

Migration Profile SEYCHELLES

A. Executive Summary

The Republic of Seychelles is an archipelagic country located in the Indian Ocean, with a tropical and humid climate. It gained independence in 1976.

It is mainly an emigrant country. In 2020, emigrants represented 37.4% of its total population. Their main destination countries were Mozambique, the United Kingdom, Australia, South Africa, and Canada. Climate change and brain drain have been a serious concern to the country, the former being mainly due to rising sea levels. Likewise, 20 forced displacements were recorded in 2016 because of a severe storm.

Regarding immigration, there are mostly Indians, Malagasies, Filipinos, Sri Lankans, and Mauritians arriving in the country. They usually work in the construction, fishing, and tourism sectors. Even though Seychelles is a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention and its Protocol and cooperates with the UNHCR, there is no official data available on refugees and asylum seekers living in the country.

Seychelles' economy is the most prosperous in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, it is highly dependent on tourism and fisheries, which are the largest sectors. Climate change poses risks to the sustainability of its long-term economy. The fallout from the war in Ukraine continues to put upward pressure on food and fuel prices and inflation. It has reduced imports from Russia and Ukraine, whereas those from Western Europe have increased.xi

Seychelles has the highest gross domestic product per capita in Africa.xii In 2021 it amounted to US\$ 1,454,458,180,xiii experiencing an annual growth rate of 7.9% compared to the -7.7 decrease in 2020.xiv In 2021, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) net inflows represented 10.8% of the country's GDP,xv while the inflation rate was 8.3% of its GDP, compared to 2.1% in the previous year.xvi

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

Seychelles is an archipelago comprising 115 islands and islets located in the Indian Ocean, northwest to Madagascar and east to Tanzania, Kenya, and Somalia.xvii The islands are divided into two groups. The first one encompasses 42 islands (including the three largest: Mahé, La Digue, and Praslin)that are of granite origin. It makes up 54% of the country's surface, and 98% of the total population live there. The second group, instead, comprises five sets of islands of coral origin.xviii

Seychelles has a total area of 460 sq. km and 107,412 people live in it.xix Its capital and largest city, Victoria, has a population of 22,881.xx The official languages are Creole (also known as Seselwa,xxi spoken by 89.1% of the population), English (5.1%), French (0.7%), and other languages account for 3.8%.xxii Concerning religion, 76.2% of the population are Catholic, 10.5% Protestant (mainly Anglicans), 2.4% Hinduist, and 1.6% Muslim.xxiii Seychelles is a multi-ethnic society in which Creole (mainly of East African and Malagasy origin) is the main group, followed by French, Indian, Chinese, and Arabs.xxiv

II. International and Internal Migration

In 2020 Seychelles registered 13,050 immigrants. 70% were male, whereas the remaining 30% were women.xxv At least half of them were originally from India (50.79%), while Malagasies, Filipinos, Sri Lankans, and Mauritanians accounted respectively for 6.25%, 5.5%, 4.67%, and 4.32% of the Seychelles' immigrant population.xxvi Recently, there has been a growing number of immigrants arriving from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. In addition, the number of migrants from European countries such as Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, and the UK has also increased.xxvii

Over the last decades, immigrants have been attracted by Seychelles' emergent economy and its labour force demand. Additionally, around 20,000 Seychellois have returned from abroad in the previous decade.xxviii Newcomers are mainly employed in the construction, fishing, and tourism sectors. There has been increasing labour demand for export-oriented activities since international trade redistributed production in Free Trade Zones and African markets.xxix Furthermore, 10% of migrant workers are employed in the healthcare and education departments. Their contracts are mainly regulated by bilateral labour agreements.xxx

The United Nations considers Seychelles a multi-ethnic society.xxxi Its population is mainly concentrated in 10 of the islands: permanent residents are located primarily in Mahé (87.3%), as well as in Praslin (8.7%), and La Digue (2%). Meanwhile, many Seychellois migrate for temporary work to islands offering seasonal jobs. This is the case for tourism or the agrarian and nature conservation sectors.xxxii

Until 1998, more than half of the population lived in rural areas. Nowadays, the proportion of urban dwellers keeps increasing over rural populations.xxxiii In fact, Seychellois are moving to Mahé island to get better jobs and quality social services. The most populous cities include Victoria, the capital city with 22,881 inhabitants, followed by Anse Boileau (4,183), Bel Ombre (4,163), Beau Vallon (4,142), Cascade (4,088), Anse Royale (3,818), Takamaka (2,580), and Port Glaude (2,174).xxxiv

III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

In 2020 there were 36,788 Seychellois emigrants living abroad, amounting to 37.4% of their total population.xxxv 18% of them moved to European countries. Nevertheless, their main destinations were Mozambique, the United Kingdom, Australia, South Africa, and Canada.xxxvi Most of them were female (54.5%).xxxvii Seychellois nationals do not need visas for short stays in several countries, mainly in the European Union Member States.xxxviii

Brain drain has been a challenge for the country since the 1970s, with educated nationals seeking employment opportunities abroad, especially in Europe.xxxix This has resulted in detrimental effects for economic development, leading also to a skills shortage in the local

employment market. Citizens residing abroad do not have the right to vote in national elections.^{xl} The government has created a voluntary registration system for Seychellois citizens who reside abroad to collect data on diasporas.^{xli}

The rise of sea levels linked to climate change presents future challenges of induced emigration, including worst-case scenarios of mass exodus. The government is working to address climate change and to frame diaspora engagement policies and practices in order to mitigate these consequences. Xlii

IOM supports the Seychellois Government in strengthening its link with the Seychellois Diaspora through study tours, workshops, and capacity building. The organisation is also working in close cooperation with the government of Mauritius and the private sector to promote and support ethical recruitment practices, as well as responsible management throughout the labour supply chain. Xliv

Remittance flows are relatively low despite the number of emigrants abroad. $^{\text{xlv}}$ In 2020 they amounted to 0.8% of Seychelles' GDP. $^{\text{xlvi}}$

IV. Forced Migrants (Internally Displaced Persons, Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and Climate Displaced Persons)

Seychelles is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.xlvii However, the country's legislation does not grant asylum or refugee status, and there is not a specific system in place to protect refugees. Nevertheless, the government cooperates with UNHCR, which is responsible for registration and refugee status determination.xlviii

No official data are currently available on the number of refugees or asylum-seekers in the country.xlix 1 9 persons from Seychelles have been officially registered as refugees in the UK.li

In 2016 20 forced displacements were recorded in the country because of a severe storm. It Rising sea levels also pose significant catastrophic threats to island countries, including Seychelles. Although its land is higher compared to other regions, the remaining mountainous region is not habitable, leading to storm-related erosion problems in the country. This could contribute to a future climate refugee crisis. Itiii

V. Victims of Human Trafficking

Seychelles is Tier 2 in the U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report, which means that although it does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, it is making significant efforts to do so. Traffickers exploit Seychellois girls and boys in child sex trafficking, particularly on the main island of Mahé. Peers and family members exploit children in bars, guest houses, hotels, brothels, private homes, and even on the street. Traffickers also engage Malagasy women who transit Seychelles in forced labour (domestic servitude) and sex trafficking in the Middle East. Labour recruitment agencies based in the country exploit migrant workers in labour trafficking. Some fraudulent recruitment tactics involve taking advantage of the victims' lack of understanding of the language in the contracts. They also retain their passports, do not pay them and abuse them physically. They are also exploited aboard foreign-flagged fishing vessels in Seychelles' territorial waters and ports. Cuban medical workers might have also been exploited by their government. In the contracts is the property of the contracts of the contracts of the contracts of the contracts of the contracts. They also retain their passports of the contracts of the contracts. They also retain their passports of the contracts of the contract of the contracts of the contract of the contrac

In 2021 the government investigated 24 potential trafficking cases (6 for sex trafficking, 11 for forced labour, and 10 involving unspecified exploitation). However, it did not initiate any prosecutions (compared to 12 in the previous year). 18 prosecutions remained ongoing. The government convicted 2 traffickers (2 Seychellois nationals for sex trafficking and labour trafficking involving Bangladeshi migrant workers). Victims obtained compensation. In addition, the government trained officials on anti-trafficking enforcement, policies, and laws. Iv

The Seychelles government identified 4 trafficking victims (2 Seychellois girls exploited in sex trafficking and 2 adult males, one in forced labour and the other whose exploitation was unknown). In partnership with an international organisation, the government developed a new victim identification and referral procedure. Furthermore, in cooperation with a religious organisation, it established the first trafficking-specific shelter (although this has not accepted any victims yet). Ivi

The government also provided 11 victims of forced labour with new work permits. It protected them from detention or prosecution for unauthorised entry into Seychelles, but not from prosecution for other unlawful acts traffickers forced them to commit. It further established an anti-trafficking secretariat that enhanced inter-ministerial coordination of anti-trafficking efforts. It held awareness campaigns targeting frontline officials, journalists, and populations vulnerable to trafficking. It also operated its first trafficking-specific hotline 24 hours a day (although no victims were identified). Ivii

Despite the efforts made, the country faced significant problems, mainly during the pandemic. Police officers mandated to investigate trafficking crimes were diverted from enforcement duties and assigned to oversee pandemic-related guidelines and procedures. There is a lack of understanding of trafficking among police, immigration officers and judges, which hampers law enforcement and victim identification efforts. In 2021 it remained without a national action plan, although it started drafting one for 2022-2025, which awaited final approval by 2021. Officials did not proactively screen vulnerable populations such as migrant workers in commercial sex (relying on victims to self-report). Iviii

VI. National Legal Framework

The Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles from 1979, amended in 1993, guarantees freedom of movement within the country, as well as entry and exit from Seychelles for all citizens. The 1994 Citizenship Act provides for the acquisition of citizenship of Seychelles by adoption, registration or naturalisation, renunciation and deprivation of citizenship, maintenance of a register of citizens by naturalisation and registration, and for the repeal of the 1976 Citizenship of Seychelles Act. Ix

The Immigration Decree No. 18 of 1979, amended in 2012, sets out conditions and modalities for the eligibility for nationality by either origin or acquisition. In addition, this law regulates the types of permits allowing non-nationals to work, the different categories of visas, and residence permits. lxi

The National Law in Seychelles does not grant asylum or refugee status, and the government has not established a system for protecting refugees. Nevertheless, the country cooperated with UNHCR, which registered asylum seekers and conducted refugee status determinations. National Na

The Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2014 provides for the prohibition, prevention and combating of trafficking in persons, including the provision of assistance to victims, the development of an authority to deal with trafficking, and the establishment of a special trafficking fund. Liviu

Seychelles acceded to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (hereinafter jointly referred to as the 1951 Convention) on April 23, 1980. Seychelles acceded to the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (hereinafter referred to as the 1969 OAU Convention) on September 24, 1980. lxv

Seychelles ratified the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the 1990 United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW). It ratified the 2000 Human Trafficking Protocol, the 1975 ILO Migrant Workers Convention in 2004, and the 2000 Migrant Smuggling Protocol. Seychelles is not a party to the ILO Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143), or the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97). Service

Seychelles has not ratified yet the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (the 1954 Convention), nor the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (the 1961 Convention). Convention). Consequently, persons at risk of statelessness do not enjoy full legal protection in the country.

VII. Main Actors

The State

The Ministry of Employment, Immigration and Civil Status (MEICS) is responsible for the country's migration policy and is the leading technical agency on migration. Lex The MEICS Labour Migration Division oversees the employment and welfare of migrant workers, processes applications and inspects employers' contracts. The Labour Migration Division's Welfare and Counselling Unit conducts visits to migrant workers' accommodations and dormitories. The Localisation, Monitoring and Evaluation Section handles the review of policy concerning labour migration, collecting and analysing data on migrant workers, developing recommendations for labour migration policy, and overseeing the implementation of localisation plans submitted by employers. The MEICS Labour Relations Division has a Labour Monitoring and Compliance Section, which is responsible for conducting workplace visits and inspecting employers' premises. The MEICS' Policy, Planning and Monitoring, and Evaluation Section is responsible for setting policies, and then collecting and analysing data on their implementation, including those on labour migration. Lexi

The Department of Immigration and Civil Status (ICS) is the main agency responsible for border security and management, including the regulation of entry and departure, and for enacting the country's immigration policy, including the processing of visitor and work permits for non-nationals. The ICS Department is under MEICS and operates in collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Tourism within the Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Ports and Marine. The Immigration Decree sets out the legal basis for the responsibilities of the Director of Immigration and Emigration officers. It defines the permits required for non-nationals to stay in the country, as well as the types of permits

allowing non-nationals to work, and designates people who are considered 'unwanted immigrants.' lxxii

International Organisations

UNHCR's South Africa Multi-Country Office (SAMCO) serves nine countries: Botswana, Comoros, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, and South Africa. Ending statelessness, enhancing the protection of the environment, and strengthening partnerships are top priorities in the region. lxxiii

The Indian Ocean Island States of Comoros, Mauritius, and Seychelles currently do not host significant numbers of refugees. Still, UNHCR monitors these countries and is committed to finding durable solutions as soon as new arrivals are reported. lxxiv

The Republic of Seychelles became an IOM member state in December 2011. lxxv Through its office based in Mauritius, IOM is supporting the Government of Seychelles to address migration challenges and leverage migration for socio-economic development. lxxvi IOM is also instrumental for the prevention and fight against trafficking in persons in Seychelles by providing training to stakeholders in the country in order to enhance the identification of victims and ensure their protection. lxxvii IOM is finally contributing to a reduction in risks and threats posed by migration-related transnational organised maritime crime, including migrant smuggling, in the Western Indian Ocean region. lxxviii

NGOs and Other Organisations

L'Association des Villes et Collectivités locales de l'Océan Indien (AVCOI) gathers citizens living in Comoros, Madagascar, Maurice, Mayotte, Reunion, and Seychelles in order to talk about cooperation initiatives in different areas. These include advocacy work in the political, economic, environmental, social, and cultural areas of society within the member states and territories. Lixix

Local associations such as the Indian Association of Seychelles pursue philanthropic work and other activities related to Indian culture. The Africa Friendship Association, instead, is a local agency in Seychelles promoting African culture and arts through greater awareness, and cultural and artistic exchanges between Seychelles and other African countries. Taxxi

Migrant construction workers might seek advice from the Association for Construction & Maintenance Contractors of Seychelles. This association is also registered as a local organisation and provides training assistance, among other activities related to promoting engineering professions within Seychelles. Ixxxiii

The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church of Seychelles is part of the Indian Ocean Bishops' Conference, which brings together the bishops of Comoros, Mauritius, La Réunion, Mayotte, Seychelles, Ixxxiii and Madagascar. Ixxxiii

Caritas Seychelles works in humanitarian and emergency assistance, supports church projects and groups, initiatives to help the sick, and activities for the elderly and disabled in the country. Its emergency relief programmes offer vital aid to victims in a country prone to natural disasters such as droughts and floods. It also provides food and clothing to vulnerable

people, counselling, and spiritual and moral support to families. They have developed several employment programmes. lxxxvi

The Office for Migrants and Itinerant People, located in Mont Fleuri, lxxxviii lxxxviii is managed by the Anglophone Migrant Community. lxxxix This centre promotes the cultural integration of migrants in Seychelles. Assistance is provided to foreigners regardless of origin, religion, creed, or race. xc

Likewise, the Anglophone Migrant Community in Seychelles comprises Catholic Christians of different nationalities working under the Diocese of Port-Victoria.xci Its main mission is to care for migrants in Seychelles. Among the main activities carried out by this community are the celebration of mass in the English language in Plaisance, celebrations of sacraments, and catechesis. They have a support group for Indian migrants, Sri Lankans, Africans, Filipinos, Seychellois, and other nationals.xcii This community provides the migrant group with information about key actors who can help them in the migration process and provides psychological, spiritual, and legal assistance to migrant workers. It also promotes the integration of the migrant population into the Seychelles society by providing information on culture and living conditions and organising language courses.xciii

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