

Republic of Seychelles



Country Report

2019

**Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights of
Women in Africa**

Table of contents

	Page
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	4
COUNRTY PROFILE	6
PROCESS	5
CONSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND	5
ARTICLE 2: ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN	9
ARTICLE 3: RIGHT TO DIGNITY	14
ARTICLE 4: RIGHT TO LIFE, INTEGRITY AND SECURITY	15
ARTICLE 5: ELIMINATION OF HARMFUL PRACTICES	17
ARTICLE 6: MARRIAGE	19
ARTICLE 7: SEPARATION, DIVORCE AND ANNULMENT IF MARRIAGE	21
ARTICLE 8: ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND EQUAL PROTECTION BEFORE THE LAW	22
ARTICLE 9: RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS	23
ARTICLE 10: RIGHT TO PEACE	25
ARTICLE 11: PROTECTION OF WOMEN IN ARMED CONFLICT	27
ARTICLE 12: RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING	27
ARTICLE 13: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WELFARE RIGHTS	33
ARTICLE 14: HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS	35
ARTICLE 15: RIGHT TO FOOD SECURITY	37
ARTICLE 16: RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING	39
ARTICLE 17: RIGHT TO POSITIVE CULTURAL CONTEXT	42

ARTICLE 18: RIGHT TO A HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT	42
ARTICLE 19: RIGHT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	45
ARTICLE 20: WIDOW’S RIGHTS	46
ARTICLE 21: RIGHT TO INHERITANCE	46
ARTICLE 22: SPECIAL PROTECTION OF ELDERLY WOMEN	47
ARTICLE 23: SPECIAL PROTECTION OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES	47
ARTICLE 24: SPECIAL PROTECTION OF WOMEN IN DISTRESS	48
ARTICLE 25: REMEDIES	50
ARTICLE 26: IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING	51
ARTICLE 27: INTERPRETATION	51
ARTICLE 28: SIGNATURE, RATIFICATION AND ACCESSION	51
CONCLUSION	52
REFERENCES	53

List of Abbreviations

AGM	Annual General Meeting
ALDEC	Adult Learning and Distance Education Centre
	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CEDAW	
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DIMO	Defense Institute of Medical Operations
EAPCCO	Eastern Africa Police Chief Cooperation Organization
EASF	Eastern Africa Standby Force
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESA	Enterprise Seychelles Agency
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GIS	Geographic Information System
GMS	Gender Management System
HBS	Household Budget Survey
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICT	Information Communication and Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IUCD	Intrauterine Contraceptive Device
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LWMA	Land Waste Management Agency
MLUH	Ministry of Land Use and Housing
MSME	Micro Small and Medium Enterprises
NCC	National Council for Children
NCE	National Council for the Elderly
NGMT	National Gender Management Team
NGSC	National Gender Steering Committee
NIHSS	National Institute for Health and Social Studies
PUC	Public Utilities Company
RPWD	Rights of Persons with Disability
SAA	Seychelles Agricultural Agency
	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
SACMEQ	
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SARPCO	Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization
SBSA	School of Business Studies and Accounting
SIAD	Seychelles Institute of Art and Design
SIAH	Seychelles Institute of Agricultural and Horticulture
SIDOL	Seychelles Institute of Distance Open Learning
SIDS	Small Island Developing State
SIT	Seychelles Institute of Technology

SMA	Seychelles Maritime Accademy
SPA	Seychelles Police Accademy
SPTC	Seychelles Public Transport Company
STA	Seychelles Tourism Accademy
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
TGMI	The Guy Morel Institute
TOT	Training of Trainers
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
	The UN Secretary-General’s UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence
UNiTE	against Women campaign (UNiTE campaign),
USD	United States Dollar
WCS	Wildlife Club Seychelles

COUNTRY PROFILE

The Republic of Seychelles is a small island nation of 115 islands in the Indian Ocean, situated between 4 and 10 degrees south of the equator and approximately 1600 km from the eastern coast of Africa. The three main islands Mahé, Praslin and La Digue is where the majority of the approximately 98,000 inhabitants of the country live and where the main economic activities occur. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Seychelles is characterized by its small land area, small population, restricted accessibility to major markets and limited natural resources which leads to a heavy reliance on external sources of income namely tourism and capital input. Seychelles' narrow resource base and other vulnerabilities as a SIDS has resulted in a heavy dependence on external financial flows for its economic and social development.

The history of the islands dates to 1770 where the first settlers took residency on Ste. Anne island. These settlers consisted of French plantation owners accompanied by their African slaves. They were later joined by settlers from India, Mauritius, Reunion and the Canton area of China. It is these different races with varied cultures that started the Seychellois nation.

Hence, Seychelles developed into a multiparty democratic small state where national unity, pride and aspirations override ideological and economic difference. Attempts made to explain the current social practices are based the colonial heritage both from the French (1770-1811) and British (1811-1975) colonial powers and on adaptations to socio-economic status, culture and personal choice. Consequently, colonialism has been the dominant force in developing the Seychellois society in ways distinctly different from that of the colonizing nations. As a result of the experience of slavery in Seychelles, the gender roles within the society were a central element of people's identity; resulting in a matrifocal and matricentric society in which the mother has always managed the educational, social and vocational direction of her children. In the case of inheritance, it was matrilineal rather than patrilineal; and the children being born from poor mothers inherited their social positions as subordinate class. This only served to reinforce the dominant gender behaviour patterns within the Seychelles society.

Process

This Report was prepared Pursuant to article 26 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Protocol), read together with article 62 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (the African Charter) and covers the period of the Seychelles ratification of the Protocol to present date i.e. 2006 to 2019. The information that forms this report therefore was gathered through wide consultations with both governmental and non-governmental sectors.

Constitutional background

The Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles which took effect in 1993 is the country's Supreme law and all other laws and policies are subject to it. Principles of gender equality are enshrined in the Constitution of Seychelles. The preamble to the Constitution which reflects the aspirations of the people proclaims the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation for freedom, justice, welfare, fraternity, peace and unity and reaffirms that these rights include the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness free from all types of discrimination.

The Constitution of Seychelles lists 25 articles (Chapter 3, Part 1) which form the Seychellois Charter of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms. These are

- Right to life
- Right to dignity
- Freedom to slavery and forced or compulsory labour
- Right to liberty
- Right to fair and public hearing
- Right to privacy
- Freedom of conscience
- Freedom of expression
- Right of assembly and association
- Right to participate in Government
- Freedom of movement
- Right to property
- Right to equal protection of the law
- Right of access to official information
- Right to health care
- Right of working mothers
- Right of minors
- Protection of families

- Right to education
- Right to shelter
- Right to work
- Right of the aged and the disabled
- Right to social security
- Right to safe environment
- Right to cultural life and values

Article 2: Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Discrimination against women is any action preventing a woman from enjoying all the rights recognized to all human beings and in all fields because of her sex.

- 2.1 Chapter III of the Seychelles Constitution embeds the 25 Charter of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms which incorporates many of the principles of international human rights instruments, and guarantees 25 rights equally applicable to both men and women.

The Constitution itself which took effect in 1993 is the country's Supreme law and all other laws and policies are subject to it. As Article 5 stipulates:

"This Constitution is the supreme law of Seychelles and any law found to be inconsistent with this Constitution is, to the extent of the inconsistency, void."

The Constitution of Seychelles does not explicitly refer to discrimination against women or define discrimination against women as contained in Article 2 of the Women's Protocol, rather it speaks in terms of the individual in general.

Article 27 clause 1 of the Constitution further states that:

"Every person has a right to equal protection of the law including the enjoyment of rights set out in this Charter without discrimination on any ground except as in necessary in a democratic state."

The language of the Constitution of the Third Republic is gender-neutral, the assumption being that both men and women are protected from all types of discrimination wherever it exists.

The laws of Seychelles are primarily of French and English origin and is constantly evolving to conform to international and national needs. The colonial rule overrode many of the traditional/customary practices of the African, Indian, and Chinese descent of the population. Gender discrimination and bias, however, may be present in societal gender roles and attitudes, thus, making it harder to eradicate stereotypes made unintentionally.

- 2.1.2 Article 22 under the Seychelles Human Rights Charter of the Constitution clearly states that every individual has the right of expression particularly on matters that concern them:

"Every person has a right to freedom of expression and for the purpose of this article this right includes the freedom to hold opinions and to seek, receive and impart ideas and information without interference"

This is further embedded in the democratic rights, such as the right to vote, which sustains liberal expression such as in Article 23:

“Every person has a right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association and for the purpose of this article this right includes the right to assemble freely and associate with other persons and in particular to form or to belong to political parties, trade unions or other associations for the protection of the interests of that person and not to be compelled to belong to any association.”

- 2.2 The country is committed to the eradication of socio-economic barriers against women, especially in its legal framework, its advocacy, and service providing agencies.

International treaties are vital tools in ensuring that the country attends to its gender equality responsibilities. These include; the Charter of the United Nations; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); the International Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW) etc. The state party has without reservations accepted these treaties and therefore is under the obligation to adopt and domesticate these principles and publish periodic country reports. The country’s acceptance to the optional protocols to the ICCPR and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) presents a legal platform for Seychellois citizens whose rights have been violated by the State.

Complementary to the global international consensus on women’s rights; regional gender rights agreements are important in the Human Rights framework of a country as similar issues call for a collaborative solution. The SADC protocol on gender and development is an important regional agreement that was ratified in 2008.

The Executive branch of the government is responsible to draft treaties for the country whilst the Legislative branch (the Seychelles National Assembly), passes laws. Consequently, according to clause 4 of Article 64 of the Constitution, treaties do not affect the country’s citizens unless it has been ratified by an act or a resolution supported by the majority of the members of the National Assembly.

Article 64 clause (4):

“A treaty, agreement or convention in respect of international relations which is to be or is executed by or under the authority of the President shall not bind the Republic unless it is ratified by–

(a) an Act; or

(b) a resolution passed by the votes of a majority of the members of the National Assembly.”

Notably, treaty principles can also be incorporated into domestic law. For instance, although Seychelles has no act, which states that the ICCPR and CEDAW are respected as a law, article 26 of the ICCPR is adopted in the Constitution.

In cases where the domestic law does not incorporate international treaties, the court should interpret or apply the domestic law to the consistency of the treaty obligation as stipulated in Article 48 of the Constitution. Below is a list of some of the legislation, which protect the rights of women in different areas.

Legal Acts which tackle specific issues related to women and legal disadvantages

- 1) *The Children Act (1982)*
- 2) *Family Violence (Protection of the Victims) Act 2000*
- 3) *Employment Act (1995)*
- 4) *Termination of Pregnancy Act 1994- Section 3 and 4*
- 5) *Penal code Act (1995)*
- 6) *Status of Married women Act (1948)*
- 7) *Civil Code of Seychelles Act (1976)*
- 8) *Domestic violence Act¹*
- 9) *Civil status Act (1893)*

i. State institutions

In addition to the legal framework, numerous government bodies either directly or indirectly aid in the elimination of discrimination against women. The Gender Secretariat presently under the auspices of the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Family² was established in 2005 to initiate, monitor and evaluate gender mainstreaming. It is the main lead in the country's Gender Management system (GMS), following the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender development.

The GMS being " a network of structures, mechanisms and processes put in place within an existing organizational framework, to guide, plan, monitor and evaluate the process of mainstreaming gender into all areas of the organisation's work, in order to achieve greater gender equality and equity within the context of sustainable development."

¹ The Domestic Violence Act assented on the 9th June 2020. Commencement date is yet to be proposed.

² In 2005 it was called the Ministry of Social Affairs and Community development

The GMS incorporates three levers of change, which would effectively be incorporated in the government systems. These include, the communication lever, which involves managing information system and gender analysis, the awareness lever, the usage of gender training and awareness raising as the main strategies for changing ideas and behaviors of individuals at the institutional level. Lastly, the Incentive/boundary lever, which consists of the performance appraisal system to evaluate staff and measure performance. Each of these levers have been incorporated into the Gender Secretariat's objectives. Other objectives include: to play a catalytic role in **advocacy and campaign awareness** on critical gender concerns into the policies, plans, and programmes to the public as well as to specific groups; the development of national policy guidelines for gender mainstreaming; to promote key targets and indicators on the status of women and men; manage information and facilitate the building of gender mainstreaming.

Other organisations which support the implementation of the gender agenda include the following:

Agency for Social Protection

The Agency for Social Protection is the body through which social welfare provision is given to those who are the most vulnerable in society.

The National Council for Children (NCC)

The National Council for Children (NCC) commits itself to promote effective interventions for the protection and safety of children. The council respects the rights and dignity of children, as laid down in the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by the Government of Seychelles.

ii. Office of the Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is appointed by the President from candidates nominated by the Constitutional Appointments Authority and serves a term of seven years which is renewable. The current ombudsperson is a woman and has been serving this position since 2017. The Ombudsman is not subject to the direction or control of any person or authority in the discharge of his/her functions.

The Ombudsman has the power to:

- Investigate corruption in public service.
- Assist persons whose constitutional rights have been affected;
- Join in a case concerning the breach of fundamental rights; and
- Take up a case to declare a law unconstitutional.

The Ombudsman can take up an investigation based on the demands of any individual. The Ombudsman can investigate any public authority up to and including the President but may not investigate the performance of any judicial function or a person performing a judicial function. If the Ombudsman is satisfied that the complaint is justified, the Ombudsman sends a report and recommendations to the relevant authority. If the recommendations are not acted upon, the Ombudsman can send these together with observations to the President or National Assembly. He/she must report the result back to the person who lodged the complaint. The ombudsman must also submit an annual report to the National Assembly on the functioning of the office.

Statistics obtained from the Office of the Ombudsman showing that out of the 559 cases investigated by the Office of the Ombudsman for the period 2004-2009, a total of 257 complaints (45.9%) were lodged by females, and in 2019 out of the total complainants, 53% were submitted by women. This shows that women, to an almost similar extent as men, have recourse to the Ombudsman. Discussions ~~held with an officer in~~ with the Ombudsman's office reveal that women, in general, complain about employment, housing, and land matters.

iii. National Human Rights Commission

The Protection of Human Rights Act (2009) establishes the National Human Rights Commission whose functions include the power to inquire into allegations of Human Rights violations; review safeguards for the protection of human rights and recommend actions to alleviate factors or difficulties inhibiting the enjoyment of human rights. The commission itself is a self-governing body.

The Seychelles **Human Rights Commission** will advise the Government on matters related to the protection of human rights, in administrative practice as well as in proposed legislation. It will undertake research and sensitisation programmes for the furtherance of human rights and also monitor Seychelles' compliance with the terms of international conventions and charters relevant to the functions of the Commission.

Article 3: Right to Dignity

- 3.1 Chapter III, Article 16 of the Constitution entitled the Right to be treated with Dignity stipulates that:

“Every person has a right to be treated with dignity worthy of a human being and not to be subjected to torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

- 3.2 In addition to the Constitutional rights of the woman to be protected and respected by the law, Article 130 in the country’s penal code states that *“a person who sexually assaults another person is guilty of an offence and liable to imprisonment for 20 years.”* This sentencing varies depending on various factors such as the age of the victim and that of the perpetrator, and whether the perpetrator is a re-offender. Where the victim of the assault is under the age of 15 years and the accused is over 18 years of age the sentence should lie between 14 to 20 years. If the perpetrator appears before the court with a similar case that has occurred within 10 years, the person shall be liable for imprisonment for not less than 28 years, and where the victim is a minor the perpetrator may face life imprisonment.

Sexual assault as under the Penal code (1995) is classified as follows:

- “(a) an indecent assault;
- (b) the non-accidental touching of the sexual organ of another;
- (c) the non-accidental touching of another with one’s sexual organ, or
- (d) the penetration of a body orifice of another for a sexual purpose.”

- 3.3 The Prohibition in Trafficking in Persons Act (2014) came into force to not only prevent the trafficking in persons and but to make provisions to protect and assist victims of trafficking in persons and to update and modernize the laws on Human Rights Trafficking. It also aims to make provisions for the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons.

The Act does not explicitly target women but applies equally to men and women, however, section 4 condemns child trafficking. The Seychelles Penal code supplements the Trafficking in Persons Act (2014), section 141:

- “Any person who detains any woman or girl against her will-*
- (a) in or upon any premises with intent that she may be unlawfully and carnally known by any man, whether any particular man or generally; or*
 - (b) in any brothel, is guilty of a misdemeanour.”*

In the same manner, section 143 & 144 of the Penal Code makes it an offence to procure a woman or girl into prostitution for purposes of gain or other purposes.

Article 4: The Rights to Life, Integrity, and Security

- 4.1 The state reserves the right to ensure that women and men are protected and have the right to liberty and security of the person and the Right to live in a secure environment. Article 15 in the Seychellois Charter of Fundamental Human Rights & Freedoms (Constitution) states:

“(1) Everyone has a right to life and no one shall be deprived of life intentionally.

(2) A law shall not provide for a sentence of death to be imposed by any court.”

Similarly, Article 18 states:

“Every person has a Right to Liberty and security of the person”

- 4.2 The prevention of violence against women and girls is crucial for the Seychelles government. Following a gender baseline study done in 2016, 58% of the women who took part in the study experienced some form of GBV in their lifetime as for men this figure was 43% and most of the abuse has been in the home by intimate partners. Victims encounter abuse in all four aspects of psychological, physical, sexual, and economic abuse; in which women are disproportionately more affected, but it is to be noted that both men and women are perpetrators.

Presently, the Seychelles Police Department still classifies cases of Domestic Violence under the country's Penal Code under various offences. These include sexual assault, grievous bodily harm, assault occasioning actual bodily harm, threatening assault, damage to the property, threatening violence, harming a child, and wounding.

The Domestic Violence Act 2020 will come into force to condemn domestic violence and to protect victims and against women. In the meantime, other laws are being used to protect victims of domestic violence, such as the Family Violence (Protection of victim) Act (year), Penal Code (1995), and the Employment Act (1995). The Bill has been adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on 7th August 2019, and the Bill was sent before the National Assembly where it was approved on the 20th of May 2020. The President assented to the Bill on the 09th June 2020, to date the Act has not yet come into force. It covers a wide range of issues that amount to Domestic Violence such as physical abuse, verbal or psychological, and economic abuse; it further states the duties of the police, social services, and other service providers providing relief to victims but also provides for the rehabilitation of the perpetrators.

4.2.1 i. National Policies and Action Plans for the Protection and Empowerment of Women

Government policies National Strategy on domestic violence 2008-2012. The strategy was created following the study on domestic violence in 2006 and it outlines four strategic objectives:

- To strengthen and harmonise stakeholder efforts to end domestic violence
- Reduce the vulnerability of men and women to domestic violence
- Reduce the impact of domestic violence on children
- Improve gender equality and equity.

The National Gender Policy officially launched in 2016 reinforces the government's objectives on gender mainstreaming. The intent is to support a permanent sustained change in society, which would enable all Seychellois citizens to reach their full potential by removing gender barriers. The policy is part of the broader government duty in the recognition of, inter alia, the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development goals, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and regional instruments which focuses explicitly on eliminating gender bias.

The National Gender action plan in the accompaniment of the gender policy is a key component of the GMS implementation in the country and will be presented to the Cabinet of Ministers .

In 2016, the government introduced the Family Policy. The policy is a direct revamping of the Social Renaissance Programme which was aimed at adding new impetus in the quest for a more stable and functional society. The policy attempts to strike a balance; one that respects the right of everyone to form a family while preserving the family unit as the natural and fundamental element of society as is laid down in the Constitution of the country. It recognizes that the primary responsibility for caregiving lies with parents and other family members. However, when and where necessary, the Government will intervene to ensure the protection of family members against all forms of abuse and discrimination, especially against women.

Medical or scientific experiments on women are practices that do not exist in Seychelles. Moreover, Seychelles abolished the death penalty for all crimes in 1993, which means that no person is subject to death for any crime committed, as other penalties exist as repercussions to breaking the law.

Article 5: Elimination of Harmful Practices

- 5.1 The Seychelles government's approach to the Elimination of Harmful practices towards women has been mainly through policies and legal frameworks.

The Gender Secretariat under the ambit of the Ministry responsible for Family has, as one of its objective, to engage in advocacy and organize activities to raise awareness amongst the public about pertinent gender issues, particularly gender based violence.

On the 25th day of every month, the Ministry's staff joins the rest of the world to observe the Orange Day campaign by wearing an orange outfit in solidarity with the survivors and victims of domestic violence. In 2017, there was an initiative to introduce Gender as a curriculum in the schools, targeting most of the Post-Secondary schools in the country. It was aimed at educating the youths on gender equality and preventing domestic violence within the family and in their relationships.

The Gender Secretariat under the Department of Family is one of the direct machinery propelling government efforts to raise awareness on GBV.

Below are some of the activities of the secretariat in eliminating harmful practices particularly domestic violence from 2005 to 2019:

- Developed a gender mainstreaming approach, adapted from the Commonwealth Gender Management System model (2005)
- Commissioned a play on domestic violence held at the International Conference Centre of Seychelles (2005);
- Conducted the Domestic Violence National Survey in (2006)
- Formulated and launched the National Strategy for Domestic Violence 2008-2012 to combat GBV.
- Conducted a situational analysis of the current institutional response to domestic violence (2008)
- Led the Government of Seychelles to join the United Nation Secretary General 's - UNiTE to End Violence Against Women (2008)
- Organised annual commemoration activities for International Women's Day and 16 Days of Activism (including Minister's official message, sensitisation forums, leaflets, posters, poster/essay/public speaking/poetry competitions, TV spots, banners, radio and print media campaigns, etc.);
- Supported the institutionalization of other GMS structures; National Gender Steering Committee (NGSC) and National Gender Management Team (NGMT);
- Supported the development and implementation of the National Gender Communications Strategy 2010-2011;

- Sought funding for gender activities from bilateral and multilateral donors;
- Supported a UNIFEM commissioned project which developed of a costed Plan of Action for Gender-Based Violence for Seychelles 2010-2011;
- The monthly commemoration of GBV is considered as orange day and falls on the 25th of each month.
- National symposium targeting spiritual leaders and their role in tackling GBV (2019)
- Training of male trainers to create awareness amongst the men in our community regarding GBV.

5.2 **International Women Right's commitment**

The country's commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Labour Organization (ILO) standards along with its Constitutional obligation to protect the Right of minors opposing child labour, which also includes both girls and boys. Article 31 of the Constitution specifies that the admission age for work is 15 years old and a young person would be employed only if employment involves light work on a part-time basis without any physical and mental strain and it does not present an obstacle to his or her education.

Seychelles is a party to the following Conventions and Charters:

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948
2. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979.
3. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989.
4. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (RPWD) 2006.
5. African Charter on the Rights & Welfare of the Child 1990.
6. African Youth Charter 2006.

Article 6: Marriage

- 6.1 The Seychelles law prohibits forced marriage as stipulated under article 41 under the Acts of Marriage in the country's Civil Status Act (1893).

Article 41. *'There is no marriage when there is no consent'*

- 6.2 A man under the age of 18 years and a girl under the age of 15 years old cannot contract marriage unless in exceptional circumstances, where the Minister allows such marriage below these ages. In the case of a legitimate minor (i.e. under the age of 18 years old) it is also required that marriage is only contracted where paternal consent has been sought and in cases where the father is deceased or is absent from the country or is incapable of expressing his will then the mother's consent is of value. Where both parents are no longer living, a judge shall consider the marriage request of a minor.

The same condition is applicable to a natural child. An under-aged illegitimate child shall be bound to the consent of the parent who has acknowledged him/her or both parents if they are present in his/her life or the legal guardian. Where both parents are absent then the permission to marry is given by the judge.

Marriage is forbidden when it is between relatives of close lineage such as brothers and sisters and other collateral lineages such as that of nieces and uncles, aunts and nephews. It is however legal for a man or woman to marry the brother or sister of their deceased partner, but that can only take place when it is not in the lifetime of the previous spouse.

Parental consent is also necessary for civil unions and a certificate of marriage is issued in the Register of Civil Status. The civil status officer upon adhering to the intention of marriage would only agree to contract marriage where the birth certificate of both parties has been presented; and in cases when necessary, there needs to be proof of divorce or death of the former spouse of the parties. The satisfactory provision of these documents, allows the marriage ceremony to proceed and a marriage certificate is issued upon completion.

- 6.3 Monogamy is the common traditional, cultural belief and lifestyle amongst the population. Article 42 under the Marriage Act under the civil status code condemns bigamy.

Article 42. *'No second marriage can be contracted before the dissolution of the first marriage.'*

Anyone who has a living husband or wife and goes through a wedding ceremony in their current life of that wife or husband is guilty of a crime and can be imprisoned for five years. This, however, does not apply to persons whose marriage has been declared void by a court

following the absence of the wife/husband for at least seven years and there is no concrete evidence that the husband/wife is alive.

- 6.4 It is within the constitutional rights of any individual (either married or not) to have the freedom of movement to reside and move wherever they want to within or outside the country. Article 25 under the Human Rights charter stipulates:

“ Every person lawfully present in Seychelles has a right of freedom of movement and for this article this right includes the right to move freely within Seychelles, the right to reside in any part of Seychelles, the right to leave Seychelles, and the right to not be expelled from Seychelles.”

- 6.5 In marriage, a woman is treated as a femme sole where she is recognized under the Status of a Married Woman Act article 4 as a separate legal individual to her husband. She, therefore, has the legal capacity to manage, acquire, hold and dispose of- by her desire, any moveable or immoveable property as though she was not married without any intervention of a trustee nor the need for her husband’s permission. There is no liability between the wife and her husband both before or within the marriage to any contract or tort, except in cases where the plaintiff substantiates the need to bring forth a claim against the couple. Hence, upon marriage, the woman is still liable on her own to pay her debts.

Despite the woman being considered as a femme sole, the Civil Code outlines clearly that it is within the responsibility of both parents once they enter marriage to maintain and bring up their child which has been produced within the marriage. To prove the paternal lineage of the child in cases where there is no birth certificate, a status of possession which includes that the child must have always borne the surname of the father is notable.

It is under the civil rights of an individual under Article 24 of the Civil Status Act-men or women to make any changes or additions to their name for any reason such as marriage etc, granted that the petitioner is a Seychellois and has been residing in Seychelles for more than three years. It is therefore the woman’s choice as to whether she keeps her maiden name or take on that of her husband’s upon marriage.

Article 7: Separation, Divorce, and Annulment of marriage

- 7.1 The dissolution of marriage occurs in cases of the death of a spouse or a formal divorce. It has been laid out in the Matrimonial Causes Act and in the Civil Code bill that any party (either the man or woman) can request for the dissolution or separation of a marriage based on charges such as adultery in which the partner cannot tolerate to live with the adulterer. It can also apply in cases where the respondent has behaved in a manner that the other partner cannot continue to live with; the respondent has left the petitioner for two years; and in cases of separation where both parties have not been living together for over one year. The only restriction to file for divorce from both parties is that the parties need to be living with each other for one year after marriage.
- 7.2 In order for a divorce to become final, sufficient evidence must have been presented before the court in attempts to salvage the marriage and the request proven to be the last resort. Divorce is made final by a court under a judge and in instances where the couple has children, or a child is involved, the custody, care, and access to the child would be determined by a court/Family Tribunal making decisions pertaining to the best interest of the child. The court/Family Tribunal is also liable to consider aspects such as the extent to which a parent who is not the natural parent of a child has taken the responsibility of the welfare of the child and the liability of any person to maintain the child other than the marriage parties if there is a need.
- 7.3 The laws of Seychelles outline clearly that the couples who have been living together in matrimony for at least seven years and decide to divorce can have their property shared amongst themselves; apart from the property or possessions acquired before the marriage by one party. Nonetheless, the court may in exceptional cases consider the making of an order as it seems fit to divide property in between both parties depending on the circumstances and the contribution of both partners in the relationship- this regardless of gender. In contrast to relationships, which have not endured more than seven years, the court is, therefore, liable to divide their joint possessions based on each party's contribution to the relationship, the educational and professional background, as well as the financial means of the party. The decision would be worked out for the best interest of the party and children (if there are any). In cases where marriage proceeded with an *en menage* relationship, the dues are calculated from the beginning of cohabitation.

Article 8: Access to Justice and Equal protection before the law

- 8.1 Article 19 of the Constitution along with its statements and clauses states that an individual regardless of gender should have access to legal aid, which comprises a fair and public hearing by law. -

‘Every person charged with an offence has the right unless the charge is withdrawn, to a fair hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial court established by law’

In the same manner, legal aid is impartial to all, as stated below:

Clause (2)(d) states that *“Every person who is charged with an offense has a right to be defended before the court in person, or, at the person’s own expense by a legal practitioner of the person’s own choice, or, where a law so provides, by a legal practitioner provided at public expense.”*

Moreover, it is within a person’s constitutional right to have equal protection of the law.

“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 for a democratic society.”

- 8.2 In addition to the legal requirements, the Gender Secretariat at the Ministry of Family Affairs has developed a Gender Law Manual to provide information and resources on Gender-related issues under the Seychelles law to assist the judges, law enforcement agencies, lawyers, and any other relevant stakeholder.

The Department of Family in collaboration with the Defense Institute of Medical Operation (DIMO) has conducted training for two consecutive years. DIMO provides capacity building on how to better coordinate actions between the different agencies dealing with domestic violence and sexual assault cases. The targeted participants comprised of the Police, health, education, social services, and civil society.

Nowadays women are more represented in legal offices, however, it might not be equal to the number of men.

Table 1: Proportion of women in legal offices

		Judge	Magistrate
2016-2017	Male	11 (85%)	3 (50%)
	Female	2(15%)	3(50%)
2018-2019	Male	8 (62%)	2 (50%)
	Female	5 (38%)	2 (50%)

The number of women as judges has more than doubled from 2016 to 2019. However there has been no difference in the number of women and men in the last three years. In 2019, there were 22 women lawyers, 12 women prosecutors, 7 women state councillors, 5 women ambassadors and 440 women police officers.

Article 9: Right to participation in the political and decision-making process

9.1 The Constitution makes provision for men and women capable of making their own decisions to participate in the political and decision-making arenas of the country. This is stipulated under Article 24 as quoted below:

“Subject to this Constitution, every citizen of Seychelles who has attained the age of eighteen years has a right:

- (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs either directly or through freely chosen representatives;
 - (b) To be registered as a voter for the purpose of and to vote by secret ballot at public elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage;
 - (c) To be elected to public office; and
 - (d) To participate, on general terms of equality, in public service.
- (2) The exercise of the rights under clause (1) may be regulated by law necessary in a democratic society.”

9.2 Political parties have both youth and women caucuses and the participation of female candidates during elections is promoted. Parliamentary elections held from 8th to 10th September 2016 in which there were 20 women candidates saw the election of 7 women which represents 21.2% of the members of parliament.

Table 2: The percentage of men and women in Parliament (2001-2019)

Years	Male	Female	Total
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2002-2007	26 (76%)	8 (24%)	34
2007-2011	26 (76%)	8 (24%)	34
2011-2016	19 (59%)	13 (41%)	32
2016-2019	26 (79%)	7 (21%)	33

The Seychelles Parliament is comprised of specific committees where women have the opportunity to be represented and participate. There exists a Women Parliamentarians Committee whose role and responsibility is to provide an opportunity for women members and other interested parties to meet together to share experiences, seek solutions and discuss topics of particular significance or relevance to women.

In nominated appointments, namely ministerial positions and executive officers, women for the year 2019 made up 50% and 40% respectively. As of 2019, there are twelve women Principal Secretaries out of twenty-eight Principal Secretaries which represents 43% of the total amount of Principal secretaries.

The general willingness of women to participate in leadership positions has not yet necessitated the government to impose quotas on the representation of women in leadership roles. There may be impediments that prevent women from pursuing a career in both political and sectoral leadership which has not yet been explored.

Article 10: Right to Peace

- 10.1 Conflict prevention, its spread and escalation are managed officially by the armed forces and the Seychelles Police Force. The Seychelles Police Department has the mandate to uphold

law and order. They are public servants with the responsibility to maintain order, control crimes, and enforce the law.

Women are active members of both forces, and over the years, training and development opportunities have provided a chance for both women and men to handle conflict situations. Human capital investment is geared either directly or indirectly towards conflict management and prevention, which incorporates anger management workshops, order management, self-defense, restraining techniques, and training to Human rights educators. Seychelles membership in continental, sub-regional, and global integrations such as the United Nations Convention against corruption, and the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime for instance have facilitated this training.

Since the year 2012 to 2019, the number of women from the police force who have participated in training especially in those related to women related training has been as illustrated in the table below.

Table 3: Gender-related training for enforcement officers

YEAR	COURSES	SEX
2012	Gender	1 Female
2013	Response in Violence Against Women and Children	1 Female
2013	Regional Workshop on development of effective law enforcement, violence against women and children	1 Male 4 Females
	6 th EAPCCO Gender Sub Committee meeting	1 Female
2014	EAPCCO Gender Sub-Committee Meeting	1 Female
	All-female SARPCCO TOT course	1 Female
	SARPCCO Command leadership course for emerging women police officers	2 Females
2018	SARPCCO AGM -Gender	2 Female
	Training for Security organs on GBV/Human Trafficking	1 Female
	Gender Dimensions of Criminal Justice Response to Terrorism	1 Female
	Training for Security organs on GBV/Human Trafficking	1 Female
	Gender Based Violence Course-by DIMO	5 Females
	Domestic Violence Course	5 Females
	Sexual & Gender Based Violence Course	1 Female 1 Male
2019	Regional Workshop for the validation of SADC Comprehensive Gender Based Violence Study	1 Female
	Sexual & Gender Based Violence	1 Female
	EAPCCO Gender Training Workshop	1 Female 3 Males
	Economic Costs of Violence Against Women and girls	1 Female
	GBV Leadership Course	4 Females
	Gender Awareness Training for EASF Gender Focal Points/Officers	1 Female

Article 11: Protection of women in armed conflict

11.1 Seychellois personnel have been dispatched to various zones either to preserve national sovereignty or to assist allies. The country has adopted the four Acts of the 1949 Geneva Protocol which protects the Human rights of both men and women who are combatants on land and at sea. The protocol entered into force on the 8th of May 1985 and acceded to on the 8th of November that same year.

Similarly, Seychelles has adopted the Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, on the 4th of April 1992.

11.2 A child as specified under the country's Children Act (1982) refers to a male or female young person under the age of 18 years old. A child is prohibited to participate in national or global armed conflict, as the country is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the 23rd of January 2001 which came into force on the 10th of August 2010.

Article 12: Right to Education and Training

12.1 The Constitution of Seychelles maintains that the democratic system on which its national pedagogy is built ensures the provision of 'education for all'. Although the country's education system has undergone five major reforms during the past 40 years, the philosophy and principles on which the schooling system was based have not changed. It is a combination of both formal and non-formal education frameworks, which consists of these 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 right of every individual, boys, and girls, to take part in the education programme (Article 33 of the Constitution) has in effect made compulsory eleven academic years of schooling for every child from primary 1 (age 6 after pre-school) to secondary 5 (age 16). The Constitution also preserves the right of parents to choose whether they would send their child to a private or public educational institution.

The following is stipulated clearly in the Ministry of Education and Human resource development's vision:

'To empower our children and young people to learn to perceive, understand and act in a manner that promotes peace, justice, harmonious co-existence and respect for diversity'

Its mission:

'To build a coherent and comprehensive system of quality education and training, reflecting shared universal and national values which promote the integrated development of the person and empower him/her to participate fully in social and economic development'

Educational inclusion is the first strategic policy goal of the Ministry of Education's Inclusive Education policy of 2015. The inclusion policy serves also as a platform to encourage the full implementation and framework of inclusive laws and regulations. Also, there are other legal and international conventions, guidelines, and policies to ensure that the country adheres to the expected requirements:

- The Seychellois Charter of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms in the Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles (1994)
- The Education Act (2004), specifically section 77 that is specific to curriculum and assessment. The Act outlines regulations relating to the general administration of public and private educational institutions, rights, and responsibilities of students, parents, and teachers.
- The Children Act (1982, last amended in 1999), which aims to protect the rights of all children to an acceptable quality of life and to ensure their protection against harm
- The Seychelles Qualifications Act (2005) established the Seychelles Qualifications Authority as the standard-setting body for education and training.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, accession in 1990), which provides for children's entitlement to a basic quality of life, including education, and protection from harm.
- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999, ratified 1992).
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979, accession in 1992).
- International covenant of social, economic, and cultural rights (1976, accession in 1992).
- International convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination (1965, accession in 1978).
- Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (2007, ratified in 2009).

The education curriculum also facilitates the integration of the country’s culture into the generation of students. Cultural principles which ought to be instilled in every Seychellois include that of finding ways to peacefully resolve conflict and promote gender equality.

The enrolment of both boys and girls at all levels in the schools are almost the same at the compulsory entry age. Figure 1 below contrasts the enrolment of both gender in Primary 1 (age 6).

Figure 1: School Enrolment of Primary pupils according to gender



source: statistics from the Education Management Information System (EMIS).

Sexual harassment in schools

The school aims to ensure the protection of young girls from sexual violence and all forms of abuse aligned with the requirements from Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Local laws and guidelines include the schools’ policy and the Children Act (1982), the early risk detention framework, public service order, and the student’s code of conduct all of which are embedded in the school’s curriculum through Personal Social Education which helps girls and boys identify the various types of abuses as well as educating them on the legal structures in place to report, cope and provide assistance in the aftermath. Each school also has a pastoral care system with a counsellor conducting class sessions on child abuse to the students.

Reporting mechanism for sexual assault

The Ministry of Education already has a structure in place for inter-agency intervention in cases of alleged child abuse. The protocol in place is centered on the Working Together Document for Child Protection. This protocol considers the focal person of other organisations which include the Department of Social Affairs, the Health Department, and the National Council for Children.

The line of reporting can either go through the school counselors and or the Headteacher to Social Affairs. In cases where the parents are not the alleged perpetrator, the counsellor would inform the parents of the child and brief them on the reporting avenues. The counsellor would also need to communicate with the Department of Social Affairs and create a formal report to the Department of Education on the details of the assault communicated to the school counselor by the student. In cases when necessary the counselor may also provide a police statement.

The focal person for the organisations meets every fortnightly to discuss the cases and the way forward.

Teenage Pregnancy Policy

The Education Department has ensured that a Teenage Pregnancy Policy is in existence in cases where underaged girls fall pregnant, allowing them the chance to complete their schooling. Depending on the stage of their pregnancy, their health, and the class level amongst other things, arrangements are made for the student to complete her academic year which could include homeschooling and the sitting of exams at alternative venues.

- 12.2 Tertiary education is the education sector that develops young men and women in their career professions. The Tertiary Education Act (2012) outlines the entitlement of students and the professional institution regulations and entry criteria which is only based on the academic performance of students. These include; the right of students to have access to the appropriate equipment and facilities for their learning as well as social activities, the right to participate in the management of the tertiary education institutions to name a few.

The University of Seychelles is the first and only University level institution in the country, offering courses in mainly humanities and science subjects. Other professional centres in the country are listed below:

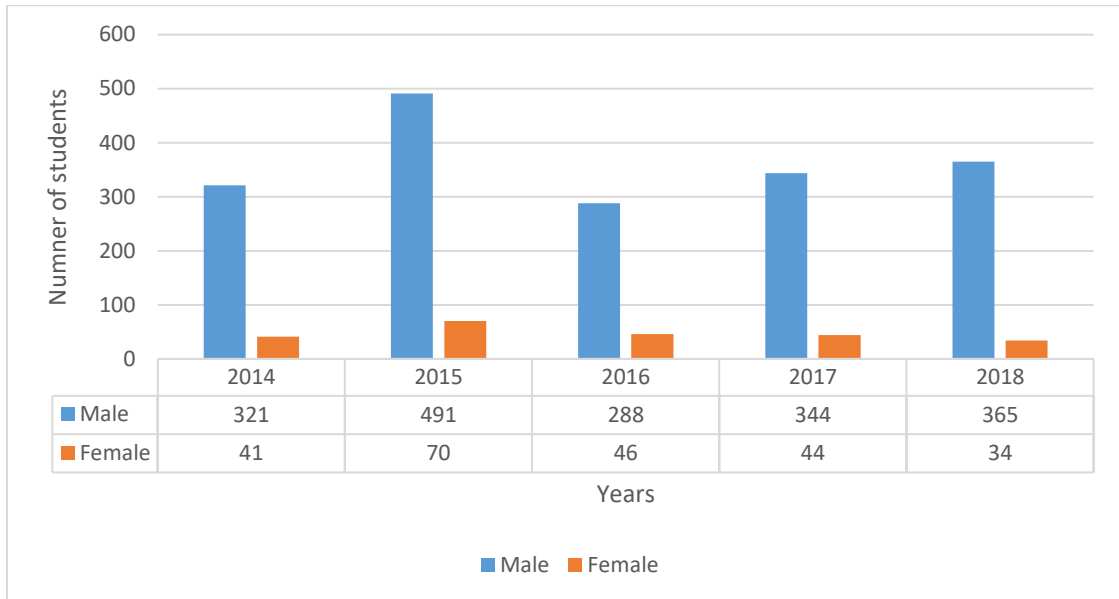
1. Seychelles Tourism Academy (STA)
2. Seychelles Business Studies Academy (SBSA)
3. Seychelles Maritime Academy (SMA)
4. Adult Learning and Distance Education Centre (ALDEC)³
5. Seychelles Institute of Technology (SIT)
6. Seychelles Institute of Agricultural and Horticulture (SIAH)
7. National Institute for Health and Social Studies (NIHSS)
8. The Guy Morel Institute (TGMI)
9. Seychelles Police Academy (SPA)
10. Seychelles Institute of Art and Design (SIAD)

Students enrolled in each of these institutions obtains upon the completion of their course certificates, advance certificates, diplomas and advanced diplomas. The enrolment for higher education i.e. university and non-university institutions are higher for girls than for boys. This has been the increasing trend since 2005 where there were 271 boys and 336 girls in tertiary education and for the year 2018, 789 boys and 1343 girls were enrolled. The statistics support the fact that girls are more likely to continue their education despite common conceptions.

Seychelles Institute for Technology (SIT) offers vocational and technical courses including some STEM subjects such as math, physics, Information Communication Technology (ICT) and chemistry. Some of the courses on offer include certificates, advanced certificates, and national diplomas such as certificate in Apprenticeship Motor Vehicle, certificate apprenticeship in electrical installation, advanced certificate in Mechanical Engineering, National diploma in Information system engineering. The rate of enrolment between male and female is illustrated below.

³ ALDEC's name change to SIDOL. The Tertiary act was created before the change in name and has not yet been amended.

Figure 2: Student enrolment at the Seychelles Institute of Technology



Source: Education Management information System (Ministry of Education)

Information Communication Technology in education and training policy for 2014-2019 by the Ministry of Education aims to shape the education initiatives in Information Communication over the years and has gender equality in its set of principles.

Gender school performance

Girls outperform boys at school at both primary and secondary levels. The 2016 Primary 6 National Examinations results continue to show the trend of girls outperforming boys in all six subjects with a difference in mean mark ranging from 8% in Mathematics to 13% and 14% in English and French respectively. Past research from the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) has shown that while girls scored significantly better than boys in a number of subjects within the Southern and Eastern African countries, Seychelles was the only country where girls scored significantly higher than boys in mathematics.

Article 13: Economic and Social welfare

13.1 The Right to work is a fundamental constitutional right which is protected under Article 35:

“The State recognizes the right of every citizen to work and to just and favorable conditions of work and with a view to ensuring the effective exercise of these rights the State undertakes-

- (a) to take necessary measures to achieve and maintain a high and stable level of employment, as is practicable, with a view to attaining full employment.”

It is required by the state to also make due efforts to make statutory provisions to ensure that the working conditions are safe, and healthy whilst also providing the worker with sufficient rest, leisure time, paid holidays and a remuneration package which provides safety and decent conditions of living. This is applicable to all workers, they are expected to have a fair and equal wage for work of equal value without discrimination on any basis and stable employment.

The minimum working age as set out in the Employment Act 1995 defines a ‘worker’ as a person at or above the age of 15 years old in employment in Seychelles or in service of an agency of the Government or diplomatic mission of Seychelles abroad and a trainee.

Moreover, the Constitution supports conducive negotiations between workers and their employers or organizations through collective agreements and machinery for the purpose of reconciliation and voluntary arbitrations to settle labour disputes.

The Ministry of Employment, Immigration and Civil Status provides legal framework for equal opportunity and fairness within the workplace.

13.2 **Elimination of discrimination in the workplace**

Workers are protected by the Employment Act (1995) in all areas pertaining to work which includes: regulation of wages and conditions of employment, protection of employment, and discipline. The Act condemns any action done by the employer or structural failures which discriminate against workers.

The Employment Act of 1995 is clear on the consequences where discrimination has occurred. Where the employer makes any employment decision such as termination of contract, employment, disciplinary measure based on the worker’s age, **gender**, race, colour, nationality, language, religion, disability, HIV status, sexual orientation, politics, trade union association or any other association a complaint is made to the Chief Executive of the organization. Once this is done, the Chief Executive shall do an inquiry into the claims and communicate to the worker and the employer on outcomes and the necessary redress to the grievance.

The Employment Act (1995) clearly states ‘An employer shall not commit any act of harassment against a worker’ in section 46B.

Supporting women entrepreneurs

The Enterprise Seychelles Agency (ESA) is a Government organization with its mission to provide the foundations for the enhancement of the entrepreneurs, to assist the enterprise in the early steps of the business lifecycle and to support the expansion and growth of the Seychellois Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

ESA implement policies and strategies of government relating to micro, small and medium enterprise (MSMEs) and to provide them with the necessary services and support. They also provide loans to entrepreneurs- Seed Capital grant- scheme provide seed Capital of up to SR50,000 to fund startups and to assist them in their early stages of development. The scheme applies to both men and women and is aimed at enhancing the development of more competitive and resilient businesses.

Protection of working mothers

The Employment Act (1995) also makes provisions for working mothers as the employment (conditions of employment of Domestic Workers) Regulations, 2019 Part IV - Maternity and Childhood Protection provides for S13. (1)

“A female domestic worker under a contract of continuous employment or, subject to sub regulation (3), under a contract for a fixed term or a part-time female domestic worker is entitled 16 weeks' paid maternity leave of which not less than 12 weeks shall be taken after the date of confinement, and to 4 weeks' unpaid maternity leave to be taken either before or after paid maternity leave.”

To reinforce the rights of the working mother as stipulated under Article 30 in the constitution; the Social protection Act of 1987 guides the employment regulations to ensure that all expectant and working mothers have the right to compulsory paid maternity leave. By law employers who are not respecting the regulation is guilty of an offense.

Article 14 under the Maternity Protection in the Employment Act (1995) ensures that a female worker, from the time she is 6 months pregnant and up to 3 months after her confinement shall not be employed on overtime work or at night between the hours of 10 pm and 5 am.

In the same manner to support mothers in mid 2018 paternity leave doubled from 5 days to 10 days.

Article 14: Health and Reproductive Rights

14.1 Women's health and reproductive right is protected under Article 29 of the Constitution where every citizen is expected to maintain an enjoyable physical and standard mental health which would increase the wellbeing and allow individuals to enjoy a healthy standard of living.

Article 29 guarantees that the state would:

- (b) " take steps to provide for free primary health care in state institutions
- (c) take appropriate measures to prevent, treat, and control epidemic, endemic and other diseases
- (d) to take steps to reduce infant mortality and promote the healthy development of the child
- (e) to promote individual responsibility in health matters
- (f) to allow, subject to such supervision and conditions as are necessary in a democratic society, for the establishment of private medical services"

The government is the main provider in primary health care, and it is expected that all health care service providers both private and public should ensure that residents can liberally make decisions on matters concerning their sexuality, reproductive health and family planning.

In total, the health system structures includes the main hospital in Victoria, 3 cottage hospitals, 1 rehabilitation unit, the psychiatric hospital, the youth health centre and 16 district health centres spread around the three main islands, Mahe, Praslin and La Digue. This is to ensure that healthcare provision is decentralized and localized to facilitate access. All centres provide medical consultation, Family Planning, Maternal Planning, Antenatal Care, Oral Health, Dressing, Health Screening, and Physiotherapy.

Family planning programmes is an important contributor to women's rights and it is a gainful way to suppress unplanned and unwanted pregnancies. Family planning clinics provide education, and free hormonal pills and injectibles, IUCD, condoms and other barrier mechanisms to prevent pregnancy. This has a direct impact on the transmission of STIs and it indirectly eradicate and destitution accompanied by a large family. Private family clinics, pharmacies also offer family planning services and the distribution of contraceptive items.

14.2 Antenatal and Post-natal Care

In Seychelles, healthcare is free at the point of use for all citizens. Primary health care services include primary medical services, family planning, childhood immunisation and developmental assessment, antenatal and post-natal care, school health and health promotion.

The Ministry of Health's guidelines for provision of contraception/reproductive health services in the family planning manual does not provide young people access to contraception without parental consent. Very few girls under 18 years old would seek their parent's permission to start on contraception, as most often they do not want their parents to know that they are sexually active. This makes it a grey area for doctors where they are often unsure about their legal rights and responsibilities in relation to providing reproductive health services to patients less than 18 years old. As a result, the above situation results in poor management of reproductive health risks amongst sexually active young people.

Trained professionals at the Youth Health centre and the school health nurses assist students who need help or display risky sexual behaviour and also conduct counselling sessions. The school counsellors also involve parents and teachers to discuss particular student's issues. The concept of Health promoting school had been promulgated since 2002 and has increased momentum with further support through peer counselling and education programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, and the Red Cross Society of Seychelles whilst promoting sexual and reproductive health rights.

14.3 Termination of Pregnancies

The Termination of pregnancy Act of 1994 guides this subject. This act outlines three legal reasons which may justify the termination of pregnancy.

- (i) Pregnancy as the result of rape, incest or defilement
- (ii) If the pregnant woman is unfit to have the care of a child because of mental retardation or deficiency

In addition to the removal of the fetus, the woman undergoes a session of counselling both prior and after the procedure. In cases where the person undergoing abortion is under the age of 18, parental consent is required. Statistics show an increase in the number of women who attempt abortion and there are many reports of illegal abortion and the majority of cases are reported mostly when complications occur.

Article 15: Right to Food Security

- 15.1 The Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture is the national and governmental branch, which ensure that the population has sufficient supply of locally produced food. This is stated clearly in the Ministry's vision statement below:

'A resilient and sustainable fisheries and agriculture sector that enhances food and nutrition security, contributes to economic growth and respects the natural environment.'

The Ministry's vision encompasses the aim to effectively manage the resources of Seychelles. These are listed below:

- *Expand the domestic food supply base to improve the local contribution to the country's food security status.*
- *Bring about a food basket with a higher nutritional value.*
- *Enable Seychelles to optimise on the use of its natural resources with opportunities to create jobs across the agriculture and food value chain.*

These objectives are sustained under the **National Food and Nutrition Security Policy**, which was created in 2013. Amid the vulnerabilities of a small island state, food security is an essential and fragile resource which needs national attention. The frailty of the ecosystem, and the country's imbalanced reliance on importation increases the country's susceptibility to exogenous financial and economic shocks; the lack of resources and growing population are all factors which emphasize the necessity to have and implement such policy to ensure food security.

The **National Food and Nutrition Security Policy** has the overarching aim to ensure that local food security is met by using an inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach, infiltrating economic, technical, and the management of the sustainable attainment of food and nutrition security in the country in both the agriculture and fisheries sector.

In addition to the overall food security, the Ministry has imposed policies, which are specific to particular industries such as the Fisheries comprehensive plan and the Seychelles fisheries sector, and Policy and strategy for the year 2019. The fishing sector faces numerous challenges such as limited capacity control, the lack of operational resource management, abuse of concessions and subsidies, availability and reliability for supply and the lack of employment. Therefore, the **Fisheries comprehensive plan** intended to consider a wider collaborative approach to sustainable the fishing with the involvement of the private sector and all the stakeholders to make the required contribution.

The **Seychelles Fisheries sector Policy and strategy for 2019** was placed with the aim to safeguard article 38 of the constitution, which cites the following:

Article 38. “The right of every person to live in and enjoy a clean, healthy, and ecologically balanced environment”

Consequently, the government has taken upon itself to ensure that sustainable fisheries which supports this, and its overall policy is as follows:

The overall goal of the policy:

“To provide effective, efficient, transparent and accountable service delivery through a participatory approach to ensure long-term sustainable fisheries and aquaculture management and conservation so that the sector continues to play a key role in the sustainable development of the country and the socio-economic well-being of the Seychellois nation.”

- 15.2 Apart from policies, there are two organisations which falls under the Ministry, which have specific mandates to enhance the country’s fishing and agricultural industry sustainably. The Seychelles Agricultural Agency and the Seychelles Fishing Authority which are parastatals which engages in research the development of sustainable fisheries whilst the Seychelles Agricultural Agency (SAA) established in 2009 by an Act of parliament to enhance the national food and nutrition security and to provide goods and services to the food producing entrepreneurs.

Clean food and water supply

Access to clean water and consistent energy supply is being provided by the Public Utilities Corporation (PUC) ascertain under the Public Utilities Corporation Act of 1986. The Act clearly states the function of the corporation which is to supply electricity, the supply of water, ensure the maintenance of proper sewerage systems. PUC is wholly owned by the government to ensure that the electricity bill and water supply is affordable to every Seychellois citizens as water and electricity has today become basic commodities for everyday living.

As the United Nations sustainable goal six stipulates, that the aim is to have clean water and sanitation which is accessible to the population, by being government owned then this ensure that accessibility is guaranteed.

Article 16: Right to Adequate Housing

- 16.1 Article 34 of the Constitution "... recognises the right of every citizen to adequate and decent shelter conducive to health and well-being and undertakes either directly or through or with the co-operation of public or private organizations to facilitate the effective realization of this right."

The state holds a number of land assets, and the Ministry of Land Use and Housing (MLUH) manages these assets on behalf of the government. The Ministry engages in the selling of land to the population at a ~~and naturally, because of the subsidized rate sale.~~ Through a land point system policy state land are provided to the population who cannot afford to buy on the private market but are able to undertake their own construction through the assistance of the bank. ~~the public is naturally drawn towards the more inexpensive supply of land.~~ However, the social housing policy target population who can neither buy the land nor construct their own houses. The policies have changed considerably in the last 10 years. The Ministry for Habitat, Infrastructure, and Land Transport (MLUH) has geared its Housing Policies from being the major supplier, to more of a facilitator.

The Ministry with this objective, cannot remain stagnant, but it fluctuates simultaneously with the current housing/economic conditions of the country. The objectives is presented here:

Mission:

"Our mission is to facilitate the national socio economic development through sustainable and efficient use of our land resources for habitat, economic, social and infrastructure needs through effective policy framework, regulations and provision of ancillary technical services to our clientele."

The core functions of the Ministry of Land Use and Housing are:

- Management of all state land including Acquisitions, Sales and Leases;
- Implementation of Land Bank Project as per Capital Budget allocations;
- Administration of Immovable Property (Transfer Restriction) Act and the responsible for the processing of all applications for purchase or lease of an Interest in Immovable property including corporate shares dealings;
- Responsible for land policy and land related legislation and timely review thereof;

- All survey related Infrastructure including cadastral surveys and registration to tiles;
- Developing the Geographic Information System (GIS) Centre of the Ministry and ensuring the efficient use of acquired digital data throughout Government with the set objective of improving performance and decision-making in Government;
- Preparation of land Use Plans and Urban development guidelines;
- Responsible for housing and provision of decent and affordable shelter as per requirements of the Seychelles Constitution and Government housing policy;
- Management of the land and Housing Application Database.

Housing Department shall be involved in reviewing housing policy in line with current philosophy. It is to be noted that there are no distinction in obtaining land between men and women, however, there are a number of option for housing schemes available within the Ministry to cater for various needs and means.

Presently, there are about two-thirds of government assisted housing owned by women as can be seen below.

Table 4: Proportion of men and women owners in government assisted housing

	Total	Percentage
Men	2522	35%
Women	4636	65%

Social Housing

This is the provision of social houses built by the government which is allocated based on the needs of the individual and recommendations from their local district. The allocation is based on a number of factors such as whether the person is a first time buyer and therefore does not have any land or houses in their possession; has been in employment for at least one year, the person’s commitment to getting a house that is the regular payment to their ‘home-savings scheme’.

Condominium housing

This housing policy targets another group of people on the other end to the social housing. They are higher end apartments built for professionals who have the means and perhaps not necessarily the land to build their dwelling. In similar ways, the applicant must be able to fully fund the project with a number of conditions which would facilitate their accessibility earning a salary over 20,000 Seychelles Rupees which is equivalent to 1,117 USD.

Part-rental housing scheme

This scheme assists individuals who are renting a home at the same time waiting for social housing. Since the private sector is driven by demand and supply, the demand for housing increases the rent and therefore many are not able to afford housing. This service helps in alleviating the cost of rental payments to the tenant based on factors, which may affect the tenant.

Temporary housing policy

The policy provides a framework for temporary housing allocation for individuals who have gone through a rather unfortunate event and therefore require immediate access to housing. These houses are only available for a minimum amount of time until the tenants are able to get back on their feet.

Self-finance allocation policy

This housing policy is in a way meeting the middle demands by ensuring that some individuals who want a house but who cannot afford condominiums and are not in dire means of obtaining a home can obtain a home.

Article 17: Right to positive cultural context

- 17.1 In the Seychelles Constitution, the right of every individual to enjoy a positive cultural environment is in accordance to living out life values.

Article 39. 'The State recognizes the right of every person to take part in cultural life and to profess, promote, enjoy and protect cultural life and the cultural and customary values of the Seychellois people'

This is done through the protection of public health, the prevention of crime, and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. It is the responsibility of the state to protect and ensure the preservation of the cultural heritage as well as the values of the Seychellois people.

It was in 1977, that for the first time in the Republic of Seychelles' history, culture was integrated in a Government Ministry or Department. Two years after, the systematic collection of oral traditions & history started with a small group of youth based at La Bastille.

The role of the Research Unit in the culture Department is to sensitize and to raise cultural awareness particularly through the use of the media. Presently, two major and consistent activities organized to promote our culture are the creole festival and the Carnival International de Victoria, which has been incorporated into the creole festival which is celebrated in October. One of the greatest aspects of the Carnival is that it not only provides entertainment to many people around the world but also offers travelers the opportunity to learn about the true culture of the Seychelles.

Article 18: Right to have a Healthy and Sustainable environment

- 18.1 Article 38 of the Constitution provides everyone the Right to live in a safe environment. It is stated that:

“The State recognises the right of every person to live in and enjoy a clean, healthy and ecologically balanced environment and with a view to ensuring the effective realisation of this right the State undertakes -

- (a) to take measures to promote the protection, preservation and improvement of the environment
- (b) to ensure a sustainable socio-economic development of Seychelles by a judicious use and management of the resources of Seychelles;
- (c) to promote public awareness of the need to protect, preserve and improve the environment.”

The Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change is responsible to ensure the constitutional right of every person to live in and enjoy a clean, healthy environment, the provision of a reliable, affordable and safe water and energy supply and build resilience against climate change and disasters.

The Ministry undertakes to:

- take measures to promote the protection, preservation and improvement of the environment,
- contribute towards the sustainable socio-economic development of Seychelles through a judicious use and management of the resources of Seychelles,
- promote public awareness and community participation in the protection, preservation and improvement of the environment,
- Invest in disaster mitigation and preparedness and built resilience against climate change,
- ensure the supply of safe potable water to all,
- ensure the supply of affordable energy to all, promote energy efficiency and democratize access to renewable energy.

The Ministry has three Directors General two of which are women: one for Waste, Enforcement and Permit Division and one for Biodiversity, Conservation and Management Division.

The Wildlife Club Seychelles (WCS) is a non-governmental organisation established in 1994 to engage children and youth in conservation actions. WCS currently has clubs in almost all schools in Seychelles and some 600+ members. WCS work in close collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, schools, other environmental NGOs and other groups from churches, scouts and districts. WCS are based at the University of Seychelles Centre for Environmental Education where they offer Environmental Education Programmes to children, youth, university of Seychelles students and the community.

Activities undertaken by the club include field trips to learn more about wildlife and ecosystems, adopting habitats, helping to green schools, doing clean ups, planting trees and heritage gardens, removing invasive creepers, engaging community members through surveys etc. WCS also undertakes projects such as Wetland conservation education project, raise your voice, conservation education project, science meets art...

WCS is always seeking new volunteers/ WCS welcome volunteers of varying ages, skill levels and qualifications who are passionate about conservation and willing to assist with the various project.

The Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change is responsible for the development and the implementation of all waste management policy, legal and regulatory framework. The waste enforcement and permit division of the Environment Department is responsible for developing all policies regarding waste collection, characterization, treatment and disposal. The Seychelles National waste policy 2018-2023 was approved in December 2018 and the overall goal is to ensure that 'waste is managed in a sustainable manner, following the set guiding principles and approaches, in order to protect the integrity of the environment and improve the quality of life in Seychelles.

Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change is committed to improving the existing waste management system, by implementing waste reduction and recovery strategies, strengthening its institutional and legal framework, upgrading waste operations in line with International practices.

All disposal and transportation procedures pertaining to waste management fall under the Basel Convention. The Basel and Stockholm Convention are together managed in a way that chemicals and their derivatives are regulated for the importation, transportation, usage and final disposal purposes. Hence, there are a number of procedures in place which regulates these chemicals and waste. For instance forms are to be completed and permits issued in order for a person to export waste oil, car batteries, scrap metals, pet bottles, aluminum can from the country. Similarly a form needs to be completed and permit issued in order for a person to dispose of any hazardous waste including asbestos, waste oil, expired medication and chemicals to the landfill.

The Landscape and Waste Management Agency (LWMA) is the Agency responsible for the cleaning and beautification of the country. They also administer waste management contracts for waste collection and landfill management. LWMA monitors and manages the different contractors for waste collection, landfill management, beach and road cleaning in the country.

Currently the country produces about 5000 tons of waste per month, a third of which comes directly from residential bin sites and retail shops.

Article 19: The Right to Sustainable Development

19.1 Women actively engage themselves in the sustainable development of the country.

Women's progress in leadership positions have been progressive over the years. Presently, the Designated Minister, the Chief Justice, the Governor of the Central Bank are all women.

There are generally more women employed in the judiciary sector. Of the 136 personnel at the various parts of the courts in 2017, such as the Registrar, the Tribunals (Employment and Family), including the Supreme and Magistrates Courts, 104 were women. As indicated above, the Chief Justice is a woman. As of July 2019, of the 27 district administrators, 20 are women, and in addition to the President and the Vice President, there are 10 ministers in the Cabinet of Ministers: 5 women (one of whom is the Designated Minister) and 5 men which equates to 50%. This is a considerable increase from 2017 when female ministers amounted to 31%.

Women make up 88% of head teachers in primary schools and 80% of secondary school head teachers. There are 98% female managers in state schools at primary level, compared to 64% at the secondary level. Seventy-two percent of head teachers hold Master's degree in educational management.

Access to resources

Article 24 of the constitution states:

"Every person has a right to property and for the purpose of this article this right includes the right to acquire, own peacefully enjoy and dispose of property either individually or in association with others."

Accessibility to resources is important for the economic and social empowerment of women. Land for commercial use is not restricted from women on the contrary resources acquisition including land and capital is made available by state institutions.

Banks in Seychelles offer access to finance for both men and women for both personal and commercial usage without any discrimination of either sexes. One of such banks, the Development Bank of Seychelles offer various investment possibilities in various economic sectors such as the blue economy, Agricultural funds, fisheries development funds, Small and medium enterprise Scheme. It is important to note that these policies are specifically directed towards Seychellois entrepreneurs some of which women are the main beneficiaries. ESA (see Article 13) is a government organization which also provide loans to entrepreneurs, recorded

and seed Capital grant from 2019 shows that the total number of women who applied for the scheme were 53.88% and total male applicants were 36.26%.

Article 20: Widow's Rights

- 20.1 Women who have lost their husbands are often taken care of by their children if they are unable to cater for themselves or in other cases they can obtain assistance from the government through either the pension scheme, or the services on offer at the Agency for Social Protection.
- 20.2 The right of the woman to remarry is dealt with in the Status of Married Women Act 1948, Section 29 states "A woman may remarry immediately after the dissolution of a previous marriage".

The Civil Status Act 2015 also provides for the qualification and conditions necessary for contracting marriage, section 42. "No second marriage can be contracted before the dissolution of the first marriage". Dissolution also applies in cases where the spouse has died and therefore the law makes provision for the woman to marry again.

Article 21: Right to Inheritance

- 21.1 Succession rights are protected under the Civil Code of Seychelles, under article 723, which outlines what would happen to the inheritance of a person in cases of death. It is the laws of the Civil Code which regulates that laws of succession amongst the legitimate heirs, natural children and the surviving spouse of the deceased. Hence women who have been married and their husbands have their inheritance passed unto them unless it has been opposed by the deceased. This applies to both moveable and immovable properties and it is not dependent on the gender of the child as either child have equal rights to access inheritance due to them.

This is clearly stated in article 745 of the Civil Code of the country:

Article 745. "Children or their descendants succeed to their father and mother, grandfathers and grandmothers or other ascendants without distinction of sex or primogeniture, even if they are born of different marriages."

- 21.2 The Civil Code also protects to some extent the inheritance rights of children conceived outside marriage regardless of sex and they are entitled to as pertaining to article 760 one half of the portion of inheritance which belongs to a legitimate child who has been conceived within marriage. Provisions are also made pertaining to successions devolving upon ascendants. In the case of the passing away of a person who has no legal spouse, nor natural children. It is expected that the inheritance should be distributed upwards equally shared by the paternal

and maternal lineages. It is important to note that the State has no right to claim any property or goods from a deceased unless there are clearly no inheritance to the property in such case the assets may be transferred to the State.

Article 22: Special Protection of Elderly women

In order to protect the rights of the elderly men and women in Seychelles the government has in place the National Council for the Elderly (NCE) with the aim to promote the management of the care of the elderly and for other matters, which concerns them.

The main functions of the Council and its board is to work towards improving the quality of life of the elderly individuals in our society.

Article 23: Special Protection of Women with Disabilities

- 23.1 Disabled men and women in Seychelles have the same benefits and rights as other citizens in the country. The government ensures that there is an equal access to free health care, social protection and the schooling in and amongst the disabled group in our population. These rights are outlined in Article 36 of the Constitution as

‘to make provisions to improve the quality of life of and the welfare and maintenance of the aged and disabled.’

‘to promote programmes specifically aimed at achieving the greatest possible development of the disabled’

Legislation introducing a National Council for the Disabled came into force in 1994. In 2009, Seychelles ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities. Thereafter, strategic plans covering the period 2011-2016 and 2018-2022 implements the priority areas in concern.

The Exceptional School of Seychelles was created in mid-1970s to cater for the educational needs of the disabled in our society. The Vocational Training Center is also in place to prepare the disabled to enter the world of work.

There has been a major revolution in the lives and changes in the protection of the disabled citizens including women. In 1994, the Disabled Person’s Act was created with the aim to serve in the best interest of the disabled group in the society.

National council for the Disabled:

“The main function of the council includes:

- The co-ordination of activities of both the public and private sector and persons engaged in the welfare of the disabled individuals.
- In partnership with other organisations to offer care to the disabled group of the population.
- To help in the provision of employment to the disabled group of the population.
- To work with other organisations in the furtherance of the welfare of the organization.
- To assist private organisations in generating activities which would aid in generating funds for the welfare of the disabled individuals
- Partake in the activities of other institutions, which are desirable, and promotes the welfare of the disabled group of the society.
- Partake in activities, which would help in the furtherance of the activities of the council.

In order to help in the activities of the council the council may receive the following:

- Grants or donations
- Raise funds in Seychelles or elsewhere”

Article 24: Special Protection of Women in Distress

24.1 The Seychelles government’s current vision is to enhance the quality of life of every Seychellois Family. The creation of the Ministry of Family Affairs in 2018 serves as an umbrella to attain specifically that purpose. Subdivided into three departments the Social Affairs, the Family Affairs department as well as the Poverty Alleviation department all work harmoniously to achieve the aforementioned vision.

The Seychellois family composition is mainly female headed with a large proportion being single mothers.

Table 5: Percentage of Males and Females head of households in the most three recent national surveys

Sex	Census 2010	LFS 2011	HBS 2013
Male	49%	42%	42%
Female	51%	58%	58%

Source: Household Budget Survey 2013

Agency for Social Protection

Agency for Social Protection is a parastatal agency, it is an income- support service agency to those most in need in the country in the hopes to help them also engage in the participation of the society. It serves a diverse group of customers including families, people in employment, unemployed people, people with disabilities, carers, and the elderly upon reaching the retirement age.

The Agency provides statutory benefits as per entitlements under the Social Security Act of 1987, undertaken through the registration, processing, verification and payment of Benefits, notably: Sickness Benefit; Maternity Benefit; Injury Benefit; Invalidity Benefit; Disability Benefit; Survivor Benefit; Funeral Benefit; Retirement Benefit; Dependent Benefit; Orphan and Abandoned Child Benefits, and Level of Subsistence. Women as well as men in need of the assistance would obtain upon assessment of eligibility an amount of Rs.3945 maximum for any payment that was upon the amendment act of 2017 to the Social Security Act of 1987.

The agency also provides a list of other means tested and universal assistance:

- Post-secondary bursary: Universal assistance given to all post-secondary students in Seychelles.
- SPTC travel concessions: subsidized bus fare for primary and secondary students including the elderly and disabled.
- Specialized child treatment: funding for overseas treatment of a minor
- Dedicated funds: the provision of snacks, lunch, uniform and other miscellaneous items to a child in school who needs the assistance
- Skills acquisition programme: cash allowance to the youth who are on the programme.
- Daycare: assist in child minding costs for a child up to 4 years old
- Rental tenant schemes: Families who are on Property management schemes are assisted with half rental payments

Other non-governmental agencies, which aids to promote, and support vulnerable women especially those who have fallen pregnant and are considering abortion. The 'Les li Viv' organization, which still stands strong on valuing the human life especially to young and often single mothers who need assistance in taking care of the child. The organization assist the young mothers ~~tries their best to save the babies and help the mothers~~ to find new purpose and direction in their lives, through advice and counseling, and provide them with life and work skills.

24.2 The prison population in Seychelles has grown tremendously over the years including the female population. Previously the female population were comprised of one or two offenders but as of October 2013, there were 37 female inmates whose offences were linked to drug possession and importation. Currently, the female prison population stands at 13. In the recent past, we have seen a surge of murders committed by women as a result of domestic violence and presently there is one woman who is convicted for the murder of her partner.

Government support to inmates is in the form of health and rehabilitation programmes from different agencies such as the Ministry of Health, Social Affairs Department (social workers and probation officers). Further, NGOs and Faith Based Organisations provide counselling and mentorship programmes to the inmates. In the present prison environment facilities promoting breastfeeding is in place. The female unit has a 'Mother-Baby unit' that is specialised to accommodate incarcerated nursing mothers with a child under 18 months old. Expectant incarcerated mothers are also provided with pre-natal care and a children's playground has been introduced for children visiting their parents especially on weekends so not to disrupt the child's schooling.

Article 25: Remedies

25.1 The Seychelles Penal Code (1995) has been effective in holding perpetrators accountable and it has facilitated prosecution to remedy injustices directly related to women. The judiciary branch of the government has the mandate to exercise judgment on cases brought by individual or parties through the interpretation of the country's laws and the Constitution. The Seychelles judicial courts comprises of the following:

- The Supreme Court
- The Court of Appeal
- Other subordinate courts or tribunals as under Article 137

The three types of courts function under their own jurisdictions as entailed in the Constitution of Seychelles.

The Family Tribunal provides an efficient and caring service that brings quick relief to the parties in dysfunctional families by having an integrated and coordinating strategy for the resolution of disputes within those families. The court has some advantages over the other courts as it resolves cases more speedily with less formal proceedings which seeks to the root of issues and it is more accessible being more user-friendly. The Family Tribunal hears and determines matters relating to access to children, custody of children, care of minor children, maintenance for both children and parents, paternity, family violence (following the

enactment of the Family Violence (Protection of Victims) Act 2000) and non-removal of children from the Seychelles.

- 25.2 The Family Violence (Protection of victims) Act 2000, constitutes violence as any “ conduct, whether actual or threatened, by a person towards, or towards the property of, a member of the person’s family that causes that or another member of the person’s family to fear for or to be apprehensive about, the personal safety or wellbeing of that or the other member of the person’s family.”

In such cases where it has been proven in the Family Tribunal court that a family member needs protection the tribunal may grant a Protection order, and a person who breaches a protection order shall be liable to appear in front of the Tribunal and face a fine of Rs 30,000 or an imprisonment of 3 years or face both offences.

In 2018, the government introduced the Truth, Reconciliation and National Unity Act. A Commission was created with the mandate to investigate the human rights allegations which have been accused of being committed during the 1977 coup d’état. The objective of this Commission is to gather complaints made by acclaimed victims and provide a platform for the perpetrators and victims to give an account and settle the records by providing closure and restitution in the form of closure and provide amnesty for perpetrators.

Article 26: Implementation and Monitoring

- 26.1 The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s rights on the rights of women in Africa was signed in the Seychelles in January 2006, and it was ratified on March 9th later that year. There has been no reservations to the protocol made by the country. The protocol came into force on April 25th 2006.

Article 27: Interpretation

- 27.1 The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights shall be seized with matters of interpretation arising from the application or implementation of this Protocol.

Article 28 Signature, Ratification and accession

- 28.1 Seychelles signed the Protocol on the 24/01/2006 and ratified on the 09/03/2006.

Conclusion

As at December 2019, this is the first report of Seychelles to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

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