

Voluntary National Review

Seychelles

22

Opening Statement

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Contents

Opening Statement.....	2
Highlights.....	4
Introduction.....	7
Methodology and Process for Preparation of Review.....	9
Policy and Enabling Environment.....	12
PROGRESS ON GOALS	19
Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere	20
Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.....	25
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	28
Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	33
Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	38
Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.....	44
Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.....	51
Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.....	55
Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.....	66
Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries	72
Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	77
Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	82
Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.....	94
Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.....	100
Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	105
Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	109
Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development	119
Addressing the impact of COVID-19.....	130
Next Steps.....	141

Highlights

The Voluntary National Review (VNR) process was initiated in 2019, and culminated in this final report in mid-2020. The development process was inclusive and engaging, and involved various state and non-state actors. Achievements were highlighted and brought to the fore as a way to showcase the exemplary progress made by Seychelles in meeting its broad socio-economic development needs. On the other hand, the process allowed challenges such as resource mobilization, climate change, economic risks and global security risks to be presented and debated, with the aim of identifying areas for improvement.

The Economic Planning Department (EPD) within the Ministry of Finance, Trade, Investment and Economic Planning (MOFTIEP) spearheaded the VNR process, as the national focal institution for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). EPD worked in close collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), as well as with a multitude of ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs), non-governmental organizations and private sector representatives. In addition, the National Assembly and various branches of academia (including, but not limited to, the University of Seychelles) were consulted in view of their broad overarching role in the country's development.

The first VNR of the Republic of Seychelles takes a broad view of the development path upon which Seychelles finds itself today. All 17 goals are reported upon, with detailed explanations on the status of implementation. Furthermore, certain key examples and success stories are elaborated for each goal, with the aim of showing the tangible impacts of efforts to achieve the SDGs and improvements to the quality of life of the people of Seychelles. The means of implementation of the SDGs is touched upon, as the path and vehicle which will carry forward the development of the country. To ensure balanced, sustainable development, the VNR pays particular attention to the potential trade-offs and synergies that could be exploited with a mindful effort to align priorities and resources.

Since the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, the Government of Seychelles (GOS) has taken the approach of integrating the SDGs into national development frameworks and national policies. The SDGs have been incorporated into the National Long Term Vision, "Vision 2033" and the National Development Strategy (NDS) 2019-2023. Vision 2033 calls for Seychelles to steer its development "Towards a sustainable and inclusive future" for all Seychellois, with emphasis on ensuring broad inclusion. The NDS 2019-2023 is founded on six thematic pillars (Good Governance, People at the Centre of Development, Social Cohesion, Innovative Economy, Economic Transformation, Environment Sustainability and Resilience), each of which has anchored SDGs within its core content.

Moreover, various government MDAs have "adopted" goals of the SDGs that pertain to their sectorial mandates and functions. For instance, the Ministry of Health has taken a leading role in mainstreaming and implementing Goal 3 "Good Health and Well-being" within its core functions and into the national health system and policies as a whole. Similarly, the Employment Department within the Ministry of Employment, Immigration and Civil Status (MEICS) has embedded (at goal, target and indicator level) the content of Goal 8 "Decent Work and Economic Growth", as part of the national framework on decent employment (the Decent Work Country Programme 2019-2023).

Seychelles' level of human development attainment is remarkably high, and this is strongly reflected in the national income, with a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) score of 0.801 (ranking 62nd out of 188 in 2019). Seychelles is therefore the first African country to attain this level of human development as recorded by the HDI, a noteworthy achievement for any country, all the more so for a small island developing state (SIDS). This is largely attributed to the country's long-standing policies of universal education and healthcare provision, in addition to the provision of appropriate social safety nets, which afford citizens a certain standard of living.

On the environmental side, the Government of Seychelles has also banned the importation of single-use plastic straws and plastic bags, in a strong effort to reduce plastic pollution across the islands. One noteworthy intervention that characterizes Seychelles' commitment to sustainable economic development was the launching of the world's first sovereign **Blue Bond** in October 2018. This is a financial instrument designed to support sustainable marine and fisheries projects. Proceeds from the bond will be used to support the expansion of marine protected areas, improve the governance of priority fisheries and contribute to development of Seychelles' Blue Economy. Grants and loans will also be provided through the Blue Grants Fund and Blue Investment Fund, managed by the Seychelles' Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT) and the Development Bank of Seychelles.

Despite the relatively impressive achievements in SDG implementation, Seychelles has faced notable challenges in its efforts to adopt and implement sustainable development pathways. Having attained "high-income" status in 2015, Seychelles finds itself on an equal footing with countries that are more developed and equipped to handle emerging challenges and technological disruptions. As a "small" country (in terms of population), Seychelles has limited human and financial resources to effectively implement, monitor and evaluate the 2030 development agenda.

Furthermore, prior to the launch of the SDGs in 2015, Seychelles' most recent Gini Index of 0.47 (published in 2012) revealed a problem of inequality in Seychellois society, under which some parts of society were not reaping the benefits of the economic growth that Seychelles had been experiencing over the previous few years. This was accentuated in 2013 by a poverty rate of 39.3 per cent, based on the national poverty line of approximately US\$13 (in 2011 PPP dollars) per person per day. The Government has taken measures to address these concerns, initially through the setting-up of the Poverty Alleviation Department to coordinate research and targeted poverty reduction interventions.

Reporting on the SDGs compels Seychelles to produce various sets of data, which may not necessarily be readily available. This calls for more robust data collection, processing and dissemination efforts. Moreover, differences persist in concepts, definitions and standards for indicators, thus creating challenges with comparability.

Seychelles remains vulnerable to climatic phenomena, such as rising global temperatures and the associated sea-level rise. This poses the threat of adverse events, such as flooding of low-lying areas, coastal erosion, storms and heat waves. Floods and storm surges directly endanger economic activities in the tourism, fisheries and real estate sectors, and could potentially have devastating impacts on the economy. In this regard, Seychelles has gone to considerable lengths to raise awareness of climate change, as well as to advocate for the empowerment of countries affected or threatened by adverse climatic phenomena.

Seychelles would stand to benefit from additional capacity building for implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the SDGs. The various implementers of SDGs would in turn be better equipped to produce the right data and take necessary corrective actions, as applicable and necessary. Partnerships are of the utmost importance for securing sustainable development pathways for Seychelles. As a SIDS, Seychelles leverages its relationships with external partners, (bilateral, multilateral, and otherwise) to achieve desired outcomes which promote the socio-economic development of Seychellois society as a whole. Goal 17, “Partnerships for the Goals”, emphasizes the ever-important need to forge partnerships and develop a collaborative approach going forward. This holds true especially when mobilizing the required resources (human, financial and otherwise) to fund national development priorities.

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Introduction

Like all other United Nation member states Seychelles has, since the launch of the 2030 Agenda five years ago, embarked on the pathway towards sustainable development and the country is continuing to progress towards achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the end of the era of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Seychelles reported that it had achieved most of these goals, especially Goals 1 to 7, from full enrolment in primary school education and universal access to free primary health care to environmental protection (for which the country remains a global leader).

The Voluntary National Review (VNR) presents an opportunity for United Nations member states to take ownership of the SDGs – while taking into account national realities – in a voluntary, transparent and participatory way. Seychelles' review approach aims to concentrate on efforts to follow the fundamental principles of Agenda 2030, including focusing on the people furthest behind, minimizing trade-offs through policy integration, and pursuing global partnerships as a means of implementation.

Since its graduation to a high-income economy in 2015, this small island developing state (SIDS) of approximately 98,000 inhabitants has shown tremendous improvements in some of its international ratings. The dynamics of the Seychelles economy and its environment, however, are extremely fragile and hence susceptible to external shocks. Nevertheless, Seychelles remains committed to achieving its targets as set out in its national plans.

Incidentally, Seychelles is continuing to strengthen its efforts to ensure that the SDGs remain at the forefront of its national development agenda. This has been highlighted in the country's Vision 2033, which was launched in 2019. Through nationwide consultations a consensual, long-term vision for Seychelles emerged as:

“A resilient, responsible and prosperous nation of healthy, educated and empowered Seychellois living together in harmony with nature and engaged with the wider world.”

The Vision promotes working together as one people towards the achievement of a sustainable and inclusive future that reflects the aspirations of the nation. The Vision is to be rolled out in the implementation of a series of three five-year National Development Strategies. The first National Development Strategy (NDS) 2019-2023 is founded on six thematic pillars: (i) Good Governance; (ii) People at the Centre of Development; (iii) Social Cohesion; (iv) Innovative Economy; (v) Economic Transformation; and (vi) Environmental Sustainability and Resilience.

As with Agenda 2030, the Vision 2033 and the NDS encompasses the three dimensions of sustainability – economic, social and environmental. The three dimensions are incorporated in a balanced and integrated manner. The NDS 2019-2023 maintains this synergy by presenting the medium-term strategies for the country's socioeconomic systems all while aiming to reduce the burden on the environment. Seychelles' national plans and targets call for social solidarity, environmental responsibility and economic efficiency.

Many countries face challenges of economic transformation, exclusion and inequality, and Seychelles is no exception. Given the inter-relatedness of these challenges, Agenda 2030 presents a more integrated approach to countries addressing global issues: it is not solely a list of 17 independent goals.

The NDS mainstreams the goals, clearly displaying ownership and localization of this broad agenda into the country's national planning processes under which each strategy ensures the implementation of the SDGs. Many reports, strategies and policies reflect, to some extent, the various targets of the SDGs to which they contribute directly or indirectly.

Seychelles is continuing to strive for the maintenance of peace and security by upholding the rule of law; upgrading and providing necessary infrastructure to boost sustainable socio-economic development; transforming its education system to build the capacity required to cater for its labour market needs; improving the quality of its health care services; embracing science, technology and innovation across all sectors; intensifying its fight against the scourge of substance abuse and other related ills; tapping into its potential as a large oceanic state; mitigating and adapting to the threats caused by climate change; and strengthening its economic resilience while maintaining macroeconomic stability.

Therefore, Seychelles remains wholly committed towards the SDGs as they are seen as the catalysts which are propelling the country towards Vision 2033. The country also recognizes the coherence between Agenda 2030 and its other major international commitments: Agenda 2063, the Paris Climate Change Agreement, the SAMOA Pathway and the Sendai Framework. The harmonization of these agendas provides Seychelles with the opportunity to align them with the National Development Strategy, which makes for greater policy coherence.

It is therefore with great honour that the Republic of Seychelles presents its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) report, which makes reference to all 17 goals. The VNR for Seychelles provides an overview of SDG implementation in the country, the alignment of national planning to Agenda 2030, and the implementation of the National Development Strategy (NDS). Moreover, the VNR takes stock of the structures, policies, achievements, challenges, level of participation and the way forward in relation to implementation of Agenda 2030.

Therefore, the process called for collective efforts from various organizations and individuals; governmental bodies, parliamentarians, civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, opinion leaders, and vulnerable groups such as the youth, elderly and persons with disabilities. In the spirit of leaving no-one behind, Seychelles acknowledges the importance of having everyone included in the process and continues to strengthen ties with its local and international partners as the country progresses 'towards a sustainable and inclusive future'.

Methodology and Process for Preparation of Review

When taking the decision to submit our first VNR at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2020, Seychelles saw this not only as an opportunity to track progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, but also as a way of further creating national ownership of the SDGs and embracing the decade of action for achieving them. As the national SDG focal point, the Department of Economic Planning within the Ministry of Finance, Trade, Investment and Economic Planning was assigned the responsibility of coordinating the VNR process. This largely included organizing stakeholder consultations, collecting inputs and drafting the report. From the onset, it was recognized that although the Department was leading the process, other key partners were vital to making it successful. In particular, the National Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Foreign Affairs played key roles in producing the report. The former was mainly responsible for quality assurance of the data within the report, while the latter ensured adherence to and implementation of international conventions and obligations.

In principle, the methodology and process for the review were designed by the Department of Economic Planning and then presented to the Cabinet of Ministers for approval. It was agreed that there would be five technical working groups, each led by a staff member of the Department assisted by a young person from one of the youth NGOs engaged in SDG implementation across the country. The technical working groups comprised representatives from government departments and agencies, the private sector, civil society and academia.

Given Seychelles' unwavering commitment to the 2030 Agenda, and with a decade left for action to achieve this, it was further agreed that the VNR report would cover all 17 SDGs. Moreover, the report itself would be substantive and knowledge-based, as well as open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable and those furthest behind.

In addition, the Department's work for the VNR process was guided and supported by the 'National Oversight Strategic Committee for the Implementation of Seychelles' Regional and Global Commitments (NOSCIS)'. This high-level committee – chaired by the Minister for Finance, Trade, Investment and Economic Planning – has the mandate of ensuring that the SDGs are integrated in the national planning

process as well as of providing oversight and strategic guidance to the coordinating unit within the Department of Economic Planning.

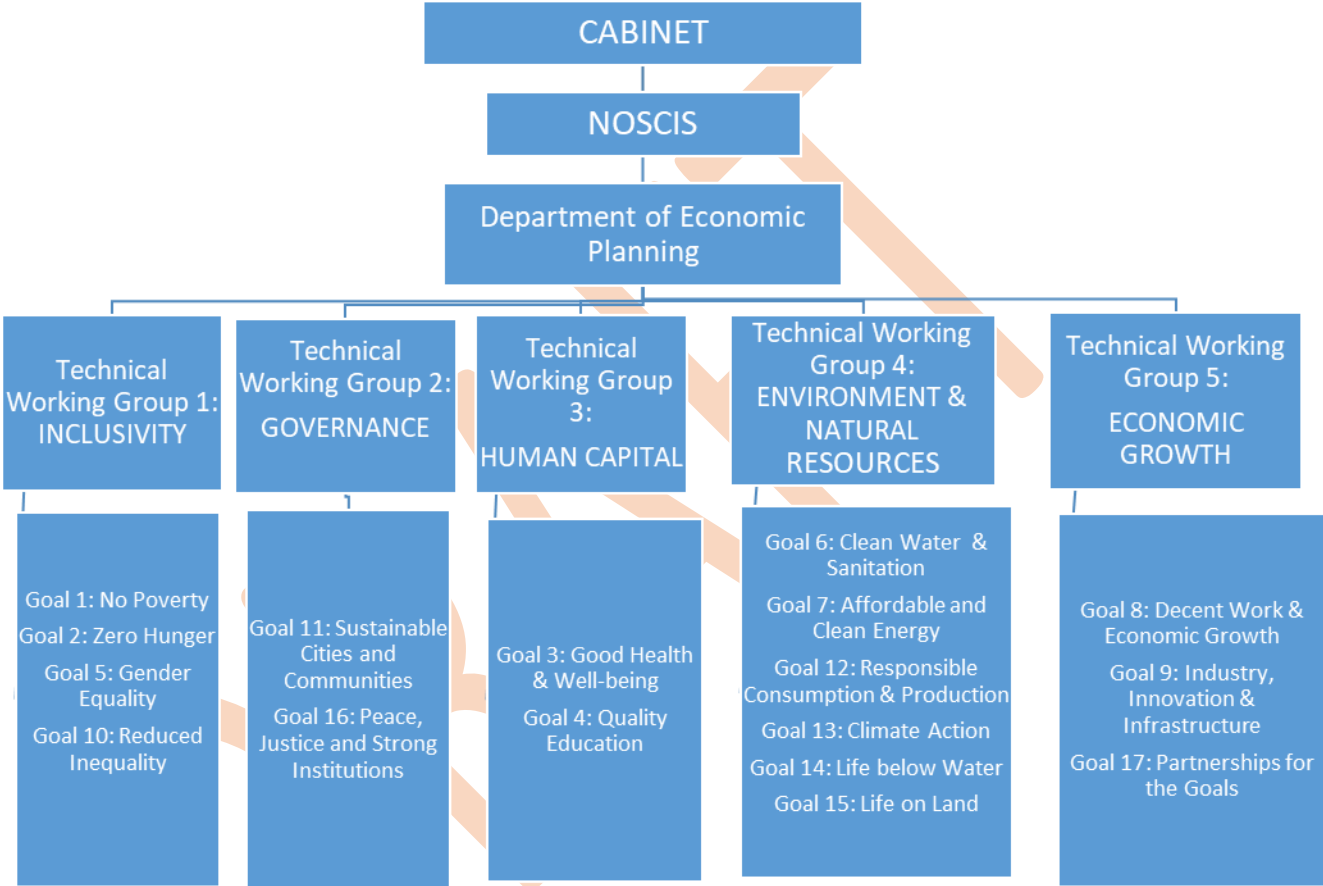


Figure: Framework for VNR preparation

Furthermore, the VNR process for Seychelles was enhanced by a number of partnerships with our development partners, who greatly assisted with making this process a successful one. In particular, the United Nations agencies played a fundamental role by providing capacity building for the staff of the Department through global and regional preparatory VNR workshops, and also by providing direct assistance in particular areas that the country had identified as being challenging.

For Seychelles, the VNR process immediately followed the 2019 launching of the country's Vision 2033 and the National Development Strategy 2019 – 2023. These two national documents were conceived by means of broad public consultations and present the medium- to long-term pathway to sustainable development for the country based on the national priorities. This then presented an opportune time for synergetic efforts to raise public awareness of the country's long-term strategies and priorities, in line with the SDGs. The ongoing Vision, NDS and SDG communication strategies target the general public, encompassing different age groups, social and educational backgrounds, race, income status, religion and gender. The main objective is to ensure that transparency, accountability, wide ownership and engagement are achieved.

Between September 2019 and May 2020, consultations were conducted for the VNR process through the technical working groups and consultative sessions were also held with various stakeholder groupings.

The planned methodology and process for the VNR was greatly affected by the rapidly changing situation associated with the COVID-19 outbreak. This was particularly true from March 2020, when the country confirmed its first cases of the virus. Given that global experts and local authorities were emphasizing the critical importance of social distancing to reduce the spread of the virus, all the remaining scheduled face-to-face consultations for the VNR were cancelled. In addition, planned activities with the private sector, civil society and the general public, aimed at raising awareness about the country's national development priorities and the SDGs, had to be temporarily postponed. However, Seychelles as a country remained determined to ensure that the VNR process was inclusive and true to the principle of leaving no one behind. It was with this in mind that everyone involved in the process adapted to this new challenge by shifting to innovative means of carrying on with the work. The remaining consultations were carried out by telephone and video conferencing, with stakeholders encouraged to submit their inputs by email. To gather further contributions for the VNR report, the Department of Economic Planning also circulated questionnaires to the technical working groups and other stakeholders, such as the Parliament.

Finally, all of these consultations, together with the 2019 SDG baseline assessment, inputs from official documents and other data sources contributed to the drafting of the report. A national validation workshop was carried out virtually in May 2020 at which all the stakeholders were invited to review the draft report online, with the ultimate objective of securing national ownership of Seychelles' first VNR report

Policy and Enabling Environment

(a) Creating ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals

Seychelles was present for the adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda in New York in 2015. During the summit, Seychelles endorsed Agenda 2033 and emphasized the importance of tackling issues related to climate change, poverty and education. Following this, the country began its implementation:


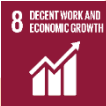








- The UNDP Seychelles office hosted a workshop in May 2016 that sought to prioritize among the SDGs for Seychelles. Discussions also focused on how to mainstream the SDGs into national strategies and policies.
- The Economic Planning Department (EPD) was created in October 2016 to establish a national strategic planning framework and begin work on the long-term vision – “Vision 2033” – and the first National Development Strategy (NDS 2019-2023) through which the Vision will be implemented for the first five years. Both Vision 2033 and the first NDS were created through a consultative process with the public, and both documents mainstreamed the SDGs, Agenda 2033 and the SAMOA Pathway into the broad national aspirations and strategies. In addition, EPD was tasked as the focal point for the SDGs and other international commitments.
- The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) began a stock-taking exercise in May 2017 to compile a list of SDG indicators for which data were available. Subsequently, NBS began to compile new data for indicators that lacked data, especially for SDGs 1, 2 and 8.
- UNDP and the Government jointly initiated an SDG Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) of policy coherence and SDG alignment in 2016. The results were presented in May 2017.
- In July 2017, the Government established the National Oversight Strategic Committee for the Implementation of Seychelles’ Regional and Global Commitments (NOSCIS), to provide oversight of and strategic guidance to EPD and MDAs in the meeting of Seychelles’ regional and global commitments and to mobilize national efforts in a common direction.
- The Government, in collaboration with UNDP, organized a national dialogue workshop in 2017 that brought together government officials responsible for policy and planning, parliamentarians and NGOs.
- In an effort to ensure that the fundamental principles of the SDGs are accessible to all, a Creole version of the UNDP SDGs Agenda Booklet – ‘Lobzektif pour Devlopman Dirab’ – was launched by the UNDP Seychelles office in 2017.
- The United Nations and the Seychelles Government signed a Strategic Partnership Framework (SPF) in 2018 which consolidates the United Nations’ commitment to supporting Seychelles’ effort to achieve the SDGs by the year 2030.





- The Parliament has been an advocate of the SDGs from the beginning. A booklet was launched with the assistance of UNDP in 2016 on the role of parliamentarians in SDG implementation. In July 2019, parliamentarians and key stakeholders met at a forum to review progress towards achieving SDG 16, and to discuss challenges and the way forward.
- As part of the VNR process, workshops have been conducted on the SDGs with members of CSOs; the private sector; District Administrators; senior citizens; district councils; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) individuals; and persons with disabilities. Media awareness campaigns have been launched using traditional media (such as television and radio), as well as social media.


(b) Incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals into national frameworks.

In 2019, Seychelles launched its 15-year vision (Vision 2033) and the first National Development Strategy (NDS 2019-2023) – the first of three NDSs that will enable implementation of the aspirations of the Vision. Conceptualization for the Vision and first NDS began in 2017 and involved wide consultations with stakeholders, ranging from youth to sector experts. During these consultations the SDGs were discussed, and later, during the consolidation of the views from the consultations, the SDGs were incorporated into the goals and strategies.

The NDS has six pillars, and each pillar has goals and strategic interventions for success. The SDGs are mapped onto each pillar and each goal. The table below illustrates the mapping of pillars to SDGs, as well as to the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and the SAMOA Pathway.

Pillars of the NDS	2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals	Agenda 2063 goals	SAMOA Pathway
1. Governance	         	<p>8. United Africa (Federal or Confederate)</p> <p>11. Democratic values, practices, universal principles of human rights, justice and the rule of law entrenched</p> <p>12. Capable institutions and transformative leadership in place</p> <p>13. Peace, security and stability is preserved</p> <p>14. A stable and peaceful Africa</p> <p>15. A fully functional and operational APSA</p> <p>20. Africa takes full responsibility for financing her development</p>	

<p>2. <i>People at the Centre of Development</i></p>		<p>1.A high standard of living, quality of life and wellbeing for all citizens</p> <p>2.Well educated citizens and skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation</p> <p>3.Healthy and well-nourished citizens</p> <p>18. Engaged and empowered youth and Children</p>	<p>11. Health and non-communicable diseases</p>
<p>3. <i>Social Cohesion</i></p>		<p>1.A high standard of living, quality of life and well-being of all citizens</p> <p>13. Peace, security and stability is preserved</p> <p>14. A stable and peaceful Africa</p> <p>15. A fully functioning and operational APSA</p> <p>16. African cultural renaissance is preeminent</p> <p>17. Full gender equality in all spheres of life</p> <p>18. Engaged and empowered youth and children</p> <p>19. Africa as a major partner in global affairs and peaceful coexistence</p>	<p>6. Food security and nutrition</p> <p>12. Gender Equality and women's empowerment</p> <p>13. Social Development</p>
<p>4. <i>Innovative Economy</i></p>		<p>2. Well educated citizens and skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation</p> <p>4. Transformed economies</p> <p>18. Engaged and empowered youth and children</p>	
<p>5. <i>Economic Transformation</i></p>		<p>1. A High Standard of Living, Quality of Life and Well Being for All Citizens</p> <p>4. Transformed Economies</p> <p>5. Modern Agriculture for increased productivity and production</p> <p>6. Blue/ ocean economy for accelerated economic growth</p> <p>9. Continental Financial and Monetary Institutions are established and functional</p> <p>10. World Class Infrastructure criss-crosses Africa</p>	<p>1. Sustained and sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth with decent work for all</p> <p>16. Means of implementation, including partnerships</p>

<p>6. Environmental Sustainability and Resilience</p>		<p>5. Modern agriculture for increased productivity and production</p> <p>6. Blue/ocean economy for accelerated economic growth</p> <p>7. Environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities</p>	<p>2. Climate Change</p> <p>3. Sustainable Energy</p> <p>4. Disaster risk reduction</p> <p>5. Oceans and seas</p> <p>7. Water and sanitation</p> <p>8. Sustainable transportation</p> <p>9. Sustainable consumption and production</p> <p>10. Management of chemicals and waste, including hazardous waste</p> <p>14. Biodiversity</p> <p>15. Invasive alien species</p>
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As part of EPD’s mandate to institutionalize planning at every level of government, EPD also developed a strategic planning template for use by MDAs. In the introductory section of the template, MDAs are instructed to give details about their strategic plans’ alignment with the SDGs and Agenda 2063.

Aside from strategic plans, many policies are now SDG-linked. For example, the Department of Employment has incorporated SDG 8 into its policies and is conducting sensitization campaigns on decent work. The SDGs also feature prominently in the policies of the Agenda for Social Protection (ASP) and the Office of the Auditor General. However, more effort is needed to incorporate the SDGs into the policies and programmes of other MDAs.

The SDGs are also featured in the national budget speech, and they have also been the theme for the Public Service Day for the past two years.

(c) Integration of the three dimensions

The mainstreaming of the SDGs into Vision 2033 and the first NDS guarantees integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, as both are wide-reaching documents that take into account the growth of all sectors and groups. The documents list many crosscutting issues such as gender, culture, spirituality, equity, values, citizenship, youth, employment, the blue economy initiative, disaster risk management, climate change, information and communications technology (ICT) and data/statistics.

The Cabinet of Ministers meets every Wednesday to discuss the state of the different sectors that the ministers oversee, as well as new policies and plans. Because of the presence of ministers and experts from various fields, issues are discussed in a holistic way. With the pending approval of the National Strategic Planning Policy and the formulation of the Cabinet Office Manual, new guidelines will be created for the Cabinet Office that will require MDAs to consult widely before presenting any proposed policy change to the Cabinet. This shows a willingness to cooperate and reduce silo thinking.

In addition, various committees have been created to address crosscutting issues. For example, in 2017, the Tourism Multi-sectorial Committee was formed to discuss the challenges in the tourism sector and

opportunities that exist to make Seychelles more competitive. The Committee is comprised of ministers, principal secretaries, chief executives, and representatives of the Seychelles Tourism Board (STB), Seychelles Civil Aviation Authority (SCAA), Seychelles Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Seychelles Hotel and Tourism Association (SHTA), Seychelles Ports Authority (SPA), and the departments of police, immigration and tourism.

In 2019, a National Steering Committee was set up to coordinate post-disaster management with representatives from various organizations. The Committee is supported by three sub-committees: one on local government for matters relating to housing, one for matters relating to infrastructure, and the third for drainage and flooding. The Committee members are from various sectors but are collaborating towards a common goal.

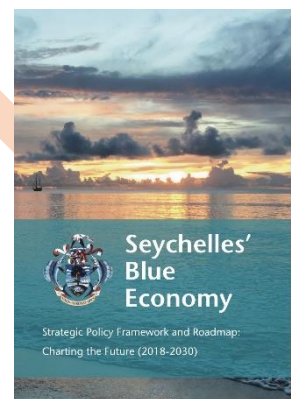
Case Study: The Seychelles Blue Economy Strategic Policy Framework and Roadmap (2018-2030)

With limited land and a small population, Seychelles has recognized that the future lies in being capable of sustainably exploiting its vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). This is why Seychelles began campaigning for the “Blue Economy” approach to sustainable development for small island developing states (SIDS).

In 2018, with the assistance of the Commonwealth, Seychelles launched the **Seychelles Blue Economy Strategic Policy Framework and Roadmap (2018-2030)**. The Roadmap is broad because the development of the Blue Economy can only be successful if it is inclusive and takes into account the environment, the people and the economy.

The Roadmap is built around four key pillars:

- *Economic diversification and resilience* (to reduce economic vulnerability and reliance on a small number of sectors and to increase the proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) derived from marine sectors)
- *Shared prosperity* (to create high value jobs and local investment opportunities)
- *Food security and well-being*
- *Integrity of habitats and ecosystem services, sustainable use and climate resilience.*



Source: Department of Blue Economy, Seychelles Blue Economy Strategic Framework and Roadmap (2018-2030)

(d) Leaving no one behind

In the preamble of the Constitution of Seychelles, it states that Seychelles will “develop a democratic system which will ensure the creation of an adequate and progressive social order guaranteeing food, clothing, shelter, education, health and a steadily rising standard of living for all Seychellois”. With this commitment in mind, Seychelles has free healthcare and education, universal retirement pensions for Seychellois aged 63 and above, and various social safety nets to protect the most vulnerable.

The Government is extending its efforts to leave no one behind through various new policies and programmes. One such programme is the “My First Job Scheme”, which was launched in 2016 by the Ministry of Employment, Immigration and Civil Status (MEICS). The scheme is intended to assist young graduates of professional centres find employment, as well as assist youth interested in entrepreneurship.

The scheme, coupled with the MEICS' various youth training programmes, is helping to address the issue of youth unemployment.

In 2016 NBS, in collaboration with the World Bank, published a poverty profile for Seychelles based on the 2013 Household Budget Survey. The poverty profile identified 39.3 per cent of households as poor according to a US\$13 a day poverty line. This exercise led to the establishment of the Office of the Secretary of State for Poverty Alleviation in October 2016. The Office launched numerous initiatives, such as Rapid Response Teams that immediately assist individuals or families in need, and a Mentorship Programme under which individuals or families benefit from the direct assistance of a mentor in their areas of need. To further improve the response, a Poverty Consensus Forum was launched in 2017, at which stakeholders with different perspectives can discuss the varied solutions to poverty in the country.

The Office of the Secretary of State for Poverty Alleviation became the Poverty Alleviation Department under the Ministry of Family Affairs in 2017. To assist the Department to better target its poverty alleviation initiatives, NBS developed a Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) with indicators of living standards that ranged from the condition of the dwelling to substance use and adolescent pregnancy. An MPI survey was conducted from April 2017 to August 2018, and the results were released in May 2019.

Keeping the poverty survey in mind, the Government introduced a progressive income tax in 2018 to replace the previous flat rate of 15 per cent. This decision was taken to improve the distribution of the tax burden by making it more equitable, and therefore to assist the most vulnerable members of society.

With regard to gender equality, the National Gender Policy was launched in 2016 with the aim of providing national guidelines for institutionalizing and operationalizing gender as an integral component of sustainable development. The Policy addresses issues of equal representation and gender-based violence, among others.

Furthermore, a "bottom-up" approach was used for Vision 2033. Widespread consultations were important to understand people's aspirations and the challenges they face. Vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities and elderly persons were identified and consulted.

(e) Institutional mechanisms

In order to guide and support the work of the Department of Economic Planning and MDAs, for the purpose of SDG implementation, the Cabinet approved the establishment of the National Oversight and Strategic Committee for the Implementation of Seychelles' Regional and Global Commitments (NOSCIS). The Committee is chaired by the Minister with responsibility for Economic Planning, with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs as the Alternate Chair. The Committee comprises members at Principal Secretary (PS) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) level from key MDAs, civil society, the private sector and the Parliament, and observers from United Nations agencies also attend. The Committee meets every two months. During the meetings, all aspects of SDG implementation are discussed. This includes discussion of synergies for overlapping targets, SDG mainstreaming into institutional and sector strategic plans, SDG inclusion in Vision 2033 and the first NDS, data gaps and how to close them, the SDG baseline survey and communication plans.

The Government also sits on the Seychelles Strategic Partnership Framework (SPF) Steering Committee, which was formed in 2019 after the signing of Strategic Partnership Framework (2019-2023) between the United Nations and the Government of Seychelles.

The SPF specifies collaboration with the Government in four strategic areas: (1) Enhancing opportunities for sustainable utilisation of the blue economy, industrialisation and agricultural development; (2) Environmental sustainability, resilience and disaster risk management; (3) Strengthening human capital development through quality health care, education and promoting quality of life; and (4) Promoting science, technology, innovation and data development to facilitate socio-economic development. The SPF is the first agreement signed between the United Nations and the Government of Seychelles with the intention of aligning the United Nations' development work to the country's development agenda as set out in the NDS, while ensuring alignment with the SDGs.

(f) Structural issues

Seychelles faces several structural issues that make achievement of some of the SDGs challenging. One important challenge is Seychelles' small size and population. This translates into the country facing diseconomies of scale, which leads to high importation costs. As most goods are imported, this issue has consequences for the cost of living and therefore for achievement of SDG 1.

The lack of natural resources also means that the country's economic structure is not diversified, and Seychelles is heavily reliant on tourism and fisheries. The economy is, therefore, vulnerable to shocks, which have the potential to derail SDG implementation. One recent shock is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected all segments of society, as well as the Government's fiscal position and delayed projects aimed at SDG implementation. In addition, climate change is a long-term threat to both the tourism and fisheries sectors, due to its effects of sea level rise, ocean acidification and increased storms on the coasts and coral reefs.

A weak private sector is another structural issue that has its roots in the country's history. This results in SDG implementation being largely Government-driven. Private sector stakeholders have expressed their desire, during VNR consultations, for an improvement in the business enabling environment to allow them to grow and better contribute to the SDGs.

PROGRESS ON GOALS

DRAFT

1 NO POVERTY



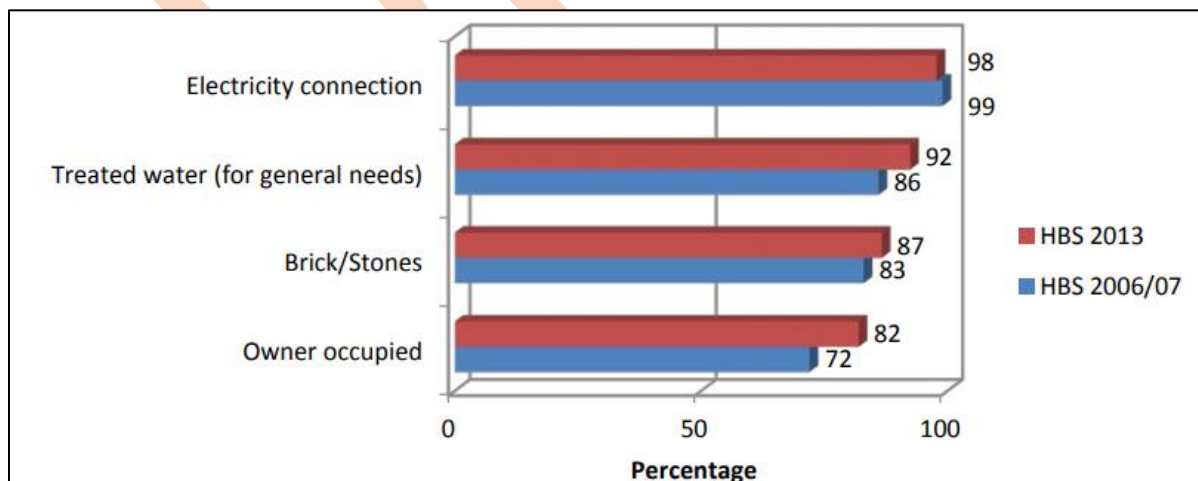
Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Poverty in Seychelles is traditionally measured by a monetary indicator, using data from Household Budget Surveys (HBS). For many years now, absolute poverty has not been a substantial concern in Seychelles, with the international poverty rate of US\$1.90 per day not being applicable. However, a national HBS conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2013 with the results published in 2015, revealed that 39.3 per cent of the Seychelles population were living below the established national poverty line of SCR 3,945 per adult equivalent per month. This poverty line translates to a gross income per adult per day of US\$10.76, or US\$15.22 with 2013 purchasing power parity (PPP). This prompted the Government to take bold measures to identify, curb and alleviate poverty.

A Poverty Alleviation Department was established to coordinate and manage poverty reduction efforts. In addition, a comprehensive poverty profiling exercise has since been carried out with the assistance of the NBS to identify and further investigate the causes and distribution of poverty at national level. The survey took into consideration other factors that contribute to poverty, including income and expenditure. The Poverty Alleviation Department launched numerous initiatives, including Rapid Response Teams that immediately assist individuals or families in need, and a Mentorship Programme through which individuals or families benefit from the direct assistance of a mentor in their areas of need. To further improve the response, a Poverty Consensus Forum, chaired by the President, was launched in 2017 at which stakeholders with different perspectives can discuss the various solutions to poverty in the country. Subsequent interventions have had a particular focus on housing and employment as contributors to poverty in Seychelles. One specific intervention was the Unemployment Relief Scheme (URS), influenced by the results of the Regional Poverty Profiling Surveys.

The 2013 HBS revealed impressive results for household access to basic services. This is depicted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Housing status and availability of basics in the home, HBS 2006/07 - 2013



Multidimensional Poverty

A broader approach towards poverty measurement and alleviation has since been adopted through the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), launched in 2019. This approach is largely based on the MPI concept developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI). This multidimensional poverty measure provides a more comprehensive picture of poverty. It complements the traditional economic monetary approach, by identifying the various dimensions of poverty in a particular setting. It identifies those who are deprived in several dimensions at the same time. It reveals who is poor and how they are poor, and the average number of deprivations each poor person experiences. As well as providing a headline measure of poverty, the MPI can be broken down to reveal the poverty level in different areas of a country, and among different sub-groups of people.

In the third quarter of 2019, the proportion of the population found to be poor according to the MPI (denoted as “H” below) was 11.88 per cent, and the average intensity (average proportion of dimensions in which poor people were deprived, denoted as “A”) was 33.26 per cent. The MPI, which is the product of H and A ($H \times A$) was 0.040.¹ This means that multidimensionally poor people in Seychelles experience 4 per cent of all the deprivations that would be experienced if all people were deprived in all indicators. The four dimensions of the 2019 Seychelles MPI (Living Standards, Health, Education, and Employment) are quantified by a set of 14 indicators. Of these, the largest contributors to multidimensional poverty in the country are deprivations in the highest level of education attained, meaning that at least one household member has not completed secondary level of education (24.91 per cent); followed by deprivation in ‘Youth Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET)’ (12.81 per cent), and informal employment (12.40 per cent). It should be noted that the NEET rate for the final quarter of 2019 was 22 per cent, indicating the extent of untapped potential among the youth population, who could contribute to national development and poverty reduction through work. This was a 9.1 per cent increase from the previous quarter of 2019. Furthermore, the 2019 NEET rate was slightly higher for females (22.9 per cent), than for males (21 per cent). The 2019 NEET rate was 2.4 per cent higher than that for 2018 (19.8 per cent) With regard to labour force status, the results show that as expected, multidimensional poverty is more prevalent among the unemployed (with a headcount ratio of 57.35 per cent), than among those who are employed and those who are outside the labour force.

Error! Reference source not found. below shows the percentage contribution of each indicator and thus the composition of multidimensional poverty in Seychelles.

¹ MPI Report 2019, National Bureau of Statistics

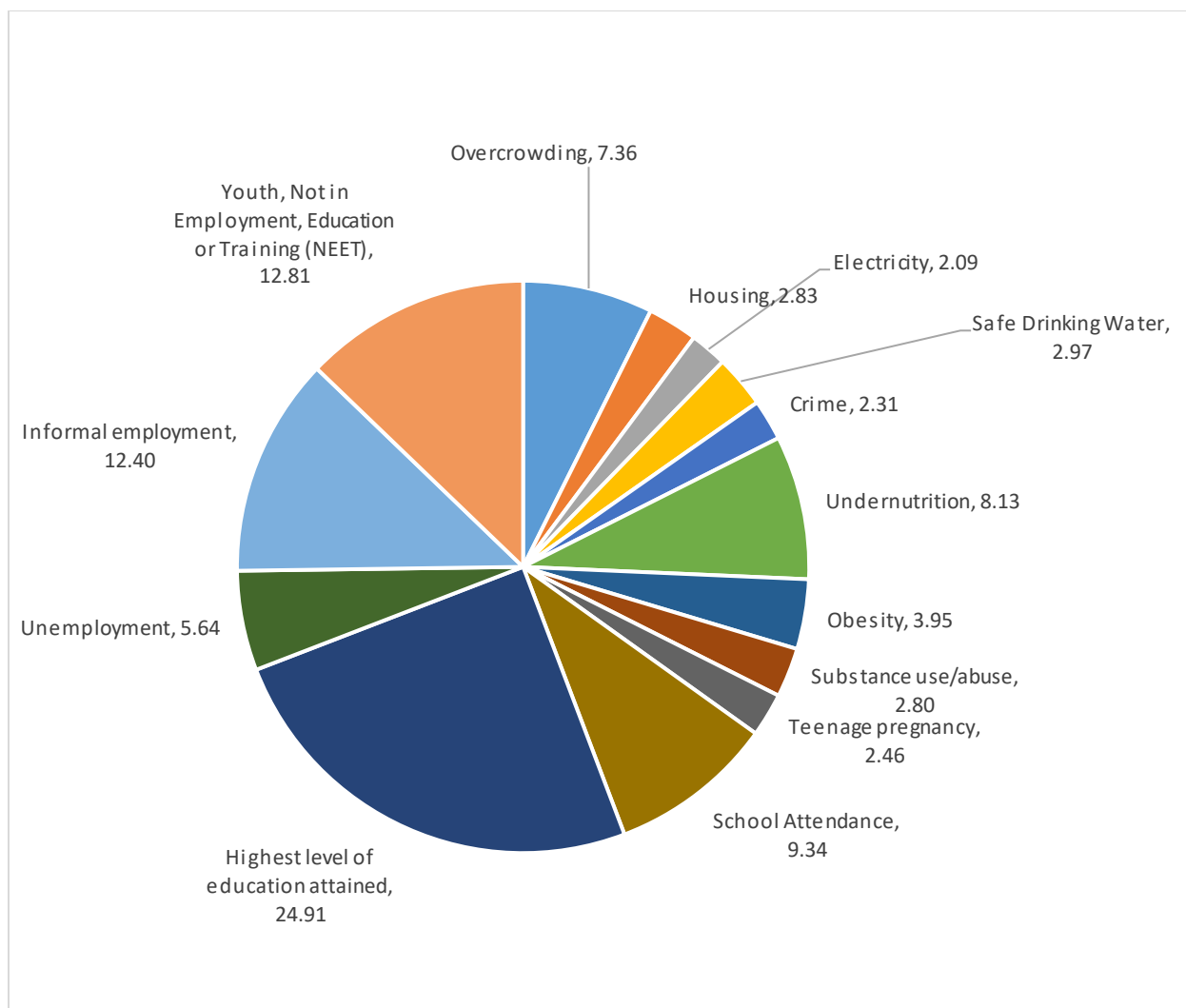


Figure 2: Contribution of each indicator to national MPI, Q3 2019, percentage

Source: MPI Report Q3 2019, NBS

In addition, those living in the largest households (with 7 or more occupants), appear to be more likely to experience multidimensional poverty (with a headcount ratio of 31.15 per cent), than those living in the smallest households (with a headcount ratio of 4.89 per cent). In fact, the relationship between household size and multidimensional poverty is quite clear: the poverty rate increases as household size increases.

Social Protection

Target 1.3 calls for the implementation of nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and achievement by 2030 of substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable. Seychelles has an extensive social protection system in place, which makes provision in the forms of both cash transfers and in-kind assistance. These forms of assistance include:

- i. bursaries for school students;
- ii. a universal retirement pension for citizens aged 63 years and above ; and

- iii. the **domiciliary homecare programme** under which homecare assistants work in the homes of the beneficiaries, acting as general helpers, assisting with tasks around the home, bathing, cooking, giving medication and other care-related duties.

These social protection programmes are administered by a network of ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) across government. Social protection has a wide reach, with 49 per cent² of the population covered, directly or indirectly. The current social protection system reduces poverty, but could do more to counter growing pressures on equity and social cohesion. The composition of social protection spending is skewed to the elderly and away from youth and the poor, which raises equity and efficiency concerns. In 2015, 79 per cent of total social protection spending was on the elderly. It is projected that approximately 21 per cent of the population will be aged 65 years and above by the year 2050. The population is therefore said to be “ageing”. In 2018, the Agency for Social Protection (ASP) spent in excess of SCR 650 million on the Universal Retirement Benefit, as a single line item. Furthermore, in the same year, the expenditure (from ASP) on the Home-Care scheme exceeded SCR 240 million.

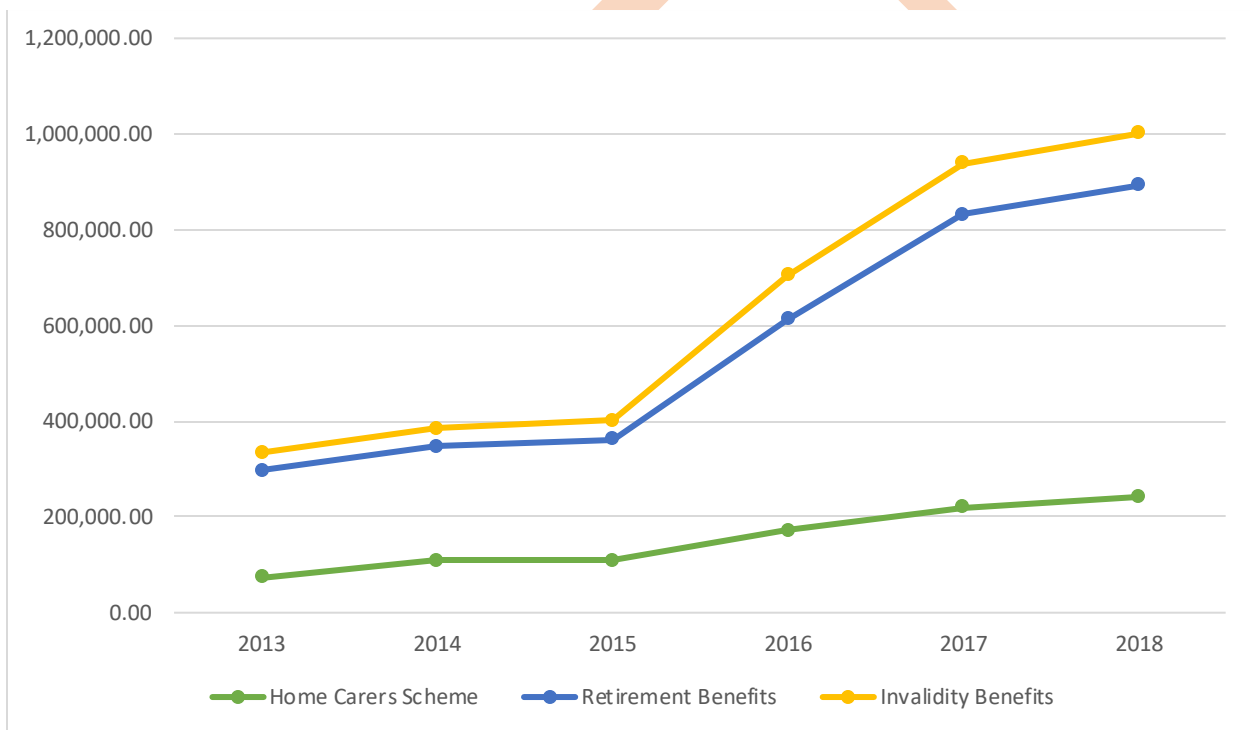


Figure 2: ASP Expenditure, 2013-2018, Seychelles rupees

Source: MOFTIEP

In the context of an ageing population, these costs will increase drastically as the proportion of elderly persons grows. This escalating expenditure on elderly care (as seen in **Error! Reference source not found.** above) is being addressed by a review of the homecare scheme with the aim of improving targeting and reaping the resultant fiscal and efficiency gains. The proposed new practice for allocating and administering homecare would be on a needs basis and centred on different levels of care.

Housing

The Government of Seychelles (GOS) makes subsidized mortgage loan facilities available for families seeking to purchase or build their first home through the state-owned *Housing Finance Company (HFC)*. Between 2015 and 2019, approximately 5,500 loans were made available by HFC.

In addition, Seychellois families have been able to acquire their own homes at a subsidized rate through a long-standing social housing scheme. In one flagship project, situated at “Ile Perseverance”, over 2,000 houses were constructed; this was one of the Government’s largest efforts to provide affordable housing. The 2019 National Budget was accompanied by a government commitment to deliver 143 plots of land and 406 houses in 2019, and 72 plots of land and 32 houses in 2020. The Government has been looking at different options for ensuring that more houses are built in the next six years. As part of the process, the Government has engaged with bilateral partners to finance the construction of 3,000 houses. The total indicative project cost for the 3,000 houses is SR3,026 million. Bilateral financing will involve a mixture of loan and grants, with a grace period of five years for repayment of the loan, It is expected that 558 and 506 houses will be available from this facility in 2020 and 2021 respectively.

Way Forward

To measure poverty, Seychelles will endeavour to produce an MPI every two years. The two-year interval will hopefully provide enough time for evidence-based interventions. The next MPI will be conducted in the third quarter of 2021. Seychelles will keep measuring the monetary measures of poverty, but will now now consider the MPI in parallel. It is hoped that in going forward, the MPI will now be a tool to address poverty in all its forms.

Going forward, poverty in all its forms must be alleviated and ultimately eradicated. For Seychelles, this translates into ensuring opportunities for all, enabling all members of society to take part in the country’s development. The results of the MPI indicate a need to bolster education provision so as to improve outcomes. Poverty reduction will require the right policies and frameworks to be in place to allow the poor a clear and viable pathway out of poverty. This can be achieved through the existing frameworks and schemes of the Government, private sector and civil society, with added coordination. For instance, the specific needs of households that are identified as deprived in certain categories/dimensions may be addressed with on a case-by-case basis. For example, in households which are deprived in terms of educational attainment, the corrective action could possibly involve skill acquisition interventions, coupled with other forms of capacity strengthening and mentoring.

Moreover, appropriate social protection mechanisms – as highlighted in the National Development Strategy (NDS) 2019-2023 – will be of strategic importance for ensuring the efficiency and efficacy of the various forms of social assistance. Improved targeting will eliminate waste and, in turn free up additional resources for development and poverty reduction.

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture



Seychelles has limited agricultural land because of its granitic surface and because 50 per cent of its land surface is protected forests. Developments (mainly in the tourism sector), coupled with accelerated urbanization, have resulted in important losses of agricultural land in recent decades. Nevertheless, it is estimated that about 6,000 ha are available for agricultural development, of which only 600 ha are being utilized. Some of the arable land is in remote mountainous areas, which limits access to markets and water supply. Owing to Seychelles' vulnerability as a small island developing state (SIDS), where variations in climate patterns (mainly rainfall and temperature) result in important changes in cropping systems affecting productivity and production, food security remains a concern.

According to the 2017 Seychelles Food Insecurity Experience Scale Survey³, 9 per cent of households experienced moderate and severe food insecurity in 2017, a marked decrease from the approximately 12 per cent in the preceding year. At the individual level, the same survey suggested that 7.6 per cent of the population were living in moderately to severely food insecure households while 1.9 per cent were estimated to be living in severely food insecure households. At national level, an obesity rate of 15.5 per cent was recorded in children aged 0-5 years in 2016, a relatively high figure as compared to regional norms and averages.

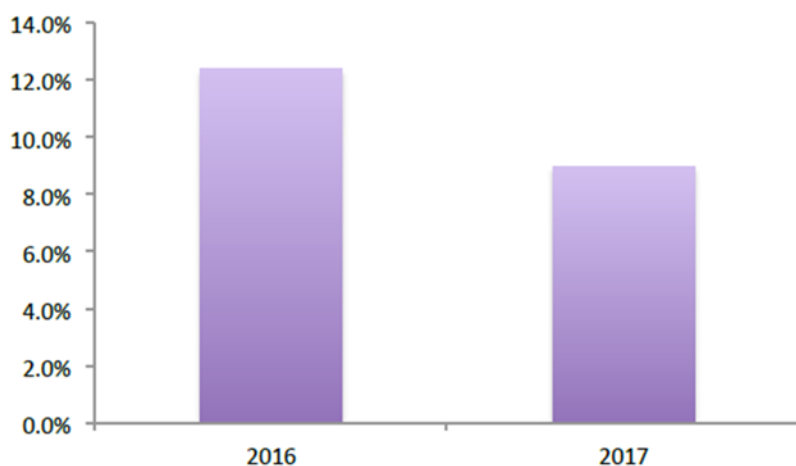


Figure 3: Households with moderate and severe food insecurity, 2016 and 2017

Source: Seychelles Food Insecurity Experience Scale Survey

Traditionally, the Seychelles economy was reliant on agriculture, including on outputs such as copra and cinnamon. As a net importer of goods and commodities, Seychelles finds itself vulnerable to external shocks, including disruptions originating in international food/financial markets. It is estimated that more than 70 per cent of all the food consumed in Seychelles is imported.⁴ Recent reports indicate that

³ Seychelles Food Insecurity Experience Scale Survey 2017

⁴ Government of Seychelles (2013). National Food and Nutrition Security Policy

between 70-90 per cent of all food consumed domestically is imported, but the exact figure is not currently available.

The 2010-2012 **Census of the Seychelles' Agriculture Sector** shows that the country has a narrow agricultural production base (only 530 market-oriented farms, 1,330 artisanal fishers and roughly 8,500 households classified as backyard farmers, out of a total of 25,000 households). About 28 per cent of farms are below 1 acre in size, 31 per cent between 1 and 2 acres, 33 per cent between 2 and 5 acres and only 9 per cent above 5 acres ⁵

In a bid to secure a supply of plants for food and agriculture, the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture is implementing a planting programme on its farm in the South of Mahé and selling local fruit and vegetable trees to members of the public as part of a process of *in situ* conservation of these varieties. The Government has already taken measures to allocate more land to the agricultural sector, in order to increase the scale of output and to provide local farmers with opportunities to grow their businesses. This will directly augment the capacity of the local agricultural sector, in turn improving the country's food security. Furthermore, in September 2019 an exempt order was approved for registered fishermen and farmers not to pay business tax. This approval will serve to maintain the current practice under which individuals who are farmers or fishermen do not pay tax. The decision was made after farmers and fishermen strongly voiced out the challenges they face given the volatility of these two sectors, and called on the Government to consider exempting the two groups from paying taxes. However, this decision will not apply for fishermen and farmers who operate under companies, as they will continue to pay business tax of 15 per cent on their profits. This landmark decision is expected to encourage more investment in the two sectors and support the revival of the agricultural sector and more local production.

At national level, the Seychelles National Investment Plan (SNAIP 2015-2020) was launched in 2015 as the main operational plan to boost the agriculture, livestock and fisheries sectors. This plan has since been succeeded by the national comprehensive agricultural plans for agriculture and fisheries put forth in 2018. There have been notable attempts to implement innovative farming methods at national level by a small number of farmers.

The Government has embarked on a broad approach to biosecurity and sustainability to protect the islands from the harmful effects of pests and diseases – including invasive alien species – on animal, plant and human health and the environment. This is essential to maintain Seychelles' reputation as a country of rich biodiversity and endemic heritage, relatively free from exotic plants, animals, human pests, diseases and invasive alien species. The movement and/or importation of plants, animals and their products into Seychelles are subject to import controls under the Animal and Plant Biosecurity Act 2014. At national level, to support local agricultural output and biodiversity, the National Biosecurity Agency (NBA) is taking measures to protect domestic agricultural production from pests and diseases that could adversely affect food security. The NBA is responsible for inspecting perishables, plant, animals and their products on entry at the border. For more on what is being done in Seychelles to ensure the sustainability of agriculture, see *Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*.

⁵ IFAD Country strategy note 2016

On the fisheries side, Seychelles is located in one of the most productive fishing grounds in the South-West Indian Ocean and has a vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 1.374 million km² (approximately twice the size of France). The fisheries sector has three main dimensions: **artisanal** fisheries, carried out by local fishers, with small, motorized boats; **semi-industrial fisheries**, consisting of small locally-owned long-liners; and **industrial fisheries**, comprising foreign-owned purse seiners and large long-liners. Seychelles has a high per capita consumption of fish – about 65 kg per year. Artisanal fisheries continues to be of great importance in terms of food security, employment and cultural identity. Fish is not only seen as a staple food, but is also very much considered a delicacy and a must-have in local, Creole cuisine. A number of concessions and facilities are made available by the Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA) to the domestic fisheries sector. These include a *Fuel Incentive Scheme* and a *Sickness Benefit Scheme*. Moreover additional facilities – such as the production and sale ice and bait – are made available to fishers at an affordable, agreed-upon price, to further encourage the local fishing industry.

Seychelles is aware of the challenge of maintaining its fish stocks, which have declined by more than 60 per cent in the last three decades, resulting in a loss of income for fishers. To support diversification and expansion of sustainable fisheries value chains in Seychelles, the country has established a loan scheme – the Blue Investment Fund – from the proceeds of the world’s first sovereign Blue Bond. For more on Seychelles’ blue economy, see *Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*. For more on the challenges of ensuring sustainability in fishing see *Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*.

Way Forward

In view of its topography, size and very limited natural resources, Seychelles is likely to remain a net importer of food. Nonetheless, efforts to boost the agricultural and fisheries output of the country are of paramount importance. The country is therefore exploring various options for enhancing food security. This includes considerations of making strategic assistance available to farmers and fishermen to improve the quality and quantity of agricultural output. Furthermore, to enable the country to benefit from enhanced value chains in the fisheries sector there is a need to bolster incentives for industries which would boost value addition, and in the process make available a larger range of food products. Seychelles will continue to leverage its relationships and partnerships with the international community as a whole at both bilateral and multilateral level, with the aim of improving food security and improving local capacity to produce sustenance for its people.

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages



Since gaining independence in 1976, Seychelles has always adopted a people-centred approach by placing health very high on the development agenda. Indeed, the right to health is enshrined in the Constitution of Seychelles: article 29 underscores the commitment of the Government to health care provision and also highlights the personal responsibility of the citizen in health matters. Moreover, the main tenet of the National Development Strategy 2019-2023 is person-centred development, and it calls for the attainment of the highest level of health and wellbeing.

As Seychelles has made great strides in economic development over the years, including achieving high-income status, the country has also experienced better health status. This is primarily the result of the Government's continued commitment to the provision of quality healthcare and its pool of dedicated and well-trained healthcare professionals. One of the country's most significant achievements is Universal Health Coverage (UHC): all citizens have access to a comprehensive package of health services, free at the point of use, within the public sector. This also includes overseas treatment for patients whose health needs cannot be met locally. The Government is the major provider and funder of health care in Seychelles, with investments in health accounting for at least 10 per cent of the national budget over recent years. Additionally, a growing private sector complements the health services in specific areas, but as yet does not offer certain key primary and secondary health care services. There is also very active involvement by civil society in the health sector, particularly, in health promotion, cancer control and care, and HIV and AIDS. There is potential for further improving public health through strengthened collaboration between the Government, the private sector and civil society.



Case study: Cancer Concern Association

The Cancer Concern Association is an NGO in Seychelles that raises awareness about cancer and also provides support and counselling services to cancer sufferers and their families. It has been particularly active in educating the public about the disease and encouraging everyone to develop healthy lifestyles that will reduce the risk of developing cancer. In 2018, it launched an awareness campaign themed 'We Can. I Can'. This was done in collaboration with other NGOs, with the objective of exploring how everyone – together and individually – can do their part to reduce the burden of cancer nationally. The campaign outlined actions that communities and individuals can take to proactively help themselves to become more aware of the consequences of their lifestyle choices and educate themselves on how to lead healthier lifestyles. Moreover, guidance was provided on how to recognize the signs and symptoms of cancer for early detection, and how to support those who are struggling with the disease. The Association has also partnered with the private sector and the Government on many of their campaigns.

Overall, the health sector is guided by the National Health Strategic Plan 2016-2020 (NHSP) which aims to achieve all the national and global health targets focused on promoting, protecting and restoring the health and well-being of all people in Seychelles throughout the life-course. The main goals of the NHSP are:

- increased expectation of life at birth;
- reduced incidence, prevalence and mortality associated with priority non-communicable and communicable diseases;
- increased level of satisfaction of the people and of health professionals with the existing health services; and
- improved overall wellbeing of all people in Seychelles.

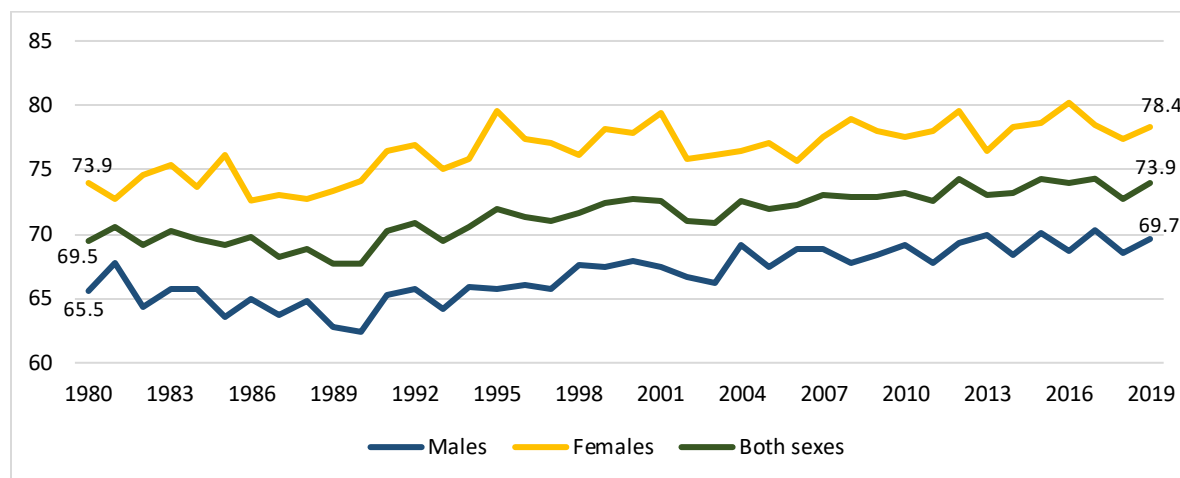


Figure 4: Life expectancy at birth, years, 1980-2019
Source: National Bureau of Statistics and Statistics Unit, Ministry of Health

Life expectancy at birth for both sexes increased from 69.5 years in 1980 to 73.9 years in 2019. However, a significant gap remains in life expectancy between the sexes (**Error! Reference source not found.**). The infant mortality rate was 27 per 1,000 live births in 1978 and has decreased steadily over the years but with spikes in 2013 and 2018 (**Error! Reference source not found.**). In 2018, a high proportion of infant deaths (32 per cent) were associated with severe congenital anomalies, much higher than averages for Eastern and Southern Africa, and closer to the averages for high-income countries. Infection and sepsis contributed to 23 out of 31 deaths (74 per cent). Almost all the infant deaths with available medical case files were premature (20 out of 21), with average gestation of 31 weeks 4 days (in the range 28 to 40 weeks). Although there were overlaps between these contributory causes to infant deaths, the fact that about a third of infant deaths had one or more severe congenital anomalies reflects a much higher rate than the World Health Organization (WHO) global estimates of 11.3 per cent of neonatal deaths attributable to congenital anomalies (2000-2015).⁶

The maternal mortality ratio varies between zero and about 120 per 100,000 live births; the high variability is a result of the relatively small population and number births per year in Seychelles. To understand why some health outcomes are poor despite increased investment, it is critical that all

⁶ Health of our Nation Annual Health Sector Performance Report, 2018, Ministry of Health, Seychelles.

dimensions of Universal Health Coverage be measured and understood to enable targeted interventions, especially for key populations such as women who use drugs (the problem of heroin use in particular is discussed later in this section).

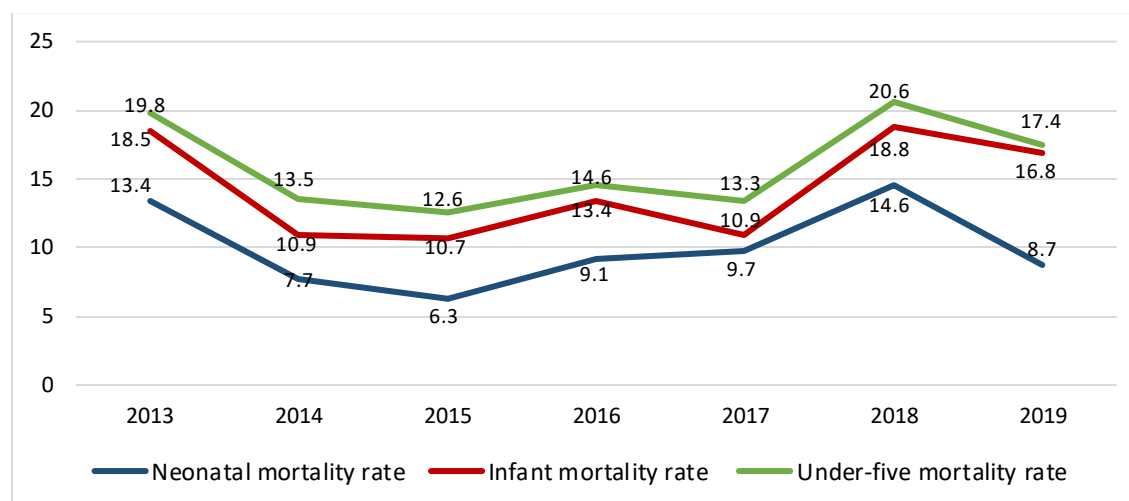


Figure 5: Neonatal, infant and under-five mortality rates, 2013-2019

Source: Department of Health and National Bureau of Statistics

In Seychelles, there is wide availability of sexual reproductive health services. However, the adolescent fertility rate remains high, at 65 births per 1,000 girls and women aged 15-19 years,⁷ indicating a need for a review of and improvements to family planning services. This should address the increasing incidence of sexually transmitted infections, which suggests a rise in unsafe sexual practices.

The country is now at an important crossroads where the shift from communicable to non-communicable diseases (NCD) is posing new and significant challenges. Serial surveys show a reducing trend in smoking in men, while prevalences of obesity and diabetes is increasing.⁸ The three main causes of death in order are cardiovascular diseases, cancer and respiratory infections (Table 1). This leading to an increasing demand for tertiary level care, and possibly to reallocation of scarce resources from primary prevention.

Table 1: Five leading causes of death, 2013-2018

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Deaths (number)							
Total deaths (of which)	717	725	703	747	748	818	795
Diseases of the circulatory system	224	202	216	249	289	264	254
Neoplasms	119	125	151	135	130	152	151
Diseases of the respiratory system	123	104	88	91	98	139	138
External causes of morbidity and mortality	47	46	52	57	51	48	53

⁷ National Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Bulletin, March 2019.

⁸ Public Health Authority (2015): National Survey of Non-communicable Diseases in Seychelles 2013-2014 (Seychelles Heart Study IV): main findings.

Infectious and parasitic diseases	58	82	47	54	47	48	40
Deaths (%)							
Diseases of the circulatory system	31	28	31	33	39	32	34
Neoplasms	17	17	21	18	17	19	20
Diseases of the respiratory system	17	14	13	12	13	17	18
External causes of morbidity and mortality	7	6	7	8	7	6	7
Infectious and parasitic diseases	8	11	7	7	6	6	5

Communicable diseases, though, remain the prime causes of morbidity. In recent years, the country has seen an increase in annual reported cases of HIV, and experienced occasional outbreaks of infectious diseases such as dengue.

It is a fact that disease burden and health outcomes are influenced not just by health care provision but also by the social determinants of health: the conditions under which people are born, grow, live, work and age, including the health system. Seychelles has successfully addressed some of these social determinants through policy decisions, such as providing universal education, maintaining low unemployment and empowering youth.

In addressing the challenges of increasing disease burden – both communicable and non-communicable – as well as poor health outcomes, health promotion has been greatly reinforced. A number of ongoing media programmes and appearances have provided information and education on a variety of health issues. The Health of our Nation (HOON) Campaign was launched in 2013 to promote healthier lifestyles. Since then a number of activities have been held at national level. These include the Workplace Wellbeing Programme (WWP), which aims to create capacity at participating workplaces for employee-led, integrated health promotion interventions.

Although access to healthcare services is not an issue, there have been numerous complaints from patients of dissatisfaction with these services, particularly focused on long waiting times at clinics, and lack of availability of specialized surgery and treatment for serious diseases and conditions locally. Certain complaints result from poor communication between health care professionals and patients. The Government is now working hard to improve the quality of care provided, through the patient-centred care initiative, which aims to ensure that the care provided is responsive to individual patient needs, preferences and values.

As part of ensuring the health and well-being of all, the Government is also committed to combating the local alcohol and illicit drugs epidemics. In 2017, an Integrated Behavioural and Biological Survey (IBBS) revealed an estimate that 4,800 people in Seychelles (5.6 per cent of the country's population) used heroin. This was in parallel to 2,560 persons who were identified as people who inject drugs.

In ensuring the health and well-being of all, there is also steadfast government commitment to combat the alcohol and illicit drugs epidemics. In 2017, an Integrated Behavioural and Biological Survey (IBBS) revealed an estimated 4,800 persons who use heroin in various ways in Seychelles (5.6 per cent of the country's population). This was in parallel to 2,560 persons identified as persons who inject drugs (the

IBBS study suggests that smoking heroin is common in Seychelles).⁹ In a strong response from the Government, the Agency for the Prevention of Drug Abuse and Rehabilitation (APDAR) was created in 2017 to lead the fight against this local epidemic, and to help those who suffer from the addictions. APDAR is making progress with its programmes. The Methadone Maintenance Programme (MMP) specifically targets users who are dependent on heroin. This Programme is provided throughout the community to all who require it, including under-aged clients. The MMP has been rapidly scaled up and the country is beginning to see a reduction in cases of viral hepatitis C and HIV among drug users. The MMP includes both pharmacological and psychosocial interventions: patients are provided with the appropriate medication (methadone) to address their physical dependence on heroin, as well as with the appropriate level of counselling and the psychological support necessary to help them maintain their treatment. Additionally, APDAR, in collaboration with the Department of Employment, has also successfully placed most people on MMT into gainful employment. As of early 2020, there were approximately 2,500 persons enrolled on to the MMP. As part of the process of improving rehabilitation of drug users, construction of a dedicated rehabilitation centre will commence in 2020.

As part of the Government's policy to mitigate the effect of alcohol on the health of its nation, there has been an increase of excise tax on alcoholic beverages by 10 per cent across the board, which was made effective from 1 January 2020. These measures were further reinforced in 2019 by separating the sale of alcohol from other commodities in shops, taxing alcoholic products on the basis of their alcohol content and placing a moratorium on licences for local production of alcoholic beverages.

Since January 2019 the Government has increased the rate of excise tax on all imported and manufactured tobacco products by 10 per cent, in its continued efforts to tackle excessive tobacco consumption in the country. These measures are in line with the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which Seychelles is party to and must therefore abide by the convention, which aims at limiting the sale of single cigarettes.

Additionally, the Government has introduced a sugar tax, which came into effect in April 2019, with the aim of tackling obesity among children.

Way forward

Although, the health sector in Seychelles is continuing to thrive, it is critical that gaps and challenges are addressed systematically. There is an urgent need to improve collection, analysis, sharing and use of data for health, in both the public and private sectors. Moreover, it is critical that the quality of care is further improved by the scaling up of implementation of patient-centred care. As part of this, an integrated Health Information System will be established to ensure improvements in health care quality, efficiency of delivery and access. As we advance as a country, more new strategic directions and innovative service delivery approaches will be taken. In further improving, Seychelles commits to strengthening partnership and coordination within and beyond the health sector, to ensure that all parties work together to develop and implement solutions to the many socio-economic barriers that influence health outcomes.

⁹ Agency for the Prevention of Drug Abuse and Rehabilitation (2018). Seychelles Biological and Behavioural Surveillance of Heroin Users of 2017

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



In Seychelles, education and human resource development are recognized as the drivers of sustainable national socio-economic development. As part of the National Development Strategy 2019-2023, which emphasizes placing people at the centre of development, the country is committed to producing educated, empowered and responsible citizens engaged in building a sustainable, inclusive and equitable society. In fact, the Government views education as a lifelong process, and this is seen as a basic human right. This is enshrined in Article 33 of the Constitution, which states that individual learners should be provided with adequate opportunities to acquire broad-based knowledge, so that they can respond to new opportunities and be capable of participating in human development.

Since 1981, Seychelles has had a system of free education in place; this is now compulsory up to the age of 16. The formal education framework consists of the following main levels: pre-primary (crèche), primary, secondary (to Cambridge A-Level), tertiary non-university education and training (Professional Centres), and tertiary university education and training. The informal educational framework includes non-formal early childhood and adult education, and social and youth activities. Moreover, state education is supplemented by private initiatives at all levels, from early childhood to tertiary education. The private education sector is very vibrant and a dedicated stakeholder in providing quality education in Seychelles. Civil society has also played an important role in supporting the education sector, especially with regard to educating the population on sustainable development.



Case study: SIDS Youth AIMS Hub (SYAH) – Seychelles

SYAH is the Seychelles chapter of a regional network of young people on small island developing states (SIDS), and is a youth-led NGO promoting and advancing sustainable development projects. The NGO has spearheaded a number of flagship projects that have been of great success. In 2019, for the fourth consecutive year, SYAH-Seychelles launched its Blue Economy Internship Programme, whereby youth aged between 15 to 30 years old are given opportunities to acquire transferable skills and also to network with like-minded peers, other NGOs, business owners and government bodies. By May 2020, 85 youth had been provided with internship opportunities which allowed them to obtain learning experiences in prospective Blue Economy careers. Every year, SYAH also organizes an inter-school competition on topics related to sustainable development.

The extensive investment in education, which has accounted for at least 10 per cent of the annual budget since at least 2018, has proven to be very rewarding for the country. In fact, it has greatly contributed to Seychelles joining the ranks of countries with a very high development index, according to UNDP's 2019 Human Development Report. The country's literacy rate is 95.4 per cent and net enrolment across all school levels is over 80 per cent, indicating high participation in education.

The 'Education Sector Medium Term Strategic Plan 2018-2022 and Beyond' provides the main guidance to further transform the education and training and human resource development landscape, with a view to greatly improving the quality of overall student development and learning outcomes for all in a cost-

effective and sustainable manner. In 2015, Seychelles launched its Inclusive Education Policy to reinforce the Government's vision for giving all children opportunities to develop and succeed, with particular attention given to those with special educational needs. This Policy set forth a new agenda for improvement and action in enhancing educational opportunities for all learners. In particular, the School for the Exceptional Child (SEC) caters for students with special needs and has a ratio of four students per teacher. However, while the education sector has adapted to be more inclusive, a need persists to further break down barriers to participation and belonging in education.

It is now a decade since Seychelles began to implement active policies to support early childhood development, as part of the country's firm belief that the early stages of childhood provide the foundation for nation building. In November 2019, the Institute for Early Childhood Development (IECD) was acknowledged as a UNESCO Global Category II Institute for Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD). Thus, Seychelles is globally recognized as a leader in this field, and is in a position to provide global intellectual and operational leadership, as well as capacity building to other member states. Furthermore, in order to strengthen ECCD, it was announced during this year's State of the Nation Address that financial assistance will be offered to all Seychellois children who are enrolled in registered Day Care and Childminding Service. This is being done to support parents by reducing the cost of childcare before children commence formal preschool or crèche education. The aim is also to encourage parents to enrol their children in registered services that are implementing quality early care and education standards, for the young children's holistic development and readiness for formal schooling.

As globalization has greatly advanced, Seychelles has also increasingly recognized the critical importance of education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) for advancing socio-economic development. Unfortunately, students' results for STEM-related subjects in the country's International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examinations could have been better (**Error! Reference source not found.**). It is therefore of utmost importance that enhancing the educational outcomes in these subject areas are prioritized and additional resources are diverted to them. The National Institute of Science, Technology and Innovation (NISTI) has taken the lead for reigniting interest in STEM-related subjects among students. NISTI is thus promoting the launch of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) clubs at secondary schools. This is particularly in line with the country's vision of transitioning from an economy driven by economic efficiency to an innovation-driven knowledge-based economy. In addition to the promotion of STI clubs in schools, NISTI has also launched a national STEM programme at extra-curricular level. The aim of the programme is to sensitize students on frontier technologies that are relevant to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). The sensitization programme is intended to prepare the young generation for the future, so that Seychelles is not left behind in the 4IR. The technologies include robotics, artificial intelligence, unmanned vehicles (drones), Renewable Energy Space 2.0, and others that are relevant to the local context.

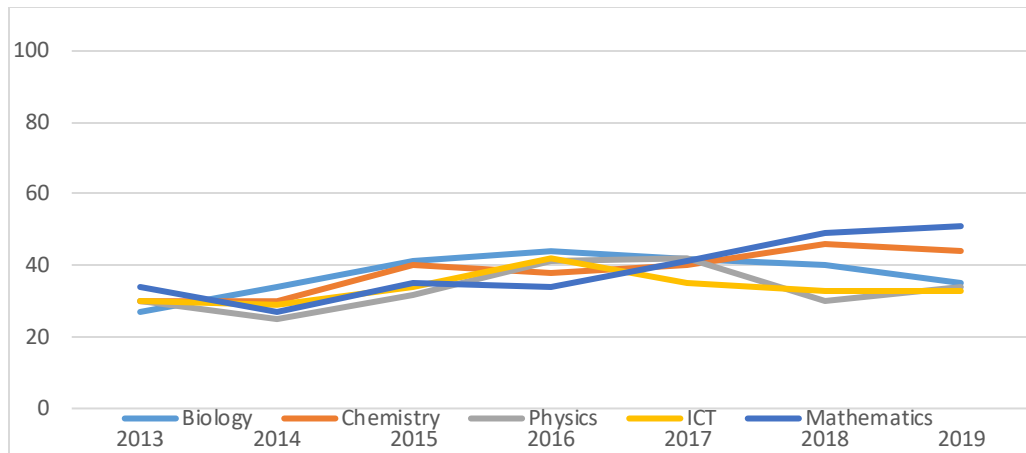


Figure 6: Proportion of secondary students with Grade C or better, selected subjects, 2013-2020

Source: Education Management Information system, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development

In 2014, the 'ICT in Education' strategy was introduced, to standardize how information and communications technologies are taught. As part of the school curriculum students are able to develop and enhance their ICT competencies. A key enabler for this is that free internet access is provided to all schools, as part of a partnership between the Government and the private sector.

Although the education system has continuously been improving and accessibility is not an issue, as of late there has been a strong focus on strengthening the quality of the education system. This now requires a renewed emphasis from every partner in education on meeting their individual and collective responsibilities. In going forward parents, students, teachers and school administrators will sign a social contract to ensure that all partners in education honour their obligations. This new approach will ensure that students and teachers work in an environment that supports learning, have high standards, and improve results.

Moreover, in order to further strengthen the education system, there has been significant investment in the teaching profession. At present, much of the teaching workforce is ageing while new teachers have received insufficient training. One of the education sector's priorities is to develop a stable and sustainable teaching workforce, which is responsive to complex student needs and the growing demands of society in the face of global challenges. It is becoming more and more difficult to attract young candidates of good academic profile, as less and less students are choosing teaching as their first choice, but instead choosing it as an alternative. The Aspiring Teacher programme was launched in 2015 and aims to attract students who might aspire to become teachers from Secondary 3 to Secondary 5, from the School of Advanced Level Studies (SALS) and from other professional centres. The programme includes a number of mentorship and internship initiatives.

The technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector in Seychelles is guided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Education 2030 Framework of Action, as well as the UNESCO TVET Strategy 2016-2021. As part of education and training reform, the Government will also be establishing a new Technical and Vocational School, which will take in students from the existing 'General and Skills' pathway that runs concurrently with the 'Academic and Technical' pathway in all secondary schools at Secondary 4 and Secondary 5 levels. Through our partnership with China, we will be receiving funds for the construction of the school. The main objective of the new school,

which will be operational by 2022, is to better prepare students who are not performing well academically to gain the knowledge and competence to better integrate into the country's economy. Training will cover growing sectors such as information technology, construction, fisheries, the blue economy and engineering.



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The Seychelles Institute of Technology (SIT) was established in 2015 as a professional centre providing high quality technical and vocational education and training in the engineering, built environment and information and communication technology fields. In addition, the institution has also undertaken initiatives in sustainability, renewable energy, and energy efficiency. This has led to SIT being recognized as one of the ten centres participating actively in the innovation-hub project being piloted by UNESCO-UNEVOC, the International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. SIT is particularly acknowledged for educating students on acquiring practical skills, expertise and understanding necessary for employment in particular occupations, trades or groups of occupations. The institution is working in partnership with its key stakeholders, such as businesses and other trade organizations.

One of Seychelles' most notable achievements as a country is the national university, the University of Seychelles, which was established in 2009. In the last decade, the young university has produced over 2,000 students who have contributed to the development of the country. Following its creation, an increasing number of students have benefited from government scholarships to pursue their further studies locally or overseas, based on their choice of study. The Agency of National Human Resources Development (ANHRD) is playing a key role in managing and administering the Government of Seychelles' scholarships scheme and tertiary training fund. Academically deserving students receive opportunities to train further in line with the human resource needs of the country. Scholarships are also available, on a merit basis, to adults who are already in employment.

In line with the lifelong learning philosophy the Guy Morel Institute (TGMI), another very important training institution, provides in-service professional development training for both private and public organizations. This includes short-term and long-term professional courses in fields such as entrepreneurship, management, leadership, human resources, and accounting and finance. In addition, the Seychelles Institute of Distance and Open Learning (SIDOL) facilitates access to education and lifelong learning for out-of-school young people and adults seeking upgrading, training, life skills and enhancing

opportunities for employment. One of SIDOL's most successful courses has been the literacy programme, which is offered to all citizens with the objective of helping eradicate illiteracy. Since its inception in 1971, the literacy rate has increased from 61.1 per cent to the 95.4 per cent figure in 2019.

Way forward

Although Seychelles has a well-developed education system, the focus now is on achieving quality education for all. In moving forward, the country is committed to promoting greater and more effective inclusiveness in education and lifelong learning. Moreover, more coordinated efforts will be made to address the current skills mismatch, so that education is always responsive to the needs of the economy. In overcoming the identified challenges in the education sector, it is our priority to build on our successes and implement our strategies accordingly.

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

5 GENDER
EQUALITY



Legal and policy framework

The Seychelles Constitution guarantees the right to equal protection before the law for “every person without discrimination on any ground”. Furthermore, the Seychellois Charter of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms (Chapter 3 of the Constitution), which incorporates many of the principles of international human rights instruments, guarantees 25 rights equally to both men and women. Article 48 of the Constitution provides for fundamental human rights and freedoms in Seychelles to be interpreted in a manner consistent with all of the international human rights obligations of Seychelles. The Seychelles Constitution guarantees that “Every person has a right to equal protection of the law including the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set out in this Charter without discrimination on any ground except as is necessary in a democratic society.” Article 30 recognizes the unique status and natural maternal functions of women in society. It endeavours to take appropriate measures to ensure that all working mothers are afforded special protection with regard to paid leave and working conditions before and after childbirth. The Constitution is therefore assumed to be gender-neutral to a large extent.

The 2013 HBS reaffirmed the notion that Seychelles is a matriarchal society, as 58 per cent¹⁰ of households are headed by females. The HBS further revealed that over half of the female heads of households were single, separated, divorced or widowed. This was reflective of past data from the 2010 Census and the 2011 Labour Force Survey. Thus the persistent dominance of female heads of households may be attributed to the absence of a male spouse or partner in their household rather than the dominance of females over males.

Table 2: Distribution of heads of households by sex

Sex	Census 2010	Labour Force Survey 2011	Household Budget Survey 2013
Male	49	42	42
Female	51	58	58

Source: Census 2010, LFS 2011, HBS 2013

In 2019, the labour force of Seychelles comprised of 49.8 per cent males and 50.2 per cent females. This represents a 0.7 per cent increase in the male proportion and a decrease of 0.7 per cent in the female proportion of the labour force since 2018. In comparison, gender disparity was observed among the youth population (aged 15-24), whereby the labour force for 2019 consisted of 54.3 per cent males and 45.7 per cent females; this is similar to 2018 when 57.3 per cent of the youth labour force was male and 42.7 per cent female. The factors limiting female participation in politics and private enterprises, including girls having to drop out of the educational system due to pregnancy and lack of willingness to further their studies

Seychelles has achieved 50 per cent women in decision-making in the Cabinet of Ministers and in the public service sector, and women have surpassed the 50 per cent target for female representation at the level of Principal Secretaries and senior managers, with a figure of over 70 per cent senior decision-making

¹⁰ Household Budget Survey 2013, National Bureau of Statistics

levels in local governance. Spearheaded by the Ministry of Family Affairs, a National Gender Policy (NGP) was adopted in 2016, with the main goal “To provide national guidelines for institutionalising and operationalizing gender as an integral component of our sustainable development”.¹¹ The NGP covers areas including constitutional and legal rights, governance, education and training productive resources, climate change, as well as food and nutrition security. The Policy is guided by the gender mainstreaming approaches of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the United Nations. The Policy is principally aligned to the key provisions of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

In terms of Seychelles’ commitment to the implementation of international conventions and agreements which reinforce the values of gender equality, Seychelles is signatory to the above-mentioned SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which encompasses commitments made in all sub-regional, continental and global instruments for achieving gender equality. The African Union (AU) recently made an award to Seychelles under the category ‘Implementation of anti-corruption policies’ of the Gender Scorecard, where the theme for 2018 was “Winning the fight against corruption: a gender sensitive path for the transformation of Africa”. The award is in recognition of the measurable progress that Seychelles has made in integrating gender equality and women’s empowerment into efforts to fight corruption on the continent of Africa.

Gender-based violence

Seychelles has developed a national plan of action on gender-based violence (GBV). The Ministry of Family Affairs is increasing awareness of the issue following a rise in the number of GBV cases, including four murders reported in January 2019, all of which were results of domestic disputes. The objective¹² of the national plan of action for GBV is to prevent all forms of gender-based violence in the public and private spheres and to provide integrated services to survivors and perpetrators. The plan encompasses various actions to be taken to address and eliminate gender-based violence in the country.

The 2016 Seychelles National Baseline Study found that the reported GBV rate is relatively high in Seychelles. While both women and men reported experiencing violence, a greater proportion of women (57.7 per cent) than men (43.1 per cent) reporting experiencing violence (in all its forms). In the study, 39.6 per cent of men and 30.9 per cent of women reported having perpetrated GBV. Most of those who reported incidents of GBV reported that they had experienced intimate partner violence (IPV): 53.8 per cent of the women and 43.1 per cent of the men surveyed had suffered IPV, while 40.1 per cent of men and 39.9 per cent of women had perpetrated it.

The predominant form of violence within intimate relationships is emotional, which involves the perpetrator belittling the victim and using insults and verbal abuse. Forty-three per cent of the women and 29 per cent of the men had experienced emotional IPV in their lifetime. An equal proportion (33 per cent) of women and men stated that they had perpetrated emotional violence against an intimate partner. Thirty-nine per cent of the women and 12 per cent of the men had experienced physical IPV. Over

¹¹ National Gender Policy (2016)

¹² <http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/10472/After+increase+in+gender-based+violence%2C+Seychelles+pushes+for+action+plan>

33 per cent of women but only 9 per cent of men had experienced economic violence. Meanwhile, 19 per cent of women said they had faced abuse during pregnancy.

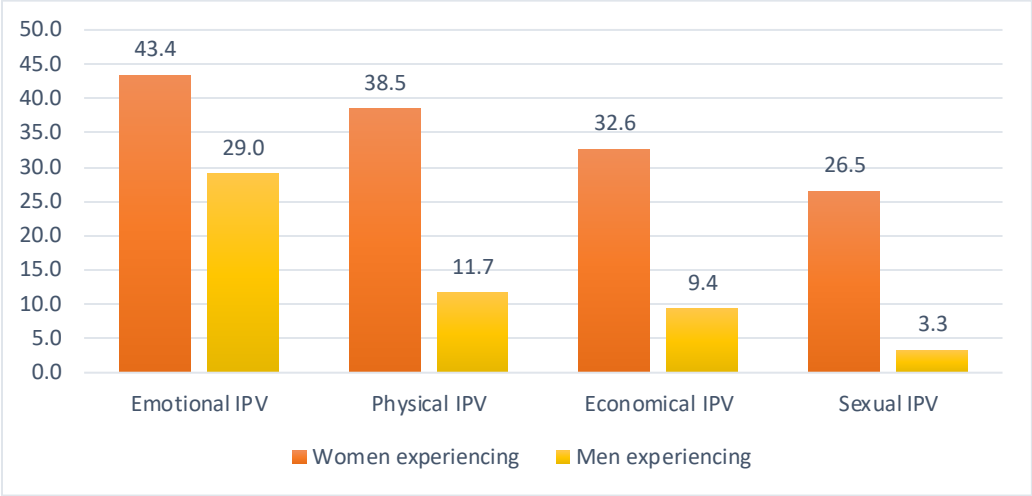


Figure 7: Forms of intimate partner violence experienced in lifetime
Source: Gender Secretariat

Research published by the Commonwealth in 2018¹³ made estimates of the economic losses both directly and indirectly attributed to VAWG. VAWG is a major violation of human rights and a significant public health issue. The research concluded that the estimated economic cost of VAWG in Seychelles is high. This high level of cost calls for urgent preventive action (see .

¹³ Economic Costs of Violence Against Women & Girls (2018), Non-technical Executive Summary, The Commonwealth

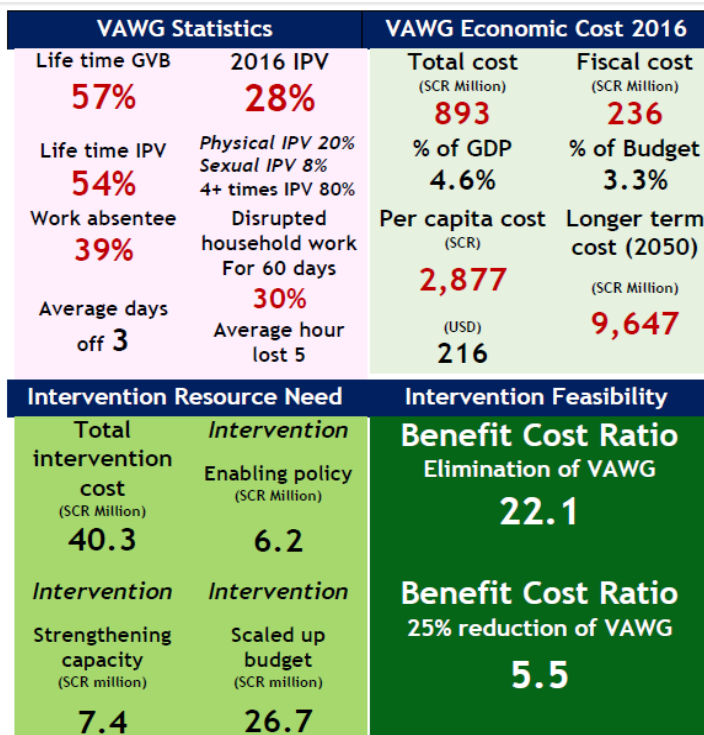


Figure 8: Costs of violence against women and girls and interventions
Source: Commonwealth

Seychelles is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In 2018, the CEDAW Committee made a set of recommendations based on the Sixth periodic report submitted by Seychelles under article 18 of the CEDAW. Seychelles has subsequently taken initial steps to address these recommendations through the formulation of the **CEDAW Follow-up Plan of Action 2020-2023**, being undertaken by the Ministry of Family Affairs. The remedial actions to be undertaken include adopting, without delay, a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women in its Constitution, covering all internationally recognized prohibited grounds of discrimination and encompassing direct and indirect discrimination in both the public and private spheres, including intersecting forms of discrimination against women.

This complements the approach of the GBV Plan of Action 2019-2023 which aims to;

- Ensure that all key populations at higher risk of being the target of violence¹⁴ are aware of the criminal nature of GBV and IPV, encourage survivors to claim their rights and report violent incidents, and inspire men and boys to take a stand against violence.
- Strengthen national capacity in GBV research, by building on the 2006 domestic violence survey
- Build skills capacity of service providers to professionally implement standardised & integrated services.

¹⁴ Including but not limited to men, boys, women and girls, people with disabilities, the elderly, sex workers, migrant workers, transgendered persons and others.

- Ensure adapted, integrated & comprehensive assistance & care to survivors of GBV, including access to shelters, legal aid, health, medical & psychological support, and counselling & rehabilitation services.
- End impunity of GBV perpetrators
- Ensure protection of GBV survivors
- Ensure access to justice in reasonable time periods

As part of Seychelles' commitment to attaining gender equality, it is perhaps worth noting that the country observes both International Men's and Women's Day. On Men's Day (19 November) in 2019, Seychelles joined the rest of the world to celebrate the positive values men bring to the world, their families and communities under the theme 'Men leading by example'. This was also an opportunity to highlight some issues affecting boys and men in the country, while at the same time encouraging men to teach the boys in their lives the values, character and responsibilities of being a man. This includes dealing with health issues that affect males, improving relations between the genders, highlighting the importance of male role models and promoting gender equality.

In celebration of International Women's Day in 2018 the national carrier, Air Seychelles, operated an iconic flight between Seychelles and Johannesburg, South Africa with a female captain and a team of all-female cabin crew. At the controls of flight HM061 was Captain Nicole Changleng, while the guests were looked after by the all-female cabin crew. Captain Changleng joined Air Seychelles in 1997 as a First Officer on the Twin Otter aircraft, before eventually attaining her commander's bars for the Airbus A330. This was a proud moment for the national carrier, which has a relatively gender-balanced workforce.



(Salifa Karapetyan, Seychelles News Agency) Photo licence: CC-BY

Way Forward

Seychelles has made remarkable progress in empowering men, women, boys and girls by ensuring the formulation and implementation of the proper legal and policy frameworks. This is noticeable from the extent to which women are leading in both the public and the private sectors. However further sensitization of the public on the positive roles of men and women across society will be instrumental for reducing social ills such as GBV and gender-based discrimination. The NGP makes several recommendations going forward. These include;

- Raise awareness and build the capacity of men and women decision-makers to become gender champions at all levels of government, agencies, state-owned enterprises and the private sector.
- Strengthen gender mainstreaming capacity in educational and training institutions.
- Identify barriers to women in traditionally male-dominated fields, including STEM sectors, and increase opportunities for women in these sectors at all levels.

It should be noted that the Gender Secretariat within the Department of Family Affairs is advocating for further research on women's empowerment in Seychelles, focusing on the factors limiting female participation in politics and private enterprises. On a broader level, the Government and other stakeholders remain engaged in promoting women's economic empowerment to permit them to participate equally with men in the economic sector; easing access to existing markets and productive resources and obtaining decent work and equal pay. Activities such as awareness raising campaigns for young people will be of great importance, as will targeting boys and men as transformative agents in changing societal norms and attitude towards violence against women. In addition, ensuring the availability of safe havens and supportive services for GBV survivors remains important so that eventually they can have control over their lives.

In going forward, the role of sound data and statistical frameworks will have to be strengthened, to ensure accurate reporting, monitoring and evaluation of gender issues. International partnerships are essential, particularly with bilateral and multilateral development partners, to provide assistance and training for local statisticians and data collectors to sensitize them on the importance of gender-disaggregated data.

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all



Goal 6 calls for implementation of integrated water resources management, and the protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems. Moreover, it encourages the expansion of international cooperation and capacity building in activities related to water and sanitation and the strengthening of local communities' participation in improving water and sanitation management. **Target 6.1** calls for the achievement of universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all by 2030. This target had largely been met as early as 2010, with 93 per cent of households at the time having potable water supply. Furthermore, the proportion of people using at least basic sanitation services was 100 per cent in 2015.

The primary sources of water in Seychelles are reservoirs, rivers and boreholes. Depending on the intensity of the dry season, the Public Utilities Corporation (PUC) also operates six desalination plants on Mahé, Praslin and La Digue to supplement the supply of potable water and mitigate the risk of water restrictions for its customers. During 2018, a total of 13,245,074 m³ of water was produced for all the three islands, of which 2,107,822 m³ (16%) was produced by the desalination plants.¹⁵

Table 3: Production of water, by island, cubic metres

	Total Production m ³	Desalination Volume m ³	Potable Water Volume m ³
Mahé	10,985,378	1,790,245	9,195,133
Praslin	1,678,521	121,792	1,556,729
La Digue	581,175	195,785	385,390
Total	13,245,074	2,107,822	11,137,252

Source: Public Utilities Corporation, Annual Report 2018, November 2019

Currently demand for water exceeds supply in Seychelles during the dry months due to a lack of raw water storage. The growing demand for water spurs not only from the country's ever-growing population and the increasing number of visitors but also from other socio-economic developments in the country. The La Gogue dam is the biggest reservoir on the island of Mahe, with a capacity of 1 million m³. In order to improve water resilience, the capacity of the largest reservoir in the country, the La Gogue Dam, is being increased. A feasibility study financed by the African Development Bank (AfDB) has indicated that raising the reservoir by 6 metres will increase the storage capacity by 60 per cent (from 1 million m³ to 1.6 million m³). The dam, project, co-financed by the Government and the African Development Bank through a partial loan and grant, will be operational from June 2020. In addition to increased storage capacity, it will also be equipped with monitoring instruments to ensure its efficient operation. The dam is expected to

¹⁵ http://www.puc.sc/wp-includes/pdfs/Notices/2019/november/PUC_Annual_Report_2018.pdf

have its own water treatment plant in the near future, which will considerably reduce the load on other water treatment plants and consequently enhance water supply networks in the North of Mahé .

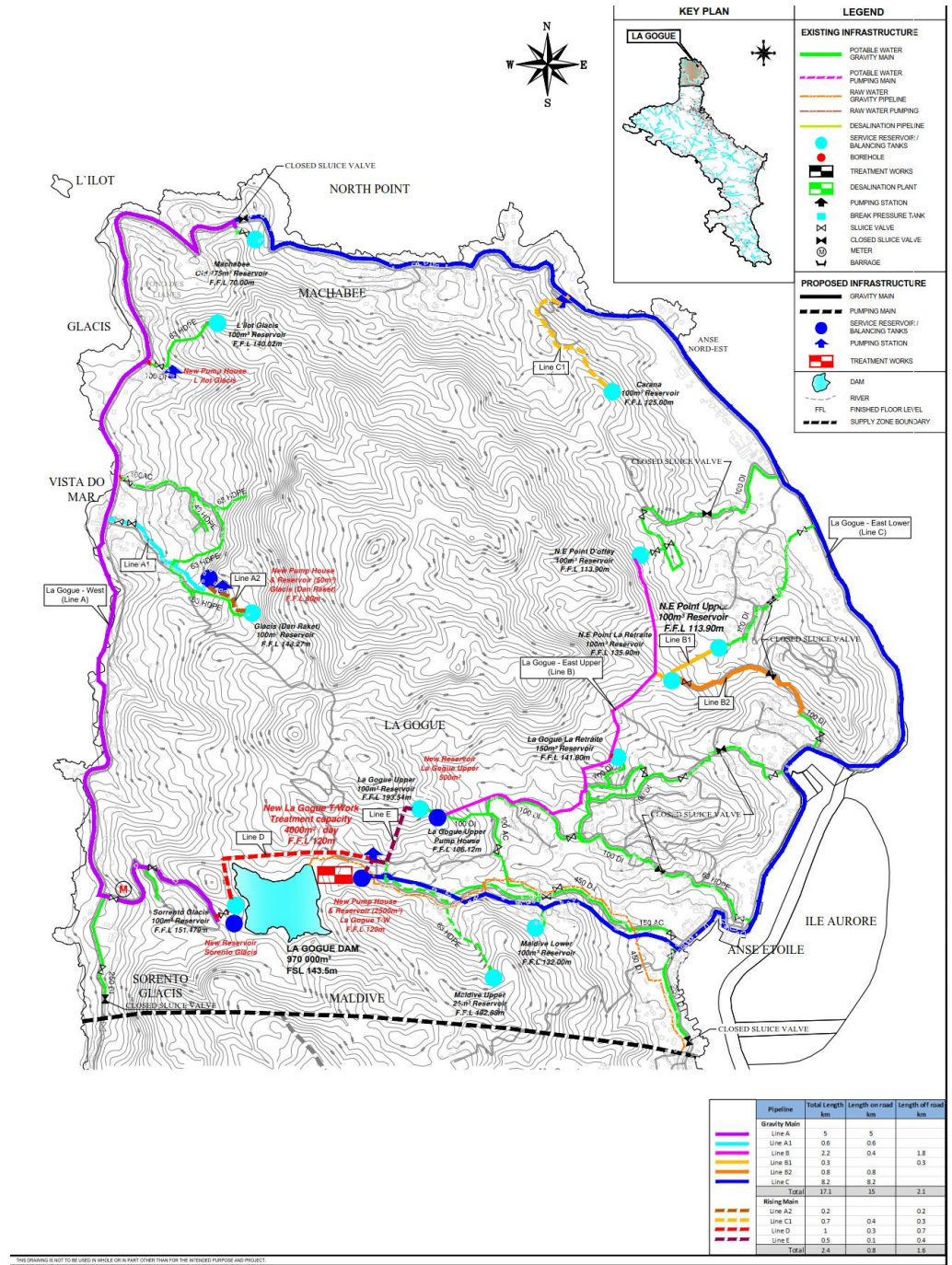
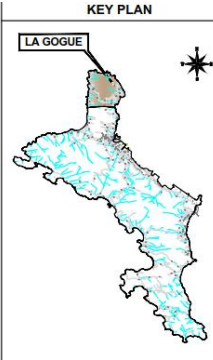
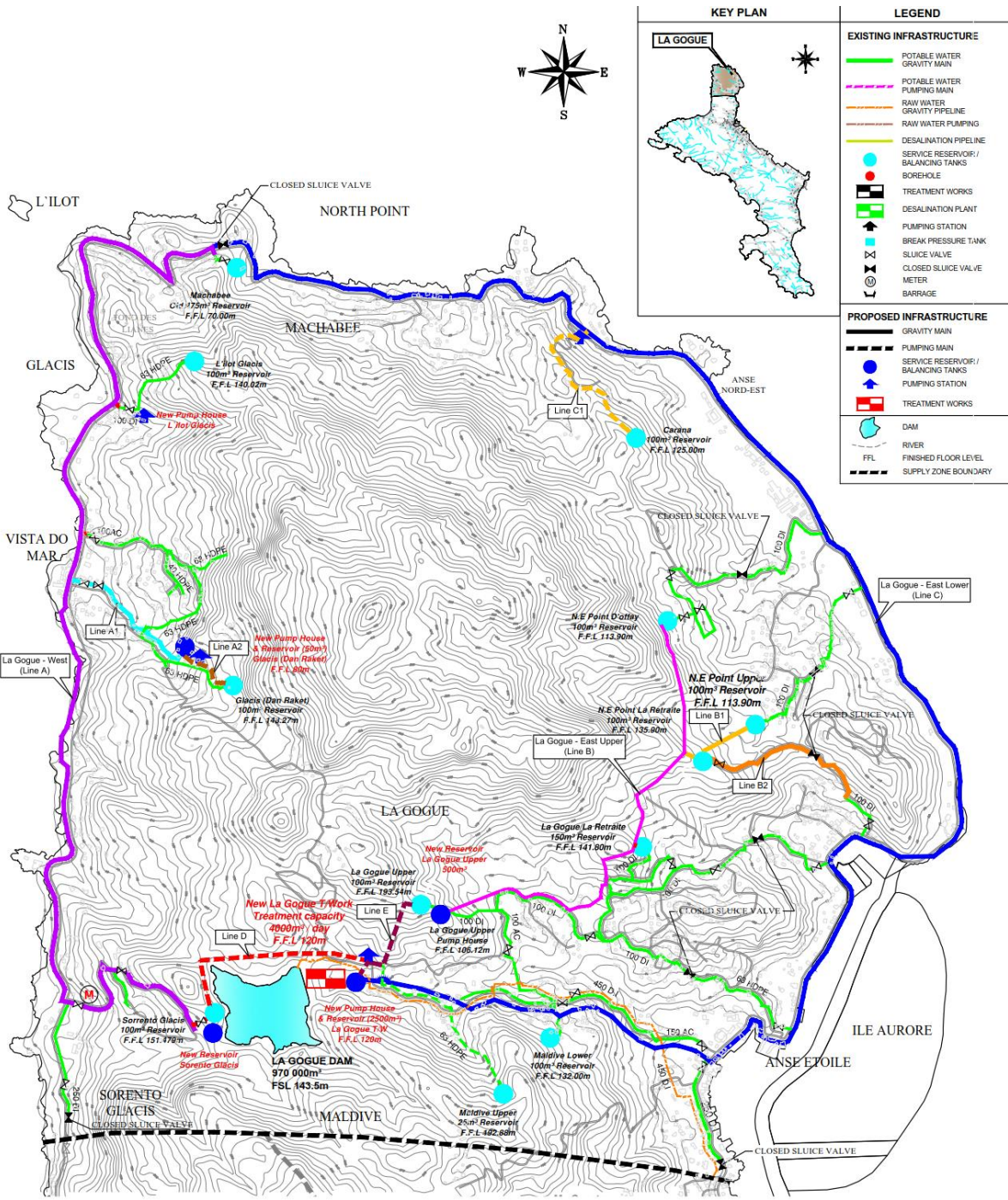


Figure 9: Site Map of La Gogue Dam Project in north of Mahe.



LEGEND	
EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE	
	POTABLE WATER GRAVITY MAIN
	POTABLE WATER PUMPING MAIN
	RAW WATER GRAVITY PIPELINE
	RAW WATER PUMPING
	DESALINATION PIPELINE
	SERVICE RESERVOIR / BALANCING TANKS
	BORHOLE
	TREATMENT WORKS
	DESALINATION PLANT
	PUMPING STATION
	BREAK PRESSURE TANK
	SLUICE VALVE
	CLOSED SLUICE VALVE
	METER
	BARRAGE
PROPOSED INFRASTRUCTURE	
	GRAVITY MAIN
	PUMPING MAIN
	SERVICE RESERVOIR / BALANCING TANKS
	PUMPING STATION
	TREATMENT WORKS
	DAM
	RIVER
	F.F.L FINISHED FLOOR LEVEL
	SUPPLY ZONE BOUNDARY

Pipeline	Total Length km	Length on road km	Length off road km
Gravity Main			
Line A	5	5	
Line A1	0.6	0.6	
Line B	2.2	0.4	1.8
Line B1	0.3		0.3
Line B2	0.8	0.8	
Line C	8.2		8.2
Total	17.1	15	2.1
Rising Main			
Line A2	0.2		0.2
Line C1	0.7	0.4	0.3
Line D	1	0.3	0.7
Line E	0.5	0.1	0.4
Total	2.4	0.8	1.6

THIS DRAWING IS NOT TO BE USED IN WHOLE OR IN PART OTHER THAN FOR THE INTENDED PURPOSE AND PROJECT.

Project Neptune

Currently, water storage facilities in Seychelles do not sufficiently capture the 2300mm of rainfall that the Seychelles receives annually. Studies in 2010 and 2011 confirmed that water deficits will worsen over time, and have an increasingly adverse economic, social, and environmental impact on Seychelles. Additionally, around 38 per cent of the water produced is in fact non-revenue water: it is lost either due to leaks or breaks in the distribution system, or it is not paid for by consumers.

With average daily demand of 38,000 m³ per day, and a water supply deficit of approximately 2.1 million m³ during the dry season, the PUC has developed the Seychelles Water Supply Development Plan (SWSDP) 2008-2030 to propose solutions for the challenges faced by the water sector in Seychelles. The SWSDP is being implemented to revamp the country's water supply system and alleviate water deficits. A significant part of the revitalization programme that resulted from the SWSDP is "**Project Neptune**", and this is being co-financed by the Government of Seychelles, the European Investment Bank (EIB), Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the European Development Fund (EDF) and the African Water Facility (AWF). The programme also encompasses improvements to the technical capacity of PUC staff and upgrading of tools to help ensure efficient operation of water and sanitation facilities.

Project Neptune involves:

- A water demand management programme, including promoting rain water harvesting and household water storage, a water conservation awareness campaign, and promotion of by-laws and water saving devices.
- Upgrading and increasing by 50 per cent the production capacity of the six existing desalination plants located in Mahé, Praslin and La Digue islands that have a total output of 24,050 m³ a day.
- Reducing of non-revenue water in Mahé's water supply network, including the replacement of old pipes, analysis and replacement of bulk and customer meters, and the purchasing of software and hardware, leak detection and pressure management equipment.
- Optimizing and increasing efficiency and adapting key components of the water supply system in Mahé, namely the Hermitage and Cascade water treatment plants and trunk mains.
- An energy audit and equipment for reduction of energy consumption.
- Technical assistance and project management support, and also capacity building for operation of the water and sanitation systems, including design and implementation of environmental, water resources and disaster mitigation and management systems; and
- Other management programmes related to environmental, water resources, and risk mitigation.

Project Neptune is the first water project supported by the EIB in Africa that specifically focuses on reducing the threat of, and ensuring long-term preparation for, climate change. The initiative will seek to both mitigate the risk of water rationing, which could pose a serious threat to economic activity and the quality of life in Seychelles, and ensure better management of waste water, to avoid health risks and water contamination.

Sewerage

Challenges persist in the management of sewage, with only four sewage treatment plants currently in operation, all of which are in need of repair to cope with current and future demand. The existing sewage treatment and disposal system in Seychelles consists primarily of septic tanks with soak pits for most households and buildings. Only 15 per cent of the population is currently connected to the PUC sewerage network, with a significant number of houses located in the vicinity of the sewerage networks, while the

remaining 85 per cent makes provision for their own septic tanks, which are pumped when necessary as they are not connected to the central network.

Strong rainfall and high groundwater levels make Seychelles susceptible to flooding. With no sewer system at altitudes above 200m, and in the context of the growing population, the Government has recognized a critical need for an Integrated and Comprehensive Sanitation Master Plan (ICSMP). The Plan, financed by the AfricaWater Facility Fund, aims at providing strategic guidance for the sanitation sector for a period of 25 years, thereby adopting a new paradigm of “waste is a resource”. This is to be achieved through exploring innovative sanitation solutions focusing on the three main populated islands: Mahe, Praslin and La Digue. Moreover, the ICSMP seeks to deliver two long-term impacts: to improve Seychelles’ environment and Seychelles’ health and sanitation conditions.

Case Study: “Water Is Life” campaign



The PUC has launched the “**Water is Life – Value It**” campaign as an important part of Project Neptune. The campaign addresses environmental, social and economic dimensions in an inclusive manner, sharing water efficiency and conservation tips to help consumers use water wisely. It also provides information about the steps being taken to improve Seychelles’ water supply and distribution system through posters, documentaries, media briefings, television and radio spots, and an educational activity book for school children. In addition to traditional media channels, PUC is also ensuring mass dissemination through television and radio spots, as well as the documentaries, available

on its website and YouTube channel.¹⁶

The “**Water is Life – Value It**” campaign is aimed at informing and educating customers about responsible water resource management by sharing information on how to reduce their water consumption. The campaign also appries members of the public about how the water supply and distribution system functions, how water is priced, and how consumers can reduce their water use and their water bills. Both leaks and illegal connections result in lost revenue and increased costs for all paying customers, while water leaks and non-revenue water account for around 38 per cent of total water consumption in Seychelles. The water conservation campaign will address the need for public support for identifying and reporting leaking water pipes and illegal connections to the water system.

Valuing and making wiser use of water resources are essential if Seychelles is to continue to meet water resource needs now and in the future. PUC is working hard to reduce water leakages and increase its water storage and desalination capacities. The public also has an important role to play in the management of water resources by ensuring that they are using water wisely, reporting leaks and unlawful connections, and reducing impacts on the environment. PUC’s water conservation campaign is also a tangible means for supporting Seychelles to achieve SDG 6: ‘Sustainable management of water and sanitation for all’.¹⁷

¹⁶ <https://youtu.be/MTGFmmGosH0>

¹⁷ <http://www.puc.sc/about-the-water-is-life-campaign/>

The Role of the Government

The Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (MECC) has been active in its water campaigns towards achieving SDG Goal 6 by 2030. This has been clear from its adoption of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), and its IWRM project has led to the country's first National Water Policy being drafted and approved. Implementation of this project has also led to the drafting of the first National Water Act and led to discussions about separating the role of water provider from that of water tariff regulator.

Through this project and another entitled "Resource Efficiency Project:", the Government has promoted the installation of rainwater harvesting (RWH) systems and water efficiency devices in households and has also instigated pilot projects for RWH systems in several public schools on the island of Mahe. These have been designed and installed by local craftspeople, thus building local capacity in the country to complete such installations. The Government has also worked with the PUC to establish a 5 million rupee loan scheme at 0 per cent interest for households to purchase and install RWH systems and potable water storage tanks to help the people build resilience in the face of water effects of climate change.

In order to tackle water-stressed environments, the Ecosystem-based Approach project under the Adaptation Fund has conducted several pieces of work to protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands and rivers; this has provided relief to farmers and residents in areas experiencing water shortages. The project's community-based approach has enabled residents take an active part in caring for the ecosystem and ensured continuity and community ownership of the restored areas.

In 2017 the MEECC conducted its first ever Water Month, with the whole month of March being dedicated to water-related activities involving public, parastatal and private stakeholders, school children and NGO groups to raise awareness of and involvement in water-related challenges and activities. This has been followed by celebrating World Water Day every year on 22 March, with various activities to engage and educate members of the public about water.

Case Study: Water Smart Farms

Sustainability for Seychelles (S4S) is an NGO seeking to promote sustainable 'green' living in Seychelles in partnership with the Government, private sector and other NGOs. In collaboration with the Val d'Endore Farmers Association (VFA), a Water Smart Farms project was initiated in an effort to address water and energy waste, which had been a persistent issue for the farmers. Members of the association were introduced to the concept of drip irrigation, in order to cut down on use of both electricity and water. Water harvesting features prominently in the delivery of the project, with the topography used for installation of tanks. The elevated nature of the land allows for gravity to be used instead of electricity to pump water into the tanks.

Way Forward

At an individual level, consumers can contribute towards the attainment of this goal by guarding against water leaks, and by taking simple steps to use water more efficiently, such as using water-efficient appliances and re-using water for household purposes. Residential consumers, as well as larger

commercial consumers, can also consider installing rainwater harvesting systems as a way to help reduce consumption of treated water and reduce dependence on external sources. This advances the promotion of water classification, a method used to categorize watercourses into classes. With this, rainwater can be collected and used in swimming pools instead of use of treated water. Doing this could greatly reduce use of fossil fuels for water treatment.

At the broader level, all parties concerned will strive to meet the demand for water for various uses. Augmenting capacity to treat and store water appropriately remains pivotal in meeting national water needs. To date, the partnerships which Seychelles has forged have allowed for major developments and improvements to the provision of water and sanitation facilities. These will prove increasingly important as these relationships can be leveraged to build the capacity of local counterparts and improve the infrastructure and quality of water management. Flagship projects such as the raising of the La Gogue dam will ensure a steady and reliable supply of water for the coming years, and symbolize the bold steps which Seychelles has taken in this regard.

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all



As a small island developing state, Seychelles is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and improving energy security by transitioning to cleaner energy sources. This is a key strategy in the National Development Strategy 2019-2023 and will greatly assist Seychelles to foster a more resilient economy. Although the country has fairly favourable conditions for generating renewable energy, such as wind and solar, only 5 per cent of the country's energy needs are currently met from renewable sources. Numerous challenges prevent small island developing states such as Seychelles from making transformative changes: these include limited space for solar PV installation, technical challenges and lack of firm sources of renewable energy.

In addition to major energy security concerns, the heavy reliance on imported fossil fuels – which account for about 25 per cent of the country's total net imports – is also placing considerable pressure on foreign exchange reserves. This will be exacerbated in the future due to the rapidly growing demand for electricity in the country. Between 2010 and 2018, the average growth rate of electricity consumption was 6.3 per cent per year.

Therefore, the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change is making concerted efforts to promote the production of renewable energy and implement energy efficiency measures to reduce the amount of fuel imported to the country. This includes strong collaboration with the electricity regulator, the Seychelles Energy Commission (created after the 2007-2008 oil crisis) and the Public Utilities Corporation (PUC), the sole provider of electricity to the public. There has also been extensive collaboration with the private sector, civil society, development partners and other government bodies in making the transition towards renewable energy.



Sustainability for Seychelles

Sustainability for Seychelles (S4S) is an NGO which seeks to promote sustainable, “green” living in Seychelles in collaboration with citizens, the government, other NGOs and the private sector. One of its strategies for this is to promote renewable energy technologies and efficient use of energy. The NGO has implemented several renewable energy projects, particularly focused on raising awareness. In 2017, it launched the “Solar PV Challenge for Schools” a mini science fair competition intended to stimulate use of the equipment in state schools to promote the use of renewable energy. For the competition, schools were invited to design and build toys, models or other devices that ran on electricity from solar PV kits. It was stressed that all entries should be built using recycled/waste materials as much as possible. S4S has also partnered with UNDP's Project Coordination Unit to develop a national campaign on renewable energy education, targeting decision-makers, the private sector and residents. The project involved conducting baseline research on current knowledge and practices, and developing the education campaign in collaboration with key stakeholders, including the growing number of renewable energy equipment suppliers in Seychelles.

The Seychelles Energy Policy 2010-2030 focuses on increasing energy efficiency and promoting renewable energy. The Policy states that the country aims to produce 5 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2020, and 15 per cent by 2030. In his 2020 State of the Nation Address, President Danny Faure announced that the national renewable energy target is rising from 15 per cent to 30 per cent by 2030. Moreover, the country has made the commitment to becoming 100 per cent renewable by 2050 through Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). A comprehensive electricity master plan has been formulated in alignment with the national energy policy to achieve nationwide goals for the electricity sector in Seychelles over the next 10 to 15 years. In this context, a 100 per cent Renewable Energy Roadmap is being developed, which further strengthens and supports the country's National Climate Change Strategy and Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). These ambitious targets thus envisage accelerating the energy transition, and will undoubtedly lead to decarbonization of the energy sector.

In addition, Seychelles is benefitting as a small island developing state from international cooperation with the Institute for Environmental Analytics (Reading University), funded under the UK Space Agency International Partnership Programme (IPP) to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology through the use of the Renewable Energy Space Analytics Tool (RE-SAT). This is a powerful renewable energy platform to enable Seychelles to make informed decisions in its renewable energy planning, through analysis of the energy generation capacity and grid impact of various deployments of wind, solar and wave renewables, in order to maximize the impact of investment, reduce financial risk and reduce exposure to volatile fossil fuel markets. Combining Earth Observation data with innovative modelling, RE-SAT is supporting the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, offering a low carbon pathway for sustainable development and supporting the country's transition to a low-emission, climate-resilient future.

In 2013, Seychelles benefitted from a grant of US\$28 million from the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) for the construction of a 6 MW wind turbine plant. Known as the Port Victoria Wind Farm, this project was installed on two reclaimed islands; three wind turbines on Ile Du Port and five on Ile de Romainville. The farm generates an average 7 million kWh per year, accounting for around 1.7 per cent of total electricity consumption. The wind farm has translated into a savings of a maximum of 16 million rupees (1.8 million litres of heavy fuel oil) annually for the country.

Since the installation of the Port Victoria Wind Farm, the country has focused on the development of solar PV systems. In 2013, through the Government's PV project with UNDP and the Global Environment Facility, the SEC is promoting the installation of rooftop grid-connected PV systems focusing on 1) the institutional, policy and legal framework, 2) financial and promotional schemes, 3) education and 4) capacity building. Currently, there are more than 3.5 MW distributed PV systems installed on residential and commercial rooftop in Seychelles. Moreover, public buildings such as State House, the National Assembly, hospitals and police stations are benefiting from the installation of PV systems on their roofs. This will not only reduce electricity bills for the Government, but will also contribute to the country's plan to bring more solar energy into Seychelles' grid. The SEC is also implementing a Solar School Project under which all public schools in Seychelles will have PV systems installed on their roofs. To date, all schools on La Digue and Praslin have PV systems installed and contributing to their electricity consumption. On Mahe, there have only been four schools so far. Further funding is being sought under the South-South Co-operation Programme with Government of China to cover the remaining schools.

Additionally, the SEC is implementing a PV Rebate Programme under which residential and commercial consumers who install PV systems can receive a rebate payment of 25 per cent and 15 per cent respectively to offset their initial cost of the systems. The rebate programme is funded equally by the Government and GEF. To date, almost 65 per cent of the fund has been disbursed. Another incentive in place for the promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies is the VAT exemption. Under VAT Act and as endorsed by the SEC, all renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies are exempt of VAT.

In addition to these small distributed PV systems, Seychelles is also implementing two utility-scale PV systems to help meet its target for 2020. These are the 5 MW Ile Romainville PV Plant and the 4 MW Floating PV Plant in the Providence lagoon.

Started in November 2018, the 5 MWp PV Plant on Ile de Romainville being constructed by PUC will have the capacity to generate approximately 7 GWh of electricity yearly. This is equivalent to the electricity needs of approximately 2,000 homes and will contribute almost 2 per cent of the country's electricity consumption. The solar farm is being funded through a concessional loan from the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD), amounting to approximately US\$8.5 million, with the remainder from PUC's equity. The 4MW Floating PV Plant is scheduled to be the first utility-scale floating solar PV system in Africa. Moreover, Seychelles is also set to be the first country in the world to build a floating solar farm on a saltwater lagoon. The plant is expected to provide 5.8GWh of affordable and clean energy every year to the national grid and will thus contribute to a reduction in fossil fuel imports. The Floating PV Plant is intended to provide around 1.6 per cent of the total electricity consumption of the country. This innovative project is due to be implemented by the end of 2020, and care will be taken to prevent environmental damage.

In parallel to the above, the Government is also implementing a PV project targeting the most vulnerable sector of society. Known as the PV Democratization Project, the project aims at assisting vulnerable households who are currently receiving support from the Agency for Social Protection (ASP) to pay their utility bills by providing them with 3kW PV systems, either installed on their roofs or part of a 1 MW community PV plant (supplying almost 400 households) already installed on Ile de Romainville. The 3 kW PV system will provide them with 300 kWh per month. The project is funded under a grant from the Government. This project has also been extended to provide PV systems to government agencies. Almost 2 MW of solar PV capacity is expected to be installed under this project. These projects are in line with the Government's vision for the energy sector: to have a country powered by clean energy and harnessing more sustainable and cost-effective energy solutions. They will also help Seychelles reach its goals under the Paris Agreement of 2015 by reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

The Seychelles Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Programme (SEEREP) was launched in 2013 to assist families and small businesses to gain access to low-interest loans to invest in energy efficient electrical appliances and renewable energy. Through this programme, the Government is working closely with commercial banks as well as SEC to encourage households to purchase more renewable energy products and technologies. As an incentive for the commercial sector, interest rates start from 5 per cent for the purchase of solar photovoltaic panels. Already, a number of families and organizations from the public and local private sectors are making use of solar panels on their buildings.

The proposed energy efficiency bill was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in October 2019 and will be drafted by the Attorney General's Office. The proposed bill provides for energy efficiency in electrical

appliances through labelling and standards, buildings, establishment of energy service companies, energy management programme, the energy auditing profession, as well as financial and promotional schemes including the current VAT exemption rule.

Seychelles is strongly committed to the development of green mobility. The Seychelles Public Transportation Corporation (SPTC) is the country's only public transport provider and has been using diesel as its main source of energy. However, in a move towards cleaner energy, SPTC will be using 22 new electric buses donated by the Government of China from 2021. In order to further diversify energy sources, the Government is also setting an example by only procuring hybrid or electric vehicles as of 2020. This will also be part of the Government's plan to replace the current conventional vehicles. Moreover, the vehicle levy has been revised to encourage use of more electric vehicles. As an added incentive, the Government is also working with the Seychelles Petroleum Company (SEYPEC) to put solar panels and electric chargers on some of the petroleum depots so that electric vehicle owners can charge their vehicles directly from the station itself.

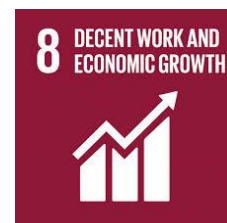
Given the benefits of modern energy, the country is also exploring the possibility of generating electricity from liquefied natural gas (LNG). Seychelles will potentially have its first LNG power station by 2023. This will be a major infrastructure investment. Recently, the Government conducted a feasibility study to establish the next steps. The country is seeking international assistance to support construction of the LNG power station. During a state visit in 2019 to Mozambique, which has natural gas reserves, there were discussions on how Seychelles could learn from its experience.

The low-carbon development pathway being taken by Seychelles presents a great number of investment opportunities for both locals and foreigners. The Seychelles Investment Board (SIB) has listed the energy sector among those in which investors can invest, focussing on renewable energy projects, such as those based on solar energy, PV and energy efficient technology. Moreover, as part of the new waste management policy, the construction of a waste-to-energy facility is listed as a potential solution for waste management.

Way Forward

Seychelles has energetically embraced the journey towards renewable energy for sustainable development. In setting such ambitious targets, the country has shown its steadfast commitment, and this has been further reinforced by embarking on and investing in innovative projects. By following through with the various plans made for the energy sector and through harnessing partnerships and opportunities, Seychelles is aiming to succeed in utilizing renewable sources, in a way that is both affordable and reliable, to satisfy the demand for energy.

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all



Since Seychelles' graduation to high-income economy status in 2015, the country has been faring well in comparison to most small island developing states. In June 2019, Fitch Ratings¹⁸ credit rating agency upgraded Seychelles' sovereign credit rating to 'BB'. This provides a promising outlook for Seychelles as it informs existing and potential investors about the country's creditworthiness. At the time, the contributing factors for the upgrade were the country's sustained forecasted primary surpluses and sustained economic growth, which has been consistent with the Government's medium-term target of bringing public debt below 50 per cent by 2021.¹⁹

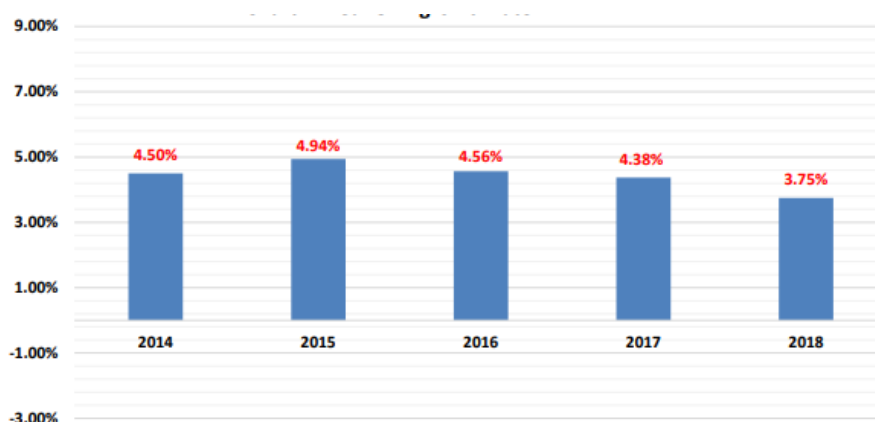


Figure 10: Gross domestic product, 2014-2018
Source: National Bureau of Statistics

Tourism sector

The economy of Seychelles is primarily services-oriented. The tourism sector contributes significantly to the country's economy, primarily through the generation of foreign exchange earnings and government revenue, stimulation of economic growth, and employment creation. In 2018, tourist arrivals rose by 3 per cent, resulting in directly contributing 23.2 per cent of total GDP. In 2019, tourist arrivals rose by 6 per cent to account, contributing to a forecasted 24 per cent of total GDP.

¹⁸ Fitch ratings is an international credit rating agency that provides guidance on a company's or country's rating to investors on which investments will not default and subsequently yield a solid return.

¹⁹ Note: This target was set prior to the Covid-19 outbreak and will be reviewed to reflect the current situation.

Seychelles has established a strong tourism brand, which elevates the country's position on the global tourism market.



Global Money Week

Money Week (GMW) is an annual international awareness campaign intended to inspire children and youth to learn about money management, sustainable livelihoods and entrepreneurship. This event is led by UN Youth Seychelles (UNYS), an NGO which focuses on promoting the SDGs. It aims to stimulate pre-emptive actions towards achieving them in Seychelles. This activity is centred around SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 4: Quality Education, and SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Seychelles celebrated Global Money Week for the second time in 2019. The Week was launched with an official Ceremony, with an opening speech by the Governor of the Central Bank of Seychelles. The address was followed by presentations on personal finance and other financial matters, provided by various stakeholders. A financial tour was organized for school students to visit commercial banks, insurance companies, the Seychelles Pension Fund and the Central Bank of Seychelles. The visits enabled the children to learn about the functioning of these institutions and get an insight into possible career opportunities. Additionally, they gave the institutions a chance to engage with an audience that is younger than the typical age demographic of their clients. Over the course of the week, 174 youth directly benefitted from the activities.



Source: UN Youth Seychelles (UNYS)

Financial sector

Another vital pillar of the Seychelles economy is the financial sector, which is the most dynamic sector and has a growing selection of financial products and services. One of the key factors leading to the country's ascent into the global financial services scene has been its success in creating a legal framework that is sound, reliable and attractive to investors. In 2017, the Central Bank of Seychelles (CBS) developed and launched a National Financial Education Strategy (NFES), which is intended to improve the level of financial capability of Seychellois, thereby facilitating further deepening of the financial sector, accumulation of assets and economic growth.

A high percentage of Seychelles' adult population is financially included,²⁰ and the country also has the highest level of financial inclusion in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The Central Bank of Seychelles (CBS), in partnership with the Financial Services Authority, is in the process of developing its first Financial Technology Strategy, which will bring about greater advancements in the financial sector.

Notwithstanding Seychelles' efforts to elevate its financial sector, earlier this year the European Union (EU) added the country to its list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes, following the revision of its criteria. This came despite the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) assessment indicating that Seychelles' preferential tax regimes were not harmful, following the country's amendment of several items of legislation concerning these regimes in 2018. Despite these somewhat contrasting assessments, Seychelles is currently amending its tax regimes to conform to the EU's request.

Fisheries sector

The fisheries sector, comprising industrial fishery, semi-industrial fishery, artisanal fishery and an aquaculture subsector, is another important pillar of the Seychelles' economy. It accounts for the employment of approximately 17 per cent of the total population,²¹ while marine-related exports accounted for approximately 98 per cent of all goods exported in 2019.²² Seychelles intends to continue fostering growth within the fisheries sector by adding greater value. Development of the aquaculture sector in Seychelles will help bring about greater additions to the supply volumes and diversifications in seafood products available to the value chains.

In October 2019, the new Broodstock Acclimation and Quarantine Facility (BAQF) was inaugurated at the Providence Fishing Port. The BAQF will home some top fish species such as grouper and red snapper, amongst others. From the BAQF the brood stock will be relocated to an aquaculture research and development facility, where the fish will spawn and the eggs will be grown out in a specialized hatchery.

The Indian Ocean Tuna (IOT) factory is one of the largest manufacturing facilities in Seychelles, and is committed to remain a dynamic and responsible player in the Seychelles economy. This is made possible by the fact that Seychelles remains an ideal location for tuna fishing and processing, with the largest fishing grounds in the Indian Ocean.

²⁰ According to The World Bank, financial inclusion means that individuals and businesses have access to useful and affordable financial products and services that meet their needs – for transactions, payments, savings, credit and insurance – delivered in a responsible and sustainable way.

²¹ 'Preparation of Seychelles' Fisheries Sector Policy and Strategy 2019'

²² National Bureau of Statistics' Statistical Bulletin – Merchandise Trade 2019 – Q4

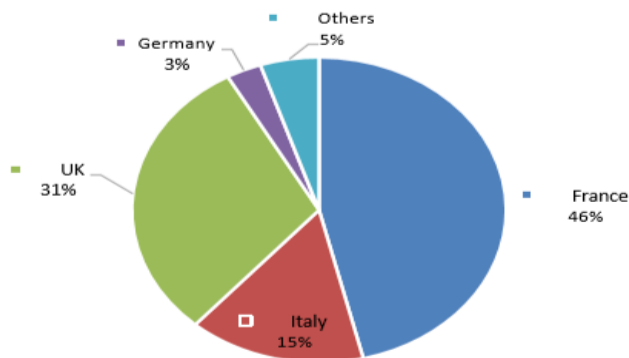




Figure 11: Exports of Canned Tuna by Destination, January - December 2019
Source: National Bureau of Statistics



The Oceana fisheries is one of the largest fish and seafood processing companies in Seychelles, with over 20 years of experience in processing and exporting high-quality fish and seafood products. The company also caters for the local market. It provides fresh fish, seafood and many other value added products such as fish balls, fish burger, minced fish and smoked fish. Besides providing a variety of fresh and frozen fish at its fish market, Oceana fisheries offers takeaway services, which serve a variety of delicious fish and seafood dishes and also offer wholesale and delivery options to hotels, restaurants and other large companies around the islands.

Blue Economy

Seychelles is well-known as a large ocean state with an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 1.4 million km². The country has embraced the Blue Economy concept, an integrated approach to ocean-based sustainable development. Seychelles is championing the “Blue Economy” as its future sustainable development model (for more on the Blue Economy concept, see the *Policy and Enabling Environment* section above. In October 2018, Seychelles launched the World’s First Sovereign Blue Bond. The blue bond – part of an



Fishtech is a fish shop located south of the main island at Anse Royale.

It is a fish processing facility which provides the locals, top restaurants, and the export markets with a wide selection of high-quality fishery and seafood products, sustainably harvested by the local fishermen on the island.

Source: <http://fishtechseychelles.com>

initiative that combines public and private investment to mobilize resources for empowering local communities and businesses—is intended to assist Seychelles in transitioning to sustainable fisheries and safeguarding our oceans while the blue economy is sustainably developed. Success depends on the willingness of stakeholders to fully embrace the Blue Economy concept and ensure that any growth is not at the expense of ocean protection and conservation.

The Blue Investment Fund (BIF) is a loan scheme established by the proceeds of the blue bond and is intended to support diversification and expansion of sustainable fisheries value chains in Seychelles. The scheme provides a minimum loan equivalent to US\$10,000 in Seychelles rupees, which is to be paid back over a maximum of 15 years at a 4 per cent interest rate. The applicant is required to make a personal contribution of 20 per cent of the required amount.²³ The BIF is designed to allow investments in value chains that are supported by managed fisheries, or investments in components of the value chains that



Blue Economy Entrepreneurship – Creating smart, sustainable and shared prosperity through entrepreneurship ecosystem assessment and training.

An assessment led by Eco-Sol Consulting Pty Ltd (Seychelles) was one of the Blue Grants Fund (BGF) project undertaken in 2019. The project was designed to address the challenge among stakeholders of understanding and better managing the entrepreneurship aspect related to economic diversification, shared prosperity and oceanic sustainability. The project entailed conducting a detailed study of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Seychelles through data collection, interviews and training workshops with key stakeholders, such as the Government, NGOs, private sector organizations and, crucially, blue economy entrepreneurs.

The project also gained better understanding of entrepreneurs' attitudes towards business in the Blue Economy that can impact the ecosystem in the long term. How can Blue Growth be created through economic diversification and added value? Where do current challenges lie within the system? What measures would stakeholders need to take into consideration to successfully ensure the long-term sustainability of both the business and the ocean?

Challenges were identified from the data collection process. These included: (i) a perception that the Government can do more to support entrepreneurial activity in Seychelles; (ii) the limited entrepreneurial culture in Seychelles, due mainly to a lack of creativity and innovation; (iii) the fact that the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Seychelles requires improvement to encourage additional Blue Economy entrepreneurship; and (iv) the lack of awareness of many other elements of the Blue Economy besides tourism, fisheries and aquaculture industries.

Recommendations based on the challenges included: (i) a need to improve the Government's role in promoting Blue Economy Entrepreneurship by updating laws to reflect current challenges and providing proper infrastructure; (ii) the need to improve the entrepreneurship culture in Seychelles to encourage more people to pursue Blue Economy entrepreneurship particularly women entrepreneurs in order to address the stereotyping threat and lack of women role models in this sector; and (iii) the need to bolster the overall entrepreneurship ecosystem in Seychelles.

²³ <http://www.dbs.sc/product-loans/blue-investment-fund-bif-scheme>

will add value without creating additional pressure on vulnerable fish populations. Meanwhile, the Blue Grants Fund (BGF) also provides access to funds to projects targeted towards sustainable marine development through enhanced value chain and ocean conservation.

Although Seychelles is performing fairly well in comparison to other small island developing states, the country remains vulnerable to external shocks. The size of Seychelles' economy, few opportunities for diversification, and high production costs, among other known factors, have contributed to its vulnerability. The country is heavily dependent on the increasingly changing, fragile and competitive tourism and fisheries sectors. As the economy grows, both imports and exports increase, though as the value of the former outweighs the latter the trade balance and thus, the current account balance is expected to be negative for the foreseeable future, given the current nature of the economy.

Private sector

The private sector remains the engine of growth within the economy. More specifically, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) play a vital role in its development. However, much needs to be done to improve the enabling environment in which businesses operate, in order to enable their full development.

Seychelles is performing quite poorly on the World Bank Ease of Doing Business Index compared to its income-level peers. In 2019, Seychelles was ranked 100 out of 190 economies, continuing a trend of worsening in the ranking observed since 2015. The factor most responsible for the poor ranking is the difficulty of starting and operating a business. The establishment of the High-level Ease of Doing Business Committee in 2018, which is chaired by the Vice President, has led to much progress locally in an effort to improve Seychelles' ease of doing business.

Improving the Ease of Doing Business in Seychelles

Various measures have been adopted to improve the business environment and bolster economic growth. At a macroeconomic level, the Government together with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) are assessing the legal, regulatory and institutional framework for investors and reviewing the business environment to bring about consistency, predictability and confidence, as well as to simplify the investment procedures all while improving the investment environment. The analysis will provide concrete policy recommendations in order to foster and support the private sector and to create an enabling environment in which they can thrive.

Following a mapping exercise conducted by Department of Investment to identify procedures that exist within the Government in the business environment, recommendations will be made on how better to streamline some operations and procedures to bring about greater transparency and efficiency.

Under the framework provided by the World Bank Ease of doing Business parameters, many initiatives are being considered and undertaken to improve the operations and business environment. Some of these initiatives include the possibility of registration at one access point, use of e-services, digitalizing records and procedures, reviewing the Companies Act, and e-payment of taxes.

Source: Investment Department, Seychelles

Employment

The developments being undertaken in Seychelles require a skilled labour force. Economic growth brings about many opportunities, particularly for employment. In 2019, Seychelles experienced a low unemployment rate of 2.9 per cent. This was a result of the numerous policies and schemes implemented by the Employment Department.

However, the informal sector remains a challenge in Seychelles. The informal employment rate for 2019 stood at 15 per cent which was slightly lower than the rate observed in 2018 (16.5 per cent). In an effort to address the informality issue, the Government has announced plans to broaden the tax base by capturing the informal sector, while maintaining the tax burden on the formal sector at a reasonable level.

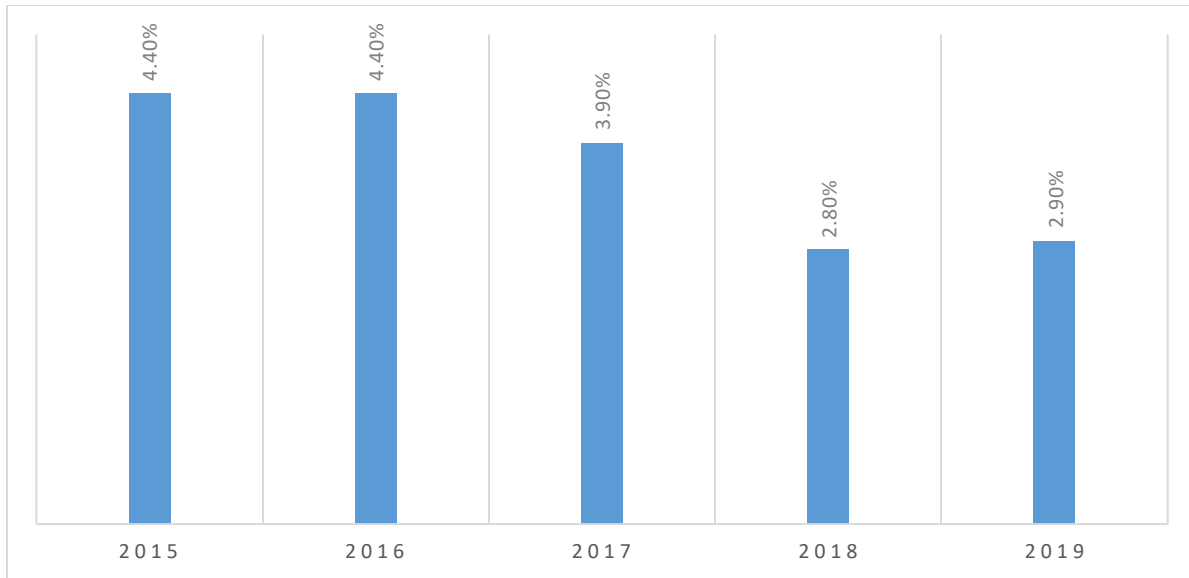


Figure 12: Unemployment rate, 2015-2019

Source: National Bureau of Statistics

Since November 2018, the Ministry of Employment, Immigration and Civil Status (MEICS), representatives of trades unions and the International Labour Organization (ILO) signed the second generation of the Seychelles Decent Work Country Programmes (SDWCP II) 2019-2023 to address key priority areas in the employment sector. The ILO SDWCP adopts an integrated approach through a combination of measures, aiming at creating employment promotion, enforcing rights at work, improving social protection and promoting social dialogue, based on Seychelles' priorities and commitments.

The SDWCP II with the ILO has primarily addressed issues around unemployment of youths and vulnerable groups, employment policies, labour migration policies, labour legislation, social dialogue, labour market information system and international labour standards. Since the third quarter of 2018, data has been collected on a monthly basis on informal employment, underemployment, and youth not in employment, education and training (NEET) which are emerging labour market challenges; it is anticipated that these will be addressed through the SDWCP.

The SDWCP II is monitored by a tripartite committee comprising of social partners (trade unions and employers' organizations) and stakeholders. The SDWCP II focuses on two major outcomes: (i) to promote decent work as a key component of development policies; and (ii) to put the ILO's knowledge, instruments and advocacy at the service of the ILO's tripartite constituents (government, employers and workers) to advance the decent work agenda within the ILO's fields of competence.

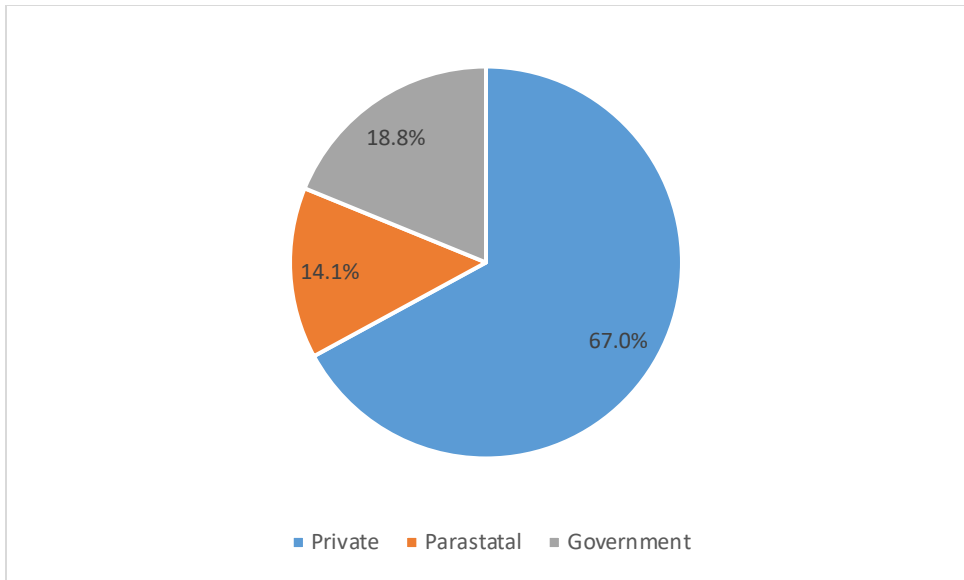


Figure 13: Formal employment by sector, Q4, 2019, percentages

Source: National Bureau of Statistics

The Unemployment Relief Scheme (URS) provided by the Government facilitates employment for the most vulnerable groups of society, with the aim of improving their quality of life and assisting them to secure permanent employment. The aim of the URS is to help vulnerable groups (such as welfare recipients, ex-convicts, rehabilitation/ detox programme recipients, and persons with disabilities certified as employable) to gain ownership of their lives through decent work, removes dependency on welfare assistance and increase the labour supply for the labour market.

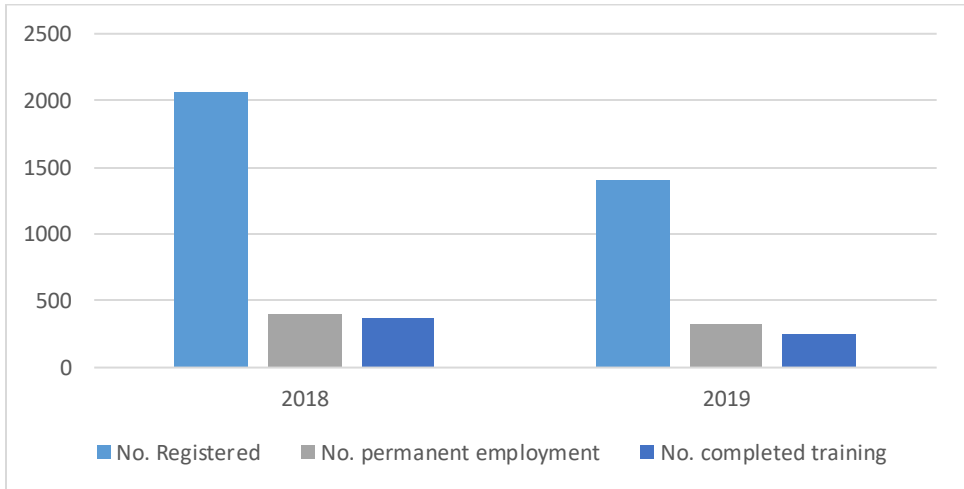


Figure 14: Numbers registered with Unemployment Relief Scheme and subsequently finding permanent employment or completing training, 2018-2019

Source: Statistics from Employment Department, Seychelles

Conversely, the 2019 youth unemployment rate in Seychelles is relatively high, at 9.7 per cent. The Employment Department,²⁴ in collaboration with the Department of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development, has introduced the ‘My First Job’ scheme to get more young people working – either through employment or by starting their own businesses. Through this scheme, the Government aims to help the young people gain important career skills, experience and guidance, spark new interest in entrepreneurship and partner with employers, educators, industry and non-profit organizations to support young workers, and in turn help reduce the rate of youth unemployment in the country.

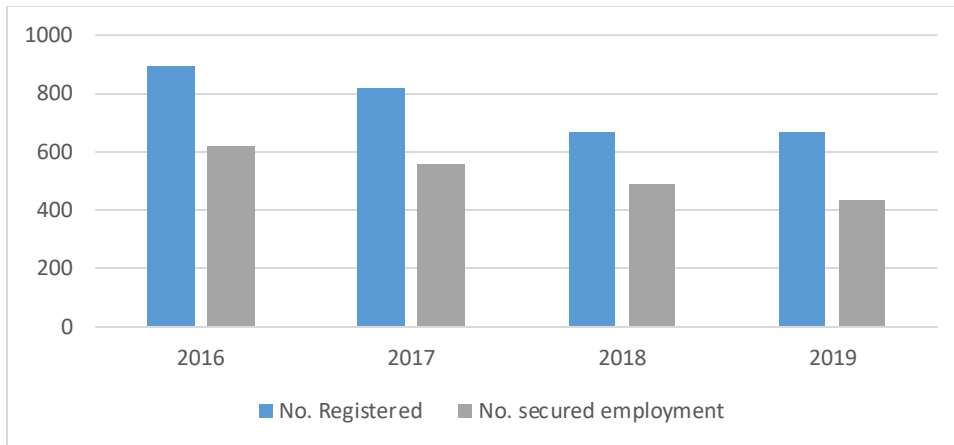
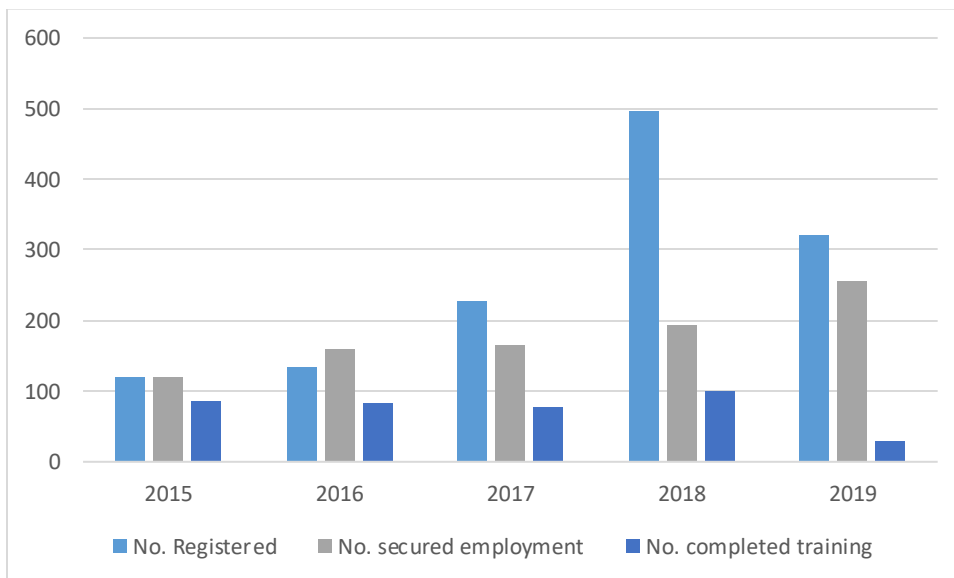


Figure 15: Numbers registered with My First Job Scheme and subsequently securing employment, 2016-2019
 Source: Statistics from Employment Department, Seychelles

The Skills Development Programme (SDP) delivers employability skills to unskilled youth through on-the-job training over periods of 6 to 18 months, depending on the chosen career area. The Programme is intended to enable youth – such as school dropouts, single parents, and individuals who have not completed their studies at a professional centre – to make a successfully transition to employment.



²⁴ Under the Ministry of Employment, Immigration and Civil Status

Figure 16: Numbers registered with Skills Development Programme and subsequently finding permanent employment or completing training, 2015-2019

Source: Statistics from Employment Department, Seychelles

With the above schemes and programmes developed by the Employment Department, many employers are more willing to accept these participants, as they have already gone through a formal registration process with the Government and a proportion of their salaries is subsidized. Additionally, the youth face less barriers to entering the workforce. This is expected to translate into a lower burden and dependency on social welfare. Although the programmes are promising, some of the participants do not remain in their jobs for long and poor work ethics can affect the employer-employee relationship.

Nevertheless, labour market gaps still remain in terms of skills mismatch and wage competitiveness. Subsequently, as a small country with limited resources, Seychelles depends greatly on foreign labour to cater for the increased development needs of the country. Over the past decade, Seychelles has experienced a significant rise in the in-flows of migrant workers. Today, migrant workers make up an estimated one-third of the country's workforce. To date, a number of regulations and programmes have been instituted by the Government to address various aspects of labour migration. In addition, a number of bilateral labour agreements (BLAs) are under consideration, and the most recent one signed with Bangladesh shows the Government's willingness to fill shortages and sustain the economy, while ensuring safe labour migration.

In October 2019, Seychelles introduced its National Labour Migration Policy and Action Plan, which aims to provide a coherent and responsive framework for regulating labour migration at the national level, contributing to improved balance of labour supply and demand, and ensuring decent and productive work for all workers. The policy aims to contribute to the long-term vision of sustainable development for the country by enhancing the benefits of labour migration and minimizing its negative impacts for the economy and society, as well as for migrant workers. To strengthen implementation of this policy, Seychelles also benefitted from its development partners' support, including technical assistance and expertise from IOM, to promote ethical recruitment, workers' rights and sustainable ways of doing business.

Way forward

As the country continues to pave its way towards sustained economic growth and decent work for all, the Government remains committed to improve its development and increase its resilience in a more sustainable way, all of which will support a productive and proactive labour force. One of the ways in which this can be achieved is by improving the investment and business climate in the country.

In moving forward, greater emphasis will be placed on value addition within sectors in order to attain the maximum from products from Seychelles, as highlighted in the country's National Development Strategy. It is thus apparent that the country cannot be heavily reliant on the tourism sector, and should aim to promote diversification for future growth. Therefore, Seychelles acknowledges the immense opportunities the blue economy brings for its people. The blue economy could, however, be further strengthened through solid partnerships in order to ensure sustainable management of the ocean's resources.

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation



Seychelles has made significant efforts to creating an environment that enables and encourages the growth of its industries as well as providing space for new innovations. Infrastructural developments on this small island continue to grow and improve with the increasing level of development and demands. For its development, the country aims to achieve greater connectivity, modernized infrastructure and an efficient transport system, all while placing sustainability at the forefront of its development.

Functioning and Resilient Infrastructure

Infrastructure investment needs are large, including in electricity, water, sanitation, ports, airports, the road networks, urban development, land and a second undersea cable. Seychelles is continuing to invest in the replacement of obsolete infrastructure, such as that of Port Victoria and the electricity grid. Currently, the airport is being extended to increase its capacity to welcome more passengers in Seychelles.

The extension and rehabilitation of Port Victoria, the country's main commercial port, will create more berthing space for additional vessels and provide other necessary infrastructure upgrades. Initial works, including preliminary surveys and detailed designs, started in mid-2019, and the project itself is expected to take two years to complete. The modernization will include the construction of a new quay, which involves extending the quay by reclaiming 40m outwards, building a new apron and extending the quay wall by 230m, to create a total quay length of 600m. The project will not only accommodate vessels of higher gross tonnage but also reduce turnaround time for vessels, leading to freight cost savings for larger vessels plying in the region, which is expected to translate into a lower cost of living. In addition, it presents an opportunity to rebrand Port Victoria as a more competitive port that is compliant with the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code.

The Ile du Port Handling Services (IPHS) has a 425m quay with premium berthing and handling services for tuna fishing ship owners, and has been in operation since January 2016. In addition, work on the Central Common Cold Store (CCCS) began in June 2019 and is expected to be completed in the coming years. This facility will be able to store up to 12,600 tons of fish, will contribute to value addition of tuna resources and improved logistics in port, and will lead to increased revenue and cost savings as well as providing opportunities for new businesses to be developed.

Innovative and Sustainable Technologies

The fast spread of digital technologies throughout the world, such as the current "Industry 4.0" trend towards industrial automation, digitalization of machinery and artificial intelligence, is reshaping production processes and business models with important implications for the economic transformation of the country. Seychelles remains committed to embracing the use of technology to help boost both labour and capital productivity and facilitate connections. In light of the potential benefits of digital

technology for economic transformation, as highlighted in the National Development Strategy, Seychelles is continuing to proactively adjust its infrastructural, regulatory and policy framework to facilitate its adoption and use across all sectors.

The ICT sector in Seychelles is relatively small but well-established. Multiple successes have been achieved in the ICT domain over the years, through the four established telecommunication operators in collaboration with the Government. Successes include the international connectivity of Seychelles through the submarine cable since the year 2012 through a public-private partnership (The Seychelles Cable Systems Company Ltd), and the recent decision to install a second submarine fibreoptic cable to ensure a connection is in place if one fails to work.

Seychelles' First Fibreoptic Submarine Cable link

The Seychelles East Africa Submarine (SEAS) cable project established the first submarine fibre optic cable for international connections between the Seychelles archipelago and continental Africa. The promoter, the Seychelles Cable Systems Company Limited (SCS), is a private-public partnership undertaking made up of Airtel, Cable and Wireless Seychelles (CWS) and the Government of Seychelles. The overall cost of the project was estimated at EUR27.2m, and it was financed through 40 per cent equity and 60 per cent long-term debt by EIB and AfDB. The cable arrived at Beau Vallon on 27 May 2012 and a ceremony took place the same day, marked by the presence of the President of the Republic of Seychelles.



Source: European Union Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund, 'Seychelles East Africa Submarine Cable' <<http://www.eu-africa-infrastructure-tf.net/activities/grants/seychelles-east-africa-submarine-cable.htm>>

Given the growing use of information and communications technology (ICT) and the internet locally, Seychelles adopted the National Cyber Security Policy and Strategy in 2018 to provide direction in relation to cyber security in Seychelles and also introduced regulations (S.I. 22 of 2018) under the Electronic Transactions Act, 2001 to enable the use of digital signatures in any electronic transactions.

Currently, work is being done to introduce new legislation in relations to cybercrimes. This legal instrument will help to combat any crimes that take place online or in cyberspace. Once enacted the legislation will repeal the Computer Misuse Act, which has been in place since 1998. The country is also currently reviewing the Data Protection Act and repealing the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Act 2000, all with aim of promoting competition and safe use of ICT in the country.

A critical factor in the Government's success has been its continuous efforts to ensure effective regulation of the sector. However, Seychelles still lags behind its peers in some areas, particularly in the area of affordability of voice and data services on mobile networks. By addressing these issues, Seychelles would benefit from increasing its competitiveness regionally and globally.

With the increasing ICT-related demand, the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MoEHRD) remains committed to bettering the lives of students and teachers through the use of ICT in their educational experience. The provision of internet access was agreed through the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the MoEHRD and its telecom partners (Cable & Wireless Seychelles, Intelvision Seychelles, Airtel Seychelles and the Seychelles Cable System (SCS)). The signing of the MoU marked the final phase in the project and the fulfilment of the 2017 State of the Nation Address (SONA) commitment for WiFi in all state schools. Access to internet on school campus is expected to further improve teachers' and students' online experience and encourage students to make proper use of the internet as a learning tool.

The National Institute for Science Technology and Innovation (NISTI) was established in 2014. The first Science, Technology and Innovation Policy and Strategy 2016- 2025 provide guidelines for other implicit national policies and strategies related to building and strengthening the foundation of governance and the four pillars of the knowledge-based economy: economic incentive and policy regime; an educated, knowledgeable and skilled workforce, an efficient national innovation system and a modern and adequate information infrastructure.

In addition, NISTI is involved in many activities that enable society to embrace the relevance of science, technology and innovation by using innovative ideas to tackle real-world issues. One of the projects which NISTI aims to bring forward is the farmers' platform, which is intended to personalized relationships between farmers, consumers and agencies.

The National Research Foundation (NRF), which will be established by NISTI, will act as a mechanism for coordination and management purposes at national level. The NRF is intended to promote research and development (R&D) to transform Seychelles into a knowledge-based economy with strong R&D capabilities. The Foundation will strengthen Seychelles' partnerships both locally and internationally to secure potential funding opportunities that will guarantee high quality research work and support business development through commercialization of research findings.

The sector, however, is faced with numerous infrastructural challenges such as outdated policy frameworks and infrastructure, and limited investment and funding directed towards the promotion and growth of science, technology and innovation.

The FIRST Global Robotics Competition

The FIRST Robotics Competition is an international high school robotics competition, created to ignite a passion for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) among the more than two billion young people across the world. FIRST Global also strives to convince various national governments and organizations around the world to embrace STEM education, and to support it by investing in their young adults who will soon begin to make their marks in the world. Participation in FIRST Global develop robots to find solutions to the world's grand challenges – water, energy, security, medicine, food, and education – and learn how to work with each other, trust each other, and become part of a truly global community.

In October 2019, Seychelles participated in the FIRST Global Robotic Competition, which was held in Dubai. Team Seychelles consisted of a group of 10 students from both public and private schools. Students were chosen on the basis of their knowledge and interest in STEM subjects. The team learned about real-world challenges related to cleaning up the world's oceans.



Source: National Institute for Science, Technology and Innovation

Sustainable Industries

The Department of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development (DoIED) has been actively trying to engage the community in industry participation using entrepreneurial values. The Department has published booklets to stimulate entrepreneurship such as “5 Steps to starting your Business”, “MSMEs guide to Incentives” and “What is an Entrepreneur?” as well educating the public, especially youth. The

main aim is to entice businesspeople to move into diversification and productive industries that can sustain the Seychelles economy.



With the goal of stimulating economic growth and regional integration, Seychelles officially joined the Southern African Development Community Free Trade Area (SADC FTA) in 2015 and signed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA) in 2018. In addition, the Seychelles Bureau Standards (SBS) was created in 1987 under the Seychelles Bureau of Standards Act to ensure standardization in relation to commodities, processes and practices throughout all sectors.

Moreover, approval has been given to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to establish the Empretec programme in Seychelles. EMPRETEC aims to provide Seychellois with core entrepreneurial skills to broaden their future prospects. This will complement the work that Enterprise Seychelles Agency – set in up in 2018 – is already doing to encourage more entrepreneurs in the country.

Additionally DOIED, with the assistance of UNCTAD, is currently working on the Entrepreneurship Policy Framework (EPF). UNCTAD’s EPF aims to support policymakers with the design of initiatives, measures and institutions to promote entrepreneurship. It sets out a structure framework of relevant policy areas, embedded in an overall entrepreneurship strategy that helps to guide policymakers through the process of creating an environment that facilitates the emergence of entrepreneurs and start-ups, as well as the growth and expansion of new enterprises.

In 2019, DOIED also presented the “Seychelles Made” Policy to the Cabinet of Ministers to allow for a National Brand and Label to certify local products. Anticipated to be launched in early 2021, the “Seychelles Made Brand” initiative also aims to make the country’s products recognizable both locally and internationally.

Furthermore, in 2019, the policy on reclamation by private individuals was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers, to allow private individuals to reclaim industrial land in demarcated areas, in order to alleviate the pressure on the Government to facilitate industrial development. As per the recommendations to amend the Industrial Estates Authority (IEA) Act under the MSME Development Project funded by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Industrial Estates Act is currently being amended so that the IEA becomes autonomous, which will facilitate the effective undertaking of its functions – develop, allocate and manage demarcated industrial land and micro enterprise centres.

In addition, the Seed Capital Grant Scheme, which was introduced in 2016, provides seed capital up to 50,000 Seychelles rupees to fund small start-up businesses to assist them in their early stages of development. In 2019, the two main sectors applying for the scheme were the cleaning and landscaping sector and the food and beverage sector.

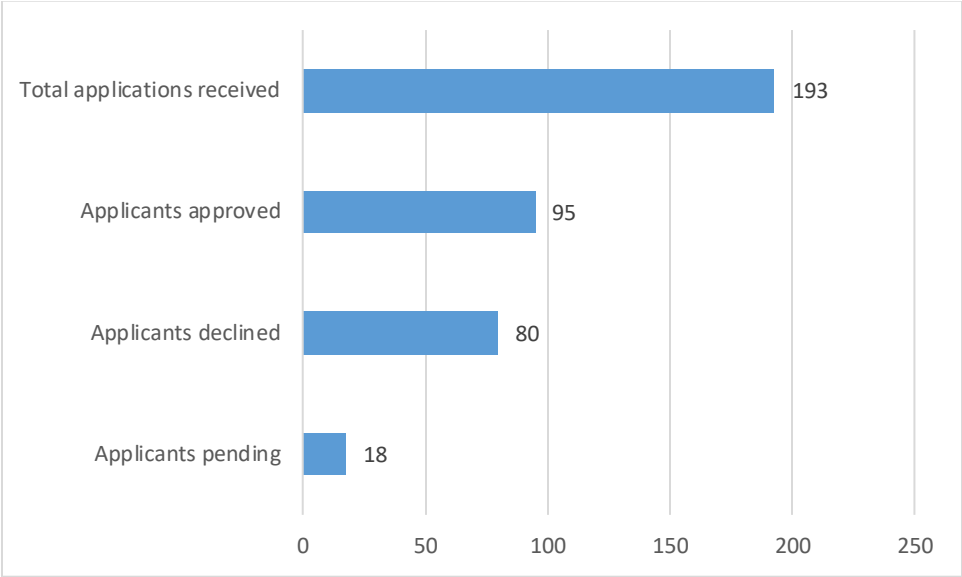


Figure 17: Seed Capital Grant Scheme, 2019

Source: DOIED

Way forward

As Seychelles continues to journey towards a more sustainable pathway, it is imperative that all key actors play their role in the implementation of this goal. All the other goals depend immensely on infrastructure and thus it is important to ensure the availability of strong, reliable and modern infrastructure to sustain current and future developments in Seychelles. The country continues to cultivate the idea of entrepreneurship to its people, in an effort to benefit from more innovative business ideas which will foster economic growth. The Government remains committed to providing the support and assistance that businesses need to enable them to grow and bring about significant transformation in the economy. Moving forward, Seychelles intends to place greater emphasis on research and development, which have been somewhat lacking in the past, to gain competitiveness within the market.

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



The 2030 Agenda calls upon all countries to work towards the attainment of orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. The Government has instituted a number of laws, policies and programmes to address various aspects of labour migration. Despite these initiatives challenges persist, including difficulties in assessing labour market needs and calibrating migration programmes accordingly, gaps in the protection of migrant workers, and a lack of coordination among public and private sector actors with stakes in labour migration. Since 2019 Seychelles has been implementing the first National Labour Migration Policy (NLMP) as the guiding framework for labour migration given the increasing demand of migrant workers across all economic sectors and skills level.²⁵ The NLMP addresses these challenges by offering a comprehensive policy framework for labour migration around four key areas of interventions: governance of labour migration; protection of the rights of all workers; attracting, retaining and developing skills; and fair and effective recruitment. In 2020, Seychelles is participating in the Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) process, which is intended to help the country to assess the comprehensiveness of its migration policies and to identify strengths and weaknesses across several areas linked to migration. The MGI process will be useful to assess national efforts made towards the attainment of the SDGs, in particular Goals 8, 10, 13 and 17.

Progressive Income Tax

The national tax system was amended in 2018 with the aim of mitigating income inequality. This involved introducing tax rates that would be used through the payroll system to calculate the tax liability for various income brackets. Under the Progressive Income Tax (PIT) system that came into effect in June 2018, the tax rate increases as taxable income increases. PIT is based on a person's monthly income from all sources of employment. This form of taxation is regarded as more equitable, as an employed person earning a high income will have a higher effective tax rate than a person earning a lower income.²⁶ Before the reforms, a flat income tax rate of 15% was applied. The table below illustrates the tax rates now applicable for various income brackets.

Table 4: Progressive income tax brackets

²⁵ National Labour Migration Policy 2018, Ministry of Employment Immigration and Civil Status

²⁶ SRC Website

Bracket	Gross monthly income		Rate (%)	
	From	To	Citizen	Non-citizen
Bracket 1	0	8,555.50	0	15% on amount up to SR 10,000
Bracket 2	8,555.51	10,000	15% on amount over SR 8 555.50	
Bracket 3	10,000.01	83,333	SR216.68 + 20% on amount over SR 1 000	SR 1,500 + 20% on amount over SR 10,000
Bracket 4	>83,333		SR 14,883.28 + 30% on amounts over SR 83 333	SR 16,166.60 +30% on amount over SR 83 333

LGBTI Rights and Freedoms

In 2016, the National Assembly passed a bill to decriminalize same-sex acts. This vote approved a proposal to amend Section 151 of the Seychelles Penal Code, which imposed a punishment of up to 14 years in prison for anyone convicted of same-sex acts. This followed a commitment made by Seychelles in 2011 to decriminalize homosexuality. The move towards decriminalization makes Seychelles one of the few African countries in which lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) activities are not punishable by law. On a more grassroots level, the LGBTI Seychelles (LGBTI-Sey) NGO was founded in 2015 and was officially registered the following year, with the aim of providing a safe and inclusive space for their members. LGBTI-Sey has ties to the Coalition of Lesbian, Bisexual, Gays and Transgender within the Indian Ocean and the AIDS Rights Alliance of Southern Africa. The local group also acts as support and a network for the local community.

The creation of LGBTI-Sey has also helped to focus discussion on the human rights of men and women with diverse sexualities, and on sexual minorities. With more awareness being created through social media platforms, it has been observed that people may be changing their attitudes, albeit somewhat slowly. Efforts have continued to present these issues more often on mass media, through documentaries, live discussion programmes and forums. There is still some resistance to accept the changing social and sex roles and diverse sexual minorities, especially in interpersonal interactions and on social media.

Elderly Persons

Elderly persons have long been considered the backbone of Seychellois society, having contributed to shape the modern and developed Seychelles of today. Seychelles has an “ageing” population, as the share of the population aged 65 years and above, which currently stands at 10.7 per cent,²⁷ is expected to double by 2040. This is mainly attributed to increased life expectancy and a low and declining birth rate. The figure below depicts the current population structure of the Seychelles population.

²⁷ <https://www.nbs.gov.sc/downloads/mid-2019-population-bulletin/viewdocument> (table 4)

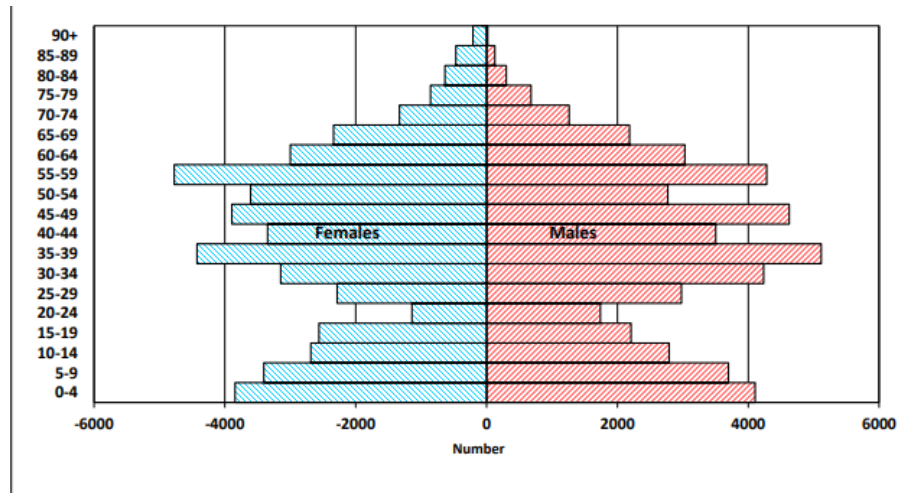


Figure 18: Population Pyramid: Mid-2019 Population Estimates, age in years
 Source; National Bureau of Statistics

Several noteworthy benefits and provisions are available for the elderly, including a complementary bus voucher that allows citizens aged 63 years and above to make free use of public transport. In addition, the state pays a monthly universal retirement pension as a means to ensure that all senior citizens are afforded a minimum level of comfort and dignity. This pension has been rising over the years, and it is now close to the national minimum wage. The Homecare Programme remains of the nation’s flagship programmes. The National Council for the Elderly (NCE) was established in 2018 with core functions such as to advise the Government on all matters concerning the elderly and to develop standards of elderly care, with a view to professionalize and maintain a high standard of care and service to the elderly.²⁹

In addition, NCE manages a network a residential homes for the elderly across the country, providing a safe and conducive living environment for elderly clients in need of shelter. It should be noted that in the State of the Nation Address of 2017, the President announced that there would be a rise in the retirement age from 63 to 65 years as of 2023. This was in response to the ageing of the population. Although this is yet to be legislated for, this measure would mean people would now have to stay in employment for two additional years, and it is anticipated that this measure would go a long way to increasing the sustainability of the universal retirement pension.

In 2018, the Government made a commitment that facilities for the elderly would be constructed and managed by the private sector. This announcement put forward the concept of a “day centre” for adults, which would permit for elderly people to have a place to spend time together in a group and be cared for. Land will be put at the disposal of the private sector so they can construct and manage day centres, elderly homes and nursing homes and the state will pay for the service, while businesses that establish facilities for elderly care before 2021 will not pay business taxes for the first 10 years of their existence.³⁰ Day centres are aimed towards elderly persons who are still physically independent, while the other two types of establishments are for elderly persons who require some level of care. Investors will be required to abide by strict minimum standards pertaining to infrastructure and level of care. Investors will also have

²⁸ <https://www.nbs.gov.sc/downloads/mid-2019-population-bulletin/viewdocument>

²⁹ <http://www.nation.sc/articles/578/dinah-hibonne-appointed-national-council-for-the-elderly-chairperson>

³⁰ <http://www.nation.sc/articles/626/facilities-for-the-elderly-on-track-coga-questions>

to satisfy a quota of elderly persons whose use of such establishments are funded by the state, although they may also offer such services to private paying clients.

As part of the formulation of the National Long-term Vision for Seychelles (Vision 2033) and the National Development Strategy (NDS 2019-2023), a special round of consultation was held with senior citizens from all 26 districts of the country to gather their insights and wisdom on the country's development path as a whole, and to seek their guidance on the way forward and their recommendations.

Persons with Disabilities



The National Council for the Disabled (NCFD) works to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. The explicit mandate of the NCFD³¹ is to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities, based on the principle of equalization of opportunities for all, and the aim of an inclusive society where persons with disabilities are respected and empowered to develop their potential and lead good, quality lives. In June 2019, the NCFD began to put together a database on persons with disabilities, in a bid to improve the development of future policies and services to cater for their specific needs.³² Seychelles ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009. By doing so, the country agreed to create an

environment in which people with disabilities can enjoy their full rights in a most dignified manner. In 2014 Seychelles submitted its initial report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Seychelles reported on the situations of persons with disabilities and associated issues in the country. The report included the existing framework and the financial and human resources constraint the small island nation faces. However, accessible public transportation and workplace access are areas that need to be improved for persons with disabilities.

In 2018, the United Nations **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** commended Seychelles for the adoption of a number of policy measures with a view to implementing the Convention. These included, in particular, amendments to the Social Security Act to ensure that persons with disabilities do not lose all their benefits when they take up employment and efforts to increase the numbers of persons with disabilities in employment; the Policy on Inclusion and the Action Plan on Inclusive Education and Training, adopted in September 2014 and guided by the Convention, aiming to provide children with disabilities with quality education; and efforts by Seychelles to collect data on disability in the 2010 national census.

In terms of safety nets, **disability/invalidity monetary benefits** cover those with permanent physical impairments who are therefore unable to work. These benefits are accessed following injury or disease, through an assessment carried out by a medical board of five doctors that focuses on the degree of physical impairment. The table below provides details of the trend in the number of active beneficiaries of the invalidity/disability benefit disbursed by the Agency for Social Protection. There are also programmes in place for persons with disabilities to acquire skills that can provide them with gainful employment and enable them to be productive in society. In recent developments, the Government is

³¹ http://www.finance.gov.sc/uploads/national_budget/PPBB%20Volume%203.pdf

³² <http://www.nation.sc/articles/278/ncfd-to-set-up-database-for-persons-living-with-disabilities>

now considering how to move towards a more functionality-based assessment rather having a sole focus on disabilities.

Table 5 Invalidity/Disability benefit

Defined Benefits	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<i>No. of Beneficiaries</i>							
Invalidity	1,186	1,071	1,140	1,180	1,360	1,675	
Disability	-	-	-	-	144	611	

Way forward.

Reducing inequality remains a broad development target at national level in Seychelles. Going forward, the focus should be on creating a non-discriminatory and inclusive society that makes provision and reasonable accommodation for all groups of Seychellois society. Through amendments to the necessary frameworks and sensitization of the public at large, greater inclusiveness can be attained. With the continual need for migrant workers to assist in the economic advancement of the country, it is crucial to enhance the benefits of labour migration through an effective policy framework for the Seychelles economy, its society and its workers, including migrant workers. From the rights and protection of the elderly, to LGBTI freedoms, to the opportunities afforded to persons with disabilities so that they may access opportunities to take an active part in socio-economic activities; Seychelles will henceforth need to acknowledge the steps required to work towards reducing inequalities.

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable



Over the past three decades, there has been increasing pressure on land from population growth and economic development. Despite this, Seychelles has prioritized keeping our towns and settlements sustainable and good places to live. This is a reflection of the Preamble of the Constitution of Seychelles which guarantees adequate shelter for all Seychellois, rising living standards and a safe and functioning environment. Moreover, housing, transportation, the environment and culture are all discussed in Vision 2033 and in the strategies of the first National Development Strategy (NDS) for 2019-2023.

Sustainable land use planning

Seychelles Planning Authority (SPA) regulates physical development on land to ensure sustainable development of communities within the country. As part of its efforts to implement the SDGs, SPA is drafting a new Physical Planning Bill to take into account changes to the development trajectory of Seychelles, and is revising all internal existing policies and guidelines in line with existing regulations. Although the Physical Planning Bill has not yet been enacted, based on the draft legislation SPA is moving ahead with the preparation of Land Use Plans (LUPs) for each of the 25 districts on Mahé, Praslin and La Digue. The emerging and approved LUPs identify the current land use and, in a limited number of locations, the proposed land use. The LUPs also indicate no-development zones, which tend to comprise wetlands, protected coastline and National Parks.

SPA is also working on the strategic documents that will provide the framework for guiding future development in Seychelles by balancing the needs for development and economic growth against protection of the natural environment and the distinctive character of the islands. The strategic documents are as follows: a Strategic Plan for Seychelles, a Framework Plan for Mahé, and a Victoria Masterplan. These documents are in line with national priorities, as outlined in NDS 2019-2023. A Strategic Land Use Unit was created in 2016 to ensure that the objectives of the strategic plans are met in the end.

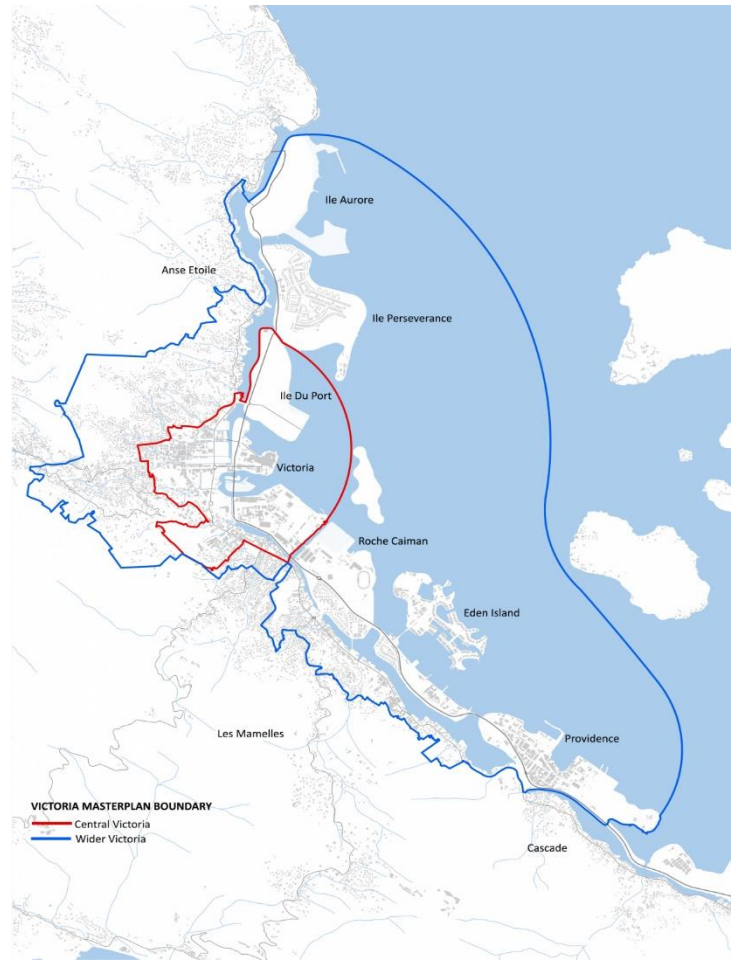
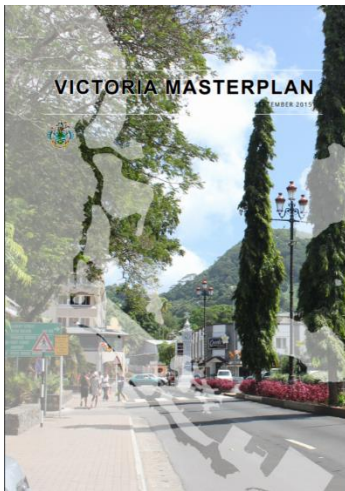
SPA is, moreover, implementing a series of urban guidelines to safeguard the cultural and natural heritage in communities, with special guidelines for La Digue in light of the current carrying capacity challenges due to tourism, and housing estate guidelines to ensure uniformity within the social housing sector.

Looking towards the future, SPA is planning to enhance SDG implementation by collaborating more closely with both local and international partners. One initiative is to obtain assistance from UN Habitat for the implementation of scheduled projects to ensure the SDGs are represented in all the project outcomes.

Case Study: Victoria Masterplan 2040

In 2015, the Victoria Masterplan 2040 was launched as a tool for coordinated decision-making and for attracting new investment. The Masterplan was developed through a collaborative process that involved representatives of government ministries, the private sector, NGOs and the public.

The Masterplan provides the vision and framework for future development, infrastructure provision, environmental management and protection.



Adequate housing

To keep up with increasing demand for homes, the Government is financing numerous affordable housing projects across the main islands. The largest housing project is the Ile Perseverance Housing Project, which will cater for 2,000 households when fully completed. In his State of the Nation Address in 2017, the President of Seychelles pledged to build 24 housing projects in 24 districts in 24 months. As of early 2020, most of the housing projects have been completed.

Aside from housing projects, the Government – through the Ministry for Habitat, Infrastructure and Land Transport (MHILT) – also supports housing needs by providing various housing assistance schemes e.g. the sale of condominium to young professionals, the land bank scheme, part rental schemes, self-finance schemes and temporary housing scheme (for emergencies). However, over the last decade the Government has been putting together policies and schemes that are changing its role from a major housing supplier to more of a facilitator of housing, by emphasizing the land bank scheme and the other financing schemes highlighted above.

Despite these initiatives, challenges remain. Seychelles is small and largely mountainous, and therefore land suitable for residential development is scarce and expensive. The topography makes electricity and water connections for houses expensive. Furthermore, since Seychelles relies on its natural beauty to

attract tourists, residential construction is limited by the presence of large nature reserves and parks (50.6 per cent of land in Seychelles is under conservation). Competition with businesses and agriculture also plays a role in land scarcity.

Case Study: Ile Perseverance Housing Project

Ile Perseverance is an artificial island that was completed in 1999. In 2002, a team of experts was formed at the Ministry of Land Use and Habitat to identify the theoretical structure and propose a development plan for the new settlement.

The design of Ile Perseverance is based on the concept of an urban village with clusters of low-density neighbourhood units formed around open courtyards which are mini centres of social interaction.

When finally completed, the Ile Perseverance Housing project is expected to cater for 10,000 people or 2,000 households.

Sustainable transportation

Seychelles has an extensive network of paved roads on the islands of Mahe, Praslin and La Digue. However, in the past decade, due to increased use of private vehicles, traffic congestion has become a challenge, especially around the capital Victoria. This has resulted in air pollution and lost productivity .

Public transportation is provided by the national Seychelles Public Transport Corporation (SPTC), established in 1977. With a fleet of 1,692 buses, SPTC operates on Mahe and Praslin. However, SPTC is facing mounting challenges because of a reduction in usage as the population becomes more affluent and switches to private vehicles. Efforts to improve the situation include raising the standards of SPTC buses and redesign of the road networks.

In terms of sustainability, the Government has in policies place to encourage the purchase of hybrid and electric vehicles through preferential tax rates and other advantages. There are also plans to switch to electric buses. However, challenges related to the topography of the main islands as well as a lack of charging stations persist.

Improving waste management

The Landscape & Waste Management Agency (LWMA) was established in 2009 to manage waste ; clean roads, beaches, rivers and amenities; and manage landscape development of public spaces in the country. LWMA is also responsible for advising the Minister responsible for the Environment on issues relating to waste management plans and laws.

As of 2018, Seychelles has a solid waste collection rate of 100 per cent in urban areas. However, challenges remain on Praslin and La Dignes with regard to safe collection and disposal of hazardous waste such as used oil and batteries.

A 2019 study on plastic leakages in Seychelles found that the bans imposed on single-use plastic bags and on expanded polystyrene (EPS) to-go ware (take-away boxes) were working (for more details on the plastic ban, see *Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable*

development). However, low-value plastic wrappers and containers were frequently found as litter in some parts of the inner islands, especially close to convenience stores and on wooded tracks near residential areas. The collection bins were also observed to be overflowing in some regions. The study made several recommendations that were presented to the Government.

LWMA and the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change are currently working on the Land Waste Management Strategy.

Disaster risk reduction

Human settlements are vulnerable to disasters, and with the growing threat posed by climate change, the frequency of natural disasters is expected to increase. The Department for Risk and Disaster Management (DRDM) was therefore established by the Disaster Risk Management Act 2014 with a mandate for disaster risk reduction, management and civil protection in relation to natural, biological, technological and societal hazards, and environmental and industrial emergencies.

The Department focuses on implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Management, which in turn was developed in line with the SDGs. Consequently, the Department indirectly includes the targets of the SDGs within its work plans.

DRMD also plays an advisory role on the National Planning Board committee, where it ensures that all proposed developments in the country are aligned with the respective regulations and that the most prominent risks are identified and dealt with.

Protecting cultural heritage

The Seychelles Heritage Foundation was set up following the enactment of the Seychelles Heritage Foundation Act in 2006. Its mandate is to promote and develop the Seychelles' cultural heritage as a sustainable and economical asset. It manages four cultural heritage sites:

- a) Ex-Plantation House, La Plaine, Au Cap
- b) Creole Village, Val des Près, Au Cap
- c) Mission Ruins, Mission, Sans Souci
- d) Bel Ombre Treasure Site

Protecting natural heritage

Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF) is a non-profit charitable organisation that was established as a public trust by the Government of Seychelles in 1979. SIF manages and protects the two UNESCO World Heritage sites of the Vallée de Mai and Aldabra Atoll. Of particular importance to SDG 11, the Vallée de Mai is a green and public space on the island of Praslin that is freely accessible to all Seychellois, while foreign tourists pay an entrance fee that significantly contributes to SIF's budget.

SIF conducts research, implements projects, develops education and outreach programmes, and engages in sustainable tourism activities. Recent projects include the Invazil Project, which found new ways to tackle invasive species in the Vallée de Mai, and the Aldabra Clean-Up Project, which was designed to tackle marine plastic pollution through action, education and research.

Way Forward

The land scarcity and steep topography of the inner islands present challenges to providing sufficient housing and sustainable transportation links. Furthermore, increased disasters caused by climate change create additional obstacles to the achievement of SDG 11. However, despite these challenges, Seychelles is striving to provide decent housing to the population, to facilitate sustainable transportation, to mitigate against disasters, to manage urban growth and waste, and to preserve the country's natural and cultural heritage for future generations. Initiatives such as the Victoria Masterplan and the completion of Ile Perseverance are of particular importance for the inclusive development of Seychelles' capital.

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns



Seychelles is known for being one of the many global leaders in environmental protection and conservation. Its beauty is derived from its endemic flora and fauna, pristine beaches, fresh air and exotic scenery. Amongst the many interventions being undertaken on the island, the Government has introduced a ban on the importing of Styrofoam takeaway boxes and other plastic items – such as plastic carriers, plates, cups and cutlery – which took effect in January 2017.

In recent years, Seychelles has placed greater emphasis on environmental protection and sustainable use of its limited resources. Seychelles has demonstrated its commitment to protecting and conserving the environment by banning the use of single-use plastic straws. The ban on plastic straws was introduced as part of an ongoing strategy to minimize and manage the amount of waste being dumped in landfill. The Cabinet of Ministers approved a complete ban on importing plastic straws in early June 2019, excepting plastic straws attached to juice packets. This was further promoted through a 'Seychelles free from plastic straws' campaign, which was undertaken by the Seychelles Hospitality and Tourism Association. The

Association brought on board many tourism establishments, of which many had already been using alternatives in their restaurants.

The Anse Soleil Beachcomber, located in the south of Mahe island, is one of many examples of tourism establishments adopting the campaign. This has resulted in a reduction of approximately 500-600 plastic straws per month ending up as plastic waste. Meanwhile Constance Lemuria Seychelles, a 5-star luxury hotel on Praslin, stopped serving plastic straws in February 2018, providing guests with paper and biodegradable alternatives instead. This further strengthens the commitment of the hotel and its reputable Green Globe-certified image of protecting and preserving both the terrestrial and the marine environments. Other hotels and small tourism establishments have adapted to use spaghetti, bamboo and lemongrass straws instead.



The Last Straw Seychelles

The Ocean Project Seychelles is an NGO founded in 2016 to protect the oceans and seas through education, action and research. Launched in 2018, its The Last Straw Campaign was designed to reduce use of plastic straws in Seychelles, through individual commitments to stop using plastic straws and commitments from venues to stop serving them. It is supported by the GEF Small Grants Program.



Source: <http://www.theoceanprojectseychelles.com/news>

With the country's aim of encouraging use of more electric vehicles, the Government announced a revision to the current levy on vehicles in the speech introducing the 2020 budget, which came into effect in January 2020. The revision includes: (i) an increase in the levy on commercial vehicles to reach a par with that applicable to private motor vehicles; (ii) a SCR25,000 increase in the current levy on conventional

motor vehicles; and (iii) a review of excise tax and levy applicable on all types of hybrid motor vehicles above 1600cc, to align to those which is applicable for their similar conventional counterparts.



#SeyNoToBalloons Campaign

Despite the naturally stunning beauty of our surroundings – the country’s beaches offer world-renowned vistas – the use of balloons is widespread in Seychelles. Balloons are the go-to decorating item at children’s birthday parties, beach picnics, office events, and even celebrations hosted by governmental agencies and ministries. Unfortunately, there is a worrying trend of balloons being left behind on beaches once the party is over. The sad reality is that more often than not these balloons and ribbons, along with the inherent risks of entanglement and choking that they pose to our wildlife, are left behind to be either taken by the tides or blown away by the wind into the ocean.

Therefore, The Ocean Project has joined an increasing number of environmental organizations worldwide campaigning for partial or complete bans on balloons, as the country continues to progress towards being the regional and potential global leader in the environmental movement.

2020 was kick started with the launch of a new campaign targeting the use of balloons in Seychelles. The purpose of the campaign is to raise awareness about the negative impacts of balloons on the environment and to highlight eco-friendly initiatives.

As part of its efforts to get this vital message across, The Ocean Project is currently working to attract venues and businesses around the country to join their campaign by making a commitment to stop the use of balloons in their event decorations and switching to eco-friendly alternatives. Already, a number of local businesses have stepped up to the plate and endorsed the campaign.

Source: <http://www.theoceanprojectseychelles.com/news>

Seychelles is also working with the Seychelles Petroleum Company (SEYPEC) to introduce solar panels and electric chargers at some of its petroleum depots to enable electric vehicle owners to charge their vehicles directly from the stations. In addition, the Government has made a commitment to henceforth procure vehicles that are environmentally friendly.

Surya Enterprise

This business – located in Providence Industrial Zone and owned by Jothinathan Naidoo – collects and exports scrap metal such as fridges and cookers. Batteries are extremely toxic to the environment and should be discarded properly. At present Seychelles has facilities to export batteries, which are accepted by Surya Enterprise.

Approximately 90 per cent of the waste in Seychelles ends up in landfill, and the total amount is rising by 3 per cent every year. The Seychelles

generate on average 70,000 tonnes of waste per year.³³ Waste is often disposed in communal bin sites around the islands, and then collected and transported in refused compactor trucks to a controlled landfill at Providence. Solid waste management poses a significant challenge to Seychelles, as it suffers from many of the usual issues associated with managing waste within a small island developing state, such as lack of funding and capacity, high costs of transportation, absence of engineered landfills and scarcity of land. Over the years, there have been many initiatives to encourage people to minimize their waste in a consolidated effort to move towards a greener Seychelles.



The new National Waste Policy, which was approved in December 2018, aims to provide a framework to facilitate the involvement of all – the Government, the private sector, civil society organizations and the general public – in the waste management sector and to encourage efficient use of resources by helping the public make better-informed decisions about how to manage and dispose of their waste. The objective of the policy is to minimize the amount of waste dumped in landfills by promoting the 3Rs (Reduce, Re-use, Recycle) and building capacity among state and non-state institutions to manage waste.

The Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change remains committed to improving the existing waste management system, by implementing waste reduction and recovery strategies, strengthening its institutional and legal framework, and upgrading waste operations in line with international practices. Additionally, waste sorting is not yet in place in Seychelles, but the Department of Environment is currently developing the Seychelles Waste Master Plan for sustainable waste management in the country.

The initiatives being undertaken locally to minimize waste include work by the **Soroptimist Club of Victoria**, which accepts clothing, bed sheets, books, towels, kitchen utensils and other household items that are no longer used by consumers. These items are donated to schools and prison as recycled materials and fashion projects. The club usually holds a jumble sale every three months.

³³ <http://www.mecc.gov.sc/index.php/what-we-do/waste-management/>



Meanwhile, Navin's Paper Recycling Centre collects old paper products including cardboard and egg trays in order to make various paper products, mainly egg trays. And the Ink Doctor is a local shop where one can return old printer cartridges, and also buy cartridges that have been recycled and refilled.

Seychelles Breweries Ltd – Sustainable Development

Seychelles Breweries is the leading beverage company in Seychelles. The company recognizes that its management of environmental issues is important to its stakeholders and key to its long-term success. Its vision is to minimize its environmental impact and build a healthy and sustainable business that also enriches its people, its community and its environment.

Over the last few years, Seychelles Breweries has made significant progress in reducing its waste to landfill by actively seeking out ways to recycle or re-use waste. This includes the use of returnable glass bottles in production, to reduce the volume going to landfill. It also has a Water Warrior programme, which trains people to conserve water and reduce water waste.

As a result of these various initiatives, Seychelles Breweries has recycled over 20 million glass bottles a year. In the last five years, the company has reduced its waste to landfill from 150 tonnes to approximately 100 tonnes. Through its Water Warrior programme it has trained over 30 young trainee plumbers to repair leaks in the community. Seychelles Breweries also partners with the Ocean Project to clean beaches around the islands. Their first beach clean-up collected over 200kg of waste on Beau-Vallon Beach.

Moreover, the company has also set a series of challenging environmental targets to be achieved by 2020 that will drive its environmental strategy. Its ultimate goal is to achieve and maintain environmental sustainability. These targets were selected to ensure that they contribute towards the achievement of the United Nations' Global Goals and covers areas such as water, carbon emissions, sustainable packaging, and waste.

Source: www.diageo.com/en/our-business/where-we-operate/africa/seychelles-breweries/sustainable-development

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Source: www.diageo.com/en/our-business/where-we-operate/africa/seychelles-breweries/sustainable-development

Sustainable Tourism

Additionally, in August 2019 the national airline, Air Seychelles, acquired a new generation aircraft, the A320neo, which aims to generate unbeatable efficiency, lowest operating cost and significantly reduce environmental footprints. This made Air Seychelles the first airline in Africa to take delivery and operate the first A320neo aircraft. The benefits of operating this new aircraft has been evidenced through fuel savings and reductions in noise footprints and nitrogen oxides.



In its efforts to promote sustainable practices in the tourism industry, the tourism department introduced, in 2011, the Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label (SSTL) – a sustainable tourism management and certification programme designed specifically for use in Seychelles. It is voluntary, user-friendly and designed to inspire more efficient and sustainable ways of doing business. The SSTL is presently applicable to hotels of all sizes and seeks to encourage and guide improvements in sustainability outcomes. As such, the project is as much an educational process as an examination process.



To date, only 21 hotels have been certified out of the over 600 hotels that are presently operating in Seychelles. The challenges the programme faces include the lack of willingness of some hotels to embark on this sustainable process. The label emphasizes eight key aspects in which hotels can strive for sustainability, including electricity, water, energy, waste management and human resources among others. Establishments are awarded points upon inspection, and receive their certification if they satisfy the qualifying criteria and are awarded the required number of points.

The SSTL presents a unique selling point as many tourists are looking for environmentally friendly establishments. Acajou hotel was the first certified under the SSTL label, in 2017. The Praslin-based four-star hotel, which boasts 52 rooms, is putting into practice numerous eco-friendly initiatives around the hotel, and it intends to continue doing so to meet the needs of the market.



BERJAYA
BEAU VALLON BAY RESORT & CASINO - SEYCHELLES
RESORT

Berjaya Beau-Vallon Bay Resort & Casino

Berjaya Beau-Vallon Bay Resort & Casino was one of the first three hospitality operators in Seychelles to have been assessed and certified by the Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label (SSTL) for integrating sustainability practices into its business operations with the aim of safeguarding the biodiversity and culture of the country.

The hotel implements the following sustainable practices; rain water harvesting, recycling of items, composting of green waste, reducing waste, a farm-to-table spice garden, feeding leftover vegetables and fruits to tortoises at the hotel's Tortoise Pen, and also feeding leftover bread to birds at the Bird Sanctuary. It also stresses a ban on cling film, plastic straws and aluminium foil.

Berjaya Group of Companies' journey towards sustainability began long before the launching of the SSTL. Caring for the environment had become a vital part of their 'Legacy of Care' by Berjaya, instilled by founder and owner Tan Sri Dato Vincent Tan. As a team, they are committed to maintaining the conservation activities ongoing in their properties as corporate social responsibility to give back to Mother Nature. As green-consciousness grows, Berjaya Group is continuing to identify new ways to enhance environmentally friendly practices and encourage sustainability.

Source: <http://www.stl.sc/news>

As a small island nation Seychelles is susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Climate change can impact the tourism industry both directly and indirectly. It is thus crucial for the industry to address these issues through climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, by planting trees, using green transportation, saving energy, using less air-conditioning, saving water, minimizing packaging and waste, using local foods, adopting green energy technology and collaborating with the community.

Hilton Seychelles Northolme Resort and Spa has been adopting some key measures to address climate change in a sustainable way. The Resort has been using methods and equipment that help to reduce energy and water consumption. These measures have less impact on the environment and generate significant cost savings. In January 2019, Hilton Seychelles began bottling and filtering its own water from a source at Mont Dauban on Silhouette island. Since then the hotel group has used 370,000 fewer plastic bottles, equivalent to 7,400 kg of plastic. Moreover, since the resort installed solar PV panels in 2014, it has cut carbon emissions by almost 95 tonnes. The resort has also installed manual adjustment of flush capacity to reduce the amount of water used per flush and replaced the showerheads with low-flow alternatives.



Four Seasons Resort Seychelles

The role of Sustainability for Seychelles (S4S) at Four Seasons Hotel is to promote sustainable tourism. The two organizations are working together to help the hotel become greener and more sustainable. The project focuses on wetland restoration, education and awareness, and sustainable waste management.



Greening the Seychelles Prison

S4S has also partnered with several other NGOs to help the prison go green and become more sustainable. Funding was obtained from the Liaison Unit of Non-Governmental Organisations of Seychelles (LUNGOS) to the Environment and Natural Resources Commission and was used to help develop the skills of inmates through training and rehab sessions focusing on carpentry (using pallets), rainwater plumbing, sustainable agriculture, arts and crafts, and habitat restoration.



Seychelles prisoners with sculpture made of waste metal

Source: <http://www.s4seychelles.com/sustainability-projects>

Sustainable Fisheries

In addition to the tourism sector, many other sectors across the island have established sustainable management plans in order to achieve responsible consumption and production. The Blue Economy sector strongly advocates for a circular economy, which aims at reducing waste at all levels of the value chain, especially within the fisheries sector. The 'Seychelles Blue Economy: Strategic Policy Framework and Roadmap 2018 –2030' highlights a key strategic objective to focus on promoting businesses that transform other companies' waste into reusable resources. The Strategy also encourages businesses to become more efficient in waste management.

Over the years, it has become evident that most entrepreneurs are unaware of how to manage their waste, while some fail to understand the benefits it can bring. The Department of Blue Economy aims to conduct knowledge dissemination, awareness and sensitization programmes on the potential benefits and ways of managing waste. However, the programme is constrained by the limited resources and capacity available. The Blue Economy Investment Committee has recently managed to direct government efforts into researching the benefits of fish waste and how it can be transformed into reusable products, such as clean source fertilizers for agricultural purposes. The Indian Ocean Tuna (IOT) factory is an example of a company that is researching ways to turn its fishery waste into fuel.

Since 2016, the Government of Seychelles has been engaged in the Third South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Governance and Shared Growth Project (SWIOFish3), which aims to help improve the management of marine areas and fisheries in targeted zones and strengthen fisheries value chains in Seychelles. One of the key components of the SWIOFish3 project is sustainable development of the blue economy. This focuses on financing sustainable development of the Seychelles Blue Economy and supporting increased value addition in the aquaculture, industrial, semi-industrial, and artisanal fishing and processing sectors. Another aspect of the project involves operationalizing the sustainable-use marine protected areas by investing in their effective management. This includes promoting sustainable practices, mostly in the tourism and fisheries sectors, aiming at improving fish handling processes and reducing energy consumption, waste generation, by-catch and discards of fish.

Moreover, the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement and the accompanying protocol between the European Union (EU) and Seychelles was renewed in October 2019. The agreement allows access for EU vessels to Seychelles waters, while the accompanying protocol sets out the conditions, including the number of vessels allowed to fish in Seychelles' waters, the set tonnage and the employment conditions for Seychellois seamen on the vessels.

Sustainable Agriculture

Although most of what is consumed in Seychelles is imported, the agricultural sector remains vital for food security and livelihoods. Despite the fact that agricultural land is scarce and local food production is limited Seychelles, with the assistance of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), has been working to improve the livelihoods of rural Seychellois through activities that support food security, income generation, building assets and increasing resilience to climate change and economic shocks. Given the country's fragile ecosystem, climate change resilience, innovative sustainable agricultural and fishing practices are essential, and have been incorporated into all IFAD programmes and projects undertaken on the island.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture is considering introducing agricultural biotechnology innovations in the agricultural sector. Late in 2019, local farmers were introduced to

modern agricultural biotechnology techniques at a workshop hosted by the Seychelles Agricultural Agency (SAA) in collaboration with the United States Embassy. The workshop introduced farmers to innovative scientific tools and techniques to improve plants and animals, and to develop microorganisms for agricultural use. The farmers learned about biotechnologies' numerous uses for reducing pesticides and increasing agricultural sustainability. Examples of biotechnology practices already being implemented in the Seychelles include the use of tissue-cultured plants to enable reproduction of disease-free plants, pheromone traps used for controlling pests, bio-pesticides and bio-fertilizers.

Additionally, the University of Seychelles and the Wildlife Clubs Seychelles have engaged in a joint initiative to bring together science and agricultural innovation to Seychelles. This aquaponics pilot project³⁴ not only contributes to the Seychelles Blue Economy Strategic objective of food security, employment and local entrepreneurship, but also aims to reduce water use and protect Seychelles' coastal and marine ecosystems from pollution caused by fertilizers and pesticides.

Essentially, aquaponics – a hybrid between aquaculture and hydroponics – involves the use of fish waste to fertilize vegetables growth. Aquaponics works on a circular system through which water from fish tanks is filtered by the growing medium and the plants as they grow. The water is then returned to the fish tank cleaner than when it left. As a result, the process uses only a small amount of water compared to traditional soil-based farming, and no artificial fertilizers or pesticides.

In its efforts to ensure long-term adoption of the project, the James Michel Blue Economy Research Institute's (BERI) Aquaponics project will be incorporated into the science curriculum of University of Seychelles' Environmental Science programme. Students will use this technology to study a range of practical and theoretical skills, such as food production, botany, fish biology, water chemistry, ecology, ecological modelling, engineering, mathematics and economics. The start-up project was funded by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives which enabled the first stage of research into agricultural technologies to improve food security, social resilience to climate change and the health of coral reefs.

In addition to the various local initiatives being undertaken Seychelles, along with four other member states (Kingdom of Eswatini, Madagascar, Uganda and Zimbabwe), is being assisted by the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) on a Climate Smart Agriculture pilot programme: the Val d'Endor Project. This programme is intended to improve water management in farming communities by reducing water and energy consumption in agriculture. This will result in increased agricultural production and productivity, and help bring the farming communities in the country one step closer to having 'green' or environmentally sustainable farms.

The programme will further aim to roll out the 'Water Smart Farms' concept, which seeks to promote water efficiency on farms, reduce soil salinity, and at the same time reduce energy consumption. The Val D'Endor Project is expected to benefit a total of 160 farmers. An additional 15 farmers will be covered, comprising 10 farmers from Bonne Espoire and 5 from La Digue.

³⁴ Seychelles Blue Economy: Strategic Policy Framework and Roadmap 2018-2030



Geffroy's farm: Eco-friendly and innovative farming



Jean-Paul Geffroy is an eco-friendly farmer at Anse Royale. Mr. Geffroy uses safe biochemical products which are not harmful to the environment. To fight farm pests, such as leaf minor, aphids, shoot borers, triphs and others, Mr. Geffroy uses neem oil from the neem tree. The neem oil acts as a repellent that slows down the reproduction of pests and deters further infestation. Neem is not harmful to human beings, water or soil. Biochemical products such as neem are also not harmful to the bee population, which are integral pollinators.

Source : Nature Seychelles, July 2014, 'Eco-friendly and innovative farming in Seychelles,'
<<http://www.natureseychelles.org/knowledge-centre/news-and-stories/585-eco-friendly-and-innovative-farming-in-seychelles>>

Meanwhile, the Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT) is supporting 'Seaweed: A Hidden Resource – a Recycling Project', a project designed to address two key issues; (i) the littering of beaches with seaweed; and (ii) the provision of compost for home gardens. The Women in Action in Solidarity Organization (WASO), an NGO, is the lead project partner and aims to explore the scope of using seaweed as a component for composting. The project beneficiaries are vulnerable and disadvantaged women and girls that WASO works with in its business incubator at Providence.

With the project, fewer seaweed drifts will be seen on beaches around Mahe, especially the east coast, less waste will be thrown into landfill as the seaweed swept up is often disposed of in communal bins, greater choice of compost will be made available to households with home gardens, and a more circular and sustainable approach to environment protection and livelihoods will be adopted in Seychelles.

Another company that produces high-quality organic liquid seaweed plant growth promoter and soil conditioner is Seaweed Seychelles. Seaweed Seychelles was founded in 2015 by Seychellois entrepreneurs, Bernard and Benjamin Portlouis on Praslin, the second largest island in Seychelles. The company has also collaborated with Australia's leading research agency, CSIRO. One of the main goals

of this company is to help the horticultural and agricultural industries improve their crop yields, protect their crops from disease, and increase flowering and nutrients without the use of chemicals.

Additionally, given the Government's aim to decrease its dependence on imported oil products and to increase the share of renewable energy in the electricity matrix to 5 per cent by 2020 and 15 per cent by 2030, the idea of exploring bioenergy is of great interest in Seychelles. The Government, through the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, requested the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to provide technical assistance for a Bioenergy and Food Security (BEFS) assessment. Using the BEFS approach, FAO will be able to assess the sustainable bioenergy potential in the Seychelles, with a focus on the generation of energy from biomass.

Modern food systems are heavily reliant on fossil fuels. In order to deliver more food with less and cleaner energy, food and agricultural systems will need to gradually decouple from fossil fuel dependence and embrace renewable energy sources that contribute less to climate change. However, sustainable bioenergy development remains a complex area for Seychelles due to the range of bioenergy options across sectors and the technological, economic and financial viability of its implementation. Thus, achieving a transformation to energy-smart food systems requires coordination in policy making, appropriate legal frameworks and ongoing multi-stakeholder dialogue to support the process.

Way forward

Despite Seychelles' inherent challenges as a small island developing state to manage waste and adopt sustainable practices, both on the supply side and the demand side, Seychelles is continuing to promote sustainable production and consumption practices, as evidenced in many of its policies, projects and initiatives. With limited resources available, it is thus crucial that individuals, groups and organizations take responsibility of their own consumption and production patterns.

Going forward, there is a much greater need to educate and raise awareness among the public on how best to help support each other to ensure a greener and cleaner Seychelles by adopting the 3 Rs (Reduce, Re-use, and Recycle). Sensitization on the effects of irresponsible consumption and production patterns across all sectors, levels, and groups need to be highlighted in the campaigns, to ensure that people understand the impact of their actions and encourage greater sustainable practices; this in turn will reverse the harm being inflicted on this beautiful island and, hence, on the planet.

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



Seychelles remains a frontrunner in the fields of climate change adaptation, protection of the marine environment and biodiversity. Combatting climate change is a high priority for Seychelles as it continues to face its harsh impacts.

The state of the environment directly impacts the tourism industry, which is one of the main earners for the country's economy. Thus, urgent action needs to be taken on climate change issues to reduce any damages inflicted on the main pillar of the economy.

Seychelles continues to be gravely concerned that climate change poses the most serious threat to its territorial integrity, viability and survival, and that it undermines the country's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and threatens its very existence. Therefore, the Government of Seychelles has put in place climate change adaptation and mitigation projects for the past decade in light of the adverse impacts of climate change to the archipelago.

Climate change is no longer a distant threat. Its impacts are here today. As the new Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change special report makes abundantly clear, the risks of climate change are mounting and even the world's best efforts will not fully prevent disruption due to the warming world: more intense storms, sea-level rise, coastal erosion, floods, ocean acidification, wildfires, droughts and so on.

Climate change is a global issue of common interest to all. In this context, the Government of Seychelles has broad partnerships and is strengthening dialogue and cooperation with friendly international donor countries that are helping Seychelles to shape its own, nationally appropriate paths to sustainable and inclusive development. For example, the ocean has enormous potential to meet sustainable development needs and mitigate climate change; but only if it can be maintained in, or restored to, a healthy and productive state and if it receives international support through climate finance.

Seychelles remains highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and climate variability but continues to be gravely concerned that climate change poses the most serious threat to its territorial integrity, viability and survival, and that it undermines its efforts to achieve sustainable development goals and threatens its very existence. Therefore, the Government of Seychelles has put in place adaptation and mitigation climate change projects for the past decade, in light of the adverse impacts of climate change to the archipelago. Seychelles has adopted several initiatives with the aim of strengthening its resilience and increasing its preparedness for such effects. In 2018, Seychelles was the leading country in the category of climate change and energy in the Environmental Performance Index (EPI), with a score of 93.25. Seychelles was further recognized as the most improved country, with a baseline score of 66.02 in 2018 compared to its previous 47.05 score.

Over the years the Government has concentrated its efforts on both mitigation and adaptation measures, with the help of its development partners such as UNDP, the EU and the World Bank. The establishment of the Department of Energy and Climate Change in 2015 has facilitated better coordination of climate change issues, implementation of the National Climate Change Strategy and international co-operation and global negotiations. The Department has made tremendous progress towards establishing the necessary framework for dealing with the issues at hand, which include development of the new Climate Change Policy. Cabinet approved the Policy in May 2020, with the

vision: “A sustainable, climate resilient and low-carbon Seychelles”. The formulation of the Policy took a consultative approach, which involved numerous stakeholder engagements. This stimulated discussions amongst stakeholder groupings, enabling consensus amongst the groupings about what the Policy is intended to achieve. Furthermore, the National Climate Change Strategy is currently being revised to better reflect today’s reality. A similar approach has been adopted, in which groupings from various sectors provide their inputs, allowing for more engagement and a participatory approach.

In recognition of Seychelles’ plight in the face of climate change, in December 2019, the Principal Secretary for Energy and Climate Change, PS Wills Agricole, was awarded one of six Green Climate Fund (GCF) Green Champion Awards in the Transformational Country Green Champion category. This award showcases and supports the most noteworthy and extensive efforts and initiatives in battling against climate change, delivered through impactful environmental, social and business-led commitments. Seychelles represents Small Island Developing States (SIDS) on the board of the Green Climate Fund (GFC), which is the world’s largest international climate fund.

The geographic location and relative remoteness of Seychelles have led the Government to increase its natural disaster and climate resilience efforts through the adoption of a Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Act in 2014, which established the country’s first comprehensive legal DRM framework. This legal framework mandated the Department of Risk and Disaster Management (DRDM) as the national entity responsible for preparing a national DRM plan and strategy and implementing an integrated emergency management and coordination system. In line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the DRDM promotes integrated policies so as to achieve resilience to disasters.

To strengthen the DRM and climate resilience agenda, the Government is also: providing a strong institutional basis for disaster risk reduction at local and national levels; identifying, assessing and monitoring disaster risk; enhancing early warning; enabling effective response capacity by strengthening disaster preparedness at local and national levels; and mainstreaming climate change considerations into national policies, strategies and plans.

Seychelles remains steadfast in mainstreaming climate change issues into national policies, plans and strategies. The National Development Strategy 2019-2023 (NDS), launched in 2019, is built on six key pillars, one of which (Pillar 6) establishes the key priority areas in terms of environmental sustainability and resilience for the period 2019-2033. The NDS is intended to aid the Government in its endeavour to better allocate resources towards identified priority areas. In reinforcing its commitment towards this agenda, climate change features strongly in all spheres of governmental planning documents, as the environment is regarded as the foundation of the economy, on which tourism, fisheries and other key sectors depend.

In terms of capacity building, Stantec et. al (2018) report that the level of awareness of climate change within Seychelles is high, although shifting this awareness into policies, plans and legislation has proven rather slow within the governmental sphere due to the accompanying high implementation costs. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) strongly advocates the need for capacity building as a key element of addressing climatic issues in developing and transitioning economies. Henceforth, with the establishment of the Paris Committee on Capacity Building in 2015, Seychelles as a signatory to the UNFCCC took a similar stance, and has since strengthened its efforts in this domain. However, much remains to be done in educating stakeholder groupings on adaptation measures, more specifically in enabling development of capacity for research, development and implementation of appropriate measures and strategies.

Progress on Implementation of the Paris Agreement and Revised and Up-scaled Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)

The Paris Agreement is meaningless without ambitious climate action, and Seychelles is conscious of this. This is why the climate actions taken thus far have been both to reduce emissions and to build resilience and adapt to the impact of climate change, and they send a strong message to the world that Seychelles is serious in combatting this global challenge. The country has invested in a plethora of initiatives to mitigate and adapt to climate change, ranging from local initiatives for grid-connected rooftop photovoltaic (PV) panels, PV democratization, and promoting and up-scaling of climate-resilient resource-efficient technologies and adaptation projects in a tropical island context, comprising nature-based solutions through establishing initiatives with friendly donor countries on a bilateral and multilateral basis.

As a signatory of the UNFCCC, Seychelles pledged more concentrated efforts in the areas of energy generation, energy efficiency, and transportation. Following Seychelles' Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), which makes clear its contributions to achieving the objectives of UNFCCC, the country committed to reducing greenhouse gases. This was backed by numerous plans, one of which is the Energy Policy which sets targets of 5 per cent and 15 per cent of energy supply delivered from renewable energy sources for the years 2020 and 2030 respectively, and an additional aim of 100 per cent delivery by 2050. Reaffirming its commitment to use of sustainable and greener energy, the initial targets have been revised from 15 per cent to 30 per cent by 2030. This move is in line with Seychelles' commitment to transitioning towards more sustainable sources of energy.

Mitigation actions

To achieve energy security, Seychelles has started to shift away from fossil fuel and embrace energy efficiency and renewable energy on a large scale. This is enabling the country to slowly meet its energy needs, lower its carbon emissions, mitigate the adverse effects of climate change, provide energy to the population at affordable prices and achieve UN SDG 7 on access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. October has been named by the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change as the month to celebrate and promote sustainable energy and to achieve energy security.

- a. **Revised and up-scaled NDC for Seychelles as a large ocean state:** During the Climate Action Summit in 2019, Seychelles and other SIDS made a collective commitment to raise the ambition of its NDCs by 2020 and move to net zero emissions by 2050, contingent on assistance from the international community. Seychelles intends to move to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2035.
- b. Seychelles has an exclusive economic zone of 1.4 million square kilometres, which is **3,000 times** the size of the islands. The highlight of Seychelles' revised NDC will, therefore, be a whole chapter dedicated to ocean climate action and blue carbon as nature-based solutions to climate change.
- c. Seychelles already protects 30 per cent of its EEZ as of March 2020, **an area the size of Germany, meeting the 30-by-30 target of protecting 30 per cent of the ocean by 2030 a decade early.**
- d. Measures on energy efficiency in public buildings and areas – including switching to LED streetlights **across the islands** and providing solar PV and energy-efficient appliances to **all public schools** – are being undertaken.

- e. Financial incentives are being provided to encourage private homes and small businesses to switch to low-energy and energy-efficient home appliances, lighting and energy management technologies through the Seychelles Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Programme (SEEREP) scheme.
- f. To help with this, in 2019 introduced energy efficiency standards which are mandatory for lightbulbs, freezers and refrigerators, air conditioners, water heaters and washing machines imported into the country.
- g. The Ministry of Finance has **exempted all certified energy-efficient appliances from value added tax.**
- h. **On green transport**, Seychelles has drawn up a national e-mobility strategy and regulatory and policy frameworks for electric vehicles, including business models and fiscal schemes to incentivize people to switch to electric cars.
- i. One of the undesirable responses to warming temperatures is that the country uses air conditioners and refrigeration more, which increases emissions and the carbon footprint if the equipment is not energy efficient, and increases use of fossil fuels.
- j. Apart from the mandatory energy efficiency standards for cooling equipment, Seychelles is also shifting to low-carbon and ozone-friendly technology as part of the Green Cooling Africa Initiative to substantially reduce our greenhouse gas emissions through refrigeration and air conditioning.

Adaptation actions

Seychelles is utterly dedicated toward ecosystem restoration through an Ecosystem-Based Adaptation (EBA) project, to build and rehabilitate where there has been destruction due to natural causes. Ecosystem restoration projects – especially those related to mangroves, sea grass and coral reefs – have been prioritized and activities to improve marine and coastal biodiversity and conserve ecosystem health are being actively pursued. However, there is an ever-increasing need of financing for adaptation.

Human activities are mostly concentrated in coastal regions, which are often low-lying, making coastal zones prone to the effects of climate changes due to the high risk of flooding from sea level rise. With the development of the country's first Coastal Management Plan (CMP) in 2019, Seychelles has started to address the hazards affecting the country's coastal zones. The CMP was developed in consultation with all stakeholders to enhance understanding about the risks associated with climate change and development pressures around the coastal zones in the country. The Plan takes into consideration existing studies that focus on coastal hazards relating to overtopping, sea level rise and flooding along the shoreline, in addition to nature-based solutions.

The success of coral restoration, for example, has even led into tourism-related activities in which one can even plant a coral while on holiday. The Tourism Sustainability Label builds on all the schemes that have been developed to encompass sustainability in one of the two main pillars of the country's economy, which is tourism. The warm, welcoming berth of the country incites many visitors to the shores and developments within the tourism sector have progressed year after year, but protection of beauty is still maintained. Seychelles advocates for tourists to come and experience the unique experience of paradise but to leave only footprints and take only memories.

In March 2019, the Nekton scientific expedition explored Seychelles' deep waters during the first Nekton Mission in the Indian Ocean. While the beauty of the underwater landscape of the

country is incomparable, the potential for new, exciting discoveries is at the forefront. From the expedition one thing was certain: even the deep ocean environment down at 350 metres displays a wealth of biological diversity, but at the same time it remains equally vulnerable to changes in its natural equilibrium. The knowledge gained from the expedition is being shared, and partnerships have been established that will provide Seychelles with avenues within the initiatives of the Strategic Blue Economy Roadmap.

Case Study: Ecosystem Based Adaptation to climate change in Seychelles

Climate change predictions in Seychelles indicate that while a higher frequency of rainfall is expected over the years, a more irregular pattern is anticipated. During dry seasons, short periodical rainfall extends the drought periods, affecting water reservoirs, which are generally dependent on precipitation. For this reason, a nationwide project was implemented in collaboration by the Government, UNDP and Global Environment Facility Programme Coordination Unit under the MEECC. This will reprofile two new wetlands in the Baie Lazare watershed, generating a total of 40,000m³ for water storage, which will cater for agricultural purposes and the Public Utilities Corporation. In addition, this has enabled the engagement of locals through the establishment of four community-based Watershed Committees, in order to foster a sense of participation within the local community through wetland and forest restoration work programmes, in addition to networking activities and capacity building gatherings.

Case Study: Eco-school Programme: Holiday Camps

The MEECC is conducting several environment education programmes to sensitize the population about environment issues through a section under the Ministry's purview called PECO. PECO primarily works closely with schools, environmental NGOs and communities, and implements educational programmes and projects with the aim of enhancing environment education at all levels.

School holiday camps are organized for pupils at which they are exposed to valuable outdoor activities, including recycling craft, nature walks and snorkeling. These activities are often centred around specific themes and are intended to develop young leaders and active environment change agents in schools and communities at large.

Africa Island States Climate Commission Framework for action

Under the Chairmanship of the Republic of Seychelles, the Africa Island States Climate Commission was officially launched on 9 February 2019 on the side-line of the African Union Summit by the Vice-President of Seychelles. It comprised nine members. The Africa Island States Climate Commission is a country partnership which promotes African island states' action for climate-resilient sustainable development to conserve biodiversity, to enhance local livelihoods and economies for greater social and environmental security among coastal communities and equally to act as a platform for the successful implementation of SDG 14: Life below water.

Way forward

Seychelles' climate action has contributed to creating climate-smart resilient islands and, as a result, it underscores the longstanding commitment of Seychelles to doing its part to bring about the necessary systemic transitions. As a SIDS, Seychelles must continue to show leadership on climate action and ambition in the fight against climate change, by building momentum for implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Seychelles recognizes that building resilience to climate change and committing to low-emission development pathways provide a firm basis for continued growth and sustainable development.

Therefore, going forward, the country aims to consolidate its regional and global leadership in the management and sustainable use of its natural resources. As a small island state, Seychelles will continue its stewardship of climate change issues at the local, regional and global levels, with the plight of small island developing state at the centre of this concern. The people of Seychelles are living with the first serious consequences of global warming through the impacts of Cyclone Felleng in January 2013 and Cyclone Fantala in April 2016 to name just two. As a vulnerable country, Seychelles' need for action is real and immediate. Therefore, the country sees an urgent need to mobilize international investment to fund adaptation measures. Seychelles will continue to work with other nations to access finance and explore innovative ways of mobilizing public and private sector resources for adaptation and mitigation. This includes support for community-based adaptation planning.³⁵

Despite the tremendous advancements made in raising awareness on matters relating to climate change, much remains to be accomplished in this regard, such as creating greater awareness amongst the public, that would in turn assist in garnering their support. Further mainstreaming of climate change considerations across the public sector in planning, budgeting and general service delivery is of critical importance.

³⁵ Seychelles National Development Strategy 2019-2023

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development



Goal 14: Life below water

Labelled as “the pioneer in protecting the beating blue heart of the planet”, Seychelles is one of the world’s biodiversity hotspots and this call for balancing the need for economic development to sustain social advancement with that of protecting the country’s natural endowment, which includes white sandy beaches, verdant landscapes, clear waters and abundant marine resources. The natural resources are the fulcrum of our domestic economy, whose two mainstays are tourism and fisheries. The former provides direct employment to 17% of our active population while the latter constitutes 95% of our domestic exports.

Oceans are the foundations of the economic development of small island states and the vastness of our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in comparison with the paucity of our land area makes us a large ocean state, which bestows upon us the role of custodian of large swathes of the Indian Ocean. Seychelles’ EEZ expands over an area approximating to 1.4 km² as compared to its landmass of roughly 459km². Its economy is characterized by a high reliance on the tourism sector, contributing to around 60% of the total gross domestic product. In an effort to shift from the dependency on the tourism sector, Seychelles is exerting extensive efforts into venturing in the domains of the Blue Economy.

Department of Blue Economy and the Blue Economy Strategic Policy Framework and Roadmap 2030

The Department of Blue Economy was established with the mandate to provide strategic direction and co-ordination of the Blue Economy implementation, as part of the continued sustainable development of Seychelles. The Blue Economy Strategic Policy Framework and Roadmap 2030 was approved in January 2018, bringing an integrated approach for sustainable development of our ocean. The documents unite three fronts, i.e. economy, environment and society in achieving sustainable development of our ocean, and aligns wholly with international commitments such as the Agenda 2030, Aichi Target11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The plan aims at developing the blue economy sector by increasing its share of GDP contributions, by creating high value jobs and local investment opportunities, by ensuring food security and well-being, and by safeguarding the integrity of habitats and ecosystem services to promote climate resilience.

Fisheries

Seychelles fisheries are categorized as follows: artisanal, semi-industrial long line fishery, industrial long line fishery and industrial foreign-owned purse seiners. Artisanal and semi-industrial long line fishery contribute to Seychelles’ food security and the fisheries industry as a whole accounts for 34% of the country’s exports.

To prevent over-exploitation of the plateau two fisheries co-management plans; the “Mahe Plateau Demersal Trap and Line Fishery Co-management Plan” and the “Fisheries Co-management Plan for Praslin/La Digue Artisanal Trap and Line Fishery” have been drafted since 2015 for artisanal and semi-industrial fisheries.

To preserve stocks for industrial fishery, in 2016, the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) decided to cut the allowance quota for yellowfin tuna by 15% as an interim plan for rebuilding the Indian Ocean Yellowfin Tuna Stock in the IOTC Area. This was done through a series of negotiations between IOTC and other stakeholders to first settle on a reference year on which the quota would apply.

Lobster fishery is regulated under Section 19 of the Fisheries Act (Subsidiary Legislation), 2010 and it follows a limited licensing system where small numbers of licenses are given during open season with set conditions to follow, amongst which is the prohibition to catch lobsters less than 7.5 centimetres.

In November 2019, the Ministry Of Fisheries and Agriculture launched the Fisheries Comprehensive Plan to guide the future actions and spearhead the development for the fisheries sector for the next three years.

Marine conservation

In 2012, the Government set a goal for protected area expansion: 50% of all terrestrial areas and 30% of the EEZ including 15% in ‘no take’ areas. The Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Initiative was launched to meet this goal. The MSP process focuses on planning for and management of the sustainable and long-term use and health of the Seychelles Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). MSP uses an ecosystem-based approach to propose new marine protected areas in conjunction with improved management for uses and activities. By 2020, target 14.5 of the SDGs, which aims to conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, has been exceeded by Seychelles.

On 24th October, 2019, Aldabra, one of Seychelles World Heritage Sites, received its fifth international designation. The Marine Conservation Institute and its International Science Council certified the atoll as an outstanding Marine Protected Area (MPA) with a Blue Park designation. Aldabra was awarded the Platinum Level Blue Park status, considered the highest level of the award, with only ten sites in the world bestowed with this award. This award displays the rigorous and effective management and efforts of this protected area.

Coastal Management

The Coastal Management Plan (CMP) 2019-2024 was launched in 2019 and sets out a holistic set of priorities for coastal management including monitoring and research, coastal protection infrastructure, risk-based spatial planning, and capacity needs.

Furthermore, legislative frameworks have been put in place to protect the coast from erosion. One example is that an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) is required for all developments in Seychelles. As of 2020, the EIA Regulation is undergoing a revision to make it more effective.

A revision of the coastal setback policy is also currently underway. This policy will determine the distance from the high water mark where development should be limited. This is part of an effort to combat the threat of coastal degradation to both businesses and homes, as well as the environment.

Debt for Nature Swap and the creation of SeyCCAT

Following the 2008 financial crisis, Seychelles in partnership with the international NGO, The Nature Conservancy, devised a debt for nature swap whereby Seychelles' debt were bought by several institutions in exchange for the protection of 30% of Seychelles EEZ for conservation purposes. The Seychelles Conversation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT) was created as a special purpose vehicle for this goal.

One of the projects co-funded by SeyCCAT and NEKTON (a UK based NGO) was a series of deep-water expeditions (named 'First Descent') for seven Seychellois researchers in 2019. The Seychelles president visited the research vessel 'Ocean Zephyr' in April 2019 to show his support for the expedition.

World's First Sovereign Blue Bond

In October 2018, Seychelles launched the world's first sovereign blue bond. The financial instrument was designed to support sustainable marine and fisheries projects through private investment. The bond is partially guaranteed by a US\$5 million guarantee from the World Bank and further supported by a US\$5 million concessional loan from the GEF, which will partially cover interest payments for the bond.

The bond raised US\$15 million from international investors, with the proceeds going into supporting the expansion of marine protected areas, improving governance of priority fisheries and developing the Seychelles' blue economy. Grants and loans are provided through the Blue Grants Fund and Blue Investment Fund, managed respectively by SeyCCAT and the Development Bank of Seychelles.

Marine pollution

Due to increased plastic pollution that end up in the ocean, the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (MEECC) completely banned the importation and use of single-use plastic bags, single-use plates, cups and utensils and Styrofoam takeaway boxes in 2017, through the development and implementation of two sets of regulations under the Environmental Protection Act (EPA).

Following cabinet approval, MDAs supported this initiative by switching from using plastic to reusable options in the work place. This includes replacing plastic water bottle in meeting rooms with other alternatives such as glass re-usable bottles or water dispensers.

In 2019, MEECC extended the ban to include the importation and use of single-use plastic straws. Consequently, businesses started using creative alternatives such as bamboo or pasta straws.

Seychelles has also shown its commitment to protecting the marine environment by signing for four more legal acts of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) in December 2019.

Seychelles has also committed to the Ellen Mac Arthur Foundation and have become a permanent member of the Plastic Waste Partnership under the Basel Convention as well as the Ad Hoc Open Expert Working Group on Marine Litter and Microplastic.

Case Study: The Ocean Project

The Ocean Project (TOP) Seychelles is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization, that was established in November 2016 with the aim of improving the health of the ocean, specifically in regards to plastic pollution.

TOP organises beach clean-ups, conducts research on marine litter, leads anti-littering campaigns, conducts screening of films related to marine pollution, and as of 2020, TOP has a series of art installations made from plastic debris to educate and raise awareness about the threats of marine debris.

Aquaculture

Aquaculture has been practiced on a small scale for over 30 years in Seychelles. The black tiger prawn farm on Coetivy island was established in 1989, while pearl (oyster) farming was established in 1995. Recently, more efforts are being put into expanding aquaculture, in line with Seychelles strategy of diversifying exports.

The Aquaculture Section in Seychelles Fisheries Authority was established in 2016 with the aim of managing, coordinating, undertaking research and development, and ensuring that the regulations for aquaculture are properly adhered to.

In 2019, cabinet approved new aquaculture regulations, which allowed the issuance of production licences for five species: red snapper, grouper, two subspecies of trevally, and sea urchins.

The same year, a broodstock, acclimation and quarantine facility was opened at the Providence Fishing Port to support the expansion of the industry.

Marine security

Seychelles works with the UNODC's Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP), which is responsible for providing technical assistance to Seychelles in countering transnational organized crime at sea, including illicit activity, which could have a direct impact in life below water. Additionally, the Programme is committed to assist Seychelles in regulating and combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and other crimes on board fishing vessels. Other crimes can include pollution, destructive fishing practices, etc.

In 2020, the President of Seychelles assented to the Defence (Amendment) Act, thereby providing a legislative framework to govern the activities of the Seychelles Coast Guard. The new framework brings clarity to the duties of the Seychelles Coast Guard while also strengthening their powers to intercept, search and detain vessels suspected of engaging in illegal activities, including IUU.

Way Forward

Going forward, the Blue Economy concept should guide Seychelles' development, given that the ocean is one of Seychelles' richest resources. The Blue Economy Roadmap is a comprehensive blueprint that will assure both economic growth, marine sustainability and food security.

Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss



The Seychelles land mass is only 455km², and a high percentage is mountainous areas that are protected on account of unique biodiversity or protection of watersheds. Most of the accessible land is along the coast, and this accommodates the vast majority of the essential infrastructures required in the country, from housing, hospitals, schools, transportation network, air and seaports, to businesses, sports and leisure activities. Therefore, like in most small island developing states, there is a high pressure on land for development.

Despite this, Seychelles has endemic species and has followed a strong environmental conservation programme from the very start. Recognized as a biodiversity hotspot, Seychelles was the first country in the western Indian Ocean region to designate part of its ocean territory as marine protected areas, and today about 50 per cent of its land territory is under legal protection. This fortifies Seychelles' commitment to becoming a global leader in environmental conservation. The Protected Areas Policy (2013) greatly emphasizes the need to extend designated protected areas, in addition to making the Protected Areas System stronger. In honouring its commitments, Seychelles has identified numerous landmarks to be designated as protected areas, including outer islands such as South Island Farquar National Park, Goelettes Island (Farquar) and the Banc de Sable Special Reserves and Grand and Petite Polyte (Cosmoledo). The aforementioned have been earmarked for completion in the year 2020. It is worth noting that these islands are hosts to rich biodiversity and offer appropriate habitats for the various endemic and endangered flora and fauna. The conservation of habitats of key species are pivotal, and therefore biodiversity conservation ranks high on the national agenda.

Seychelles was one of the 30 countries that piloted the Biodiversity Finance Initiative, which adopts a methodology appraised by parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) as an instrument to support efforts to improve resource mobilization for biodiversity conservation. The first exercise carried out in the process was a Policy and Institutional Review, this was followed by a Biodiversity Public and Private Expenditure Review, with the aim of identifying the losses to biodiversity arising from implementation of policies, along with possible scope of alignment to increase efficiency. Thereafter, a Biodiversity Finance Plan was developed with the objective of providing a more coherent and comprehensive approach to biodiversity finance through exploration of differing types of finance solutions, with engagement of the public sector, private sector and civil society.

The forests of Seychelles tend to be found in mountainous areas, where there is less construction and access by human populations. Although extractive uses are allowed in the forest, most wood for construction is imported from overseas. In the past, charcoal production was primarily from local sources, but now it is increasingly imported from overseas. The main threats to the native forest ecosystems are alien invasive species, particularly creepers, which have spread at an alarming rate and are now found in most of the country's low-lying forests. The Government of Seychelles, in collaboration with its developing partner, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), is currently engaged in a project to develop a National Forest Policy. The project is expected to run for 18 months and aims to deliver three main objectives; training, forest policy analysis and consultations. In addition, the project is expected to be utilized as a tool to expand awareness and education of national forest programmes and sustainable forest management.

Case Study: Protected Areas Finance

Following the announcement of its intentions to expand the volume of Protected Areas, the Government recognised the substantial financial resources that effective management of these areas could require. Hence, in 2016, the Government of Seychelles, with support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and UNDP, embarked on a Protected Areas Finance Project in order to build capacity and prepare for the management of these expanded areas. The Seychelles National Parks Authority (SNPA) oversees the management of eight Protected Areas (PAs) and currently is the PA organization with the largest financing gap. This project aims at aiding SNPA, in addition to other PA management organizations, to improve its financial systems.

This will hence improve financial sustainability and strategically unify the Protected Area System. It further sheds light on the financing gaps and explores new and innovative instruments in addressing these gaps, while addressing emerging threats and risks to biodiversity in a dynamic global landscape.

The major outcomes of the project were:

- A national-level sustainable financing plan for protected areas
- The Seychelles National Parks Authority Strategic Plan
- Management Plans for several Protected Areas
- Tourist facilities, furniture and signage in the Protected Areas.

On the island of Praslin, past incidences of forest fires have caused parts of the island to be degraded, and heavy rains have resulted in loss of top soil and erosion in certain places. These are being addressed through a number of environmental projects, in an attempt to restore and rehabilitate damaged and degraded habitats. For instance, through the Government of Seychelles' Ecosystem-Based Adaptation Project has rehabilitated forests in several catchment areas, such as Mare Aux Cochons, Grand Bois and Caiman Rivers. In addition, on Praslin Island a partner NGO, TRASS, has been restoring large fire-affected areas, as well as several wetlands.

In May 2018, the Republic of Seychelles validated its Land Degradation Neutrality under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification targets and measures, as part of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030. Moreover in October 2019, Seychelles embarked on an FAO-funded project to establish a comprehensive national policy and legal framework for forestry. This will include sustainable forest resources management, innovation and review of existing laws that guide management of forests.

Seychelles became party to the CBD following the signing and ratification of the Convention in 1992 and December 1993 respectively. The Convention seeks to achieve three key objectives; the conservation of biodiversity, ensuring sustainable use of components of biodiversity, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. Seychelles has since identified several ways in which the implementation of the Convention and subsequent Decisions of the Conference of the Parties (COP) are to be set out to reflect the needs and realities of the small island state.

In transforming high-level, broad commitments into more tangible, localised actions, Seychelles prepared its second National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP 2015-2020) with the objectives of meeting the Seychelles' commitments as specified under Article 6a of the CBD. The latest NBSAP was elaborated with a mindful effort to ensure alignment with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

This would in turn ensure coherence with the Convention's strategic plan, making reporting easier. The NBSAP was aligned with the CBD Strategic Plan 2011-2020 and its 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. In total 31 projects have been designed to achieve these targets, of which 60 per cent have been implemented so far. Against the backdrop of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, Seychelles has made particularly significant progress on targets 1, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, 16 and 20.

As part of delivering on the objectives of the CBD, and more specifically the third set objective, the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) was adopted in 2014 as a more effective implementation avenue to provide a strong basis for greater legal certainty and transparency for both providers and users of genetic resources. In realizing this, the Nagoya Protocol establishes the ABS Clearing House to aid delivery to the goal. At present, Seychelles is developing its national CHM through the Global GEF-UNDP-ABS project; this will be fitted to cater for the country's specificities. This platform enables exchanges of information on biodiversity, scientific and technical cooperation and facilitates an effective network of parties and partners. In this regard, with its development partner, the UNDP country office, a project was launched to strengthen human resources, legal frameworks and institutional capacities to implement the Nagoya Protocol. Its outcome includes an approved Access and Benefit Sharing Policy. In 2018 Seychelles established its national Access and Benefit Sharing policy. This policy is being used to inform the ABS legislation and associated regulations. It is at an advanced stage of drafting and is expected to be completed later in 2020.

Way forward and challenges

A substantial proportion of funding of projects and upkeep of protected areas relies on eco-tourism. This heavy reliance on a specific source of income leaves Seychelles highly vulnerable and fragile to external shocks. In addition, achieving high-income status has led to a substantial reduction in the amount of donor funds available for environmental conservation efforts. As a means to addressing this weakness, it is vital for Seychelles to identify innovative solutions to diversify projected income dedicated for the financing of conservation and biodiversity related projects.

Striking the right balance between environmental sustainability and environmental protection on the one hand and economic development on the other is a challenge for Seychelles. However, the Government is taking on the issue head-first in order to ascertain how the country continues on its development trajectory. The desired outcome is to enhance management of sustainability development in the Seychelles through increased environmental protection and conservation while maximizing the economic benefits to be gained from this. At the same time, the objective also remains to adapt and build resilience against both the vagaries of the global economy and climate change for the benefit of the present and future generations.

Case Study: The Vallee de Mai

The world's smallest natural UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Vallee de Mai, is located on the island of Praslin. The 19.5ha reserve is the largest existing forest of the endemic coco de mer palm, and has over countless years of isolation amassed a great amount of species unique to the forest. Before receiving UNESCO World Heritage Site status, the forest was placed under national protection in 1966, when the Government of Seychelles declared it a Nature Reserve. In 1983, the reserve was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF) was awarded stewardship of the site in 1989, and has managed it diligently ever since. SIF is continuing to safeguard the site, ensuring a well struck balance between conservation, research, education and tourism.

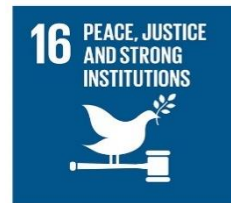
Source: <http://www.sif.sc/vdm>

Case Study: Aldabra Atoll

Aldabra is one of the world's largest raised atolls, made up of four main islands. Due to its geographical location, terrain composition and shortage of fresh available water, large human settlements are scarce. Today, the atoll stands as one of the world's natural wonders, hosting a large population of giant tortoises. It has been a refuge to countless endangered and unique species. Furthermore, Aldabra is renowned for its pristine marine life and limestone terrain. In 1982, this coral atoll was made a UNESCO Marine World Heritage Site.

Source: <https://www.sif.sc/aldabra>

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels



Seychelles is a presidential republic with a multi-party political system and a Constitution that fully aligns with the aspirations of Goals 16. The Preamble of the Constitution asserts Seychelles' commitment to “uphold the rule of law based on the recognition of the fundamental human rights and freedoms enshrined in this Constitution and on respect for the equality and dignity of human beings”. The Preamble also declares Seychelles to be a democratic state that assures the exercise of individual rights and freedoms. The Constitution also guarantees judicial independence and the creation of independent constitutional bodies that are subject only to the Constitution.

Over the past five years, Seychelles has made remarkable progress towards good governance. This includes more open and participatory political discussions after the parliamentary elections of 2016, the passing of new legislation, increased efforts to fight corruption, and the creation of numerous institutions and civil society organizations to advocate for greater protection of human rights, transparency and accountability. Moreover, Good Governance is a pillar of the National Development Strategy (2019-2023), with the two goals under the pillar being: Goal 1 – A transparent, accountable and citizen-centric government that delivers efficient, effective and quality service, and Goal 2 – A secure and fair state where the rule of law is upheld and human rights are respected.

However, challenges remain. Stakeholders highlighted that implementation and enforcement of laws, access to information, and corruption all require attention. Nonetheless, the existence of a progressive legal framework and Constitution and the creation of specialized institutions, coupled with an independent and accessible judiciary, mean that Seychelles is creating an enabling environment conducive to realization of Goal 16.

The fight against corruption

According to the World Bank's World Governance Indicators (WGI) for 1996 to 2018, control of corruption in Seychelles has been improving from a record low of 0.12 in 2006 (on a scale of -2 to 2.5; the higher the score, the better the control of corruption). A large improvement was noted in 2015, though the score declined between 2016 and 2018.

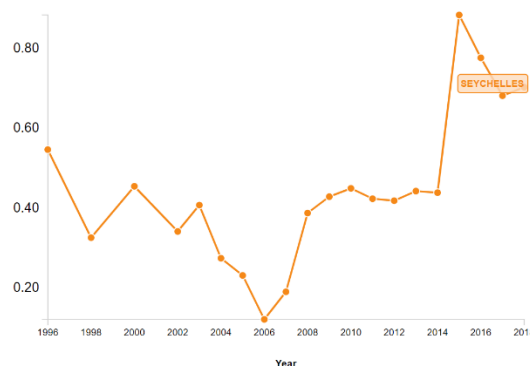


Figure 19: Seychelles' World Governance Indicators ranking, 1996-2008

Source: World Bank

Transparency International's annual Corruption Perception Index (CPI) shows a more consistent improvement from a score of 48 in 2010 to 66 in 2019, placing Seychelles at the top of the ranking for African countries and 27th in the world.

Figure 20: Corruption Perception Index for Seychelles, 2010-2019

Source: Transparency International

To consolidate this progress, the Anti-Corruption Act was promulgated in 2016. The Act established the Anti-Corruption Commission of Seychelles (ACCS) with the mandate is to investigate, detect and prevent corrupt practices. The Act stipulates that the Anti-Corruption Commission "be a self-governing, neutral and independent body" and gives details of what is considered corrupt practices. The provisions are extensive and progressive, and they also apply to foreign public officials.

As of December 2019, ACCS has received 179 complaints, investigated 66 cases and closed 33 cases. As part of its awareness campaigns, ACCS has conducted sessions in public institutions and private businesses. In 2019, ACCS collaborated with Transparency Initiatives Seychelles (TIS) and the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development to develop an awareness raising campaign in schools. As of February 2020, all secondary schools and post-secondary institutions have received the sessions (the only exception was the Seychelles Institute of Agriculture and Horticulture, due to their students being away on work attachment). Following this campaign, ACCS spearheaded an action group entitled "Youth Against Corruption" to further engage youth in the anti-corruption effort.

ACCS is also proactive in identifying loopholes that can potentially lead to corruption. A Risk-Based Assessment of public institutions is planned to identify these vulnerabilities. In cases where loopholes are identified, ACCS' Prevention and Education Department conducts awareness sessions to instruct the relevant institutions of the risks. Given Seychelles' small population and close familial links, conflicts of interest arise frequently. To address this issue, ACCS has published a handbook on "Managing Conflict of Interest" which is available online.

To further solidify the legal framework to fight corruption, amendments have also been made recently to the Beneficial Ownership Act and to the Anti-Corruption Act itself. The Anti-Money Laundering Act was also recently re-enacted.

Case Study: Transparency Initiative Seychelles (TIS)



In 2018, Transparency Initiative Seychelles (TIS) was launched. TIS is part of Transparency International and has the aim of creating a Seychelles in which government, politics, business, civil society and the daily lives of people are free of corruption.

TIS manages a project funded by the European Union entitled “Towards improving Transparency, Accountability and Good Governance in Seychelles”. As part of this project, TIS partners with ACCS for outreach activities in schools, and trains media professionals in investigative journalism and media law. TIS also partners with the Information Commission to increase awareness of citizen’s rights.

Ongoing efforts include the #forwardwithintegrity campaign to promote good values within individuals and institutions. TIS plans to continue with advocacy work in partnership with other organizations that promote transparency, good governance and accountability.

Strengthening transparency and accountability

The increased momentum for more transparency led to the passing of the Access to Information (ATI) Act in 2018, the creation of the Department of Information (DoI), and the setting up of an autonomous Information Commission. The purpose of the ATI Act is to provide a legal framework within which Seychellois can exercise their right to access public information under Article 28 of the Constitution. The Act stipulates the duty of public bodies to create, keep, organize and maintain information; and to submit implementation plans and annual reports, and publish information manuals. Public bodies are also obliged to designate Information Officers who will respond to requests for information. Moreover, the Act specifies that the Information Commission should be self-governing and neutral, and lists its powers and duties.

The DoI and the Information Commission work closely with MDAs to ensure that the ATI Act is implemented correctly. DoI has also led public awareness campaigns to educate the public on their right to information, and to encourage civic participation in government decisions.

However, challenges remain in the area of proper record-keeping and data storage to prevent data loss. Furthermore, MDAs are habituated to a culture of secrecy, and therefore change management efforts are being made to enable transition to a more transparent administration.



Created in 1993, the Constitutional Appointment Authority (CAA) is another important entity in Seychelles’ effort to improve transparency and accountability. In 2017, after receiving complaints about some Constitutional Appointees and because the CAA had not adopted any rules of procedure since its creation, the CAA sought the assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat to help it formulate rules that would ensure that any complaint received by the CAA against a Constitutional Appointee was dealt with a uniform, fair, transparent and impartial manner.

The Office of the Ombudsman is another institution that provides Seychellois citizens with a platform to address issues of maladministration, good governance, human rights violations, fraud and corruption within the civil service. The Office is active in its review of various institutions, has written reports with recommendations for more transparency, and runs investigations into allegations of maladministration. The Office has also reviewed old and new laws, regulations and policies to strengthen their effort in preventing maladministration and corruption. The Office plans to raise

awareness through training sessions on its role and citizens' rights, and by making its reports more accessible and user friendly.

The Office of the Auditor General (OAG) is another significant public entity in Seychelles. The OAG is mandated under Article 158 of the Constitution and its aim is not just to identify and report on shortcomings but also to assist and advise managers throughout the public sector on how to improve their financial performance and administration while promoting the principles of good governance, transparency and accountability.

Case Study: SDGs in national audits

 <p>OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL SPECIAL REVIEW REPORT</p> <p>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS 2030 - SEYCHELLES COASTAL MANAGEMENT</p> 	<p>In 2017, the OAG made commitments with governing bodies such as the African Organisation of English-Speaking Supreme Audit Institutions (AFROSAI-E) and the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) to mainstream the SDGs into audits.</p> <p>That same year OAG, with the support of AFROSAI-E and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), conducted an audit of the coastal and marine environment in Seychelles, in line with SDG 14. The audit identified gaps that exist in coastal management, highlighted policies that were not being implemented well and spurred the creation of the Seychelles Coastal Management Plan.</p>
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Case Study: Open Government Partnership (OGP)

<p>The Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative brings together government reformers and civil society leaders to create action plans that make governments more inclusive, responsive, and accountable.</p> <p>The Government of Seychelles initiated contact with OGP in October 2017, as part of its effort to support Results Based Management (RBM) reforms.</p> <p>In 2018, all required documents were sent and Seychelles was accepted into the OGP on 15 August 2018.</p> <p>Seychelles' first National Action Plan was subsequently prepared by a 12-member drafting committee comprised of individuals from both the government and civil society. The four commitments from the Plan are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Public participation in the Budget	
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">ii. Implementation of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FITI)iii. Implementation of the Access to Information Activ. An E-Engagement Portal |
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Upholding human rights

The Seychelles Human Rights Commission (SHRC) was set up in August 2018 and has two main responsibilities, legally defined in the Seychelles Human Rights Act 2018: to promote and to protect universal human rights. Its functions consist of implementing the country's national and international obligations, providing human rights education and raising public awareness, monitoring behaviour and ensuring compliance to human rights, reviewing laws and policies and investigating human rights issues and complaints.

Illustrating more concern for greater human rights protection, human rights litigation before the Seychelles Constitutional Court has increased, with issues such as fair trial rights, the right to health and the right to property being ventilated through use of the Seychelles Charter of Fundamental Rights.

To consolidate progress and improve further, SHRC is engaging in various initiatives. SHRC is currently organizing educational and training workshops on basic human rights, with a new emphasis on using multi-media platforms as a way of reaching more youth and social groups. It is assessing new and existing laws to ensure that human rights are reflected; for example, it will take an active part in the current review on issues of child abuse, looking closely at existing legislation as well as monitoring actual practices for the reporting of such crimes.

At the same time, the SHRC is investigating complaints brought by members of the public regarding violations of their human rights – these include abuses of the right to work, right to property, right to a fair hearing and right to shelter, to name but a few. These alleged violations are not solely against the Government, but are to be found within all sections of society.

The Seychelles Human Rights Commission has also identified some 'General Issues' which have come up several times and which need to be addressed on a more systemic level, including:

- The protocol for the treatment and determination of the legal status of distressed persons found at sea, once in the custody of the Seychelles Authorities,
- Remedial and custodial arrangements for children/minors in contact with the law,
- The treatment of migrant workers, their working conditions and contracts, as well as upon termination of employment and ensuing legal actions,
- An overview of the legal system, specifically establishing a code of conduct for lawyers, re-assessing court costs, and other access to justice issues.
- The conditions of detention of persons in police cells; lack of access to judiciary officers after working hours and during week-ends as well as access to medical staff and/or lawyers, and
- The protocol governing asylum and refugee seekers, and procedures to be followed by asylum seekers

These will start being addressed in 2020: they are expected to require at least three years of work to obtain long-term redress and will require coordinated efforts by all three branches of government, as well as inputs from the general public.

Case Study: Seychelles Prison Service

The Seychelles Prison Service (SPS) currently operates three prisons: Montagne Posee Prison on Mahe, and two prisons on the outer islands of Coetivy and Marie Louise. Together the prisons hold 394 inmates as of December 2019 (319 convicted and 75 remand).



Montagne Posee Prison. Source: Seychelles News Agency

In keeping with the global shift of transforming prisons into places where prisoners are reformed for re-entry into society, SPS plans to change its name to Seychelles Correctional and Rehabilitation Service. The Prison Act will also be updated, and construction of a better prison is planned.

Ensuring justice for all

The Judiciary of Seychelles (henceforward the Judiciary) comprises the Court of Appeal, Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Magistrates' Courts, and the Rent Board, Juvenile Court, Employment Tribunal and Family Tribunal. In the last five years, the Judiciary has implemented important reforms through the adoption of annual themes. The themes have included: "A Judiciary you Can Trust"; "Access to Justice for All"; "Without Fear or Favour: Judicial Independence and Accountability", and "Courage and Commitment".

The Judiciary's Strategic Plan (Vision 2020) has prioritized the streamlining of court processes, innovation in case administration systems, revamping of the Legal Aid Scheme, and reduction in court backlogs. Processes within the courts have been improved to ensure that cases are resolved in a timely manner (as of 2019 there is no case backlog). Subscribing to the principle of open justice, all court proceedings and all court files are open to the public, with the exception of sensitive cases (such as sexual assault, victims under the age of 18 and so on), and many court decisions are available online on SeyLii.org. Furthermore, the Judiciary has launched a new website, which has improved accessibility to key features such as relevant laws and judgments.

The Judiciary has recorded an increase in the number of Constitutional Court cases on a variety of issues and disputes. These cases indicate increased trust in the Judiciary. Cases like these provide practical and substantive content to the provisions of the Constitution, and lay the foundation for the resolution of future cases. The Judiciary of Seychelles was chosen to host a regional conference attended by high-ranking judicial officers from across Southern and Eastern Africa under the theme of judicial independence.

The Judiciary also facilitates training for judges, court staff and members of the legal profession on a range of issues. Training in recent years has focused on the treatment of child and vulnerable victims and witnesses, human rights, judicial independence and ethics, illicit financial flows and gender. In 2016, the Judiciary facilitated its first workshop on LGBTI rights, which coincided with the decriminalization of same sex relationships. The Judiciary has established a multi-stakeholder group on Vulnerable and Child Victims/Witnesses to safeguard their wellbeing during the criminal justice

process. The Judiciary is also a regular participant in criminal justice stakeholder groups to discuss key issues in the criminal justice system.

Community advice and outreach programmes are planned to educate the public about the legal system, building on the success of engagements with schools. Furthermore, greater collaboration between the Judiciary and CAA is projected in order to enhance appointments and disciplinary procedures.

Improving service delivery

In 2013, the Government launched Results-Based Management (RBM) reforms with the aim of improving the effectiveness and accountability of the public sector. The RBM policy laid the foundations of a robust framework to enable a shift from traditional public-sector management to results-oriented management. The shift required a mindset change towards greater accountability by both public institutions and individuals working in the public service.

The RBM system is made up of four key components that provide the necessary framework for planning, implementing, monitoring and reporting on organizational performance, and linking organizational performance to personnel performance. The components are:

- National Strategic Planning
- Programme Performance-Based Budgeting (PPBB)
- Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (PME)
- Performance Management System (PMS)

PPBB was first launched, with all MDAs on full PPBB for the 2017 budget cycle. PPBB ensures that MDAs consider their performance when budgeting and that all programmes produce clear results. PPBB has led to more efficient use of public funds; this has supported the Government's efforts to maintain a fiscal surplus every year and to reduce reliance on supplementary budgets.

PME was the second component to be rolled out, though its full implementation is not expected until 2021. Currently, select MDAs are piloting the PME framework.

Strategic Planning was the third component to be launched. MDAs are expected to think strategically about their mandates and to have strategic plans that align with national priorities.

The framework for PMS is currently being designed. The goal of PMS is to increase individual performance in the public sector through a framework of incentives.

Press freedom

According to the 2019 World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders, Seychelles was ranked 69th in the world on measures of press freedom. The ranking has improved since 2014.

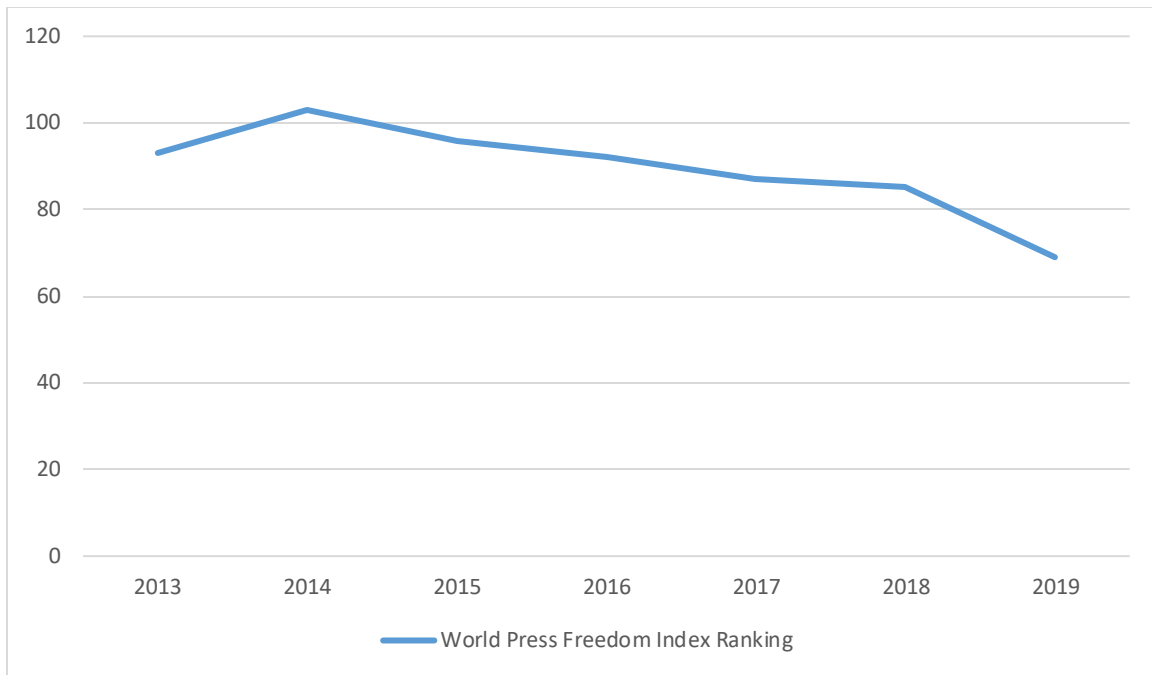


Figure 21: Seychelles' World Press Freedom Ranking, 2013-2019
Source: Reporters without Borders

Seychelles has no recorded killings of journalists and few reports of abuses, though there is a perception that journalists self-censor.

Combatting crime

According to the World Bank's WGI, the perception of effective rule of law deteriorated between 1996 and 2012, though the trend has improved since. Seychelles' most recent score (2018) was 0.20. This was higher than the world average, as well as the regional average for sub-Saharan Africa. However, the score was below average compared to income peers.

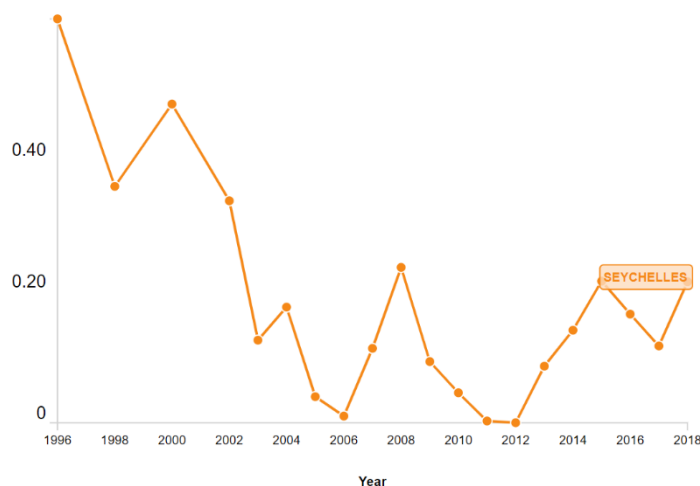


Figure 22: Perception of effective rule of law, Seychelles, 1996-2018
Source: World Bank World Governance Indicators

To improve this situation, the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) works closely with stakeholders to solve crimes. Together with the police, FIU is part of a task force that works to resolve major cases involving large sums of money or multiple organizations. To combat illicit financial flows, the FIU is currently reviewing the Anti-Money Laundering Act and the Beneficial Ownership Act. FIU plans to improve its

work through enhanced cooperation with other government entities and international stakeholders, remote access to databases, and the development of an information technology platform to facilitate information sharing.

The Attorney General’s (AG) Office is another important institution in Seychelles’ fight against crime. In keeping with changes in the legal landscape and to mainstream the SDGs, the AG’s Office regularly updates laws to reflect new knowledge and the evolving context. Furthermore, interactive sessions with the rest of the Government and SDG-linked training are also being conducted.

The Government is also committed to combatting transnational crime, including drug trafficking, wildlife trafficking and trafficking and smuggling of persons. Significant efforts were made on prevention, assistance and prosecution for victims of trafficking in 2019. Following the establishment of a National Coordination Committee and amendments of acts and laws, the United States’ Department of State upgraded the country to the Tier 2 category in 2019.

The Government is working with UNODC’s Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) which provides normative, analytical and operational assistance to Seychelles to strengthen the effectiveness and fairness of its criminal justice institutions to tackle transnational crime at sea. GMCP also supports and works towards the establishment of effective, fair and humane criminal justice systems and is assisting Seychelles to develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. GMCP also works to support Seychelles’ courts, prisons and law enforcement agencies on an ongoing basis, always guided by the principle of protecting human rights.

Strengthening democracy

According to the international research project, *Varieties of Democracy*, Seychelles is making steady progress in improving protection of freedom of expression and achieving the ideals of liberal democracies (conceptualized as the protection of individual and minority rights by law). The graph below illustrates the trend in the two indices: Freedom of Expression Index and Liberal Democracy Index.

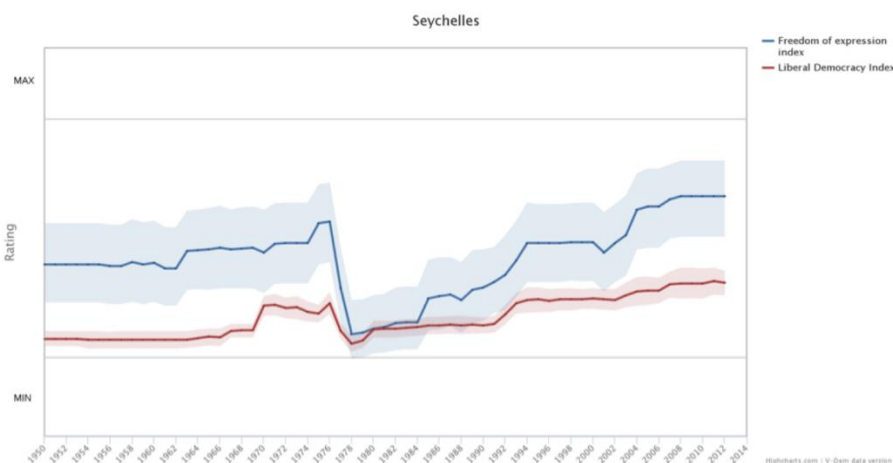


Figure 23: Freedom of Expression Index and Liberal Democracy Index, 1950-2014
Source: Varieties of Democracy

The National Assembly of Seychelles is the central institution of democracy. As the legislative branch of government, its members discuss and pass laws proposed by the Executive, vote to amend the Constitution where necessary, and critically oversee the actions of the Executive. The latter includes debating motions, addressing questions to ministers, scrutinizing the national budget, and participating in Standing and Select Committees.

Way forward

Despite challenges such as lack of data, weak information exchange infrastructure across government, weak law enforcement, and a culture that has been shaped by years of one-party rule, many opportunities are present to improve good governance. The most significant of these are the improved role of the National Assembly and the Access to Information Act.

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development



Governance is the key means of implementation of the SDGs but no country stands alone. International partnerships are required, especially taking into account the inherent challenges experienced by small island developing states. Seychelles is no exception. Over the years, Seychelles has developed solid relationships with its development partners. Its development efforts have been supported by countries such as China, India, United Arab Emirates, and European nations amongst others. In order to sustain the growth of Seychelles and its achievements towards the SDGs, it is vital to continually build on existing and potential partnerships, both local and international, as they play key roles on the development agenda.

Trade relations

As a small island developing state (SIDS), Seychelles relies greatly on local, regional and global partnerships to successfully attain the SDGs and push forward its development agenda. Seychelles has been an active member of various trade blocs in which great emphasis is placed on strengthening global integration and regional development, eliminating trade barriers, encouraging global competitiveness and promoting stability and transparency. These trade blocs that Seychelles is a member of include the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Indian Ocean Rim – Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). Seychelles also has a close trading relationship with the European Union.

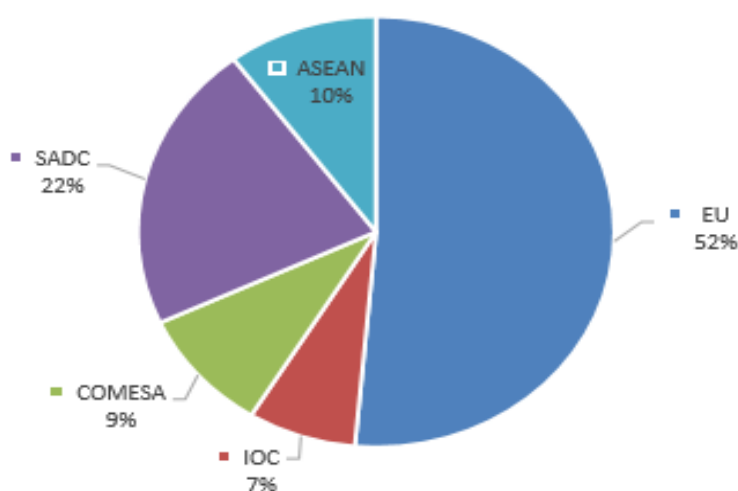


Figure 24: Imports from selected economic communities, January-December 2019
Source: National Bureau of Statistics

COMESA has introduced and implemented various programmes in which Seychelles is an active participant. These include the Free Trade Area that was launched in October 2000 and was joined by Seychelles on 11 May 2009, the COMESA Common Investment Area, the Common Market, the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), the Regional Approach to

Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy in Eastern and Southern Africa (RABESA), the Enhancing Procurement Reforms and Capacity Project, the COMESA Innovation Council, the COMSTAT, the COMESA REPS, and the Regional Investment Area (RIA).

Seychelles has been active in a number of SADC programmes. These include the SADC Free Trade Area, the SADC UNIVISA, the CCARDESA, the Cooperative Development of Operational Safety And Continuing Airworthiness Programme (COSCAP-SADC) and the Cooperative Aviation Security Project (CASP SADC). Recently, SADC began a comprehensive consultative process among its Member States which translates members' key policy areas into a collective document, the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Programme (RISDP). The RISDP 2020-2030 will provide guidance to the regional integration agenda and will run in parallel to the SDGs and Agenda 2063 to ensure that the SADC region strides forward together in pursuit of sustainable development.

The European Union (EU) is the world's largest trading bloc. The Republic of Seychelles has forged a strong partnership with the EU since 1977. During the last four decades, Seychelles has received EUR 40 million in development aid from the EU under successive European Development Funds, covering various sectors, from environment to economic to education reform programmes. Seychelles has received an allocation envelope of EUR 10 million to implement the Economic Partnership Agreement.

Seychelles has also gained from several other EU instruments, including regional programmes, the Common Security and Defence Policy (EUVAFOR Operation Atalanta), the MASE programme, the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) and thematic budget lines for Environment and Non State Actors. The European Union – Seychelles partnership covers development, investment and trade as well as areas of maritime security, climate change and the SDGs. The EU remains the Seychelles' top trading partner and also the country's largest source of tourist arrivals. In 2019, around 86.2 per cent of the country's total exports were directed towards the EU.

The EU is also involved with the Port Victoria Extension project, having pledged EUR 5 million for the project within a grant under the Africa Investment Facility. The EU also facilitated additional funding required in the form of a loan with the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). Additionally, the EU is currently providing technical assistance to key institutions in Seychelles, including the Attorney General's Office, the Anti-Corruption Commission Seychelles, and the Financial Intelligence Unit. The support will be extended to the Procurement Oversight Unit and the National Bureau of Statistics once Terms of Reference (TOR) has been finalized.

In view of strengthening collaboration within the regional space of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Seychelles successfully hosted a consultative meeting in August 2019 on the establishment of a Regional Consultative Process (RCP), named as Migration Dialogue for the IOC member states (MiDIOCC). This RCP was endorsed at the IOC Council of Ministers in March 2020 and will enable the countries, including Seychelles, to facilitate and reinforce free movement of goods and persons, and take actions in several areas linked to human mobility, such as tourism, trade, climate change and maritime governance. In terms of maritime safety, since 2017 Seychelles has hosted the Regional Coordination Operations Centre, a regional structure intended to search for and rescue people and monitor maritime areas.

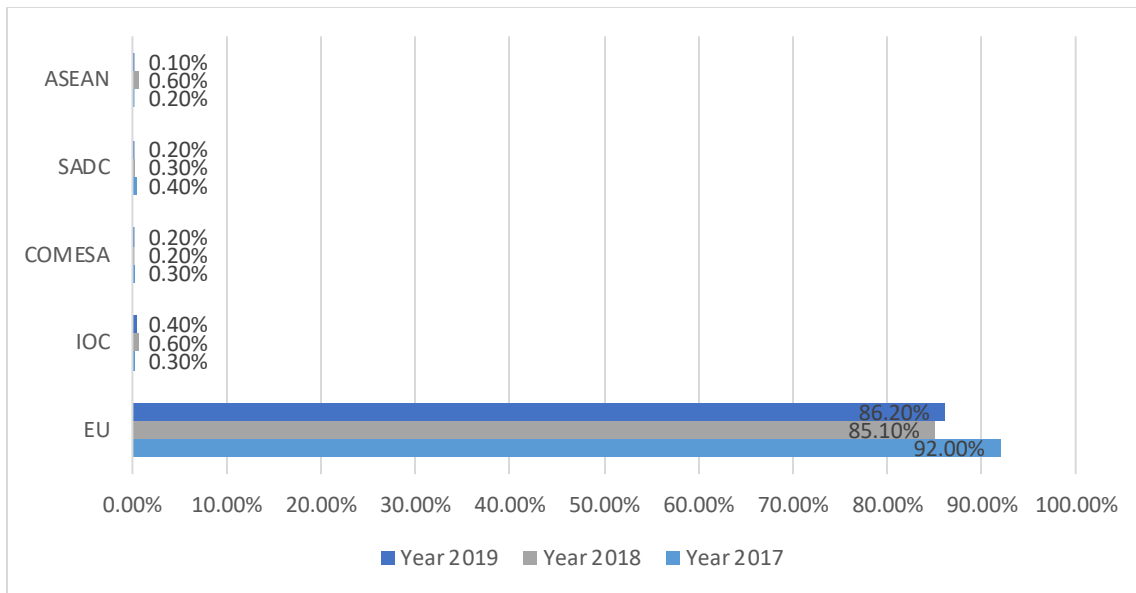


Figure 25: Destinations of exports, percentages

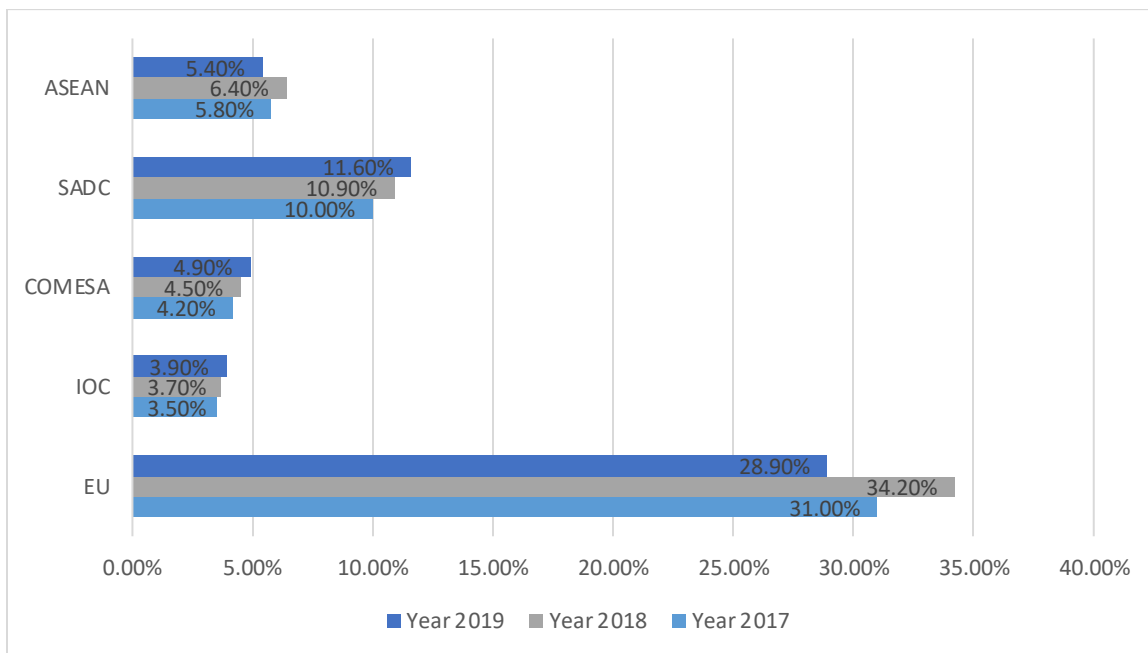


Figure 26: Sources of imports, percentages

Source: National Bureau of Statistics

Seychelles continues its efforts to promote trade, development and cooperation relationships through various key channels. These include

- the EAC-COMESA-SADC Free Trade Area Agreement: a tripartite agreement which is a historic milestone for regional integration in Africa as it is the continent's largest trading area;
- the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement (IEPA);
- the Lomé Conventions,
- the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement otherwise known as the Cotonou Partnership Agreement; and
- the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which Seychelles has signed but not yet ratified.

The graph below shows improvements in the country's Terms of Trade (ToT)³⁶ which translates to an increase in the amount of imported goods the Seychelles economy can purchase per unit of export goods. In 2019, the terms of trade were measured at 114.56.

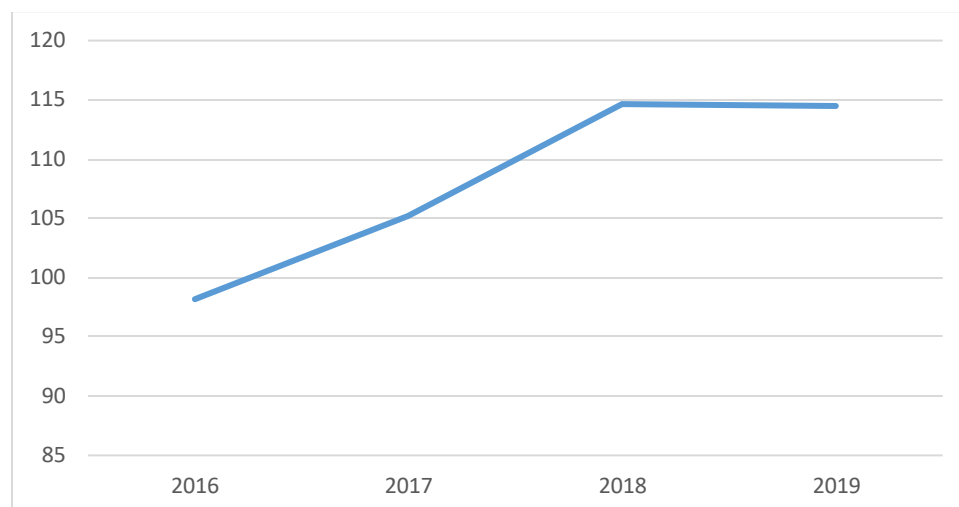


Figure 27: Terms of trade, 2016-2019

Source: National Bureau of Statistics

As means to increase regional integration, Seychelles joined the Accelerated Programme for Economic Integration (APEI) along with four other African countries – Mauritius, Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi – in 2016. This initiative, supported by the World Bank, is intended to create regional reforms that will improve the trading environment within Africa. The APEI focuses on removing barriers to trade, promoting trade in services, and boosting resources to facilitate trade. One of the key objectives of this programme is to enhance integration by fostering the movement of people within the region.

Seychelles also recognizes that local partnerships are just as important. Seychelles has over the years collaborated with its local stakeholders (governmental, civil society and private sector) to drive the development agenda forward and to promote implementation of the SDGs. The country has adopted a synchronized approach under which consultations with various stakeholders across all sectors and groups, including the private sector and civil society, bring about greater participation and hence strengthen local partnerships. The Government ensures broad consultations are conducted during the preparation phase of the budget process, the country's national plans and Vision, and any reforms being undertaken, such as the recent business tax reform.

Other Initiatives

Seychelles participated in the Global Partnership 2018 monitoring exercise, which was designed to help countries and their development partners to assess progress, opportunities and obstacles in aligning their efforts and partnerships with the effectiveness principles. To achieve the SDGs requires improving the quality, impact and effectiveness of development cooperation. The Global Partnership's monitoring framework tracks development stakeholders' progress in aligning their policies and practices with four internationally agreed principles of development effectiveness.

Moreover, Seychelles was accepted into the Open Government Partnership (OGP) on 15 August 2018. This initiative was formally launched on 20 September 2011, with the aim of bringing together

³⁶ The Terms of Trade (ToT) refers to the relative price of imports in terms of exports and thus is defined as the ratio of the export price index to the import price index.

government reformers and civil society leaders to produce action plans that will enable governments to become more inclusive, responsive and accountable. The Government of Seychelles first initiated contact with the OGP in October 2017 as part of its efforts to further support Results-Based Management (RBM). It was identified that through OGP the Government could effectively engage with civil society on RBM and hence gain widespread support for the RBM reforms by using technology as a facilitator of transparency within government.

Over the years Seychelles has collaborated with various development partners in efforts to adopt sustainable development pathways and concepts within the greater national development agenda. At the local level, UNDP Seychelles has assisted the Department of Economic Planning to formulate the country's National Development Plan, and more specifically to mainstreaming the SDGs into the national development agenda. Moreover, UNDP Seychelles has also been involved in national outreach initiatives, such as engaging parliamentarians (one of the three arms of government).

Furthermore, the Seychelles-United Nations Strategic Partnership Framework (SPF), which was signed in August 2018, is seen as an important milestone in the partnership between the United Nations and Seychelles. The SPF consolidates the commitment of the United Nations and Seychelles to support the country's effort to meet the SDGs by 2030. It also highlights the key support areas for which assistance will be provided to Seychelles by 18 United Nations agencies. The SPF is also aligned with the national priorities highlighted in Seychelles' National Development Strategy.

Seychelles also benefits from the Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). UNODC is applying the knowledge, skills and experience of its staff and governing bodies to help Seychelles to reach SDG targets 17.16 and 17.18. Moreover, GMCP regularly engages with local government counterparts and convenes multi-national and multi-stakeholder meetings, conferences, learning exchanges and partnerships to improve policy coherence, and consequently the effectiveness of international, regional and national efforts to combat illicit flows, in line with targets 17.17 and 17.19. Seychelles is part of the multi-national prosecutors network, and an active participant in law enforcement training where regional and national law enforcement agencies cooperate and form lasting relationships. The country also attends inter-ministerial meetings on issues of maritime crime.

Engaging Parliamentarians on the SDGs to commemorate World Parliament Day 2018



To commemorate the very first international day of Parliamentarism the National Assembly, in collaboration with UNDP Seychelles, hosted a panel discussion on 'Engaging Parliament on the Sustainable Development Goals', in the Savoy Resort at Beau-Vallon. Presentations were made by the Department of Economic Planning, UNDP Seychelles, and the National Bureau of Statistics, all covering the topic of the SDGs in relation to their organizations.

The importance of the SDGs was discussed later during panel discussions with the Speaker of the Youth Assembly, Mr Roberto Legaie and the Founder of the UN Youth Organisation, Ms Anna Rose Clarisse providing insight into the civil society youth sector and the efforts being made to implement these goals for the development of Seychelles. Fruitful exchanges on the need for strategic cohesion were discussed between government departments, the public and the legislature in implementing the goals.

Going forward the National Assembly will commemorate this day along with other national parliaments across the globe, and will continue to look for ways to engage the public and carry out the role of implementing the SDGs within the Legislature.

Source: The National Assembly of Seychelles, 2018

Implementation Mechanisms

Financing

Frameworks and institutional arrangements are required at both national and sectoral level to establish roles and responsibilities. This is done through institutional and sector strategic plans, which are aligned to the country's National Development Strategy and also reflected in its annual budget process (all while mainstreaming the SDGs). Since the 2008 reform, Seychelles has adopted the Medium-Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF) aimed at improving Public Financial Management (PFM). Through this framework, the country has thus adopted a 3-year budgeting structure, improved the efficiency of government spending, increased the equity of the tax system and enhanced the governance of public enterprises.

Given Seychelles’ high-income status, the country’s access to concessionary lending and overseas development assistance (ODA) to fill its financing gaps for major projects has largely diminished. As a result, the country will continue to mobilize its domestic resources through improved tax enforcement, and utilizing the private sector through public-private partnerships (PPP). Over the last few years, the country has also adopted new and innovative ways to raise additional funds, such as the Blue Bonds and debt swap, and it has shown great interest in exploring venture capital.

Domestic revenues

The Government ensures that adequate resources are made available for the country’s development priorities. Tax revenue accounted for 89 per cent of total Government revenue in 2019.³⁷ Seychelles’ Resource Mobilization Strategy promotes improvements in domestic resource mobilization without creating economic distortions that could negatively affect economic growth.

The Strategy focuses on (i) enhancing the tax collection system through the rolling out of e-payment systems, revision of laws and computerization of collection systems; (ii) introducing new taxes such as the recent sugar tax and property tax on foreign-owned residential property; (iii) adjusting expenditure towards priority areas; (iv) encouraging public-private partnerships across all sectors; (v) privatizing government assets to enable the private sector to assume its position as the engine of growth; and (vi) developing the financial sector to promote equity fundraising through legislative improvements.

Investments

Investments (both local and foreign) play an immense role in contributing to the drive towards successful implementation of the SDGs. Over the last three years, projects were mostly submitted to the Seychelles Investment Board (SIB) by Seychellois, followed by Indians, Chinese and South Africans. For the year ending December 2019, SIB recorded a total processed investment of SCR 10.9 billion, compared to SCR 8.4 billion in 2018 and SCR 3.8 billion in 2017. Figure 28 below reveals an increase of 24 per cent between 2018 and 2019 and one of 65 per cent between 2017 and 2019.

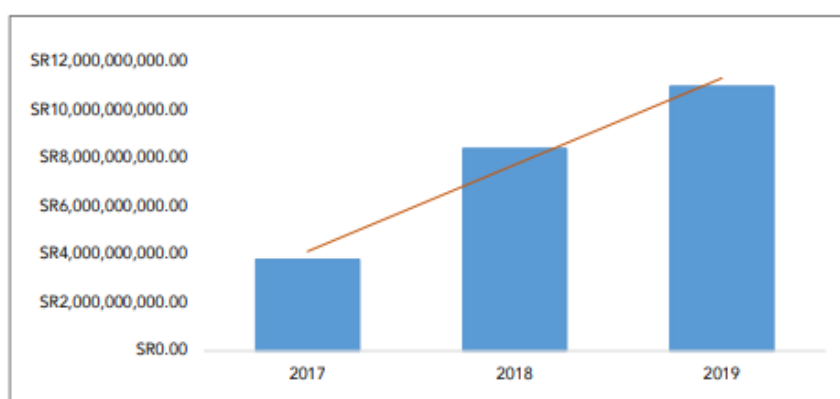


Figure 28: Total investment processed by Seychelles Investment Board, 2017-2019
Source: Seychelles Investment Board

The highest investment by sector was recorded in the large hotels category in the tourism sector, with investment processed at a value of SCR 5.6 billion (51 per cent of total investment) recorded for 2019. Large tourism establishments were also the leading investment category in 2017 and 2018, at SCR 2.2 billion (59 per cent of total investment) and 7.2 billion (86 per cent of total investment) respectively.

³⁷ Percentage of tax revenue as a proportion of total government revenue, excluding grant

Despite this sector remaining the highest in investment value, the level of investment decreased by SCR 1.6 billion or 22 per cent between 2018 and 2019.

In 2019, the investment levels for the health-related and residential sectors rose significantly. Health-related investment rose to SCR 2.9 billion from SCR 41.9 million in 2018, an increase of more than 7,000 per cent, while residential investments were recorded at SCR 1.2 billion. Cumulatively, these three sectors – large hotels, health-related and residential – made up 89 per cent of total investment in 2019.

i. Foreign direct investment

Seychelles continues to work towards improving the ease of doing business to entice more and better foreign direct investment (FDI). In 2019, the highest number of projects originated from India and South Africa, while promoters from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and South Africa had the highest level of investment. In 2019 the projects submitted by promoters from UAE had an investment value of SCR 2.5 billion, while promoters from South Africa submitted projects with total investments worth SCR 2.9 billion.

Over the years, there has been a gradual increase in FDI value. The FDI figure for January-October 2019³⁸ of a total US\$202.2 million represented a 23 per cent increase from the 2017 data and a 44 per cent increase from the 2018 data.

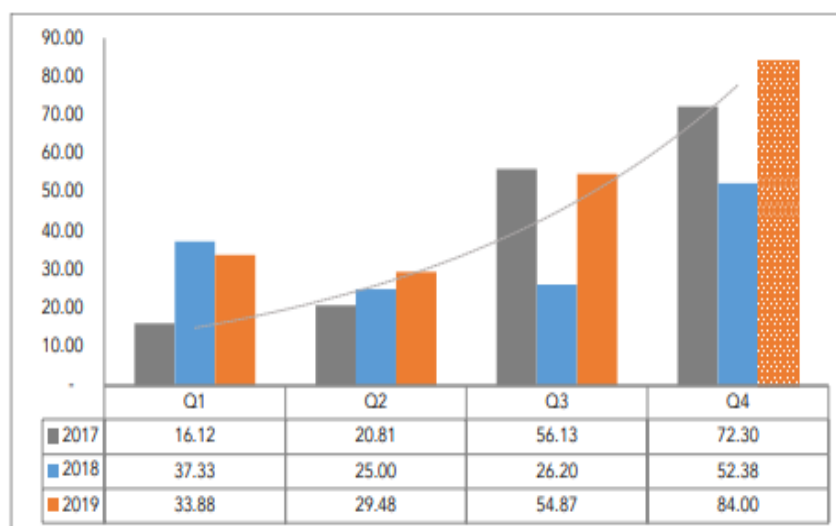


Figure 29: Foreign direct investment by quarter, 2017-2019, million US\$
Source: Central Bank of Seychelles (CBS)

The total FDI for January to June 2019 was recorded at USD 127.6 million, with the biggest investment targeted to goal 4 which was a health-related project, a hospital, with an investment value of US\$218 million.³⁹

³⁸ Note the quarter 4 data is a forecasted figure

³⁹ This value is not reflected in the FDI figures for the first half of 2019 as the project is still in progress

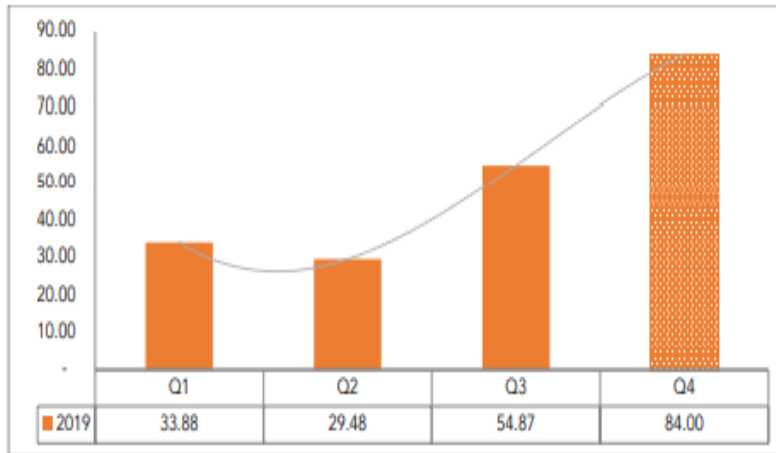


Figure 30: Foreign direct investment in Q1 to Q4 (Q4 forecasted), 2019
Source: Central Bank of Seychelles (CBS)

ii. Local Investment

In 2019, the level of investment by Seychellois nationals stood at SCR 2.3 billion, a decrease from 2018 where Seychellois nationals had an investment of SCR 5.6 billion.

Remittances

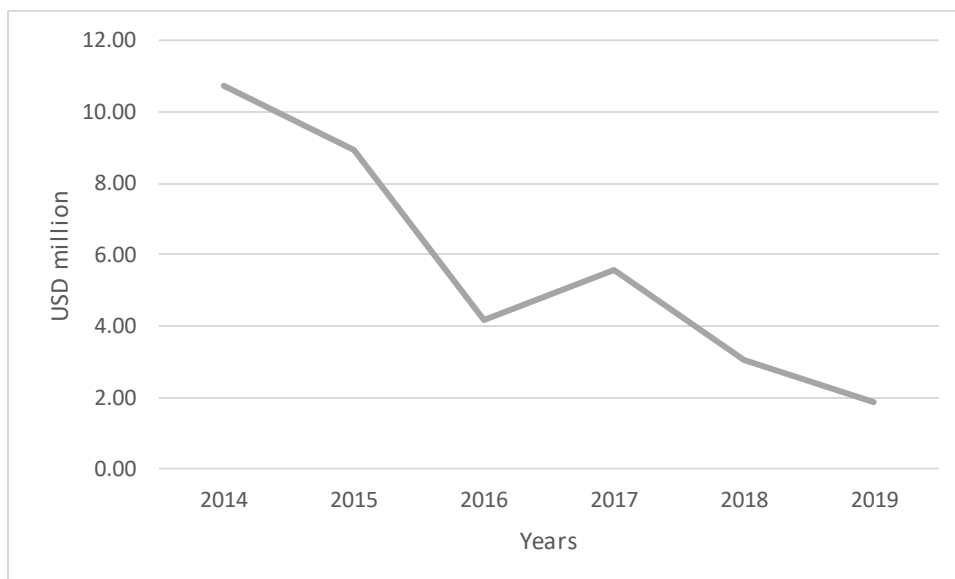


Figure 31: Outward remittances from Seychelles, 2014-2019, US\$ million
Source: Central Bank of Seychelles (CBS)⁴⁰

Foreign labour accounts for approximately a third of the country's working population, with the highest proportion in the construction sector, followed by the tourism sector and production services. In 2019, outward personnel remittances as estimated by the World Bank amounted to US\$73.6 million, and inward personnel remittances to US\$23.6 million; both figures have generally been

⁴⁰ Remittance data provided reflects data available to CBS and may not reflect actual figures

increasing since 2013.⁴¹ The Central Bank of Seychelles (CBS) continues to work towards improving the financial regulations pertaining to remittance transfers.

One of the recommendations emerging from the 2017 Ministerial Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA) was to encourage Member States to: “Build capacities to collect and analyse migration data to strengthen evidence-based policy-making”. In 2020, the Government of Seychelles, in close collaboration with the IOM, is planning an assessment on migration data and analysis for the Indian Ocean countries. This assessment will allow migration-policy stakeholders to have a deeper understanding of the existing data-related dynamics, gaps, and what is needed from national actors to overcome these gaps. However, most importantly, the assessment will aim to enhance the availability of harmonized regional migration data and contribute to SDG target 17.18.

Monitoring and evaluation

Progress must be continually monitored, evaluated and reported to ensure that Seychelles remains on the right track. Monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs will be conducted through the results framework highlighted in the country’s National Development Strategies. All ministries, departments and agencies are expected to provide progress reports on their performance and achievements which will depict the extent to which implementation occurs.

This process is further strengthened by the Results-Based Management (RBM) programmes which aim to maximize efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. This institutional framework which was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2013 aims to highlight key national priorities taking into account Seychelles’ international commitments such as Agenda 2030, ensure delivery of outcomes through the efficient use of allocated budget, and strengthen the collection and analysis of data required for evaluating progress made.

Information from the private sector and civil society organizations will be captured by continuous stakeholder engagement and involvement through regular public fora and meetings, consultative sessions, such as thematic working groups and committees, and public education campaigns to raise awareness on the implementation of the SDGs.

Way forward

Despite the country’s challenges, Seychelles continues to push the sustainable development agenda forward through greater partnerships. The country remains dedicated to strengthening its relationships with its global partners. Seychelles needs to tap into different areas of export potential to increase its exporting capacity to the global market, thus promoting diversification, trade and generating more income to sustain its growth and development through successful implementation of Agenda 2030.

More initiatives will be required to bring on board the private sector and NGOs to ensure the successful implementation of the SDGs locally. Currently, there is yet to be a proper mechanism for coordinating with and including the private sector and civil society fully in the process, and this poses as a daunting challenge. In the spirit of leaving no one behind, the country hopes to strengthen coordination and collaboration with various stakeholders within the country, such as the private

⁴¹ World Bank Open Data, <https://data.worldbank.org>, accessed 30 May 2020.

sector and civil society. Engaging with these various sectors will help in the country's collective efforts to drive successful implementation of the SDGs.

Seychelles recognizes that the success of Agenda 2030 relies on political will, individual commitments, ownership by all and a coordinated and integrated implementation approach. Furthermore, successful implementation of the 17 goals will require a strengthened institutional framework for implementation. This will be done primarily through use of the National Development Strategies and sector plans; undertaking continuous monitoring and evaluation; introducing management information systems and ensuring ownership and participation by all.

Addressing the impact of COVID-19

From the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, Seychelles was on alert to this invisible enemy and as a country, it took the necessary preventive measures. Even prior to the confirmation of the first case in the Seychelles, the Public Health Authority initiated a local outbreak response plan, with clear teams assigned to Coordination, Surveillance/Laboratory, Case Management, Infection Prevention and Control, Risk Communication and Social Mobilization, Control at Points of Entry (PoE), and Logistics and Supplies. Additional measures included intensified surveillance at points of entry, training of health personnel, and preparation of quarantine and treatment facilities

Seychelles reported its first confirmed cases of COVID-19 on 14 March 2020, joining the growing majority of countries in the world in this fight against the global pandemic. Although the pandemic directly puts the health of citizens in danger, its highly adverse effects do not end there. The Seychelles economy, a small island developing state, is directly impacted and will remain so for years to come. The impacts, policy responses and way forward can be considered in terms of the **Social, Economic** and **Environmental** dimensions, reflecting the 2030 Agenda.

Social dimension

Health

Following the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in Seychelles, a public health emergency was declared in the country. The Public Health Authority (PHA) is taking the lead in containing the spread of the virus, and in implementing the necessary health measures to ensure the health of the nation in this time of crisis. From the start of the outbreak in the country, measures adopted included:

- Active surveillance and monitoring at ports of entry
- New measures for health services and strict social distancing guidelines
- The closure of Seychelles International Airport for international flights until 30 April except for repatriation flights, emergency diversions and special approved missions
- A 24-hour hotline dedicated to facilitating responses to suspected COVID-19 cases

Moreover, following a possible case of community transmission from the 11th and latest positive case, a 21-day prohibition of movement order came into effect on 9 April 2020, to prevent the spread of the virus. This was further extended by four days. As such, this restricted the movement of people to only venture out of their homes for certain essential activities, such as purchasing food and seeking medical services. This directive also permitted only essential services such as health and food manufacturers and retailers to continue to operate. The Government, especially the health authorities, urged citizens to respect these new social distancing measures and to become part of the solution to this pandemic. Further restrictions were put in place from 17 April to break the chain of community transmission. This included completely banning people from leaving their homes from 7pm to 6am, except for those considered to be providing critical services.

As of 18 May 2020, the total number of cases of COVID-19 detected in Seychelles is 11, all those who contracted the virus have recovered. The last case reported was on 6 April 2020. There have been no COVID-19 related deaths in Seychelles to date.

Education

The closure of all educational institutions was a joint decision by the authorities responsible for health and education as a precautionary measure against the spread of COVID-19 in Seychelles. This was particularly in line with the mandatory directive of social distancing to stop the spread of the virus.

Given the importance of education, it was critical that studies should continue even during the novel coronavirus threat. The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development thus worked on a contingency plan, which largely included learning through online portals such as Google Classrooms, and learning resources and assignments being sent via email regularly. In the spirit of the Ministry's theme of 'Education: A Shared Responsibility', parents were called upon to fulfil their part in ensuring the continuity of their children's studies and were briefed on the educational objectives for their children. They have also been provided with education packs comprising textbooks, worksheets and supplementary exercises. Students at professional centres were put in active communication with their lecturers in order to stay on top of their studies and coursework. Private schools have also taken up a similar initiative of making use of online resources for continued learning.

In order to ensure that children were still taken care of while at home, the "Employment Coronavirus Special Leave Temporary Measures Regulations" were introduced. This allowed parents of children under the age of 15 to seek special leave from their employers until school institutions resumed their operations on 11 and 18 May. Only one parent can take this leave, and this new Regulations do not apply to essential services such as health workers.

Social protection

Seychelles had a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.801 in 2019 and it is categorized as a country with a very high level of human development – the highest in Africa. In a major crisis like COVID-19, it is critical to have effective social protection measures in place to shield the poor and vulnerable from the worst impacts. A government's ability to build a comprehensive social safety net is influenced by its fiscal space, the efficiency of programmes and their coverage. Seychelles has some of the highest rates of public spending on social protection programmes, as a share of GDP, in Africa.

In such difficult times, the Government has recognized the urgency of ensuring that the most vulnerable are protected. The Agency for Social Protection (ASP) is mandated to provide social security coverage and protection against poverty through financial assistance, as laid out under the Agency for Social Protection and the Social Security Benefit Act. The social safety net is the only discretionary assistance programme. In the light of COVID-19, the Government saw the necessity to make an extra provision of SR30 million for welfare assistance, compared to the initial 2020 budget estimates. Moreover, the budgetary allocation for the Unemployment Relief Scheme (URS) was increased by SR10 million, to allow for re-skilling of workers, particularly those in the tourism sector. ASP is also assisting individuals in the informal sector who are affected, to ensure that no one is left behind.

As much as it has been a health and economic crisis, this has also been a social one, and all segments of the population have been affected. However, a great many have responded positively to combatting this new pandemic in a display of solidarity across the country. This has included artists composing patriotic and unifying songs, making comedic sketches and other interventions to instil a sense of solidarity and togetherness in this fight, as well as to educate the public on the required safety measures.

Additionally, the public response has been a display of creativity and selflessness throughout the country. Many have been showcasing their talents with emphasis being placed on the directive of staying safe by staying at home. Individuals have also come forward to not only thank those working in the frontline of this pandemic, but also to make their own donations to address the needs that have arisen. With the impact on individuals and families, having to be restricted to the confines of their homes and respect social distancing measures, social media has offered great relief to many. In Seychelles, we have seen a spike in online media consumption, with many joining together virtually to

cope amidst this crisis. A time like this has really showed our strength as a small island nation of less than 100,000 people.

Role of media / sharing of information

In such difficult times, the role of the media became even more important in transmitting vital information to the public. The national media community has been strongly involved since the outbreak, as a partner rather than a spectator. Its strong influence has led to it creating and shaping public opinion, as well as creating public awareness about the COVID-19 situation in Seychelles. Regular press conferences have been held by health authorities and high-level government officials on matters related to the pandemic, such as financial assistance, disaster risk management and new regulations. Moreover, to ensure inclusive dissemination of information during this crisis, a sign language interpreter is present during press briefings at all times. In addition, the Association for People with Hearing Impairment (APHI) prepares short videos of all important health advisories and other key notices to keep the deaf community informed.

Civil society initiatives

Civil society has also been a strong partner in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, they have voiced their appreciation for our health workers' efforts and encouraged the public to heed the expert advice and respect the safety measures in place. In particular, some NGOs have assisted the Government as volunteers amidst the outbreak, particularly in contact tracing, which also involves data collection and input. The Citizen Engagement Platform Seychelles (CEPS), the platform for civil society in the country, has been working in collaboration with the private sector and the Government to provide humanitarian services as part of the National Emergency Plan. This mainly involves distributing essential products to the most vulnerable in society. Also, through a collaborative effort with various partners, CEPS has launched a helpline for people who might need therapeutic guidance and support during these challenging times.

Partnership and support from the international community

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the WHO Country Office (WCO) has been working actively with the health authorities in Seychelles to heighten the level of preparedness and containment measures. Now that the disease has reached our shores, they are providing ongoing support to the country to ensure a well-integrated and multi-sectoral approach.

Bilateral and multilateral development partners have assisted us greatly as of April 2020, by sending medical workers to help our health workers in the country's current health emergency. They are expected to play a crucial role in assisting local health care providers to better prepare in the event of cluster cases and community transmissions resulting in a surge. Seychelles has also benefitted from humanitarian aid from many international partners, who have donated consignments of medical equipment, testing kits and medicine to the country. The donations include medical coveralls, isolation gowns, gloves, hand sanitizers, masks and other medical items.

Given the projected economic downturn for the country and the urgent financial assistance needed, the government has secured budget support loans from several international organizations. In 2013, an agreement about a sum of US\$7 million was signed with the World Bank under the 'Catastrophe Deferred Drawdown', or 'Cat DDO'. This is a flexible 'contingent credit line' that allows Seychelles to have immediate liquidity, following a disaster, and will thus be used for the current health emergency. Moreover, the World Bank also has US\$14 billion that it has put at the disposal of countries in need as loans to support their response to COVID-19. Seychelles is eligible for a sum equivalent to 0.1 per cent of

national GDP, which amounts to approximately US\$2.5 million. The country also has another facility of approximately US\$47 million under other products offered by the World Bank. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has also recently doubled its emergency assistance, to US\$100 billion. Seychelles qualifies to receive 100 per cent of its quota, which is equivalent to US\$30 million. The African Development Bank has not yet announced any specific products for assisting countries which are being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Seychelles has a budgetary support facility for a sum of US\$9 million.

In addition, many of our development partners are providing policy advice and technical support as we go through these challenging times.

The private sector “gives back”

There has been a heartening response from the private sector in supporting Seychelles’ Government in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The outpouring of support from the private sector to provide medical supplies and equipment has been incredible. Moreover, some businesses have also opted to provide non-medical goods and services, which will greatly assist health workers. The response efforts also include cash donations to support the Government’s efforts against this pandemic. Furthermore, the private sector response also comprises: working to protect their employees, maintaining continuity of operations for those offering vital products and services, and manufacturing products that are necessary at this time, such as hand sanitisers.

Although hardest-hit, tourism establishments have also played a strong role, with some offering their hotels for quarantine purposes and providing accommodation and meals to medical staff. Telecommunications operators have also greatly contributed by assisting the community at large through various measures, such as providing free bandwidth and data allowance. Additionally, the private sector has been very vocal in expressing solidarity and gratitude for the efforts of workers in the health sector, and has also played an important role in advising the public to respect social distancing measures to curb the spread of the virus.

Economic Dimension.

Seychelles’ high dependence on tourism is reflected in the fact that the service industry accounted for 84 per cent of Seychelles’ GDP and 64 per cent of export revenues in 2018. Most of this is from travel, transport, and other ancillary tourism activities. The tourism industry in Seychelles has been expanding for decades. Visitor numbers were steadily increasing – rising by 6 per cent in 2019 alone to 384,204. An extensive tourism campaign was expected to help sustain the industry’s growth trajectory in 2020 and beyond. The World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that Seychelles has the highest dependence on direct and indirect contribution to GDP of any country in Eastern Africa, at 66 per cent of GDP.⁴² In the face of the COVID-19 outbreak, official figures for tourist arrivals in March showed a sharp curtailment in the numbers of visitors, to less than half the total for February, when arrivals reached over 38,000.

⁴² World Travel and Tourism Council estimate.

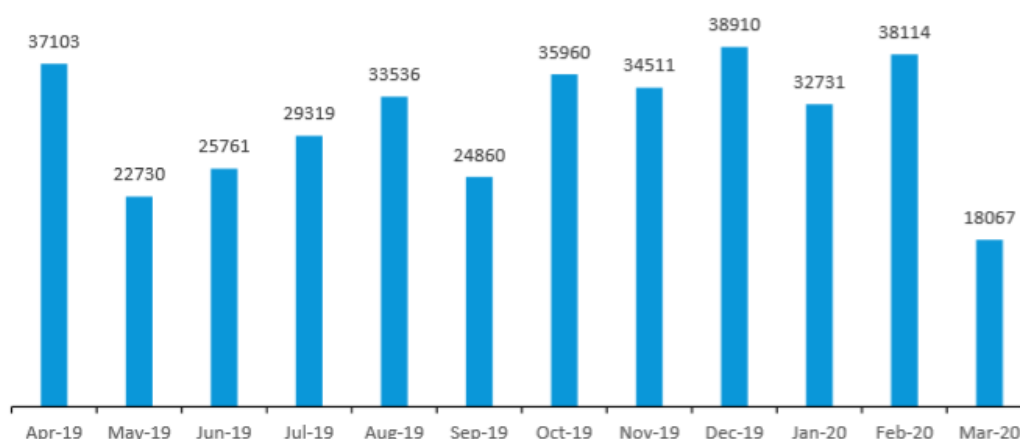


Figure 32: Tourist Arrivals, April 2019 - March 2020

Source: National Bureau of Statistics

The rising popularity of the tourist destination has enabled Seychelles to consistently earn surpluses in its service trade – a sharp contrast to the large deficits in the merchandise trade sector. As the primary source markets for tourist arrivals, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Italy together accounted for 44 per cent of visitors to Seychelles in 2019.⁴³ Unfortunately, these are also among the countries hardest hit by the pandemic in Europe. Even when travel restrictions are lifted, the tourism industry may not rebound until the economies in the main source markets recover.

Seychelles' exposure to Europe, an epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic, cannot be understated. Over a third of its global trade is with European partners, which account for 68 per cent of its fish and seafood exports.⁴⁴ The Euro area economy is now expected to contract by an unprecedented 7.5 per cent in 2020, which will depress demand for imports from all countries, including from the Seychelles. The United Kingdom is also an important market for Seychelles, and is forecast to suffer its biggest economic contraction in 300 years, with a 14 per cent decline in GDP.⁴⁵ On the other hand, Seychelles' dependence on China (where the pandemic originated) is quite low – only 4 per cent of total trade in 2018 – so this has helped to minimize risks when economic activity in China halted in the first quarter of 2020. It is, however, as yet unclear exactly how this may impact on exports and imports. Seychelles' main merchandise export is canned tuna fish, and although exports may suffer temporary disruptions due to transport-related delays, demand for such products is likely to remain fairly high. Imports of manufactured goods, machinery and transport equipment may, however, suffer quite serious disruption as supply chains break down.

The Central Bank of Seychelles' (CBS') preliminary estimates show that year-on-year tourism earnings are to contract by 70 per cent in Euro terms in 2020 compared to 2019. Given high uncertainty on matters relating to COVID-19, the CBS Board has decided to take a conservative but dynamic approach in the appropriation of foreign exchange to the market. Through the use of Foreign Exchange Auctions as well as bilateral sales, the CBS can supply foreign exchange to the market should it be needed, but consistent with its strategy of maintaining the reserves for as long as possible. However, in view of the sudden nature of developments surrounding COVID-19, the CBS' initial intervention was aimed at clearing goods already imported but requiring payments in foreign currency to finalize the

⁴³ National Bureau of Statistics data.

⁴⁴ National Bureau of Statistics data.

⁴⁵ Data from European Commission

transactions. Currently, the CBS is committed to allocating reserves for the purchases of fuel, essential goods and medicine. Nevertheless, given the evolving environment, the CBS may adjust its list of priority goods and timing of sales to the market. As of 7 May 2020, CBS reported gross international reserves of US\$579 million and net international reserves of US\$428 million. The figures below provide a comparative indication as to the supply and demand of US\$ (in millions) for the months of January to May in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

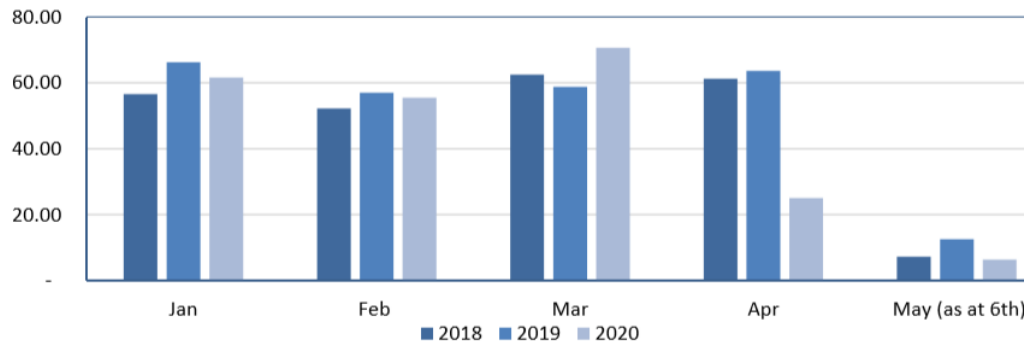


Figure 33: Supply of US\$, January to May 2020, in US\$ millions
Source: Central Bank of Seychelles

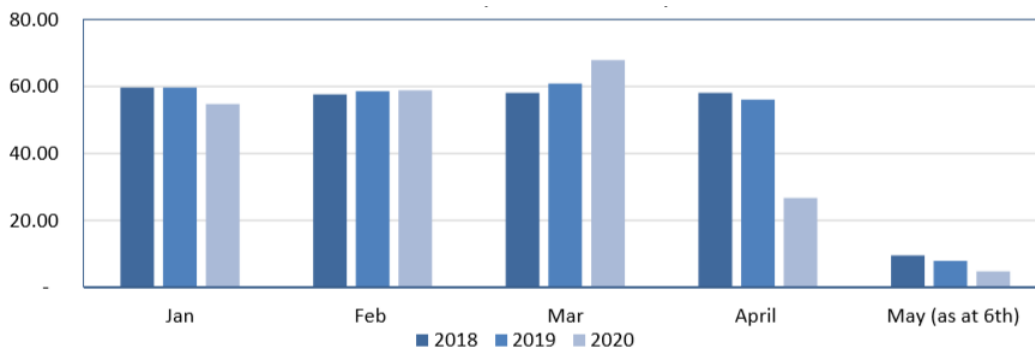


Figure 34: Demand for US\$, January to May 2020, in US\$ millions
Source: Central Bank of Seychelles

As foreign inflows from foreign investment, remittances and export earnings are expected to slow in the short-to-medium term, central banks are keeping close guard of the level of foreign exchange reserves. As at the end of 2019, Seychelles held a relatively moderate level of foreign exchange reserves. The Central Bank of Seychelles has already flagged a significant reduction in foreign exchange inflows, while the demand for foreign exchange has continued to rise. These pressures are likely to lead to a devaluation in the rupee in the near term.

Seychelles’ credit rating was also impacted by the economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. In early May 2020 Fitch Ratings downgraded Seychelles’ Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) by two notches to 'B+' from 'BB', with a Stable Outlook. Fitch has since forecasted that Seychelles’ economy will contract by 14 per cent in 2020, mainly due to the hit to tourism (which accounts for an estimated 25 per cent of GDP directly and around 55 per cent if indirect factors are included). Furthermore, Fitch projects GDP to grow by 7 per cent in 2021, driven by a partial recovery in tourism from the third quarter of 2020, and resumption of FDI and public investment spending.

“New priorities in a new reality”

In April 2020, Government presented a revised budget for the year in light of the country’s situation. Originally, the 2020 budget was based on the theme: “Equitable Results – Shared Prosperity”. The

budget was built around the National Long-term Vision, “Vision 2033” which aspires to “transform Seychelles as a resilient, responsible and prosperous nation that is healthy, educated, empowered, and that is living together in harmony with nature, and engaged with the wider world”. The revised budget, themed “New priorities in a new reality”, reflects the country’s way forward in this challenging period. The Appropriation (Amendment) Act 2020 now provides for a budget of SR10,447,151,547 for the calendar year 2020.

Budget spending priorities have been shifted towards:

- Health care – to contain and combat the disease
- Food security – to ensure sustenance during the crisis;
- Wage retention and job security for Seychellois employees in the private sector;
- Social protection – to ensure the safety of the most vulnerable;
- Increased security – to prevent the proliferation of crime during the economic downturn;
- Investments in infrastructure – to support economic growth; and,
- Investments in programmes and projects that will improve the lives of all citizens;

Moreover, there has been a comprehensive exercise to identify additional fiscal space and savings through means such as expenditure rationalization, a recruitment freeze and postponements of events and meetings.

In light of the unprecedented circumstances, the budget will now be in deficit, financed by the following:

- An advance from the Central Bank of Seychelles at 0 per cent interest.
- The issuance of a Bond on the market
- Publication of Treasury Bills
- Use of reserves to cover importation costs
- Budget Support Loans from the World Bank, the IMF and the African Development Bank.

The 2020 budget deficit also means that Seychelles will not be able to reach the target of 50 per cent of debt to GDP by 2021. This target will be pushed back to a later date which will be dependent on the recovery of the economy.

Assistance to the private sector

The private sector is recognized as the “engine of growth” of Seychelles’ economy, and it is thus imperative that it is given the support it needs to keep functioning in this challenging period. Tourism-related businesses are facing particular difficulty in maintaining their liquidity, given that no revenue is being collected because no visitors are arriving. The Government has thus committed to provide assistance to the private sector to also avoid redundancies and allow businesses to continue to operate. Firstly, it has suspended tax payments related to revenue to help maintain the businesses’ liquidity. These measures include the postponement of all payments due between March and September 2020 and the postponement of Corporate Social Responsibility, Tourism Marketing Tax, Business Tax and taxes on Non-Monetary Benefits Income until September 2020.

In addition, a sum of SR1,090,531,200.00 has been proposed in the 2020 budget amendment to guarantee the salaries of the employees in the private sector for three months (April-June 2020). However, further provisions have been made for up to six months. In order to ensure that this support is targeted towards businesses in genuine need and to prevent abuse, a high-level committee comprising government officials and representatives of the private sector was established to manage the scheme. Individual salary assistance is being capped at SR30,000. All private businesses, including

self-employed individuals, in the formal sector can apply and will be assessed on certain criteria. This assistance will also cover foreign workers currently in Seychelles. Moreover, the informal sector is also being assisted through the Agency for Social Protection.

In a display of support, in mid-May, the Central Bank of Seychelles (CBS) launched a Private Sector Relief Scheme in anticipation of the revenue constraints that businesses will face, given reduced demand for certain goods and services due to the associated impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This scheme will provide a special credit facility to affected businesses. Through this Private Sector Relief Credit Line Facility, CBS has made available SR500 million for affected individuals and businesses in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) category (i.e. businesses with sales turnover of SR25 million or less). The scheme will be managed by commercial banks, the Development Bank of Seychelles (DBS) and Seychelles Credit Union (SCU), and is intended to complement other financial measures being implemented by the Government. Financing will take the form of overdrafts or term loans with a fixed interest rate of 1.5 per cent per annum as well as a six-month moratorium and a maximum repayment of three years for the term loans. The credit facility will be provided as loans or overdrafts, and must be sufficient in value to cover the critical expenditure of a borrower for a period of six months.

Food security

As a small island nation, Seychelles imports over 90 per cent of its commodities, thus implying that food products produced or manufactured locally do not account for much of its consumption. It is thus critical that the country guarantees its food security amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Especially now with the tourism industry being affected, support the agriculture and fisheries sectors is a priority now more than ever. As a result, a high-level committee for food security was established in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the fisheries sector, an emergency plan was developed for three months to guarantee local fish supply and also protect the livelihoods of about 1,500 fishermen. Since the outbreak, some fishermen have not been able to sell their catch, as tourism establishments and demand from fish processors has declined significantly, due to reduced activities and closure of some businesses. As part of the emergency plan, fishermen are now guaranteed a fixed price for their catch from fish processors. Other incentives in place include a reduction in prices of ice and bait. Moreover, under the Fisheries Development Fund, a credit facility aimed at improving the financing opportunities for local investors to participate in long-line ventures and add value for the fisheries sector, the interest rate is being reduced from 3 per cent to 1 per cent. Additionally, the Seychelles Trading Company (STC), which is fully owned by the Government and the major importer of consumer goods, will be purchasing from fish processors and selling to the population at affordable prices. Currently, the average catch of demersal (deep-sea) fish is 400 tons a month, 50 per cent of which was sold to hotels and restaurants and the other 50 per cent on the local market.

Considerable challenges have been encountered by the agricultural sector selling produce since the outbreak. As part of assistance to farmers so that they continue investing in this sector, the interest rate of the Agricultural Development Fund will change from 2.5 per cent to 1 per cent for the duration of the pandemic only. Moreover, the Government has 14 parcels of land made available to the Agricultural Producers of Seychelles association, which will ensure that local production is greatly increased in the country. Although the country is finding itself in a challenging period, this presents an opportunity for growth and sustainability for the agriculture and fisheries sectors.

Environment Dimension

Environment

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the environmental sector in Seychelles has encountered difficulties related to the global slowdown. The sudden drop in tourism revenue in protected areas managed by entities such as the Seychelles National Parks Authority (SNPA), Nature Seychelles, Island Conservation Society, Seychelles Islands Foundation and the National Botanical Gardens Foundation, has meant that fewer funds will be generated on behalf of the environment sector and in turn less resources will be available for their use.

Further to this, there has been growing uncertainty on the prospects for environmental NGOs who were previously receiving donor financing in the form of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), as well as other forms of donation. The resultant economic downturn and challenges within the private sector have now placed significant strain on the resources of these NGOs, which now have to face the reality of potential restructuring, and delays to their projects and operations in general.

By mid-March 2020, a ban had been imposed on all European tourist arrivals (including those from Reunion and Mayotte) in addition to already existing bans on arrivals from China, South Korea, Italy and Iran. This ban has constrained the air transport industry significantly, as high volumes of flight cancellations resulted. This temporary measure will inevitably have had considerable negative impacts on the economy, as it is highly dependent on the tourism industry and Europe is the country's primary source market for tourists. However, this could have several beneficial environmental impacts. Less inbound and outbound flights will decrease emissions, as flight frequency will tend to fall due to the significant drop in passenger numbers. Air Seychelles, the national carrier, has curtailed its operations by cancelling several regional and domestic scheduled flights. It can be inferred that the fuel consumption of the carrier and other fuel-dependent industries will decline considerably over the crisis period.

In addition, the drastic drop in tourist arrivals will also lead to reduced consumption of goods and services within the country. This will undoubtedly reduce generation of waste and pollution. During the course of the restricted movement order, it was reported that solid waste generated from households had increased, whereas commercial waste from businesses and other sectors had decreased considerably.

Whilst acknowledging our limited natural resources, this pandemic has again showcased the urgent need to further enhance national production within the country. The private agricultural sector in Seychelles is regarded as rather weak, with agricultural output considerably less than in previous years. Strengthening this sector is essential to boost local production and decrease dependence on imported products. Whilst the Government is maintaining its stance on environmental conservation, it is imperative that the right balance be determined.

The severity and magnitude of the outbreak has highlighted the need to intensify efforts and measures in place, firstly by revisiting the Disaster and Risk Management Plan. This will greatly assist to strengthen the country's resilience in the period before any such crises arise again

Impact on the energy sector

The energy security of Seychelles requires much consideration. The country depends heavily on imported oil to meet domestic energy needs.

Monitoring of day-by-day electricity demand by PUC from January to April 2020 revealed a noticeable reduction in demand for energy on Mahe and Praslin (as well as La Digue) from 16 March to 26 April 2020. This gradual decrease has clearly been due to the lockdown.

Impact on demand for electricity at sector level

Error! Reference source not found. below shows the structure of electricity sales at the Public Utilities Corporation (PUC), the national supplier of electricity, for 2018. The Commerce and Industry sector is the largest customer of PUC and accounts for 55 per cent of sales, corresponding to 212.3 GWh for that year. The Residential category is second with 32.7 per cent of the sales, corresponding to 126.29 GWh for that year. Total sales of electricity by PUC for 2018 were 386 GWh.

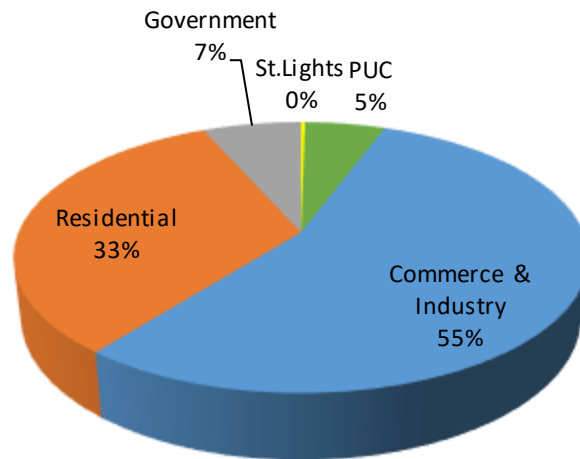


Figure 35: Structure of electricity consumption in 2018
Source: Public Utilities Corporation (PUC)

COVID-19 will change this structure, with the share of the Commerce and Industry reducing and the share of Residential increasing. This situation will not benefit PUC as Commercial & Industrial electricity is the main source of revenue for PUC and the tariff for Residential is subsidized.

Residential sector

The Residential sector consumes roughly a third of national electricity consumption, and has over 32,000 consumers. As most people have to stay at home during the lockdown period, this increases electricity consumption in that sector, as people use their home appliances more than usual. On average, electricity consumption in the Residential sector grew by 7.8 per cent per year between 2014 and 2018. However, due to the lockdown it is expected that the growth rate from 2019 to 2020 will be above 8 per cent. Domestic consumers' electricity bills will be higher in 2020 than in previous years, as their consumption will move up to higher ranges above 300 kWh.

To reassert the country's stability in this regard, it is essential that the sector remains a priority given its importance. Thus more efforts should be placed on accelerating provision of access to greener, renewable and efficient energy.

Opening up and way forward

The Public Health Restriction Order expired on 4 May 2020 and a revised one came into force on the same day. The new Order allows for gradual removal of restrictions by phases. While some restrictions are removed, some will be maintained to prevent the introduction of new cases and mitigate community transmission if a new case is detected.

The Department of Health called on the public at large to give full support to the revised measures and to actively engage in adapting to the "new normal". Members of the public are asked to pay close attention to these three pillars of COVID-19 prevention:

1. Increased vigilance in detection of suspected cases,

2. Social or physical distancing at all times, and
3. Improved hygiene, especially hand and respiratory hygiene.

The Department of Health issued new measures and a *Schedule of Opening of Establishments and Activities* on 3 May 2020. On 4 May 2020, the Restricted Movement Order was officially lifted. This allowed for the reopening of food outlets, postal services, indoor religious services, and domestic public transport, to name a few. Meanwhile, daycare centres, childminding institutions, post-secondary institutions, the University of Seychelles, and private schools reopened their doors on 11 May 2020 while public schools and educational institutions reopened on 18 May 2020.

The international airport will be reopened on 1 June 2020, under certain conditions which include restrictions on entry of people from countries and territories afflicted by COVID-19. Furthermore, a mandatory 14-day quarantine will apply to anyone entering the country.

These unprecedented circumstances thus are now forcing Seychelles to demonstrate its resilience as a nation. This requires an urgent review of national development priorities and renewed strategies for achieving international commitments such as the SDGs. Seychelles remains committed to its pathway towards sustainable development, even in the face of such a serious challenge. While this alarming new situation plunged the country into a period of uncertainty, it also compelled it to readjust to this new reality by taking national measures to prevent, mitigate and combat against the effects of COVID-19. In going forward, the priority remains the well-being of the people. This will be done in line with the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – and achieving this in a balanced and integrated manner.

Next Steps

The Voluntary National Review is regarded as a stepping stone towards successful implementation of the SDGs. Like Seychelles' two central planning documents – Vision 2033 and its first medium-term National Development Strategy (2019-2023) – this review reiterates the numerous examples of progress made by Seychelles in upholding both regional and international commitments. In addition, it brings forth recurrent challenges and weaknesses faced and provides further insights and methodologies that are deemed useful towards accelerating implementation of the Goals. One such example is recognizing Seychelles' remarkable achievements in the area of environmental conservation, while at the same time acknowledging the need to boost efforts in the scope of educational outcomes.

As a small island developing state (SIDS) with high-income status, Seychelles is persisting in its efforts to effectively address the numerous challenges faced by SIDS, specifically by dealing with the adverse effects of climate change, limited access to funds for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the goals and lack of human resources among stakeholder groupings.

Global issues, such as rising temperatures and sea-level rise, pose a serious threat to small island nations such as Seychelles. These affect SIDS through increasing possibilities of adverse events, such as flooding in geographically low-lying areas, coastal erosion, storms and heat waves. These have resultant repercussions on economic activities, and more specifically in the tourism, fisheries and real estate sectors. Seychelles places high importance on raising awareness on climate change matters and this will remain a top priority of the Government. It is apparent that public funds are inadequate to sustain all projected developments to contribute towards advancement of the goals, and it is imperative that other avenues are explored to facilitate new and innovative financing mechanisms either through public-private partnerships or other potential partnerships for successful implementation, monitoring and reporting.

The establishment of a coordinating body and other such mechanisms to ensure implementation of international commitments have facilitated a more structured monitoring and coordinating framework for Agenda 2030. However, the process has highlighted the urgent need to strengthen the inter-governmental coordination mechanism, which is seen as rather weak at present. Instilling stronger coordination between governmental bodies and other stakeholders would enable better synergy and coherence for policy planning across government. This could also prove useful in identifying areas of duplication, as well as contributing more positively to achieving more harmonization of policies. Establishment of a formal data exchange mechanism would thus be highly recommended for enhancing cross-sectoral communication amongst stakeholders.

In addition, reporting on the SDGs compels Seychelles to produce various sets of data, which may not necessarily be readily available. The recent SDG Baseline Assessment Report 2019 identifies the gaps that exist in data collection and dissemination. The Report further highlights the difficulty which stakeholders encounter in obtaining reliable statistics, while often the required data is simply absent. On the other hand, it was reported that if data is being collected, it would in many instances lack granularity, thus constraining in-depth data analysis. Consequently, the consequential lack of quality and disaggregated data impairs policy formulation, and monitoring and evaluation. There is thus a need for more robust data collection, processing and dissemination efforts. The study goes on to suggest an urgent revamping of the data collection strategy so as to enable Seychelles to better report on such commitments. At present, the National Bureau of Statistics is the only institution engaged in the generation of data nationally; while other governmental bodies do collect data, this is done using

systems and methods suitable for their particular organizations and not necessarily in the format needed for such reporting needs. It is vital that this issue is addressed going forward.

As previously discussed, Agenda 2030 is one of the numerous development frameworks under which Seychelles must implement and report. Seychelles is, however, faced with the implementation of other commitments such as the SAMOA Pathway, which take into account the specificities of SIDS, the African Union 2063 Agenda and other global and regional development frameworks. Reporting on the numerous development commitments places additional tasks on Seychelles, a small country with limited capacity. In addition, this also presents to some extent respondents' fatigue in populating data for the various custodians of these agendas.

While the Department of Economic Planning is actively engaged in strong advocacy work for the agenda, it is crucial that efforts to raise awareness are intensified at all levels in the spirit of 'Leaving no one behind'. Although significant efforts have been made to mainstream the SDGs into national planning, it should be taken into account that at present Seychelles' planning instruments are still in their infancy stage with the National Vision and first National Development Plan only launched in the middle of 2019. In addition, Seychelles currently has a rather weak planning culture within the governmental sphere. The Planning Policy, currently being drafted for Cabinet Approval, should be used as an opportunity to further educate the wider population on the subject matter. The department could utilize this as a tool to raise awareness of the SDGs, at the same time advocating for better planning across government.

As the National Development Strategy 2019-2023 is strongly linked to the SDGs, it is thus recommended that a similar approach is utilized going forward, with the development of sector plans in order to maintain similar coherence. In doing so, this could again reinforce the importance and relevance of the goals to ministries and their implementing agencies, with the aim of improving the outcomes of their day-to-day tasks. In this way, policies could also be more guided and SDG-linked, which would thus accelerate implementation of the Agenda.