

# MHPN



August- December 2025

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## National Psychology Week 2025 – Celebrating the Impact of Psychology in Our Communities

National Psychology Week is an annual event dedicated to raising awareness and fostering appreciation for psychology while celebrating its significant impact. This year’s theme, “Celebrating the Impact of Psychology in Our Communities,” highlighted the many ways psychological knowledge, services, and professionals contribute to the well-being of individuals and society.



Mrs Betty- Mai Sofa

On 12 November 2025, the University of Seychelles hosted the second Psychology Workshop as part of the celebrations. The programme opened with welcoming remarks by Dean Dr. Justin Zelime, followed by an address from Mrs. Marie Antoine Bethew, Psychologist at the Ministry of Education, speaking on behalf of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Networking team. She emphasized the importance of psychology in shaping healthier communities and supporting young people.

The keynote reflection was delivered by Ms. Betty-Mai Sofa, Registrar at UniSey, who spoke about her work in improving student life on campus and ensuring learners maximize their personal and professional growth. She also inspired participants with her journey from supporting children as a scout to engaging with diverse partners and families in the wider community. Her story underscored psychology’s far-reaching influence in everyday life.



The morning forum showcased psychology in practice across multiple sectors. Ms. Sophie Preira, Provisional Psychologist at Mental Health Services, presented a compelling case study. Ms. Anna-Lisa Labiche, Principal Psychologist at Mental Health Services, shared insights into clinical practice.

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Ms. Anuishka Nanty highlighted applications in education, Ms. Cherelle Belairy, Provisional Psychologist discussed advocacy and support through the National Council for Children, and Mrs. Anielle Egekwu, Psychologist from the Department of Social Affairs, reflected on contributions to social and family services. A moderator-led discussion encouraged participants to reflect on lessons, challenges, and innovations in psychology practice.



The workshop continued with lightning talks that brought psychology “in action” to life. Ms. Cherelle Belairy presented her Online Safety Project, Mr. David Dogley, Provisional Psychologist at the Ministry of Education, shared his SEL Project, Ms. Ketty Mathiot, Psychologist at Mental Health Services, highlighted her Mental Health and Wellbeing Project, and Mrs. Lindy Legras, Senior School Counsellor, introduced a grief support initiative for students. These short presentations demonstrated psychology’s reach in addressing pressing community needs.

In the afternoon, a panel discussion on workforce development and practitioner well being offered thought-provoking contributions. Ms. Labiche spoke on working conditions and the scheme of service, Mr. Simao Inacio, Psychologist at the Ministry of Education, explored the mental health of practitioners, and Ms. Brigitte Gbilimou, Psychologist at Mental Health Services, addressed training and professional development.

Together, they highlighted the importance of ethics, resources, and resilience in strengthening the mental health workforce.

The workshop concluded with an open forum for collective reflections and closing remarks by the MHPN representative, reinforcing the importance of collaboration and forward-looking strategies.



Complementing the week’s activities, a “Cakes and Conversation” bake sale was held on 17 November at the Ministry of Education. The event created a warm space for informal dialogue on mental health, where sharing food encouraged meaningful connections among community members. Proceeds from the bake sale will support future initiatives for children.



*Written by Ms. Rasheedda Uranie (HPC 25/1053)*

## Nurturing Emotional Foundations: The ExSEL Program

The development of a child's emotional and affective behavior is a central topic in psychology. How can we most effectively cultivate a healthy relationship with emotions and self-regulation in our youngest learners?

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) plays a big part. As of December 2025, the ExSEL: Little Steps in SEL, Big Leaps to Excel program is transitioning from planning to implementation. This groundbreaking initiative, a partnership between UNESCO MGIEP and the Ministry of Education, Seychelles, aims to mainstream SEL across Creche Year 1 and 2 classrooms.



While SEL is a lifelong venture, the focus on this age group is strategic. The years from 3 to 8 are defined by neuroplasticity, a period of rapid brain growth where children quickly form new habits. Introducing SEL during this time is critical for shaping long-lasting emotional and social habits.

The habits centred around SEL focuses on managing emotions, and fostering empathy. It is fundamental to a child's success, functioning not just as a classroom skill but as a life skill that helps children manage stress, focus better, and build healthy relationships promoting self-regulation and prosocial behaviors, leading to greater life satisfaction. The first program year (2025–2026) is dedicated to empowering our teachers.

Following a 'Trainer of Trainers' (ToT) model, the foundation was established in October when Master Trainers (MTs) from each school completed an intensive five-day training delivered by MGIEP. The MTs received a comprehensive guidebook, complete with lesson plans, PPTs, and resources.



Crucially, the training space modeled an SEL classroom. The environment was rich with emotions vocabulary charts, stories created by the MTs, featured a calm-down corner equipped with toys, books, soft blankets and table arrangements met SEL criteria to foster positive interaction. The lesson followed a structure activity, presentation, interaction, and recap, something that the MTs actively replicated by creating their own lesson plans, practicing them with peers, and receiving direct feedback from mentors and peers.



Currently, MTs are actively engaging in sessions this December and January to finalize their strategies. They will train teachers to integrate SEL into daily routines, using the skills in both SEL and non-SEL classes, and focusing on core skills like emotional regulation, perspective-taking, and active listening. Our educators are the superheroes driving this reality, and we anticipate seeing the "Big Leaps" in our learners' social and emotional health.

*Written by Mr. David Dogley (HPC25/1087)*

## Supporting Our Educators: Mental Health Awareness at Beau-Vallon Secondary School

On **October 16, 2025**, in commemoration of **Teachers' Week**, Psychological Care Services (PCS) conducted a specialized mental health awareness session for the staff at **Beau-Vallon Secondary School**. This initiative was born out of recommendations following a careers week exhibition and mental health walk held earlier in July.



### Empowering Teachers in the Classroom

The session, which ran from 13:30 to 15:30, was attended by approximately **20 staff members**. Facilitated by Provisional Psychologists Ms. Ella De Lafontaine and Ms. Sophie Preira, the primary goal was to shine a light on the specific mental health challenges educators face and provide them with the tools to navigate them.

Key topics included:

- **Defining Mental Health:** Clarifying the distinctions between general mental health and formal mental disorders.
- **Debunking Myths:** Addressing common misconceptions and sharing factual information to reduce stigma.
- **Practical Strategies:** Discussing mental health within the classroom environment and sharing vital **self-care tips** for teachers.
- **Interactive Engagement:** The session featured an "Answer the Question" feedback activity and open discussions that allowed staff to clarify doubts in a safe environment.

### A Growing Community Impact

The workshop was highly regarded by both organizers and participants, who demonstrated a strong baseline understanding and active engagement throughout the afternoon.

One notable outcome of the event was the presence of Ms. Rhonda Burka, President of the Nurses Association Republic of Seychelles (NARS). Recognizing the deep relevance of the session's content, Ms. Burka has already expressed interest in collaborating with the PCS team to host a similar "Mental Health and Building Resilience" session for local nurses during Nurses Week in May 2026.

This session underscores the commitment of the Mental Health Services and the Health Care Agency to fostering a supportive environment for those who care for our community, whether in the classroom or the clinic.



*Written by Ms Ella De Lafontaine (HPC21/0838),  
and Ms Sophie Preira (HPC22/0913)*

## Dibwa Drive, Dibwa Maleme – A Celebration of Creativity, Recovery, and Community

On November 7th, 2025, our unit proudly opened the doors to “Dibwa Drive, Dibwa Maleme,” an exhibition that brought together creativity, resilience, and the spirit of recovery. What began as a therapeutic project in early 2025 grew into a vibrant showcase—one that not only displayed beautiful handcrafted work, but also reflected the dedication and personal growth of the clients participating in our rehabilitation program.

From the first sketch to the final polish, clients worked alongside our committed staff members, custodians, and psychosocial unit to bring their ideas to life. Their creations—finely crafted furniture pieces, delicately embroidered pillowcases, imaginative driftwood gadgets, and charming flower pots—filled the exhibition space with colour, texture, and meaning. Each piece represented more than craftsmanship; it embodied patience, perseverance, and the rebuilding of confidence.



For many clients, engaging in hands-on creative work has been a grounding and empowering part of their recovery process. The act of shaping wood, threading a needle, or transforming natural materials into functional objects offered moments of clarity, pride, and therapeutic release. Through teamwork, shared problem-solving, and the encouragement of our staff, clients discovered new skills—and often, new parts of themselves. The exhibition day was a heartfelt celebration. Visitors admired not only the artistry on display but also the stories woven into each creation. Clients stood beside their work with well-earned pride, receiving appreciation that affirmed their effort and progress. For many, seeing their pieces exhibited publicly was a powerful reminder that their abilities are valued and that their journey forward is supported.

Thanks to the strong collaboration among clients, staff, custodians, and the psychosocial unit, “Dibwa Drive, Dibwa Maleme” was a resounding success. More importantly, it stood as a testament to what can be achieved when creativity, community, and rehabilitation move together in harmony.

We look forward to building on this momentum—and to many more opportunities to showcase the remarkable talent and determination within our unit.



Written by Ms. Camella Hoareau (HPC21/0823)

# Cultivating Well-being: Managing Stress and Building Resilience for North East Point Hospital and Hospice Staff

On October 23, 2025, Ms. Brigitte Gbilimou, a Clinical Psychologist from the Psychological Care Services, led a vital session focused on Managing Stress and Building Resilience. This presentation, delivered to the staff of the North East Point Hospital and Hospice (NEPH), aimed to equip professionals with the psychological tools needed to navigate the pressures of modern work-life.



## Understanding the Nature of Stress

The session opened with a deep dive into what stress actually is—the body's response to any demand or challenge. Ms. Gbilimou highlighted that not all stress is equal, distinguishing between:

- **Acute Stress:** The immediate, short-term "fight or flight" response.
- **Chronic Stress:** Long-term exposure to stressors that can significantly impact health.

Participants learned to recognize Stress Warnings and Signs, ranging from physical symptoms like headaches and fatigue to emotional indicators like irritability and decreased motivation.

## The Workplace Challenge: Burnout and Balance

A major focus of the presentation was Work-Related Stress. Common stressors identified included heavy workloads, lack of control, and poor work-life balance. If left unmanaged, these factors can lead to Burnout—a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress.

## Key discussion points included:

- The importance of Work-Life Balance to prevent professional fatigue.
- Identifying Socio-economic and Biological Factors that uniquely affect how different individuals react to stress.

## The Path to Resilience and Empowerment

The second half of the workshop focused on solutions. Resilience was defined not just as "bouncing back" but as the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity. Ms. Gbilimou introduced a model of Empowerment, which involves:

1. **Setting Goals:** Identifying what you want to achieve.
2. **Taking Action:** Moving toward those goals.
3. **Observation and Reflection:** Evaluating the impact of actions and building self-efficacy.

## Final Takeaway: There is No Health Without Mental Health

The session concluded with the powerful reminder that mental well-being is the foundation of overall health. Staff were encouraged to utilize local resources, such as the Wellness Clinic at Seychelles Hospital, for ongoing support.

"Empowerment is a process that draws on evolving self-efficacy, knowledge, and competence."



*Written by Ms Sophie Preira (HPC22/0913)*

# NCC Outreach to Inner Islands

On 15th October 2025, Training Officers Mrs. Fatma Bibi, Ms. Latifah Noel, and Ms. Stella Dubel from the National Council for Children (NCC) conducted a meaningful outreach session at Grand Anse Praslin Primary School. This year, the NCC team made a deliberate effort to extend its reach to families and children of the outer islands, marking an important step in strengthening nationwide child welfare support.

During the visit, parents attended a parenting session focusing on positive parenting strategies, communication, and strengthening family relationships. Teachers also received training on safeguarding, with emphasis on safe and responsible digital behaviour, managing online risks, and fostering positive digital engagement—an area that remains a major priority throughout 2025 as children increasingly navigate online spaces.



*Mrs. Fatma Bibi NCC Training Coordinator*



*Mrs. Yasmin Umarji CEO NCC*



*Ms. Latifah Noel from training team*



*First-Ever Inner Island Children's Conference*

The next day, the NCC team proudly hosted its first Inner Island Children's Conference at the Baie Ste. Anne Community Centre. The event brought together 67 children from Grand Anse, Vijay International School, and La Digue Schools for a day of learning, empowerment, and dialogue.

Topics discussed also included Online safety, Children's rights and responsibilities and Safeguarding and personal wellbeing. The session provided a platform for students to voice their thoughts, ask questions, and build awareness of the challenges facing young people in the digital age.

| Concerns                      | 2023 | 2024 | Jan-Jun 2025 |
|-------------------------------|------|------|--------------|
| Behavioural issues            | 134  | 136  | 58           |
| Parental separation           | 38   | 36   | 23           |
| Grief and loss                | 38   | 28   | 28           |
| Anger management              | 30   | 40   | 17           |
| Emotional issues              | 19   | 23   | 6            |
| Suicidal thoughts or attempts | 9    | 23   | 23           |
| Sexualised behaviour or abuse | 14   | 21   | 10           |
| Bullying                      | 7    | 28   | 10           |
| Anxiety                       | 24   | 18   | 10           |

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NCC's CEO, Mrs. Umarji, presented an overview of recent case trends, sharing statistics that highlighted the demographic profile of clients and the most common concerns presented to the organization over the past three years with the aim to create awareness on various issues impacting the youth.

The children participated in group discussions about warning signs and behaviours surrounding these concerns and they were informed of the various resources and outlets available for help.

*Written by Ms. Cherelle Belairy (HPC21/0759)*

## Men's Mental Health Takes Center Stage at ABSA Bank Seychelles

In recognition of Men's Health Awareness Month this November, personnel at the ABSA Bank of Seychelles headquarters recently gathered for an insightful session dedicated to understanding and improving men's mental wellbeing. The presentation, titled "Understanding Mental Health Challenges and Promoting Wellbeing," was delivered on November 10, 2025, at the Capital City Building in Victoria.

### A Collaborative Effort for Awareness

The session was facilitated by Ms. Ketty Mathiot, a Clinical Psychologist, and Ms. Ella De Lafontaine, a Provisional Psychologist, both representing the Psychological Care Services under the Ministry of Health's Health Care Agency.

The event saw participation from approximately 25 personnel. This included 10 men attending on-site and 15 personnel (both men and women) joining virtually via Google Meet.

### Breaking Down the Barriers

The presentation aimed to highlight the unique mental health challenges men face within the community and the workplace. To keep the two-hour session interactive, the facilitators used a mix of true-or-false questions, myth-debunking, and practical activities—such as a workshop on challenging Negative Automatic Thoughts (NATs).

### Key themes explored during the session included:

- **Defining Masculinity:** An open dialogue on what it truly means to "be a man" and the complex expectations society places on men.
- **Shifting Perspectives:** Transitioning from "toxic" masculinity toward positive masculinity.

- **Serious Challenges:** Addressing critical issues such as common mental health disorders in men and suicidal behaviors.
- **Seeking Help:** Strategies for improving mental health and the importance of seeking professional support.

### Key Outcomes and Observations

The facilitators noted that while participants had a fair understanding of general mental health, there was a clear need for more education regarding suicidal behaviors and the concept of positive masculinity.

Despite the heavy nature of some topics, the atmosphere remained engaging and participatory. Attendees used humor to foster a relaxed environment while asking vital questions to clarify their doubts. The session concluded on a high note with a group photo and tokens of appreciation presented to the facilitators, marking a successful step toward prioritizing mental health within the corporate sector.



*Written by Ms Ketty Mathiot (HPC17/0571), Ms Ella De Lafontaine (HPC21/0838) and Ms Sophie Preira (HPC22/0913)*

# Empowering Local Experts: Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) Training of Trainers Workshop 2025

From October 28th to 31st, 2025, the Lemongrass Room at NIHSS became a hub of collaborative learning. The Mental Health Services (MHS), in partnership with the World Health Organisation (WHO) Country Office in Seychelles, successfully implemented the **Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop**.

## Bridging the Gap in Mental Health Care

The World Health Organisation launched the mhGAP initiative to address the global burden of mental, neurological, and substance use (MNS) disorders. This workshop was designed to:

- **Scale up services** by integrating evidence-based care into general health and community settings.
- **Strengthen capacity** for non-specialist providers to identify and manage priority conditions.
- **Expand the pool of trainers** capable of providing supervision and improving service coverage across Seychelles.

## A Dynamic Learning Experience

The four-day intensive program was facilitated by a core team including Dr. Daniella Malulu (Consultant In Charge), Ms. Anna-Lisa Labiche (Principal Clinical Psychologist), and Mr. Emmanuel Ogale ( Social Worker) from MHS, alongside Dr. Joseph Mogga from the WHO African Region.

Twenty-two professionals participated in the sessions. The training utilized highly interactive methods to ensure participants were ready to lead future sessions:

- **Interactive Learning:** Sessions included group discussions, role-play demonstrations, and participant-led presentations.
- **Core Topics:** The curriculum covered nine priority areas, including depression, psychosis, epilepsy, and child/adolescent mental health disorders.

- **Skill Development:** Participants practiced active listening, adult learning principles, and providing constructive feedback.

The training aimed to prepare participants to become future mhGAP trainers within their respective organisations.

## Key Outcomes and Future Directions

The workshop concluded with strong engagement and a clear roadmap for the future. To ensure the sustainability of these efforts, several recommendations were proposed:

1. **Scaling Up:** Newly trained experts will roll out mhGAP training across primary health care and community facilities.
2. **Focus on High-Burden Areas:** Implementation will prioritize national needs, specifically suicide and self-harm, substance use, and child/adolescent disorders.
3. **Strengthened Supervision:** Regular monthly supervision will be institutionalized to support new trainers.
4. **Collaborative Care:** Promoting teamwork between specialists and non-specialists to ensure holistic, person-centered care.

This workshop marks a significant step toward closing the treatment gap and ensuring that mental health care in Seychelles is accessible, affordable, and evidence-based.



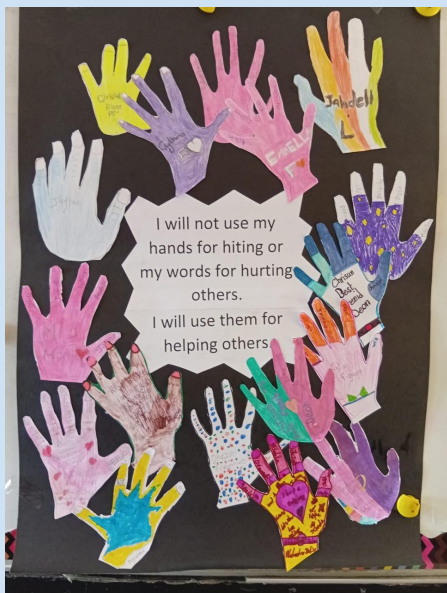
*Written by Ms Ella De Lafontaine (HPC21/0838),  
Ms Julia Telemaque (HPC24/1014),  
and Ms Sophie Preira (HPC22/0913)*

## Anti- Bullying Week: Using Our Power for Good

Anti-Bullying Week provides an important opportunity to shine a spotlight on bullying and to remind us all—students, staff, parents, and carers—that everyone has a role to play in creating safe and respectful environments throughout the year.



This year's theme, "Power for Good," encourages us to recognise the different ways we can make a positive difference. Children and young people are supported to understand their own strengths and to take individual and collective action to stop bullying. Parents and carers are encouraged to work closely with schools to support children who may be affected by bullying. Teachers, school support staff, and youth workers are reminded of the powerful impact they have in shaping safe, inclusive spaces where children can learn and thrive.



Across our schools, Anti-Bullying Week was marked through a variety of activities and learning experiences. Importantly, this work did not begin and end with the week itself. Anti-bullying initiatives have been....

... embedded since the start of the school year in Term 1 and are now a key part of our school strategic plan and ongoing focus.

Bullying can have a serious and lasting impact on mental health, wellbeing, and self-confidence for both children and adults. While awareness has grown, reports of bullying continue to rise, particularly in online spaces. This highlights the need for continued education, open conversations, and strong partnerships between schools and families.



We remain committed to using our Power for Good. By working together as a community, we can challenge bullying behaviours, support those affected, and ensure our schools remain safe, welcoming places for everyone.



Written by: Mrs. Marie Antoine Bethew (HPC15/0393)

## Learners Orphan and Semi-Orphans Picnic: A Day of Connection and Healing

On Saturday, 22 November, School Counsellors from Zone Five, North Region hosted a special end-of-year picnic for our Learners Orphan and Semi-Orphans Support Group. This gathering marked the first time we organized an activity of this kind, making it a meaningful milestone for both learners and counsellors.

The event was designed to bring students together in a safe, relaxed space, offering them an opportunity to connect beyond the classroom. After a full year of in-school support, including counselling sessions, guidance activities, and emotional check-ins, the picnic served as a moment to pause, reflect, and celebrate resilience. Throughout the day, learners engaged in games, group activities, shared meals, and open conversations, all aimed at strengthening peer relationships and promoting a sense of belonging. Laughter, teamwork, and mutual encouragement filled the atmosphere, reminding everyone that healing and growth can also happen through joy and connection.

Importantly, the picnic reinforced a key message of our mental health work: no learner is alone. By creating space for positive shared experiences, we help learners build confidence, trust, and supportive friendships that extend beyond formal counselling settings. As an end-of-year gathering, the picnic also allowed counsellors to acknowledge the progress learners have made over the year and to encourage them as they move forward. The success of this first event has inspired us to continue organizing similar activities in the future as part of our holistic approach to learner wellbeing.



We are grateful to everyone who contributed to making this day memorable. Together, we continue to nurture hope, connection, and emotional wellbeing for our learners.

*Written by School counsellors Zone 5*

## Force for Good: A Festive Youth Well-Being Workshop

On Friday, 12 December 2025, the Christmas season was filled with learning and laughter at the Youth Well-Being Workshop, hosted by Absa under the *Force for Good Programme*.



Students from Africa EducatesHer, along with other adolescents and youth from diverse organisations and institutions, joined interactive sessions on mental and emotional well-being. Discussions encouraged openness, confidence, and understanding of healthy relationships, personal choices, and self-respect.

The sexual health segment, led by Ms. Hildre Boniface of Africa EducatesHer, was supported by facilitators including a clinical psychologist, Absa staff on financial literacy, and other professionals. The facilitators fostered a supportive environment that encouraged meaningful dialogue and genuine empowerment.

With a festive touch, the workshop reminded all that caring for well-being is the greatest gift. Thanks to Absa, the facilitators, and the inspiring students for making this event impactful and memorable. Informed youth are truly a *force for good*.



*Written by: Mrs. Marie Antoine Bethew (HPC15/0393)*

# Prioritizing Mental Health: Absa Bank Hosts Resilience and Stress Management Workshop

In recognition of **Mental Health Awareness Month**, Absa Bank recently partnered with **Psychological Care Services** to host an insightful workshop titled *"Managing Stress and Building Resilience"*. This session, held on October 22nd as part of Absa's **Wellness Wednesday** initiative, was designed to equip staff with the practical tools necessary to navigate the high demands of the banking industry.



## Interactive Insights and Practical Tools

Led by Clinical Psychologist Miss Brigitte Gbilimou, the session provided 17 employees—both in-person at the Victoria Premier Branch and virtually from Praslin and La Digue—with a comprehensive look at the mechanics of stress. Participants engaged in a variety of interactive activities, including:

- **The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS):** A self-assessment tool that helped attendees identify their current stress levels, with most scoring in the moderate range.
- **Perception Exercises:** Using optical illusions to demonstrate how different individuals psychologically respond to the same stressors.
- **Real-time Feedback:** Utilizing the "Slido" platform to anonymously share common workplace stressors, such as tight deadlines and workload challenges.

## Building a Psychologically Safe Workplace

A core focus of the workshop was the importance of **psychological safety**. Through video and group discussion, staff explored what it means to feel safe sharing their minds without fear of negative consequences. Participants highlighted that building integrity and ensuring everyone feels heard are essential components of a healthy work environment.

## Coping Strategies for Success

To combat burnout, the group discussed various coping mechanisms ranging from exercise and yoga to positive affirmations and talking with trusted friends. Miss Brigitte emphasized that while some stress (eustress) can be motivating, prioritizing self-care is vital for maintaining a long-term work-life balance.

The collaboration between the Health Care Agency and Absa Bank was a resounding success, with many participants expressing a keen interest in future mental health sessions to continue their wellness journey.



*Written by Ms Julia Telemaque (HPC24/I014)  
and Ms Sophie Preira (HPC22/0913)*

*Merry Christmas to all our valued readers! We are incredibly thankful for the time and insight you've contributed to our network throughout the past year. It is your dedication that drives our success, and we look forward to reaching even greater milestones together in the year ahead. May your holiday season be restful and your New Year be bright!*