Introduction

Mauritius and Barbados have demographic, socio-economic, and cultural differences, but share similar sustainable development challenges as Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Both countries are physically small, have a narrow resource base, high susceptibility to natural hazards, low economic resilience, and limited human and technological capacity for mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change (Nurse and Sem, 2000). Both countries are very dependent on tourism, coastal resources, and international trade. There has been a growing concern in both Mauritius and Barbados regarding the negative impacts of climate change and environmental pollution on agriculture, water, fisheries, erosion of beaches, degradation of reef systems and bleaching of corals, loss of wetlands and depletion of biodiversity. Both countries have been at the forefront of development programmes and strategies for SIDS which produced initiatives such as The 1994 Barbados Programme of Action and The 2005 Mauritius Strategy of Implementation.

SIDS produce less than 1 per cent of global greenhouse gases, yet are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change (Steiner, 2014). In SIDS there is a growing concern about environmental injustice, environmental sustainability and climate change. Such a context should compel community-based social workers in Mauritius and Barbados to adopt a green social work (GSW) approach to ensure that the people they serve have sustainable livelihoods. GSW is defined by Dominelli (2012: 25) as:

A form of holistic professional social work practice that focuses on: the interdependencies among people; the social organization of relationships between people and the flora and fauna in their physical habitats; and the interaction between socio-economic and physical environmental crises and interpersonal behaviour that undermine the well-being of human beings and Planet Earth.

This chapter discusses the activities and roles of community-based social workers who work with diverse stakeholders in Mauritius within Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).
It also considers the need for similar activities and roles to be performed by social workers in Barbados to ensure that people in vulnerable coastal communities are able to sustain their livelihoods. Coastal zones consist of several stakeholder groups ranging from wealthy hoteliers to chronically poor artisanal fishers and micro-business owners who earn their livelihoods through a range of activities. Management for sustainable outcomes in the coastal zones extends across different sectors, organisations and ownership boundaries, and encompasses different stakeholders’ needs, interests and concerns (Rockloff and Lockie, 2004). ICZM requires social workers to play an active role within coastal communities through the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and development, as well as capacity-building for resilience with regards to the effects of climate change, natural disasters and environmental degradation.

In this chapter, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) (as shown in Figure 20.1) is used to answer the following questions in a comparative manner for Mauritius and Barbados:

1. What are the strategies, methods, and techniques being used by social workers in: (a) assessments of vulnerability and livelihoods; (b) inventions for transforming structures and processes; (c) promoting livelihood strategies; and (d) accounting for and reporting livelihood outcomes achievement from their interventions?

2. What are the main challenges for social workers working within ICZM for: (a) a multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral collaborative approach; and (b) participation of marginalised, disenfranchised, and vulnerable individuals and groups?

3. What lessons for GSW can be drawn from the two case studies?

The context: Mauritius and Barbados

Mauritius is 2,040 square kilometres in size and has an Exclusive Economic Zone that extends over an area of 1.9 million square kilometres and a population of 1.2 million. It is world famous as a tropical holiday destination, with 1.2 million tourists visiting the country yearly. Tourism and the finance, service, and textile sectors are important pillars of the Mauritian economy, while sugar production – the traditional pillar of the island’s economy – is declining in relative importance (BTI, 2016). Since gaining independence from Great Britain in 1968, Mauritius has made remarkable socio-economic progress by diversifying its economy and developing its welfare system. Since the early 1980s, the island has had an average annual economic growth of around 4 per cent, while successive governments have made continuous efforts to consolidate the welfare state, providing free healthcare, free education at all levels, and a basic old age pension at universal level (Rambaree, 2011a, b; 2013).

Mauritius is promoting sustainable development through various socio-economic incentives. A major focus within sustainable development initiatives has been coastal zone management. The government of Mauritius and several international organisations like the Indian Ocean Commission, European Commission, and World Bank, are operating within the ICZM framework in Mauritius. ICZM is based on the recognition that coastal zone management is a complex, dynamic, and interconnected field of physical, biological, human socio-economic, and political systems and processes. Community well-being and community participation as part of stakeholders’ engagement within ICZM has been defined as a key component and strategy for achieving success with sustainable development processes (McFadden, 2008; Rambaree, 2011b).

Barbados, a small country located in the Atlantic Ocean north of the equator in the archipelago of Caribbean islands, has a land mass of 430 square kilometres and coastline of 97 kilometres, and is much smaller than Mauritius. Barbados attained political independence from Britain in 1966, two years before Mauritius. It has a population of approximately 285,154 (World
Population Review, 2016), and ‘face[s] an ageing population and a growth rate of almost zero’ (Government of Barbados, 2013: 3). Like Mauritius, it is among the most densely populated countries in the world.

Barbados boasts a literacy rate of 99.7 per cent compared to Mauritius’s 89.2 per cent (UNDP, 2016). It has a universal healthcare system and free education from preschool to tertiary level. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Barbados was worth US$4.45 billion in 2015 (Trading Economics, 2016), and its GDP per capita is approximately US$25,100 (CIA, 2016). The main natural resources of Barbados are coral reefs, fish, petroleum, and natural gas. Its main industries include tourism, fisheries, by-products of natural gas and petroleum, by-products of sugar particularly rum, agriculture, and light textile manufacturing. The country ‘is experiencing a loss of competitiveness in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors’ (Government of Barbados, 2013: 3). Barbados is highly dependent on tourism; 1 million tourists visit the island annually (Barbados Statistical Service, 2015). Tourists are attracted to the island’s climate, coral reefs, beaches, and marine life. The socio-economic development of Barbados is particularly vulnerable to the impact of regional and global environmental changes and climate change. Like Mauritius and other countries in the Caribbean, Barbados is a SIDS with a fragile economy and inimitable vulnerabilities.

Barbados, a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), worked towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In 2015, the government adopted the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (CARICOM, 2016), and has signed but not yet ratified several international agreements to address environmental and climate change-related issues that continue to assail the island. These international agreements include biodiversity, climate change, desertification, endangered species, hazardous wastes, marine dumping, ozone layer protection, ship pollution, and wetlands (CIA, 2016). Government adopted a Coastal Zone Management Unit (CZMU) created in 1996 and 1998 Coastal Zone Management Act (Government of Barbados, 1998). Barbados has a cooperative approach to coastal zone management and environmental protection and government has realised that effective ICZM helps Barbados’s social and economic development.

Social work in Mauritius and Barbados

The ramifications of climate change and environmental degradation impact individuals, families, and communities (Erickson 2012; Besthorn and Besthorn, 2012), and work negatively against people’s livelihoods and sustainable development. The multiple effects of climate on societies globally is creating new career paths for social workers in disaster management and environmental management, matters discussed by Dominelli (2012); Besthorn and Besthorn (2012); McKinnon (2012); and Erickson (2012). Besthorn and Besthorn (2012: 58) note that ‘for a growing number of social workers in developed countries, the recognition began to emerge that the natural environment shares a complex and evolutionary link to personal and social development’. The Global Agenda on Social Work and Social Development, devised by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), and International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) has environmental sustainability as one of four pillars requiring action from social workers (IASSW, IFSW and ICSW, 2012).

The government in Mauritius employs most professional social workers in occupational positions like ‘social security officer’, ‘community development officer’, ‘regional development officer’, ‘youth officer’, and ‘family welfare officer’. Almost all professional social workers are
trained in social work to at least Bachelor level. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are another major employer of professional social workers. Some professional social workers with university qualifications in social work are employed by international organisations based in Mauritius, including the Red Cross, United Nations (UN) organisations, and the European Commission Decentralised Cooperation Programme. A small number of social workers are employed by private companies where they operate within Corporate Social Responsibility mandates.

Social workers in Barbados are trained mainly as generalist practitioners. Ring and Carmichael (2015) who conducted a workforce study on social work in Barbados found that most social workers hold a Bachelor’s degree in social work, with casework as the main form of practice. A small number engage in group work and community work. Ring and Carmichael (2015: 26) note that:

direct casework practice is the main form of social work activity, which . . . suggests that social workers perform their duties within a remedial model of service delivery where the focus is on individual pathology and treatment of social problems.

The majority of social workers in Barbados are employed in the government sector with a small number in local NGOs and the private sector (Ring and Carmichael, 2015). The agencies and organisations in which they work include, among others, the Welfare Department, the Probation Department, the Government Industrial Schools, the prison, Youth Service, the Child Care Board (child welfare agency), the National Council on Substance Abuse, the National Assistance Board which provides services to older people, the Disability Unit, the Community Development Department, and various local charities. There are also trained social workers who work in the fields of nursing, law enforcement and teaching.

In Barbados, social workers employed by the Community Development Department (CDD) engage in community development initiatives and capacity-building programmes within communities that focus on self-help initiatives and other traditional areas of community work. However, community-based social workers in Barbados need to give greater attention to the ‘asset-based’ approach in working with communities to enable the development of community strengths, and the promotion of social sustainability and social development. Despite the growing impact of climate change-related issues such as beach erosion, prolonged droughts, depleted coral reefs, periodic flooding, and land slippage on communities and their residents, social workers are not employed by the Ministry of the Environment, the Water Resources and Drainage Department (under which CZMU sits) or the Department of Emergency Management (DEM). The DEM coordinates the national response to disasters. Providentially, ‘social workers employed by the Government Welfare Department and the CDD are members of the planning and response teams’ (Rock and Corbin, 2007: 385) of DEM. Additionally, ‘all social workers employed by the Government of Barbados are charged with responding to the physical, social and mental health needs of persons affected by the trauma of disasters’ (Rock and Corbin, 2007: 385). Thus, they have clearly defined roles to play in situations of natural disaster through their involvement with DEM. However, social workers in Barbados are not adept in responding to the socio-economic issues that arise in the everyday interplay between the natural environment and people. This infers that social workers need to be trained to think and respond to social, economic, and environmental changes – macro-issues that impact negatively upon sustainable development, environmental justice, and livelihoods of people in particularly vulnerable communities.
The sustainable livelihoods approach: applicability to green social work

Since its conceptualisation in the 1990s, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) shown in Figure 20.1 has been a popular model used to identify important assets in livelihoods, their trends over time and space as well as the nature and impacts of shocks and environmental, economic and social stresses upon these assets (Morse et al., 2009). A livelihood consists of the capabilities, assets (material and social resources), and activities required to earn a living (Chambers and Conway, 1991). For a livelihood to be sustainable it has to cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base (Carney, 1998). The SLA can be regarded as a genuinely transdisciplinary model that offers a fresh vision of a holistic and/or integrative approach with the capacity to analyse and understand the complexity related to sustainable development (Knutsson, 2006).

Social work is defined as ‘a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people’ (IFSW, 2016: 1). Promoting social changes towards development is explicitly expressed in the global definition of social work. Thus, it becomes the role, responsibility, and moral obligation of social workers to ensure that social changes within our society are in line with sustainable development. In this sense, Dominelli (2012: 7) presents GSW for ‘holistic understandings about various environments and their impacts upon people’s behaviour’. GSW provides social workers with a sound understanding about environmental injustices which are considered oppressive, and obliges social workers to intervene for the cause of social justice and human rights (Dominelli 2012; Rambaree 2013; Rambaree and Ahmadi, 2017). For Dominelli (2012), the mission of GSW is to protect the environment and enhance people’s well-being by addressing prevailing structural inequalities and the unequal distribution of power and resources, as well as by promoting harmonious relationships among humans, plants, and animals within the socio-cultural, economic, and physical environment. The main aim of GSW is particularly centred towards protecting and promoting the livelihoods of vulnerable and marginalised populations (Ibid).

Figure 20.1  Sustainable livelihoods framework
Source: DFID (1999), page 1. Used with permission
SLA could be considered a suitable framework for GSW. Similarly, Hugman (2016) argues that GSW is based on the recognition that ecology is part of the development of livelihoods. SLA can facilitate green social workers to see livelihoods in a dynamic, historical context by allowing practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to understand the complexities involved in working for sustainable livelihoods. In particular, GSW discourses highlight the complexities and interdependence between ecology and social issues within the context of a heightened concern for the global energy crisis and climate change challenges, prevailing structural inequalities, and unequal distribution of power and resources of interest to social workers (Dominelli, 2012). GSW is a holistic approach. SLA’s strength is that it belongs to the group of holistic approaches that seek to capture the enormous complexities of development problems (van Dillen, 2002). The SLA, therefore, can support social workers in stimulating their thinking and mapping the complexities surrounding their practice towards sustainable development.

In the original SLA framework, the neglect of power relations was an important flaw, and a subsequent generation of livelihood studies managed to integrate the analysis of power relations in a meaningful way by focusing more attention on influences, institutions, structures, and processes (De Haan, 2012). For Dominelli (2012), GSW is based upon the insights of radical and anti-oppressive social work that challenges structural inequalities and unequal distribution of power with the aim of promoting harmonious relationships and sustainable livelihoods. The way ecosystem services and resources and other livelihood opportunities are distributed locally is often influenced by informal structures of social dominance and power within society (Krantz, 2001). The SLA can support social workers in identifying the complexities of power dynamics and suggest ways and means to direct power towards the emancipation of people who are trapped or pushed towards marginalisation, exclusion and poverty, and who are victims of environmental injustices. Social workers have a major concern in tackling environmental injustices through a better understanding of societal power structures and processes. In this endeavour, the SLA can be used as an interdependent framework to guide social workers to attain some of the aims of GSW.

Assessment of vulnerability and livelihoods

Mauritius has an extremely rich coastal zone consisting of near-shore wetlands and mangroves, lagoon coral, fringing coral reef, and all their associated marine life (Ministry of Environment, 2007). However, marine scientists are warning that coastal zones in Mauritius are undergoing enormous ecological pressure as a result of rapid growth in land- and sea-based activities alongside the effect of climate change (Rambaree, 2013).

Coastal areas of Mauritius have a history of inequalities. By the time of independence in 1968, most prime land (over 70 per cent of the beach front) was occupied by Franco-Mauritians (2 per cent of the population), ‘extremely wealthy sugar barons’ who had established an elite lifestyle in Mauritius (Salverda, 2010, 2013; Salverda and Hay, 2014). In 2007, when the European Union decided to end the special sugar trading status accorded to former colonies, the then-Mauritian government introduced the Integrated Resort Scheme (IRS) (which became the Property Development Scheme [PDS]), whereby sugar estate owners could convert acres of their agricultural land mostly in coastal areas into luxury villas to be sold to foreign buyers with Mauritian citizenship being granted to the buyers (Rambaree, 2013). The IRS enables large-scale landowners to construct exclusive resorts with a variety of high-quality amenities, such as marinas, golf courses, restaurants, shops, water sports centres, and wellness centres, thereby occupying large surface land areas and beaches (Sharpley and Naidoo, 2010).
Local people from the coastal communities are becoming increasingly worried about ‘Mauritius being sold to foreigners’ and their representatives are anxious about the increasing number of gated communities that are blocking access to the beach for local people (Rambaree, 2013). Side-by-side with the gated communities in the coastal areas of Mauritius, people are living in chronic poverty and become squatters of state-owned land. Social workers have a big challenge in countering the dualisation of the coastal communities in Mauritius. There is a map on Google Earth which provides an example of dual communities in Mauritius. Click on the following URL to access it. It requires Google Chrome to download; instructions for a free download are available through this URL.

https://earth.app.goo.gl/?apn=com.google.earth&ibi=com.google.b612&isi=293622097&ius=googleearth&link=https%3a%2f%2fearth.google.com%2fw%2f%40-20.27039599,57.7734752,44.39843483a,7404.12157048d,35y,0h,0t,0r

The fishing community of Mauritius regularly voice their concerns regarding their disrupted livelihoods in coastal zones. Almost all Mauritian coastal villages have a vibrant history of traditional artisanal fishing. However, most fishers come from a marginalised socio-economic background, living in chronic poverty, with more than 77 per cent having no formal education (Sobhee et al., 2008). The fishers’ families often consist of individuals who are in low-paid and highly unstable jobs. Fishers report high concern for socio-economic issues such as lack of education, unemployment of their children, poverty, and environmental degradation (Rambaree, 2011a). In particular, fishers are very concerned about the degradation of the marine ecology, due to the rising number of resorts and ocean-based activities in the coastal zones.

Furthermore, Rambaree (2013: 267), among others, found that the owners of micro-businesses located on Mauritian coasts received only residual benefits from the tourism industry and medium-scale industries such as restaurants and shops, and were not able to compete with the multinational groups that provide all-inclusive services. Additionally, the livelihoods of small-scale vegetable planters from the east coast of Mauritius are threatened as they are constantly being blamed for over-fertilising the soil which is said to be leading to the bulk accumulation of algae at the Belle Mare/Palmar beaches (Ministry of Environment, 2007) and negatively impacting the tourism sector.

Barbados has similar coastal zone and environmental-related issues such as the building of marinas and hotels on the beaches leading to beach erosion when the tide surges, and the docking of giant ships and cruise liners and resultant pollutants which have been depleting marine life. Across the island there is an increase in new housing developments built on agricultural lands which compromise the ecology of the island. Other problems include sewage disposal, prolonged drought, extreme flooding and soil erosion during the rainy season, land slippage, and the illegal dumping of refuse, all of which directly or indirectly impact the lives of people and communities. Professional social workers in Barbados have not been engaged in the assessment of the vulnerabilities of people in affected communities so that they can be provided with the information required to help preserve community resources and empower residents. They appear to be comfortable operating under the premise that ‘their expertise is in matters social, and therefore natural environmental factors are not germane to . . . social work’s professional interests’ (McKinnon, 2012: 266). They must be made aware that social and environmental justice issues are of grave importance and that using an environmental lens would provide them with insights about the impact of natural and environmental hazards and climate change on the socio-economic development of the country and the well-being of the clients/service users that they serve (Dominelli, 2012). It would also help enlighten them about the value of an authentic and holistic eco-systemic approach to their interventions.
Interventions for transforming structures and processes

Social workers have a critical role to play in assessing risk and vulnerability and transforming structures and processes that would enable communities to be proactive instead of being reactive in mitigating disaster, environmental hazards, and injustices. Erickson (2012: 184) states that, ‘despite our long-held principle of eco-systemic practice, social work has been slow to consider the natural environment as part of our practice’. Social workers do not pay enough attention to how climate change and the degradation of the environment is impacting the people they serve. Erickson (2012: 184) notes that, ‘social work has almost completely disregarded the integration of issues of the natural environment into . . . existing models that include the human environment’. To this end, they have not been able to impact the structures and processes that are trying to promote environmental sustainability (Dominelli, 2012). Possible explanations for disregarding environmental problems could be the profession’s training orientation and social workers’ view that such issues are the purview of other disciplines, as they are already overwhelmed ‘with a plethora of “real life” problems of the . . . most vulnerable people’ (Besthorn and Besthorn, 2012: 56).

Social workers in Mauritius need to adopt a political agenda to intervene in conflicts between various stakeholders and secure social justice for vulnerable groups (Rambaree, 2017). For too long, political elites (predominantly Indo-Mauritians) have worked together in areas of common interest with the economic elites (predominantly Franco-Mauritians) on a win/win basis (Rambaree, 2013, 2017; Salverda, 2013) to the exclusion of poor people. With globalisation and the rapid growth of neo-liberalism, Mauritius is vulnerable to conflicts between different stakeholders from coastal communities. Such conflicts necessitate social workers’ interventions as mediators to protect the livelihoods of vulnerable groups such as the planters and the fishers. Dominelli (2013: 436) notes that, ‘resolving these conflicts often involves multi-stakeholder partnerships composed of internal and external actors working alongside each other’.

Promoting livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes

In Mauritius and Barbados, social workers need to focus more attention on environmental justice through redistribution of ecosystem services, which are vital in promoting and protecting the livelihoods of people. Ecosystem services are the benefits people obtain from the ecosystem, which is a dynamic complex of plant, animal, and micro-organism communities and non-living environment, interacting as a functional unit together with human beings (Alcamo et al., 2003). Scientific discourses have established that ecosystems provide sufficient ecosystem services to humans supporting their basic needs for survival, mental health, and well-being (Sandifer et al., 2015). In particular, coastal resources are an asset within ecosystem services, made up of living organisms and non-living materials that can be used to support livelihoods for economic gain (Rambaree, 2013). In Mauritius, the vast majority of the poor people live in the coastal areas and, the marine ecosystem is an important source of livelihoods and well-being.

Challenges for social workers

Collaborative approach

A large number of professional social workers in Mauritius are involved in multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral collaborative approaches through environmental projects related to ICZM.
The governmental organisation that has the overall responsibility for coordinating the ICZM projects in Mauritius is the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management. The UN through the Supporting Integrated and Comprehensive Approaches to Climate Change Adaptation in Africa project and the European Union through the Regional Programme for the Sustainable Management of the Coastal Zones of the Indian Ocean Countries work in close collaboration with social workers from various governmental and non-governmental organisations. In a study of organisations involved in ICZM projects in Mauritius, Rambaree and Cheetamun (2009) found that eight out of 35 organisations had employed workers with social sciences backgrounds. Mauritian social workers operate in multidisciplinary teams to contribute towards environmental projects through activities such as education and campaigns with various population groups, community-based environmental enhancement projects, social needs and impact assessment, disaster intervention, and policy formulation and implementation.

The biopsychosocial functioning of the individual is dependent not only on the social environment but also the natural environment. Social workers have to make the paradigm shift to include the natural environment as a field of expertise. This shift has not yet resonated with the social work community in Barbados and social workers are losing opportunities to engage with experts in other disciplines on issues of climate change and the environment that impact their clients/service users. They may have ‘difficulty in integrating a comprehensive understanding of the natural environment and its influence on individual and collective development as well as issues of social and economic justice’ (Besthorn and Besthorn, 2012: 57). However, given the unprecedented occurrences of natural and manmade disasters the time has come for all sectors of society and academic disciplines to examine the issues around climate change, environmental degradation, and environmental injustice and to work together to find solutions that would secure the livelihoods of vulnerable groups (Dominelli, 2012).

### Participatory approach

Social workers operate in partnership with marginalised, disenfranchised, and vulnerable people whose stories spur them into action. Social workers must engage with residents of local communities and empower those who are disenfranchised due to environmental injustice. This involves hearing their stories, engaging in advocacy for squatters, persons facing environmental hazards such as land or beach erosion and who need to be relocated, and poor persons whose livelihoods are in further jeopardy due to development projects such as hotel construction on the beach front. Generally, social workers employed by governments do not intervene in these matters when government is involved in one way or another, for fear of losing their jobs. However, it behooves them to act through their local professional association to petition government to intervene on behalf of the disadvantaged.

In both Mauritius and Barbados, social workers are required to work towards fairness and social justice by challenging inequalities, marginalisation, and oppression. In this sense, a GSW approach is required to identify strategies that give voice to marginalised and oppressed people, and assist them to express their needs, rights, and concerns in having a fair share in ecosystem services (Rambaree, 2013). For instance, using the SLA, social workers can identify, analyse, and highlight complexities and their power dynamics to suggest how power may be utilised for the emancipation of those people who are trapped or pushed towards vulnerabilities, marginalisation, exclusion, and poverty. Enhancing the capabilities of marginalised and vulnerable groups for emancipation is what makes social work a transformative practice (Rambaree, 2017).
such endeavours, social workers need to work for and with marginalised, disenfranchised, and vulnerable individuals and groups. GSW is based on participatory principles in decision-making processes for achieving the goals of sustainable development. As Dominelli (2013: 435) argues:

Meeting development needs, particularly those linked to raising people out of poverty, can cause extensive environmental degradation if the development is not planned sustainably and if poor people are not involved in multi-stakeholder partnerships to find solutions alongside experts.

Lessons from the case studies and conclusion

The case studies from Mauritius and Barbados indicate how two countries with similar environmental challenges can undertake social work interventions in the field of ICZM. Social workers in these countries have to consider seriously the impact of the natural environment and climate change on the biopsychosocial functioning of humans, to meet the goals of sustainable development effectively. They must become advocates for marine, coastal and environmental conservation in securing the well-being of those vulnerable groups that depend on these resources for their socio-economic well-being. Social workers in Barbados have missed opportunities for multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral collaborations that could transform structures to meet the needs of clients/service users affected by environmental problems by focusing mainly on casework approaches to practice. Environmental sustainability, social sustainability, and people’s livelihoods are linked together and require structural changes as highlighted in GSW.

The Mauritian case study calls for a more radical approach to social work: GSW, which is founded on a radical philosophy of fighting against injustices and working for the rights of marginalised and vulnerable populations. Protecting the livelihoods of people is central to GSW. Engaging in GSW requires social workers to have a good understanding of the societal agencies, structures, and processes that impact upon the livelihoods of people. In this endeavour, social workers can utilise the SLA to intervene for the well-being of society and our planet.

The authors conclude that the GSW model presented by Dominelli (2012) has successfully managed to awaken the social work profession to take a more active role in affirming environmental justice and environmental rights as crucial components in promoting the well-being of humans and all living beings on planet Earth. GSW provides social workers with guidelines for critical reasoning and thinking from a more radical and anti-oppressive perspective. Such perspectives are much needed in contemporary societies, where neo-liberal forces have anchored their exploitative power in various social structures. GSW is essentially targeted at empowering marginalised and vulnerable groups and individuals. Moreover, GSW has opened avenues for the social work profession to play influential roles within multidisciplinary collaborations that meet the goals of sustainable development. Hence, social workers from all around the world, including Mauritius and Barbados, can benefit from GSW’s ideologies, values, and guidance in promoting the central identity of social work as a liberating and emancipatory profession.

References


