

Balancing Progress and Well-being: Assessing Impacts on Mental Well-being from Development Initiatives in the Maldives

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Research Objective

To analyse environmental impact assessments (EIA) and identify level of consideration given to mental well-being of people affected by development projects





رَدَدُوكُمُ الرَّجِيئِينَ فِيكُمْ: رَجَعْتُمْ كَمَا كُنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَائِرِينَ فِيهَا رَدَدْتُمُوهُمْ فِي دَرَجَاتِهِمْ
لَمَّا رَجَعْتُمْ فِيهَا سَائِرِينَ (رَجَعْتُمْ فِيهَا سَائِرِينَ دَرَجَاتِهِمْ)



Zaan

Literature

Established connection between nature and mental well-being

- Increased psychological well-being;
- Reduction of risk factors and burden of some types of mental illnesses;
- Types of nature experiences are decreasing in quantity and quality across the globe

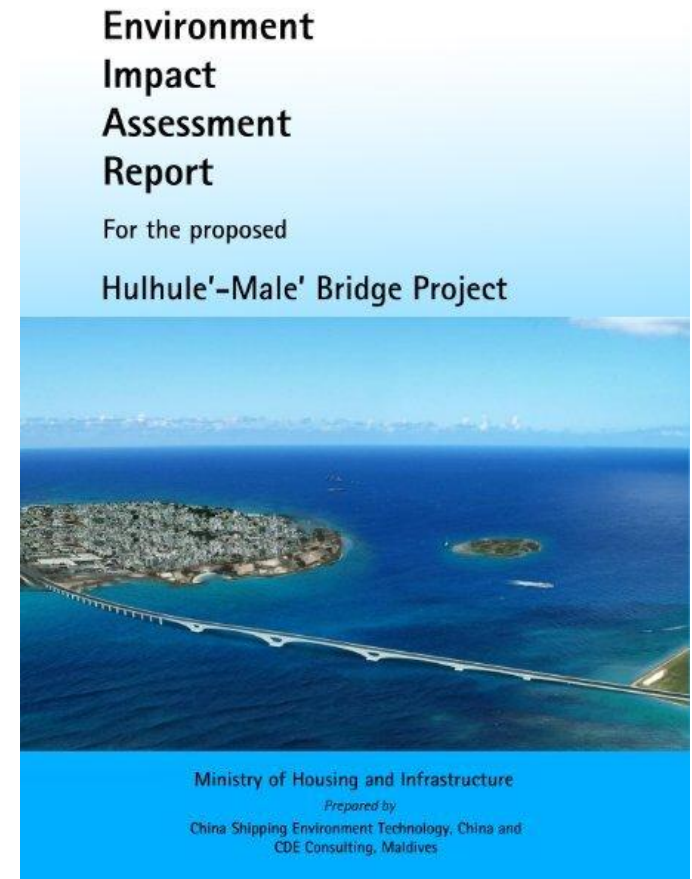
Impact of blue spaces seen as higher compared to green spaces

- Marine and coastal margins about 6 points higher than continuous urban environments whereas green environments were 2-3 points higher (MacKerron & Mourato, 2013).



Research Method

- EIA reports required for all development projects
 - Environmental and socioeconomic impacts
- Analysed EIA reports from 2015 to 2023
 - 1207 reports screened for detailed analysis
 - 62 reports analysed in-depth content analysis



Research Method : Sample selection criteria

- Project located in vicinity of a continuous living population (excluded resorts, agricultural islands, industrial islands, uninhabited islands; lagoon reclamation)
- Within inhabited islands excluded:
 - Large multi-storey buildings in existing land plots or already reclaimed areas
 - Upgrading or developing existing harbours, channels, coastal protection
 - Developing of existing roads
 - Powerhouse relocation from residential to away from people
 - Utilities development near existing locations
 - Reports where map showing location of development within island is not available (mainly for water & sewerage projects)

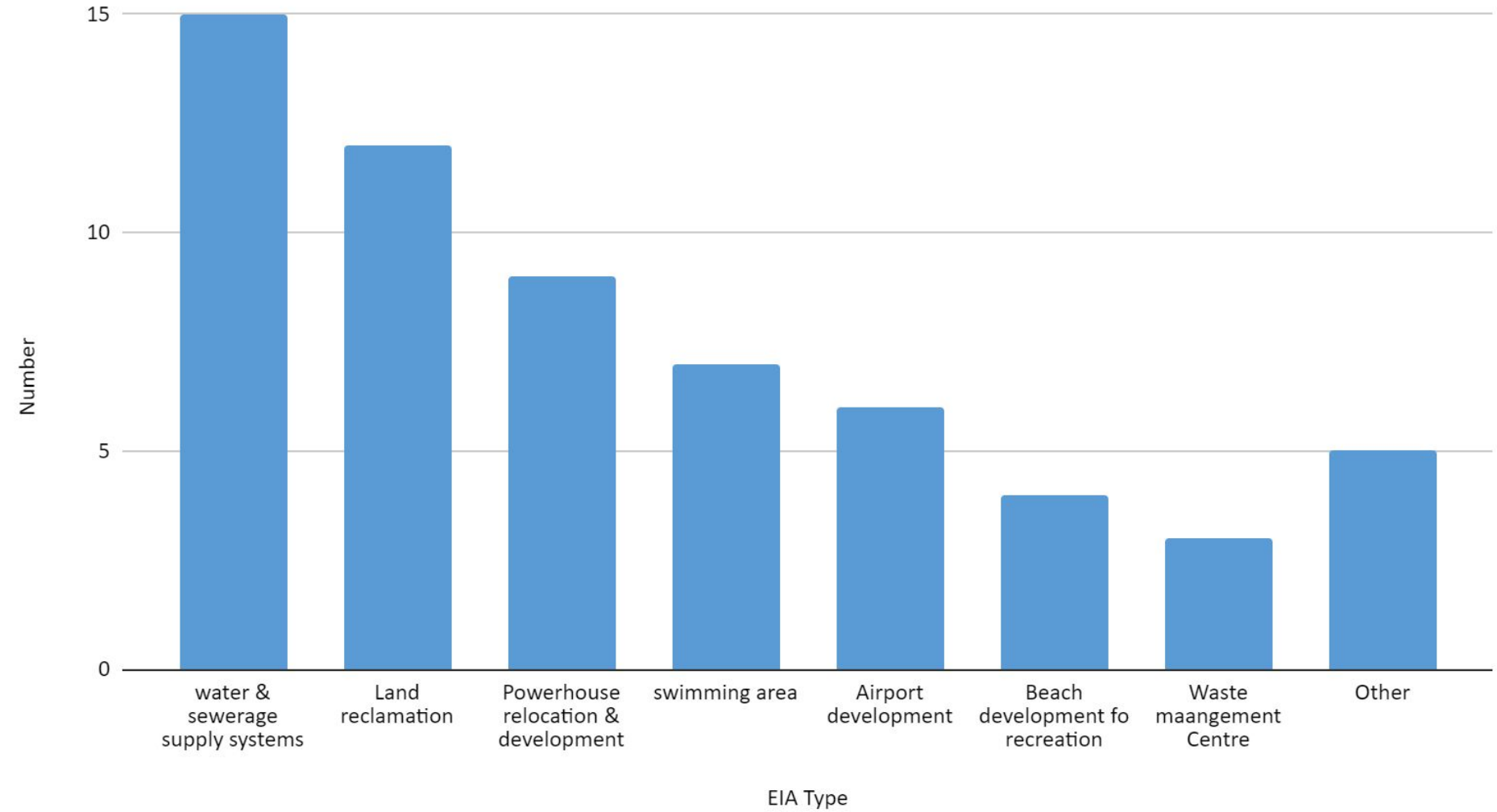
Research Method: Analysis

- Checklist if addressed
 - Environmental
 - Social
 - Economic
 - Health & well-being
 - mental well-being

- Level of consideration
 - 0 = not mentioned (None)
 - 1 = mentioned (Low)
 - 2 = discussed some impacts and mitigation (Medium)
 - 3 = discussed in-depth (High)

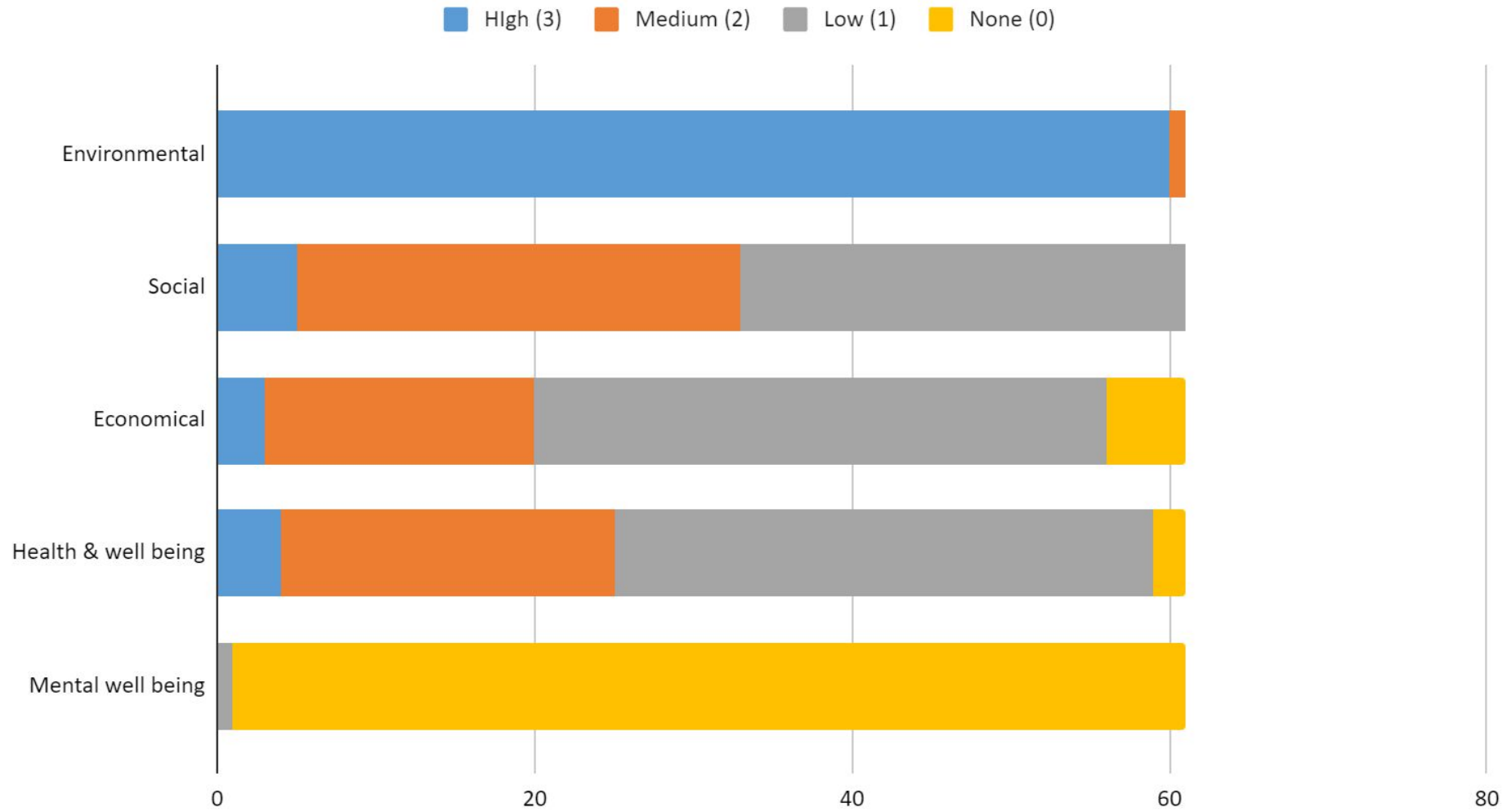
Findings

EIA Analysed by Type of Project



Findings

Considerations of Impacts in EIAs by type



EIA: Development of an Artificial Beach

“The project is important to create a healthy community, physically and **mentally fit** population for nation building, establish and maintain social cohesiveness of the island community”



Discussion

Land reclamation: loss of vegetation & beach areas Beach & recreational areas development

- Mentions these aesthetically as a social impact
 - Can link viewing/experiencing the ocean and greenery to positive mental impacts (e.g. calming effects)
 - Use of recreational spaces creating active lifestyles and contributing positively to mental well being

“aesthetic
luscious
greenery of the
island will be
lost as well”

Discussion

Waste Management Centres (WMC)

- Mentions positive social and health impacts from cleaner public spaces free from pests but not linked to mental well being
- Access roads to WMCs create access to greener areas which used to be dense vegetation area



Conclusion & Recommendation

- High focus on environmental impacts and mitigation
- Mental well being analysis is almost negligible
- Some project can have negative mental health (loss of natural spaces)
- Many instances of positive impacts on mental well being are not examined
- Share findings with EIA practitioners and evaluators
- Develop mental well being evaluation methodologies and provide trainings
- A potential area of research in the Maldives

Bibliography

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changing currents ~

~ forming connections

Thank you