



SOUTHERN AFRICAN MIGRATION MANAGEMENT PROJECT

THE SEYCHELLES: LABOUR MIGRATION REVIEW

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International
Labour
Organization



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1. INTRODUCTION

As the economy has expanded in the last two decades, labour migration to Seychelles has been driven by growth in the tourism, construction sectors as well as in fish processing industries. Poulain and Herm (2014: 37) note the steady increase in the numbers of migrant workers in Seychelles between the two previous census datapoints of 2002 and 2010 but that after 2010, the increase was even more pronounced. Growing dependence on labour migration has prompted debate about the need for labour market reform and the introduction of a labour localization regulatory framework (Thompson et al., 2019). Section 2 of this labour migration overview first summarizes the main pillars of the 2019 National Labour Migration Plan (NLMP). Section 3 examines various data sources for assessing the volumes, age and sex profile, countries of origin, and employment sectors of migrant workers in Seychelles. Sections 4 to 11 examine the labour migration policy framework and Section 12 outlines the NLMP strategy for improved social protection for migrant workers.

2. NATIONAL LABOUR MIGRATION POLICY (NLMP)

The Seychelles National Labour Migration Policy was released by the Ministry of Employment, Immigration and Civil Status after tripartite consultations including workers and employers' organisations and other key stakeholders, was accompanied by a Labour Migration Action Plan and published in 2019 (Adonis, 2017; MEICS, 2019). The stated objectives of the NLMP are to:

1. Ensure that effective institutions, procedures, and regulations are in place to govern labour migration based on reliable data and broad stakeholder participation.
2. Protect the rights of migrant workers and uphold high standards of working conditions for all.
3. Ensure that the right mix of skills is available in the Seychelles in order to meet labour market needs and promote productive and sustainable employment for all workers.
4. Promote fair and effective recruitment practices for all workers.

The policy is structured around four key areas of intervention linked to each of the above objectives:

A. Governance of Labour Migration

Under the first objective, Seychelle's Labour Migration Policy mentions the need to undertake actions to formalize or improve inter-ministerial coordination to ensure coherence among employment, education, social protection, development and migration policies. Mechanisms will also be put in place to increase the participation of civil society, employers and workers organizations in developing and implementing migration-related policies and programmes. In order to ensure that a solid evidence base is available for policymaking, the Government will undertake to strengthen data collection relevant to labour migration.

B. Protection of the rights of all workers, based on the principles of equality of treatment and non-discrimination

The second objective notes that without proper protections for the rights of migrant workers, all workers are at risk of suffering from downward pressures on wages and deteriorating working conditions. The Government will take measures to strengthen the enforcement of existing regulations and to improve data collection on abuses and violations. To ensure that migrant workers are

covered by social protection measures, gaps and ambiguities in existing policies will be clarified. Recognizing that migrant workers have specific needs and vulnerabilities, the Government will work with social partners and civil society to better provide information and support services to migrant workers, and to sensitize key actors and the general public on migrant workers' needs as well as their positive contribution to the development of the Seychelles.

C. Actions to attract, retain and develop the skills needed for the Seychelles' labour market

The third objective states that the Government will develop strategic labour migration programmes to offset demand for needed skills, while continuing to invest in building local workers' skills. In order to better analyze current and projected supply and demand for skills, the Government will seek to improve data collection on the labour market and strengthen its collaboration with the private sector and trade union organizations to jointly identify critical skills shortages and strategies in response. The strategies will also include modification of school curriculum in line with labour market needs. The Government will also undertake to engage with Seychellois abroad as well as potential emigrants to encourage return and retention of Seychellois with skills in need in the country.

D. Fair and effective recruitment for all workers

The fourth objective observes that the Government will further develop and enforce measures to protect workers from fraudulent and abusive recruitment practices and ensure that a comprehensive regulatory framework for recruitment activities is in place. The Government will also take on a more proactive role in overseas recruitment in collaboration with employers, private recruitment agencies, and countries of origin of migrant workers, to improve the quality and reliability of recruitment processes. Finally, the Government will enhance collaboration between local public employment services and private recruitment agencies to provide more effective job placement services.

3. LABOUR MIGRATION DATA SOURCES, TRENDS AND DYNAMICS

3.1 Migration Data Sources

The main open access data sources for migration to Seychelles include the following:

- ▶ UN DESA Migrant Stock Country Profile
- ▶ UN DESA Migrant Stock by Origin and Destination 2019 Update
- ▶ World Bank Remittances Data (World Bank, 2021)
- ▶ National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2020a, 2020b) (2020)

3.2 Migrant Stock Trends

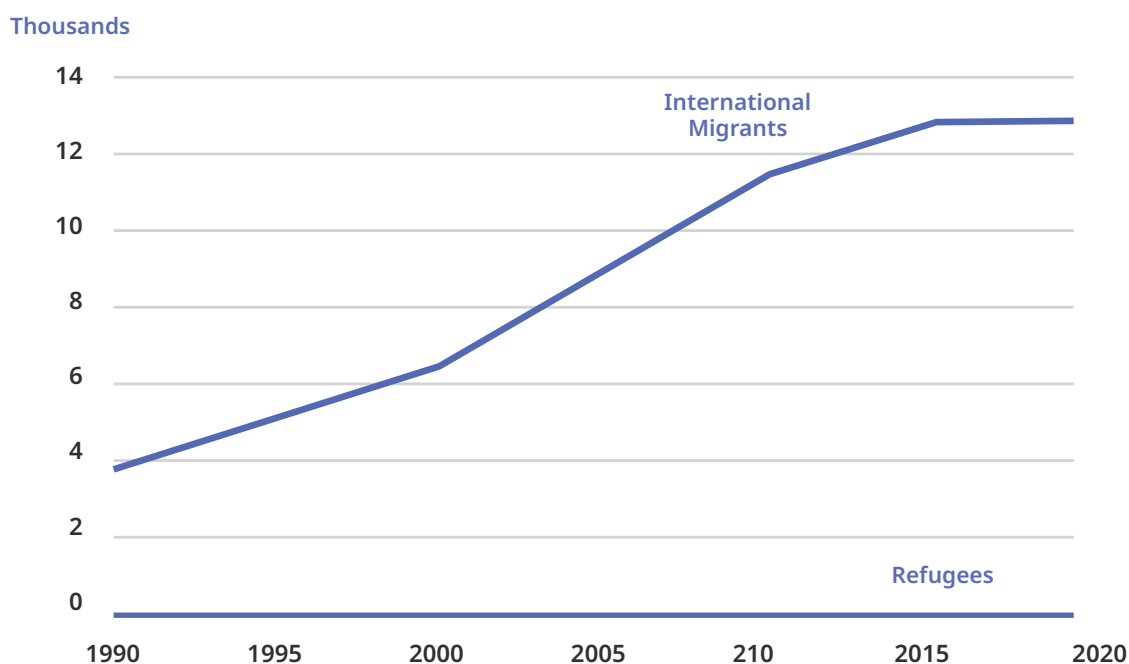
UN DESA migrant stock data suggests that the total number of foreign-born international migrants in Seychelles have undergone a steady increase in the last three decades from approximately 3,700 in 1990 to 12,900 in 2019 (Table 1 and Figure 1). The proportion of migrants in the total population also increased from 5.3% in 1990 to 13.2% in 2019. The migrant population aged slightly from an average of 34 to 38, as did the proportion of working age adults in the migrant population from 77% to 86%. The proportion of migrants from other SADC states almost doubled in the 1990s to 29% in 2000 but has since fallen to around 18%. The only indicator which has shown a consistent decline is the proportion of females in the migrant population, down from 41% in 1990 to 30% in 2019, primarily a result of increased male in-migration.

▶ **Table 1: Migrant Stock of Seychelles, 1990-2019**

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2019
International migrants	3,700	5,100	6,600	9,000	11,400	12,800	12,900
Share of total population (%)	5.3	6.7	8.1	10.1	12.5	13.5	13.2
Females %	40.8	41.3	41.6	35.3	31.7	30.0	30.0
Median Age	34.0	34.0	33.4	33.5	34.7	35.8	37.8
Age Group (%)							
0-19	18.4	18.4	15.1	14.0	10.0	10.4	10.2
20-64	76.8	76.8	80.3	82.2	87.3	86.5	85.7
65+	4.8	4.8	4.6	3.8	2.8	3.1	4.1
Migrants from Southern Africa (%)	15.0	24.7	29.4	22.2	18.2	18.2	18.2

Source: UN DESA (2019a)

► **Figure 1: Number of International Migrants in Seychelles, 1990-2020**



3.3 Countries of Migrant Origin

The NLMP notes that at the time of the 2010 census, the foreign-born population was primarily from India, followed by Madagascar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Mauritius and that work permit approvals data indicate that the number of migrants from these countries have continued to increase over the past decade. New migration flows have also emerged, from Asia including Nepal, Bangladesh and China. The number of migrants from Western European countries has also increased, in particular from Germany, France, Italy, Belgium and the United Kingdom (MIEC, 2019). In 2019, work permit data put the number of migrant workers at 14,541 (MIEC, 2019: 10). Table 2 shows the migrant stock (foreign-born) in the country in 2019. Of the 12,926 migrants in the country, just over 70% of migrants are from Asia, followed by Africa (18%) and Europe (7%). India is the main source of migrants (with 51%) of the total, followed by Madagascar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, China. And Kenya.

► **Table 2: Migrant Stock by Region and Country of Origin, 2019**

	No.	%
Africa		
Madagascar	809	6.3
Mauritius	559	4.3

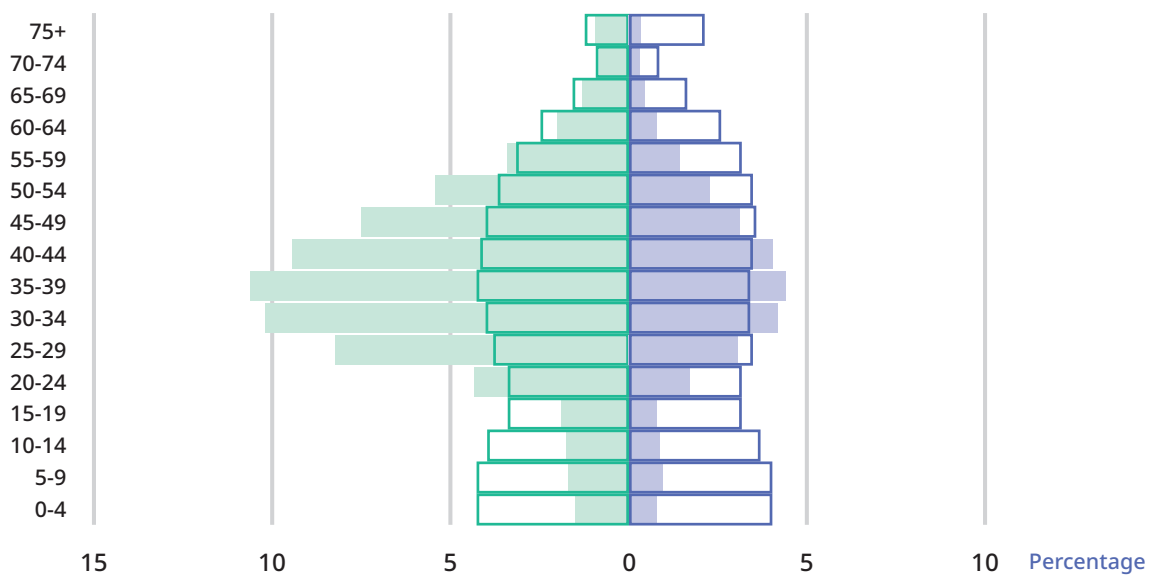
	No.	%
Africa		
Kenya	413	3.2
South Africa	257	2.0
Nigeria	137	1.1
Somalia	64	0.5
Maldives	38	0.3
Uganda	28	0.2
Sub-Total	2305	17.9
Asia		
India	6550	50.7
Philippines	712	5.5
Sri Lanka	604	4.7
China	515	4.0
Thailand	241	1.9
Bangladesh	222	1.7
Nepal	176	1.4
Indonesia	142	1.1
Pakistan	24	0.2
Sub-Total	9186	71.2
Europe		
UK	293	2.3
France	241	1.9
Italy	123	1.0
Russia	97	0.8
Germany	85	0.7
Belgium	38	0.3
Spain	24	0.2
Sub-Total	901	7.2
Other		
Australia	51	0.4
Cuba	43	0.3
Other South	287	2.2
Other North	153	2.0
Sub-Total	534	4.9
Totals	12,926	100.0

Source: UN DESA

3.4 Age and Sex Distribution of Migrant Population

Figure 2 from UN DESA shows that most migrants in Seychelles in 2019 were of working age with a particular concentration of both male (on the left) and female migrants (on the right) in their 30s. The comparison group is citizens of Seychelles which shows a very consistent distribution across the age categories. Table 3 shows the sex distribution of the migrant population by country of origin. Overall, the migrant stock is heavily male dominated (70% male versus 30% female). The main reason for this is that there are many more male than female migrants from every Asian and most African countries (Kenya being the only real exception). Migrants from the major origin country, India, make up half of the migrant population overall with a sex ratio of 73% male and only 27% female. The sex ration of migrants from most European countries is more evenly balanced.

► **Figure 2: Population Pyramid of Migrant Workers in Seychelles, 2019**



Source: UN DESA

► **Table 3: Sex of Migrant Stock by Country of Origin, 2019**

	Female	Male	% Female	% Male
Africa				
Madagascar	155	654	19.2	80.8
Mauritius	145	414	25.9	74.1
Kenya	257	156	62.2	37.8

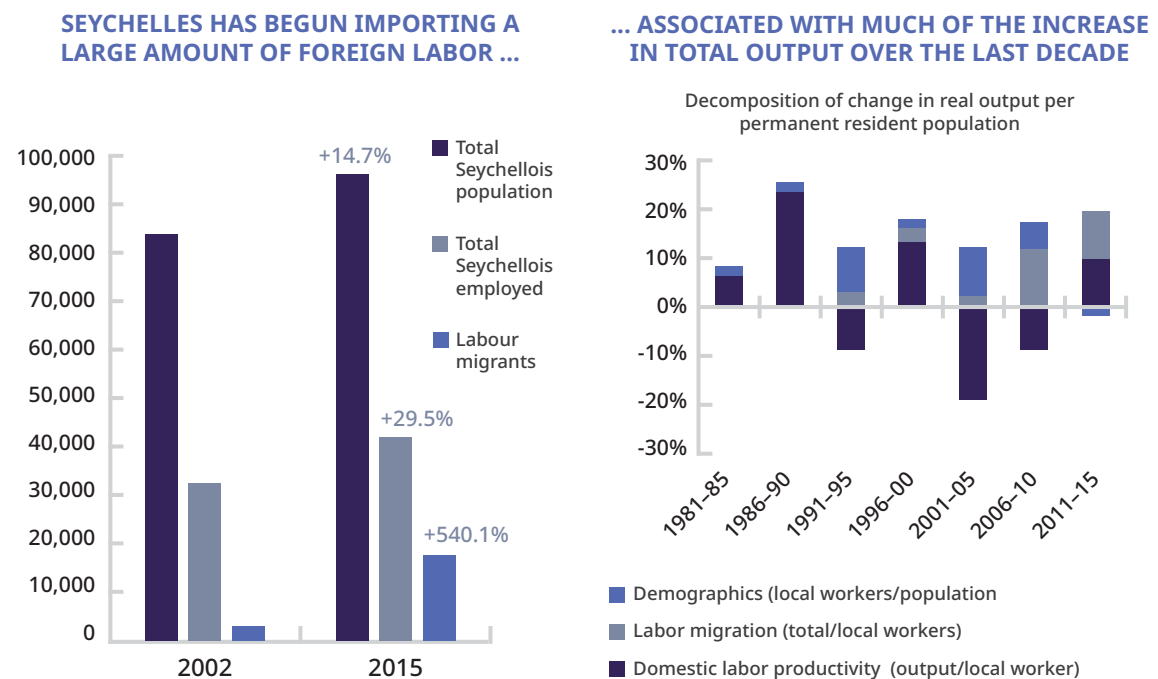
	Female	Male	% Female	% Male
Africa				
South Africa	101	156	39.3	60.7
Nigeria	44	93	32.1	67.9
Somalia	22	42	34.4	65.6
Maldives	13	25	34.2	65.8
Uganda	14	14	50.0	50.0
Asia				
India	1774	4776	27.1	72.9
Philippines	180	532	25.3	74.7
Sri Lanka	172	432	28.5	71.5
China	61	454	11.8	88.2
Thailand	120	121	49.8	50.2
Bangladesh	44	178	19.8	80.2
Nepal	20	156	11.4	88.6
Indonesia	39	103	27.5	72.5
Pakistan	5	19	20.8	79.2
Europe				
UK	135	158	46.0	54.0
France	118	123	49.0	51.0
Italy	47	76	38.2	61.8
Russia	57	40	58.8	41.2
Germany	47	38	55.3	44.7
Belgium	24	14	63.2	36.8
Spain	18	6	75.0	25.0
Other				
Australia	24	27	47.1	52.9
Cuba	19	24	44.2	55.8
Other South	102	185	35.5	64.5
Other North	66	87	43.1	56.9
Totals	3877	9049	30.0	70.0

Source: UNDESA

3.5 Migrant Employment

The World Bank Seychelles diagnostic provides a detailed analysis of the economy and labour market of Seychelles. Other than a graphic about the growing importance of labour migration to economic growth (Figure 3), no further information about migrant employment is provided (World Bank, 2017).

► **Figure 3: World Bank Diagnostic on the Role of Labour Migrants in the Economy, 2002–2015**



Source: World Bank (2017)

Migrant workers are not included in the Seychelles Labour Force Surveys which limits the information available about migrant employment in the economy and the labour market as a whole (Bhorat et al., 2017: 5). The reason relates to internal capacity issues and administrative data from the Immigration Department could assist in closing the data gaps.¹ MIEC (2019: 25) notes that the highest concentration of migrant workers are in construction, tourism, wholesale trade and retail, and fishing. Migrant workers make up a majority of employees in export-oriented manufacturing firms such as fish processing in the Seychelles international free trade zones (SITZ).

1 Communication from Mario Dupres.

Migrant workers are represented in all sectors of the economy and at all levels. However, the largest number are in lower and semi-skilled positions in demanding working conditions. Migrants are also employed in the public sector, particularly healthcare and education. Around two-thirds of all medical doctors in the country, and about 250 teachers in secondary and professional training centres are migrants, Table 4 shows the occupational breakdown of the non-citizen population at the time of the 2010 Census, the most recent available set of data. However, as many as a third of all non-citizens did not report their occupation in the census (Poulain and Herm, 2014: 47). Migrants make up a significant proportion of the workforce in three main sectors of the economy: accommodation and food services, construction, and manufacturing. The table confirms that migrants are found in all economic sectors and also shows that the workforce is heavily-male dominated. In construction and manufacturing, close to 90% of the workers are male. Even in tourism (accommodation and food services), the workforce is 69% male.

► **Table 3: Employment Sectors of Non-Citizens, 2010**

	No. of Non-Citizens	Male No.	Female No.	Male %	Female %
Construction	2,064	1,822	242	88.3	11.7
Manufacturing	991	886	105	89.4	10.6
Accommodation & Food Services	798	549	249	68.8	31.2
Public Administration & Defence	244	157	87	64.3	35.7
Wholesale & Retail Trade	191	136	55	71.2	28.8
Transportation & Storage	189	134	55	70.9	29.1
Human Health & Social Work	161	106	55	65.8	34.2
Administrative & Support Services	153	97	56	63.4	36.4
Other Services	150	92	58	61.3	38.7
Education	126	77	49	61.1	38.9
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	98	61	37	62.2	37.8
Mining & Quarrying	91	87	4	95.6	4.4
Real Estate	77	63	14	81.8	18.2
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	63	30	33	47.6	52.4
Information & Communication	51	37	14	72.5	27.5
Financial & Insurance	46	25	21	54.3	45.7
Households as Employers	40	26	14	65.0	35.0
Electricity Supply	38	24	14	63.2	36.8
Professional, Scientific & Technical	37	28	9	75.7	24.3

	No. of Non-Citizens	Male No.	Female No.	Male %	Female %
Water Supply	18	13	5	72.2	27.8
Unknown/Other	2,172	1,419	753	65.3	34.7
Total	7,798	5,869	1,929	75.3	24.7

Source: Poulain and Herm (2014)

According to MEICS (2019), there has been an increase in demand for female migrant workers to fill positions in light manufacturing as well as domestic work and home care, although the lack of sex-disaggregated statistics on work permits make it difficult to assess the extent of this trend.

3.6 Remittances

World Bank remittances data shows a gradual increase in remittance outflow from Seychelles between 2001 and 2006, a rapid increase after 2007 and a peak of USD74 million in 2015 followed by another peak of USD73 million in 2019. The 2020 figure is the lowest since 2010, presumably COVID-related.

► **Table 4: Remittance Outflows from Seychelles**

Year	USD (million)
2001	6
2002	5
2003	7
2004	8
2005	10
2006	17
2007	52
2008	51
2009	62
2010	41
2011	50
2012	57
2013	61
2014	58
2015	74

Year	USD (million)
2016	63
2017	68
2018	70
2019	73
2020	45

Source: World Bank (2021)

4. POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles (as amended)²

Chapter 3 of the Constitution of the Seychelles, is titled Seychellois Charter of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms and except where otherwise prescribed, apply to all persons living in the country. Some of the key provisions of Chapter 3, that are of relevance to labour migration and migrant workers, are presented below:

Article 16

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

Article 17

- a. *Every person* has a right not to be held in slavery or bondage.
- b. *Every person* has a right not to be compelled to perform forced or compulsory labour.

Article 18

Every person has a right to liberty and security of the person.

Article 22

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

Article 23

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

Article 25

Every person lawfully present in Seychelles has a right of freedom of movement and for the purpose of this article this right includes the right to move freely within

2 <https://seylil.org/sc/legislation/consolidated-act/42>

Seychelles, the right to reside in any part of Seychelles, the right to leave Seychelles and the right not to be expelled from Seychelles.

Article 27

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 28

The State recognises the right of access of *every person* to information relating to that person and held by a public authority which is performing a governmental function and the right to have the information rectified or otherwise amended, if inaccurate.

Article 31

The State recognises the right of *children and young persons* to special protection in view of their immaturity and vulnerability and to ensure effective exercise of this right the State undertakes

- a. to provide that the minimum age of admission to employment shall be fifteen years, subject to exceptions for children who are employed part-time in light work prescribed by law without harm to their health, morals or education;
- b. to provide for a higher minimum age of admission to employment with respect to occupations prescribed by law which the State regards as dangerous, unhealthy or likely to impair the normal development of a child or young person;
- c. to ensure special protection against social and economic exploitation and physical and moral dangers to which children and young persons are exposed;

Several articles in the constitution specific rights that are applicable to citizens only, including:

- ▶ **Article 33** – the right to education
- ▶ **Article 34** – the right to adequate and decent shelter conducive to health and well-being
- ▶ **Article 35** – the right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work

Part 5 of the Constitution sets out the Principles of Interpretation of the above provisions and helps with understanding how the principles may be applicable to migrant workers, even if they specifically reserve the right for citizens (as indicated above):

Article 47

Where a right or freedom contained in this Charter is subject to any limitation, restriction or qualification, that limitation, restriction or qualification

- a. shall have no wider effect than is strictly necessary in the circumstances; and
- b. shall not be applied for any purpose other than that for which it has been prescribed.

Article 48

This Chapter shall be interpreted in such a way so as not to be inconsistent with any international obligations of Seychelles relating to human rights and freedoms and a court shall, when interpreting the provision of this Chapter, take judicial notice of

- a. the international instruments containing these obligations;
- b. the reports and expression of views of bodies administering or enforcing these instruments;
- c. the reports, decisions or opinions of international and regional institutions administering or enforcing Conventions on human rights and freedoms;
- d. the Constitutions of other democratic States or nations and decisions of the courts of the States or nations in respect of their Constitutions.

4.2 Immigration Decree Regulations (Decree No.18 of 1979) and 2014 Regulations³

The Immigration Decree (Decree No.18 of 1979) and Immigration Regulations of 1981 (Statutory Instruments 32 of 1981) and its amendments, regulate the entry and stay of foreigners in the Seychelles.

The process for the recruitment of migrant workers is split between two Ministries; namely, , the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. All applications for recruitment start with the Employment Department

³ <https://seylil.org/sc/legislation/consolidated-act/93>; <https://seylil.org/sc/legislation/si/2014/11>

(Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs) where the employer needs to make an application for a post to be occupied by a foreigner. All employers, including those that hold a valid Certificate of Entitlement (CoE) are required to undertake labour market testing of local jobseekers which include non-nationals married to locals. Authorization to recruit migrant workers is given to employers by the Employment Department and the Immigration Division issues the permit to allow the migrant to work.

Since February 2021, employers have been required to submit their list of vacancies to the Ministry in order to check the availability of local jobseekers. Previously those employers holding a valid COE would apply directly to the Immigration Department. After the employer has proven through a vacancy/labour market test process the Ministry that no local jobseeker exists with the required skills, an approval certificate is given to the employer for the recruitment of a non-Seychellois.

The Immigration Act also provides the parameters within which the employment of foreign nationals is regulated. The application for a Gainful Occupation Permit (GOP) must be made in the prescribed manner to the Ministry of Internal Affairs through the Director of Immigration subject to specific provisions being met. Every person who arrives in Seychelles must appear before an Immigration Officer and be in possession of a valid passport, and documentary evidence relative to their claim to enter or remain in Seychelles. The Director of Immigration may require, in respect of any person entering Seychelles as a condition, the deposit of a sum of money or the furnishing of such guarantee as the Director of Immigration may accept in lieu of such deposit. In the case of non-Seychellois on GOP the employer is required to make the deposit.

The application for the permit must be made in the prescribed manner to the Minister through the Director of Immigration by the person seeking permit in the case of a self-employed or by the prospective employer. In considering the application the Minister must take into account: the character, reputation and health of the applicant and, where relevant, any member of his household; the professional qualification of the applicant; the availability of services of persons already in Seychelles; the protection of local interests and the economic and social benefit which the applicant may bring to Seychelles or enhance by his presence.

Employers from the tourism sector, construction, agriculture, manufacturing, fishing, financial services and security services are subject to a quota system and employers can recruit workers overseas within the quota limit without needing to advertise

jobs in Seychelles, provided that they hold a valid COE. They would also need to notify the Employment Department of such vacancies and obtain an approval from the Employment Department prior to recruitment and proceeding directly to the Immigration Department. All locally registered companies in these sectors wishing to recruit non-local workers may apply for a certificate of entitlement in writing to the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs. Employers in the Trade and Commerce Industry and employers employing domestic workers are also subjected to a quota system. However they are not entitled for have a COE.

Following the issue of the work permit, employers are required as per the Employment Act (see below) to submit within one month after recruitment, the contract of employment of the foreign worker to the Ministry, for attestation to ensure that the terms and conditions of employment are in conformity with national labour laws. Companies are required to submit their establishment list every three months to the Ministry, as part of the monitoring process of the employment of foreign workers. Employers under the quota entitlement are also required to submit the list and details of vacancies. Where applicable the employer may be required to submit a localization plan by request of the Ministry responsible for employment.

The following sectors are obliged to first test the local labour market to fill in their vacancies and the Ministry has to be satisfied that they cannot find qualified willing local person to fill those posts before the employer can apply for a certificate of entitlement to bring in a foreign worker: trade and commerce, domestic workers for private elderly homes, and domestic workers for individual employers.

4.3 Employment Act, 1995 and Amended Regulations, 2016⁴

The Employment Act of 1995 establishes the principle of equality of treatment, specifying that migrant workers workers are protected by the same terms and conditions of employment as Seychellois workers. This implies that all labour laws apply equally to migrant workers, including:

- ▶ Industrial Relations Act (IRA) 1994, establishing the right of all workers to form and join independent unions and to bargain collectively, as well as to be represented by trade unions in dispute settlement processes

4 <https://seylil.org/sc/legislation/consolidated-act/69>

- ▶ Occupational Safety and Health Decree, 1978, imposing a duty on the employer to ensure that employees are not exposed to health and safety risks, and that every employee undergoes a medical examination prescribed for the relevant job category,
- ▶ Employment Act, Amended Regulations, 2016 setting mandatory minimum wage for all workers regardless of nationality
- ▶ Public Service Order of 2011, establishing equal access to all state emergency medical services on the same basis as citizens of Seychelles

4.4 National Labour Migration Policy, 2019⁵

Under the auspices of the Employment Department,, a National Labour Migration Policy was published in October 2019 that sets out the following objectives:

1. To ensure that effective institutions, procedures, and regulations are in place to govern labour migration based on reliable data and broad stakeholder participation.
2. To protect the rights of migrant workers and uphold high standards of working conditions for all
3. To ensure that the right mix of skills is available in the Seychelles in order to meet labour market needs and promote productive and sustainable employment for all workers.
4. To promote fair and effective recruitment practices for all workers.

The policy is structured around four key areas of intervention linked to each of the above objectives, as follows:

- ▶ **Key area of intervention 1** relates to the governance of labour migration
- ▶ **Key area of intervention 2** focuses on the protection of the rights of all workers, based on the principles of equality of treatment and non-discrimination.
- ▶ **Key area of intervention 3** proposes actions to attract, retain and develop the skills needed for the Seychelles' labour market

5 <http://www.mofbe.gov.sc/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Labour-Migration-Policy.pdf>

- ▶ **Key area of intervention 4** seeks to ensure fair and effective recruitment for all workers

The scope and targets of the NLMP are:

- ▶ Migrant workers¹ currently employed in the Seychelles or seeking to migrate for employment to the Seychelles
- ▶ Seychellois migrants working abroad
- ▶ Seychellois working in the Seychelles
- ▶ All Government ministries and departments with a direct role in labour migration or with policy responsibilities intersecting with migration issues
- ▶ Representatives of workers and employers
- ▶ Private sector stakeholders, including employers of migrant workers and private recruitment agencies
- ▶ Civil society representatives active in the protection of migrant workers and employment programmes

5. LABOUR MARKET INSTITUTIONS

5.1 Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs: Labour Migration Division

The Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs (MESA) is the lead technical ministry responsible for promoting employment and social dialogue, overseeing labour relations, and monitoring employment conditions and the labour market. MESA includes a Labour Migration Division has as its main role to ensure the effective management of the employment of non-Seychellois in Seychelles.

The functions of the Labour Migration Division include:

- ▶ Processing requests for employment of non-Seychellois
- ▶ Carrying out periodic visits to local organizations to monitor the implementation of the Localization Plan and Policy
- ▶ Ensuring that employers submit the contracts of Employment for non-Seychellois for attestation
- ▶ Verifying that all contracts for employment of non-Seychellois workers are in line with the Employment Act 1995
- ▶ Keeping regular contact with the Immigration Division and other stakeholders in relation to the employment of non-Seychellois
- ▶ Ensuring the welfare of non-Seychellois workers in the country

The registration of job seekers and job placement services have been outsourced to private recruitment agencies (PRAs) since 2009. PRAs must apply and receive a certificate of registration from the Ministry and then apply for a license to operate as a PRA from the Seychelles Licensing Authority. Reporting by PRAs on vacancies, jobseekers and placements are used by the Ministry to monitor their activities as well as overall labour market trends.

5.2 Ministry of Internal Affairs

The Ministry (formerly Immigration & Civil Status Department in the MEICS and Immigration Division) is responsible for enforcing border controls and assessing applications for citizenship, permanent residence, and temporary work permits.

5.3 Tripartite Platforms

A number of platforms for tripartite social dialogue have been established by the Ministry including the National Consultative Committee on Employment (NCCE), an Occupational Safety Board, and a Committee for the Employment of Non-Seychellois. The National Labour Migration Policy's Action Plan calls for the establishment of a Tripartite Labour Migration Advisory Committee (LMAC) including representatives of workers and employers' organisations. The LMAC has the objective to monitor implementation of the NLMP and, as needed, create specific thematic working groups around key migration policy areas. However, Seychelles' LMAC has not been meeting as expected.

The NLMP's Action Plan mentions the need to "Integrate labour migration-related topics into the agenda of the National Consultative Committee on Employment to ensure tripartite discussion." According to the NLMP, in practice, there has been limited substantive tripartite consultation, and social partners were not strongly associated to recent changes in labour legislation on key issues such as minimum wage and retirement age and income tax reforms. However, the NCCE has been reconstituted in 2022 and regular meetings are indeed being undertaken.

5.4 Committee on Employment of Non-Seychellois

The Committee on Employment of Non-Seychellois (CENS) was set up to advise the Ministry of Employment, and Social Affairs on issues relating to the employment of Non-Seychellois. It also assists in monitoring and coordinating the employment of non-Seychellois workers in the country.

The Committee can achieve this by;

- ▶ Reviewing/proposing new strategies for effective management of non-Seychellois workers based on performance of the local labour market;
- ▶ Reporting and making recommendations on the employment of non-Seychellois
- ▶ Assisting with the monitoring and evaluating of the Localization Plan

According to the official MESA website, the Committee meets every two months and consists of representatives from the following Ministries and organizations:

- ▶ Ministry of Employment, and Social Affairs
- ▶ Ministry of Tourism and Culture
- ▶ Ministry of Finance Trade and Investment

- ▶ Ministry of Health
- ▶ Immigration Division
- ▶ Seychelles Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI)
- ▶ Association of Seychelles Employers (ASE) and
- ▶ Seychelles Federation of Workers' Union (SFWU)

In relation to this, the NLMP notes that there is a need to “revive the Committee for the Employment of Non-Seychellois to discuss work permit requirements, employment and welfare related issues for migrant workers, in close collaboration with the inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms”.

Seychelles' Labour Migration Action Plan mentions that through the CENS or the Advisory Committee, a working group should be set up to clarify employer obligations in relation to housing and food for migrant workers and develop and disseminate guidelines accordingly.

6. RATIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

6.1 ILO Conventions

Seychelles has ratified 37 ILO Conventions, of which 23 are in force.⁶ With regard to labour migration, the following Conventions that have been ratified are of particular interest:

► **Table 5: ILO Conventions Ratified**

	Convention No	Title	Date of Ratification
Fundamental Conventions	C029	Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)	06 Feb 1978
	C087	Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)	06 Feb 1978
	C098	Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)	04 Oct 1999
	C100	Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)	23 Nov 1999
	C105	Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)	06 Feb 1978
	C111	Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)	23 Nov 1999
	C138	Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)	07 Mar 2000
	C155	Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155)	28 Oct 2005
	C182	Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)	28 Sep 1999
Governance Conventions	C81	Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)	28 Oct 2005
	C144	Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144)	28 Oct 2005

According to the ILO⁷, Seychelles has not ratified the following conventions that are specifically related to or of relevance to labour migration;

- Migration for Employment Convention (revised), 1949 (No. 97)
- Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No.143)

6 A full list of ILO conventions ratified by Seychelles is available at https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:11200:0::NO::P11200_COUNTRY_ID:103090

7 https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11210:0::NO:11210:P11210_COUNTRY_ID:103090

- ▶ Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181)
- ▶ Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)
- ▶ Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)

6.2 UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families

In 1994, Seychelles ratified the 1990 UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (became effective in 2003). It is one of very few mainly destination countries to have ratified the Convention. In 2015, the Government submitted a report to the UN on the implementation of the Convention, after wide consultations with key stakeholders, specifying its compliance with the various sections of the Convention.⁸

The report provides a brief overview and migration profile of the Seychelles and confirms the applicability of the Seychelles Constitution and various labour and related laws to migrant workers and their families, as discussed in various sections of this review.

8 <https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2fPPRiCAqhKb7yhsopW4hXj-6Fi8deaUX%2f%2fzx44nYfdNA4WPCjp4omM3nV7B1nFKtQLAIQAUpg2ynGEPFgO%2f5VkQ6klx%2fnIRj3LbF-hBk2DHXXcvkenDkjZjqZ3lz>

7. BILATERAL LABOUR MIGRATION AGREEMENTS (BLMAS)

The Government of Seychelles has signed a number of bilateral agreements with countries of origin to recruit highly-skilled professionals and workers with vocational skills to fill shortages in the public sector, which are not subject to quota limits. These include agreements with India, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Nigeria, Mauritius, Cuba, and China, though not all are currently active. These agreements are usually negotiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with the relevant technical ministry (Education, Health, etc.).

In the NLMP, the following objectives with regard to BLMAs are set out:

Bilateral cooperation with migrants' countries of origin will be strengthened to promote well managed labour migration. Actions include:

- ▶ In collaboration with social partners develop a model bilateral labour agreement which set out clearly the roles and responsibilities of each State, address labour market needs, admission procedures, and integrate participation of social partners in their monitoring and implementation, and align them with international standards, as promoted in ILO Recommendation No.86 Annex;
- ▶ Review existing bilateral agreements and MOUs, in particular those which are obsolete, to adapt them to existing migration flows and to ensure they contain provisions for the protection of migrant workers and that they respect the principle of equality of treatment and opportunities between migrant and national workers, in line with internationally recognized good practices;
- ▶ Consider developing new bilateral labour agreements to meet identified labour shortages in the private sector and improve recruitment processes, ensuring coherence with BLAs and MOUs currently used for public sector recruitment;
- ▶ Strengthen relations with consular representatives of origin countries in the Seychelles to promote shared responsibilities in the protection and management of migrant worker issues;
- ▶ Encourage cooperation between trade unions in origin countries and in the Seychelles for the prevention of abusive practices, continuity in access to grievance mechanisms, and sensitization of potential migrant workers on Seychelles' labour legislation.

Annex 5.2 of the NLMP provides a list of countries being considered for future Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements:

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1. Bangladesh | 7. Indonesia | 13. Philippines |
| 2. Botswana | 8. Kenya | 14. South Africa |
| 3. Cameroon | 9. Madagascar | 15. Sri Lanka |
| 4. China | 10. Mauritius | 16. Tanzania |
| 5. Ghana | 11. Nepal | 17. Zambia |
| 6. India | 12. Nigeria | 18. Zimbabwe |

8. DECENT WORK COUNTRY PROGRAMME

Seychelles is currently implementing a second generation DWCP (2019-2023) with three priorities:

- ▶ Creation of decent and productive employment
- ▶ Strengthening of social dialogue and tripartite institutions
- ▶ Effective implementation of international labour standards

On labour migration the DWCP document notes that “with the lack of skills required to support the labour market and to maintain current growth rates, the demand for foreign workers will continue and alignment of the educational system with the labour market demand is also required. The current foreign labour force is estimated at 14, 000 and includes numerous unskilled employees in sectors such as construction, hospitality, home carers, agriculture and fisheries (Republic of Seychelles, 2018: 17).

Opening
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closing quote

The DWCP also cautions against current trends as follows “whilst foreign labour is needed and can bring skills and technological transfers to the country, the increased number of GOPs being issued in almost every sector of the economy, is open to abuse and can have negative impacts on the country and the local community, if not managed and regulated properly. An assessment of the labour migration and subsequent development of a Labour Migration policy is required in DWCP II given its implications on the economy and the labour market, the foreign labour force in the country and the national human resource development plan” (Republic of Seychelles, 2018: 19).

9. FAIR RECRUITMENT OF MIGRANT WORKERS

With regard to fair recruitment, the NLMP notes the following:

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“The Government seeks to ensure fair and effective recruitment for all workers, which responds to labour market needs and does not displace local workers or undermine working conditions. Regulating entry into the Seychelles’ territory and labour market is an essential role of Government. It is both as an expression of its sovereignty and a means for balancing the dual imperatives of supporting economic growth and protecting its national workforce. The Government recognizes the key role of private recruitment agencies in governing labour migration and ensuring efficient and transparent recruitment of foreign and national workers.

In light of the scale of recruitment needs and the practical difficulties faced by PRAs and employers in engaging with overseas recruiters, the Government will take on a more proactive role in facilitating the recruitment of skills from abroad. The Government recognizes its responsibility to protect the rights of all workers from fraudulent and abusive recruitment practices, and to promote recruitment in respect of human rights and labour legislation. The Government is committed to ensuring that workers and employers have access to grievance measures in cases of abusive or fraudulent recruitment practices.

The Government acknowledges the need to strengthen relations with primary countries of origin to facilitate the recruitment of needed skills and ensure fair and well-regulated, recruitment.

In achieving the above, the following outcomes (supported by specific actions) are outlined:

1. Measures are enacted and enforced to protect workers from fraudulent or abusive recruitment practices
2. A comprehensive regulatory framework for recruitment activities is in place
3. Greater flexibility is introduced in employer-migrant worker relations to reduce mobility constraints on migrant workers
4. Improved overseas recruitment processes to facilitate the efficient recruitment of qualified workers
5. Collaboration between public employment services and private recruitment agencies is enhanced to deliver more effective job placement and recruitment services

10. QUOTA SYSTEM AND LABOUR/SKILLS SHORTAGES

Under the quota system introduced in 2014, employers in tourism, construction, agriculture, fishing and financial services can only recruit workers from other countries within their quota limit defined as an allowable percentage of their overall workforce.

The quota system is classified into three categories, namely Categories 1, 2, and 3 (Table 6) (MLHRD, 2014, 2016). The procedures for the recruitment of non-Seychellois in Category 1 does not make it obligatory for businesses to first test the domestic labour market. Companies simply must apply for an entitlement certificate, provided that a company can demonstrate or prove that it is currently adhering to all the provisions of the Employment Act of 1995 and other government regulations (Thompson et al., 2019).

Category 2 employers have quota entitlements, however they must test the local labour market first by advertising to determine if there are Seychellois to fill the vacant positions. The same provision applies to domestic workers in Category 3.

Feedback received from the Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Section of the Employment Department clarifies these requirements as follows:

1. If they hold a valid COE and are below their quota allocation, they can recruit without advertising but still need to notify the Employment Department and receive an approval prior to proceeding to the Immigration Department
2. If they hold a valid COE and above their quota allocation, they need to advertise
3. If they have no COE they need to advertise

► **Table 6: Quota System Categories**

Category 1	Tourism	Construction	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Fisheries	Financial Services	
Sub-Category		Building contractors classes: 1,2,3,4	Farm size: 1,2,3h	Factory size	Semi-industrial, sea cucumber, mariculture	Banks, auditing firms, insurance companies	
Quota Allocations (average %)	52	60	60	60	56.6	17.3	
Category 2	Import	Wholesale	Retail	Import & Wholesale	Import & Retail	Import, Wholesale & Retail	Private Elderly Homes
Quota Allocations (average %)	20	20	30	25	37.5	47.5	40

The 2019 National Labour Migration Policy's Action Plan states the need to:

- Establish sector, occupational or industry-wide quotas for migrant workers based on close labour market monitoring rather than quotas for individual employers.

On the issue of labour shortages and skills identification, Seychelles' Labour Migration Action Plan mention the need to:

1. Establish tripartite sector-specific skills councils with strong private sector representation to identify future job growth, monitor the employment situation in the sector (supply and demand), identify skills gaps and strategies to fill labour shortages, support skills development programmes, identify priorities for investment in training, and set training standards;
2. In collaboration with skills councils, establish a limited list of critical occupational shortages for which there is an established significant immediate lack of highly-qualified workers which cannot be compensated by on-the-job training or short-term training programmes, and which may be considered for visa fast-track or other facilitated access to visas;
3. Define strategies with skills councils for filling skills gaps through both local training programmes and recruitment of foreign workers in key sectors. This includes revising quotas per sector or occupation to ensure coherence with established labour market needs.

11. SKILLS RECOGNITION OF MIGRANT WORKERS

The Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA) was established with the enactment of the Seychelles Qualifications Authority Act in 2005. The objectives of the SQA are to:

- ▶ Develop, implement and maintain a national qualifications framework; and
- ▶ Provide for quality assurance of the education and training system nationally.

One of the specific functions embedded within the role of the SQA is the recognition/evaluation of local and foreign qualifications. Seychelles is one of the eight SADC countries piloting alignment of their National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) or National Qualifications Systems (NQS) with the SADCQF. In 2018, the Seychelles National Alignment Committee (NAC) was appointed to work on the process of aligning the Seychelles National Qualifications Framework with the SADC Regional Qualifications Framework.

In response to a questionnaire regarding the SADCQF, the Seychelles Qualifications Authority noted that “it as an opportunity for encouraging accreditation among institutions: It will serve a motivation for institutions to seek accreditation and have all their programmes validated as the SADCQF will facilitate recognition of qualifications in the region. It will facilitate recognition of qualifications, mobility of qualifications and qualification holders, increase access to international qualification, trade in services, harmonization of education, training and qualification procedures.”⁹

9 https://static.daad.de/media/daad_de/pdfs_nicht_barrierefrei/infos-services-fuer-hochschulen/projektsteckbriefe/sadc_state_of_play_report.pdf

12. SOCIAL PROTECTION OF MIGRANT WORKERS

Confiance et al. (2011) note that Seychelles has one of the best-developed social protection systems in the developing world. The World Bank concurs that Seychelles has “a generous, comprehensive, but fragmented social protection system, with as many as 30 programs ranging from universal pensions and social welfare for the poor, to programs targeting orphans and people with disability.”¹⁰ However, most programs are reserved for citizens only. The Government of Seychelles requested support from the World Bank to improve the efficiency and quality of its social protection system, but there is no reference in the project documentation to expanding protection to non-Seychellois (World Bank, 2016).

Specifically with regard to social protection, the NLMP notes that “there is a pressing need to review migrant workers’ access to social protection, in particular health protection and pension contributions.... Migrant workers are concentrated in hazardous jobs with a high incidence of occupational accidents, and are more vulnerable to exploitation and violence, which correspondingly increases their exposure to HIV and other health risks. As the social security system applies only to citizens of the Seychelles, migrant workers are exempt from paying social security contributions, but are also ineligible to access benefits. Health care and other benefits are subject to individual negotiations and contractual agreements between employers and migrant workers, with expenses often covered through out-of-pocket payments by employers.

There are no specific regulations indicating the scope or extent of coverage to be provided by employers, nor on employer obligations regarding workplace accidents, disability benefits, or chronic disease treatment, including HIV. For long-term benefits such as pensions, there are no provisions in place to ensure that migrants can pay into the national scheme or maintain their contributions in their countries of origin. Given that many migrant workers have already stay up to ten years in the Seychelles without contributing to any pension scheme, they will not be protected for old age upon return to their country of origin.

10 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/03/25/world-bank-supports-seychelles-to-reform-its-social-protection-system>

Government does have institutions to monitor the social welfare of the migrant workforce and an expanded range of social protection activities is proposed in the NLMP such as:

1. Review current levels of social protection coverage for migrant workers in practice, including gender differences with respect to entitlements and benefits, and formalize responsibilities of employers in providing coverage.
2. Study the potential impact and identify necessary pre-conditions for extending coverage of the national social security system to migrant workers and their families.
3. Impose standard clauses in employment contracts which specify employers' responsibilities in covering health care needs and compensation in case of work-related accidents or sickness.
4. Consider entering into bilateral social security agreements with primary countries of origin of migrant workers to ensure maintenance of rights, and with destination countries for Seychellois abroad.

12.1 Welfare and Counselling Unit ¹¹

The Welfare and Counselling Unit in the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs has the following functions:

- ▶ Conduct induction sessions (to include anti-social behavior, local culture) with newly recruited Non-Seychellois workers.
- ▶ Conduct visits/ investigations at accommodation facilities regularly to monitor the welfare of Non-Seychellois workers.
- ▶ Attend and report any issues on general welfare of Non-Seychellois workers including their working conditions.
- ▶ Report on non-compliance with laws and procedures to the Ministry and relevant authorities.
- ▶ Promote and raise awareness of good welfare practice with employers and relevant authorities.
- ▶ Act as negotiating officer between Non-Seychellois workers and their employers.

11 <http://www.employment.gov.sc/labour-migration-division/welfare-and-counselling-unit>

- ▶ Follow-up on issues raised by Non-Seychellois workers with relevant authorities until satisfactory solution.
- ▶ Follow-up on cultural, social and sporting programmes with organizations put in place for the benefit of Non-Seychellois workers.
- ▶ Liaise and coordinate with external agencies (NSC, Community Development etc...) to conceptualize and enhance quality of cultural, social and sporting activities.

12.2 Labour Protection and Working Conditions Proposals in NLMP

The NLMP identifies the following challenges with regard to the labour protection of migrant workers:

Despite a number of regulations and legal instruments in place to protect the human and labour rights of migrant workers, documented rights violations and areas for concern include:

- ▶ Discriminatory wage practices
- ▶ Inadequate living conditions and food provision
- ▶ Abusive working conditions
- ▶ Concentration of migrant workers in hazardous occupations.
- ▶ Lack of access to information

The NLMP proposes the following interventions to address the labour protection challenges faced by migrant workers:

1. Existing regulations for the protection of workers in particular concerning the respect of equal treatment and non-discrimination principles in terms of working conditions are enforced, and access to decent living conditions, taking into account the specificities of migrant workers, including gender differences.
2. Sex-disaggregated data on abuses and violations of labour and immigration laws and regulations is systematically collected and applied
3. Gaps and ambiguities in relation to access to social protection benefits for migrant workers are rectified
4. Migrant workers have access to information and support services enabling them to enjoy their rights in practice, including access to justice and specific services and information targeting women migrants.

5. Relevant authorities, social partners, and the general public are sensitized to the positive contributions of migration as well as to the specific needs of migrant workers

The NLMP sets out the specific actions that will be undertaken to achieve these interventions.

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