



UNIVERSITY OF  
SEYCHELLES  
Knowledge hub of the Indian Ocean

# Harambee in Practice: Social work as a catalyst for unity and hope Symposium

Showcasing Student-Led Research for an Inclusive and  
Sustainable Tomorrow

Auditorium: Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education



Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2026



9:00 AM – 3:00 PM



Department of Health and  
Social Care  
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT

Supported by

The Education and  
Socio-Economic Research  
Institute  
FACULTY OF RESEARCH AND  
INNOVATION

# PROGRAMME

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- 09:00**    **Welcome Address by the MC**  
**Opening Address by Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Development**
- 09:20**    **Keynote address by Dr. Georges Nicette - Senior Lecturer Health and Social Work, University of Seychelles**
- 10:15**    **COFFEE BREAK**
- Session 1 Moderator: Mrs. Marie Josée Bonne**
- 10:40**    **What are the gaps in regard to Employment Policies or the Employment Law for persons with disabilities in Seychelles?**  
Marco Gerry
- 11:05**    **Evaluating the effectiveness of home care in Seychelles: Quality of care and its impact on active ageing.**  
Juliana Augustin
- 11:25**    **PLENARY**
- Session 2 Moderator: Dr. Marie-Reine Hoareau**
- 11:40**    **The lived experience of heroin users on methadone treatment in Seychelles.**  
Shirley Françoise
- 12:05**    **Occupational stress and burnout: The experiences of social workers in the Seychelles islands.**  
Vivienne Lesperance
- 12:20**    **PLENARY**
- 12:40**    **LUNCH**
- Session 3 Moderator: Mrs. Betty-Mai Sofa**
- 13:35**    **Investigating Primary School Teachers experience in inclusive education in Seychelles.**  
Flavienne Laurette
- 13:55**    **To which extent parental involvement impacts students' misbehaviour in school.**  
Mendy-Jane Malvina
- 14:20**    **An investigation on factors influencing the primary-secondary transition process and the impact on students' well-being.**  
Tessy Allisop
- 14:40**    **PLENARY**
- 14:55**    **General discussion and closing remarks**

# **Rationale of the symposium**

The Health and Social Care Department at the University of Seychelles will host a Social Work Symposium on 8th July 2026 to mark World Social Work Day, with the theme "Co-Building Hope & Harmony - A Harambee Call to Unite a Divided Society." The symposium highlights the essential role of social work in fostering inclusive and resilient communities, grounded in the African concept of Harambee and the imperative to decolonise social science scholarship.

By focusing on the unique sociocultural context of Seychelles, the event prioritises local knowledge production and the integration of indigenous perspectives. The presentation of empirical dissertation research by alumni highlights the translation of academic inquiry into evidence-based practice, reinforcing the discipline's commitment to actionable, community-centered interventions.

Emphasising social cohesion, collective action, and social justice, the symposium encourages participants to critically engage with their own practices and to develop culturally competent, ethically informed responses to societal challenges. Ultimately, this event serves as a catalyst for knowledge exchange, professional development, and capacity building, advancing both local and global conversations on the transformative potential of social work.



# **Abstracts of Presentations**

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## **Keynote Presentation**

**Georges Nicette (PhD)**

**Senior Lecturer**

**University of Seychelles**

**Harambee in Practice: Social Work as a Catalyst for Unity and Hope": Showcasing Student-Led Research for an Inclusive and Sustainable Tomorrow**

### **ABSTRACT**

This keynote address inaugurates the Social Work Symposium under the theme "Co-Building Hope & Harmony, A Harambee Call to Unite a Divided Society." It underscores the imperative of social work research in Seychelles, highlighting how locally grounded inquiry informs culturally relevant and evidence-based interventions. By showcasing alumni dissertation research, the address demonstrates the transformative impact of student scholarship on practice, policy, and community well-being. Emphasising the African philosophy of Harambee, "pulling together", the keynote calls for collective action, cultural sensitivity, and advocacy to build inclusive and resilient communities. Ultimately, it affirms the centrality of empathy, collaboration, and research in advancing social justice and professional growth within the Seychellois context.

### **Presentation 1: What Are the Gaps in Regard to Employment Policies or the Employment Law for Persons with Disabilities in Seychelles?**

**Marco Gerry**

**Post title and Affiliation: Principal Programme Development Officer, Department of Family Affairs, Ministry of Social Affairs, Family, Equality**

**Email: [marco.gerry@gov.sc](mailto:marco.gerry@gov.sc)**

Despite growing awareness regarding equality, inclusion, and human rights, many persons with disabilities continue to face barriers in accessing and maintaining employment opportunities. This research examines the gaps that exist within employment policies and employment legislation relating to persons with disabilities in Seychelles. The study explores whether current employment laws, workplace policies, and institutional practices adequately protect and support persons with disabilities within the labour market. The aim is to identify legal, social, and structural challenges affecting the employment of persons with disabilities and assess the effectiveness of existing frameworks designed to promote equal opportunities. The study also investigates employer perceptions, accessibility concerns, discrimination, and the extent to which policies are implemented in practice and subsequently provides recommendations that may contribute to improving employment inclusion and strengthening legal protections for persons with disabilities in Seychelles.

A qualitative research approach is used, involving interviews and discussions with relevant stakeholder persons with disabilities. Secondary data from legislation, policy documents, academic literature, and international conventions are also reviewed to support the analysis.

The findings reveal gaps relating to policy implementation, limited workplace accommodations, insufficient awareness among employers, and weaknesses within monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. The study contributes to the broader discussion on social justice, equality, and inclusive development while highlighting the importance of ensuring that all individuals are provided with fair and meaningful employment opportunities regardless of disability.

## **Presentation 2: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Home Care in Seychelles: Quality of Care and Its Impact on Active Ageing**

**Juliana Augustin**

**Post title and affiliation: Director of Operations, Agency for Social Protection (ASP)**

**Email: [jaugustine@gov.sc](mailto:jaugustine@gov.sc)**

The study critically assesses the effectiveness of home-based care in Seychelles, emphasizing on quality of care and its influence on active aging. Using a mixed-methods approach—including policy analysis, stakeholder interviews, and beneficiary feedback—the research examines how current service delivery models align with principles of person-centred care, accountability, and aging in place. Results indicate that while home care services provide essential support to older adults, systemic issues remain, such as inconsistent monitoring systems, varying caregiver performance, limited training, and insufficient integration of complementary services that foster social connectedness. The study underscores the need for standardized oversight frameworks and participatory reform strategies to improve service quality, promote autonomy, and support the well-being of older beneficiaries. It also highlights the importance of developing relevant and innovative models tailored to the local context. Overall, the findings offer a foundation for integrating home-based care into broader aging policies and LTC reforms in Seychelles, providing practical insights for improving service delivery and promoting active, inclusive aging.

## **Presentation 3: 'The Lived Experiences of Heroin Users on Methadone Treatment in Seychelles'**

**Shirley Françoise**

**Post title and affiliation: Senior Benefit and Welfare Officer, Agency for Social Protection (ASP)**

**Email: [shirley@gov.sc](mailto:shirley@gov.sc)**

**Over time, heroin addiction in Seychelles has become a major concern for society, policymakers, and the public in general, leading to the consideration of methadone treatment to curb the dependence. Concerning the ambiguity of methadone treatment on the user's quality of life, De Maeyer et al. (2011) remind us that what is beneficial for some people may be harmful to others. Opinions are that consumers' perceptions of their experiences with the treatment delivery program are often overlooked, hence the aim of this study, which may also serve as a basis for future studies of wider population impact.**

**The study employs a phenomenological and constructivist paradigm, utilizing an interview guide with semi-structured questions that allowed participants to express themselves freely on the topic. Two participants of both sexes who have been on methadone for not less than three months consented and were enrolled to participate in the research. The data were analysed thematically.**

**The results reveal that heroin users accessing methadone treatment view methadone as helpful, as it provides a life purpose. On the other hand, the methadone programme is described as a legal ghetto, full of stigma that sets barriers to employment. Likewise, support and unprofessional practices were identified as factors influencing adherence and program discontinuation. Additionally, key findings and recommendations include public and family education, the presence of qualified personnel working holistically in the field of substance addiction, and a review of the methadone program based on the local context.**

**The results suggest that while methadone helps provide a second chance to heroin users on the methadone treatment program in Seychelles, stigma, unprofessional practices, lack of support, and unemployment constitute important hindrances to the rehabilitation of methadone consumers. Therefore, there is a need for more education across the population, a review of the service and further research in the area to consider aspects that were not considered in this study.**

## **Vivienne Lesperance**

**Post title and affiliation: Programme Officer for Prevention Education, Agency for the Prevention of Drug Abuse and Rehabilitation (APDAR)**

**Email: [vivilesperance@yahoo.com](mailto:vivilesperance@yahoo.com)**

The core nature of social work practice renders social workers vulnerable to occupational stress and burnout. The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of social workers in the Seychelles Islands with regards to work related stress and burnout. The objectives are to ascertain whether the social workers suffer from stress and burnout, as well as delving into their subjective experiences with job stress and burnout. The study also aims to identify the preventative and self-care practices available in the social workplace to manage stress and prevent burnout. The study adopts a qualitative exploratory approach. Data were collected through an online questionnaire survey, with a total of 20 social workers participating in the study.

The findings indicate that social workers experience job stress and burnout and are currently experiencing the effects of occupational stress and burnout in their respective workplaces. Job-related and organizational factors are seen as contributing to job stress and emotional exhaustion among the social workers who participated in the study. Notably, the study reveals a lack of frequent social, emotional, and psychological support and aid in the workplace. Debriefing with colleagues emerge as the most common self-help technique. The conclusions drawn from the study are significant for all the ministries, departments that employ social workers, and the Seychelles Social Workers' Council.

## **Presentation 5: Investigating Primary School Teachers Experience in Inclusive Education in Seychelles**

**Flavienne Laurette.**

**Post Title and Affiliation: Employment Officer, Ministry of Employment and Human Resource Planning**

**Email: [f.laurette408@gmail.com](mailto:f.laurette408@gmail.com)**

The main characteristic of inclusion is to create an educational system that enables access, equity and social justice for all learners regardless of their abilities (Armstrong, 2008). This paper aims to investigate the experience of teachers in Seychelles in relation to Inclusive Education, and the influence these experiences have in inclusive classrooms. A qualitative study was conducted using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory as the guiding theoretical framework. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, and data were collected using semi-structured interviews. The data were analysed using thematic analysis.

The findings reveal that teachers faced four main challenges namely; lack of parental responsibility, limited training, infrequent support from the Special Educational Needs Coordinator and limited support in general. The study also highlights the systemic barriers in the meso-system, exo-system and macro-system influence teaching in inclusive education classrooms. Additionally, the study indicates a lack of collaborative relationships has restricted the implementation of inclusion within schools X and Y. The research suggests that there is a need to enhance collaborative partnerships between stakeholders and to engage the community in inclusive education practices. It also recommends the provision of specialised training for pre-service teachers and ongoing training for in-service teachers.

## **Presentation 6: To Which Extent Does Parental Involvement Impact Students' Misbehaviour in School.**

**Mendy-Jane Malvina**

**Post Title and Affiliation: Personal and Social Education Teacher, Anse Royale Secondary School, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development**

**Email: [mmalvina7@gmail.com](mailto:mmalvina7@gmail.com)**

This study investigates the extent to which parental involvement impacts student misbehaviour in secondary schools in Seychelles. The research aims to examine the relationship between parental involvement and students' behaviour, identify the benefits of parental participation in school life, and explore whether increased parental involvement could contribute to reducing misconduct among secondary school students.

A mixed-method research approach was adopted, combining both qualitative and quantitative data. Purposive sampling was used to select six secondary schools based on their reported levels of student misbehaviour. The participants consisted of Deputy Heads responsible for pastoral care and support, as they are directly involved in managing students' discipline and maintaining records related to parental engagement. Data were collected through structured face-to-face interviews, allowing participants to provide detailed information regarding behavioural issues and parental involvement within their schools.

The findings reveal that schools with higher levels of positive parental involvement generally experience lower levels of student misbehaviour. However, the study also demonstrate that parental involvement alone does not automatically guarantee positive behaviour, as the quality and nature of the involvement play a crucial role. Positive parental support is associated with improved behaviour, stronger academic performance, better student wellbeing, and increased cooperation between schools and families. Conversely, negative parental attitudes, permissive parenting styles, and lack of collaboration with schools are found to contribute to behavioural problems among students.

The study concludes that parental involvement significantly influences student behaviour in secondary schools. Effective collaboration between parents and schools is therefore essential in promoting positive behaviour and reducing misconduct. The research recommends strengthening communication systems, increasing parental sensitisation programmes, and encouraging stronger partnerships between schools, parents, and support agencies.

## **Presentation 7: An Investigation on Factors Influencing the Primary-Secondary Transition Process and the Impact on Students' Well-being.**

**Tessy Allisop**

**Post title and affiliation: Community Social Worker, Department of Social Affairs, Ministry of Social Affairs, Family & Equality**

**Email: [tessyallisop@gmail.com](mailto:tessyallisop@gmail.com)**

The transition from primary to secondary education represents a significant milestone in a student's educational journey. In Seychelles, approximately 1,400 students make this transition annually. Despite the considerable number of students transitioning, the Ministry of Education is yet to establish a formal policy or clear guidelines to support students during this critical phase.

Using a qualitative research approach, this study explores the various factors that may facilitate or hinder the transition process, with particular emphasis on students' wellbeing. Data were collected from primary and secondary students, as well as teachers, through focus group discussions and face-to-face semi-structured interviews to curb the effects of groupthink.

The findings reveal that students experienced mixed emotions regarding the transition. Many express anxiety and fear about becoming the youngest students in secondary school, while others demonstrate enthusiasm about making new friends, engaging in more advanced learning, and achieving future aspirations. Other concerns also include adapting to a new school environment and issues related to safety, particularly perceptions of anti-social behaviour among older secondary students. Teachers highlight challenges such as limited networking and communication between schools, insufficient parental involvement, and the size of secondary schools.

The study recommends that the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, review and strengthen existing policies, procedures, and guidelines to better address the factors influencing the primary-secondary transition process, with particular attention to students' wellbeing and adjustment.



# **Profile of Presenters**

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**Dr. Georges Nicette**  
**Senior Lecturer**  
**University Of Seychelles**

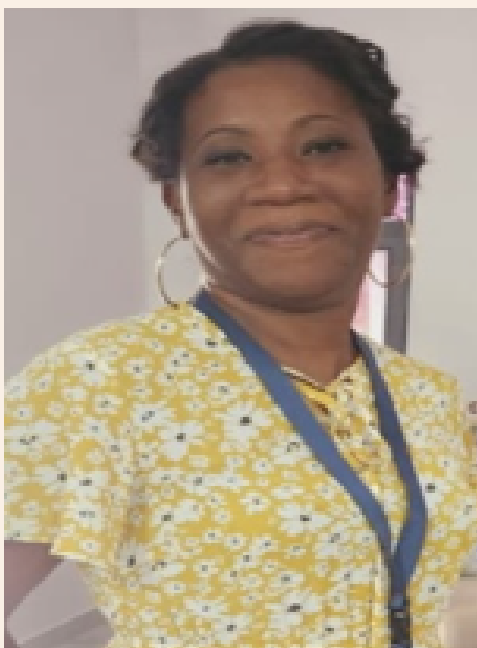
**Dr. Nicette is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Seychelles, holding a PhD in Sociology from the University of Malta. His academic qualifications also include an MA in Sociology from Staffordshire University, a BA in Social Work, a Postgraduate Certificate in Business Management from Edith Cowan University, and an LLB from the University of London.**

**Dr. Nicette has held lecturing positions at the National Institute of Health and Social Studies (NIHSS), SIDOL/ALDEC, and TGMI. His professional experience encompasses roles as a Mental Health Social Worker with the Southwest Aboriginal Medical Services (SWAMS) in Western Australia, a Probation Officer within the Ministry of Social Affairs, and an Immigration Officer in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. He currently serves as the Chairperson of the Seychelles Empowerment-Based Social Workers Association (SEBSWA) and is an executive member of both the Social Workers Council (SWC) and Board of the Seychelles Home Care Agency (SHCA).**



**Marco Gerry**

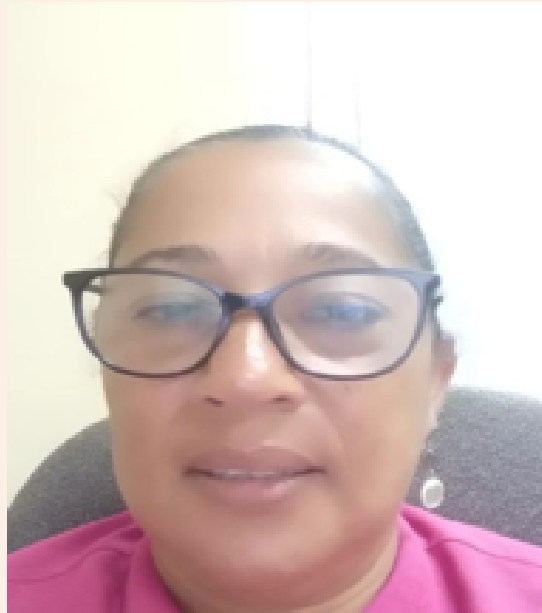
**Marco is a young professional with a diverse background in social work, law, business, history, and journalism. Having recently completed a Bachelor of Social Science (Honours) in Social Work at the University of Seychelles, he has gained knowledge and skills in community development, advocacy, human wellbeing, and social issues. His academic background in law, business, and history has equipped him with a broad understanding of society, governance, organisations, and social systems. He also has three years of experience as a journalist, where he developed strong skills in research, communication, interviewing, writing, and reporting on matters affecting communities. He is passionate about equality, inclusion, and positive social change, and continues to use his education and professional experience to contribute meaningfully to society and support the wellbeing of others.**



### **Juliana Augustin**

**Juliana is the Director of Operations at the Agency for Social Protection (ASP), with over 16 years of experience in social protection, welfare administration, and social work. She holds a Bachelor of Science (Honors) in Social Work from the University of Seychelles, and throughout her career she has had the privilege of serving in a range of operational and leadership roles within the public service.**

**Her professional work has centered on strengthening social protection systems, improving service delivery, enhancing operational efficiency, and promoting accountability and good governance. She has a particular interest in social protection policy, case management and program evaluation, public sector modernization, and the use of evidence to inform policy and practice. The research she is presenting reflects her commitment to improving the lives of older persons in Seychelles.**



**Shirley Françoise**

**Shirley is a committed individual who is passionate about encouraging change and contributing to people's well-being. She has a degree in social work and years of work experience with vulnerable populations. Her client-cantered approach and acquired skills throughout the many years of service in the field of social work, plus professional development, have made it possible for her to understand and manage difficult social issues in a variety of work contexts.**

**Through her dissertation, Shirley presented research focused on exploring the lived experience of heroin users on methadone treatment in Seychelles.**



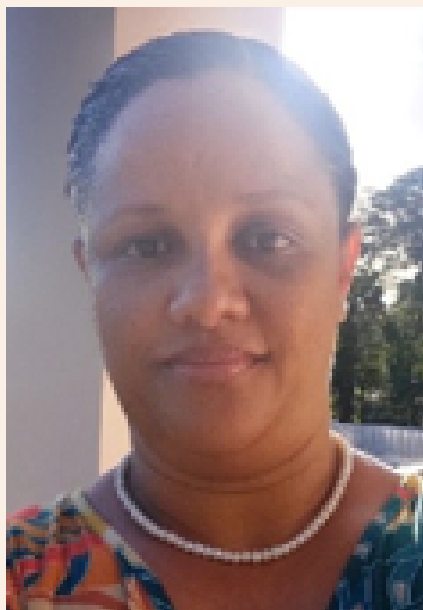
**Vivienne Lesperance**

**Vivienne works at the Agency for the Prevention of Drug Abuse and Rehabilitation in Seychelles (APDAR). She holds a Master's Degree in Health Social Work from the University of Debrecen, Hungary, as well as a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from the University of Seychelles. She specializes in this field due to the need to bridge the gap between health and social care systems and to diversify social work practice in the Seychelles. Originally from Praslin, Vivienne is committed to supporting vulnerable individuals and advocating for the mental health and wellbeing of carers in the social field. Her professional interests include rehabilitation, mental health advocacy, substance use, and strengthening support for children, young people, and elderly persons, persons with disabilities and individuals facing social, emotional, and health challenges. Beyond her professional work, she enjoys writing poetry, drawing, and listening to music. She aspires to be a voice for the voiceless and contribute to positive social change.**



**Flavienne Laurette**

**Flavienne is an Employment Officer in the Skill Development Programme Section with the Ministry of Employment and Human Resource Planning, working with unskilled youth. Her academic journey began at the School of Advanced Studies, where she obtained A-level in Psychology, Sociology, and Law. Her interest in psychology and sociology led her to the University of Seychelles, where she earned a Bachelor of Social Science, specializing in Social Work. Her dissertation investigated primary school teachers experience inclusive education, with the aim of understanding the efficacy of current practice and implementations of policy. She is passionate about youth empowerment, social inclusion, and supporting individuals in developing their skills and employment opportunities.**



**Mendy-Jane Malvina**

**Mendy-Jane is a graduate of the Bachelor of Social Science in Youth and Community Work programme at the University of Seychelles. She is currently working as a Personal and Social Education Teacher at Anse Royale Secondary School. She has a strong interest in youth development, education, student welfare, and community empowerment. With professional experience in the education sector, she is particularly passionate about understanding the social and family factors that influence student's behaviour and academic achievement. Her research focuses on parental involvement and its impact on student misbehaviour in secondary schools in Seychelles. Through her work, she aims to contribute to the development of effective strategies that strengthen collaboration between schools, families, and communities in order to promote positive student behaviour, wellbeing, and educational success.**



**Tessy Allisop**

**Tessy is a married mother of two adult daughters. She has an Honours Degree in Social Work, obtained in 2020, and a Certificate in Community Studies. She has been practicing as a community social worker for the past 10 years in different districts and is currently working at Perseverance district. Her work involves supporting diverse groups within the community, including children, adolescents, and the elderly. The most common issues she is addressing are child neglect and behavioural challenges among teenagers. She also conducts outreach programmes and collaborate closely with schools, NGOs, the police, and NCC. She strongly believes that partnership and teamwork bring the best outcomes for individuals and communities. She is particularly passionate about supporting teenage mothers through advocacy and guidance. Outside work, she engages in charitable activities with Caritas, participate actively in church activities, and enjoys gardening and caring for her pets.**



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