

Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs

Social Affairs Department

Strategic Plan 2023-2026



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Foreword

The formulation of the 4-year Strategic Plan has been characterized by the drive to be more sensitive to the needs of different population groups in line with the government's vision to leave no one behind.

The Social Affairs Department's vision is one that is all encompassing in advocating for what is best for our population; this being a harmonious society, upholding the rights and dignity of each single child and adult regardless of background, ethnicity, religious, political and social status.

The challenges in our society are real and issues are crosscutting, touching all sectors of our society. The Social Affairs Department has the ears of our leaders and through the adoption of the Result-Based Management there will be better coordination, management of resources and accountability that will allow the Department to introduce the much needed holistic support services that will address the needs of the identified vulnerable target groups.

The strategic goals of the Social Affairs Department were adopted in a retreat with the senior management team of the Department. The strategic direction was shared with all staff of the Department in various consultative meetings so that they understand what the Department wants to achieve. The strategic priorities were shared with our key partners during 2022 and early 2023. The Department will continue to seek the collaboration of all partners including civil society to join us and support its implementation.

There is no better way of achieving success than ensuring that the chain links are solidified through mutual understanding, cooperation and unity of purpose.

As we roll out our strategic plan, let us all put our families and children first. Let us be the catalyst of change to make the difference. Let us build up Seychelles to achieve the key development milestones in line with the government's national vision, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2033.

Executive summary

The Social Affairs Department, since its creation has as mandate the constitutional duty of care to assess the needs of families, children other vulnerable groups and facilitate provision of services and intervene to address specific identified needs.

The Development of the Social Affairs Department Strategic Plan follows extensive consultation with stakeholders and staff of the Department. It identifies key issues and challenges that need to be addressed and new services to address current emerging needs.

Guided by our vision and mission, the Social Affairs Department's Strategic Plan aims to target the social issues faced by our nation through the different strategic objectives. The plan will cover the period 2023 -2026. Given the multifaceted feature of social development issues, the Department realizes that inclusion and collaboration of all partners is crucial to the successful implementation of this Strategic Plan. For that reason, a series of consultations was conducted with all relevant partners.

The Strategic Priorities are aligned with the Department's Medium Term Strategy and financial forecast. This document will serve as a guide for implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of programmes, practices and policies guiding daily work activities.

The Social Affairs Department's Strategic Plan 2023-2026 is one conceived on needs and rights based approach taking a holistic view of prevention, remedial and protection paradigm in responding to the needs of various social groups of the society. Therefore, the collaboration and support of all stakeholders is crucial for its successful implementation.

1.0 Background and context

The government's philosophy and broad social policy is based on a people centered approach, ensuring that policies respond to the needs of the population thus ensuring that no one is left behind. This philosophy requires great synergy across government to ensure the social wellbeing of the population in translating the Fundamental Charter of Human Rights as enshrined in the Constitution in concrete policies, programmes and services. The Social Affairs Department's broad mandate is crucial as it provides a decentralized service at grass root level in communities whereby social workers can connect with families and children, conduct needs assessment, intervene to support them and refer them for other identified appropriate services. Other targeted services for family and domestic conflict aim to reconcile and preserve family relationship that are fragile through conflict resolution and counselling sessions whilst the well-established child protection system allows for speedy and timely response to reported cases of child abuse.

1.1 Policy Mandate

"The Department of Social Affairs' mandate is to promote, support and empower Seychellois families and individuals, recognizing the complexities of development on families and the need to identify the root causes of those factors which impact on family life and help bring positive life changes for the betterment of our society. To bring meaningful change, effectively support families and help them to address the challenges of everyday life, the Department must continue to provide effective intervention services, develop strategies, policies and carry out outreach activities".

1.2 Legislative Mandate

The Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles, Chapter 42 of the Laws of Seychelles, bestow the Social Affairs Department the mandate and duty of care to uphold fourteen out of the twenty-five articles of the Seychellois Charter of Fundamental Human Rights and ensure services to families, children and vulnerable adults.

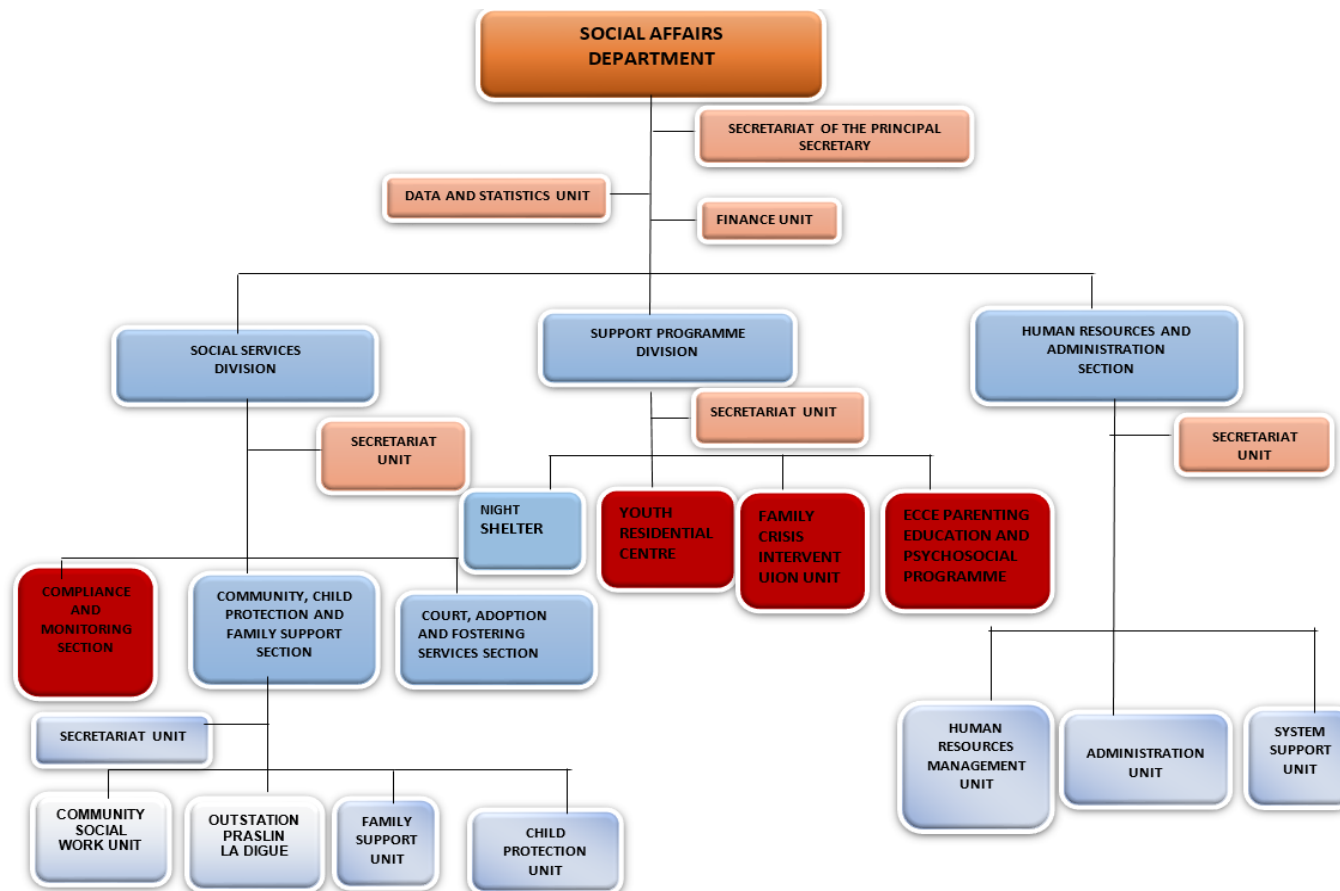
- Article 16 – Right to Dignity
- Article 27 – Right to equal protection of the law
- Article 28 – Right of access to official information
- Article 29 – Right to health care
- Article 30 – Right of working mothers
- Article 31 – Right of minors
- Article 32 – Protection of families
- Article 33 – Right to education
- Article 34 – Right to shelter
- Article 35 – Right to work
- Article 36 – Right of the aged and disabled
- Article 37 – Right to social security
- Article 38 – Right to Safe environment
- Article 39 – Right to cultural life and value

Seychelles is also party to all international human rights treaties, inclusive of the Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified in 1990 being the main human right treaty with three Optional Protocols monitored by the Social Affairs Department.

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The Children Act 1982 gives the Social Services, being the Division responsible for children's affairs, the statutory mandate for protection of children. The Social Services Division works with a broad range of child protection stakeholders to ensure the well-being and protection of children. The Department fulfill its other obligations and duty of care through other legislations and practice directive issued by the judiciary.

1.3 Organizational Structure



1.4 Functions

Principal Secretary Seretariat

- Ensure the Department is complying to all laws, codes of conduct
- Responsible for human resources development of the Department.
- Monitor Financial System within the Department to ensure no irregularities
- Provide financial administration and control of the Department
- Ensure the efficient and proper maintenance of facilities, equipment and assets belonging to the Department.

Support Programme Division

- Provide a temporary and safe accommodation for those in need
- Help the homeless person to re-integrate back into their families and society
- Provide rehabilitation for the youths with behavioral challenges
- Empower parents to undertake their roles, responsibilities and tasks from conception, pregnancy and early childhood

Social Services Division

- Identify foster and adoptive parents and facilitate foster and adoption processes
- Provide reports to the Courts and the Family Tribunal
- Work with children and their families by providing services to dys-functional families to restore social functioning.
- Protect abused children and those who are at risk of harm through clear intervention plans.
- Assure the suitability of people wanting to work with children in line with the Regulations.
- Monitor and inspect Children's Care Homes to ensure that implementation of the minimum sets of standards that embody the best interest of the child principle.

2.0 Situational Sector Analysis

There is glaring evidence of the change in the social landscape of the country with the drug scourge being rampant, and social issues escalating at an alarming rate in most communities. Being cognisant of its mandate to help alleviate social issues by working with dysfunctional families to address the decay in our social fabrics, Social Affairs Department continue to face a number of challenges hindering the smooth and effective delivery of its services. Over the past five years, the Social Services Division has continued to see a rise in reported cases at community level, child abuse cases and domestic cases reported at the level of the head office. The identified social problems permeate different family composition and social strata and are compounded by the drug scourge and many absent fathers due to long-term imprisonment. To better address the complex multifaceted social issues, Social Services require the appropriate supporting structures with professionals to assist empower the families to restore social functioning.

2.1 Supporting structures

2.1.1 Youth Hope Residential Center

Social Services has been facing challenges to provide appropriate effective services for highly at risk young adolescents who are in need of social control and provide the solace to their families. Those adolescents are absconding school on a regular basis and given long suspension period due to their varying social issues ranging from drug use, aggressive behaviour at school level and at home, sexual activities and juvenile delinquency. Those adolescents are very reticent to access services and this being the case, they pose a danger to themselves, either being harmed or get involved in petty crimes and drug trafficking activities

The table below shows the number of adolescents who are on Social Services radar. This number will fluctuate and increase if students are suspended or drop out of school due to the gravity of offences at school level.

Table No.1.At risk adolescents requiring social control as at 2022

Age group	Male	Female
8-10 years	3	0
11-13 years	5	6
14-16 years	21	20
Total	29	26

The delay in implementing the behaviour modification programme in an appropriate controlled environment to address the increase in the number of youths displaying anti-social behaviour within the community remains problematic and is a recipe for more youths to deviate into crimes.

2.1.2 One-Stop Crisis Intervention facility

Domestic violence and child abuse cases are on the rise despite all the efforts of various partners to curb the violations of rights of women and children through gender based violence. The Family Support Unit of the Social Services Division records cases referred by the Family Tribunal and drop in. The need to provide mediation services continues to increase and clients who require psychotherapy services are referred to the Family Department. The table below shows the

reported cases of family violence and domestic violence with the highest reported during the year 2022. It is envisaged that once the Domestic Violence Act 2020 becomes operational, criminalising the acts of domestic violence, Social Services will take on additional responsibility as prescribed by the Act.

Table No.2 Domestic and Family Violence reported cases

SELF-REFERRED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES		
Year	Other family violence	Spousal violence
2019	116	72
2020	111	74
2021	82	79
2022	360	220

The change of the Children Helpline to a three-digit number, resulted in a noticeable increase in incoming calls on the Helpline after working hours especially during the year 2021 onwards reporting concerns about children. An analysis was conducted during the year 2022, to look at tasks conducted after working hours, either responding to calls on the Children Helpline, social workers being involved in fieldwork to connect with victims in distress or home visits to address issues with the parents. The finding indicated the need to relook at the current mode of service delivery and to move to an extended hour or shift mode of work to respond to the emerging need of the various target groups who require services after working hours.

Both Social Services and the Police are key responders to reported cases of child abuse and domestic violence. However, the services continue to be fragmented thus the need to have responsive service in a more conducive environment. The lack of this one-stop facility for crisis intervention by social workers and the police is a major hindrance to ensure coordinated multi-disciplinary response for timely intervention in the reported cases and calls made to the Children Helpline.

Figure No.1 and Table No.3 illustrate the trend in reported cases of child abuse and calls on the Children's Helpline over the past four years.

Figure No.1 Number of calls received on Children’s helpline

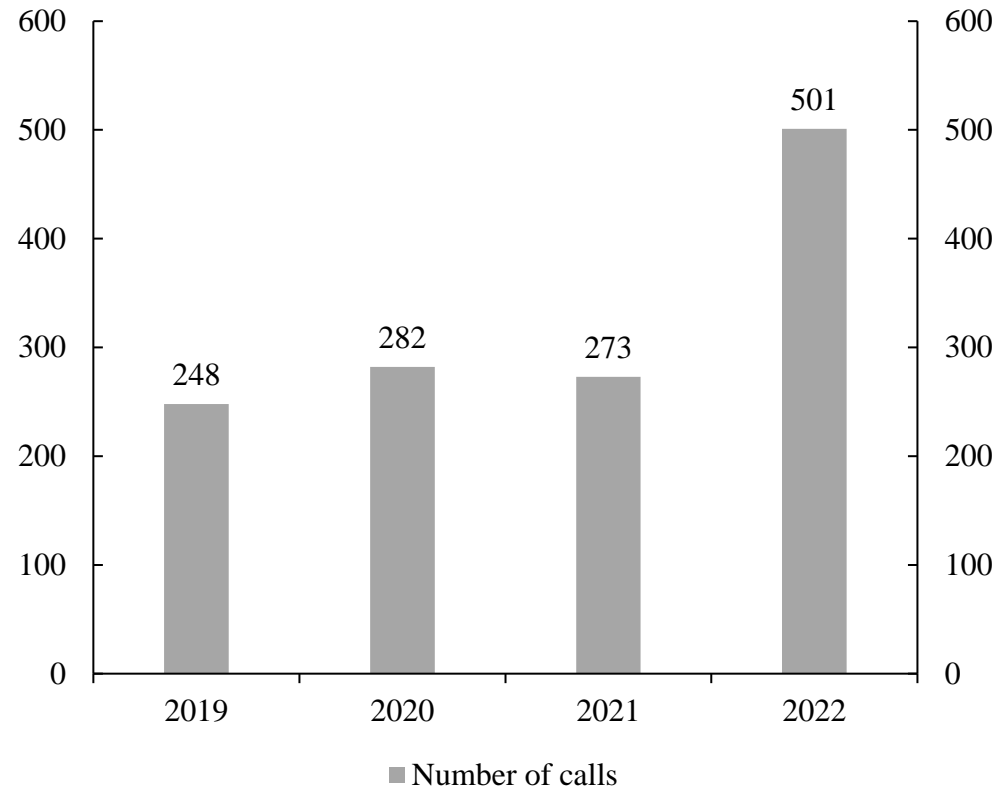


Table No. 3 Child abuse cases reported (2019-2022)

Categories	2019	2020	2021	2022
Sexual abuse (confirmed)	127	168	119	134
Alleged sexual abuse(Under investigation)	50	76	60	85
Sexual play	1	9	8	
Alleged sexual play			1	
Indecent act	27	8	1	
Alleged Indecent act	2			
Sexual exposure	9	8	4	
Attempted sexual abuse			1	
Alleged Sexual exposure			2	
Special cases(sex trafficking case)		41		
Total sexual	216	310	196	219
Physical	115	157	79	121
Alleged physical abuse	14	31	42	38
Neglect	4	4	7	10
Alleged neglect (deceased)			2	
Alleged neglect		2	4	9
Threatening violence		1	7	
Total other abuse	133	195	141	178

2.2 Data collection and management

The Department has been recording and managing data manually for many years. The importance of a national database on at risk children and families cannot be over emphasised but the move to have a digitalised case management system has been delayed due to budgetary constraint. The unavailability of adequate IT equipment and the appropriate programme- software for timely and systematic collection and management of data hampers effective co-ordination and timely provision of information for decision-making.

2.3 Services for vulnerable adults

The Night Shelter has been providing services to vulnerable adults most of whom are substance abusers and have fallen out with their families. They are provided with temporary shelter at night and other psychosocial support to help them re-integrate with their families and in the community. The situation of “homelessness” which was perceived as non-existent some years ago and associated with men in their late 50s has become a stark reality with more and more young adults drowning themselves in the dark abyss of drug addiction and living rough in various corners of all districts of Mahe and Praslin. Many are referred to the Night Shelter for service but their behaviour are very challenging to the small group of staff who have braved all odds to work with this vulnerable group who disregard and disrespect all form of boundary and control. Their challenging behaviour poses a threat to the workers and there has been incidents endangering the lives of staff.

The Department notes that the trend in “homelessness” due to anti-social behaviour due to the drug and alcohol scourge is slowly changing and for some years now, female vulnerable adults have been observed to be sleeping rough and putting themselves at risk of harm. Because of the lack of space at the current location, there is a gap in psychosocial services for females.

Budgetary constraint is another challenging factor making it difficult to implement the approved framework to pay out risk allowance to existing staff, resulting to low morale and discouragement to continue working under high-risk environment.

2.4 Shortage of trained professionals

Over the past six years, the Department has managed to secure funding to attract young graduates from NIHSS who wants to continue a career path in social work practice. However, the difficulty faced is the gap in financing time-line and graduation of candidates exiting NIHSS. As a result, the graduates take up other positions in the labour market.

Another identified challenge is staff burnout due to heavy caseload. This causes staff to become demotivated and they opt to take other jobs, which they feel is less stressful. As a result, staff turnover affects the Department's retention plan. Then again, replacement at the right time becomes problematic at the expense of being faced with budget cut during the mid-year budget review exercise.

2.5 Legislative framework

The Children Act 1982 became operational almost 41 years ago. With developments and amendment of other legislations, some provisions of the Children Act no longer respond to the emerging situations observed over the past years. The Department has seen the need to address the identified gaps to align the Children Act with other modern revised legislations. The Department is now in the process to carry out a gap analysis to make proposal for the necessary amendments of the Children Act and also bring it in line with requirement of international treaties that the country has ratified.

The Department also noted the void of not having appropriate subsidiary regulations to strengthen the child protection structure of the country, especially quality of care standards in the children care homes and ensuring suitable background check on candidates working in children related field.

Moving Forward

The Department's strategic goals and priorities aim to address the above identified challenges that will respond to the needs of the various vulnerable target groups within the society. The focus is on improving service delivery and new intervention services through the purpose built supporting infrastructure. The strategic priorities have informed the MTES and the budget forecast for the years 2023 -2026.

3.0 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2023-2026

The strategic direction responds to the strategic goals of the Department, which is aligned with the government's six National Priorities that are to be translated into tangible and realistic actions.

SP 1. - Effective multi-disciplinary interventions for crisis intervention, mediation, family violence, child contact and emergency services through a one stop crisis intervention center and the Youth Residential Center for delivery of the behaviour modification programme.

SP 2. - Revise legislations related to children's wellbeing and domesticate requirements of international treaties to remain compliant with the State's reporting obligations;

SP 3. - Ensure proper coordination and data management through digitalization and the establishment of required databases that have linkages with other departments to ensure proper coordination and data management to serve both internal and national purposes

SP 4. - Ensure delivery of diverse programmes to support intervention services for families and children at community level.

SP 5. - Identify gaps and improve standards and efficiency of service delivery within the Social Services Division through the use of an audit.

SP 6. - Ensure adherence and compliance to the Children (Working with Children Suitability Check) Regulation 2023

The six national priority areas for the period of 2023-2027 are as follows:

- (1) A modern Public Service
- (2) The Transformative Economy Agenda
- (3) A Healthy Nation
- (4) Promotion of Law and order
- (5) A modern education system aligned with future needs
- (6) Environment sustainability and climate change resilience

The Department notes the importance of integrating all six priorities within its work plan but more emphasis will be on two of the six priorities namely (1) A modern Public Service and (4) Promotion of Law and Order that are directly linked to **SP** No.1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

4.0 Vision Statement

"A harmonious society where individuals respect and uphold values and human dignity and contribute towards their well-being, economic and social stability"

5.0 Mission-

To enhance social functioning at all levels of society by promoting, empowering and supporting the functions and responsibilities of individual and families.

6.0 Core Values

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

7.0 STRATEGIC GOALS

Goal 1: An improved ethos of service delivery and professionalising of services

Goal 2: Strengthen support services and programmes

Goal 3: Legislation Review

Goal 4: Uphold treaty-reporting obligation

Goal 5: Setting up the Youth Hope Project – Implement behaviour modification programme for at risk youths.

The strategic priorities have been translated into specific strategic objectives outlined in the implementation plan.

8.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2023 - 2026

<p>Goal No.1: An improved ethos of service delivery and professionalising of services</p> <p>National Priority 1: A modern Public Service</p> <p>SDG 8: Decent work and Economic Growth</p> <p>Agency for Social Protection: <i>Strategic Priority 4: Assist the World Bank in the development and modernization of the social protection system of Seychelles.</i></p>			
Strategic Objective	To improve the efficiency and quality of delivery of services by strengthening the internal capacity of the Department and improving access to information.		
Expected Outcome	A trained workforce to provide efficient and responsive services that optimises resources whilst meeting emerging needs.		
Strategy	Lead Division, Section/Unit	Supporting Partners	Time-Frame
Review, update and introduce new internal policies and guidelines	Human Resource Management Unit & Accounts Unit	Department of Finance	2023
Operationalising the new Psychosocial Support Programme Section	Human Resource Management Unit	Public Service Bureau , Ministry of Education, Police, MOH, MYSF	2023

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Enhance staff professional development	Social Services & Human Resource Management Unit	Seychelles Qualification Authority (SQA) NIHSS UNISEY/TGMI	2023-2026
Setting up the digitalisation case management system for the various sections of the department	Human Resource Management Unit	Space 95 ,DICT	2023-2025

Goal No.2: Strengthen support services and programmes

National Priority 4: Promotion of Law and Order

SDG 3: Good Health and Well Being

SDG 5: Gender Equality

National Health Strategic Plan 2022-2026,:
Strategic Direction 4:Promote healthy populations

Seychelles Police Strategic Plan 2023-2025,
Strategic Objective 2: Improve community trust and confidence in policing
Strategic objective 4: Make it even safer for those who live, work and visit Seychelles.

Strategic Objective	To provide targeted support programme for families, children and vulnerable adults.
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Expected Outcome	Empowered families, individuals and children benefitting from: 1. Increased coverage and attendance of Parenting Programme 2. An integrated effective family crisis intervention service		
Strategy	Lead Division	Supporting Partners	Time-Frame
Strengthen the Parenting Education Programme	Psychosocial Support Programme Section	Ministry of Health & other partners	2023 -2026
Explore new ways of engaging parents and youths in community outreach activities	Social Services Division	All relevant partners	2023
Evaluate and review procedures and operation of Night shelter to increase effectiveness.	Psychosocial Programme Section	Relevant partners	2023
Advocate for the full implementation of the new one-stop crisis intervention centre service for more efficient service delivery	Social Services Division	Seychelles Police, Health Care Agency, Judiciary, Family Department, NCC, Education Department	2022-2026

Goal 3: Legislation Review (Children Act 1982)			
National Priority No 4: Promotion of Law and Order			
SDG 16: Peace Justice and Strong Institutions			
Strategic Objective	To strengthen child protection mechanism to address emerging issues		
Expected Outcome	Modern Children Act focusing on the well-being and the best interest of children		
Strategy	Lead Division	Supporting Partners	Time-Frame
Undertake gap analysis of the Children Act 1982	PS Secretariat	Other Relevant MDAs	2023
Report of Gap Analysis for amendment of the Children Act 1982 to Cabinet	PS Secretariat	Other Relevant MDAs	2023-2024

Goal 4 - Uphold treaty-reporting obligation			
National Priority No 4: Promotion of law and order			
SDG 16: Peace Justice and Strong Institutions			
Strategic Objective	To monitor and ensure compliance to related international treaties		
Expected Outcome	Timely submission of periodic progress reports as per United Nations schedule.		
Strategy	Lead Division	Supporting Partners	Time-Frame
Periodic data collection to inform the reporting process	PS Secretariat	Implementing MDAs	2023-2026

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Goal 5 - Setting up the Youth Hope Project - residential rehabilitation center for at risk youths National Priority No 4: Promotion of law and order SDG 16: Peace Justice and Strong Institutions Ministry of Education Strategic plan 2021-2024 : <i>Strategic Priority 4:Ethos and Culture</i>			
Strategic Objective	To reduce and prevent antisocial behaviours through implementation of targeted behaviour modification programmes for at risk youths with the collaboration with key stakeholders.		
Expected Outcome	Resilient and rehabilitated youths with more positive behaviour to contribute towards the development of the country.		
Strategy	Lead Division	Supporting Partners	Time-Frame
Consultation with key strategic partners to secure the site and funding for the project.	PS Secretariat	MLH/MOF MOE	2023
Carry out consultation and agree on final architectural plan and Construction phase of the project	PS Secretariat	SIA & MOE	2023
Finalize human resource plan, training, structure and relevant posts	PS Secretariat	PSB/MOE/MIA and HR	2024-2025

9. 0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Social Affairs Department will ensure that monitoring and evaluation is conducted for the successful implementation of the Strategic Plan. Led by the respective Divisions, Sections and Units, the set strategies of the implementation plan set out a clear road map for the 2023-2026 period.

Through an ongoing monitoring process and periodic discussions, this will inform decision making as necessary on progress made during the various identified time-line of the Strategic Plan. The necessary adjustment aligned to the budget calendar will be done as may be necessary.

Progress will also be measured against the performance contract of Heads of Divisions, Sections and Units as most of the deliverables are pin to the Strategic Priorities of the Department.

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Result Framework

Strategic Objectives	Strategic Interventions	Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	Implementation Target					Data Source	Lead Section	Implementing Partners	Financing SCR
				2022	2023	2024	2025	2026					
To improve the efficiency and quality of delivery of services by strengthening the internal capacity of the Department and improving access to information.	Enhance staff professional development	A trained workforce to provide efficient and responsive services that optimizes resources whilst meeting emerging needs.	Number of trained social workers	48	53	55	57	59	HRM Unit	HRM Unit	NIHSS, SQA	P1 53,247	
	Embark on a digitalisation process		Percentage completion of database	10%	75%	100%	NA	NA	Social Services Division	Social Services Division	Space 95	P1 64,400	
			Percentage completion of website	75%	100%	NA	NA	NA	HRM Unit	HRM Unit	Com &Click Marketing Agency Seychelles	P1 51,500	

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To provide targeted support programme for families, children and vulnerable adults.	Strengthen the Parenting Education Programme	Empowered families individuals and children	Number of parenting sessions for ante-natal and post-natal clients	105	120	120	120	120	MTES 2024	Support Programme Division	MOH	P3 624,000
	Evaluate and review procedures and operation of Night shelter to increase effectiveness.		Number of homeless adults assisted per year	35	40	40	45	45	MTES 2024	Support Programme Division	Other Relevant MDAs	P3 345,570
			Number of successful re-integrations of clients per year	5	5	8	10	12	MTES 2024	Support Programme Division	Other Relevant MDAs	
	Advocate for the full implementation of the new one-stop crisis intervention centre service for more efficient service delivery		Number of reported and active child abuse cases per year	1513	1,400	1,500	1,600	1,600	MTES 2024	Social Services Division	Other Relevant MDAs	PSIP 6,000,000

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To strengthen child protection mechanism to address emerging issues	Undertake gap analysis of the Children Act 1982	Modern legislation focusing on the well-being and on the best interest of children	Percentage completion of gap analysis	0%	50%	75%	100%	NA	PS Secretariat	PS Secretariat	Other Relevant MDAs	P1 100,000
To monitor and ensure compliance to related international treaties	Periodic data collection to inform the reporting process	Timely submission of periodic progress reports as per United Nations schedule.	Number of reports submitted	1	NA	NA	1	NA	PS Secretariat	PS Secretariat	Other Relevant MDAs	P1 240,000
To reduce and prevent antisocial behaviours by at risk youths through implementation of targeted programmes and projects and by strengthening collaboration with key stakeholders	Consultation with key strategic partners to secure the site and funding for the project.	Resilient and rehabilitated youths with more positive behaviour to contribute towards the development of the country.	Completion rate of the Youth Residential Center	0%	10%	50%	100%	NA	MTES 2024	PS Secretariat	MOE,MIA, MLH,SIA	PSIP 34,004,000
	Carry out consultation and agree on final architectural plan and construction phase of the project											

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	Finalize human resource plan, training, structure and relevant posts												P3 1,122,000
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