SOCIAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASP Agency for Social Protection

AU African Union

CRC Convention on the rights of the Child

DFA Department of Foreign Affairs

DICT Department of Information Communications Technology

ECCE Early Childhood Care and Education

IECD Institute of Early Childhood Development

ISP Internet Service provider

MDAs Ministries, Departments & Agencies

MLGCA Ministry of Local Government and Community Affairs

MLH Ministry of Lands and Housing

MOE Ministry of Education

MoESA Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs

MOH Ministry of Health

MYSF Ministry of Youth, Sport and Family

NAP National Action Plan

NCC National Council for Children

NIHSS National Institute for Health and Social Studies SADC Southern African Development Community

SIAH Seychelles Institute of Agriculture and Horticulture

TIP Trafficking in Persons

Vision

A Harmonious society where individual respect and uphold values, human dignity and contribute towards their well-being, economic and social stability.

Mission

Enhance social functioning at all levels of society by promoting, empowering and supporting the functions and responsibilities of individuals and families

Core Values

The core values of the Department of Social Affairs are;

- **Professionalism:** We will be professional in our line of duty.
- **Integrity:** We will be accountable, reliable and trustworthy.
- **Teamwork:** We will actively engage with all our staff and partners
- Confidentiality: We will respect confidential information entrusted to us by all our clients.

Review of 2023 activities

Introduction

This annual report highlights the work undertaken by the Social Affairs Department during the year 2023. Despite the rise and changes in societal ills in our country, the team continued to diligently provide services to the most vulnerable of our society. As a Department that strives to always improve on service delivery, several internal reviews and discussions were held throughout the year to identify ways to improve on service delivery and new work initiatives that aims to reduce staff burnout within the organization.

The Department also managed to commemorate several events throughout the year such as the World Social Work day, Universal Children's day, Women's day and Men's day where different activities were organized for these occasions.

Budget Overview

A total of about SR 36.2 million was allocated to the Social Affairs Department for the year 2023. This represents an increase of 10 percent compared to the allocated budget for 2022.

Total spending for 2023 amounted to about SR 33.9 million around 94 percent of the allocated budget. The table below gives an overview of the allocated budget and spending of the Department for the year 2023.

	Budget	Actual	Variance
Wages & Salaries in cash	23,287,363	21,736,655	-1,550,709
Office Expenses	2,245,052	2,049,974	-195,078
Transportation & Travel Cost	577,950	475,181	-102,769
Maintenance & Repairs	493,435	387,943	-105,492
Materials & Supplies	360,570	313,227	-47,343
Other uses of Goods and Services	8,690,825	8,485,700	-205,126
Non-Financial Asset	570,377	508,985	-61,392
TOTAL	36,225,572	33,957,664	-2,267,909

Table 1: Budget expenditure 2023

Staffing

Throughout the year, the Department recruited a total of 14 new staff. Most staff recruited are working within the Social Services Division. As at December 2023, a total of 93 staff were employed at the Social Affairs Department, with Community, Child Protection & Family support Section accounting for a majority of the pool of staff. A further breakdown of each section by percentage of staff is illustrated in the graph below.

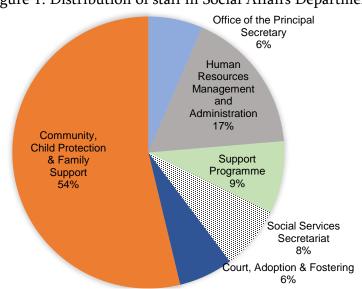


Figure 1: Distribution of staff in Social Affairs Department

Training and professional development

A lot of emphasis was put on professional development and training throughout the year. This is shown by the variety of trainings attended by staff of the Department. These included training in:

- Intermediate Microsoft
- Intermediate Excel
- Customer Service Excellence
- Sign language training
- Executive Leadership Development
- Strategic Human Resource Management
- Performance Management System Training
- Result Base Management Training
- Managing People
- Stress Management
- Training in trafficking in Person
- Legal Risk Awareness
- First Aid Training
- Training on new Procurement Methods
- Training on Technology Control for Safer Browsing

Staff also participated in a number of workshops throughout the year.

New Initiative

Strengthening the child protection mechanism

- Children's Care Homes (Minimum Standards of Care)Regulations, 2022 was passed in August 2022. Training on the standards was conducted with the care homes in 2023 and continuous support were provided to the homes for the implementation process.
- Work was carried out to finalize the Working with Children Suitability Check Regulation, it will be presented to Cabinet in 2024. Once the regulation is in force it will apply to all individuals working with children.
- The Department continued in its advocacy for a one stop crisis facility for speedy intervention for victims of abuse and the Youth Hope centre for delivery of the behaviour modification programme.
- Preparatory work was conducted in regards to a new digital case management system that will be implemented in 2024. Designing of the system and training took place in the second

half of the year. The step taken towards digitalisation will facilitate the linkages with other Departments further down the line to strengthen coordination.

- The Department sought out a legal expert to conduct a gap analysis of the Children's Act 1982. This will inform the revision of the Act. The aim is to have a modern legislation to that will incorporate all child protection matters and provisions of international treaties.
- Work was carried out to finalize the Social Affairs Strategic Plan 2023-2026.

Social Affairs Department representation on Boards and Committees

The Social Affairs Department has a crucial role to play in contributing inputs on different Boards and Committees for the wellbeing of various population groups. Annex 1 provides the list of the Boards and Committees featuring Social Affairs Department's representation.

International meetings

The Department participated in the following overseas Mission.

 Conference for Digital Skilling and Fifth Session of the Committee on Social Policy Poverty and Gender

The Department was also represented in online international meetings conducted.

Meeting with World Bank on Social Registry

Building Linkages and Strengthening Partnership

The Social Affairs Department continued to strengthen partnership through meetings with various MDAs to discuss on social issues and other projects as well as strengthen the working collaboration.

As part of the continuos collaborative work, Principal Social Workers, Senior Social Workers and Social Workers met with district leaders and other partners to sentitize on the crucial role of the Social Affairs Department and to discuss issues of common interest affecting their communities, families and children.

Social Services Division

The Division comprises of three sections; The Court, Adoption & Fostering Section, Community, Child Protection & Family Support Section as well as the Monitoring and Compliance Section. The functions of the Division are wide-ranging and encompasses identifying foster and adoptive parents and placement of children in alternative care, working on referrals from Family tribunal, counseling and supporting children and families and other individuals in need, protecting abuse children and those who are at risk and monitoring standards in care homes amongst others.

Court Adoption and Fostering Section

The Court Adoption and Fostering Section's main responsibility is to handle cases referred by the Supreme Court and Family Tribunal for investigation and submission of reports to address children related issues of custody, access, maintenance, adoption, guardianship and mediation for reconciliation in divorce matters. The section also coordinates matters of fostering placements and pre-adoption.

A total of 564 cases regarding custody, access and maintenance were referred by the Family Tribunal. This represent a significant increase compared to the preceding year where total referrals stood at 369. The breakdown of referrals per quarter can be seen in the graph below.

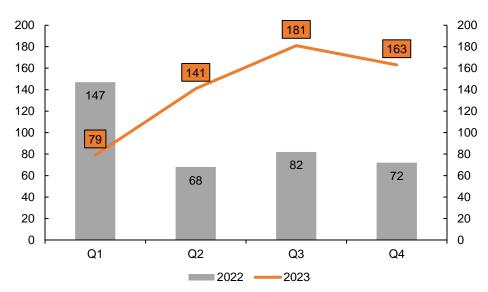


Figure 2: Custody, Access and Maintenance referral cases (2023 vs 2022)

Source: Social Services Division

In terms of the Supreme Court referrals, there were 21 cases referred in 2023. Compared to 2022 referrals declined by eight. A majority of cases referred in 2023 were adoption cases. An increase of four adoption cases was recorded. There were also four cases of Guardianship and one interdicted person recorded.

Table 2: Supreme Court referral cases

	2023				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Adoption	2	3	6	5	16
Guardianship	1	2	1		4
Interdicted person	-	1	-	-	1
Total	3	6	7	5	21

Source: Social Services Division

Community, Child Protection & Family Support Section

Community social work promotes the wellbeing of families in the community. It encompasses a variety of components focusing on economic needs, educational concerns, family challenges, collaborative and creative solutions at community level. It further emphasizes on advocacy, analysis planning and implementation of activities to support families and alleviate the difficult situation they are going through.

The Child Protection Unit undertakes investigation into referrals of cases of alleged abuse. They empower children to protect themselves and protect abused children and those who are at risk of harm through clear intervention plans. As part of the investigating process and intervention plan, the unit works in partnership with stakeholders such as the Police and Ministry of Health. The unit undertakes home and school visits as well as counselling sessions and preparing victims for court.

The Family Support Unit also provides services to dysfunctional family and other vulnerable individuals in the society with the aim of restoring social functioning. They cater to cases related to domestic violence, homelessness, mental health, neglect of adult with disabilities, housing issues, vagrant adults and breach of peace.

Child Protection Unit

The Child Protection Unit recorded 413 new cases for the year 2023. This shows an increase of 16 when compared to the preceding year. The main issues reported is that of physical and sexual abuse at 138 and 119 respectively. Compared to the previous year cases of physical abuse

reported increased by 17, whilst reported cases of sexual abuse declined by 15. The total number of cases reported in 2023 vs 2022 is depicted in the graph below.

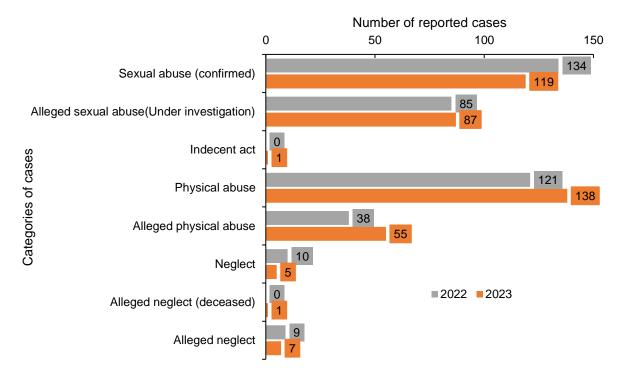


Figure 3: Cases of abuse reported (2023 vs 2022)

Source: Social Services Division

Children's Helpline

The 3-digit helpline operates on a daily basis up to 11.00pm. The helpline is manned on a rotational basis by social workers of the two main sections, namely Court, Adoption & Fostering Section and Community, Child Protection & Family Support Section.

There were 837 calls made through the helpline during the year 2023. Compared to 2022, this shows a substantial increase of 282 calls. The main increase in calls received were reports of children absconding home. Other main increases were in the missed calls, hang-ups or wrong numbers recorded on the helpline, as well as an increase in the number of calls reporting issues of neglect.

On average about 70 calls were received on the helpline per month, with the main issue reported being absconding home followed by neglect. Districts with highest calls made to the helpline are Anse Aux Pins, Perseverance 1 and Port Glaud, where reports are made by the

Children Care Home. More calls were recorded on Saturdays and Sundays compared to weekdays. This may be linked to the fact that most people are off work and children are not in school.

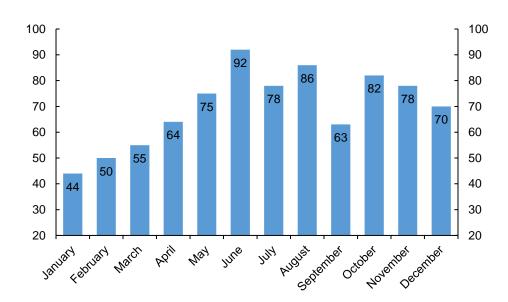


Figure 4: Number of calls received through the helpline in 2023

Source: Social Services Division

Table 3: Main issues reported through the Helpline

Issues	Number of calls received
Absconding home	173
Neglect/Alleged Neglect	161
Others(missed calls, hangups, wrong number)	90
Access/Custody	58
Advice/information	50
Behavioral Issue	43
Physical abuse	31
Deviancy	26
Domestic Violence	22
Sexual abuse	20

Source: Social Services Division

Community Social Work Unit

282 cases were recorded at district level during 2023. Compared to 2022, cases reported declined significantly by 138 or 33%. The most remarkable reduction was observed in the number of reported cases of neglect which declined by 44. Other notable reductions was observed in financial issues and elderly neglect cases reported, which decline by 32 and 31 respectively. The main cases reported at community level is that of neglect and deviancy. This can be observed in the graph below along with the other top cases reported at community level.

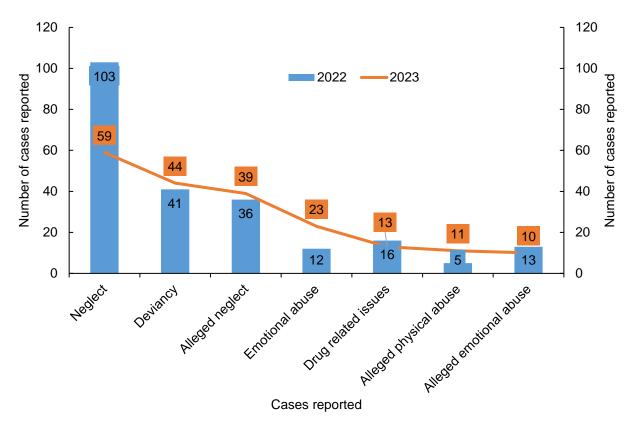


Figure 5: Highest recurring cases recorded at District level in 2023

Source: Social Affairs Department

Family support Unit

A total of 443 cases were recorded at the family support unit during 2023. This represents a significant reduction of 305 in the number of cases recorded compared to the preceding year. The most significant reduction (117) was seen in the number of family conflict cases recorded. Despite the reduction, family conflict was the main issue reported at the Family Support Unit throughout the year. Other notable reduction was seen in spousal conflict cases by 94, housing issue and homeless by 37 and 34 respectively.

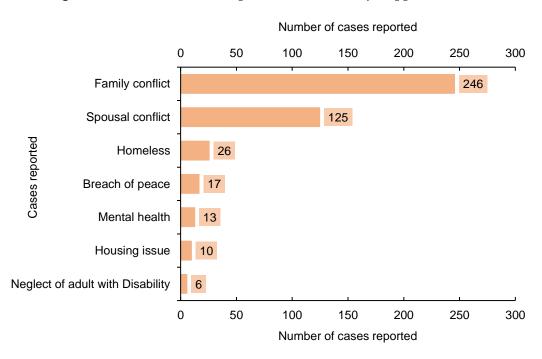


Figure 6: Number of cases reported at the Family Support Unit in 2023

Source: Social Affairs Department

Referrals to other ministries and agencies

The Social Services Division has an important role to assess the needs of families and clients when a case is reported or referred to the Division for intervention. The Division works in close collaboration with other agencies that are responsible to provide other identified services for the client or family.

This assessment is done through the Risk Indicator Framework. A risk assessment form is completed and the referral made to other agencies to request services to address the identified needs. The Division also receives referral for intervention in matters related to children or other vulnerable families and adults from other agencies.

Outreach Activities

As part of the prevention work carried out by the Department, social workers conducted several sensitization activities throughout the year.

The various community outreach activities in identified sub-districts and housing estates serve to observe the dynamics of those areas as well as sensitise families and children on various topics and issues ranging from child neglect, supervision of children, domestic violence amongst others. There are also sensitisation sessions on various topics conducted in Children's Care Homes, schools and Government organisations.

Table 4: Outreach activities

Month	Type of outreach /Number of household	District/School		
	covered			
February	Spot check in 7 housing estates	Anse aux Pins, Cascade, Pointe Larue		
	Talk on adolescent/puberty	Foyez de Nazareth		
March	Grief session,13 S1-S3 students	Pointe Larue Secondary School		
April	Door to door	Anse aux Pins		
	Talk on Domestic Violence	Local Government staff		
	Door to door, 33 households	Baie Lazare		
	Door to door, 20 households	Bel Ombre		
	Talk on obesity and the effect of Tobacco	Foyez de la Solitude		
May	Door to door, 25 households	Port Glaud		
	Door to door, 20 households	Au Cap		
	Talk on Domestic Violence	MoESA		
July	Door to door, 26 household	Perseverance 2		
	Sensitization on Domestic Violence			
August	Door to door, 22 households	Glacis		
	Door to door, 20 households	Grand Anse Mahe		
	Door to door, 20 households	Anse Etoile		
	Door to door, 39 households	English River		
	Sensitization on child protection matters			
October	Door to door, 20 households	Mont Fleuri		
	Door to door, 20 households	Roche Caiman		
	Door to door familiarization	Plaisance		
	Door to door, 27 households	Mont Fleuri		
	Door to door, 33 households	Perseverance		
	Session on social skills	Foyez de Nazareth		
	Talk on self Esteem, Primary 6	Anse Boileau Primary		
December	Talk on role of Social Services to 3 rd year students	NIHSS		

Support Programme Division

Parenting Education programme

The parenting education programme was introduced in 2013 and aims to empower expected mothers so that they take on their parental responsibilities from the start. The sessions are conducted before and after birth. Participants are provided with psychosocial support during their pregnancies and they get the chance to learn about different topics such as stress, breastfeeding, budgeting and child development amongst others. A survey was conducted in 2023, to assess the overall impact of the programme, and the general feeling from participants was that the parenting sessions are very helpful and informative, which proves the positive impact of the programme.

During the year 2023, a total of 122 antenatal classes and 92 post-delivery classes were conducted across various regions on Mahe, Praslin and La Digue. The table below displays the number of participants per regions and per session attended.

Table 5: Ante Natal 2023

Regions	1 st 5	Session	2 nd Session 3 rd Session		No of sessions		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	conducted
Perseverance	25	68	26	97	23	43	28
Anse Royale	13	33	14	45	9	22	17
Beau Vallon	11	28	8	25	3	12	14
Anse Boileau	8	22	7	16	6	10	12
Takamaka	4	9		8		5	7
GA Praslin	1	5					1
BSA Praslin	3	20	5	22	1	5	7
Beoliere	2	9					2
Port Glaud			0	2			1
La Digue	6	10	1	9	2	5	7
Les Mamelles	12	29	25	64	16	32	14
Baie Lazare	1	8	2	5			6
High risk(Victoria)	2	15		4		4	5
DSAPTR	1	2					1
Total	89	258	88	297	60	138	122

Table 6: Post Delivery 2023

Regions	1st S	Session	2 nd S	ession	3 rd Session		No of sessions
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	conducted
Anse aux Pins	2	5			1	3	2
English River	12	30	6	13	11	29	13
Anse Royale	5	13	1	2	1	12	10
Beau Vallon	7	24	2	4	5	11	11
Anse Boileau	8	14	7	18			8
Takamaka		6			1	2	3
BSA Praslin	7	16		8	1	11	8
Beoliere	7	13		1	1	4	8
Port Glaud		3				4	3
La Digue	4	13		2		3	7
Les Mamelles	14	37	8	22	4	12	16
Baie Lazare	3	8					3
Total	69	182	24	70	25	91	92

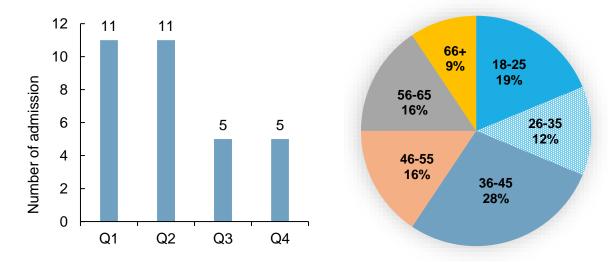
Night shelter

The mission of the night shelter is to cater for those individuals identified as being homeless due to their dysfunctionalities. The main aim is to provide psychosocial support and skills thus promote reintegration within their families and society.

At the beginning of the year 2023, there were nine service users already at the Night shelter. 32 new admission were recorded during the year and one person was assisted without admission. Most admissions were recorded during the first half of the year and a larger number of the services users were between the age range 36-45 years as can be observed in the pie chart below.

Fourteen reintegration were recorded at the night shelter for the year. Reintegration can be in terms of reconciliation with family members, therefore moving in with them, employment and renting of alternative housing or transfers into the elderly homes around Mahe. Reintegration back into society and within the families is made possible through the continuous counselling and psychological support provided to clients as well as the good working collaboration with other relevant partners.

Figure 7: Admissions per quarter & percentage of service users per age group



Source: Night Shelter

Highlights of 2023

World Social Work Day

The theme for Social Work Day 2023 "Respecting diversity through joint social action"

A series of activities were organized throughout the month of March.

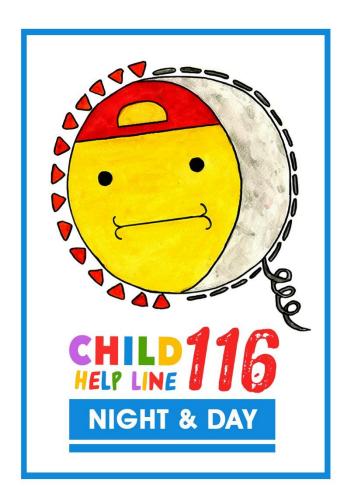
- Long service award ceremony and presentation of token to staff
- Church Service held at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.
- Team bonding activity included health talks, screening test and massage held at Anse Etoile community center.
- Launching of Logo competition for Children Helpline at Perseverance primary school.
- Tete a tete meeting with Minister and past clients of night shelter.

Photo: Minister, Principal Secretary, Night Shelter Administrator and past clients of the night shelter



Children's helpline logo competition

The Children's helpline inter school logo competition was launched in March 2023. Several schools took part in the competition. The first prize was awarded to Shruti Sujith from the International School Seychelles. Her logo was chosen as the official Children's Helpline logo.



African Union Mission

A delegation from the African Union conducted a monitoring visit in Seychelles during the week 25th-28th September as part of the ongoing campaign to end Child marriage. The delegation had the chance to meet with various Departments and other entities to get a better understanding of the cultural context and the mechanism in place for ending harmful practices against children including child marriage. To note, child marriage is not an issue for Seychelles given revision in laws, discussions were held about the various legislations, programmes and other systems in place for the wellbeing of children.

The accompanying picture is Minister Patricia Francourt with the head of the AU Commission delegation Hon. Hermine Kembo Takam Gatsing.



Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) projects (2023-2024)

Photos: Children engaging in gardening activities and visit at SIAH along with supporting partners.





Engaging Children in After-School Learning Activities

- The inventory of existing activities and assessment of learning environment was conducted during the first half of 2023.
- Recruitment and training of facilitators that will be administering the after school learning activities was done.
- The assessment of each child's needs through individual profile was also conducted but it is still ongoing due to movement in the children's care home.
- The programme has been developed, however it will be sent to the Ministry of Education for input and validation. Once funds are disbursed procurement of resources will be done.
- Monitoring will be conducted to track learning outcomes and behaviour modification when the programme is implemented
- A final evaluation report will be done at the end of 2024

A Recreational Garden for Productive Leisure

- Procurement and storage of resources was done in 2023
- Clearing of gardening area, preparing soil and learning about gardening was done in 2023
- The gardening activities are ongoing
- Visit to other farms and gardens was done and will also be conducted in 2024
- Harvesting and visits by the nutritionist is ongoing
- A final evaluation report will be done at the end of 2024

Parental Awareness on Various Technological Controls for Children Safer Browsing

- The programme was developed in 2023 in consultation with DICT and ISP.
- Social workers were trained to be facilitators of the training
- The session will be conducted in different regions with different groups of parents.
- Questionnaires will be administered to the parent participants for evaluation of the sessions
- A final evaluation report will be done at the end of 2024

Enhancing the Environmental Conditions in the Waiting and Interview Rooms for Improved Service Delivery

- A situational audit was conducted in 2023, after which work started on the plan for the new interior design, this is still ongoing.
- The procurement of resources and equipment is still pending, awaiting for funds.
- Once the rooms are set up, there will be monitoring of usage
- A final evaluation report will be done at the end of 2024

National Assembly sessions

- Minister Patricia Francourt accompanied by the Principal Secretary appeared before the National Assembly on 23rd of May 2023 for a Private Notice Question.
- Minister Patricia Francourt presented the Departments' 2024 budget to the National Assembly on 15th November 2023. The Principal Secretary and accountant were in attendance to support the Minister.

Staff meetings

The Department maintained its ethos of communication and meetings with staff to provide staff with information address their concerns and get their contribution to ensure that the department continues to maintain a good public image.

Senior Management Department meeting

There were five meetings of the Senior Management Committee of the Social Affairs Department during the year whereby pertinent strategic issues was discussed for implementation.

Social Services Management Meeting

Meetings were held to address matters relevant to the work of the Social Services Division and issues of concern of social workers.

Human Resource and Budget management Meetings

The Human resource and Budget management team along with the Administration team held meetings throughout the year to discuss issues pertaining to their specific duties.

Note of Appreciation

The Department notes and appreciate the hard work of its entire staff. The effort to ensure good service delivery does not go unnoticed. To our partners, your support and good working collaboration is well appreciated. Finally, to the Minister your unwavering guidance, support and encouragement is much valued. The same appreciation is echoed for the Cabinet of Ministers for their understanding and support to our Ministry.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we note the achievements during the year despite challenges. The achievements are attributed to the hard work of the staff and good working collaboration with partners. Looking ahead the Department remains committed in delivering on its mandate by taking on new strategies that aims to bring positive changes in the lives of families, individuals and children needing support. These new strategies are incorporated in the new Strategic Plan 2023-2026. Amongst the new strategies, are the digitalization processes, which the Department will further embark on in the coming year.

Annex 1

Table 7: Boards and Committees

Boards/Committees	Representative	Frequency of meetings
National Commission for Child Protection	Principal Secretary, Director Social Services and Senior Policy Analyst	Quarterly
National Co-ordinating Committee against Trafficking in Persons	Principal Secretary	Bi-annually and depending on arising exigencies
Children Special Fund	Principal Secretary	Monthly
Housing Allocation Committee	Principal Secretary	As required
Law and Order Committee	Principal Secretary & Principal Social worker.	
Criminal Stakeholders Committee	Principal Secretary	Quarterly
Inter- Ministerial Committee Social Protection reform	Principal Secretary	Quarterly
Technical Working Group on social protection reform	Principal Secretary	Every 2 months
Faculty of Arts and Social Development Board	Principal Secretary	As needed
Socio-Economic needs assessment committee	Senior Policy Analyst	As required
Health Inter-Sectoral Policy Engagement Network	Senior Policy Analyst	Bi-annually
Human Rights Treaty Reporting Committee	Senior Policy Analyst Senior Social Worker	Every 2 months
Youth-Wellbeing Committee	Senior Policy Analyst	Quarterly
Agency for Social Protection	Director Social Services	Monthly/As needed
National Institute for Health and Social Studies	Director Social Services	Monthly/As needed
Institute of Early Childhood Development	Director Social Services	Monthly/As needed
Suitability Check Panel	Director Social Services Principal Social Worker Senior Monitoring & Compliance Officer	Monthly
Multi-Sectoral Committee on Teenage Pregnancy	Director Social Services Senior Social Worker Principal Programme Development Officer	Quarterly
President's Village Advisory Committee	Principal Social Worker Senior Social Worker	Monthly
Agency for Social Protection Appeal Review Committee	Principal Social Worker	Monthly/ As needed

Technical Working Group to Reduce Youth Crime Offending Associated with Illicit Drug Activity in the Seychelles.	Principal Social Worker	Monthly/ As needed
Standards in Centre Based Services (Day Care Centers)	Principal Social Worker	Twice Monthly
Rent Board	Principal Social Worker	Weekly/Fridays
Part Rental Committee	Senior Social Worker	Fortnightly
Central One Regional Team Committee	Senior Social Worker	Once every two months
East Regional Action Committee	Senior Social Worker	Once every three months
Seychelles National Drug Observation	Senior Social Worker	
Data Base Management Project	Senior Social Worker	As needed
Technical Committee Trafficking's in Person (TIP)	Senior Social Worker	As needed
Gender Based Violence Technical Committee	Senior Social Worker	As needed
Vulnerable Home Repair Committee	Senior Social Worker	As needed
Elderly and Disable Trust Fund Steering Committee	Senior Social Worker	Monthly
Social Work Council	Senior Social Worker Social worker	Every two months and as needed.
Children and Adolescent Mental Health Networking Committee	Senior Social Worker	As needed
Seychelles Film Classification Board	Principal Programme Development Officer	Weekly