Background:

Mauritius is Small Island Developing State (SID) with about 1.2 million of inhabitants; and currently, the country is receiving almost the same number of international tourists per year. Indeed, tourism sector plays a key role in the economic growth of Mauritius. Over the last few years, successive governments in Mauritius have been continuously promoting the expansion of resorts and property development schemes in coastal areas, as a strategy to boost up the national economy. However, the country is currently experiencing a sharp rise in community movements against resorts and property developers who are being accused of appropriation and exploitation of local ecosystem resources and services. Environmental activists are also mobilising local communities against various forms of environmental injustices in Mauritius. In this connection, community-based social workers need to develop and use appropriately designed ecosocial work method in promoting environmental justice for all. In particular, ecosocial work is a specific area of practice within social work that combines social and ecological perspectives in order to promote sustainable development. Within this context, this paper aims to propose and discuss a theory-driven and evidence-based method for ecosocial work practice.

Method:

This paper is based on analysis from two sets of qualitative data gathered from Mauritius. The first data set is from the year 2008, where seven focus group discussions with a total of fifty-seven key representatives of community leaders (twelve women) in seven coastal villages were carried out. The second data set is from the year 2018, where eighteen semi-structured interviews with five community-based social workers (four women), eleven
social/environmental activists (two women), and two corporate social responsible managers (no woman) from resorts/property developers were undertaken. The gathered data were subjected to a deductive discourse analysis using ATLAS-ti v.8.3 software. Critical discourse analysis is a qualitative data analysis where meanings, motivations, ideologies and power are analysed through the deconstruction of text and talk using a critical perspective. A theoretical framework based on environmental justice were used to structure the data analysis.

Results:
From the findings of the data analysis, this study presents and discusses - ‘Benefit Interest Driven Justice’ - as an ecosocial work method based on environmental justice theory. The theory provides the knowledge based and explanation on what is happening/going to happen and why. Based on the theory and gathered evidence, the ‘Benefit Interest Driven Justice’ method presents a model on how practice need to be undertaken by social workers and why. The ‘Benefit Interest Driven Justice’ method in ecosocial work aims to promote community-based stakeholders participation in avoiding/resolving conflicts and to come in terms with ‘justice for all’ within the context of sustainable coastal community development. With reference to the theory of environment justice and gathered evidence from the field, the findings also highlight the benefits and constraints of the ‘Benefit Interest Driven Justice’ method.

Conclusion:
This study concludes that theory-driven and evidence-based methods in ecosocial work practices are essential for promoting sustainable coastal community development. Community-based social workers are therefore urged to develop and/or reflect upon appropriate methods for ecosocial work practices based on gathered evidence from the field.