



**DEPARTMENT
OF FISHERIES**
SEYCHELLES

POLICIES AND STANDARDS FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF LOCAL CREW AND SKIPPERS

2025 - 2030

CONTENTS

1.	BACKGROUND	3
2.	GUIDING PRINCIPLES	4
3.	CONTEXT	5
4.	CHALLENGES FACED BY SEYCHELLES SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES	6
5.	VISION.....	11
6.	AIM.....	11
7.	POLICY STRATEGY	11
8.	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES.....	12
9.	POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.....	12
10.	POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK.....	13
11.	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES.....	13
12.	POLICY STATEMENTS	14
	Policy Statement 1 - The Modernisation of Small-Scale Fisheries in Seychelles	14
	Policy Statement 2 – Adopt a cross-sectoral collaboration and holistic approach towards learning	17
	Policy Statement 3 - Develop adequate structures to enable and spearhead greater collaboration among stakeholders.....	19
	Policy Statement 4 - Promote better co-management approaches towards sustainable fisheries management initiatives.....	20
	Policy Statement 5 - Develop an Effective Communications Strategy	21
13.	POLICY REVIEW	22

1. BACKGROUND

The fisheries sector constitutes a sizeable component of the country's Blue Economy's potential as a key pillar of the Seychelles economy. The Small-Scale Fishery (SSF) sector continues to experience growth in spite of challenges in terms of depleting marine resources and a limited (ageing and diminishing) local labour force. Several initiatives have been undertaken by both government and the private sector with the support of a number of international organisations, towards enhancing fisheries governance. *The Fisheries Sector Policy and Strategy* (2019) highlights the importance of supporting the small-scale fisheries sub-sector through various policy positions including among others, to "Stimulate economic growth and transformation of the economy to create decent work, and vibrant, equitable and sustainable livelihoods contributing towards food security for all" (p.11, 2019).

Yet, the ability to transform sustainable fisheries policies into practical and realistic procedures and processes remains a challenge for the small-scale fisheries sub-sector. *The Employment Study and Capacity Needs Assessment of the Fisheries Sector in Seychelles (2022)* report, which was the result of a comprehensive quantitative study on the labour needs of the fishery industry highlighted several challenges in terms of the country's labour capacity to sustain and support the growth of the fisheries industry. One such challenge focused on the difficulties surrounding the recruitment and retention of local crew and fisher/skippers within the country's small-scale fisheries sub-sector.

In seeking to remedy this obstacle, the Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy through the support of the SWIOFish3 programme, sought a consultancy to develop policy and standards to improve the recruitment and retention of fishers and skippers in the small-scale fisheries sub-sector in September 2022. A qualitative study was conducted between December 2022 and April 2023 to interrogate the existing and required elements that should inform policy for the sustainable increase in recruitment and retention of the local crew and skippers within the small-scale fishery labour force. Particular focus was placed on the necessary components which will attract the youth within the sub-sector in support of sustainability.

The following policy framework on enhancing the conditions of recruitment and retention of the labour force within Seychelles' small-scale fisheries is premised on the aforementioned study's key findings and recommendations. It addresses six (6) key focus areas relative to the development of a more robust, evolved and modern operational framework for the sub-sector, namely:

- i. Modernisation of Small-Scale Fisheries;
- ii. Effective Cross-sectorial collaboration;
- iii. Holistic and pragmatic approach towards training;
- iv. Proper and formal structures for SSF;

- v. Better co-management approaches; and
- vi. More effective communications amongst stakeholders.

This policy framework is further presented with remedies surrounding the labour force component in conjunction with proposed intervention activities and modalities to address underlying obstacles which have contributed towards the present and worsening status regarding the labour force of Seychelles' small-scale fisheries. It therefore provides for a more refined socio-economic outlook for the industry which encapsulates phased approaches to address SSF longevity in a pragmatic way.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Seychelles Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) spans over 1.4 million km² in the Indian Ocean. In addition, Seychelles co-manages the Joint Management Area (JMA) of the Extended Continental Shelf of the Mascarene Plateau, which is an area of 396,000 km², with neighbouring Mauritius. This means that despite its micro-state status, Seychelles holds the important responsibility of managing a vast maritime zone.

The country's pledge towards its sizeable oceanic space rests on a long-established history of environmental preservation for posterity. This ethos is enshrined in the country's Constitution under Article 38 (b) which states that the State has the responsibility to ensure "a sustainable socio-economic development of Seychelles by a judicious use and management of the resources of Seychelles". This is further encoded in nationally established laws and policies which ensure the adoption of a holistic approach towards the management of Seychelles' marine resources.

The Seychelles Blue Economy, Strategic Policy Framework and Roadmap (2018) provide for a detailed approach towards the sustainable use of the country's marine resources which best responds to the country's economic initiatives. As one of the country's key economic pillars, the fisheries sector constitutes a sizeable component of the Blue Economy's potential - contributing to as much as 20% of the country's GDP, whilst providing employment to around 17% of the population (World Bank, 2017)¹.

Suffice to underscore how the ongoing unrelenting efforts to properly manage the country's marine resources require an equally matched judicious management of the country's labour prerequisites. Ensuring the existence of conditions that attract young men and women in the small-scale fisheries sector finds itself within the ambit of Article (33) of the Seychelles Constitution which articulates every citizen's right to Education; and Article (35) which provides for the right to work under decent working

¹ Available From <https://www.worldbank.org/> [Accessed 2/12/2022]

conditions. These constitutional rights provide for the assurance of enabling environments where all necessary conditions for a person to achieve optimal potential for delivery within the Seychelles labour force, are established and maintained. These unalienable rights are further protected by the Seychelles Employment Act (1995); The Industrial Relations Act (1993), the Occupational Safety and Health Decree (1978) and the Education Act (2004) as amended.

In appreciating the socio-economic and legal challenges for the Seychelles small-scale fisheries sub-sector, there is a need to tap into the potential of transforming SSF around an ethos on sustainable fisheries which can be ingrained into the mindset of the local population. This is underscored as one appreciates how environmental management and conservation have trickled down within Seychelles society – integrated as a way of life for the country’s inhabitants. The development of the following set of policy areas is therefore made with cognisance of how the nation as a whole can be an instrumental enabling component, especially as it addresses means to increase the inclusivity of the younger generation in the industry and for environmental sustainability for posterity.

3. CONTEXT

Small-scale fisheries in Seychelles comprise three sub-categories including artisanal fishery, semi-industrial long-line fishery and sea-cucumber fishery, operating in fishing vessels under 24m. To date, various fisheries management mechanisms have been implemented nationally. These have included input control such as limited entry, closed season, and gear restriction as well as output control such as fishing quota, minimum size and specially marked designated protected areas, all of which involve the small-scale fisheries sector.

The artisanal fishery category is made up of boat owner/fisher, boat owner/business person/not fisher and fishers’ relationships. Artisanal fishery, which is an open-access fishery, is practised along a catch-sharing system where a percentage of profit is shared with the fishers following costs deduction. Fishers operate without formal employment contracts and the catch, mostly demersal, is mainly sold in district/community markets targeting mostly local consumption whilst some are also sold to local fish processors for the export market. Over the past decade, a number of boat owners/business owners have entered small-scale fisheries as investors and boat owners and not as fishers themselves. This has included a noticeable number of women. These changes indicate a shift in the structure of artisanal fishery from being merely an arrangement among fishers to a more boat owner/fisher relationship. Several boat owners also have other businesses or jobs, which means that artisanal fishery for many is merely a supplementation to their income rather than the main focus of their business.

The semi-industrial long-line fishery, (also referred to as the small-scale longline fishery) operates mostly along the business/owner and employed fisher relationship - employing mostly expatriate workers with fixed employment contracts as it is a legal requirement, catching mostly pelagic tuna and tuna-like species primarily for the export markets. Most semi-industrial fishery is linked or associated with fish processing plants as fish processors are the ones licensed to export marine products for commercial purposes under the country's Licensing Regulations and the Export for Fishery Products Act (1997).

The Sea cucumber fishery is a limited entry, and seasonal fishery (open for 9 months during the year) and species-specific quota. It operates within a combined system of catch sharing for Seychellois fishers and fixed employment contracts for expatriate workers, targeting the export market. Recently, Seychelles has been exploring the possibility of fishing beyond the country's EZZ into the aforementioned Joint Management Area (JMA) of the Mascarene Plateau. Access to this area to Sea Cucumber fishers will be made available only if exploratory assessments prove successful.

4. CHALLENGES FACED BY SEYCHELLES SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

Key findings from the research guiding this policy framework underscored the wider context within which the Fisher Communities operate and engage. Currently, the sub-sector operates within a fragmented and unstructured nature without clear-cut organisation and integration. This occurs through small fisher associations which only focus on the immediate aspects covering their specific region and/or district without an overarching entity to drive necessary processes nationally. This revealed the importance of better organisation in terms of the establishment of structurally functional Fisher Associations, with the possibility of amalgamation through a national Fishers' Federation or Association as an NGO entity. These are instrumental for a sounder approach to engagements and negotiations with other partners such as the Government, Financial Institutions etc.

A consistent lack of the aforementioned structures translates into a subsequent lack of a proper legal framework to support SSF in attaining its full development and providing the right working conditions for fishers in this largely informal sector. For example, fishing vessels of under 10m are not operating under any legal framework which indicates a lack of standard in terms of security and safety equipment on board. The Work in Fishing Convention (2007) of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) which provides broad standards for work in Fishing of vessels of 24m and above has not been ratified by Seychelles, however, a legal gap analysis has been undertaken. In the event of ratification, it will not impact vessels of 24m and less, which is the category of vessels for SSF.

It has also been observed and confirmed by stakeholders that some of the initial policy proposals

concerning SSF were too ambitious, whilst the Covid-19 pandemic has put a hold on the full implementation of others. There are, however, a few mechanisms in place to measure the success rate of some policies. Moreover, the qualitative study guiding this policy framework has been able to capture the implementation levels and identify the gaps in practice and some instances, policy variance.

The adverse impacts of substance abuse on the local workforce and the challenges in attracting youth within the sub-sector were also underscored. Findings further expanded to issues around the nature and format of educating and developing a workforce that is suitable for small-scale fisheries' realities. It was also revealed that preparations to enter this sector, and the overall status of the current fisheries workforce are both lacking and lagging. With the sub-sector also facing obstacles as to effective communications from within and between itself and other national stakeholders also registering as a key finding, recommendations guiding the key policy areas showcase the importance of consolidating a new and renewed framework that channels communications across all local actors and any international cooperating partners in a timely and efficient manner. As such, the small-scale fisheries would be better geared to transition to a more evolved and innovative sub-sector which remains true to its cultural-artisanal sustainable footprint.

Following the Study, five principal challenges have been identified in the Small-Scale fishery sub-sector which are acting as barriers to the full development and increase of the Seychellois workforce across the sector. Most of these challenges fall within the wider context of Seychelles small-scale fisheries and pose both direct and indirect impacts on the domestic labour supply.

a) Lack of modernity and evolution in Artisanal Fisheries

Artisanal fisheries in Seychelles are distinct and different from other business/job practices. For instance, by its aforementioned nature, artisanal fisheries operate largely within the informal sector with no employment contracts and other protection afforded under the Employment Act for its employees. Another substantive particularity lies in the fisheries, practice of a catch-sharing system as its form of salary. These make comparative analysis challenging. The situation is further aggravated as the introduction of new methods, policies, practices and standards has to be done with careful consideration of the sector's and community's cultural aspects rather than relative to existing frameworks and structures. This scenario differs completely from the country's semi-industrial long-line fishing which has a more structured and organised approach since it is a business owner/fisher relationship with most workers falling within the expatriate category.

To address the above-mentioned challenges, the sub-sector, especially artisanal fisheries, requires a comprehensive reform geared towards modernisation or evolution. The informality and unstructured nature of Seychelles' artisanal fishery have given rise to a number of challenges which prevent the

implementation of proper regulatory frameworks and act as barriers to improved working conditions of fishers. The below cultural/traditional practices have been observed within the artisanal and, to a certain extent, sea-cucumber fishery categories.

The traditional and existing practice in artisanal fisheries is such that profit is shared as a percentage of the returns of the catch thereby leaving fishers without a fixed income. This is further exacerbated as fishers operate outside of any employment contract between themselves and boat owners. This has resulted in the inability for parties to be protected by sector-specific employment laws and regulations, workers' rights, remuneration and compensation, social protection and other securities and benefits which should safeguard their work and constitutional rights and well-being. It further halts effective negotiations at the labour union level whilst restricting access to potential benefits falling within industrial relations.

Further, because of this traditional way of doing business, many artisanal fishers lack real business acumen which effectively translates into their inability and limited-to-no skill sets to lead their business practices in a modernised fashion. For example, many transactions in the fisher community, especially for the artisanal fishery sector, are done in cash - with no involvement of the banking system. This informal practice weakens the industry which, as a result, cannot be properly regulated. This practice further widens the crack within the sector as it becomes the leading barrier that hinders access to financing support avenues.

This practice stems from a culture of doing things which seems to have been passed down from generation to generation. And whilst treasured by the older fisher community, it renders the sector unattractive to young people who prefer more stable and profitable opportunities. This cultural challenge needs to be addressed by bringing modernity or an evolved modus operandi marking the way the small-scale fishers' community conducts its business going forward. The motivation for this proposed evolution lies in the parallel evolution in cultural practices and the core principles residing in the need to ensure wellness and better lives for the labour force. As artisanal fishers have become accustomed to certain modern technologies such as GPS, fish finder and VMS tracking systems on some vessels in line with national maritime safety regulations, work towards addressing this modernity is now essential. This includes supporting mechanisms for more modern vessels aimed towards improving working and living conditions onboard, as what might have once seemed to be a conducive environment for the older generation, may no longer be attractive for today's youths.

b) Lack of aligned and proper strategic development towards curricula, training and pedagogy

The school system, as presently structured, represents one of the main barriers limiting learning opportunities for young people who wish to join the small-scale fisheries sub-sector. Key observations and findings guiding this statement are as follows:

- i. The Technical Education (TE) classes in Secondary Schools where fishery is taught lack proper materials and knowledge-base;
- ii. The Seychelles Maritime Academy's (SMA) entry requirement is deemed too high for those who are truly passionate about joining SSF;
- iii. The SMA offers limited practical learning experiences in SSF to learners;
- iv. There are few avenues to learning once students leave secondary school level;
- v. There is a lack of emphasis on the holistic approach to learning where learners are also imparted with soft skills, essential to their survival and growth in the world of work; and
- vi. Lack of emphasis on entrepreneurial studies in Fisheries at both secondary and post-secondary levels.

Moreover, many interrogated youth participants who expressed their wish to join the sector indicated that their preference was to be boat owners rather than fishers. Yet, the school's set-up is not focusing on entrepreneurial skills development and business management. In supporting the proposal to modernise the sector, the school's curricula and practical learning opportunities will have to equally integrate entrepreneurship and business studies as key founding components; and ensure learning opportunities exist within the in-school and out-of-school contexts with the support of the private sector participation and community-based approaches. Without such proper 'catchments' within the education, employment and youth development systems, many young people will continue to fall through the cracks and the sector will increase its reliance on expatriate labour.

c) Lack of proper structures within Small-Scale Fisheries

Up until recently, small-scale fishers in Seychelles were not a collective entity but a fragmented group of individuals. The emergence of fisher associations throughout the country brought the first sign of a sense of organisation in the sub-sector. The Seychelles Fishermen and Boat Owners Association (SFBOA) emerged as the umbrella organisation for artisanal fishery although some associations do not recognise it as such. The recently created Association of Fish Processors and Exporters of Seychelles (AFPES) regroups semi-industrial boat owners and fish processors and not necessarily fishers. Whilst both associations may incorporate some elements of small-scale artisanal fishing, their names inform how other leading sectors flood over the sub-sector with the latter not receiving central attention or focus. A lack of organisation and structure means that the small-scale fisheries sub-sector is powerless to negotiate as a single entity. The existence of a structurally sound, substantively integrated and

respected avenue for negotiations is important if players in this sub-sector want to accomplish full access to their rights with a more organised and powerful base to negotiate for opportunities.

For example, in some fisheries, the registration of fishers with the SFA is not compulsory and many fishers remain unregistered. As a result, fishers who are not registered cannot access certain benefits such as sickness benefits/covers, insurance benefits and other incentives offered by the government. This leaves a sizeable portion of the fisher population vulnerable and disadvantaged. The need for demystifying adverse views, educating fishers on the importance of registration and better communications between fishers and other stakeholders such as employment and fisheries authority are essential components which can be accomplished through a nationally recognised fisher NGO.

d) Lack of proper Communications Framework

Fishers are of the view that they are often left out of the decision-making process. Other stakeholders have also highlighted the importance of an effective communications network amongst themselves to ensure proper delivery and exchange of information. There is also a lack of proper channels of communication for education, sensitisation and outreach. As a result, all stakeholders tend to work in silos, with no clear method of sharing information and innovations and participating collectively. This results in stakeholder frustrations which, subsequently, lead to a lack of engagement and trust among parties. The situation is further exacerbated as it translates into the inability of the sub-sector to talk to the wider population which limits interaction with the local pool of potential workers. As such, there is a need for a proper communications framework supported by strategic activities for engagements, information sharing, sensitisation and education.

e) Lack of effective and inclusive co-management systems of Stock Management

Research on the impacts of climate change on small-scale fisheries is well documented and has led to a significant level of established mitigation measures to address emerging concerns such as depleting resources. Whilst authorities have put in place several mitigating mechanisms towards the country's marine stocks, getting the support of fishers, and fully implementing effective and collaborative co-management approaches, have been somewhat challenging. The Mahé Plateau trap and line fishery co-management plan (2019) for example is a detailed strategy and work plan towards close collaboration with stakeholders. Our study reveals, however, persistent challenges as a result of negative fisher perceptions towards stock management.

Seychelles, under its Blue Economy pathway, has an extensive and well-defined strategy and action plans for climate change mitigation, including fisheries management. Sustainable management of fishery resources and conservation under the Seychelles' Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) as well as *The Mahé Plateau trap and line fishery co-management plan* (2019) are a few steps being undertaken to address these concerns. This naturally comes with its impacts on the industry including small-scale

fisheries. However, this study unearthed an existing lack of understanding and collaboration by certain fishers in support of sustainable management of fishery resources. Many fishers fail to comprehend the merits of these mechanisms leading to apathy and boycott. The modernisation of this sub-sector will require a change in the way stakeholders communicate and collaborate with each other. The success of sustainable management of fishery resources depends heavily on proper education and the willing participation of fishers. There is a need to develop and establish proper frameworks to accommodate the co-management regime with clearly defined responsibilities for the different parties.

5. VISION

The main vision of this policy is to modernise small-scale fisheries in Seychelles in order to create the best possible conditions for the full and active participation of the country's young men and women for the sector's continued growth and development.

6. AIM

The aim of this policy is to support the creation of more enabling conditions for the recruitment, integration and retention of young Seychellois men and women within Seychelles' small-scale fisheries sub-sector.

7. POLICY STRATEGY

The Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy wishes to address the challenges surrounding the shortage of local labour in small-scale fisheries. This acute shortage was one of the findings of the aforementioned *Employment Study and Capacity Needs Assessment of the Fisheries Sector Report* (MRAG, 2022) commissioned by the SFA. The current qualitative study conducted in 2022/2023 on the challenges preventing the recruitment and retention of local crew and skippers in Seychelles' small-scale fisheries identified five main challenges preventing the full participation of Seychellois men and women into the sub-sector. The interrogations held with multiple local stakeholders and analyses of documents relative to the subject matter led to the development of this policy framework and its proposed strategies for successful implementation. It is therefore an inclusive strategy for action on the following policy areas which has the potential of meaningfully transforming the sub-sector.

8. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The Policy is structured around six strategic policy objectives which act as the foundation for more detailed action plans. These objectives are aimed at addressing the challenges identified in the results of the qualitative study on small-scale fisheries in Seychelles (February 2023), and provide an alternative framework for the modernisation of small-scale fisheries in Seychelles, especially as regards recruitment and retention. These fundamental changes will support the creation of better conditions to attract and retain young people in employment within the sub-sector.

- i. **Modernisation of small-scale fisheries in Seychelles** - Provide an appropriate framework for the modernisation of Seychelles' SSF for it to develop to its full potential for the longevity and growth of the sub-sector;
- ii. **Focus on business opportunities for young entrepreneurs** - Explore all possible avenues to provide business opportunities for young Seychellois entrepreneurs to join the small-scale fishery sector;
- iii. **Co-management approaches in sustainable fishery resources management** - Develop the right conditions for close collaboration between all relevant stakeholders, especially the private sector, for co-management of the country's marine resources;
- iv. **Communications strategy and framework** - Develop a communications framework for effective internal and external communications with all stakeholders;
- v. **Proper structures and platforms for engagements** - Support the fishery community to create proper platforms and structures for negotiations and engagements on improving working conditions and work standards in the small-scale fishery sub-sector;
- vi. **Holistic and inclusive training approaches** - Develop relevant, holistic and inclusive training avenues for young Seychellois men and women in small-scale fisheries to meet the country's labour market needs and decrease its overreliance on expatriate labour.

9. POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The development of this Policy is a result of two extensive studies. The first one commissioned by the SFA entitled the *Employment Study and Capacity Needs Assessment for the Fisheries Sector in Seychelles (2022)* which identified the labour challenges of small-scale fisheries in Seychelles. Pursuant to that a qualitative research was commissioned in 2022/23 with a focus on the labour challenges of Small-Scale fisheries in Seychelles. The research included stakeholder consultations, semi-structured one-on-one interviews, focus group meetings and document review, including the assessment of the implementation of previous recommendations to address the labour challenge. The Policy was validated through a national stakeholder workshop which took place on 29th August 2023.

10. POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Policy and legislative framework which covers the implementation and management of this policy are as follows:

POLICIES
The Fisheries Sector Policy and Strategy(2024)
The National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (NFNSP) (2013)
The National Employment Policy and Strategies (2014)
National Youth Policy 2018/2023
Occupational Health and Safety Decree (1978)
The National Curriculum Framework (2013)
LEGISLATION
Export for Fishery Products Act (1997)
The Seychelles Employment Act (1995)
Industrial Relations Act (1993)
Seychelles Fisheries Authority Act (2024)
Fisheries and Aquaculture Act (2025)
Licenses Act (2010)
Education Act (2004)
International Instruments/Conventions
Working in Fishing Convention (2007)
Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (2014)

11. RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES

The Government of Seychelles holds the overall responsibility for policy development and oversight. This policy provides a framework for further initiatives by the Ministry of Fisheries and the Blue Economy, and for implementation by the Seychelles Fisheries Authority (SFA); the country's lead technical executive arm for fisheries and aquaculture as defined by the SFA Act. Other principal supporting Stakeholders are the Ministry of Education, the SMA, the Department of Employment and the private sector. It is therefore the responsibility of the Ministry responsible for Fisheries and the Blue Economy and the SFA to work in close collaboration with other Ministries, government departments and agencies, to support the proper and efficient implementation of those policies, as well as the development of appropriate programmes and initiatives necessary for the full implementation of the proposed policy framework.

12. POLICY STATEMENTS

Based on the above findings, the issues raised are grouped under five key thematic areas for policy action. It must be noted that, in addressing the challenges and opportunities surrounding the retention and recruitment of Seychellois in small-scale fisheries, the bigger underlying challenges of Seychelles' small-scale fisheries will also need to be factored in and addressed. The following policy statements and action areas therefore attempt to provide a consolidated set of short, medium and long-term approaches and remedies. As such, it places the sub-sector within the broader socio-economic context and provides proposals which will require a set of nationally-driven approaches as some policies cannot be implemented if the shortage of staff at SFA and the Fisheries Department are not addressed.

POLICY STATEMENT 1 - The Modernisation of Small-Scale Fisheries in Seychelles

The Government will facilitate the modernisation of the Seychelles SSF sub-sector through the development of its infrastructure at community and national levels; the establishment of mechanisms to drive the move towards an online-based market and marketing initiatives that cater for the SFF; the crafting of modern and relevant business models and appropriate training for current, new fishers and boat owners; development of innovative and sustainable forms of financing for existing and new fishers and the establishment of new mechanisms to upgrade and modernise the SSF fleet. The modernisation project will be supported through Public Private Partnership avenues to ensure collaboration, transparency, the SSF community buy-in and the growth and sustainability of SSF in Seychelles. It will ensure that the sub-sector remains Seychellois-owned and Seychellois-driven.

The proposal to modernise the Small-Scale Fisheries Sector to attract a younger and, hopefully, new crop of fishers in Seychelles, attempts to address the cultural challenge which is crippling the industry from growth. This acts as a deterrent for young people who see those engaged in fishing activities as hardworking but not earning sufficiently to support their families. They view fishing as a life of sacrifice which they are not willing to be part of. The modernisation of small-scale fisheries must, in itself, be a shift and rebranding of the sub-sector. Modernisation requires a long-term view and phased approach towards changing old habits as some of the proposals will have financial implications. This includes the modernisation of infrastructure at national and district levels; the modernisation of fishing vessels to meet basic working conditions to attract a younger generation and modernisation in the way SSF conducts its business.

Modernisation of Infrastructure

- Fully implement SFA's modernisation plan as per its Strategic Plan 2022-2027;
- Continue to find financing mechanisms to fully address infrastructural facilities for SSF;

- Determine the best modus operandi for a wholesale auction fish market in Seychelles and determine if an auction market is still relevant to the Seychelles context;
- Develop financing mechanisms towards the day-to-day upkeep and management of district/regional facilities for fishers; and
- Engage with international partners to impart international best practices and support the Modernisation process.

Develop online-based infrastructures which promote direct access to the market for SSF products.

- Conduct a study to determine the best online and user-friendly platform to market SSF products in Seychelles;
- Determine the management approach for the online platform. This can be co-managed by the private sector with the support of the Government;
- Develop sensitisation and training programmes to encourage public/private sector engagement in online marketing opportunities;
- Integrate online marketing as a core training component for students at the SMA and the National Technical Vocational Secondary School – (NTVSS); and
- Encourage and support the organic growth of online platforms which promote SSF.

Develop a programme which encourages SSF operators to upgrade and modernise their vessels.²

- Develop Financial Mechanisms to support fishers who wish to upgrade their fishing vessels;
- Provide Guidance and Technical support to fishers/vessel owners who wish to upgrade their fishing vessels to provide for better living and working conditions onboard;
- Develop a sensitisation and education programme for fishers on the importance of improving living and working conditions on the vessels; and
- Establish basic safety and sanitary standards for Fishing Vessels in SSF in accordance with vessel activity and categorisation.
- Incorporate workers' rights and responsibilities as an education programme for young fishers.

Modernise Business approaches of SSF

- Ensure that SSF economic activities continue to remain Seychellois-owned and Seychellois-driven;
- Foster greater engagements between financing institutions, insurance companies, the Pension Fund, and the Seychelles Revenue Commission (SRC) to encourage legal and better business practices for SSF;
- Provide proper mechanisms which will encourage and support fishers to access the formal

² This has financial implications on Fishers and the study revealed that not many are willing to provide better facilities – It should be done with careful consideration and mindful of the financial implications it carries

structures of financial institutions such as insurance, banking, pension, licensing and tax-related activities;

- Sensitise fishers on the importance of using the banking system to conduct their business;
- Sensitise fishers on existing financial incentives available through the banking system;
- Develop simple business training programmes for existing fishers who wish to upgrade their business skills;
- Develop mechanisms to ensure that fishers' rights are protected under the legal framework whilst taking into consideration the specificities of SSF;
- Encourage Vertical growth of SSF businesses which can add value to fish and other seafood products at the cottage industry level e.g. Smoked fish; salted fish; processed and prepacked fresh fish etc.; and
- Support the establishment of businesses to provide regular and affordable fishing supplies and equipment to fishers.

Develop strategies to create a more conducive business environment for SSF

- Conduct a feasibility assessment on the implications of implementing voluntary off-season fishing periods to allow fishers sufficient time to rest during low fishing season. This is a proposal made by the fishers which will allow time for rest, fish repairs, stock reproduction, training etc.;
- Undertake a comparative analysis of provisions relative to Fisher welfare benefits regionally, noting specific context demography, and associated costs and mindful of the ongoing study on public sector support to the fisheries sector;
- Recognise, formalise and support short-term casual work schedules within the sector to attract local workforce;
- Integrate new employment frameworks for fishers to generate incentives and garner interest from locals to engage in SSF. These would include employment and labour law-oriented contracts or arrangements for employment, protection of human and labour rights of fishers, and a non-compulsory lowered retirement age for persons having worked an extended number of years in the domain;
- Conduct further in-depth analysis into the implications of opening up the artisanal subsector to foreign workers;
- Identify and encourage higher-value job opportunities for Seychellois, within the fisheries value chain; and
- Identify and modernise relevant legislation/policies which support rather than prohibit innovation and entrepreneurship to support the growth and development of SSF.

POLICY STATEMENT 2 – Adopt a cross-sectoral collaboration and holistic approach towards learning

The Government will, in collaboration with national learning institutions/academia, the SSF community, the private sector and other regional or international cooperating partners inter alia develop a set of reinvigorated and modernised training approaches to incorporate a wider societal cross-section – extending training opportunities in SFF to the community level and integrating both academic and teaching practice elements to learning of SFF. This will be supported by modern and revised curricula and training and tailor-made learning opportunities, alongside the spearheading of increased research in the domain. In this regard, the Government will endeavour in the conclusion of relevant instruments between various national, regional and international parties to achieve modernised national learning to enable the growth of a nationally skilled SSF labour force.

In adopting a holistic approach to learning, the policy aims to address the quality of the pool of school leavers who enter the labour market; capture the group of ‘vulnerable’ youths who do not make it to post-secondary institutions, and present them with alternative learning opportunities and short-term learning opportunities to mature students. It is believed that by empowering young people through tailor-made learning avenues, the propensity for them to fall victim to social ills becomes less. The study revealed that past policy proposals which were focused on training alone did not yield the desired results - therefore a holistic approach to learning needs to be adopted. Consequently, the training needs of the labour market in SSF can best be approached through a multi-sectoral and collaborative format as different entities can provide a wider and richer set of tailor-made training opportunities. Whilst the formal school system can address formal training needs, the interest in the sector is best delivered by the community of fishers and entrepreneurs in the districts. This was a recurrent theme in focus group meetings with the students themselves. The formal school system will need a transformation to address not just labour shortages but also the underlying causes such as lack of soft skills, lack of social skills, discipline, social reforms in school leavers etc. The modernisation of SSF will require modern-day approaches to learning.

Modernise the Seychelles Maritime Academy to better reflect market needs

- Conduct a thorough review of the SMA including its programmes to better reflect the labour market skills requirements;
- Provide greater support to Seychellois lecturers to ensure passionate and effective delivery of programmes;
- Develop Business and Entrepreneurship Studies Fisheries for Students at all levels;
- Develop short-term courses for secondary school leavers who do not attain a full-time course at the SMA;

- Provide support for work placement opportunities in SFF for Apprenticeship learners;
- Offer short or other courses with a lower entry-level requirement to allow more of those who are passionate about the sector and job to enter the Academy; and
- Ensure that the SMA is administered by a board and Ministry which reflects and promotes the training needs of the institution in all areas of learning including Fisheries.

Develop an MOU between the Fisheries Administration and the National Technical Vocational Secondary School (NTVSS) to formalise engagements and commitments

- Support and fully participate in the formation and establishment of the NTVSS for secondary school students;
- Ensure that the offered programmes at the NTVSS, pay special attention to the holistic approach to learning, including soft skills and discipline;
- Become an active and permanent partner to provide Technical Support for the Fisheries programme at the NTVSS;
- Support the Centre for Excellence in curricula development aimed at Fisheries technology and other relevant fisheries courses;
- Support Research and Development in new fisheries techniques and technology;
- Empower Technical Education Teachers to specialise in fisheries;
- Develop a programme which encourages former SMA students to become TE Teachers; and
- Identify and develop courses in other sectors of the Fisheries value chain to encourage Seychellois to take up higher-value jobs and business opportunities.

Develop Training and Learning Opportunities at Community Levels

- Develop a career guidance module (inclusive of media content and specific fairs/festivals) geared at appealing to the interests of youth towards the industry. This should feature inputs from all national stakeholders within the industry to better educate and elevate the status of SSF going forward;
- Develop a knowledge transfer mechanism at a community level through private sector participation:

For example: Partner with fishers to deliver more hands-on education during the Southeast monsoon. This may involve fishers who can deliver knowledge and know-how during the Southeast monsoons as a form of paid training. This approach and other such 'master class' sessions will address both student career guidance and off-season incomes for fishers;

- Undertake active engagements with the Employment Department for resource mobilisation to support short-term training initiatives through the Department's various employment schemes;

- Work in close collaboration with the Employment Department in the development and formulation of its National Government Policy on HRD planning of which Fisheries has been identified as one of the economy's six pillars; and
- Continue to support mechanisms for people between 16-18 years of age to join formal employment in the sub-sector as apprentices.

POLICY STATEMENT 3 - Develop adequate structures to enable and spearhead greater collaboration among stakeholders

The Government will support the SSF Community and Civil Society in setting up a National Umbrella Organisation and any other necessary legal entity to capture and empower SSF fishers. The government will further facilitate the relevant training, technical support, and financial mobilisation mechanisms for such established entities including the development of necessary legal instruments as regards their management, strategic and operational components. Through the National Umbrella Organisation, the government will support the creation of a conducive environment for effective communications, engagements and consultations with the SSF Community, through which sustainable organisational management to be led by the SFF industry, will be achieved.

The findings of this research indicate a lack of structure and organisation led by fishers. The unstructured, informal and unregulated system of SSF may have worked in the traditional set-up, but with increasing opportunities and demands for engagements at national and international levels to reform the sub-sector, those engaged in SSF will have to strongly consider adopting a more structured and organised approach in addressing their concerns. There is also a lack of resources and capacity within those associations including a lack of sustainable financing mechanisms for long-term sustenance. This lack of organisation can also be found at the level of authorities and institutions, for example, lack of structures in MDAs for proper consultations even at policy development stages; lack of proper follow-ups, lack of effective and appropriate communications frameworks, and lack of supporting legislative frameworks etc.

Formation of an Umbrella Organisation for SFF

- Support the creation of a national body as an NGO organisation which can solely represent SSF and all its associations; This can be done with the support of CEPS;
- Register or be affiliated with a workers' or employers union to represent the industry in labour and industrial relations matters, and to collectively bargain for better working conditions;
- Through this umbrella organisation develop an MOU between SSF and Government Authorities to address matters of mutual interests including better financing mechanisms,

- better insurance policies etc. and to support the modernisation process of SSF;
- Develop a plan for more active engagements between Fisheries administration and Fisher communities to foster greater collaboration amongst stakeholders; and
- Ensure sufficient and exhaustive consultations with all stakeholders when developing policies;

Strengthen Internal Implementation Structures

- Develop and Strengthen structures for proper policy implementation and monitoring mechanisms including increased specialist manpower at the Fisheries Department;
- Develop outreach programmes and initiatives aimed at sensitising, educating and informing the general population and targeted audiences on the importance of the fishery sector in Seychelles; and
- Develop greater engagements through the Fisheries Transparency Initiative to encourage accountability and ensure responsible fisheries governance.

POLICY STATEMENT 4 - Promote better co-management approaches towards sustainable fisheries management initiatives

In an effort to spearhead a renewed thinking, broadened knowledge base and an active call to action as regards to the practice of sustainable fisheries by the SSF sub-sector, the Government will undertake outreach and educational initiatives such as training workshops, advocacy, joint collaborations and other relevant actions to develop and integrate sustainable fisheries mechanisms for implementation by SSF Fishers. The government and its stakeholders will place further emphasis on changing attitudes and mindsets by empowering the younger generation through schools and community-based initiatives.

The qualitative study guiding this policy framework revealed a lack of understanding and collaboration by certain fishers to support sustainable fisheries management mechanisms. Many fishers fail to comprehend the merits of these mechanisms leading to apathy and boycott. The modernisation of SSF will require a change in the way stakeholders communicate and collaborate. The success of stock management relies heavily on proper education and the willing participation of fishers.

- Ensure that Co-management approaches become the cornerstone of sustainable fisheries management mechanisms;
- Develop and establish proper frameworks to accommodate a co-management regime with clearly defined responsibilities for the different parties;
- Conduct a comprehensive community-based programme to engage and educate, train and sensitise fishers on stock status and management;

- Develop and implement curricula from the primary level to educate students about sustainable and responsible fisheries practices;
- Develop mechanisms and avenues to encourage fishers to support sustainable fisheries management systems; and
- Adopt inclusivity, consultative and participatory approaches in the decision-making process and other fisheries management-related actions.

POLICY STATEMENT 5 - Develop an Effective Communications Strategy

The development of a comprehensive communications strategy that speaks to the full implementation of this policy will be led by the Government, in consultation with the SSF sub-sector and other national and international stakeholders. The execution of a robust and all-inclusive Communications Strategy will propel the desired policy outcomes within a holistic national framework in support of buy-in and continued national interest.

The life of a policy is beyond the confines of offices and should find an environment of its own in practice. A communications plan is an integral part of any policy implementation phase. The above-stated challenges, which will eventually produce several sub-policy positions, will entail a considerable transformation of the SSF sub-sector, a shift in thinking and ways of operating. This will require considerable effort and investment in constructing the required narrative which should not only reflect the transformation but communicate in a way which carries the transformation forward and engages the population at large.

- Develop a Comprehensive Communications Strategy for the Department of Fisheries and the SFA and ;
- Set up proper communications pathways and SOPs;
- Provide training to staff and other stakeholders on effective communications within the sub-sector;
- Build an electronic network and database of SSF for information sharing;
- Develop a culture of consultation and transparency for effective collaborations amongst stakeholders;
- Develop a nationwide sensitisation programme including a themed programme with various activities to involve, sensitise and engage the nation on the importance of the fisheries sector; and
- Empower and Support the Liaison/Communications Officer at SFA to facilitate communications between the Authorities and stakeholders.

A proper communications framework to shift the narrative on SSF from negative perceptions to one which depicts a modernised sector with the potential to do good business; personal development; growth and prosperity, is vital. The framework should support this document's vision and policy areas through various promotional, educational, outreach, PR and Marketing initiatives in support of modernisation and the achievement of an integrated SSF.

13. POLICY REVIEW

The development and implementation of this policy framework will require the support of multiple stakeholders under the leadership of the SFA. It is imperative that the core principles of integration and inclusivity spearhead the implementation of this policy in order to inspire and attract buy-in and proactive engagement by all parties. Its success is therefore heavily reliant on the development of capabilities and the willingness of all parties to work within a holistic approach to revamp Seychelles' small-scale fisheries going forward. Further to that monitoring and evaluation framework, guidelines shall be provided as regards the proper and effective implementation of this policy, requiring a robust and engaged multi-stakeholder collaborative approach.

The Ministry responsible for fisheries will have the overall responsibility of the monitoring and evaluation of the Policy. To remain relevant, the Policy shall be reviewed from time to time considering the changing context within the SSF sub-sector and new/emerging economic challenges and opportunities.