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# SEYCHELLES NATIONAL REVIEW ON THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM OF ACTION 2020-2024

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## NARRATIVE REPORT

To mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)<sup>1</sup>, and 10 years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>2</sup> and its Sustainable Development Goals.

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<sup>1</sup> [Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women](#), Beijing, 4–15 September 1995, chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

<sup>2</sup> General Assembly resolution [70/1](#).

## Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>ASFF</b>	Alliance of Solidarity for the Family
<b>ASP</b>	Agency for Social Protection
<b>CARE</b>	Campaign for Awareness Resilience and Education
<b>CEDAW</b>	United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CEPS</b>	Citizens Engagement Platform Seychelles
<b>ELM</b>	Everlasting Love Ministry
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>HASO</b>	HIV and AIDS Support Organisation
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NSC</b>	National Sports Council
<b>SAF</b>	Survival Ark Foundation
<b>WASO</b>	Women in Action and Solidarity Organisation

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## **1.0 Section 1: Introduction**

Stakeholder engagement was important in the preparation of the national report, led by the Division for Research and Policy Planning within the Family Department of Ministry of Youth Sports and Family.

Initially, requests for information were sent to various organizations across all sectors, but the response was poor, limiting the depth of information gathered. A workshop convened to gather input, but turnout remained disappointing. Despite these challenges, key departments and individuals participated in the workshop, reflecting the commitment of some stakeholders to contribute to the process.

During the reporting period, 2020-24, Seychelles achieved several notable milestones in advancing gender equality and protecting human rights through legislative reforms.

These include the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act, 2020, which aims to combat domestic violence and protect victims, and the Children (Amendment) Act, 2020, which prohibits all forms of corporal punishment of children.

Additionally, Seychelles modernized birth and stillbirth notifications through the Civil Status (Amendment) Act and implemented significant reforms in civil law through the Civil Code of Seychelles Act, 2020. These legislative changes demonstrate Seychelles' commitment to promoting gender equality, safeguarding vulnerable groups, and fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

The review process in Seychelles has shed light on both progress and challenges regarding gender equality and women's empowerment. Despite generally gender-neutral laws, gaps in enforcement and implementation persist, highlighting the need for mainstreaming gender in legislation drafting and harmonizing laws with international treaties.

Limited and outdated literature on gender impedes a comprehensive understanding of cultural implications, compounded by a lack of sex-disaggregated data hindering evidence-based policymaking. Seychelles has a Gender secretariat but operates with limited capacity and under the purview of the Research and Policy planning division of the Family Department.

To address these challenges, Seychelles should prioritize resource allocation, policymaker education, stakeholder commitment, improved data collection and analysis, capacity building, and a national commitment to gender mainstreaming across sectors and policies.

## **2.0 Section 2: Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks**

### **1. Over the past five years, what have been the most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women?**

The Seychelles Constitution guarantees the right to equal protection before the law for "every person without discrimination on any ground." Additionally, the Seychellois Charter of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms (Chapter 3 of the Constitution), which incorporates many principles from international human rights instruments, ensures 25 rights equally for both men and women. Article 48 of the Constitution mandates that fundamental human rights and freedoms in Seychelles be interpreted in alignment with the country's international human rights obligations.

The Constitution affirms that "Every person has a right to equal protection of the law, including the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set out in this Charter without discrimination on any ground except as is necessary in a democratic society." Article 30 acknowledges the unique status and natural maternal functions of women in society, aiming to implement measures that ensure all working mothers receive special protection regarding paid leave and working conditions before and after childbirth. Consequently, the Constitution is largely considered to be gender-neutral.

Despite significant strides in advancing gender equality, particularly through legislative measures and constitutional provisions fostering women's empowerment, gender challenges in Seychelles extend beyond women. Men and boys also encounter significant obstacles, underscoring the necessity for a comprehensive approach to address gender issues that diverge from trends observed in other parts of the world.

For instance, boys consistently lag behind girls in academic performance across all levels of education. Additionally, a concerning number of males grapple with substance abuse, including drug and alcohol addiction. Moreover, statistics reveal that the majority of domestic abuse perpetrators are male, indicating the prevalence of gender-based violence affecting both sexes. Recognizing and addressing these multifaceted challenges requires a holistic understanding of gender dynamics and tailored interventions to support the well-being of all individuals regardless of gender.

Seychelles does not have a designated ministry or department of women or gender affairs. There is, however, a Gender Unit in the Family Department within the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Family, but its reduced capacity and resources limit its effectiveness towards achieving its goals.

Thus, although Seychelles has made significant progress toward gender equality, the country still faces challenges in the availability of sex-disaggregated data due to poor national coordination and collaboration in data collection, analysis, and gender mainstreaming in policies, plans, and programs. There is a need to educate policymakers and departments about gender mainstreaming, as sectoral policies and national plans are often developed without integrating gender

considerations. In too many instances, gender is treated as a separate social issue rather than being embedded in policy formulation and implementation.

In 2015, Seychelles witnessed the appointment of its first female Chief Justice, marking a significant milestone in gender representation within the judiciary. However, in 2020, this position was once again held by a male.

Examining the Cabinet of Ministers in 2020, there were 12 members, with women holding 42% of the positions (5 female ministers) and men holding 58% (7 male ministers). The President and Vice President were male, while the Designated Minister was female. The current Cabinet has expanded to 15 members, with the proportion of female ministers decreasing to 33% (5 female ministers) and male ministers increasing to 67% (10 male ministers). Notably, the President, Vice President, and Designated Minister are all male.

In the National Assembly, gender representation has shown some improvement. The previous assembly had 33 members, with women representing 21% (7 women) and men representing 79% (26 men). The current assembly, now with 35 members, has seen an increase in female representation to 28% (10 women), while male representation has slightly decreased to 72% (25 men). This analysis highlights both progress and setbacks in gender representation across different branches of government, underscoring the need for continued efforts to achieve gender parity in Seychelles.

Seychellois culture encompasses significant dimensions that deeply influence the lives of both men and women. Cultural factors play a substantial role in shaping the roles, responsibilities, capacities, opportunities, and decision-making processes of individuals. These factors are pervasive across all aspects of life in Seychelles. Key aspects of Seychellois culture include: (i) the notably high incidence of single motherhood and single-parent families, with approximately 80 percent of children in Seychelles born out of wedlock in 2023, as reported by the National Bureau of Statistics; (ii) the traditional division of roles and responsibilities between men and women, where women are often assigned primary responsibility for domestic and unpaid work, including childcare; and (iii) the ongoing issue of boys' underperformance in schools.

In the absence of surveys and data on these topics, it is impossible to gauge the full nature and extent of these issues in the country. It is clear, however, that by far the greatest share of the burden of caring for children falls on women, while men have correspondingly few or minimal obligations to contribute to the welfare of their children. This imbalance inhibits women's economic agency.

The notable achievement during this reporting period included enactment of the more comprehensive Domestic Violence Act, 2020, which prohibits various forms of domestic violence and ensures protection for victims while penalizing perpetrators. The Act replaced the Family Violence (Protection of Victims) Act, 2000, which initially provided protection for women, men, and children in Seychelles.

Both the Updated Gender Gap Analysis and Gender Country Profile (July 2022) and the Seychelles Country Report for 2022 acknowledge this delay, attributing it to ongoing efforts to sensitize the public and collaborate with partners. The reports highlight that relevant authorities and stakeholders feel unprepared to apply the law, emphasizing the need for readiness before the act can be enforced. However, the Domestic Violence Act implementation date was signed by the Minister responsible for Family in December 2023 and procedures are being made to establish a domestic violence shelter.

The Children (Amendment) Act 2020, adopted on May 12, 2020, marks another significant milestone for Seychelles as it prohibits all forms of corporal punishment of children. The amendment inserts a new section 70B into the Children Act 1982, explicitly stating that no child shall be subjected to corporal punishment. Offenders face fines up to SCR25,000 or imprisonment for up to 2 years. The Act also repeals the previous provision allowing 'proper' punishment by parents or guardians, ensuring children have the same legal protection from assault as adults. Seychelles becomes the 60th state worldwide and the ninth African state to implement such a prohibition. However, the initiative emphasizes the need for adequate resources, education, and collaborative efforts between the government and civil society to effectively implement and eliminate all forms of corporal punishment against children in Seychelles.

In 2021, Seychelles enacted the Civil Status (Amendment) Act to modernize birth and stillbirth notifications, particularly regarding surname regulations, aiming for greater gender equality. This was followed by the implementation of the Civil Code of Seychelles Act, 2020 on July 1, 2021, after a lengthy law reform process initiated in 2013. The revised Code reflects a contemporary Seychellois society, aligning with constitutional principles and international legal obligations. Key changes include recognizing marriage as between "two parties," facilitating divorce petitions for both spouses, ensuring equal division of relationship property for married and unmarried couples, granting inheritance rights to long-term domestic partners, establishing 18 as the legal marriage age for all genders, and equalizing children's rights regardless of parental marital status. These reforms are significant, particularly in Seychelles where approximately 80% of children are born outside of marriage, reflecting a crucial shift in civil law towards inclusivity and equality.

*Some of the amendments done are in line with gender rights, such as: establishing 18 years as the legal age of marriage for both males and females, regardless of consent from a parent, legal guardian or judge; equal rights for all children whether legitimate, illegitimate or born out of wedlock; ensuring that no unmarried partner would lose out totally upon the termination of a relationship; more flexibility in distributing a deceased's property taking into account the rights and needs of the surviving spouse and children ensuring they are not entirely deprived. Through these amendments, the term "illegitimate child"- a reference to children born out of wedlock, is now void.*

In conclusion, the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act, 2020, is crucial for Seychelles in gender terms as it represents a significant step towards combating gender-based violence and

ensuring the protection of victims. By prohibiting various forms of domestic violence and establishing measures to safeguard victims while holding perpetrators accountable, the Act addresses a pressing issue that disproportionately affects women and children in Seychelles.

Additionally, the Children (Amendment) Act, 2020, which prohibits all forms of corporal punishment of children, is essential for promoting gender equality by protecting children from violence and abuse, regardless of their gender. These legislative changes signal Seychelles' commitment to upholding human rights and ensuring the well-being and safety of all its citizens, particularly vulnerable groups such as women and children. Furthermore, the modernization of birth and stillbirth notifications through the Civil Status (Amendment) Act and the reforms introduced by the Civil Code of Seychelles Act, 2020, are significant for promoting gender equality by recognizing the rights and equal status of individuals in marriage, divorce, property ownership, and inheritance. These legal reforms contribute to dismantling discriminatory practices and promoting gender parity within Seychellois society, fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment for all its inhabitants.

**1. Over the past five years, what have been the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes?**

Over the past five years, enhancing legal protections and promoting gender equality have been among the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in Seychelles through laws and policies. The enactment of the Domestic Violence Act, 2020, represents a significant advancement in this regard, as it strengthens protections against domestic violence and ensures the safety and well-being of victims. Similarly, the Children (Amendment) Act, 2020, prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment of children, demonstrates Seychelles' commitment to safeguarding the rights of children, particularly vulnerable groups. Additionally, the modernization of birth and stillbirth notifications through the Civil Status (Amendment) Act, 2021, and the comprehensive reforms introduced by the Civil Code of Seychelles Act, 2020, further promote gender equality by recognizing the rights and equal status of individuals in various aspects of civil law. These legislative and policy measures reflect Seychelles' dedication to advancing gender equality and protecting the rights of women and girls, thereby contributing to broader efforts to promote inclusivity, equality, and social justice within the country.

The protection of children, particularly in the context of sexual abuse, has emerged as a critical priority for Seychelles, significantly influencing laws, policies, and programs aimed at accelerating progress for women and girls. On the occasion of Children's Day, June 1, 2022, the Cabinet approved the policy framework for the drafting and enactment of a Sexual Offences Bill.

This decision came in response to the alarming rise in reports of sexual abuse against children, the majority being girls, underscoring the urgent need for enhanced legal protections. In May 2020, the establishment of the Child Law Reform Committee (CLRC) marked a pivotal step in this direction.



The CLRC was tasked with a clear mandate to review the existing legal framework concerning children and to propose comprehensive reforms aimed at aligning Seychelles' laws with constitutional mandates, international obligations, and best practices. The emphasis on protecting children has been a cornerstone of national policy, reflecting a broader commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, who are disproportionately affected by sexual violence.

In a bid to ensure that the new legislation is robust and reflective of societal needs, the Cabinet mandated extensive consultations on the draft Bill, emphasizing the inclusion of children's voices in these discussions. This participatory approach not only aims to create more effective and protective legal measures but also fosters a culture of inclusivity and respect for the rights of children. The Bill, now in its final consultation stage, is set to be submitted to the Cabinet for approval, representing a significant milestone in the country's legislative efforts to combat sexual offences.

This initiative aligns with the broader priorities that have guided Seychelles' progress in gender equality over the past five years, which include the enactment of comprehensive domestic violence legislation, reforms to enhance social protection for women and mothers, the prohibition of corporal punishment to safeguard children's rights, and legal reforms to ensure gender equality in civil and family law. Collectively, these measures reflect a dedicated effort to create a safer, more equitable society where the rights of women, girls, and children are protected and promoted, setting a strong foundation for future generations.

Advancing gender-responsive social protection has been another priority in Seychelles' efforts to accelerate progress for women and girls in the last 5 years. Under the custodianship of the Ministry of Finance, Seychelles embarked on a significant reform journey in 2021 in collaboration with the World Bank, resulting in substantial enhancements to welfare weights and statutory benefits.

Notably, the revision has seen remarkable increases in key benefits crucial for women's economic security and well-being. Maternity benefits have increased from SCR 2,480 to SCR 6,633.47, providing expectant mothers with significantly enhanced financial support during pregnancy and childbirth.

Moreover, the expectant mother allowance has seen a boost, soaring from SCR 1,500 to SCR 5,000, thereby further alleviating financial burdens associated with pregnancy-related expenses.

Recognizing the unique challenges faced by mothers of multiple births, the revised program now offers more comprehensive support, with a new rate of SCR 3,134 for the second child and a cap of SCR 6,633.47 for triple births and above.

These substantial increases underscore Seychelles' commitment to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment by addressing the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls.

These measures acknowledge the fact that the larger proportion of applicants for social protection in Seychelles are women signifying a crucial step towards addressing poverty. By tailoring interventions to meet the diverse needs of women, particularly teenage mothers, Seychelles aims

to create an enabling environment where all women and girls can thrive, contributing to a more equitable and prosperous society for all.

Changing discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes has been another central priority in accelerating progress for women and girls in Seychelles. The Family Department has led various initiatives aimed at reshaping societal attitudes and promoting gender equality. A key element of this effort has been a comprehensive sensitization campaign that addresses gender-based violence. This campaign has involved community outreach, educational programs, and media campaigns designed to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of gender stereotypes and promote respectful relationships. Additionally, the Social Affairs Department has spearheaded the Multi-Sectoral Committee for Teenage Pregnancy, bringing together stakeholders from health, education, and social services to develop and implement strategies that support young mothers and prevent early pregnancies. Furthermore, there has been a strong push for the enactment of specific legislation to address sexual offences and other related violence. This includes advocacy and sensitization campaigns to garner public and legislative support for the Sexual Offences Bill, which aims to provide more robust legal protections for victims of sexual violence. Through these comprehensive programs and legislative efforts, Seychelles is working diligently to eliminate gender-based discrimination and create a more equitable society for all its citizens.

Seychelles has also prioritized the creation and enactment of laws, policies, and programs to address digital crimes and protect its citizens, with particular attention to the safety and well-being of women and girls. The recent enactment of the Cybercrimes and Other Related Crimes Act, 2021, replacing the outdated Computer Misuse Act of 1998, is a critical step in this direction. This new legislation criminalizes actions such as fraud, harassment, and the dissemination of private or indecent videos on social media, which disproportionately affect women and girls. By addressing these digital crimes, the Act aims to create a safer online environment, thus safeguarding the dignity and privacy of women and girls who are often targets of such violations.

The new law's provisions for severe penalties, including fines and imprisonment, for offenses like cyber harassment, stalking, and the unauthorized sharing of private information, underscore the government's commitment to protecting its citizens from digital harm. For instance, the Act includes stringent measures against the distribution of offensive content intended to harass or disturb someone's peace of mind, with offenders facing up to five years in prison. This is particularly important in curbing the harassment and exploitation of women and girls online, providing them with a legal framework to seek justice and protection.

Moreover, the law addresses the issue of indecent videos, including those involving children, recognizing the severe impact such violations have on the victims' lives. By criminalizing the distribution of such content and imposing strict penalties, Seychelles is working to ensure that women and girls can engage in the digital space without fear of exploitation or abuse.

Additionally, the law includes mechanisms for effective investigation and prosecution of digital crimes, such as procedures to analyze electronic information and remove indecent content from social media. These measures enhance the ability of law enforcement to protect victims and hold

perpetrators accountable, thereby contributing to a safer digital environment for everyone, especially vulnerable groups like women and girls.

2. **Over the past five years, what specific actions have you taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls?**

Over the past five years, Seychelles has implemented several targeted measures to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls.

**1. Enhanced Maternity and Expectant Mother Allowances**

The aim of this initiative is to provide greater financial security to expectant mothers, recognizing the economic burdens associated with pregnancy and childbirth. This measure particularly targets pregnant women, including teenage mothers, who face economic challenges.

Target Population: Pregnant women, and mothers of multiple births. However, teenage mothers are not covered under the ASP Statutory benefit. This is a challenge and a limitation which the country is required to address.

Budget: This reform was part of a broader social protection initiative, supported by the World Bank, with a budget allocation specifically for increasing maternity and expectant mother allowances. This initiative was budgeted under the allocation of R 1.3 billion dedicated to benefits and approved programs by the Agency for Social Protection. Specifically, the reforms and measures to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized women and girls were funded from the SR 61.8 million set aside as a Social Safety Net.

The increase in maternity benefits from SCR 2,480 to SCR 6,633.47 are applicable to mothers that are self-employed or in casual employment and the expectant mother allowance from SCR 1,500 to SCR 5,000 applicable to mothers living on Praslin/La Digue, has provided significant relief to thousands of women. The introduction of a new rate for multiple births has also ensured better financial support for families with more than one child.

The implementation highlighted the importance of comprehensive stakeholder engagement, including healthcare providers and community organizations, to ensure that beneficiaries are well-informed and can access these benefits effectively.

## **2. Sexual Offences Bill and Child Protection Measures**

This legislative initiative aims to enhance legal protections against sexual offences, particularly for children, by drafting a comprehensive Sexual Offences Bill. The scope includes wide consultations with various stakeholders, including children.

Target Population: Children and young women at risk of sexual abuse.

Budget: The drafting and consultation process was funded through the Government.

Impact Evaluation: The final stages of the Bill's consultation have shown positive feedback from various stakeholders, and its eventual implementation is expected to significantly reduce instances of sexual abuse by providing stricter penalties and better protection mechanisms.

Lessons Learned: road-based consultation, especially including the voices of children, is crucial for creating effective and accepted legislation.

## **3. Enactment of the more comprehensive Domestic Violence Act, 2020.**

This legislation represents a significant advancement in legal protections for victims of domestic violence, replacing the outdated Family Violence (Protection of Victims) Act, 2000.

The Domestic Violence Act 2020 has been approved by the National Assembly and assented to by the President in 2020. The Act has received its commencement date on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023 and is currently being implemented. Despite the law being enforced, the lack of available shelter for the victims presents a significant challenge. As a result, some victims are withdrawing their cases because they have no place to live. The Police are currently uncertain about how to assist these individuals. This year (2024) budget was allocated to undertake maintenance on a potential property to be converted into a shelter.

These efforts include extensive public sensitization campaigns and collaboration with partners to ensure that all relevant authorities and stakeholders are adequately prepared to apply the law. Reports such as the Updated Gender Gap Analysis and Gender Country Profile (July 2022) have acknowledged these preparatory activities, highlighting the ongoing commitment to enhancing the legal framework to better protect women, men, and children from domestic violence. This initiative underscores the dedication to creating a safer and more equitable society, addressing the vulnerabilities of marginalized groups, and promoting gender equality.

**4. Over the past five years, how has the confluence of different crises affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what measures have you taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls?**

The economy's heavy reliance on tourism, accounting for 31% of GDP and 41% of exports, made it highly vulnerable to external shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a severe downturn in tourism, which, coupled with the economic repercussions of the war in Ukraine, particularly affected key European markets, resulting in a substantial reduction in tourism revenue and economic growth.

Seychelles has faced a confluence of different crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, which have significantly impacted the implementation of the Beijing Gender Plan of Action.

These economic shocks have had a direct impact on employment and earnings. While average earnings increased by 4.8% due to upward revisions in public sector wages, employment decreased by 0.2% in Q3 of 2023. Additionally, environmental disasters, including heavy rainfall, landslides, and a massive explosion in Mahé island's industrial zone, further strained the economy and increased household vulnerability, particularly affecting women's economic stability and security.

To mitigate these impacts and continue advancing gender equality as outlined in the Beijing Gender Plan of Action, Seychelles has implemented several measures. The government has focused on maintaining fiscal prudence through successive consolidation efforts since 2021, improving economic resilience and managing external shocks. This includes keeping public debt on a sustainable path, which declined to 60.1% of GDP in 2023, and ensuring the banking sector remains liquid and well-capitalized.

Seychelles has prioritized enhancing social protection and economic support systems. Reforms in social protection have seen significant increases in maternity benefits, expectant mother allowances, and support for multiple births, reflecting a commitment to women's economic security. Additionally, efforts to increase labor earnings and reduce poverty have been central, although challenges such as labor and skills shortages and the growing rate of teenage pregnancy, drug, and alcohol addiction remain.

Climate change adaptation measures, such as improvements in disaster preparedness systems and enhanced coastal management, are crucial to safeguarding the livelihoods of women, who are often disproportionately affected by environmental disasters. The government has also focused on broadening access to quality education and skills development to empower women and girls and address institutional barriers to starting and operating businesses.

5. **Over the next five years, what are the priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes?**

Seychelles will prioritize accelerating progress for women and girls by strengthening national efforts to address the following issues: gender-based violence, poverty alleviation, child protection, online safety, and gender mainstreaming.

Central to this effort is the full implementation of the Domestic Violence Act, 2020, will offer robust protections for victims and stringent penalties for perpetrators, addressing the urgent need to combat gender-based violence effectively.

In parallel, social protection reforms will continue to be a cornerstone of poverty alleviation strategies, with significant allocations from the SCR 61.8 million Social Safety Net. Enhanced benefits such as increased maternity benefits and expectant mother allowances will ensure that women, especially those facing economic hardship, receive the necessary support.

Protecting children remains a critical priority, with legislative efforts such as the Children (Amendment) Act 2020 and the forthcoming Sexual Offences Bill, which aims to strengthen legal frameworks against child abuse and exploitation.

Recognizing the rising digital threats, the Cybercrimes and Other Related Crimes Act will play a pivotal role in ensuring greater online safety by criminalizing digital harassment, fraud, and the dissemination of private or indecent content.

Sensitization campaigns led by the Family Department will be intensified to challenge and change discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes, involving community outreach and education programs aimed at fostering a more inclusive society.

The Multi-Sectoral Committee for Teenage Pregnancy will spearhead efforts to provide comprehensive support to teenage mothers, addressing both their immediate and long-term needs.

Finally, gender mainstreaming across all sectors will be pursued vigorously, ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into all aspects of policy and program development. This holistic approach, supported by sustained government commitment and international partnerships, will be instrumental in creating an equitable and supportive environment for all women and girls in Seychelles.

### 3.0 Section 3: Progress across the 12 critical areas of concern

#### 6. Over the past five years, what actions has your country taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship)?

##### **Reskilling/Up-Skilling Programme**

Introduced in March 2021, the Reskilling/Up-Skilling Programme aims to provide re-training opportunities to jobseekers aged 18 and above, addressing the labour market's demand in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The program offers training lasting from one week to six months at registered training institutions.

The primary target population includes jobseekers aged 18 years and above, with a particular focus on women, who have been disproportionately affected by the economic impacts of the pandemic. The program has successfully re-trained numerous individuals, helping them to gain employment in new sectors. Data shows a significant uptake among women, contributing to greater gender equality in the workforce. The Gender Unit has contributed towards the review process to ensure that the issue of gender (and employment) are well aligned in amendments/updates of the Employment Act.

The program highlighted the importance of providing financial support during training periods. Future iterations might include stipends to alleviate financial burdens further.

In 2023, SR 5 million were set aside for the seed capital grant scheme. This is a grant of up to SR 200,000 for financing small start-up enterprises, to assist them in the first phase of their development. This scheme will be managed by the Enterprise Seychelles Agency (ESA).

Cabinet's approval of the ratification of the International Labour Organisation's Domestic Workers Convention in May 2023 represents an important measure to advance gender equality in the world of work, particularly within informal and non-standard employment sectors. The Domestic Workers Convention aims to improve the working and living conditions of domestic workers globally, a workforce predominantly composed of women. By ratifying this convention, Seychelles commits to ensuring fair labor practices, decent wages, and safe working environments for domestic workers. This action addresses the vulnerabilities and exploitation often faced by women in this sector, thereby promoting their rights and economic security.

Furthermore, the Cabinet's decision to submit the 20 instruments adopted by the ILO from 2001 to 2019 to the National Assembly underscores a broader commitment to aligning national labor laws with international standards. This alignment is crucial for providing comprehensive protections and enhancing labor rights across various sectors, including those where women are overrepresented.

Implementing these measures will lead to significant improvements in job quality and security for women in informal employment, boosting their economic empowerment and reducing gender disparities in the labor market. Additionally, by fostering a more equitable work environment,

these actions encourage more women to engage in entrepreneurship, knowing that they have a robust legal framework supporting their rights. Overall, these steps are vital for creating a fairer, more inclusive economy where women can thrive in all forms of employment.

The approval of the new National Entrepreneurship Strategy in 2022 represents another significant measure to advance gender equality in the world of work. This strategy, developed in response to the Investment Policy Review's recommendation, aims to strengthen Seychelles' entrepreneurship ecosystem, supporting the country's aspiration of becoming a knowledge-based and technology and innovation-driven economy.

By fostering an inclusive and robust entrepreneurial environment, the strategy specifically addresses barriers that women face in entering and succeeding in business ventures. It promotes access to financial resources, business training, and mentorship programs tailored to women entrepreneurs, enabling them to overcome challenges such as limited access to capital and markets. The strategy also emphasizes the importance of creating supportive networks and platforms where women can share experiences, collaborate, and innovate, thus enhancing their business acumen and confidence.

Moreover, the strategy encourages the integration of technology and innovation in entrepreneurial activities, providing women with opportunities to engage in high-growth sectors traditionally dominated by men. By equipping women with the necessary skills and resources to participate in the digital economy, the strategy ensures they are not left behind in the technological advancements shaping the future of work.

Additionally, the strategy promotes gender-responsive policies that create a conducive environment for women's entrepreneurship. This includes advocating for family-friendly policies and flexible work arrangements that allow women to balance business and family responsibilities effectively.

Overall, the National Entrepreneurship Strategy aims to level the playing field for women in entrepreneurship, enabling them to contribute significantly to economic growth and development.

**7. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers?**

Seychelles has taken significant actions to advance gender equality in the labor market and supporting the well-being of both women and men.

In January 2024, the country ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 189, which is a landmark step towards ensuring fair employment and decent living conditions for domestic workers, the majority of whom are women. This ratification signifies the country's commitment to providing domestic workers with the same labor rights and protections as other workers, including fair wages, reasonable working hours, and safe working conditions. By formalizing the rights of domestic workers, Seychelles acknowledges the critical role they play in the economy and society, ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect.



Furthermore, in 2023, the Employment Department of Seychelles sought technical assistance from the ILO to conduct a study on Flexible Working Time Arrangements, Gender Equality, and Work-Life Balance. This study which is still on-going aims to develop policies that facilitate greater access to employment for groups that face barriers due to family commitments, such as women with caregiving responsibilities. The expected outcome of this initiative is the implementation of family-friendly policies that support flexible working arrangements, enabling workers to better balance their professional and personal lives. Such policies are essential in reducing the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women and promoting a more equitable distribution of domestic responsibilities.

Additionally, Seychelles has introduced re-skilling and upskilling programs for individuals who have faced long-term unemployment. These programs are designed to provide training and education to enhance employability and ensure that individuals can successfully re-enter the labor market. These opportunities address the skills gap and supports those who have been out of the workforce, particularly women who may have taken extended breaks for caregiving responsibilities. These initiatives help to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their employment history, have the skills and opportunities needed to participate fully in the economy.

In 2023 the Home Care Agency Act came into force. The Act was created to establish an Agency to allow citizens experiencing a considerable decline in capacity such as the elderly and persons with disabilities to receive care and support by those officially recognised by that Agency as being capable of rendering care consistent with that citizens's basic rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Government has also provided assistance to child care through the Institute of Early Childhood Development. The financial assistance for registered day care and childminding services is an initiative offered to all Seychellois children who are enrolled in registered day care and childminding service. The aim of the service is to support parents by reducing the cost of child care and encourage parents to enroll their children in registered service which are implementing quality early care and education standards for young children's holistic development and readiness for formal schooling. The service provided further reduces time spend in unpaid care and promotes work life balance for families.

#### **8. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce the gender digital divide?**

In October 2020, Seychelles approved the Information Communications Technology (ICT) in Education and Training Policy 2022 – 2027. This policy outlines the Ministry of Education's strategic plan to harness technology to enhance educational outcomes and services. As part of its implementation, significant groundwork has been done to ensure that both secondary and primary education institutions are equipped with computers and internet connectivity.

Additionally, the policy includes comprehensive training courses on ICT in education for both in-service and pre-service educators, ensuring that teachers are well-prepared to integrate technology into their teaching practices. By incorporating the subject of ICT into the curriculum, the policy aims to foster digital literacy from an early age, ensuring that both boys and girls have equal access to technological education. This holistic approach not only prepares students for a digitally-driven

world but also actively works to close the gender gap in digital skills, promoting equal opportunities for all students regardless of gender.

By approving the Cybercrimes and Other Related Crimes Bill 2021, Seychelles introduced modern legislation that not only addresses the various cybercrimes that disproportionately affect women, such as online harassment, stalking, and the non-consensual distribution of private or indecent videos, but also ensures a safer digital environment for all users.

The new law criminalizes these offenses and imposes severe penalties, thereby deterring potential perpetrators and providing stronger protection for women and girls who are often the victims of such digital crimes. Additionally, by fostering a secure and trustworthy digital space, the legislation encourages more women to engage with and benefit from digital platforms, thus promoting gender equality in the digital realm. This aligns with Seychelles' broader commitment to leveraging technology for inclusive growth and ensuring that all citizens, regardless of gender, can participate safely and equitably in the digital economy.

Since 2022, the Research and Policy Planning Division within the Family Department embarked on a digital upskilling workshop with UNECA to hold upskilling capacity building training for women and girls in Seychelles. The Training took place in 2023 where 30 women and girls from all economic and educational background were provided with the necessary capacity to assist them in their education and well as growing their businesses.

Seychelles is also part of the COMESA 50million African Women Speak Project since 2020, whereby women on the African continent are provided with a platform to engage in networking for their businesses. At present there are over 1,000 Seychellois women registered on the platform. The platform was previously being managed by the Seychelles Enterprise Agency but is now the platform is being monitored by the Ministry responsible for gender.

In 2023, Seychelles took a significant step towards bridging the gender digital divide by extending its laptop subsidy scheme to include students in Primary 5 and Primary 6 across both public and private schools. This initiative provides a SCR 3,000.00 subsidy per student for the purchase of a laptop or tablet, aiming to enhance digital literacy and access to technology from an early age.

By ensuring that both girls and boys have equal opportunities to develop essential digital skills, the scheme addresses the digital divide at its roots, preparing students for a technology-driven world. This comprehensive approach fosters an inclusive educational environment where economic barriers do not hinder any child's access to necessary digital tools.

The scheme targets all Primary 5 and Primary 6 students in Seychelles, with a budget allocation that underscores the government's commitment to this cause. Success is measured by the increased ownership of digital devices among students and their improved performance in digital subjects. Key lessons learned include the importance of timely subsidy disbursements and the provision of technical support for device setup and maintenance, which are crucial for the effective implementation and sustainability of the program.

Cabinet also approved five proposed areas that will form part of the Seychelles Open Government Partnership Action Plan for 2024-2025. One critical area concerns Digital Transformation and

Connecting People. Information technology is essential for achieving the transparency and citizen engagement that the Open Government Partnership champions. However, Seychelles faces a significant shortage of skilled local IT personnel, making it challenging for the government to implement and maintain digital projects like the e-portal.

This OGP commitment aims to address this issue by establishing necessary educational programs, encouraging citizen participation in digitalization, and strengthening Seychelles' nascent IT industry to effectively support the public sector. By focusing on education and skill development, particularly in IT, the initiative ensures that both women and men have equal access to opportunities in this burgeoning field.

Promoting digital skills and providing training can help close the gender digital divide by empowering more women to enter and thrive in the IT sector, historically dominated by men. Encouraging female participation in these programs will foster an inclusive digital workforce, enabling women to contribute significantly to digital projects and innovations. This approach not only enhances the overall digital capabilities of Seychelles but also ensures that women are equally represented in the digital transformation process, thus promoting gender equality in the digital economy.

By creating a more inclusive and skilled IT workforce, the commitment helps bridge the gap in digital literacy and access, ensuring that women and girls are not left behind in the digital age. This initiative will provide them with the skills and opportunities needed to participate fully in the digital economy, thereby supporting broader efforts to achieve gender equality and empowerment in Seychelles.

**9. In the past five years, how has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy?**

The Seychellois economy, highly dependent on tourism and fisheries, has faced challenges such as external shocks and natural disasters, impacting growth and employment. Despite this, the government has prioritized development efforts aimed at enhancing productivity and economic performance to foster greater shared prosperity. However, labor shortages, teenage pregnancy rates, and issues with drug and alcohol addiction have constrained further advances in poverty reduction and gender equality.

To address these challenges, Seychelles has implemented various macroeconomic policies aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Notable measures include:

1. **Enhancements to Social Protection Measures:** Seychelles has implemented significant enhancements to welfare weights and statutory benefits, particularly maternity benefits and expectant mother allowances. These measures have played a crucial role in reducing poverty, especially among women, by providing financial support during pregnancy and

- childbirth, empowering women to afford essential expenses related to maternity care, and alleviating financial burdens associated with pregnancy-related expenses.
2. Targeted Financial Assistance: The government has provided special financial assistance targeted at low-income earners, particularly women, through measures such as special financial assistance for employees earning less than a certain threshold per month. This assistance has helped vulnerable women meet their basic needs and lifted them out of poverty.
  3. Price Controls and Subsidies: Measures such as the introduction of maximum retail prices for essential commodities and assistance with the payment of electricity bills have helped alleviate financial pressure on households, particularly women-headed households. Affordable access to food and other necessities has reduced financial strain, while subsidies on electricity bills have allowed women to allocate resources to other essential needs.
  4. World Bank Budget Support Programme: Seychelles has accepted budget support from the World Bank through the "Programme for Results" (PforR), targeting reforms across the social protection system. By focusing on enhancements and reforms in cash transfer programmes, particularly those benefiting vulnerable populations, including women, this programme aims to provide greater financial stability and assistance to women in need, contributing to poverty reduction and improving socio-economic well-being.

**10. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?**

The significant enhancements to welfare weights and statutory benefits in Seychelles, particularly the increases in maternity benefits and expectant mother allowance, have played a crucial role in reducing poverty, especially among women who often shoulder the responsibility of managing the home and providing for their families.

With the substantial increase in maternity benefits from SCR 2,480 to SCR 6,633.47, expectant mothers now have access to significantly higher financial support during pregnancy and childbirth. This increase empowers women to afford essential expenses related to maternity care, such as prenatal visits, nutritional supplements, and medical services, thereby reducing their financial strain and vulnerability to poverty.

Additionally, the boost in the expectant mother allowance from SCR 1,500 to SCR 5,000 further alleviates the financial burden associated with pregnancy-related expenses, enabling women to better manage household finances and meet the needs of their families.

Moreover, the introduction of a new rate of SCR 3,134 for the second child and a cap of SCR 6,633.47 for triple births and above recognizes the unique challenges faced by mothers of multiple births, ensuring that they receive adequate support to care for their children without falling into poverty.

These comprehensive measures tailored to address the specific needs of women, including teenage mothers and single mothers, have created a more inclusive and supportive

environment, contributing to poverty reduction and fostering greater gender equality in Seychelles.

In 2022, the range of measures finalized by the Cabinet to alleviate hardships among citizens, particularly in the face of the rising cost of living, significantly contributed to reducing and eradicating poverty among women and girls in Seychelles.

Special financial assistance targeted at employees earning less than SR9,000 per month directly benefited many women who constitute a significant proportion of low-income earners.

Moreover, the introduction of a maximum retail price for essential commodities ensured that women, who are often responsible for household shopping and budget management, can access affordable food and other necessities, further reducing financial strain.

Enhanced school meal services also alleviated the burden on low-income families, ensuring that children including girls have access to nutritious meals, which is crucial for their physical and cognitive development.

Additionally, assistance with the payment of electricity bills helped to alleviate the financial pressure on households, allowing women to allocate their resources to other essential needs, such as education and healthcare. Overall, these measures represent a concerted effort by the government to assist the most vulnerable, who are often single mothers.

The approval for Seychelles to accept budget support from the World Bank through the "Programme for Results" (PforR) in January 2021 marked a significant step towards programmes under the social welfare system which targets the vulnerable groups of the population.

By targeting reforms across the social protection system, the programme aimed to ensure the sustainability of social protection measures and promote economic inclusion for working-age beneficiaries, including women.

Specifically, the programme focused on the five largest cash transfer programmes managed by the Agency for Social Protection, namely Retirement Pension, Homecare Programme, Invalidity Benefit, Disability Benefit, and Social Welfare Assistance.

These programmes play a crucial role in providing financial support to vulnerable populations, including women who may face economic challenges due to various factors such as caregiving responsibilities, disability, or lack of access to formal employment opportunities.

Through the PforR programme, enhancements and reforms in these cash transfer programmes were expected to provide greater financial stability and assistance to women in need, ultimately contributing to poverty reduction and improving the socio-economic well-being of women in Seychelles.

**11. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls?**

The revisions and updates made by the Agency for Social Protection (ASP) in May 2022 and January 2024 have significantly contributed to improving access to social protection for women and girls in Seychelles. The adjustments made to welfare weights and statutory benefit rates reflect a proactive approach by the government to address the evolving needs of vulnerable populations, particularly women and children.

Firstly, the revision of welfare weights in May 2022, such as the increase in adult supplementation rates and child supplementation rates, ensures that families, especially those headed by single mothers or women as primary caregivers, receive adequate financial support to meet their basic needs.

For instance, the 1<sup>st</sup> Adult Supplementation increased from SCR 3,945 to SCR 5,224, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adult Supplementation increased from SCR 2,761.50 to SCR 3,656.80, and Child Supplementation increased from SCR 1,972.50 to SCR 3,134.

These adjustments reflect a recognition of the rising cost of living and aim to alleviate financial burdens on households, thereby benefiting women who often bear the responsibility for managing household expenses.

The adjustments made to welfare benefits and support measures, particularly in utilities, transport, and housing, have also played a significant role in contributing to poverty alleviation in Seychelles.

Firstly, the increase in the allowance for utilities from SR 488 to SCR 665, with an additional 8% increase for households with four children and above, helps mitigate the financial burden of essential services on low-income families, including many headed by women. This increase ensures that families can better afford basic utilities such as electricity, water, and gas, thereby improving their quality of life and reducing the risk of utility disconnection due to unpaid bills.

Secondly, the adjustment in transport allowance, from SR 250 to SCR 800, provides essential support to individuals, especially women, who rely on public transportation to access education, employment, healthcare, and other essential services. By increasing the transport allowance, the government helps alleviate the financial strain of commuting costs, making it easier for individuals, particularly those from low-income households, to access opportunities and resources necessary for economic stability and social well-being.

Additionally, the cap on housing loan or rent at 40% of the household income, with a maximum limit of SCR 5,000 or the actual monthly repayment amount, offers crucial support to families struggling with housing costs. This measure ensures that households, including single-parent households led by women, do not face excessive financial burdens related to housing expenses, thereby preventing housing instability and homelessness.

These increased benefits provide crucial financial assistance to women and families, ensuring better maternal and child health outcomes and reducing the risk of poverty among vulnerable households.

Additionally, the introduction of the multiple birth benefit in 2024 demonstrates a targeted effort to address the specific needs of women with multiple births, providing additional financial support to alleviate the financial strain associated with raising multiple children simultaneously. With each additional child, mothers receive SCR 3,134, capped at SCR 6,633.50. This benefit acknowledges the unique challenges faced by mothers of multiple births and aims to support their economic well-being.

Overall, these actions taken by the ASP to revise welfare weights and statutory benefit rates demonstrate a concerted effort to improve access to social protection for women and girls in Seychelles. By providing increased financial assistance and support, especially during critical life events such as childbirth and caregiving, the government contributes to promoting gender equality, empowering women, and reducing poverty among vulnerable populations.

## **12. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?**

Seychelles has undertaken a series of comprehensive actions to enhance health outcomes for women and girls, addressing various aspects of healthcare, nutrition, and public health policies.

### **1. Revision of Breast Milk Substitute Regulation-2023**

The revision of the Breast Milk Substitute Regulation in 2023 underscores Seychelles' commitment to promoting optimal infant nutrition and breastfeeding. By prohibiting the marketing of breast milk substitutes and banning donations and sponsorships to government entities, Seychelles aims to protect and promote breastfeeding, which is crucial for the health and well-being of mothers and infants. This measure contributes to reducing infant mortality rates and improving maternal and child health outcomes, as breast milk provides essential nutrients and antibodies necessary for infant growth and development.

### **2. Primary Health Care Package-2022**

The approval of the Primary Health Care Package by the Cabinet highlights Seychelles' efforts to strengthen primary healthcare services, particularly for women and girls. By defining the scope of primary healthcare services under six broad categories, including family health, disease prevention and control, and health promotion, Seychelles aims to ensure equitable access to essential healthcare services for all citizens, regardless of gender or socioeconomic status. This initiative is particularly beneficial for women and girls as it addresses their unique health needs throughout their lifespan, including reproductive health, maternal care, and preventive services.

### 3. National Health Strategic Plan 2022-2026

The approval of the National Health Strategic Plan reflects Seychelles' commitment to achieving the highest level of physical, social, mental, and spiritual health for all its citizens, including women and girls. By endorsing investments in disease prevention and promoting a holistic approach to health, Seychelles aims to improve health outcomes and reduce the burden of disease in the population. This strategic plan prioritizes preventive healthcare measures, such as immunizations, screenings, and health education, which are essential for promoting women's health and well-being.

### 4. Managing Alcohol Consumption for a Healthy and Productive Nation-2023

Seychelles' commitment to managing alcohol consumption recognizes the adverse impact of alcohol abuse on public health, including the health and well-being of women and girls. By addressing the social determinants of alcohol misuse and adopting a data-driven policy approach, Seychelles seeks to mitigate the negative health consequences associated with excessive alcohol consumption, such as alcohol-related diseases, injuries, and social problems. This initiative aims to create a healthier and more productive society, benefiting women and girls who are disproportionately affected by alcohol-related harms.

Overall, these actions demonstrate Seychelles' commitment to improving health outcomes for women and girls by addressing various determinants of health, promoting preventive healthcare measures, and ensuring equitable access to essential healthcare services. By prioritizing women's health and well-being within its healthcare policies and strategies, Seychelles aims to create a healthier and more resilient society for all its citizens.

## **13. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented?**

Seychelles has implemented a series of initiatives aimed at improving education outcomes and skills development for women and girls, focused on promoting sustainable development education, enhancing technical and vocational training, integrating information and communication technology (ICT) into education, fostering entrepreneurship, and promoting ethics education in schools.

### 1. Development of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Policy and Strategy-

This initiative, approved in 2024, aims to equip learners of all ages, including women and girls, with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to address global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and inequality. By integrating sustainable development principles into education, Seychelles seeks to empower women and girls to become agents of change and contribute to building a more sustainable and equitable society.

### 2. Promotion of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)



Seychelles has prioritized the development of TVET policies and programs to provide women and girls with opportunities for skills development and economic empowerment. The approval of the National TVET Policy 2023-2027 in October 2023 underscores Seychelles' commitment to producing a skilled and competent workforce to support economic development. Additionally, the decision to convert the Perseverance Secondary School into a National TVET Secondary School reflects Seychelles' efforts to expand access to vocational education and address skill shortages in key sectors.

### 3. Integration of ICT in Education

The approval of the ICT in Education and Training Policy 2022-2027 in October 2020 highlights Seychelles' commitment to leveraging technology to enhance education outcomes. By providing basic infrastructure, training educators, and incorporating ICT into the curriculum, Seychelles aims to equip women and girls with digital skills essential for success in the modern workforce. This initiative promotes gender equality in access to technology and empowers women and girls to pursue careers in ICT-related fields.

### 4. Support for Entrepreneurship

Seychelles has recognized the importance of entrepreneurship in driving economic growth and empowering women and girls. The approval of the new National Entrepreneurship Strategy in 2022 and the revision of the Seed Capital Grant scheme in July 2022 demonstrate Seychelles' commitment to supporting entrepreneurship development. By providing start-up capital, business management training, and mentorship opportunities, Seychelles aims to encourage women and girls to pursue entrepreneurial ventures and contribute to economic diversification and job creation.

### 5. Enhancement of Ethics Education

Seychelles has prioritized ethics education as a means to foster ethical values and promote peace and harmony in the community. The plan to trial an ethics education program in schools, supported by UNESCO, underscores Seychelles' commitment to instilling ethical values in learners from a young age. By integrating ethics education into the curriculum, Seychelles aims to cultivate a culture of integrity, respect, and social responsibility among women and girls, preparing them to be responsible citizens and leaders in their communities.

Overall, these actions demonstrate Seychelles' commitment to improving education outcomes and skills development for women and girls, addressing gender disparities in education and promoting inclusive and equitable access to quality education and training opportunities. Through targeted policies and programs, Seychelles aims to empower women and girls to realize their full potential and contribute to the country's social, economic, and sustainable development goals.

#### **14. What actions has your country taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated?**

In 2021, Seychelles took significant actions to mitigate the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and promote economic recovery, with a focus on supporting businesses directly affected by the downturn in tourism.

The revision of the Financial Assistance for Job Retention (FA4JR) scheme to cater specifically to tourism-related businesses played a crucial role in providing targeted support to sectors most affected by the pandemic. By prioritizing businesses such as hotels, restaurants, tour operators, and transportation services, with a significant proportion of women employees, the scheme aimed to safeguard jobs and sustain operations in key economic sectors, thereby contributing to broader economic recovery efforts.

Furthermore, the decision to provide 50 percent assistance to businesses directly connected to tourism, along with a fixed payment for self-employed individuals, helped alleviate financial burdens and ensure the continued employment of workers in these sectors. This targeted approach to financial assistance not only supported businesses but also helped protect jobs and livelihoods, particularly among vulnerable groups such as women who are often disproportionately affected by economic shocks.

Seychelles also approved in 2021 the acceptance of budget support from the World Bank through the "Programme for Results" (PforR). This program aimed to target reforms across the social protection system, focusing on ensuring the sustainability of social protection measures and enhancing the economic inclusion of working-age beneficiaries in the labor force.

By implementing reforms across the five largest cash transfer programs managed by the Agency for Social Protection, including Retirement Pension, Homecare Programme, Invalidity Benefit, Disability Benefit, and Social Welfare Assistance, Seychelles aimed to strengthen its social safety nets and provide crucial support to vulnerable segments of the population, including women and girls who are disproportionately affected by poverty and lack of access to employment opportunities.

Through the PforR program, Seychelles sought to bolster its social protection system, which plays a vital role in mitigating the impacts of economic shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. By ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of cash transfer programs, Seychelles aimed to reduce poverty levels and provide a crucial lifeline for individuals and families facing financial hardships, particularly in the wake of the pandemic.

Moreover, by focusing on economic inclusion for working-age beneficiaries, Seychelles aimed to address gender gaps in employment and social protection. Women are often disproportionately affected by poverty and unemployment, and enhancing their access to social protection measures and opportunities for economic participation is essential for promoting gender equality and empowerment.

Another response to the economic strains brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, was the introduction of the Seychelles Employee Transition Scheme (SETS) to assist workers facing redundancy. SETS aimed to alleviate the financial burdens of affected individuals and families, thereby mitigating the risk of increased poverty. By providing financial support to laid-off workers, SETS addressed the immediate needs of those impacted by job losses, including vulnerable groups such as women who may be disproportionately affected. Moreover, SETS promoted gender-inclusive employment opportunities through the National Workers Preparatory Programme, offering diverse avenues for individuals to re-enter the workforce.

Additionally, SETS prioritized social protection by ensuring that workers receive their base salaries even after being laid off, providing a crucial safety net during times of economic uncertainty. By fostering socio-economic stability and implementing comprehensive support mechanisms, SETS facilitated inclusive economic recovery for all members of society, regardless of gender.

Seychelles is presently considering the introduction of flexible working arrangements as a new mode of work in the government. This initiative aimed to tackle various pertinent issues exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Flexible working arrangements can provide greater opportunities for women to participate in the workforce by offering options such as telecommuting, part-time work, or flexible hours. By allowing employees to balance work with family responsibilities, this initiative can help mitigate barriers that women face in accessing employment opportunities, thereby contributing to closing gender gaps in employment.

Flexible working arrangements can also support social protection measures by enabling employees, including women, to maintain employment and income during times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. By providing alternative work arrangements, the government can help safeguard the livelihoods of vulnerable populations and ensure economic resilience.

The introduction of flexible working arrangements acknowledges the importance of work-life balance, particularly for families. By allowing employees, including working mothers, to adjust their work schedules to accommodate personal and family needs, this initiative promotes greater well-being and productivity, contributing to closing gender gaps in employment and enhancing overall social welfare.

**15. Over the past five years, which forms of gender-based violence, and in which specific contexts or settings, has your country prioritized for action?**

Seychelles has undertaken a robust legislative agenda to address and prioritize various forms of gender-based violence, particularly focusing on domestic violence and corporal punishment of children.

These efforts signify a comprehensive approach to fostering a safer and more equitable society.

1. **Domestic Violence:** The enactment of the Domestic Violence Act, 2020, stands as a cornerstone in Seychelles' strategy to combat gender-based violence. This Act explicitly prohibits various forms of domestic violence, which includes physical, emotional, psychological, and economic abuse. By establishing protective measures for victims and mechanisms for holding perpetrators accountable, the Act addresses a critical issue that disproportionately affects women and children. The Act not only provides legal recourse for victims but also mandates the creation of support services, including shelters and counseling, which are essential for the rehabilitation and recovery of those affected. This legislation underscores the nation's commitment to creating a supportive and responsive framework that empowers victims to seek help and ensures their safety and dignity.
2. **Corporal Punishment of Children:** The Children (Amendment) Act, 2020, adopted on May 12, 2020, marks a significant shift in protecting children's rights in Seychelles. This Act categorically bans all forms of corporal punishment, ensuring that children are no longer subjected to physical punishment either at home or in any institutional setting. By inserting section 70B into the Children Act 1982, the new legislation states that no child shall be subjected to corporal punishment, with strict penalties for offenders, including fines up to SCR25,000 or imprisonment for up to two years. This change repeals previous provisions that allowed 'proper' punishment by parents or guardians, thus aligning the protection of children with international human rights standards. The implementation of this Act requires a concerted effort involving adequate resources, comprehensive education campaigns, and collaboration between government bodies and civil society organizations to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability.

Beyond these two critical areas, Seychelles has also made strides in promoting gender equality through other legislative reforms. The modernization of birth and stillbirth notifications through the Civil Status (Amendment) Act and the comprehensive reforms introduced by the Civil Code of Seychelles Act, 2020, play a significant role in dismantling long-standing discriminatory practices. These reforms address issues such as marriage, divorce, property ownership, and inheritance, ensuring that individuals, regardless of gender, have equal rights and status under the law. Such measures are instrumental in promoting a more inclusive and equitable society, where gender parity is not only a goal but a reality.

In essence, the legislative efforts of Seychelles over the past five years reflect a multifaceted approach to addressing gender-based violence. By prioritizing the elimination of domestic violence and corporal punishment of children, and by fostering broader gender equality through legal reforms, Seychelles demonstrates a serious commitment to upholding the rights and well-being of all its citizens. These actions are not just about legal compliance but about building a society where safety, dignity, and equality are the foundations for every individual's life.

#### **16. In the past five years, what actions has your country prioritized to address gender-based violence?**

Seychelles has prioritized a multifaceted approach to addressing gender-based violence, focusing on both legislative reforms and extensive sensitization campaigns. The key actions prioritized are:

## 1. Legislative Reforms

The Domestic Violence Act, 2020 has been a significant step in combating gender-based violence. The Act explicitly prohibits various forms of domestic violence, including physical, emotional, psychological, and economic abuse. It provides a comprehensive framework for protecting victims, holding perpetrators accountable, and establishing support services such as shelters and counseling. This law addresses the disproportionate impact of domestic violence on women and children, ensuring they have robust legal protection and access to necessary resources.

The Children (Amendment) Act 2020, adopted in May, 2020, marks a critical milestone in child protection by banning all forms of corporal punishment. The legislation inserts a new section 70B into the Children Act 1982, explicitly stating that no child shall be subjected to corporal punishment, with offenders facing severe penalties. This reform ensures that children enjoy the same legal protection from assault as adults, aligning Seychelles with international human rights standards.

## 2. Sensitization Campaigns and Advocacy

A prominent effort is the official campaign against domestic violence launched by the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Family. This campaign focuses on empowering the younger generation to become responsible citizens and prepares them for future family life. A significant part of this initiative is conducting awareness sessions targeting 17 and 18-year-olds from various post-secondary institutions. These sessions aim to foster a better understanding between men and women, create a healthier living environment, and promote harmonious cohabitation.

The campaign highlights the importance of creating a gender-neutral environment for discussions about domestic violence and its prevention. It is structured around the national theme for 2023, "Annou viv pli byen dan larmoni ansanm," – (Let's live better together in harmony) emphasizing harmony and mutual respect in relationships.

The Ministry has also designated the 25th of each month as Orange Day, dedicated to condemning and fighting domestic violence, thus maintaining a continuous effort to raise awareness throughout the year.

To reach a broader audience, the Ministry has intensified programs like "Mon Fanmir, Mon Leker," (My Family is my Heart) which focus on prevention, education, advocacy, and empowerment. These programs are regularly targeted at young boys and girls, starting at an early age, to instill the values of respect and non-violence. The campaign also includes decentralizing aspects of the Family Department to ensure a continuous and widespread reach of their agenda.

Interactive sessions with speakers discussing the roles of boys and girls in society, identifying red flags in dating violence, and debating behavioral expectations have been pivotal in engaging the youth. Feedback from participants indicates a strong impact, with many expressing a newfound understanding of domestic violence and the importance of respectful relationships. These

sensitization efforts aim to cultivate a culture of non-violence and mutual respect, ultimately reducing the prevalence of gender-based violence in Seychelles.

**17. In the past five years, what strategies has your country used to prevent gender-based violence?**

Seychelles has employed a multi-faceted approach to prevent gender-based violence, incorporating legislative reforms, sensitization campaigns, and advocacy efforts.

The enactment of the Domestic Violence Act, 2020, and the Children (Amendment) Act 2020 are pivotal legislative measures aimed at addressing gender-based violence. The Domestic Violence Act provides comprehensive protection for victims and accountability for perpetrators, explicitly prohibiting various forms of domestic violence. Similarly, the Children (Amendment) Act bans all forms of corporal punishment, ensuring children's rights and aligning Seychelles with international human rights standards.

The Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Family spearheads various campaigns and initiatives to raise awareness about gender-based violence amongst the general population and youths. These efforts target different demographics, including young adults, through awareness sessions conducted in post-secondary institutions. The campaign emphasizes creating a gender-neutral environment for discussing domestic violence and promoting harmony and mutual respect in relationships. Designating the 25th of each month as Orange Day ensures sustained efforts to raise awareness throughout the year. Programs like "Mon Fanmir Mon Leker"- (My Family is my Heart) focus on prevention, education, advocacy, and empowerment, starting at an early age to instill values of respect and non-violence. Interactive sessions engage youth in discussions about gender roles, dating violence, and behavioral expectations, fostering a culture of non-violence and mutual respect.

Overall, Seychelles has utilized a comprehensive approach, combining legislative reforms with targeted sensitization campaigns and advocacy efforts to prevent and combat gender-based violence effectively.

**18. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (e.g. online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)?**

Seychelles has demonstrated commitment to preventing and responding to technology-facilitated gender-based violence through a series of actions, including legislative reforms, policy initiatives, and programs aimed at safeguarding the rights and dignity of women and girls in digital spaces.

One of the most significant actions taken by Seychelles is the enactment of the Cybercrimes and Other Related Crimes Act, 2021. This comprehensive legislation, which replaces the outdated Computer Misuse Act of 1998, criminalizes a range of digital offenses, including fraud, harassment, and the dissemination of private or indecent videos on social media platforms. By

specifically targeting behaviors that disproportionately affect women and girls, such as online sexual harassment and non-consensual sharing of intimate images, the Act aims to create a safer online environment.

The new law imposes severe penalties, including fines and imprisonment, for various digital offenses, highlighting the government's determination to protect citizens from digital harm. Particularly noteworthy are the stringent measures against cyber harassment, stalking, and the unauthorized sharing of private information. These penalties serve as deterrents to perpetrators and provide avenues for justice and protection for victims of technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

Recognizing the severe impact of digital violations on the lives of victims, especially women and girls, the Cybercrimes Act addresses the issue of non-consensual sharing of intimate images. By criminalizing the distribution of such content and imposing strict penalties, Seychelles aims to create a digital space where individuals can engage without fear of exploitation or abuse.

The law includes mechanisms for effective investigation and prosecution of digital crimes, empowering law enforcement agencies to protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable. These mechanisms, such as procedures for analyzing electronic information and removing indecent content from social media, enhance the country's ability to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

**19. In the past five years, what measures has your country taken to resource women's organizations working to prevent and respond to GBV?**

Over the past five years, Seychelles has not directly funded women's organizations exclusively dedicated to preventing and responding to gender-based violence (GBV) because there is no such organisations in existence.

While prominent NGOs like Women in Action and Solidarity (WASO) primarily focus on empowering women of low income and skills, the government has provided financial support through the National Grant Funding Scheme to various organizations working in social and gender-related areas. These initiatives indirectly contribute positively to measures aimed at preventing and addressing GBV.

Established in 2019, the National Grants Funding Scheme allocates resources to projects aligned with the country's National Development Strategies and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Since its inception, the scheme has funded a total of 105 projects amounting to SCR 32,514,904.90.

Although not specifically tailored to combat GBV, several funded projects address social issues that intersect with GBV prevention and response:

1. Campaign for Awareness Resilience and Education (CARE). This project focuses on providing a school-based substance use prevention program for children and youth, promoting resilience against substance abuse and fostering positive behavior. Total funding in 2023: SCR 383,776.60.
2. Everlasting Love Ministry. ELM's Community Prevention and Empowerment Program target social-related issues in specific zones, offering psycho-social support services, school-based interventions, and capacity building. Total funding in 2023: SCR 449,950.00.
3. HIV AIDS Support Organisation of Seychelles -HASO's Community Outreach & Prevention Program aims to create an enabling environment for key populations and people living with HIV/AIDS to access sexual and reproductive health services. Total funding in 2023: SCR 423,515.00.
4. Survival Ark Foundation -SAF's Life Skills Development project aims to reduce anti-social activities among children through the provision of safe learning environments and positive relationship building. Total funding in 2023: SCR 451,115.00.
5. United for a Purpose (UP Brigade) -This project focuses on empowering recovering drug addicts through life skills acquisition, targeting specific districts. Total funding in 2023: SCR 225,185.00.

While these projects do not directly address GBV, they contribute to creating a supportive environment that indirectly impacts GBV prevention efforts.

In 2024, additional projects were approved under the scheme, furthering initiatives that align with national development goals:

1. Seychelles Bible Society -"Life Skill Training for Transformational Leadership" project empowers adolescent school leaders with skills to positively influence peers. Total funding in 2024: SCR 161,195.50. -
2. Seychelles Alzheimer's Foundation -This project aims to improve care for Alzheimer's patients through community awareness and professional training. Total funding in 2024: SCR 277,292.00.
3. Everlasting Love Ministry-A continuation of ELMI's Community Intervention, Prevention, and Empowerment Program focusing on early intervention and psycho-social support. Total funding in 2024: SCR 449,700.00.
4. HIV AIDS Support Organisation of Seychelles- A continuation of HASO's nation-wide project to improve access to sexual and reproductive health services for key populations. Total funding in 2024: SCR 516,115.00.



5. Campaign for Awareness Resilience and Education-A continuation of CARE's project aimed at empowering children and youth to make positive life choices and engage in self-protective behaviors against substance use. Total funding in 2024: SCR 543,905.50.
6. Survival Ark Foundation- A continuation of SAF's Life Skills Development project aimed at reducing anti-social activities among children. Total funding in 2024: SCR 591,902.00. Although there isn't direct funding for women's organizations focused solely on GBV, these diverse projects contribute to creating a supportive environment that indirectly aids in preventing and responding to gender-based violence in Seychelles.

**20. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media?**

Seychelles has taken actions to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination, and gender bias in the media, including social media, through legislative reforms and policy initiatives aimed at safeguarding the digital space and protecting the dignity and well-being of women and girls.

1. Enactment of the Cybercrimes and Other Related Crimes Act, 2021-Seychelles prioritized the creation and implementation of robust legal frameworks to combat digital crimes, including those perpetuating gender-based discrimination and bias online. The Cybercrimes Act criminalizes various digital offenses, such as fraud, harassment, and the dissemination of indecent content, which disproportionately affect women and girls. By addressing these violations, the Act aims to foster a safer online environment and uphold the dignity and privacy of women and girls who are often targeted.
2. Severe Penalties for Offenses: The Cybercrimes Act imposes severe penalties, including fines and imprisonment, for offenses like cyber harassment, stalking, and the unauthorized sharing of private information. This underscores the government's commitment to protecting citizens, particularly women and girls, from digital harm. Strict measures against the distribution of offensive content aimed at harassing or disturbing individuals' peace of mind are particularly crucial in curbing online harassment and exploitation, providing a legal framework for seeking justice and protection.
3. Addressing Indecent Content: Recognizing the severe impact of indecent videos, including those involving children, on victims' lives, the Cybercrimes Act criminalizes their distribution and imposes strict penalties. By addressing this issue, Seychelles aims to ensure that women and girls can engage in the digital space without fear of exploitation or abuse.
4. Effective Investigation and Prosecution Mechanisms: The Cybercrimes Act includes mechanisms for the effective investigation and prosecution of digital crimes, enhancing law enforcement's ability to protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable. Procedures

for analyzing electronic information and removing indecent content from social media platforms contribute to creating a safer digital environment for everyone, especially vulnerable groups like women and girls.

**21. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls?**

Seychelles has implemented a series of targeted actions to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls including the Enactment of Domestic Violence Act, 2020. This legislation strengthens protections against domestic violence and ensures the safety and well-being of victims, particularly marginalized women and girls. Additionally, the Children (Amendment) Act, 2020 was passed to safeguard the rights of children.

This amendment prohibits all forms of corporal punishment of children, demonstrating the country's commitment to protecting children from violence and abuse.

Recognizing the urgent need to protect children, particularly girls, from sexual abuse, Seychelles took decisive action by initiating the drafting and enactment of a Sexual Offences Bill.

This policy framework, approved by the Cabinet in response to rising reports of sexual abuse against children, reflects Seychelles' commitment to enhancing legal protections for vulnerable groups.

Seychelles also established the Child Law Reform Committee (CLRC) in May 2020 to review existing legal frameworks concerning children and propose comprehensive reforms.

The CLRC's mandate includes aligning Seychelles' laws with constitutional mandates, international obligations, and best practices to protect children's rights, particularly in the context of sexual violence.

**22. In the past five years, what actions and measures has your country to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?**

Seychelles has not implemented specific measures targeted solely at promoting women's participation in public life and decision-making.

Instead, the country has predominantly relied on general measures that are mostly gender-neutral in nature. While Seychelles has made strides in advancing gender equality through broader policies and initiatives, such as promoting education and employment opportunities for all citizens regardless of gender, there has been a lack of targeted interventions aimed specifically at increasing women's representation and influence in public spheres.

However, it's worth noting that Seychelles has a relatively high level of gender equality compared to many other countries, with women holding significant positions in various sectors, including politics, business, and civil society. Nonetheless, there remains room for improvement in ensuring

equitable participation and representation of women in decision-making processes at all levels of society.

**23. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)?**

Seychelles has not implemented specific actions targeted at increasing women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media through information and communication technologies (ICT).

However, it's important to note that the Seychellois constitution guarantees equal rights and opportunities for all citizens, regardless of gender. Women are not discriminated against in any form, including in the media sector, and they have equal access to expression and participation in decision-making processes.

Seychelles prides itself on its commitment to gender equality and ensures that women have the same opportunities as men to contribute to media discourse and decision-making, whether through traditional media channels or emerging ICT platforms. While there may not be specific initiatives targeting women's involvement in media and ICT, the overarching legal framework and cultural norms support inclusivity and equal participation for all citizens.

**24. Please describe your country's current national women's machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women) and describe the measures that your country taken over the past five years to establish and/or strengthen it.**

Seychelles currently does not have a national women's machinery exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. In the past, there was a National Gender Machinery known as the Gender Secretariat, which was housed within the Social Development Policy Division of the Ministry for Social Affairs, Community Development, and Sports. This secretariat played a crucial role as the permanent Lead Agency within the Gender Management System (GMS), aiming to facilitate gender mainstreaming across government policies, programs, and activities, as well as within the private sector and civil society.

In recent years, the Gender Secretariat has transitioned into a Unit within the Family Department, but is under equipped to undertake a full fledged role in gender mainstreaming and cater for the promotion of all gender issues in the country. It is important to note that this unit is understaffed, consisting of only one person assisted by the Research and Policy Planning staff. Despite the absence of a dedicated national women's machinery, efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment continues through various government departments and initiatives, albeit with limited resources and capacity.

**25. In the past five years, what other mechanisms and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality across sectors? (e.g. gender focal points in the Executive, Legislature or Judiciary; inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms; gender audits, consultations with women's organizations)**

Over the past five years, Seychelles has encountered challenges in effectively mainstreaming gender equality across sectors due to budget constraints and limited human resources. Despite efforts to address gender disparities, weaknesses persist in the formulation of policies, where gender considerations are often viewed as separate issues rather than integrated into all policies, plans, and programs.

There remains a lack of awareness regarding gender mainstreaming among key sectors and policymakers, with some perceiving Seychelles as having no significant gender-related challenges, citing past progress as evidence.

This underscores the need for increased education and awareness initiatives to foster a deeper understanding of gender issues and their relevance in national development.

Furthermore, Seychelles currently lacks coordination mechanisms and dedicated machinery for mainstreaming gender, leading to a gap in capacity-building and the implementation of gender audits.

Staff members often lack the necessary knowledge and training to conduct gender audits, and there are no compulsory systems in place to facilitate this process. Addressing these challenges will require concerted efforts to enhance awareness, build capacity, and establish effective coordination mechanisms to ensure the successful mainstreaming of gender equality across all sectors of society.

**26. If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality?**

The Seychelles Human Rights Commission (SHRC) is mandated to independently promote and protect the human rights of all individuals in the country without discrimination. Established under the SHRC Act, 2018, the commission operates as a self-governing, neutral, and independent body, in accordance with Section 3(2) of the act, and adheres to the principles relating to the Status of National Institutions, commonly known as the Paris Principles.

In line with its mandate, as outlined in Section 14(4)(a) of the SHRC Act, 2018, the commission is empowered to investigate alleged violations of human rights either on its own initiative or upon receipt of a complaint. Notably, the SHRC addresses all complaints based on its internal procedures, ensuring accessibility and impartiality for every person, irrespective of gender. Thus, while the SHRC does not specifically target violations of women's rights, its overarching mission to safeguard human rights encompasses the promotion of gender equality and the protection of women's rights within the broader framework of human rights protection in Seychelles.

**27. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?**

Seychelles has taken significant steps to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies, and implement the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda.

One of the actions in this regard is the approval of the 2024-2025 National Action Plan for Women, Peace, and Security by the Seychelles Cabinet of Ministers in December 2023. This plan, set to be implemented from January 2024, marks a crucial advancement in the country's commitment to WPS principles.

The approval of this National Action Plan is politically significant, demonstrating Seychelles' dedication to enhancing women's participation, leadership, and engagement in decision-making processes at all levels. This aligns with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, reinforcing Seychelles' adherence to international standards on WPS. The strategy comprehensively addresses five core lines of effort: participation, protection, relief, response, recovery, integration, and institutionalization, aiming to create a holistic impact on women's safety, rights, and inclusion.

By prioritizing gender-responsive policies and programs, the Seychelles government seeks to support women and girls during conflicts, crises, and disasters. This approach is designed to foster safer environments, enhance women's participation in peace processes, and improve access to humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, the strategy's recognition of global shifts, such as climate-related crises and technological advancements, highlights Seychelles' innovative approach to the WPS agenda.

In terms of financial commitments, Seychelles has set a commendable example by committing to allocate at least 15% of its official development assistance to gender equality. This financial target ensures that significant resources are directed towards empowering women and promoting peace and security. Additionally, Seychelles actively supports the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), which provides crucial funding to women-led initiatives in crisis settings, thus contributing to the empowerment of women on the frontlines of conflict and crisis.

Seychelles also encourages other Member States to allocate a minimum of 15% of funds specifically for promoting women's participation in mediation efforts. This ensures that women have a seat at the table during peace negotiations and conflict resolution processes. Recognizing the importance of budgeting for national policies, Seychelles strategically allocates resources to implement effective gender-responsive programs and policies related to women, peace, and security.

Despite these efforts, Seychelles still faces challenges in fully implementing the WPS agenda, particularly in ensuring women's participation in peace processes. Women continue to encounter obstacles to meaningful inclusion in negotiations and mediation efforts, which undermines the potential impact of gender-responsive peacebuilding. Overcoming these structural barriers

requires concerted efforts to elevate women's voices in decision-making processes related to peace and security.

**28. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?**

**There is no armed conflict in Seychelles.**

**29. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?**

**There is no armed conflict in Seychelles.**

**30. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls?**

Seychelles has made significant strides in protecting children from discrimination and violations of their rights, with a particular focus on addressing sexual abuse. While the constitution provides equal protection to both girls and boys, and there is no significant disparity in their treatment, recent efforts have targeted the safety and welfare of children broadly, addressing issues affecting both girls and girls.

One of the actions taken was on Children's Day, June 1, 2022, when the Seychelles Cabinet approved a policy framework for the drafting and enactment of a Sexual Offences Bill. This decision was driven by a disturbing rise in reports of sexual abuse against children, with the majority of victims being girls. The new bill aims to enhance legal protections against sexual offences, reflecting an urgent need to strengthen the legal framework and provide better safeguards for children.

In May 2020, Seychelles established the Child Law Reform Committee (CLRC) to review the existing legal framework concerning children and propose comprehensive reforms. The CLRC's mandate is to align Seychelles' laws with constitutional mandates, international obligations, and best practices. This committee plays a crucial role in ensuring that the national laws effectively protect children, particularly girls, from abuse and exploitation.

A significant aspect of the legislative process for the new Sexual Offences Bill is the emphasis on extensive consultations. The Cabinet mandated that children's voices be included in these discussions, ensuring that the new legislation is not only robust but also reflective of the actual needs and perspectives of the children

it aims to protect. This participatory approach highlights Seychelles' commitment to creating a culture of inclusivity and respect for children's rights.

The draft Sexual Offences Bill, currently in its final consultation stage, is expected to be submitted to the Cabinet for approval soon. Its enactment will represent a significant milestone in Seychelles' legislative efforts to combat sexual offences and provide stronger legal protections for children.

The Children (Amendment) Act 2020, adopted on May 12, 2020, marks another significant milestone for Seychelles as it prohibits all forms of corporal punishment of children. The amendment inserts a new section 70B into the Children Act 1982, explicitly stating that no child shall be subjected to corporal punishment. Offenders face fines up to SCR25,000 or imprisonment for up to 2 years. The Act also repeals the previous provision allowing 'proper' punishment by parents or guardians, ensuring children have the same legal protection from assault as adults. Seychelles becomes the 60th state worldwide and the ninth African state to implement such a prohibition. However, the initiative emphasizes the need for adequate resources, education, and collaborative efforts between the government and civil society to effectively implement and eliminate all forms of corporal punishment against children in Seychelles.

**31. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation?**

Despite being an example in environmental issues and protection/conservation, Seychelles lags in integrating gender perspectives into environmental policies. This is across the board but specifically relating to environment, social issues are often ignored. There's been no commitment to make the links, and no systems are in place to mainstream gender perspectives into environmental policies. Environment policies are most of the time made in isolation, without considering the gendered impacts and implications.

This oversight must be addressed urgently, especially considering the increasing evidence of climate change effects harming the population. The specific effects on women and vulnerable groups remain largely unknown. For instance, there are many elderly women living alone in Seychelles who are particularly vulnerable to climate-related impacts but are often overlooked in policy considerations.

To rectify this situation, Seychelles needs to integrate gender perspectives into environmental policies. This involves establishing mechanisms to assess and address the differential impacts of environmental changes on women and vulnerable groups. It also requires engaging with communities to understand their needs and concerns, especially those of marginalized populations. By doing so, Seychelles can ensure that its environmental policies are not only effective in addressing climate change and conservation but also equitable and inclusive for all its citizens.

**32. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience?**

In the past five years, Seychelles has taken some actions to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience, such as through the Disaster Risk Reduction initiative under the Sendai Framework. This has been done through consultation with the Gender Unit, however, there are no concrete action taken to develop a national gender action plan for disaster risk reduction.

However, the Department of Risk & Disaster Management is guided by the Disaster Management Act 2014. Seychelles also has the National Integration Emergency Management Plan (NIEMP) 2019. The NIEMP is aligns with the national goals for disaster risk management and brings along the necessary mechanisms required to help reduce the impact of disasters on the societal, economic, and environmental dimensions of the country.

Humanitarian services is led by the Local Government Department with supporting agencies such as Red Cross Society of Seychelles, Family Department, Agency for Social Protection, Department of Information and Communication Technology, Tourism Department and Island Development Company Ltd.

The intervention starts once there are affected persons who have lost their assets and require attention to satisfy their basic needs. This task includes identifying, categorizing, and quantifying the affected population (the disappeared, deceased, and/or at risk), and determining their basic needs after the event. Information is collected on the composition of affected families/individuals (total number of members, number of adults, children, and teenagers, gender, and ages), name of the head of the family, individuals in need of special attention or belonging to vulnerable groups (children, teenagers, persons with disabilities, older adults, etc.), shelter or housing needs and personal (food, clothing, hygiene items, medicines) and domestic needs (mattresses, blankets, kitchen elements, etc.), taking into consideration the equipment and goods demanded by vulnerable groups.

The task includes creating a database of missing persons (name, gender, age, last known location, clothing, special features, etc.) and disseminating the name of missing and found person(s) through the radio, television, or web, etc and Identify the networks and social support mechanisms that could help assist the community

#### **4.0 Section 4: National institutions and processes**

**33. Please describe your country's national strategy or action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, its priority, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5.**



Seychelles is currently in the process of reviewing and updating its National Gender Policy, which was initially launched in 2016.

The policy aims to address gender equality issues within the country and will be aligned with international frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly focusing on Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) on gender equality.

The previous National Gender Policy of Seychelles emphasized the importance of eliminating gender-based discrimination and promoting gender mainstreaming in all aspects of society.

While Seychelles does not have overtly discriminatory laws, the gap lies in the enforcement and implementation of existing laws. The policy therefore aimed to address this by emphasizing legislation and the domestication of treaties and protocols ratified by Seychelles to mainstream gender perspectives.

The policy drew on gender mainstreaming approaches from regional bodies such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Commonwealth Secretariat, the African Union and the United Nations. It was particularly aligned with the key provisions of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

Priority areas covered in the policy included constitutional rights, productive resources, climate change, food and nutrition security, gender-based violence, HIV and AIDS, and gender representation in the media. The policy also addressed key issues and challenges related to gender equality in Seychelles.

While there is mention of a National Gender Plan of Action for the period 2019–2023, it has not been officially approved by relevant authorities and remains in draft form. This indicates a need for further action and commitment to operationalize the policy through concrete plans and funding allocation.

**34. Please describe your country's system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.**

There is no Gender-responsive budgeting system in place to track the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in Seychelles.

**35. What formal mechanisms are in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?**

There is at the moment no formal mechanism at national level to bring all stakeholders together in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The responsibility for reporting is housed in the Gender Unit within the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Family, under the Department of Family within the Research and Policy Planning Division. This unit is understaffed, consisting of only one person.

**36. Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report.**

Stakeholder engagement played a crucial role in the preparation of the present national report, although it faced challenges. The Department of Policy Planning and Research within the Department of Family Affairs spearheaded the report's development.

Initially, requests for information were sent to a range of organizations encompassing various sectors, including the Family Department, Social Services, Judiciary, Family Tribunal, Attorney General's Office, Seychelles National Youth Council, Citizens Engagement Platform Seychelles, Alliance of Solidarity for the Family, HIV AIDS Support Organisation, National Sports Council, Seychelles Police, Seychelles Human Rights Commission, Department of Labour, Finance Department, National Planning Department of Information and Communications Technology, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Environment, Agency for Social Protection, Disaster Risk Management Division Seychelles, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Sports Department and Local Government Department.

Unfortunately, the response was poor, yielding limited information for comprehensive answers to the questionnaire.

A workshop was also convened to gather input from the above stakeholders. However, there was again a disappointing turnout. Despite this, a list of participants for the workshop held on Tuesday, 28th May 2024, at Olympic House indicates the involvement of key departments and individuals:

1. Employment Department
2. National Planning Department
3. Agriculture Department
4. Ministry of Foreign Affairs
5. Seychelles National Youth Council (SNYC)
6. Association of Seychelles Press (ASP)
7. Education Department

8. Social Affairs Department
9. Ministry of Youth & Sports
10. Attorney General's Office
11. Family Department

Although the workshop aimed to gather insights and contributions, the limited turnout likely impacted the depth of discussion and input received.

Despite these challenges, the engagement of stakeholders, albeit to varying degrees, underscores the collaborative effort involved in the report's preparation. Moving forward, efforts may be needed to enhance participation and ensure more comprehensive contributions from stakeholders in future endeavors.

**37. Please describe your country's action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.**

There is currently no action plan to implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

The last report on the Convention on the Elimination all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), was Seychelles 7<sup>th</sup> Periodic Report, produced in November 2023.

Many of the international treaties and conventions signed by Seychelles have been domesticated. Laws and legal instruments in Seychelles are gender neutral, except when they contain specific provisions for the reproductive and maternal role of women. In the Seychellois Charter of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms (Chapter 3 of the Constitution), the Constitution of Seychelles guarantees the same human rights to all citizens and individuals in the country.

Below are the international treaties, regional instruments signed or ratified by Seychelles – relevant to Gender, and reports submitted for last 5 years

	<b>Name of International Treaty</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Ratification/ Accession</b>	<b>In Force</b>	<b>Report/s last 5 years</b>
1	Universal Declaration of Human Rights, GAUN, 10/12/1948 [Not a legally binding instrument]	1976		YES (Seychelles abides by it as a UN member)	UPR 2021

2	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR)		05.05.92	YES	
3	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), 1966.		05.05.92	YES	UPR 2021
4	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) New York 18.12.79.		05.05.92	YES	2019 (6 <sup>th</sup> ) + shadow report 2019 prepared by LGBTI Sey
5	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW-OP) 2000	22.07.02	Not ratified	NO	
6	Convention on the Rights of the Child		07.09.1990	YES	2018 (5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> )
7	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	23.01.01	11.012.12	YES	
Other relevant international conventions and agreements					
8	Equal Remuneration Convention No. 100, 1951.	23.11.99	23.11.00	YES	
9	Discrimination (employment occupation) Convention No. 111, 1958.		28.01.05	YES	
10	African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR). Nairobi, Kenya 06/1981	06.05.92 A5	06.08.92	YES	
11	Protocol to the ACPHR on the Rights of Women in Africa, Maputo 11/07/03	09.03.06			2021 – report submitted but pending, some

					modifications proposed.
12	Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance 2007 (Article 2 – Promote Gender balance and equality in the governance and development processes)		12.08.16		
13	AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa	08.07.2004			2017, 2019, 2020
14	Protocol to the African Charter of Human and People’s Rights on the establishment of an African Court on Human and People’s Rights 1998 (Article 12 – Nominations process requiring adequate gender representation)				
15	African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990		06.05.92		
16	Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, especially Women and Children 2006/SADC Protocol against Trafficking in Persons (TIP), especially Women and Children				
17	Maputo Plan of Action for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights 2006	(2006)	(Status not known)		Draft Report 2019
18	SADC Protocol on Gender and Development 2008	2008	2013		Seychelles participates and reports
19	COMESA Treaty, Articles 154, 155 and 143 (leading to Gender Policy 2002)	(Status not known)	(Status not known)		2018, 2019 - reports submitted by Gender Secretariat

20	Agenda 2030 and the SDGs	2015			
21	AU Agenda 2063	31.01.2015			2019

Source: Department of Foreign Affairs

**5.0 Section 5: Data and Statistics**

**38. What are the most important areas in which your country has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level?**

Statistics, its collection, analysis, and use, particularly relating to gender, are lacking in Seychelles.

While the National Bureau of Statistics is mandated to support the advancement of the population through the provision of quality statistics that inform planning and decision-making, the data collected primarily covers areas such as demography, national accounts, tourism, employment, census surveys, production, crime, justice, and security. However, there is a notable absence of gender analysis in these statistics.

Although most statistics are disaggregated, there are limitations in terms of reliability in data collection. Additionally, duplication exists, often resulting in different statistics on the same issue.

Unfortunately, over the past five years, there has been no significant improvement in this situation, and the status quo remains unchanged.

**39. Over the next five years, what are your country’s priorities for strengthening national gender statistics?**

Over the next five years, the focus will be on enhancing the capacity of the gender unit, fostering closer relationships and coordination with all departments by appointing a gender focal point in each department, forging a stronger working partnership with the National Bureau of Statistics, promoting enhanced national coordination in gender data collection, developing guidelines and benchmarks for collecting and analyzing gender data, and advocating for the integration of gender statistics into policy formulation. The National Bureau of Statistics is also working on a new Statistical Act, which will provide better coordination of Statistics at national level.

**40. What gender-specific indicators<sup>3</sup> has your country prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs?**

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<sup>3</sup> The term ‘gender-specific indicators’ is used to refer to indicators that explicitly call for disaggregation by sex and/or refer to gender equality as the underlying objective. For example, SDG indicator 5.c.1 captures the percentage of countries with systems to track public allocations that are directed towards policies and programmes that promote gender equality—the

While Seychelles has identified six priority areas in its National Development Strategy (NDS) 2024-2028, aimed at shaping the socio-economic landscape of the nation, there are no gender-specific indicators prioritized for monitoring progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite the alignment of the six goals with the Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS), and gender issues such as gender-based violence and gender equality is mentioned in the report there is no gender-specific indicators within the NDS.

This signifies a need for the development of such indicators to effectively monitor progress on gender-related SDGs in Seychelles. The NDS was formulated by the National Planning Department within the Ministry of Finance, National Planning, and Trade and was approved in 2023. Reporting on the SDGs compels Seychelles to produce various sets of data, which may not necessarily be readily available. This calls for more robust data collection, processing and dissemination efforts. Moreover, differences exist in concepts, definitions and standards for indicators, thus creating challenges with comparability.

#### **41. Which data disaggregation's<sup>4</sup> are routinely provided by major surveys in your country?**

The National Bureau of Statistics, particularly through its Census and Survey unit, plays a pivotal role in collecting statistical information concerning the socio-economic conditions of the Seychellois population. The unit's core function is to ensure the timely execution of censuses and surveys aimed at gathering vital statistics crucial for evidence-based planning and decision-making processes.

Key surveys routinely conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics include Population and Household Surveys, Consumer Price Index (CPI) surveys, Household Budget Surveys (HBS), and Labour Force Surveys (LFS). These surveys cover a wide range of socio-economic aspects, providing valuable insights into various facets of Seychelles' population and economy.

One notable aspect of these surveys is the disaggregation of data by sex, which allows for a gender-sensitive analysis of the collected information. Specifically, data disaggregated by sex are provided in surveys such as Seychelles Population and Housing Censuses, Population and Vital Statistics, Labour Force Surveys, Unemployment Statistics, and Household Budget Surveys. This disaggregation enables policymakers and researchers to better understand gender-specific trends, disparities, and dynamics within Seychelles, facilitating targeted interventions and policy formulation to address gender-related issues effectively.

## **6.0 Section 6: Conclusion and next steps**

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underlying objective is the promotion of gender equality. The term is also used for indicators where women and girls are specified within the indicator as the targeted population (see UN Women. 2018. *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York).

<sup>4</sup> As specified in A/RES/70/1, with the addition of education, marital status, religion and sexual orientation.

The review process in Seychelles has provided valuable insights into the progress made in terms of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, as well as the persisting challenges specific to its context as a small island developing state.

One key lesson learned is that while Seychelles has laws and legal instruments that are generally gender-neutral, there are still gaps in their full enforcement and implementation. Specifically, there is a need for mainstreaming gender in the legislation drafting process and harmonizing laws to align with (sub)regional and international treaties and protocols ratified by Seychelles.

Moreover, the review process has highlighted the limited and outdated literature on gender in Seychelles, making it challenging to gain a comprehensive understanding of historical and cultural implications of gender issues. Additionally, the lack of sex-disaggregated data presents a significant challenge, hindering evidence-based policymaking and monitoring of progress towards gender equality goals.

Furthermore, Seychelles lacks a designated ministry or department of women or gender affairs, with the Gender Unit within the Ministry of Family facing constraints in terms of capacity and resources. This limits its effectiveness in addressing gender-related issues comprehensively.

To address these challenges, Seychelles must prioritize allocating more resources towards gender issues, enhancing education and awareness among policymakers, and fostering greater commitment from stakeholders.

Additionally, efforts should be made to improve the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data, as well as to strengthen systems for data collection. This will enable better monitoring of progress and identification of gaps in gender equality initiatives.

Furthermore, there is a need for investment in capacity building, including training more qualified staff and promoting education on gender mainstreaming principles. Finally, there must be a national commitment to mainstream gender across all sectors and policies to ensure sustainable progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in Seychelles.