Research Team, Maldives

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Version 1.0, 2025

Islamic University of Maldives
King Fahd Building, Violet Magu
Male', 20037, Republic of Maldives
www.ium.edu.mv

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange, a joint endeavour with the International Development Research Centre, Canada.

The educational resources, training manuals, assessment packs, and pedagogical materials produced for this project were developed with the expert guidance and support of CHILD TO CHILD (childtochild.org.uk).

Disclaimer

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of IDRC or its Board of Governors.

Islamic University of Maldives
King Fahd Building, Violet Magu Male', 20037
Republic of Maldives
info@ium.edu.mv
www.sipca.ium.edu.mv

Contents

Executive Summary 5
1. Introduction 5
2. Project Institutions, Leadership and Stakeholders 6
2.1 Consortium and funding partners 6
2.2 Key project personnel 6
2.3 Government and education-sector stakeholders 6
3. Participating Schools and Direct Implementation Figures 6
4. Major Programmes and Events 7
4.1 Project launch 7
4.2 Curriculum Analysis Workshop 7
4.3 Tool Development and Validation Workshop 8
4.4 International Online Teacher Training Programme 8
4.5 International Exposure Visit – Islamabad, Pakistan 9
4.6 Curriculum Mapping and Material Adaptation Workshop 9
4.7 Baseline Research and Assessment 10
4.8 School-based Child-to-Child implementation 11
4.9 SIPCA Maldives Uptake Forum 1 11
4.10 School visit – Muhyiddin School 12
4.11 Mid-term monitoring visits 12
4.12 Post Data Collection 13
4.13 Child-to-Child briefing session 13
4.14 Research communication meeting with the Ministry of Education 13
4.15 Sharing intervention results with participating schools 14
4.16 SIPCA Maldives Uptake Forum 2 15
5. Overall finding from the Play-Based Child-to-Child implementation 15
5.1 Quantitative Findings 15
5.2 Qualitative & Behavioral Findings 18
6. Policy and Practice Implications 18
7. Resources Developed Through the Project 18
8. Our Acknowledgement and Appreciation 21
9. Conclusion 23
Statement of Copyright & Usage Disclaimer 24

Implementing institution: Islamic University of Maldives (IUM)

Consortium partners: Aga Khan University, Pakistan; University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Funding: Global Partnership for Education – Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE-KIX), supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

Reporting period: 2024–2026

Submitted to: Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Skills Development, Republic of Maldives

Executive Summary

The Scaling Impact of a Play-Based Child-to-Child Approach to Make Pre-School to Primary School Transition Fun and Inclusive (SIPCA) project was implemented in the Maldives by the Islamic University of Maldives (IUM), in partnership with Aga Khan University (AKU), Pakistan, and the University of Colombo (UoC), Sri Lanka. The project was supported through GPE-KIX and IDRC.

The project piloted a Play-Based Child-to-Child (PBCtC) approach in ten schools. Grade 5 students served as Young Facilitators (YFs), supporting Upper Kindergarten (UKG) children, known as Young Learners (YLs), through structured play-based learning activities. The intervention focused on English and Dhivehi literacy, numeracy and social-emotional skills, while creating opportunities for older children to develop leadership, empathy, confidence and communication.

The school implementation involved 28 teachers, 88 Young Facilitators and 309 Young Learners, representing 425 direct participants. Activities also engaged school leaders, parents, government officials, teacher educators, international researchers and education-sector stakeholders.

This report summarises the project institutions and personnel, participating schools and beneficiary numbers, major programmes and events, stakeholder participation, educational resources and key outcomes. Where an online report did not publish an attendance list or exact number, this report identifies that limitation rather than estimating.

1. Introduction

SIPCA aimed to improve children's school readiness and facilitate a smooth, inclusive and enjoyable transition from pre-school to primary education through a Play-Based Child-to-Child approach. The model enables older students (Young Facilitators) to support younger children (Young Learners) through structured, interactive and age-appropriate activities.

In the Maldives, Grade 5 students were engaged as Young Facilitators to facilitate learning activities for Upper Kindergarten children. The approach emphasised foundational literacy and numeracy, Dhivehi language, social-emotional learning, peer support and inclusive participation.

2. Project Institutions, Leadership and Stakeholders

2.1 Consortium and funding partners

Institution / organisation	Country	Role
Islamic University of Maldives (IUM)	Maldives	Lead and hosting institution; research, coordination, implementation and dissemination.
Aga Khan University (AKU)	Pakistan	International research consortium partner.
University of Colombo (UoC)	Sri Lanka	International research consortium partner.
Global Partnership for Education – KIX (GPE-KIX)	International	Project funding and knowledge exchange support.
International Development Research Centre (IDRC)	Canada	Research funding and support.

2.2 Key project personnel

Name	Role / responsibility	Institution
Dr. Mariyam Shareefa	Principal Investigator / Project Lead	Islamic University of Maldives
Dr. Visal Moosa	Project Coordinator	Islamic University of Maldives
Dr. Nasima Shakeel	Consortium team member / Co-investigator	Aga Khan University, Pakistan
Abdul Wali Khan	Consortium team member / Co-investigator	Aga Khan University, Pakistan
Tiromi Wijanthi Vilasitha Indigahawala	Consortium team member	University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

2.3 Government and education-sector stakeholders

- Ministry of Education (MoE), including curriculum and policy officials.
- National Institute of Education (NIE).
- Department of Inclusive Education (DoIE).
- Education development officers and curriculum specialists.
- School principals, deputy principals, school coordinators and implementing teachers.
- Parents of Young Facilitators and Young Learners.

3. Participating Schools and Direct Implementation Figures

The intervention was implemented in ten schools across different geographical locations in the Maldives. The following table presents details about the school-level numbers who participated in the intervention.

No.	School	Island / location	Teachers	YFs	YLs
1	Muhyiddin School	Vilimalé, K. Atoll	4	15	57
2	Ghaazee Bandarain School	Utheemu, HA. Atoll	2	3	11
3	Mohamed Jamaaludheen School	Fuvahmulah	3	11	40
4	Hafiz Ahmed School	Fuvahmulah	3	6	21
5	Sharafuddin School	Hithadhoo, Addu City	3	10	35
6	ADh. Atoll School	Maamigili, ADh. Atoll	3	10	30
7	Nolhivaram School	Nolhivaram, HDh. Atoll	3	9	38
8	Afeefuddin School	Kulhudhuffushi, HDh. Atoll	3	17	62
9	Muraidhoo School	Muraidhoo, HDh. Atoll	2	3	7
10	Fuvahmulaku School	Fuvahmulah	2	4	8
	TOTAL	10 schools	28	88	309

Direct implementation participation comprised 28 teachers, 88 Grade 5 Young Facilitators and 309 UKG Young Learners.

4. Major Programmes and Events

4.1 Project launch

Date: 23 October 2024

Venue: Islamic University Maldives

The launch marked the commencement of the SIPCA project in the Maldives. The project involved IUM, AKU and UoC, with support from GPE-KIX and IDRC.

Minister of State for Education and other officials attended the launching ceremony.

4.2 Curriculum Analysis Workshop

Date: 13 November 2024

Number of Participants: 17

Facilitator: Dr. Aishath Shina

The workshop brought together representatives from MoE, NIE, DoIE, schools and IUM to identify curriculum gaps and misalignments between pre-school and early primary education. Details of the participants are presented in the following table.

Name	Institution / department	Designation
Majidha Ibrahim	MoE	Policy / education development professional
Aminath Maria	MoE	Deputy Minister
Shiyama Aboobakuru	NIE	Senior Curriculum Development Analyst
Nuzuhath Waheed	NIE	Curriculum Development Analyst
Aminath Nizna	SA	Education Development Professional
Zeena Abdul Gafoor	SA	Education Development Professional
Adhila Rushdhee	DoIE	Senior Inclusive Education Analyst
Haleemath Hussain	DoIE	Senior Inclusive Education Analyst
Shimla Ismail	Galolhu School	Leading Teacher
Fathimath Ushama	Maafannu Madharusa	Leading Teacher
Fathimath Saeed	Falaah	Leading Teacher
Fathimath Nabeela	Imaadhuddin School	Grade 1 Teacher
Aminath Meherbaan	Ghazee School	Leading Teacher
Aishath Raufiyya	Rehendhi School	Leading Teacher
Visama Hassan	IUM Teacher Trainers	Senior Lecturer
Khaulath Saeed	IUM Teacher Trainers	Senior Lecturer
Hameeza Afeef	IUM Teacher Trainers	Senior Lecturer

4.3 Tool Development and Validation Workshop

Date: 14 November 2024

Venue: IUM

Participants: 17

Facilitator: Dr. Aminath Shafiya Adam

The workshop focused on developing and validating research instruments for literacy, numeracy and social-emotional skills, as well as reviewing teacher, parent and Young Facilitator instruments. Details of the participants are presented in the following table.

Name	Institution / department	Designation
Majidha Ibrahim	MoE	Policy / education development professional
Aminath Maria	MoE	Deputy Minister
Shiyama Aboobakuru	NIE	Senior Curriculum Development Analyst
Nuzuhath Waheed	NIE	Curriculum Development Analyst
Aminath Nizna	SA	Education Development Professional
Zeena Abdul Gafoor	SA	Education Development Professional
Adhila Rushdhee	DoIE	Senior Inclusive Education Analyst
Haleemath Hussain	DoIE	Senior Inclusive Education Analyst
Shimla Ismail	Galolhu School	Leading Teacher
Fathimath Ushama	Maafannu Madharusa	Leading Teacher
Fathimath Saeed	Falaah	Leading Teacher
Fathimath Nabeela	Imaadhuddin School	Grade 1 Teacher
Aminath Meherbaan	Ghazee School	Leading Teacher
Aishath Raufiyya	Rehendhi School	Leading Teacher
Visama Hassan	IUM Teacher Trainers	Senior Lecturer
Khaulath Saeed	IUM Teacher Trainers	Senior Lecturer
Hameeza Afeef	IUM Teacher Trainers	Senior Lecturer

4.4 International Online Teacher Training Programme

Briefing: 11 January 2025

Training sessions: 16 January, 23 January, 30 January and 6 February 2025

Mode of Training: Online

Participants: approximately 90 across Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Facilitator	Organisation
Susan Durston	Child-to-Child
Chie Takahashi	Child-to-Child
Helen Walker	Child-to-Child
Celine Woznika	Child-to-Child
Sameen Kamran	Cities for Children, Pakistan
Madeeha Ansari	Cities for Children, Pakistan

Participants included pre-school and primary teachers, teacher educators, research team members and education stakeholders from IUM, AKU, UoC, Cities for Children and participating schools in the three countries. Training addressed play-based learning, Child-to-Child principles, Young Facilitator preparation, classroom facilitation, inclusion and parent engagement.

4.5 International Exposure Visit – Islamabad, Pakistan

Dates: 16–22 February 2025

Location: Islamabad, Pakistan

Total participants: 51 (17 from each participating country).

The visit included school observations and practical learning activities across 16 schools.

Details of the Maldives delegation are presented in the following table.

No.	Name	Institution
1	Dr. Mariyam Shareefa	IUM
2	Dr. Visal Moosa	IUM
3	Dr. Aminath Shafiya Adam	IUM
4	Dr. Aishath Shina	IUM
5	Shafeenaz Nasir	IUM
6	Aishath Shifa	MoE / NIE
7	Haleemath Hussain	MoE / DoIE
8	Aishath Dheema	Muhyiddin School
9	Azma Abdul Samad	Ghaazee Bandarain School
10	Mariyam Abdulla	Hafiz Ahmed School
11	Ikram Saeed	Mohamed Jamaaludheen School
12	Zulaikha Ali	Sharafuddin School
13	Shuhaila Mahmood	ADh. Atoll School
14	Aishath Rasheedha	Nolhivaram School
15	Mariyam Hassan	Afeefuddin School
16	Aminath Saila	Muraidhoo School
17	Aishath Waheedha	Fuvahmulaku School

4.6 Curriculum Mapping and Material Adaptation Workshop

Date: 22–23 February 2025

Venue: IUM

Participants: 21

Details of the participants are presented in the following table.

Name	Institution
Dr. Mariyam Shareefa	IUM
Dr. Visal Moosa	IUM
Dr. Aminath Shafiya Adam	IUM
Dr. Aishath Shina	IUM
Shafeenaz Nasir	IUM
Aishath Shifa	MoE / NIE
Haleemath Hussain	MoE / DoIE
Adhila Rushdhee	MoE / SA
Aishath Dheema	Muhyiddin School
Azma Abdul Samad	Ghaazee Bandarain School
Mariyam Abdulla	Hafiz Ahmed School
Ikram Saeed	Mohamed Jamaaludheen School
Zulaikha Ali	Sharafuddin School
Shuhaila Mahmood	ADh. Atoll School
Aishath Rasheedha	Nolhivaram School
Mariyam Hassan	Afeefuddin School
Aminath Saila	Muraidhoo School
Aishath Waheedha	Fuvahmulaku School
Nuzuhath Mohamed	Nolhivaram School
Asma Mohamed	Nolhivaram School
Maushath Abdulla	Nolhivaram School

Facilitators: Dr. Aminath Shafiya Adam and Dr. Aishath Shina, IUM.

Participants reviewed the Young Facilitator Guide, mapped lessons against the Maldives National Curriculum and adapted stories, songs, games and activities to the local context.

4.7 Baseline Research and Assessment

Period: January–February 2025

Location: Ten participating schools.

Details of the schools are presented in the following table.

Participant group	Number	Method / purpose
Teachers	29	Surveys and interviews
Young Facilitators	88	Surveys
Young Learners	154	Baseline literacy and numeracy assessments
Parents	25	Interviews

The baseline established initial levels of literacy, numeracy and social-emotional development and gathered information on teacher knowledge and parental perceptions.

4.8 School-based Child-to-Child implementation

Period: 30 April–November 2025

Duration: 25 weeks

Schools: 10.

The core intervention engaged 28 teachers, 88 Grade 5 Young Facilitators and 309 UKG Young Learners. Weekly play-based sessions addressed English and Dhivehi literacy, numeracy, social-emotional skills, communication, collaboration, creativity and problem-solving. Teachers supported and guided Young Facilitators, while parents and school management contributed to implementation.

4.9 SIPCA Maldives Uptake Forum 1

Date: 12 July 2025

Venue: IUM, Malé

Participants: 58.

Details of the participants are presented in the following tables.

Government and education-sector representatives

Name	Designation / institution
Dr. Fathimath Nishan	State Minister, Ministry of Education; Chief Guest
Aminath Maria	Deputy Minister
Majida Ibrahim	Education Development Professional, MoE
Shiyama Aboobakuru	Senior Curriculum Development Analyst
Thohira Abdulla	Senior Curriculum Development Analyst
Nuzuhath Waheed	Education-sector representative
Adhila Rushdhee	Senior Inclusive Education Analyst
Haleemath Hussain	Senior Inclusive Education Analyst

IUM and SIPCA team

Name	Role
Dr. Mariyam Shareefa	Principal Investigator
Dr. Visal Moosa	Project Coordinator
Dr. Aminath Shafiya Adam	Technical Consultant
Dr. Aishath Shina	Technical Consultant
Shafeenaz Nasir	Research Assistant / Master of Ceremonies
Dr. Khaulath Saeed	Moderator
Uza Samiya Zakariyya	Moderator
Uz Mohamed Shaheen	Moderator
Visama Hassan	Senior Lecturer
Fareeda Mohamed	Senior Lecturer

International consortium representatives

Name	Institution
Dr. Nasima Shakeel	Aga Khan University, Pakistan
Abdul Wali Khan	Aga Khan University, Pakistan
Tiromi Wijanthi Vilasitha Indigahawala	University of Colombo, Sri Lanka
Padmini Sriyalatha Ranaweera	University of Colombo / Sri Lankan education-sector partner

School teacher presenters

School	Teacher presenters
Muhyiddin School	Aishath Dheema; Fathimath Jeeza and Principal
Sharafuddin School	Aminath Azra; Mariyam Rishana and Principal
Afeefuddin School	Mariyam Hassan; Nareema Abdul Rahman and Principal
Mohamed Jamaaludheen School	Ikram Saeed; Fathimath Naffa and Principal
Hafiz Ahmed School	Mariyam Abdulla; Nuzuhath Mohamed and Principal
Fuvahmulaku School	Aishath Waheeda; Aminath Rashad and Principal
ADh. Atoll School	Shuhaila Mahmood; Aishath Mohamed and Principal
Nolhivaram School	Asma Mohamed; Maushath Abdulla and Principal
Ghaazee Bandarain School	Azma Abdul Samad; Aishath Shauna and Principal
Muraidhoo School	Aminath Saila; Fathuhiyya Ali and Principal

Other school representatives included Mohamed Shujau Abdul Raheem (Arabiyya School) and Aminath Meherbaan (Ghaazee School), alongside other Malé school management representatives and Maldives KIX Committee members participated in the forum. The forum included presentation of baseline findings, school experience-sharing, an international panel, discussion and certificate awarding.

4.10 School visit – Muhyiddin School

Date: 13 July 2025

Venue: Muhyiddin School, Vilimalé.

Participants included the IUM SIPCA research team, consortium representatives from AKU and UoC, school management, implementing teachers, Young Facilitators and Young Learners. The visit included classroom observation and discussions about school-level implementation. The team observed ongoing session of CtC implementation where YF facilitates the YL session with various activities.

4.11 Mid-term monitoring visits

Dates: 12 August–3 September 2025

Coverage: all 10 participating schools.

Details of the school visits are presented in the following table.

Date	School	Location
12 August 2025	ADh. Atoll School	Maamigili
13 August 2025	Muhyiddin School	Vilimalé
27 August 2025	Afeefuddin School	Kulhudhuffushi
27 August 2025	Ghaazee Bandarain School	Utheemu
28 August 2025	Muraidhoo School	Muraidhoo
28 August 2025	Nolhivaram School	Nolhivaram
2 September 2025	Sharafuddin School	Hithadhoo
3 September 2025	Hafiz Ahmed School	Fuvahmulah
3 September 2025	Mohamed Jamaaludheen School	Fuvahmulah
3 September 2025	Fuvahmulaku School	Fuvahmulah

The IUM research team engaged school principals, deputy principals, teachers, Young Facilitators, Young Learners and parents during their visit. Monitoring activities included classroom observation, interviews, feedback collection and review of implementation progress.

4.12 Post Data Collection

Following the completion of the school-level play-based interventions, the SIPCA project conducted its post-intervention data collection phase during the last two weeks of November 2025 across participating pilot schools. This phase evaluated the impact of the Child-to-Child model on both Upper Kindergarten YLs and Grade 5 YFs, gathering evidence to measure changes against baseline metrics. The quantitative field evaluation measured growth in early learning competencies among Young Learners and tracked social and emotional indicators for Young Facilitators. Qualitative data collection captured context-specific experiences, operational challenges, perceived growth, and structural feedback from key stakeholders involved in delivery.

4.13 Child-to-Child briefing session

Date: 1 December 2025

Mode: Online

Attendance and names: SIPCA research team members from Maldives and participating teachers from all the 10 schools

Participants presented the progress of CtC implementation, their thoughts, their findings and the challenges they experienced. CtC team from UK were eager to hear the teachers' voice and suggested ways to overcome the challenges and how to adjust to different situations.

4.14 Research communication meeting with the Ministry of Education

Date: 17 February 2026

Venue: Ministry of Education, Malé

Participants: 12.

Details of the participated members are in the following table.

Name	Designation	Institution
Dr. Ahmed Mohamed	Minister of State for Education; Chair	MoE
Dr. Abdul Latheef Mohamed	Minister of State for Education	MoE
Dr. Aishath Wadheefa	Minister of State for Education	DoIE / MoE
Dr. Fathimath Nishan	Deputy Minister	MoE
Shuhudha Rizwan	Senior Curriculum Development Analyst	MoE
Shiyama AbooBakuru	Senior Curriculum Development Analyst	NIE
Mariyam Nasha Hashim	Senior Administrative Officer	MoE
Dr. Mariyam Shareefa	Principal Investigator	IUM
Dr. Visal Moosa	Project Coordinator	IUM
Dr. Aminath Shafiya Adam	Technical Consultant	IUM
Dr. Aishath Shina	Technical Consultant	IUM
Shafeenaz Nasir	Research Assistant	IUM

The IUM team presented quantitative and qualitative findings, including changes in literacy, numeracy and social-emotional competencies, Young Facilitator development and inclusive education experiences. The meeting also considered future adoption and scaling.

4.15 Sharing intervention results with participating schools

Date: 9 April 2026

Venue: Online.

The meeting involved five IUM research team members and representatives from 10 schools.

Name	Institution	Designation
Dr. Mariyam Shareefa	IUM	Project Lead
Dr. Visal Moosa	IUM	Project Coordinator
Dr. Aminath Shafiya Adam	IUM	Technical Consultant
Dr. Aishath Shina	IUM	Technical Consultant
Shafeenaz Nasir	IUM	Research Assistant
Abdulla Inaayath	Ghaazee Bandarain School	Principal
Aishath Fazna	Muraidhoo School	Principal
Adnan Ali	Afeefuddin School	Principal
Fazeela Abdul Gafoor	Nolhivaram School	Principal
Aminath Naaz	ADh. Atoll School	Deputy Principal
Nazima Ali Manik	Muhyiddin School	Principal
Ahmed Mihad	Sharafuddin School	Principal
Zulaikha Ali	Sharafuddin School	Leading Teacher
Arifa Abdul Majeed	Mohamed Jamaaludheen School	Principal
Nizna	Hafiz Ahmed School	Leading Teacher
Mohamed Fayaz	Fuvahmulaku School	Principal

The meeting shared curriculum analysis, tool development, quantitative and qualitative intervention findings, and discussed sustainability and potential expansion to additional grades.

4.16 SIPCA Maldives Uptake Forum 2

Date: 24 September 2026

Venue: IUM Hall, Islamic University of Maldives, Malé.

Stakeholder institutions included IUM, the Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Skills Development, NIE, DoIE, Aga Khan University, University of Colombo and representatives of the ten SIPCA schools.

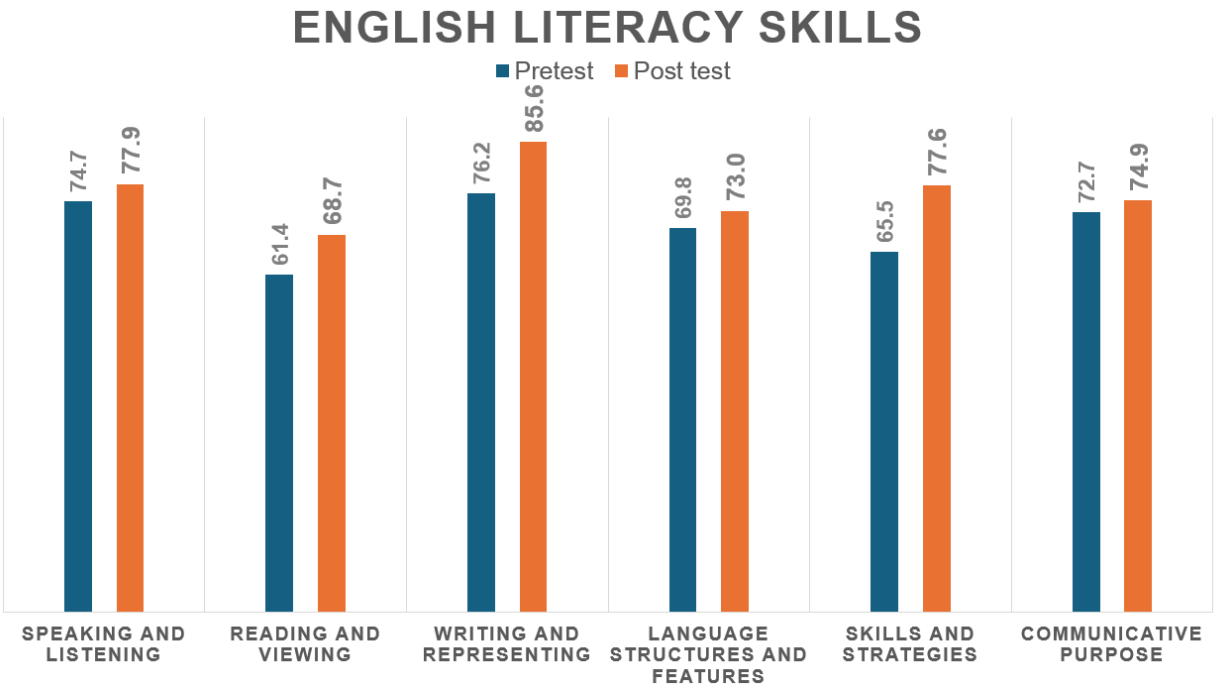
The forum included presentation of the implementation journey and findings, formal handover of the SIPCA Material Package to the Ministry, recognition of participating schools and teachers, acknowledgement of institutional partners, an exhibition of Young Facilitators' reflective journals and a photographic display of the project timeline.

The material package handed over comprised the Young Facilitators Guide, Young Learners Activity Pack, School Guide, Teachers Manual and Young Learners Assessment Pack.

5. Overall finding from the implementation

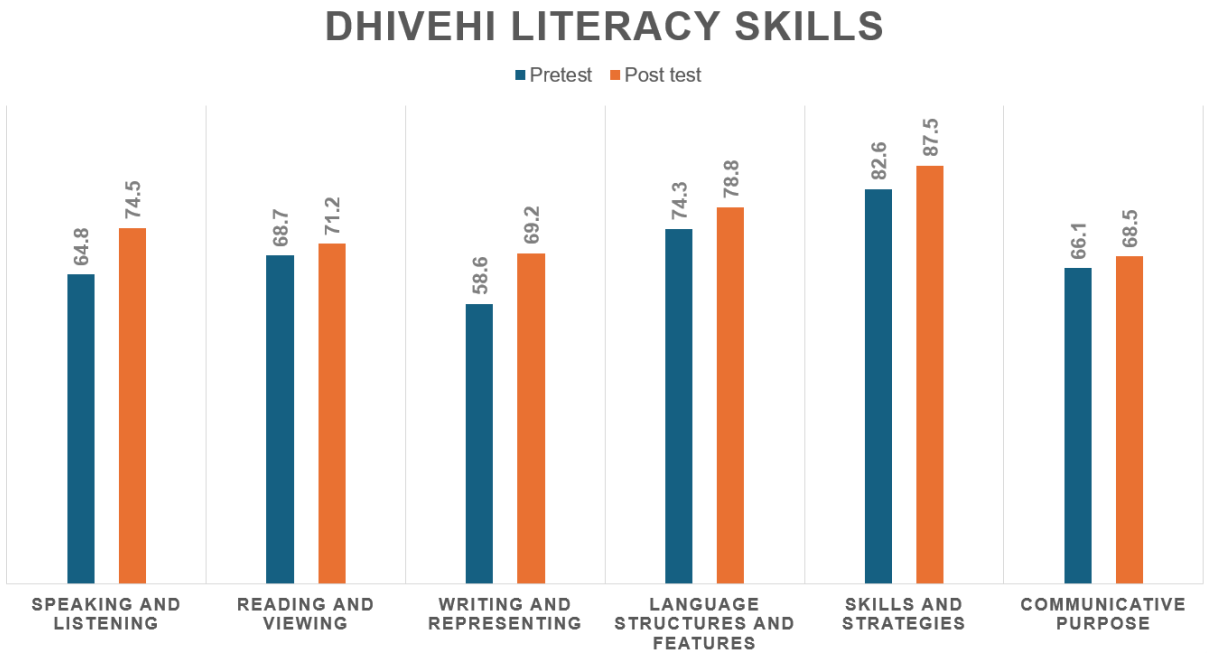
5.1 Quantitative Findings

The quantitative pre-test and post-test survey results ($N = 301$) across key developmental domains showed marked growth in learning and socio-emotional competencies:

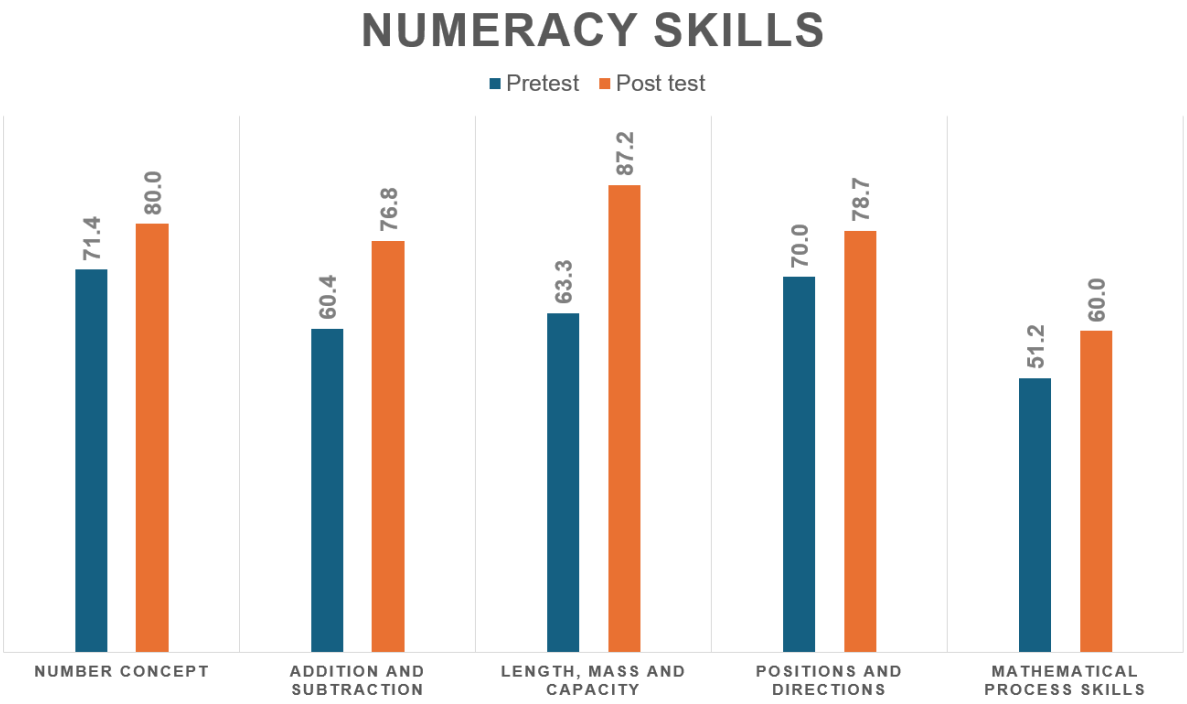


The evaluation of **English Literacy Skills** demonstrates clear pre-test to post-test growth across all six measured sub-domains. **Skills and Strategies** registered the largest increase, jumping by 12.1 points from 65.5 to 77.6. **Writing and Representing** achieved the highest overall score, advancing from 76.2 to 85.6. **Reading and Viewing** improved from 61.4 to 68.7, while **Speaking and Listening** progressed from 74.7 to 77.9. Additionally, moderate gains were

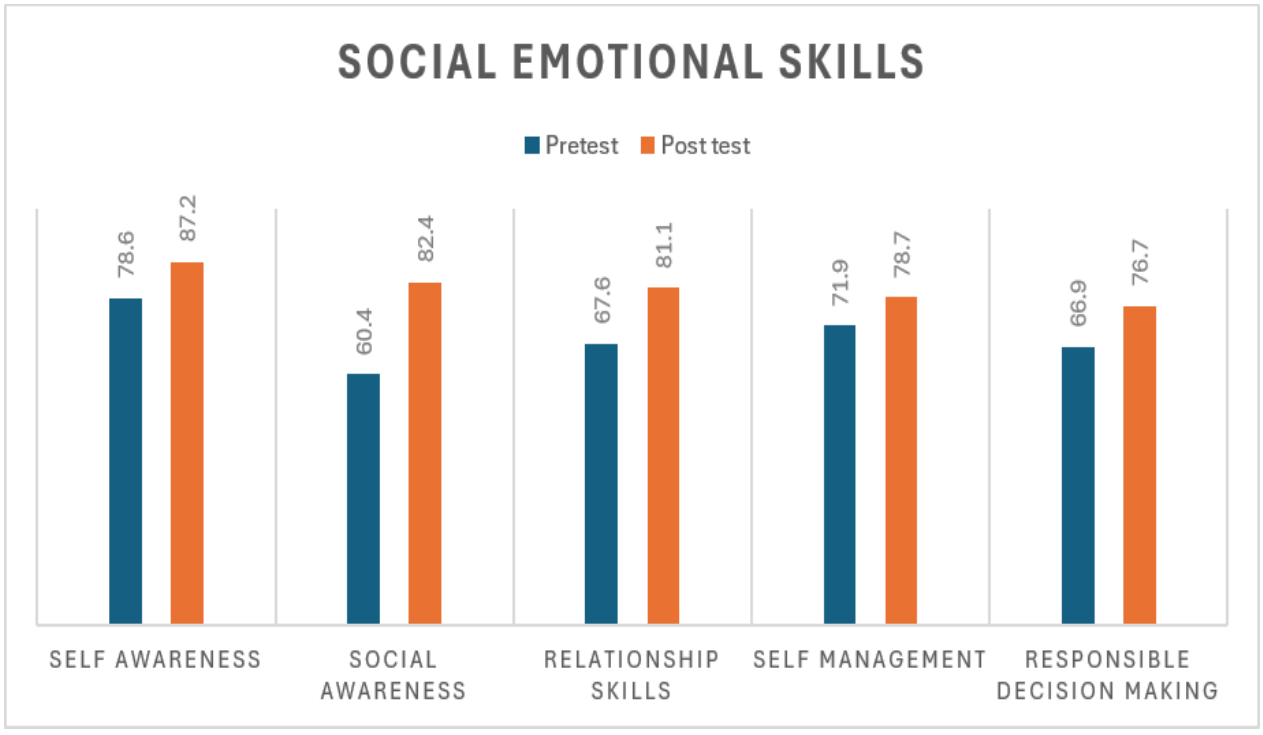
recorded in **Communicative Purpose** (72.7 to 74.9) and **Language Structures and Features** (69.8 to 73.0), highlighting comprehensive progress in English language development.



The pre-test and post-test data for **Dhivehi Literacy Skills** demonstrates baseline growth across all six assessed competencies. The most pronounced improvements were observed in **Writing and Representing**, which climbed from 58.6 to 69.2, and **Speaking and Listening**, which increased from 64.8 to 74.5. **Skills and Strategies** maintained the highest overall performance, rising from 82.6 to 87.5. Moderate gains were also achieved in **Language Structures and Features** (74.3 to 78.8), **Communicative Purpose** (66.1 to 68.5), and **Reading and Viewing** (68.7 to 71.2), reflecting steady development in Dhivehi language proficiency.



The pre-test and post-test survey data for **Numeracy Skills** shows consistent improvements across all five evaluated sub-domains. The largest overall gain was recorded in **Length, Mass and Capacity**, which jumped significantly by 23.9 points, from 63.3 to 87.2. **Addition and Subtraction** also saw substantial progress, increasing from 60.4 to 76.8. **Number Concept** rose from 71.4 to 80.0, while **Positions and Directions** expanded from 70.0 to 78.7. Finally, **Mathematical Process Skills** improved from 51.2 to 60.0, highlighting overall foundational growth in mathematical understanding following the intervention.



The evaluation of Social Emotional Skills shows positive growth across all five sub-domains from pre-test to post-test. **Social Awareness** experienced the highest gain, increasing significantly by 22.0 points from 60.4 to 82.4. **Relationship Skills** also saw notable improvement, moving from 67.6 to 81.1. **Self Awareness** advanced from 78.6 to 87.2, reaching the highest overall post-test score. Additionally, Responsible Decision Making rose from 66.9 to 76.7, while **Self Management** grew from 71.9 to 78.7, demonstrating well-rounded social and emotional development overall.

5.2 Qualitative & Behavioral Findings

The qualitative data collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and artifact logs highlighted multi-dimensional impacts across the school community:

- **Dual Transformation & Peer Relationships:** The peer-led setup dissolved traditional classroom anxiety and fear of making mistakes. Sibling-like bonds developed naturally, with Young Learners referring to older peers as "SIPCA Brother" or "SIPCA Sister," which provided an atmosphere of emotional safety, active listening, and mutual encouragement.
- **Impact on Young Facilitators:** Older students developed enhanced empathy, self-awareness, patience, and leadership skills. Mentoring younger peers required them to revisit concepts and subject-specific vocabulary, boosting their own language fluency and academic understanding while instilling a strong sense of prosocial responsibility and child protection.
- **Redefining the Teacher's Role:** By shifting direct small-group management to the Young Facilitators, preschool teachers transitioned from continuous transactional instruction to analytical observation, co-planning, and dynamic scaffolding. This structural shift gave teachers the bandwidth for in-the-moment diagnostic reflection on individual learning trajectories.
- **Home-School Connection & School Climate:** Positive experiences spilled over into home environments, with parents reporting that children eagerly retold stories and habits learned during sessions. The overall model fostered higher school attendance, joy, and a protective, family-like school culture that naturally mitigates bullying and supports inclusive learning, including connection with special needs students.

6. Policy and Practice Implications

The 25-week intervention (totaling only 25 hours of direct activity) demonstrates that peer-led learning is a highly scalable, high-impact framework. Key actionable recommendations emphasize formalizing Child-to-Child approaches in whole-school transition policies, restructuring teacher training to support mentoring and diagnostic observational roles, and leveraging peer connections to enhance school safety and emotional readiness.

7. Resources Developed Through the Project

Under the SIPCA project, five comprehensive resource packs were developed to support effective implementation across participating schools: the SIPCA School Guide, Teachers' Training Manual, Young Learners Assessment Pack, Young Facilitator Guide, and Young Learner Booklet.

Below is an overview of each component within the resource pack.

7.1 SIPCA School Guide

The SIPCA School Guide is a practical operational manual designed to implement a play-based, child-to-child educational model across primary and pre-primary schools in the Maldives. Developed under the SIPCA initiative, the guide addresses early childhood transition challenges by pairing older students with incoming early learners.

Here is a structured breakdown of the guide's core operational frameworks

a. Stakeholder Alignment & Teacher Empowerment

- **Teacher Training:** Equips pre-school teachers, primary educators, and school leaders with skills to mentor older peer facilitators in lesson planning and creative pedagogies.
- **Internal Alignment:** Establishes cross-grade coordination meetings between administrative heads and teachers to maintain academic standards.
- **Parental Engagement & Digital Channels:** Facilitates physical orientation sessions for parents of both facilitator and learner cohorts, backed by dedicated digital communication groups (such as Viber) for ongoing updates.

b. Inclusive Facilitator Selection (Grade 5 YFs)

- **Learner Ratio:** Maintains a 5:1 ratio of Young Learners (YLs, Upper Kindergarten) to Young Facilitators (YFs, Grade 5).
- **Non-Merit Recruitment:** Selects YFs based on academic diversity and strict gender balance rather than academic performance alone.
- **Socio-Emotional Growth Target:** Intentionally recruits students who lack confidence or need leadership opportunities, using the program to foster personal empathy and self-esteem.

c. Preparation & Co-Design

- **Weekly Collaborative Planning:** Pre-school teachers and YFs meet weekly to walk through upcoming lesson plans and co-create learning aids.
- **Student-Led Adaptations:** Grants YFs creative autonomy to modify play-based activities, tailoring narrative and interactive elements to be authentic and relatable to early learners.
- **Pre-Session Checks:** Instructors review teaching aids and offer constructive encouragement prior to classroom entry.

d. Play-Based Pedagogical Delivery

- **Interactive Strategies:** Integrates storytelling, role-playing, singing rhymes (for numbers, body parts, and phonics), and hands-on tactile crafts.
- **Outdoor & Experiential Learning:** Moves activities outside the traditional classroom to teach real-world skills, such as identifying geometric shapes in nature or navigating basic traffic safety rules.

Flexible Scheduling Models

To ensure implementation without compromising core academic instructional hours, the guide establishes four adaptable operational models:

Model	Name	Operational Strategy	Primary Advantage
Model 1	**Synchronous**	Integrated into overlapping school hours; YFs leave class for 1 hour while teachers cover makeup content.	High integration into daily school workflow.
Model 2	**Inter-Session**	Scheduled directly between shift changes (after YFs finish, right before YLs start).	Zero impact on standard instructional hours; ideal for dual-shift schools.
Model 3	**Post-Session**	Held immediately after early dismissal or as an evening extracurricular block.	Best fit for single-session school environments.
Model 4	**Co-Curricular Integration**	Aligned with existing weekly Uniform Body activity blocks; YF participation counts toward required service.	Seamless integration into existing school governance.

7.2 Teachers' Training Manual

The Teachers' Training Manual is a comprehensive guide engineered to equip educators with the skills and materials required to execute project activities effectively.

- **Youth Facilitator (YF) Management:** Outlines criteria for identifying, recruiting, and mentoring Youth Facilitators (YFs) within the school environment.
- **Professional Development Modules:** Delivers structured, step-by-step training content covering instructional strategies, material preparation, and classroom management techniques tailored to project goals.
- **Stakeholder Coordination Protocols:** Details communication frameworks and engagement strategies for organizing parent-teacher orientations, home-learning support, and community updates.

7.3 Young Learners Assessment Pack

The Young Learners Assessment Pack is a standardized suite of four primary assessment tools developed to baseline, track, and support early childhood and primary student development across critical domain areas.

- **Dhivehi Literacy Assessment Tool:** Evaluates foundational mother-tongue language acquisition, including phonemic awareness, letter-sound recognition, early vocabulary, and age-appropriate reading fluency.

- **English Literacy Assessment Tool:** Measures early English language acquisition, focusing on sight word recognition, basic phonics, listening comprehension, and foundational reading skills.
- **Numeracy Assessment Tool:** Assesses core mathematical concepts, including number sense, counting stability, simple addition/subtraction, pattern recognition, and spatial logic.
- **Social-Emotional Skills Assessment Tool:** Gauges critical behavioral and developmental milestones, evaluating emotional self-regulation, peer interaction, cooperative play, and adaptability during classroom transitions.

7.4 Young Facilitator Guide

The Young Facilitator Guide is an accessible, student-friendly manual designed to empower Grade 5 pupils taking on peer mentorship roles in the CtC play-based program. Structured to build confidence and leadership, it breaks down session activities into clear, visual instructions that help facilitators lead story-building, rhymes, games, and tactile learning tasks for pre-primary learners. Beyond lesson delivery, the guide provides practical tips on effective group management, encouraging reluctant peers, and maintaining positive interactions. Serving as a personal reference handbook, it supports young facilitators in developing empathy, self-regulation, and collaborative skills while assisting incoming students through a smooth, engaging school transition.

7.5 Young Learners' Booklet

The Young Learners' Booklet is an engaging, child-centered activity book designed to support pre-primary students during their transition into primary education. Tailored for interactive use during CtC play-based sessions, it features vibrant illustrations, hands-on drawing exercises, letter and number tracing, and guided play prompts.

Aligned with the four core assessment domains - Dhivehi literacy, English literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional development, the booklet reinforces foundational concepts in an accessible format. It serves as a personal portfolio for young learners, sparking curiosity, boosting fine motor skills, and fostering a positive, joyful connection to early classroom learning.

8. Our Acknowledgement and Appreciation

The successful implementation of the SIPCA project stands as a testament to the dedication, collaboration, and shared vision of numerous organizations, educational leaders, educators, and students. We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to bringing this transformative play-based initiative to life.

- **Funding and Strategic Partners:** We express our sincere appreciation to the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) for their invaluable financial support, strategic leadership, and commitment to fostering contextually relevant educational innovations across the region.

- **Ministry of Education (MoE):** Special thanks go to the Ministry of Education, and their departments – especially DoIE, and NIE for their institutional backing, policy guidance, and commitment to integrating progressive early childhood transition strategies into the national educational framework.
- **Sub-Grantee Consortium Members:** We recognize our consortium partner institutions across Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Their collaborative research efforts, regional insights, and dedication were essential in designing and scaling this multi-country initiative.
- **Child-to-Child (CtC):** We extend our appreciation to Child-to-Child for providing critical training, technical guidance, and expertise in peer-led pedagogical models, ensuring our operational frameworks remained authentic, inclusive, and effective.
- **Cities of Children:** Special thanks to Cities of Children for hosting and facilitating an invaluable exposure trip, providing our team with practical insights, experiential learning opportunities, and inspiration to enrich our child-centered methodologies.
- **Management and Staff of Islamic University of Maldives (IUM):** We extend our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to the management of the IUM for their unwavering support, strategic leadership, and administrative guidance throughout the SIPCA initiative.
- **School Principals and Leadership Teams:** We are deeply grateful to the principals and school heads of our pilot schools. Their administrative foresight, operational flexibility, and leadership made the successful rollout of the scheduling models and school-level activities possible.
- **Teachers and Educators:** Our heartfelt thanks go to the pre-school and primary school teachers who served as frontline mentors. Their dedication to training facilitators, co-designing play-based sessions, and fostering nurturing learning environments was the cornerstone of this project's success.
- **Students (Young Facilitators & Young Learners):** We also celebrate our Grade 5 Young Facilitators and Upper Kindergarten Young Learners. The enthusiasm, empathy, and joy demonstrated by the students truly brought the child-to-child vision to life, proving that learning and transition are best achieved together.
- **Parents and Guardians:** We extend our sincere gratitude to the parents of both our Young Facilitators and Young Learners. Their open-mindedness, active participation in orientation briefings, and continuous encouragement at home were vital in building trust, securing community buy-in, and ensuring the smooth, confident participation of their children throughout the project.

Islamic University of Maldives
King Fahd Building, Violet Magu Male', 20037
Republic of Maldives
info@ium.edu.mv
www.sipca.ium.edu.mv

9. Conclusion

The SIPCA project has proven that a play-based, child-to-child model can transform early school transitions across the Maldivian education landscape. By fostering peer-led engagement between Grade 5 facilitators and incoming pre-school learners, the initiative delivered measurable gains in early literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional readiness, while simultaneously instilling leadership, empathy, and confidence in older students. Its demonstrated operational flexibility across diverse island contexts highlights its practical viability within existing school frameworks.

However, to fully realize the initiative's potential, scaling this model beyond the pilot sites to all atolls is a vital next step. Expanding SIPCA nationwide will ensure that geographic isolation does not limit educational quality, giving every young learner across the country an equitable, joyful, and community-centered entry into primary education. Formally integrating these practices into national policies will embed play-based peer learning as a permanent cornerstone of early childhood education in the Maldives.



Project Lead

Mariyam Shareefa, PhD

Islamic University of Maldives

1st November 2026

Islamic University of Maldives
King Fahd Building, Violet Magu Male', 20037
Republic of Maldives
info@ium.edu.mv
www.sipca.ium.edu.mv

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The educational resources, training manuals, assessment packs, and pedagogical materials included within this project were developed with the expert guidance and support of CHILD TO CHILD (childtochild.org.uk).

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SIPCA

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