

OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN



source: UNICEF

ANNUAL REPORT

2024 - 2025

His Excellency, Mr. Dharambeer Gokhool G.C.S.K
President of the Republic of Mauritius
Office of the President
State House
Le Réduit

Your Excellency,

Pursuant to Section 11(1) of the Ombudsperson for Children Act 2003, I have the honour to submit to you the Annual Report for the period September 2024 to August 2025 to be laid before the National Assembly.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Aneeta Ghoorah
Ombudsperson for Children

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FOREWORD

Each time, as I sit down to write the Annual report, I find myself holding more than a pen. I hold the weight of children's voices—some raised in courage, some whispered in fear, and too many still unheard.

This second Annual Report, brings with it a mix of emotions.

Mixed feelings about the W's "What, Why and Where", followed by the "How, Whom and When?"

WHAT is going on in the Society? Sexual abuse on innocent children, misuse of the Internet, alleged cases of consumption of illicit substances, violence, harassment and bullying, attempted suicides as well as 4 infanticides this year.

WHY is there an erosion of values?

WHERE do children find solace?

HOW do we as citizens and adults address the problems?

WHOM can we trust?

WHEN will recommendations, at least the ones which can be easily implemented, be translated into concrete Actions?

Why isn't a single recorded interview with a child victim of sexual abuse prioritised, to prevent the trauma of repeatedly recounting such painful experiences?

Can't there be FAST TRACK for the cases in which the perpetrator and victim are living under the same roof or close vicinity?

There is pride in the progress we've made: in laws that better protect children's rights, in institutions becoming more responsive, and in the everyday efforts of families, educators, and advocates who stand up for what is right.

There is hope in the resilience of children who, even in adversity, find ways to grow, laugh, and dream.

Yet alongside these feelings lie concern. Concern that too many children still fall through the cracks—that poverty, violence, and neglect remain persistent barriers to their well-being.

And there is, candidly, a sense of frustration. Frustration at the pace of change, at promises unfulfilled, at moments where systems designed to protect children have instead failed them.

Recommendations emanating from the Office of the Ombudsperson are being made year in and year out, and yet Policy decisions and Actions do not follow suit.

But above all, there is resolve. Because the task of amplifying the rights, needs, and voices of children—is not optional. It is essential.

This report offers a reflection on the period September 2024 to August 2025, but it is also a call to action for the year ahead.

Let us be guided by the fact that every child—every single one—deserves to be seen, heard, and safe.

At this point crosses my mind the Concept of “**Ubuntu**”.

As a reminder, lest some may have forgotten: Ubuntu is a traditional African philosophy that emphasises the interconnectedness of people and their responsibilities to each other and the environment.

The chain of protection and safeguarding of rights of children very well align with the Core values of Ubuntu, so relevant to ALL the actors involved in the process in a fast-moving VUCA world and its accompanying toll of challenges.

Our biggest challenge: How do we navigate in this VUCA environment? How do we protect our children from the uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity?

The rapid evolution in Artificial Intelligence (AI) will accentuate the problems and it is high time adults and youngsters be prepared to face the virtual world with all its intricacies, scams, child grooming and other issues which AI will entail.

Partial solutions would be converting:

- **V**olatility into **V**ision
- **U**ncertainty into **U**nderstanding
- **C**omplexity into **C**larity
- **A**mbiguity into **A**gility

More easily said than done though!!

But Together We Can!!

AND REMEMBER

The basic principle of UBUNTU

“I am because you are, you are because we are”.

Aneeta GHOORAH

Ombudsperson for Children



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report is submitted in accordance with Section 11 of the Ombudsperson for Children Act 2003 and covers the period September 2024 to August 2025.

Why do we need to safeguard the rights of children?

For one thing, important as it is to highlight that children are our future workforce and well-cared-for children make for healthy, productive and innovative adults, we have to move beyond this purely economic and ultimately restrictive utilitarian viewpoint.

It is primarily our moral and ethical responsibility to ensure that we, our institutions and our systems in place act as a rampart, protecting them from any man-made or natural vicissitudes directly or indirectly inflicted upon them.

For another, our children are today called upon to confront a volatile environment that is replete with a slew of mega crises, ranging from an increasingly pervasive economic insecurity, passing through an exclusionary inequity and diverse cyber-related threats to a mushrooming of problems related to mental health (accentuated post COVID) and the effects of Climate Change. Here again, children are the most vulnerable when, in fact, it is their right to aspire for a safe, free-from-anxiety and -duress environment.

It thus behoves us all to commit ourselves to fulfilling the sober realisation that,

1. Some progress—but only some has been made with regard to the protection and safeguard of the several rights of children. We still have a long way to go on our threat-mitigating journey.

2. We are all conscious that both incremental and disruptive technology reign supreme and is evolving at a rapid pace. It is also one in which the child deserves not to be gagged but rather to have her voice listened to.

Hence the rationale for the setting up of “Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits des Enfants” (JADE) at the level of the OOC.

The JADE provides a platform to listen to the voice of the Youth, and come up with recommendations on pertinent issues “for the Youth, by the Youth”. Though in its embryonic stage, they have contributed to carrying out activities and a dedicated chapter in this Annual Report.

In my first Annual Report, Chapter One detailed the Chain of Protection and in this report, we are highlighting loopholes and discrepancies which have been noted while coming across enquiries into a few complex cases.

Highlights of seminars, conferences, workshops attended by the Officers of the OOC in person or virtual are outlined in another chapter which de facto also leads to another part which describes the activities organised by the office.

I had the privilege of attending the “Congrès de Associations des Ombudsmans et Mediateurs de la Francophonie (AOMF)” held during the third week of October 2024, where I participated in the General Assembly. The “Comité Droits de l’Enfant de l’AOMF” provided a platform to voice out related proposals and share experiences as

well as networking with colleagues from the different participating States.

AOMA provided a platform to share the role and functioning of the OOC, the more so, Mauritius is one of the few countries where there is a distinct office which safeguards and promotes the rights of children.

This report would not be complete without including a section on the situation of our children in this era where Mauritius is facing all the contemporary issues - A CALL FOR ACTION.

As Ombudsperson for Children (OC), I oversee All activities conducted by the Office, ranging from investigations, conduct of workshops, sensitisation campaigns, responding to Media, site visits as well as launching new projects to push forward the children's agenda.

In line with its mandate and as part of its operational process, this Office receives complaints, carries out enquiries/ investigations followed by an in-depth analysis, prior to taking the relevant actions in the best interests of the child. Some of the most pertinent cases and actions taken accordingly have been described.

All throughout the above exercises, the investigators came across certain elements which needed to be addressed, hence the formulation of Recommendations.

Thus prompted by the case reported to the OOC in connection with a child performing in the Zavatta Circus as well as by extension the rights of the Child Athlete (issue which arose during discussions with the Law Reform Commission), a **special report** on the protection of the Child artist and the Child Athlete has been produced and disseminated.

This **special report** has been prepared with the collaboration of the Law Reform Commission, obviously taking into consideration **The Best Interests of the Child**.

This special report has been a watershed in these two areas. It is available on the website of the OOC.

The OOC also carries out systemic investigations and this year the pertinent subject on which we have tried to shed light is the Non Formal Sector in Education. For too long this has been left on its own and the need for a holistic report was felt.

This Annual Report also includes a chapter on child online safety and its associated benefits as well as potential dangers.

Last but not least, there is a section on Rodrigues with its own specificities and where lately there have been growing cases of larceny, and child abuse.

My plea to All Ministries/organisations and institutions concerned by the implementation of the recommendations would be to initiate action after discussions with All parties concerned. Collective efforts and Collaboration would help move forward.

Bonne Lecture!

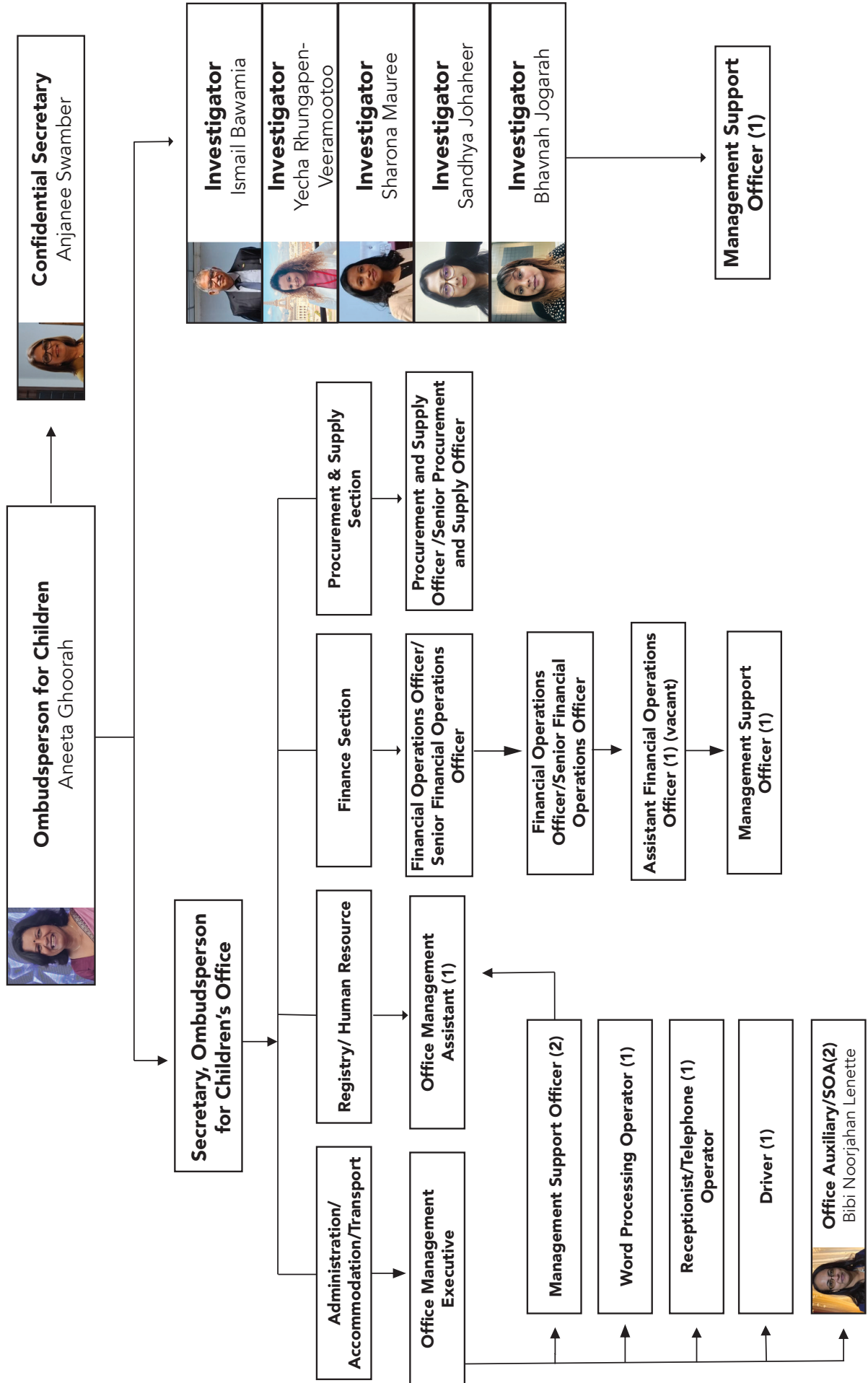
WHO WE ARE

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OOC) in Mauritius is a National Human Rights Institution, responsible for protecting and promoting the rights and welfare of All children and young people under 18 years of age living in the Republic. Established under the Ombudsperson for Children Act of 2003 (OCA), the OOC plays a key role in ensuring that children's rights are upheld in accordance with national laws and international conventions, namely the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC).

WHAT WE DO

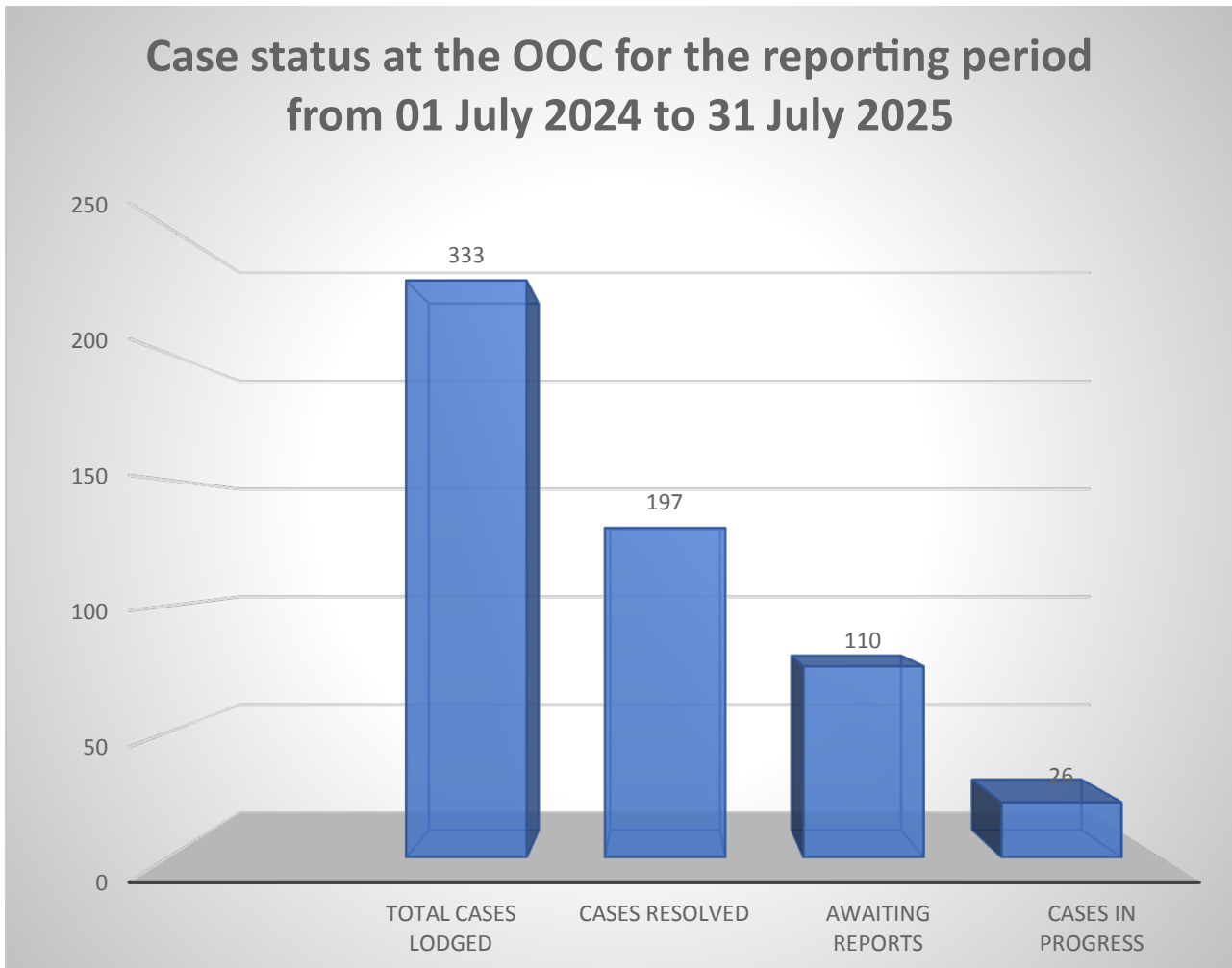
The overarching goal of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children is to ensure that every child in Mauritius is treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. In order to achieve this goal, the core functions of the OOC are to: carry out investigations of complaints from or on behalf of children regarding violations of their rights or issues affecting their welfare; advocate for children's rights and raise awareness on issues affecting them; monitor the implementation of laws, policies, and programs related to children's rights and welfare; make recommendations to relevant authorities for improvements in legislation, policy, and practices; encourage and facilitate the participation of children in matters that affect them, ensuring that their voices are heard in decisions that impact their lives.

Organisational Structure



HANDLING OF CASES

For the reporting period from 01 July 2024 to 31 July 2025, the OOC registered a total of **333** cases.



96
Number of
cases regarding
school

72
Number of
cases regarding
family

20
Field visits

24
Cases involving
children with
disabilities

Tables 1 to 5 below provide an overview of:

- the status of complaints registered for the period from 01 July 2024 to 31 July 2025;
- the different categories of complaints received;
- the profile of complainants;
- mode of complaints received and;
- cases involving Rodrigues and foreign countries.

Table 1. Number of cases handled by the OOC from 01 July 2024 to 31 July 2025.

Case status	Number of cases	Percentage (%)
Cases resolved	197	59.16
Cases awaiting reports	110	33.04
Cases in progress	26	7.80
TOTAL	333	100

Table 2. Categories of complaints registered at the OOC from 01 July 2024 to 31 July 2025.

Categories of Complaints	Number of cases
School problem – Transfer/ Admission/ Transport/ Infrastructure	53
Corporal punishment/ Harassment/ Verbal Abuse by Personnel at School/ Bullying/ Violence/ Assault at school	43
Child Neglect/ Ill-treatment/ Child at risk	41
Sexual Abuse and Harassment	29
Behavioural Problems	28
Children with Disabilities	24
Family Conflicts	22
Institutional abuse	12
Physical Violence in Family/ Domestic violence/ Intimate Partner violence	9
School Absenteeism/ Drop out	9
Drug Abuse	8
Suicidal tendencies/Self Harm	3
Poverty/ Social Aid	3
Tardy declaration	2
Exploitation	2
Sale of Cigarettes and Alcoholic drinks to minors	1
Child Abduction/ Child Missing	1
Child Labour	1
Others	42
TOTAL	333

Table 3. Profile of complainants at the OOC recorded from 01 July 2024 to 31 July 2025.

Complainant	Number
Mothers	87
Fathers	58
Educational Professionals	56
Group of Parents	23
Medical Social Workers	13
Others	28
NGOs	5
Relatives/ Friends	8
Own-motion Inquiries	2
Grandparents	16
Anonymous	19
Media	4
Neighbors	5
Ministries & Departments	6
Child	2
Foster Parents	1
TOTAL	333

Table 4. Mode of Complaints received as from 01 July 2024 to 31 July 2025

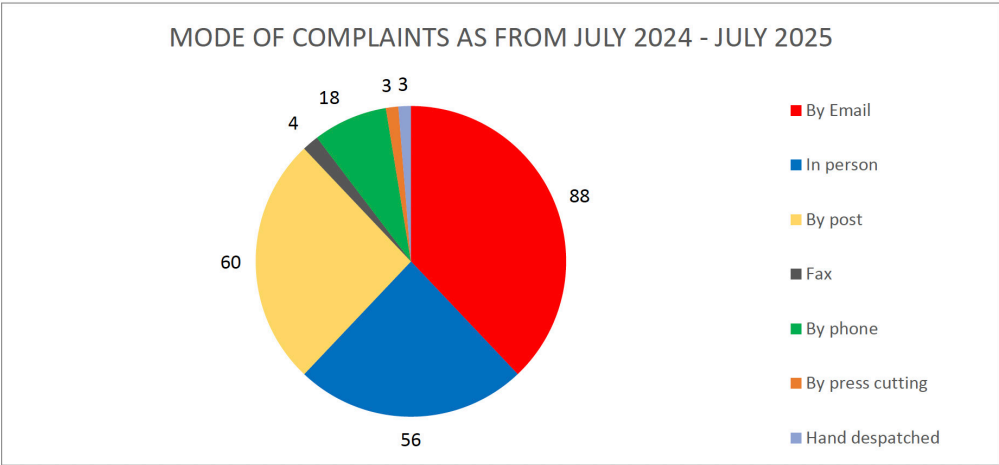


Table 5. Cases involving Rodrigues and foreign countries from 01 July 2024 to 31 July 2025

Countries	Cases
Rodrigues	7
Foreign Countries	5
Agalega	1

Chapter 1

Chain of Protection for Children: Addressing the Discrepancies and Loopholes

“Safety and security don’t just happen; they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear.”
~ Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa



Introduction

In the Annual Report 2023-2024, a chapter was dedicated to the Chain of Protection, underscoring its critical importance within the Republic of Mauritius. The child protection system, as part of a robust chain, is fundamental to ensuring that children receive consistent, high-quality care, safeguarding their well-being and protecting them from harm. In the previous report, I highlighted the commendable initiatives carried out by several key stakeholders such as government agencies, NGOs, and other entities that work to strengthen our protective network. Their efforts are vital in maintaining the integrity of our intervention processes, and enhancing the overall care we provide to the children of the Republic.

However, despite these commendable efforts, several discrepancies and loopholes have been identified when dealing with cases, these impact upon how the continuum of care is provided to children, which have led to avoidable gaps and shortcomings in the system.

As part of my statutory duty as Ombudsperson for Children, I have received numerous complaints and case reports during the 2024-2025 reporting year, many of which reveal

significant vulnerabilities within the child protection system. In this chapter, I will showcase real case studies that were lodged within my office, where I have found it necessary to highlight the loopholes in the continuum of care: gaps that have allowed children to fall through the cracks of protection.

The Chain of Protection: A Continuous Effort

The child protection system, as discussed in the previous report, operates within a continuum of care that stretches from prevention and early intervention to rehabilitation, family reunification, and alternative care when necessary. Ideally, the system provides a seamless flow of services, ensuring that every child who is at risk of abuse or neglect receives the appropriate care at the right time.

Key components of the continuum of care include:

- 1. Preventive Services:** Programs that aim to reduce the occurrence of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, focusing on building protective environments in families and communities.
- 2. Early Intervention:** Immediate responses to cases of suspected harm, such as medical care, legal protection, and psychological support to prevent further abuse.
- 3. Rehabilitation:** Services designed to heal children who have already been harmed, including therapy, counselling, and family support.
- 4. Alternative Care:** When family reunification is not possible or safe, children are placed in foster care, kinship care, or institutional care, ensuring they have a safe environment.
- 5. Reintegration and Long-Term Support:** After children have been removed from harmful situations, the system provides long-term monitoring and services to reintegrate them into safe homes or communities.

Each of these stages is interconnected, forming a chain where the actions at one point directly affect the outcomes at subsequent stages. However, it is this very continuity of care that is being threatened by the weaknesses in the chain of child protection system.

Case Studies: Loopholes in the System

While the components of the continuum of care appear sound in principle, the realities on the ground reveal a more complex picture. As Ombudsperson for Children, I have reviewed numerous complaints that expose how structural weaknesses, inconsistent implementation, and fragmented coordination frequently impede the system's capacity to respond effectively to children's needs. To illustrate these breakdowns, I present a selection of real-life case studies received by my Office during the 2024–2025 reporting year. These cases demonstrate that, despite established frameworks, children continue to fall through the cracks highlighting not only individual failings but also systemic shortcomings that require urgent attention.

Case study 1

Case background:

Minor M, who lived in the SMF quarters with her family for over ten years, disclosed that she was abused by an officer of the SMF between the ages of 9 and 12. It was only this year that Minor M shared her experience with her mother, and a statement was made to the Brigade pour la protection de la famille. Concerns have arisen due to Minor M ongoing proximity to the perpetrator, as they live in the same building – Minor M's family on the second floor and

the perpetrator on the ground floor. This close living situation forces Minor M to confront her trauma daily, harming her mental and emotional well-being. The Office wrote to the CP for immediate action to ensure the safety and well-being of Minor M. A follow up letter was also addressed.

Report received on behalf of the CP states that all necessary actions had been taken and that Minor M and her family were now “living peacefully.” The same day, Minor M reached out to the Ombudsperson for Children, expressing the distress she is experiencing. Despite being the victim, she and her family were advised to relocate, rather than receiving the support they needed.

The Ombudsperson for Children identified discrepancies between the official statement from the CP, which claimed the family was living peacefully, and Minor M’s personal account. This inconsistency raises concerns about the accuracy of the information and the effectiveness of the protective measures in place. The situation is seen as a violation of the best interests of the child, as outlined in the Children’s Act 2020, which prioritises the well-being of the child in all matters involving them.

Legal Framework

The Children’s Act 2020 clearly stipulates that the best interests of the child must be the paramount consideration in any matter involving a child. The Act mandates that all persons, courts, institutions, and bodies involved in matters concerning children must:

- Respect, protect, and fulfil the rights and best interests of the child.
- Ensure the child is treated fairly and equitably.
- Respect the inherent dignity of the child.
- Take the child’s views into account, and that their developmental needs, including any special needs, are considered.

These principles form the legal, and I would further argue, the ethical foundation for actions taken in cases of abuse or neglect! They must be adhered to at every stage of the child protection process.

Identified Discrepancies and Loopholes in the Chain of Protection

i. Lack of Proper Protective Measures

Despite the serious nature of the allegations concerning Minor M, the continued close proximity of the alleged perpetrator in the same building presented a challenge.

The ongoing exposure of Minor M to this situation not only carried potential risks but also subjected her to persistent emotional and psychological distress. It’s crucial to acknowledge that the Children’s Act 2020 clearly emphasises safeguarding a child’s environment. Therefore, proactive and timely implementation of effective protective measures, such as addressing the perpetrator’s presence in that location, was essential to better support Minor M and uphold the protective framework designed to ensure children’s rights.

ii. Undermining the Best Interests Principles: Insufficient Consideration of the Child’s Wishes

The letter from the Commissioner of Police emphasised that Minor M’s was consulted, however, Minor M’s correspondence suggests that her wishes might not have been fully incorporated into the decision-making process.

Children's emotional and psychological needs are often best understood by the children themselves. Children, especially those who have been abused, are often the ones who are most insightful about their own needs and the best measures to ensure their well-being. Prioritising a child's perspective is central to child-focused decision-making, aligning with the best interests principle as stipulated in the Children's Act 2020.

When Minor M's perspective isn't fully prioritised, it signals a gap in child-focused decision-making. This undermines the fundamental best interests principle outlined in the Children's Act 2020. Furthermore, adequately considering Minor M's views and wishes at every stage of the process is crucial; it aligns with Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Article 4 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), both of which advocate for children to be active participants in matters affecting their lives, especially their safety and welfare.

iii. Weaknesses in Legal Framework Enforcement

Even when a perpetrator's threat is acknowledged, the failure to start legal proceedings creates a gap in our child protection system. The Children's Act 2020 clearly requires swift protective measures in cases of abuse or neglect. Yet, judicial delays in such critical cases expose a serious flaw in how child protection laws are enforced.

These delays deny children and their families the fundamental right to timely resolution of their cases, which is essential for their well-being and future stability. This failure to act promptly violates Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which prioritises the child's best interests in all actions. It also undermines Article 10 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), demanding swift and effective legal measures to protect children from harm. Ultimately, this lack of timely enforcement continues to put Minor M's safety and well-being at risk.

Case Study 2

Case background:

Minor B, lives with his mother, Mrs. A, who reportedly suffers from alcohol dependence and has a history of multiple relationships. It is alleged that Minor B is not receiving proper care and attention due to these issues.

The complainant has expressed concerns about the child's well-being, citing that Minor B's school attendance has significantly declined, and that there are worries about his neglect. It is reported that the father's whereabouts are unknown, and the child is solely dependent on his mother for care.

The OOC wrote to the MEHR, and the MGEFW, requesting for a comprehensive report in this matter.

A report from the MGEFW stated that an assessment has confirmed that Child B is well cared for by his mother, with no protection concerns identified. However, the mother reported frequent absences due to harassment from the biological father, which impacts their ability to get to school. The mother has received counselling and was advised to report the harassment to the police while prioritising the child's education.

Report from the MEHR stated that since October 2022, Minor B has been under the care of his mother and stepfather. Since then, his school attendance declined considerably. The educational social worker made several visits, but the parents were often unavailable. In 2023, Child B had 52 school absences, and by July 2024, this number increased to 77. There was a decline in his academic performance and focus. The MEHR's report flagged that the CDU was updated to consider placing Minor B in a shelter, similar to his siblings, to ensure his well-being and regular school attendance.

Identified Discrepancies and Loopholes in the Chain of Protection

The case involves a complex set of challenges including the child's poor school attendance, his mother's alcohol dependence, and a history of familial instability. These issues are worsened by the reported absence of the child's father and ongoing harassment that impacts the mother's ability to properly care for him. The child's educational neglect illustrated by substantial school absences is a symptom of a deeper, ongoing issue of neglect within the home.

A child-centred approach, which places the needs, views, and best interests of the child at the heart of all decision-making, appears to be lacking in Minor B's case. The absence of such an approach has led to critical gaps in the protection system, undermining its overall effectiveness in ensuring Minor B's well-being.

Below are the key loopholes identified in the chain of protection for Minor B:

i. Inadequate Holistic Assessment of the Child's Needs

The current approach appears to focus on isolated issues, such as Minor B's school attendance, without fully considering the broader, underlying factors impacting his well-being. By not assessing the full spectrum of the child's needs, critical areas of neglect, such as the potential for emotional and psychological neglect stemming from his mother's alcohol dependence and the unstable home environment, may be overlooked. This focus can inadvertently affect several fundamental rights of the child as outlined in national laws and international conventions.

The Children's Act (Section 7) clearly mandates that the best interests of the child be the primary consideration in all actions affecting them, encompassing both immediate and long-term needs. A comprehensive consideration of all factors impacting Minor B's well-being, particularly the emotional and psychological aspects related to his mother's alcohol dependence, is essential to fully uphold this principle. Additionally, Section 10 of the Act calls for a comprehensive care plan that addresses not only a child's physical well-being but also their emotional and mental health needs.

While both the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) emphasise the importance of addressing emotional and psychological well-being, the primary concern here remains the opportunity to ensure the system takes a more comprehensive approach to Minor B's holistic needs, as required by national law. A more thorough assessment would help ensure that all aspects of Minor B's development are properly supported, including his emotional and mental well-being.

ii. Absence of a Comprehensive Care Plan and Opportunities for Enhanced Inter-Agency Coordination

While reports from various institutions offer valuable insights into Minor B's situation, it appears there might be an opportunity to further strengthen the development of a coordinated, comprehensive care plan that holistically addresses his emotional, psychological, and educational needs. This presents an area where enhanced inter-institutional collaboration could be particularly beneficial in ensuring all aspects of a child's unique needs are effectively met.

My Office requested reports from both the Ministry of Education, Human Resources, (MEHR) and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (MGEFW). The information received, while valuable, highlighted some disparities between the reports—one indicating no protection concerns and the other flagging a major decline in school attendance. These differences suggest areas where enhanced communication and coordinated action could further strengthen the response to a child's needs. I must also stress that the consideration of placing him in a shelter, as last resort, should ideally be part of a broader plan that also addresses the root causes of the child's neglect and educational decline.

This case also highlights the need for further integrated support or interventions for the mother to address her alcohol dependence, which directly contributes to the challenges in Minor B's case. A more comprehensive and proactive approach, involving multiple layers of support, is needed to address these interconnected issues and ensure the child's long-term safety and well-being. To facilitate this, My Office has referred this case to a NGO for appropriate assistance to the mother.

Case Study 3

Case background:

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children received a complaint from a father who on 11 July 2024 had reported a case of sexual abuse of his daughter, Minor N (17 years) perpetrated by a man of 22 years, resident of the same locality. The case had been reported to the police station of his locality. However, he was taken aback when a Police Officer told his daughter to go home and the case of sexual abuse was NOT recorded by the Police Officer on that day.

The following day, that is, on 12 July 2024, the father, accompanied by his daughter went to the Police Station anew to lodge the case of sexual abuse. The father averred that since that day, the perpetrator's family has been harassing him and his daughter several times, pressurising them to withdraw the case. To that effect, a case of harassment was lodged against the perpetrator's family.

The father deplored the delay in the justice system. Meanwhile the perpetrator was roaming around freely and his daughter's security was at stake. The father complained that although his family faces many socio-economic problems, he is determined in seeking justice for his daughter.

The OOC wrote to the CP on 09 August 2024 and 3 reminders dated 13 September 2024, 21 October 2024 and 20 November 2024 respectively requesting information as to why the Police did not register the case on 11 July 2024; the status of the case and relevant assistance provided to the victim.

A report from the CP stated that the minor's father had made the request to the Police that the perpetrator should not call at their place. On the same day, the Police met with the perpetrator in the presence of his father and informed him to refrain from calling at the place of minor N to which he promised. Police report stated that the case of sexual abuse was lodged on the 12 July 2024. Minor was examined by a Police Medical Officer and a reconstruction exercise was carried out. Victim support and first-hand counselling was provided to minor and the CDU Psychologist assisted her. The perpetrator had remained untraceable and it was gathered that he was admitted and was undergoing a residential Drug Rehabilitation Programme. Two declarations were made at the Police station regarding the brother of the accused who was constantly seeking trouble with minor N, making nasty remarks and pestering her for the withdrawal of the present case. Police investigation was ongoing.

Minor's statement to OOC: Voice of the Child

On 2 December 2024, minor N personally wrote a letter to the OOC to describe the ordeals she went through and the problems she faced. She described how on 11 July 2024, she was told by a Police officer not to lodge the case of sexual abuse as this would bring her disrepute and that here "1 zafer normal sa Presque tout ti fille dn lendroit pa vierge". She complained that not only the true complaint of sexual abuse was not lodged on that day but the Police Officer never showed them the statement he recorded. The Police Officer simply stated that he would contact the perpetrator not to call at their place.

Moreover, minor N related how she has been threatened verbally and almost physically several times by the perpetrator's family to withdraw the case, further to which complaints

of harassment were lodged at the Police Station. However, minor has been told by the Police Officer that they cannot do anything in this case apart from giving the family a warning. Minor has had panic attacks and has had to juggle to and forth BPF and the Police Station with regard to her case while the perpetrator was still roaming around.

Minor N was later apprised by a Police Officer that her perpetrator was called at Court and was out on bail. Her father enquired about how this procedure was done since his daughter neither did any parade identification nor was called at the Court. It was only further to it that, minor N was called for parade identification at the Police Station. Astoundingly, minor was made to stand at the corner of the door to identify her perpetrator. There was no screen permitting her to identify her perpetrator without being seen, nor was a BPF Officer assisting her. Minor refused to do the parade identification until the conditions were met. After 2 days, minor went to BPF to do her parade identification.

Minor deplored that there is no fast-tracking of her case despite being a minor and it was only after she wrote to the DPP, that her case was taken into consideration. The justice delays only add on to the traumas she is experiencing.

Identified Discrepancies and Loopholes in the Chain of Protection

i. Lack of proper protective measures – Police

Police force constitutes a key partner in the chain of protection services for children. The Police has a crucial role in safeguarding children's rights. The Police typically represents the first point of contact with the criminal justice system for victims of child sexual abuse.

In this case, however, the Police Officer failed to provide proper assistance to the child victim of sexual abuse by downplaying the seriousness of the offence, not recording the case of sexual abuse on the spot and failing to contact essential services. The CDU was not alerted, nor was the child taken to the hospital. By not registering the case of sexual abuse on the same day implies that all forensic evidence which can help establish the guilt or innocence of possible suspect would be quashed. Moreover, the Police failed to consider minor's best interests in the parade identification procedure. No Care and precaution were taken to ensure minor's dignity and safety in that process. Moreover, the attitude of authorities, in this instance, the Police, that trivialises the trauma and blames the victim is condemnable. This in fact leads to secondary victimisation of the minor. The lack of proper protective measures has subjected minor N to additional trauma and may have accentuated the feeling of mistrust of minor N in the Police force. The general apathy of the Police with regard to children victim of sexual abuse is a matter of concern. It is not considered as a matter of priority and this goes against the principles of child rights as enunciated in the UNCRC and the ACRWC.

The quality of police interviewing technique in such sensitive case also raises a question mark as to whether the use of digital interview recording during investigative interviewing should not be used to address challenges and future outlook.

ii. Undermining the Best Interests Principles of the Children's Act, the UNCRC and the ACRWC

As per Section 4 of the Children's Act 2020, *"The best interests of a child shall, in respect of any matter concerning the child, be paramount and be the primary consideration by any person, Court, Institution or other body."* Article 3 of the UNCRC stipulates that *"In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration."* While Article 4 of the ACRWC states that *"In all actions concerning the child undertaken by any person or authority the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration."*

Children are too often an afterthought in many decisions taking place or even in the services being provided to them. In this case, minor N's best interests were undermined. Minor recorded being humiliated by her contact with a Police Officer and was confused as to whether the Police would truly protect her. She was not treated in a fair and equitable manner and her views were not adequately taken into consideration until she was forceful. Her holistic and emotional needs have been over looked. The Police has the duty to protect children who are at risk of harm and must do so efficiently and in the best interest of each child.

Broader systemic issues and policy challenges identified

The three case studies presented above highlight critical weaknesses within the child protection system. Beyond these individual instances, systemic and policy-level issues have been identified that affect vulnerable groups of children across Mauritius. The systemic challenges are outlined as follow:

A. Discrepancies in the Care and Education of Children with Disabilities Aged 3 to 5 Years in Mauritius

Children aged between three and five years who present with developmental disabilities such as cerebral palsy, autism, or rare congenital syndromes fall into a serious policy gap in Mauritius. This gap emerges due to inconsistencies, overlaps, and omissions across key legislative and regulatory frameworks, like the Child Day Care Centre Regulations 2022, and the Special Education Needs Authority (SENA) framework.

Child Day Care Regulation 2022

The Child Day Care Centre Regulations 2022 limits attendance to children below the age of 3. While this framework may be suitable for typically developing children, it is inappropriate for children with disabilities, who often require extended early stimulation, socialisation, and continuity of care beyond the age of three.

As evidenced in multiple complaints handled by the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, children with disabilities are being excluded from the same daycare centres they previously attended, based solely on age despite having ongoing, unmet developmental needs.

Special Education Needs Authority Act

The Special Education Needs Authority (SENA), established under the SENA Act 2018, provides support for children with disabilities but its intervention officially begins at the

age of five. This creates a vacuum of services for children aged three to five, precisely the age at which early intervention is most effective according to global standards and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Children under five are thus excluded from specialist education placements, access to trained educators, and tailored support violating their right to inclusive education as guaranteed under both the UNCRC (Article 23 & 28) and the UNCRPD (Article 24), to which Mauritius is a party.

Early Childhood Care and Education Authority

The Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA) has a mandate over pre-primary education but lacks a clear strategy and resources to support children with complex disabilities. As shown in multiple cases, ECCEA tends to refer parents to mainstream schools without ensuring the provision of specialised staff, classroom accommodations, or carers. When children do receive carers, they are often insufficiently trained to manage specific-needs children, resulting in exclusion or withdrawal from public schooling environments.

Additionally, ECCEA's policy of not assigning carers to private institutions creates indirect discrimination against families who choose private pre-primary options due to proximity, accessibility, or quality concerns.

Fragmentation Between Ministries and Institutions

Another systemic discrepancy lies in the fragmented responsibilities between the Ministry of Education, ECCEA, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, and SENA. There is a lack of a unified, child-centred policy that facilitates seamless support from early childhood through to formal education. Parents are often referred between departments, each citing jurisdictional limitations, while the children's educational rights are neglected in practice.

At the level of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, these cases are dealt with as special cases and the child will be admitted to a pre-primary school with a carer or the child will be admitted to a SEN School, depending on a case to case basis.

At the request of the OOC, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare is having meetings with relevant stakeholders to devise a policy formulation to bridge the gap regarding children with disabilities aged between 3 and 5 years.

Recommendations

To address the above discrepancies and uphold the principles of equity and inclusivity, the following reforms are recommended:

- **Amend the Child Day Care Centre Regulations 2022**

Extend the age limit beyond 3 years for children with disabilities, allowing them to remain in familiar care environments with specialised support until a suitable educational placement is secured.

- **Expand SENA's Mandate**

Lower the official age of intervention from 5 to 3 years, in line with international best practices on early intervention.

Include specific provision for multi-disciplinary support teams (educators, therapists, carers) for younger children.

- **Strengthen ECCEA's Inclusive Education Mandate**

Ensure that pre-primary schools public and private have access to properly trained carers, inclusive curricula, and special needs training for staff.

Provide financial and technical support to private schools that agree to enrol children with disabilities.

- **Develop an Inter-Ministerial Protocol**

Establish a formal protocol among the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, ECCEA, and SENA to ensure coordinated case management, with a single point of contact for parents and caregivers.

- **Introduce a National Early Intervention Policy**

Develop and adopt a comprehensive Early Intervention and Inclusive Education Policy that addresses the needs of children with developmental delays and disabilities from birth to school age.

B. Children victims of trafficking in persons

i. Introduction

The Ombudsperson for Children received a serious complaint concerning the welfare and protection of two minor children from Madagascar, who arrived in Mauritius accompanied by their parents under false pretences. The circumstances reported are indicative of human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, involving potential violations of the children's rights under both domestic and international legal instruments.

ii. Background of the Case

The family entered the country on a tourist visa, relying on assurances from a recruitment agent that employment and legal documentation would be arranged upon arrival. Upon arrival, the provided housing was unfurnished and substandard. Parents were employed in a small supermarket for MUR 13,000/month, despite being promised MUR 30,000. The children were reportedly coerced into assisting at a nearby shop, indicating child labour. One child disclosed being physically abused.

Upon raising concerns about their treatment and seeking to report the agent, the latter pre-emptively contacted law enforcement and reported the family for overstaying their tourist visas. As a result, the parents were detained under immigration provisions. The children were placed in an NGO-run facility under protective custody.

The parents were subsequently released and admitted to the NGO-run facility where they reunited with their children. It was determined that, in the best interest of the children, the entire family would be accommodated at the facility. The children have eventually been enrolled at school, with the intervention of the OOC and Human Rights Committee.

iii. Legal and Policy Framework

The 2023 anti-trafficking law amendment established the Trafficking in Persons Unit in the Central Criminal Investigation Division of the Mauritius Police Force to oversee human trafficking investigations. The 2023 anti-trafficking law amendment also included a non-punishment provision, noting the Director of Public Prosecutions had the authority to decline prosecuting victims of trafficking who may have committed unlawful acts as a result of being trafficked. The Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act, as amended, criminalized sex trafficking and labour trafficking of adults and children and prescribed penalties of up to 15 years' imprisonment. The Children's Act of 2020 also criminalized child sex trafficking and prescribed penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment.

The above-described situation is legally characterised as a case of human trafficking under the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act. The Act, which was amended in 2023, consolidates existing laws and provides a more effective legal basis to identify victims of trafficking; ensure their protection and access to justice and prosecute perpetrators.

iv. The Trafficking in Persons Report (2024) by the U.S. Department of State on Mauritius reported that:

- The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, including the National Children's Council and the Child Development Unit, led government efforts to combat child trafficking.
- The MGEFW continued to operate a 24-hour hotline to report child abuse and GBV, including potential trafficking crimes, and the police operated a 24-hour hotline to report crimes.
- The government reported identifying five suspected child trafficking cases through the hotline, the same number of cases as in 2022.
- The government conducted some activities to raise awareness of child protection and extraterritorial child sexual exploitation and abuse in the tourism industry.
- Traffickers exploit foreign migrants, particularly Malagasy women, recruited under false pretences of employment or tourism in sex trafficking and domestic servitude in guesthouses, hotels, and massage parlours.

v. Issues Identified

- The family was lured under false promises and exploited for labour, fulfilling the definition of trafficking in persons.
- The minors were subjected to forced labour and one reportedly suffered physical abuse, violating child protection laws.
- The agent's report to the police led to the detention of the parents and separation of the family, instead of an immediate referral to the anti-trafficking task force.
- The children, living at a facility, face an uncertain educational future due to their irregular immigration status.

vi. Intervention by the Ombudsperson

As per Section (5)(i) of the Ombudsperson for Children Act (2003), the Ombudsperson is mandated to investigate cases of children who are not Mauritian citizens but who are on Mauritian territory.

The Ombudsperson drew the attention of the Ministry of Education to the situation of the children who are in irregular situation and whose rights to education are not being fulfilled pending court procedures. The Ombudsperson was made to understand that due to the irregular immigration status of the children, they are not eligible for school enrolment under current legislations.

Access to education is a fundamental right that should be afforded to all children without discrimination, particularly those who are victims of exploitation and in need of protection and reintegration. Given the vulnerability of these children and the importance of ensuring their right to education, it is of paramount importance to establish clear policies to improve access to educational institutions.

vii. Recommendations

1. Child Protection and Family Reunification

- Ensure psychosocial support for minors who find themselves in such vulnerable situation, including trauma counselling.
- Establish a clear plan for family reunification, in coordination with the relevant Embassy and child welfare services.

2. Access to Education

- The Ministry of Education should issue clear guidelines ensuring that all children, irrespective of immigration status, have uninterrupted access to schooling, in line with Mauritius's obligations under the UNCRC.

3. Diplomatic Engagement

- Such cases must be formally reported to the relevant Embassy and all diplomatic channels used to safeguard the family's rights and explore repatriation or regularisation solutions.

4. Public Awareness and Prevention

- Awareness campaigns should be organised, warning against deceptive recruitment practices and reinforcing the dangers of trafficking.
- Ensure hotlines and complaint mechanisms are accessible and promoted in multiple languages.

viii. Conclusion

This case reveals a serious breach of children's rights and a failure in early detection mechanism related to trafficking. Urgent action is needed across multiple agencies to restore justice to the victims, uphold the rule of law, and prevent recurrence. The Ombudsperson for Children will continue to monitor such cases closely and work with stakeholders to ensure the protection and dignity of all children in Mauritius, regardless of origin or legal status.

Despite entering Mauritius on tourist visas, which classifies the minors as prohibited immigrants under Section 5(1) (e) and Section 36 (e) of the Immigration Act, their

case highlights a significant tension between immigration law and children's rights. Under current legislation, individuals in an irregular migration situation are not entitled to access public services or benefit from public funds. As a result, these children are, in principle, ineligible for admission to public schools. However, in this case, the children were admitted to school while court procedures were ongoing, revealing a critical loophole—or more accurately, a humanitarian exception—within the system. This exception demonstrates that, although the law does not explicitly protect the right to education for children with irregular status, in practice, some flexibility is being exercised in favour of the child's best interests.

This situation underscores a broader systemic issue: children should not be penalised for their immigration status, and their fundamental right to education, as guaranteed by international instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28), must be safeguarded irrespective of legal status. This case serves as a positive yet exceptional example, pointing to the need for formal policy clarification to prevent discriminatory practices and ensure consistent protection of children's rights in all circumstances.

C. Prolonged Hospitalisation of a Minors Due to Systemic Delays in Child Protection Measures

i. Introduction

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children has the legal mandate to advocate for the protection, promotion, and fulfilment of the rights of every child. In this context, the Office intervened in a case involving a minor who remained unnecessarily hospitalised for an extended period due to delays in decision-making by authorities. This report highlights the background of the case, systemic challenges encountered, rights violations observed, and provides recommendations to improve institutional responses and uphold the best interests of the child.

ii. Background of the Case

In May 2024, a child with Down syndrome and gross developmental delay was admitted to a public hospital. The child presented with signs of severe malnutrition, multiple untreated wounds, bedsores, and old healing abrasions, raising immediate concerns of neglect, abuse, and ill-treatment. The child also exhibited signs of psychological distress, including sleep disturbance.

Following comprehensive medical treatment, the child's health improved significantly, and a formal medical discharge was issued in September 2024. However, the child remained hospitalised for several months beyond medical necessity, pending decisions from the Child Development Unit (CDU) regarding the possibility of removing the child from parental care and placing them in a residential care facility.

iii. Actions Taken by the Ombudsperson for Children

Upon being informed of the case by the medical social worker and the prolonged hospitalisation of the child despite medical discharge, the Ombudsperson for Children intervened in accordance with her mandate to uphold the rights and best interests of children.

The Ombudsperson formally engaged with the hospital administration and relevant medical staff to seek clarification on their obligations under **Section 34 of the Children's Act (2022)**, which mandates the reporting of children in danger. Specifically, the Ombudsperson requested written confirmation and documentation regarding:

- Whether the hospital had reported the suspected case of ill-treatment to the Police, as required by law, given the child's condition on admission (severe malnutrition, physical injuries, bed sores, and signs of neglect).
- Whether the treating medical professionals had medically established that the injuries sustained by the child could reasonably be attributed to physical abuse or neglect.
- Whether the hospital had assessed the potential risks associated with reunifying the child with the parents, and if such reunification could pose a threat to the child's health, safety, or psychological well-being.
- Whether any recommendations had been made by the hospital regarding the need for alternative care arrangements, including possible placement in a residential facility or foster care setting.

Simultaneously, the Ombudsperson reached out to the CDU to inquire about their assessment process and decision-making timeline. The following issues were raised:

- Whether a comprehensive assessment of the child's safety and well-being had been conducted in a timely and thorough manner.
- Whether the CDU was actively coordinating with medical staff and law enforcement to secure the child's protection and initiate care placement if required.
- Whether sufficient safeguards were in place to ensure that the decision made by the CDU would be informed, rights-based, and in the child's best interests.

iv. Issues Identified

• Unwillingness of Authorities to Assume Responsibility

Despite clear indications of abuse and neglect, there was hesitation and delay among key institutions particularly the hospital and the CDU regarding who should initiate the legal steps necessary to protect the child. Each awaited the other's action, particularly in regard to filing a formal complaint with the police, as required under Section 34 of the Children's Act (2022).

• Legal Duty to Report Suspected Ill-Treatment

Under the Children's Act (2022), medical professionals are mandatory reporters of suspected abuse. As direct witnesses to the child's condition upon admission, hospital staff held crucial first-hand information. However, the failure to immediately report the case to the police delayed legal processes and restricted the CDU's ability to apply for an Emergency Protection Order.

• Systemic Delays in Social and Legal Assessments

The CDU indicated that they were awaiting the medical and social assessment reports to make an informed decision. However, these delays coupled with the absence of a police declaration meant the child remained in the hospital for a prolonged period despite no further medical need.

• Violation of Child's Rights

The unnecessary hospital stay amounted to a violation of the child's rights to timely protection, a safe environment, and social integration. While debates unfolded

over administrative responsibilities, the child remained in a medical ward instead of being transitioned to a more suitable care environment.

- **Lack of Inter-agency Coordination**

The case highlights critical gaps in inter-agency collaboration and accountability. The absence of a clear, time-sensitive protocol for responding to suspected child ill-treatment resulted in prolonged institutional care and placed the child at further risk of harm.

- **Confidentiality and Family Pressure**

Despite repeated requests from the parents to have the child returned to their custody, the CDU should maintain strict confidentiality of the case. However, the lack of public clarity on roles and responsibilities further created mistrust among stakeholders and left space for blame-shifting.

v. Recommendations

To the Ministry of Health:

- Enforce hospital protocols mandating immediate reporting of suspected child abuse to the police in line with Section 34 of the Children's Act (2022).
- Designate hospital social workers trained to manage such cases and liaise with child welfare authorities in real time.

To the Child Development Unit (CDU):

- Establish clear procedural timelines for assessment and decision-making in high-risk cases to prevent institutional delays.
- Strengthen collaboration with law enforcement and hospitals to ensure emergency protection is swiftly applied when required.
- Ensure that the child's best interests are prioritized over administrative or procedural technicalities.

To Law Enforcement Authorities:

- Respond promptly to mandatory reports filed by medical professionals concerning suspected child ill-treatment.
- Initiate investigations into parental conduct in cases of suspected abuse, ensuring that justice is not delayed due to reporting gaps.

vi. Outcome

In June 2025, following sustained advocacy by the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, the medical team at the hospital filed a declaration with the police regarding suspected ill-treatment. An Emergency Protection Order was subsequently granted, and the child was placed in a residential care facility. The CDU committed to maintaining regular monitoring to ensure the child's continued safety and well-being.

While the eventual outcome protected the child, the significant delays reflect systemic shortcomings that need urgent reform. Every day a child spends in limbo due to administrative inaction is a violation of his/her dignity and rights. The institutions tasked with protecting vulnerable children must work with urgency, clarity, and shared accountability.

D. Addressing the Crisis of Undeclared Births

A child's right to a name and nationality from birth is a fundamental and non-negotiable right enshrined in Article 7 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Article 6 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). Both instruments require States Parties to ensure that every child is registered immediately after birth and to safeguard their right to acquire a nationality. In Mauritius, however, many children are unfortunately being born into vulnerable circumstances and may remain **undeclared** for long and being denied their most basic rights - the right to an identity!

Case in Point: The Undeclared Child – A Systemic Failure

The case of *Baby H*, born to a drug addict mother, starkly illustrates these legal and policy failures. Despite repeated medical interventions, including hospitalisation and the involvement of social services, Baby H remains undeclared. The biological parents, though repeatedly advised, have shown persistent uncooperativeness.

What is particularly alarming is that the baby's paternal aunt has expressed her willingness to adopt the child and cover all associated legal expenses. Yet due to the child's undeclared status, no legal guardianship or adoption can be processed. The child is effectively trapped in a situation where, in the absence of birth registration, no formal decisions can be made regarding identity, and custody.

Systemic Barriers and Limited Mandates

This case brings into sharp focus the limitations of the current child protection structure. According to a Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (MGEFW) report:

- **Narrow Jurisdiction:** The MGEFW's mandate explicitly restricts it to handling delayed birth declarations only for children already placed in Residential Care Institutions (RCIs) or in registered foster care under a court order. Children like Baby H, living informally with relatives, fall outside this scope.
- **Referral Without Intervention:** In such cases, the Ministry merely refers biological parents to the District Court to initiate the declaration process. This approach fails entirely when parents are unwilling, incapable, or absent. There is no legal or administrative mechanism that empowers the State to act directly in the child's best interest under such circumstances.

A police report further highlights the vacuum in accountability: despite official warnings, the parents cited financial difficulties and refused to proceed. The Commissioner of Police suggested that the Child Development Unit (CDU) facilitate legal aid, but again, no authority was empowered to take direct and immediate action on behalf of the child.

Patterns Beyond a Single Case

Baby H's situation is not an isolated case. Similar instances, often involving underage mothers, informal caregivers, or families in poverty have come to the attention of NGOs and frontline professionals. In each, the **system relies entirely on parental compliance**, even when those parents are demonstrably incapable or unwilling to fulfil their responsibilities. Without birth registration, close families or kins taking care of these affected children have to rely on referrals from the Civil Status Office to initiate procedures for vaccinations, access to healthcare.

This situation violates not only their right to identity but also obstructs their right to protection, care, and development, as guaranteed under both the UNCRC and the African Charter.

Urgent Recommendations for Reform

To address this critical gap, the following measures are recommended:

- Expand the Legal Mandate of the MGEFW and/or CDU to directly initiate and finalise birth declarations when parents fail to act and the child's welfare is at risk.
- Enact legislation granting designated State authorities the power to act **in loco parentis** (in place of the parent) for registration purposes when it is clearly in the child's best interest.
- Develop emergency birth registration protocols, particularly within hospitals and maternity wards, to ensure that no newborn is discharged without being officially registered with particular attention to children born to parents with substance use disorders, **who are at heightened risk of abandonment, neglect, or non-compliance with registration procedures.**
- Improve coordination between the police, judiciary, health services, and social welfare agencies, ensuring that every child born in Mauritius is declared without delay.
- Conduct national awareness campaigns on the importance and obligation of birth registration, especially targeting vulnerable populations.

Conclusion

The case studies and accompanying systemic challenges in this report expose a harsh truth: discrepancies, loopholes and policy gaps in the system leaving certain children unprotected and vulnerable. Beyond these individual stories, there lies a larger pattern: one where many children are pushed outside the safety net altogether.

This report invites renewal, not reproach. It urges every stakeholder to unite around a shared mission: safeguarding every child without exception, in every corner of the Republic. When we act together with clarity, urgency, and empathy we can ensure that rights on paper become a lived reality.

Chapter 2

The Rights of Children in the Non-Formal Education Sector

Section 7(1) of the Ombudsperson for Children Act stipulates that, *“Where the Ombudsperson for Children considers, either upon complaint made to him or on his own motion, that it is necessary to investigate a matter relating to the rights of a child, the Ombudsperson for Children shall investigate the complaint in such manner as he considers appropriate.”*

In this optic, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children has carried out a systemic investigation on the rights of children in the non-formal education sector in Mauritius.

The objectives of the investigation are to:

1

Take cognizance of the present situation of children in the non-formal education (NFE) sector.

3

Assess whether the non-formal education sector in Mauritius complies with the UNCRC and the African Charter.

2

Determine the reasons children find themselves in the non-formal education sector.

4

Assess whether NFE programmes are in line with Article 29 of the CRC, and Article 11 of the African Charter.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out various rights that are crucial for the well-being and development of children, including their right to education.

The key provisions of the UNCRC related to education are as follows:

Article 28

The right to education, including the obligation to make primary education compulsory and available free to all.

Article 29

The goals of education, focusing on the development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

Article 31

The right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities.

Education System in Mauritius

The education system in Mauritius generally aligns with the principles of the UNCRC particularly in terms of ensuring that all children have access to education.

Mauritius has made substantial progress in aligning its education system with these principles:

- Education is free at all levels and compulsory up to age 16, supporting the UNCRC's right to education.
- Measures exist to promote equity, inclusion, and holistic development, including early support for literacy and numeracy, special needs education, and programs addressing socio-emotional development.

Note: Detailed information on progress and initiatives in the formal education sector is provided in the **Annex C** of this report.

Gaps and Challenges in the Education System

While Mauritius has made significant strides in aligning its education system with the UNCRC, continuous efforts are needed to address existing gaps and challenges so as to fully realise all aspects of the UNCRC.

The education system in the Republic of Mauritius faces several challenges:

1. Quality of Education:

- **Teacher Training and Development:** Ensuring that teachers are well-trained and continuously updated with new teaching methods and technologies is a challenge. There is a need for ongoing professional development, Life Long Learning should become a reality.
- **Curriculum Relevance:** The curriculum needs to be continuously updated to meet the changing needs of the global economy and to incorporate 21st-century skills. It must be at the same time tailor made for the local context.

2. Disparities in Access:

- **Socio economic Inequality:** Children from lower-income families may face barriers to education, including lack of access to private tutoring and extracurricular activities.

3. Inclusive Education:

- **Special Needs Education:** While efforts are made to include children with disabilities, there are still gaps in resources, trained staff, and infrastructure to fully support inclusive education.

Progress has been noted in training courses offered to teachers, assistant teachers and carers working in this sector. However, in the best interests of children with disabilities, there is a pressing need to shift from the medical model of disability to the human rights model of disability as recommended by both the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU). The latter model of disability better promotes inclusive education.

4. Language Barriers:

- The medium of instruction and language used in schools may not always align with the home languages of all students, posing challenges for effective learning.

5. Infrastructure and Resources:

- **School Facilities:** Some schools, may lack adequate infrastructure, such as well-maintained buildings, well-equipped libraries, and laboratories and other specialist rooms.

6. Dropout Rates:

- **Primary Education:** There is a growing number of children in primary schools who are regularly absent from school, in spite of a tracking mechanism
- **Secondary Education:** While primary education enrolment is high, there is a noticeable dropout rate at the secondary level. This can be due to various factors, including economic pressures, lack of interest, or academic difficulties.

7. Examination-Oriented System :

- **Pressure and Stress:** The education system in Mauritius is often criticized for being too focused on examinations, which can lead to high levels of stress among students and a focus on rote learning rather than critical thinking and creativity.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, involving policy reforms, stakeholder engagement, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Equity and Inclusion in Education Policy

Mauritius has consistently adopted a rights-based approach to education, in line with SDG 4 (Education). Education is free and compulsory up to the age of 16 and is supported by accompanying measures such as free transport, textbooks, and examination fees, together with a free tertiary education scheme.

Policies also emphasise gender equality whereby boys and girls are offered the same opportunities and subjects, and efforts have been made to remove stereotypes from teaching materials.

For children from vulnerable families, targeted support such as child allowances and free school materials is provided.

These measures apply primarily to the formal education sector. However, around **1,000 children** remain in the non-formal sector, raising the key question: **to what extent do they benefit from these measures of inclusion and equity?**

The Non-formal Education sector

There are many ways of defining non-formal education, but for the purpose of this investigation the definition developed by **UNESCO (ISCED, 2011)** has been adopted:

“

The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative and/or a complement to formal education within the process of the lifelong learning of individuals. It is often provided to guarantee the right of access to education for all. It caters for people of all ages, but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway-structure; it may be short in duration and/or low intensity, and it is typically provided in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars.

Non-formal education mostly leads to qualifications that are not recognised as formal qualifications by the relevant national educational authorities or to no qualifications at all.

Non-formal education can cover programmes contributing to adult and youth literacy and education for out-of-school children, as well as programmes on life skills, work skills, and social or cultural development.

”

Source: UNESCO, ISCED 2011

Characteristics and importance of non-formal education

Non formal education isn't a replacement to formal education, which is key and fundamental to the growth of the person, however, it can complement it by covering needs or certain aspects that the regulated institution lack.

UNESCO, for example, emphasises the flexibility of non-formal education and how it allows for more personalised learning to be developed for each person. In fact, this would be the most ideal model for them.

How is it flexible? Non formal education is open to any age, origin and personal interest. Moreover, it's a relatively voluntary type of education, with diverse teaching methods and its end goal isn't a degree, but rather pure learning.

The benefits of non-formal education can be summarised as follows:

- Helps grow and mature, on a personal level, as well as within society. In many cases, teamwork or coexisting, can play an important role.
- By developing the skills of each individual, you boost their self-esteem.
- The capacity to learn and discover on your own develops a healthy critical attitude of your surroundings, social norms and power mechanisms.
- Boosts job placement opportunities and encourages self-employment.

The following definitions of formal education, non-formal education, and informal education are based on UNESCO's understanding.

1. Formal Education

Formal education refers to structured and systematic learning provided by institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities. It follows a set curriculum and leads to officially recognized qualifications and certifications. Characteristics of formal education include:

- Structured learning programs with specific objectives
- Delivered by trained educators
- Leads to recognized diplomas, degrees, or certificates
- Follows national education policies and guidelines

Example: Primary and secondary schooling, university degrees, and technical training provided in accredited institutions.

2. Non-Formal Education (NFE)

Non-formal education is any organized and sustained educational activity that occurs outside the formal school system. It is often flexible, learner-centred, and adapted to specific community or individual needs. Unlike formal education, it may not always lead to officially recognized qualifications.

Characteristics of Non-Formal Education:

- Structured but more flexible than formal education
- May or may not lead to certification
- Targets specific groups, such as out-of-school children, adults, or marginalized populations
- Includes vocational training, literacy programs, and life skills education

Example: Adult literacy programs, skills training workshops, community education programs, and alternative learning centres like ANFEN in Mauritius.

3. Informal Education

Informal education is unstructured learning that takes place through daily life experiences, without a set curriculum or formal instruction. It happens naturally through interactions with family, peers, media, and the community.

Characteristics of Informal Education:

- No structured curriculum or set objectives
- Learning happens spontaneously in everyday life
- No official certification or formal recognition
- Includes self-directed learning, cultural learning, and social interactions

Example: Learning a language at home, acquiring skills through work experience, watching educational content online, or learning cultural traditions through family.

The Comparison Table below summarises these three forms of Education:

Feature	Formal Education	Non-Formal Education	Informal Education
Structure	Highly structured	Semi-structured	Unstructured
Certification	Recognized degrees & diplomas	May or may not have certification	No certification
Setting	Schools, universities	Community centers, NGOs, training institutes	
Flexibility	Rigid, follows curriculum	Flexible, tailored to learners	Completely unstructured
Example	Primary school, university	Vocational training, literacy programs	Learning a skill from family or the internet

Non-Formal Education in the Republic of Mauritius

In Mauritius, non-formal education plays a vital role in addressing the needs of marginalised and vulnerable groups, particularly adolescents who have not thrived in the formal education system. Historically, the earliest initiatives date back some 35 years, when NGOs and social workers began supporting disadvantaged youth through funding from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Development Corporation Partnership (DCP), and religious organisations. Over time, several NGOs were established to support out-of-school children.

Mauritius ratified the UNCRC in 1990, guaranteeing the right of every child to access quality education. To uphold this principle, the **Adolescent Non-Formal Education Network (ANFEN)** was created in 2000, with UNICEF support, as a network of 21 NGOs in Mauritius and Rodrigues. Today, around 1,000 adolescents aged 11–18 attend ANFEN centres each year. These centres provide:

- Basic literacy and numeracy,
- Life skills development, and
- Vocational training in areas such as carpentry, culinary arts, and pastry-making

ANFEN’s mission is to reintegrate dropouts into society by improving employability, teaching skills for independence, and providing psychosocial support. While some children with disabilities are referred to the Special Education Needs Authority (SENA), ANFEN also accommodates students with conditions such as dyslexia or speech disorders, often without sufficient resources. Human resource needs are met through staff recruitment, alumni engagement, and volunteer contributions.

Currently, around **28 non-formal education schools** are registered with the **National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF)**, of which 17 fall under ANFEN. (See ANNEX D)

The Role of NSIF

The National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF) is the central body responsible for receiving, managing, and allocating funds to registered associations. Its mandate is to implement programmes benefiting individuals and families on the Social Register of Mauritius, as well as other vulnerable groups. The relevant priority area for this investigation is educational support and training.

Most non-formal education associations are classified under category F1 where they are funded for ongoing projects since 2017. The NSIF provides regular programme grants for ongoing services to poor and vulnerable groups and focuses on interventions complementary to public services.

In 2022, NSIF, in collaboration with the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD), introduced the National Certificate Level 1 (NC1). This qualification equips learners who did not complete primary schooling with essential literacy and numeracy, enabling access to MITD courses. Around 100 students sit the NC1 exams each year.

However, challenges remain. Many adolescents leave non-formal centres by age 16–17 in order to work, often accepting poorly paid jobs due to a lack of formal qualifications. NSIF is currently conducting a survey to understand why children engage in non-formal education instead of the formal system. It was suggested that the survey results could serve as secondary data and provide a valuable contribution to the research conducted by this Office. However as at date the results of this survey have not been made public.

To date, no comprehensive studies have assessed the situation of children attending non-formal education (NFE) centres in Mauritius. This gap underscores the rationale for this systemic investigation: to gain a clear understanding of the current situation of children in the NFE sector, identify existing shortcomings, and provide evidence-based recommendations.

To obtain first-hand insights into these challenges, the Ombudsperson for Children met with key actors in the sector:

- Mrs Stephanie Ha Yeung, Manager of ANFEN (30 January 2025)
- Mrs Ravaton, Programme Manager, NSIF and Mr Ragoobur, Research and Development Manager, NSIF (12 February 2025)

Systemic investigation into the situation of children in the non-formal education (NFE) sector in Mauritius.

As at date no studies have been conducted to assess the situation of children attending the non-formal system in Mauritius as there are no established standards or evaluations to measure its effectiveness and outcomes. Hence the rationale of this systemic investigation.

Methodology

In line with Section 7(1) of the Ombudsperson for Children Act 2003, and guided by the principles of the UNCRC and the African Charter, the OOC conducted a systemic investigation into the situation of children in the non-formal education (NFE) sector in Mauritius.

Following preliminary discussions with key sector actors, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children sought to gather empirical data on the non-formal education sector. To ensure a comprehensive understanding, the investigation employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research tools. The aim was to gather first-hand

data from key actors directly involved in the NFE ecosystem.

It is important to note that the findings presented in this chapter are based on a limited sample and, therefore, are NOT representative of the entire population of stakeholders in the non-formal education sector. However, they offer valuable insights into the experiences, challenges, and perceptions of those directly involved in the delivery and reception of education in the non-formal education setting.

The research process involved:

- Survey questionnaires administered to:
 - » Managers of non-formal education institutions
 - » Educators in NFE schools
 - » Students enrolled in non-formal education programs
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) held with:
 - » Educators
 - » Students
 - » Sector experts and experienced stakeholders

This dual approach enabled the Office to capture both measurable trends and lived experiences, thereby allowing a more holistic analysis of the non-formal education landscape.

A. Quantitative Data Analysis – Survey Findings

Data gathered from Managers of Non-Formal Education Institutions

Data collected from 13 managers of non-formal education institutions indicate that the majority are female (9 out of 13). Most managers are over the age of 41, with more than half (7) aged 51 or older, reflecting a predominantly experienced workforce. Academically, the majority hold graduate or postgraduate degrees, while two possess lower-level qualifications. In terms of professional development, many have completed pedagogical training provided by ANFEN and related organisations.

In terms of experience, the managers are evenly divided: six have held their current positions for less than three years, while another six have served for over eight years. Notably, 11 out of 13 have participated in leadership or institutional management training, indicating a strong foundation in professional development. Most institutions are formally registered, primarily with the Registrar of Associations and the National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF).

All institutions operate during standard school hours, although specific schedules may vary slightly. Discipline within institutions was generally rated as good (6), with a few indicating very good (3) or fair (3). Attendance was rated even more positively, with most reporting good (9) or very good (3) pupil attendance. Every institution reported having a governance structure in place, mainly composed of boards of members or management committees.

Financially, annual budgets range from 1 to 7 million MUR, with the most common funding sources being the NSIF, private companies via CSR, and donors. Most institutions (10) run a food program, typically financed through multiple sources including NSIF, donors, and

corporate CSR funding. The food program is in place to support underprivileged children who often attend school without adequate nutrition.

Regarding infrastructure, 10 institutions reported having an adequate number of classrooms. Specialised facilities—such as computer labs, kitchens, workshops, and hairdressing rooms—are commonly available. While all institutions have a manager's office, the presence of staff rooms and assistant manager offices is less consistent. Academically, there is a strong emphasis on non-examinable subjects such as arts and life skills, with 11 managers indicating moderate to very high levels of focus on these areas.

Students sit for national exams such as Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) and the National Certificate of Education (NCE), with performance steadily improving between 2020 and 2024. Vocational placements at institutions like MITD and other training centers have also increased, indicating a functional transition path for students post non-formal schooling. However, quality assurance visits from government bodies were limited, with 10 institutions reporting no visits in the last year.

Parental engagement strategies are diverse, including homework support, signing academic records, and participation in open days. Most institutions (11) hold meetings with parents about three times a year. Teacher accountability is maintained through mandatory sign-in/out systems, and punctuality is generally rated highly.

Most institutions provide access to psychologists or counsellors (12) and social workers (11), although often on part-time or sessional bases. These professionals typically work once or twice a week at the non-formal schools. Staff qualifications are varied, with a strong presence of vocational training and in-service education, especially through ANFEN. The staff is predominantly female and falls mostly in the 40–60 age range.

In terms of teaching materials, only 3 institutions use MIE textbooks. The majority rely on alternative curricula such as Caritas' alphabetisation programs. Instructional techniques are learner-centered, with high use of storytelling, visual aids, and discussion. Assessments are mostly continuous and observational, with termly exams also in place.

Most classrooms are adequately furnished, and core values such as tolerance, care, responsibility, punctuality, and politeness are actively promoted. A majority of educators (8) are also assigned administrative duties. However, only two institutions reported having a functioning student committee, indicating room for improvement in child participation and voice.

Finally, managers identified the main reasons for student enrolment in NFE as school dropout (11), failure at PSAC exams twice (7), and academic non-promotion to higher grades (7), underlining the critical function the non-formal institutions serve. Moreover, factors like food provision, approachable staff, and flexible rules also influenced enrolment decisions.

In conclusion, managers of non-formal education institutions in Mauritius demonstrate strong leadership and dedication to supporting their schools and learners. Despite this commitment, they face significant challenges, including limited government oversight, resource constraints, and the need to balance day-to-day operational duties with strategic leadership. Their role remains crucial in overcoming these obstacles to ensure that non-formal schools deliver inclusive, flexible, and high-quality education for vulnerable children.

Data gathered from Educators

The analysis of the questionnaire administered to 18 educators in Mauritius' non-formal education (NFE) sector reveals crucial insights into the present situation, quality of provision, and alignment with children's rights.

Demographically, the NFE workforce is predominantly female, with a significant proportion (over 50% of respondents) holding a School Certificate (SC) as their highest academic qualification. This indicates a varied academic background among educators, with some potentially lacking formal teacher training specific to their roles, especially given the SC holders. The majority of educators fall within the 25-44 age range suggesting a relatively experienced but also active workforce. A significant number are also 45-54, indicating a mix of mid-career and more senior educators.

While a majority of educators report having received some form of in-service training, the specifics of this training (nature, duration, and provider) are vital for assessing its adequacy and impact on teaching quality, particularly given the lower formal qualifications.

Another critical finding is the severe inadequacy of learning resources; there is a notable scarcity of pupils' books, educators' guides, and reference materials across most subjects, particularly in Science and Social Studies, which significantly impedes effective teaching and learning, compromising the child's right to adequate educational resources. Despite these resource challenges, educators largely describe a physically adequate learning environment in terms of lighting and seating, though aeration remains a concern in some instances.

Encouragingly, educators report frequent use of learner-centred instructional techniques such as question-and-answer, discussion, storytelling, and visual aids, aligning well with the holistic development aims of Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 11 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child by fostering active participation and essential life skills.

The sector is overwhelmingly driven by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), highlighting their pivotal role, but a significant proportion of educators express dissatisfaction with their salary, a factor that could impact morale, retention, and the long-term sustainability of the NFE workforce.

Finally, while educators demonstrate good attendance, a notable number report that administrative duties detract from their teaching effectiveness, suggesting a need to streamline operational processes to ensure educators can fully dedicate themselves to student learning and well-being. This multifaceted picture underscores areas of strength, particularly in the commitment to child-centred values, but also significant vulnerabilities related to educator qualifications, resources, and working conditions that need urgent attention to fully uphold the rights of children in non-formal education.

Data gathered from Pupils of Non-formal schools

A total of 28 pupils from non-formal schools participated in the survey, which aimed to assess the quality of education, their background, learning environment, and the support systems available to pupils. The gender distribution was relatively balanced, with 16 males and 12

females. The majority of respondents were aged between 14 and 16 years, indicating that non-formal schools are primarily serving adolescents who may have re-entered education after interruptions.

Most pupils (27) reported living with their parents, though some cited family separation or loss of one parent as part of their living circumstances. While most pupils reside in relatively stable environments, one pupil reported living in institutional care. Parental education levels were modest, with a significant number of parents having only primary or secondary education. Approximately a section of respondents (8) reported receiving little to no help with schoolwork at home, which highlights a gap in academic support.

Pupils cited a range of reasons for attending non-formal schools, with the most common being a friendlier learning environment, more understanding teachers, and relaxed school rules. Only a small number mentioned proximity or financial constraints as the main reason for enrolment. This suggests that the appeal of non-formal education lies in its flexible and inclusive approach rather than logistical or economic factors alone.

Regarding resources and meals, the majority of respondents (25) confirmed they receive lunch at school, and 15 reported having three meals a day. However, 7 indicated they eat only one or two meals, which may suggest underlying food insecurity. Most pupils (18) stated that they are allowed to attend school without a uniform, reflecting the inclusive policies of non-formal schools.

On health matters, most pupils said they are taken to health centers when sick, either by family or school staff. However, a small number still rely on over-the-counter medication or go untreated. In terms of safety, 7 pupils reported experiencing some form of insecurity at school, primarily violence, while 4 reported insecurity on their way to or from school.

In conclusion, the findings highlight that non-formal schools play a crucial role in providing accessible and flexible education to pupils who may not thrive in formal systems. While the schools generally offer a supportive environment, there remain challenges related to academic support, health access, and learner safety. Targeted interventions are recommended to strengthen parental engagement, enhance safety measures, and provide additional academic and emotional support to vulnerable learners.

B. Qualitative Data Analysis – Focus Group Discussions

To complement the quantitative data gathered through surveys, the focus group discussions aimed to gather in-depth, first-hand perspectives on the lived realities within NFE settings, the challenges faced, and practical proposals for improvement. Thematic analysis was guided by principles drawn from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), with a focus on the following **four key rights**:



Focus Group Discussion with 31 Students Attending Non-Formal Schools

- **Theme 1: Rights to be protected against all forms of violence**

Students shared that they have experienced violence to varying degrees in their lives, with physical violence, cyberbullying, and racism—particularly related to skin colour—being the most common forms. They expressed a strong need for safer environments, both in schools and in the wider community, and called for more effective intervention by adults when violence occurs. However, the children reported feeling safer in non-formal school settings, as they believe they are less likely to be judged and more likely to be understood.

- **Theme 2: Rights to Play and Leisure**

The students reported participating in activities such as knitting, woodcraft, and art. Sports such as basketball and volleyball are also popular and considered more enjoyable than traditional Physical Education (PE) lessons. These activities not only help them relax but also contribute to their personal development and social bonding. However, not all students have equal access—those from Saint Joseph Technique noted the absence of such recreational opportunities at their school, indicating the need for more consistent activities across all non-formal schools.

- **Theme 3: Rights to Education**

The children articulated a powerful vision for education, one that prioritises the cultivation of their individual talents and the active fostering of their creativity. They shared that it was difficult to navigate through the rigid framework of the formal education system in the mainstream school, with one student poignantly observing that it feels like the same boring routine everyday. In contrast, they reported a smoother and more positive integration into non-formal schooling, which they perceived as offering a more adaptable and receptive pedagogical approach when compared to the strict curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources.

Despite this overall positive sentiment regarding the education received in non-formal settings, the students collectively identified a crucial practical need: the provision of free accessible transportation facilities, which would enable them to attend classes more regularly and without added hardship.

- **Theme 4: Right to Participation**

The students reported participating in only a limited number of activities at school and expressed a strong desire for more opportunities to be involved. They shared that they want to contribute more, showcase their strengths, and feel like valued members of the school community. The students believed that creating more avenues for their participation could help foster a stronger sense of community, enhance their leadership skills, and enrich their overall educational experience.

- **What differences do you notice between your experience in a Non-Formal Education school and the experiences of students in mainstream government or private schools?**

Students shared that Educators in non-formal schools are more attentive and supportive, handling them with extra care and patience. They find it easier to adapt in this environment, as they are surrounded by peers who share similar experiences. In non-formal schools, they feel encouraged and motivated to pursue their dreams. Many reported feeling marginalised and neglected in mainstream schools, whereas in non-formal settings, they feel included and valued. Educators play a key role in helping them discover their individual talents. Additionally, the students highlighted that the school routine in Non-Formal schools is more engaging and varied, with wide avenues, as compared to their previous mainstream schools.

What measures can be taken to address the gaps or shortcomings in Non-Formal Education schools?

1. Non-formal schools should offer a broader range of activities to enhance student engagement.
2. Non-formal schools should focus on preparing students for employment by providing relevant skills and career guidance.
3. Educators should receive the appropriate training to support the socio-emotional well-being of students effectively.
4. All non-formal schools should be equipped with computers and internet access to support digital learning.
5. The school library should offer a wide variety of books and magazines to support student academic and personal development.

6. There should be more outdoor educational outings and exposure, such as visits to the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre, the Meteorological Station, the Helicopter Squad, Vallée Adventure Park, and Odysseo, to provide experiential learning opportunities.

Focus Group Discussion with 17 Educators Working in Non-Formal Schools

• Theme 1: Rights to be protected against all forms of violence

Educators reported witnessing frequent episodes of violence in schools and expressed their inability to manage such incidents effectively, despite the presence of rules and regulations. The most common forms of violence include physical, emotional, sexual, and verbal abuse. Much of this violence stems from economic hardship—for instance, conflicts often arise when students take items such as pencils, food, or money from their peers. Educators often feel powerless in the face of this persistent climate of violence. Social media further exacerbates the issue, as students mimic harmful behaviours, they see online without understanding the consequences.

To combat school violence and raise awareness, the school management has implemented several initiatives. Affected students receive therapy and counselling from the Psychologists/Counsellor. Police Officers are invited to give informative talks at school. Art therapy is also used to help children channel their aggression in healthier ways. Students are educated about the negative impacts of social media. Importantly, when parents are unable to attend school programs, school representatives take the initiative to visit them and discuss issues concerning their children, ensuring communication and support. Ultimately, training and empowering Educators remains key to equipping them with the necessary tools to effectively address and prevent school violence in the non-formal schools.

• Theme 2: Rights to Play and Leisure

In Non-formal Education schools, children participate in a wide range of activities, including art, music, gardening, cooking, dancing, swimming, sculpting, and watching films. Educational outings to places such as youth centres and sports clubs are also organised. These activities are designed not only for recreation but also to foster creativity, collaboration, and personal growth. Children receive leadership training and are introduced to project-based learning to help develop their artistic and practical skill.

• Theme 3: Rights to Education

Each Non-formal Education school follows a specific curriculum tailored to its unique objectives. These objectives reflect the individual vision and mission of each school. The curriculum is flexible and can be adapted to align with the broader goals of education. Its primary aim is to prepare students to become responsible, autonomous, and constructive members of society. Effective teaching in these schools relies heavily on pedagogical approaches that promote active learning.

While infrastructure plays a vital role in facilitating this learning, many non-formal schools face challenges, such as the lack of a playground, which limits opportunities

for physical activity and play. Moreover, the location of some non-formal schools is not conducive to learning, as they are situated in areas where drug addiction and related activities are prevalent in the surrounding environment. This poses additional challenges for both Educators and students, affecting safety, focus, and overall well-being.

- **Theme 4: Right to Participation**

Students in Non-formal schools are given the freedom to express themselves and participate in a variety of activities. Many of these children have experienced rejection from mainstream schools and society at large, often leading to feelings of isolation and marginalisation. Unfortunately, some parents do not fully engage in their children's education and may lack awareness about effective parenting. As a result, much of the responsibility for emotional and developmental support falls on Educators. In the absence of strong parental involvement, Educators in non-formal schools take on an active role—helping students develop a sense of belonging, encouraging their participation, and empowering them to express their thoughts and feelings.

- **What differences do you notice between your experience in a Non-Formal Education school and the experiences of students in mainstream government or private schools?**

Mainstream and private schools typically have larger student populations, whereas Non-Formal schools have fewer students, allowing Educators to build closer relationships and better understand each student's individual needs. According to Educators, students often feel safer and more secure in non-formal education settings compared to mainstream schools. The infrastructure in Non-Formal schools is notably different, and these schools generally operate without formal recognition or support from the Ministry of Education and Human Resources.

Furthermore, there is a lack of coordination or collaboration between non-formal schools, as each one operates independently. Despite these challenges, non-formal schools are more flexible than mainstream schools, allowing them to adapt their teaching approaches and structures more readily to meet students' needs.

- **What measures can be taken to address the gaps or shortcomings in Non-Formal Education schools?**

1. Non-Formal Education schools should be officially recognised by the State and provided with financial support or grants to develop adequate infrastructure and deliver quality education to their students.
2. Educators should receive specialised training to effectively support children from challenging or disadvantaged backgrounds.

Focus Group Discussion with Experienced Professionals in the Non-Formal Education Sector

On 02 July 2025, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children conducted a focus group discussion with 6 key persons conversant in the field of Non-formal Education. The participants were as follows :

- ◊ Mr. Viken Vadeevaloo – Former Director of ANFEN, currently at Fondation Joseph Lagesse
- ◊ Mr. Edler Maurer – Manager, SAFIRE
- ◊ Mrs. Prisca Seevathean – Coordinator, Terre de Paix
- ◊ Mr. Jean Philippe Provence – Manager, Ecole Technique St Joseph, Rose-Hill
- ◊ Mrs. Melanie Valere-Ciceron – Manager, Passerelle NGO
- ◊ Mrs. Christelle Gopaul – Coordinator, TIPA

1. What is your experience in the Non-Formal Education (NFE) sector, the number of years involved, the evolution (if any)

All participants reported extensive experience in the NFE sector, and some reported having up to 20 years of involvement. They have worked primarily with vulnerable and at-risk children, especially those who have dropped out or been excluded from the formal education system. Their organisations provide educational, technical, social, and psychological support, often serving as a bridge to help children reintegrate into society and develop life skills.

The concept of non-formal education emerged as early as the 1970s, largely in response to the limitations of formal education systems in meeting the diverse learning needs of all children. Among the earliest non-formal education institutions are Terre de Paix, established in 1970, and École Technique de St Joseph, founded in 1974. Both were created with the aim of equipping children who had been expelled or excluded from formal schools. Without access to these alternative pathways, many of these children would have been left “à la rue” and at risk of exploitation and marginalisation.

Initially, NFE in Mauritius was largely focused on technical and vocational training, primarily intended to equip young people with skills for employment. However, over time, the scope and approach of non-formal education expanded significantly. It began to include literacy and numeracy programs, life skills education, art therapy and creativity and community-based development initiatives. The NGOs also conduct interactive sessions with parents to encourage their involvement in their children’s development. These programs became increasingly flexible, learner-centred, and responsive to local needs of vulnerable children.

NGOs working in the non-formal education sector have, at times, experienced tensions with Ministries for many years. In some instances, particularly during the implementation of the 9-year compulsory education policy that was in place, Ministries have questioned the legitimacy of non-formal education efforts, expressing a firm belief that all children should be integrated into the formal school system. This has, at times, led to the marginalisation or discrediting of the work carried out by NGOs, despite their long-standing experience and community-based expertise in the field of non-formal education.

Some NFE schools are affiliated with SENA, and certain Educators have completed online training courses offered by the organisation. Since then, SENA has begun referring children with special needs to these schools.

Today, the NFE continues to evolve as a crucial complement to formal education, helping address inequalities and promote inclusive, equitable learning opportunities for all.

2. In spite of the fact that Education is compulsory up to 16 years, there are dropouts and street children. What is your view/take on the situation?

Although education in Mauritius is legally compulsory up to the age of 16, the reality on the ground tells a different story. Participants in discussions unanimously expressed concern over the persistent challenges of school dropouts and street children.

Many children who exit the mainstream system and join non-formal education (NFE) centres do so out of necessity, not choice. They are not recruited or invited—they find their way there because the formal system could not accommodate them. For over 25 years, organisations like ANFEN, a network of 21 non-formal education centres, have responded to these needs. ANFEN and similar institutions help children leave the streets, learn to read, gain life skills, and develop a sense of responsibility and self-worth.

Education must be rooted in the principles of quality, equity, and inclusivity, as advanced by UNESCO, and NOT be driven by 'ego' goals. Every child, regardless of background, learning pace, or personal challenges, deserves a meaningful and empowering education.

To grasp how deeply entrenched this problem is, consider this analogy: Forty years ago, around 30,000 students sat for the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) exam. Yet, only 3,000 secondary school places were available. The system simply couldn't accommodate the majority. Many of those left out were forced to repeat the CPE or drop out altogether, with limited or no alternatives. Moreover, attempts to bridge the gap—such as the 'prevocational', 'extended program' or 'fortified learning'—unfortunately failed to provide meaningful pathways.

Today, despite reforms, the same pattern of exclusion persists. The rat race has only intensified, inadvertently pushing many children into non-formal education settings.

Moreover, mainstream education often lacks the adaptability to meet the needs of children with learning difficulties, behavioural issues, or socio-emotional challenges. Many children come from broken homes, experience domestic violence, live in poverty, or suffer from neglect. Without emotional support, counselling, or flexible learning models, they are pushed out of the system. Trauma, low self-esteem, and previous experiences of academic failure make it difficult for these children to reintegrate.

Despite being compulsory on paper, enforcement mechanisms are weak, and formal schools often lack the tools and resources to prevent at-risk students from dropping out. Moreover, there is no robust tracking or referral system linking formal

education with NFE institutions. As a result, many street children and dropouts fall through the cracks.

Participants strongly advocated for the formal recognition and integration of Non-Formal Education into the broader national education framework. NFE offers a second chance to children who disengage from formal schooling by providing a more compassionate, adaptable, and responsive learning environment.

The underlying logic is simple: if there were no school dropouts, non-formal schools would not exist. These institutions emerged to fill the gaps left by a formal system that remains rigid, exam-centric, and inaccessible to many. Instead of dismissing NFE, it is important to acknowledge its vital contribution and ensure that it is fully supported, resourced, and recognised within national education policy.

3. According to each of you, does the NFE system comply to Article 29 of the UNCRC?

All participants agreed that the Non-Formal Education (NFE) system is strongly aligned with the spirit and principles of Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This article emphasises that education should be directed toward “the development of the child’s personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential,” as well as the “preparation of the child for a responsible life in a free society.”

In non-formal education settings, children receive not only academic instruction but also comprehensive social and psychological support. Many programs incorporate art therapy, and students frequently engage in reflective and life skills sessions that address critical topics such as gender relations, sexuality, and illicit substance use. These sessions are often facilitated by trained resource persons, with the overarching goal of empowering the child and fostering personal growth to become a good citizen in the society.

There are several documented success stories of children who, after participating in non-formal education programs, have found gainful employment upon reaching the age of 16. In many cases, these young people have not only adapted well to the professional environment but have also thrived and progressed within their respective organisations.

4. To what extent do you believe NFE addresses learning needs NOT met by the formal education system?

The participants strongly affirmed that the Non-Formal Education (NFE) system plays a vital and complementary role in addressing learning needs that are often neglected or overlooked by the formal education system. NFE is tailored to the pace, interests, and capacity of each learner, in contrast to the standardised and exam-oriented approach of formal education. Children who struggle with literacy and numeracy, receive customised support, ensuring they don’t fall further behind.

NFE integrates vocational training, hands-on learning, and exposure to real-world issues, making learning more relevant and meaningful. Youth are equipped with skills for employability and daily life, which formal education often fails to provide.

NFE serves as a bridge for reintegration, empowering children who have been excluded from mainstream school. NFE is highly effective in addressing the diverse, non-academic, and psycho-social learning needs of vulnerable children that formal education often fails to meet. It serves as a vital alternative pathway, offering flexibility, empathy, and relevance, particularly for those who are most at risk of being left behind.

5. Are NFE providers in Mauritius required to be registered? If so, what is the process and what are the associated challenges or benefits?

All the NGOs are registered at the Registry of Association. However, there is no such thing such as a license to operate as an institution providing non formal education to vulnerable children. They have a collaboration with MITD and other non-award bodies.

6. What do you see as the key strengths or benefits of NFE programs for children?

NFE programmes adapt to the individual pace, needs, and capacities of each child. Unlike formal education, NFE allows for non-linear learning pathways, making room for recovery, healing, and reintegration. NFE centres often serve as safe spaces, especially for children affected by abuse, neglect, or trauma. The emphasis on trust, empathy, and care creates conditions where children can regain confidence and rebuild relationships. NFE promotes the overall well-being of the child—not just academic progress. It incorporates life skills, emotional intelligence, values education, and vocational orientation, equipping children for real-life challenges. It offers a second chance and reinforces the idea that every child can learn and grow, regardless of their background.

Non-Formal Education offers more than just academic instruction—it provides a lifeline, a second chance, and a nurturing environment where vulnerable children can rediscover their potential and regain a sense of purpose. Its flexibility, inclusiveness, and holistic focus make NFE an indispensable part of building a just and equitable education system.

7. What are the challenges Non-Formal Education face?

• **Lack of support from the Ministry of Education and Human Resources**

Despite the essential role NFE schools play, they remain unrecognised by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources. This lack of formal recognition not only undermines the legitimacy of non-formal education but also marginalises the thousands of children who rely on it as their only viable pathway to learning.

• **Educator demotivation and emotional fatigue**

Several Educators reported fatigue and a sense of discouragement linked to student disengagement, classroom management difficulties, limited results, and a perceived lack of recognition and pedagogical support. Some express a loss of purpose or connection with their role.

• **Balancing creativity with academic expectations**

Many Educators appreciate the value of creative activities (e.g. Modelling, music-making, visual arts) in motivating students and developing life skills. However, they also express concern about the time these activities take place, especially when

academic pressure limits their feasibility. Some were discouraged when creative efforts did not translate into immediate academic gains, particularly in reading and writing.

- **Varying levels of engagement and confidence among staff**

While some Educators embrace creative and participatory approaches, others feel unprepared or uncomfortable implementing them. This inconsistency affects the learning experiences of students and highlights the need for peer support and shared planning.

- **Learners' complex socio-emotional needs**

Children often join NFE sector with emotional or behavioural difficulties lined to personal circumstances. Educators must frequently manage these challenges without specific training or adequate emotional support, impacting both teaching and learning. The absence of psychological support services in schools poses a serious barrier to the early identification and intervention of issues that affect children's well-being.

- **Fragmented collaboration and lack of planning time**

Despite working in flexible, informal systems, Educators struggle to find dedicated time to plan, exchange practices, and co-construct tools or lesson plans together. This limits the consistency and sustainability of innovative approaches.

- **Limited financial support to NFE schools**

The National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF), operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Security, Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, allocates the majority of its funds to projects implemented by the Ministry itself, thereby limiting financial support available to NGO-led initiatives, including NFE schools.

- **Challenges in recruiting suitable personnel**

Non-formal institutions face significant challenges in recruiting suitable personnel. There is a pressing need for staff who are not only qualified but also genuinely passionate about their work and committed to the well-being of children.

- **Challenges of Educators in managing children with special needs in NFE schools**

SENA often immixes children with academic difficulties and those with special needs, leading to the admission of a few students with conditions such as autism, trisomy, or physical disabilities into NFE schools. This classification disrupts the daily operations of these institutions, as Educators—despite having received some online training in Special Educational Needs—are generally not adequately equipped to provide the specialised care and support these children require.

8. What do you recommend to improve the NFE sector?

- **Invest in Educator well-being and professional growth**

Educators are key to student success. Providing structured spaces for dialogue, reflection, and emotional support can help Educators regain motivation and purpose. Creating a culture of self-leadership and mutual respect is essential to sustaining their engagement.

- **Create time and structure for peer learning and shared planning**

Educators have shown interest in co-developing pedagogical tools and meeting monthly to exchange ideas. Facilitating such collaboration would help them feel

less isolated, increase confidence, and promote more coherent practices across classrooms.

- **Support the integration of creative methods with academic content**

Hands-on experiences like flashcards, group art projects, and games enhance student involvement and life skills. With support, Educators can learn to anchor these activities in academic objectives, making the creative process meaningful and manageable.

- **Reinforce learner-centred approaches that foster autonomy and trust**

Students are most motivated when they are respected, listened to, and given space to contribute to classroom planning. Encouraging such dialogue, even in small ways, strengthens their confidence, participation, and sense of belonging.

Home-schooling as a form of non-formal education

Home-schooling is generally considered as a form of non-formal education and it is gaining momentum in Mauritius. Classifying home-schooling as non-formal education stems from its structured yet flexible approach, which operates outside the traditional formal education system. Several scholarly sources support this perspective:

- A study by Irland Santosa and colleagues describes home-schooling as “an alternative education that is held in the non-formal education pathway,” highlighting its adaptability to individual learning needs.
- Research by Ajeng Apriliana Nur Icmi and Yoyon Suryono emphasizes that home-schooling serves as a substitute for formal education, allowing parents to develop models tailored to their child’s character and psychological state.

However, it’s important to note that the classification of home-schooling can vary depending on regional educational policies and interpretations. In some contexts, home-schooling may be considered part of the formal education system, especially when it follows a structured curriculum and leads to recognized certifications. Therefore, while home-schooling often aligns with the principles of non-formal education due to its flexibility and learner-centred approach, its exact classification can differ based on specific educational frameworks and regulations.

Brief Discussion paper on “Towards a comprehensive and inclusive legal framework for home-schooling” by the Law Reform Commission

The document is a discussion paper by the Law Reform Commission of Mauritius on creating a comprehensive and inclusive legal framework for home-schooling. It highlights the current legal ambiguities and disparities in Mauritius, especially for immigrant children, and compares home-schooling regulations in England, France, Germany, and New Zealand.

Key points include:

1.Current Situation in Mauritius: The Education Act mandates compulsory education but does not explicitly address home-schooling, leading to legal uncertainties and unequal access to alternative education options.

2.Comparative Analysis:

- **England:** Home-schooling is legal with significant parental autonomy, subject to local authority oversight.
- **France:** Home-schooling is legal but heavily regulated, requiring annual inspections and prior authorisation.

- **Germany:** Home-schooling is generally prohibited, with strict enforcement to ensure social integration.
- **New Zealand:** Home-schooling is legal with a requirement for a Certificate of Exemption and regular reviews to ensure educational standards.

3. Best Interests of the Child: The principle emphasizes ensuring children's well-being and holistic development, which can be supported by home-schooling if properly regulated.

4. Recommendations: The document proposes either allowing home-schooling for all with appropriate regulations or abolishing it entirely to ensure fairness and equity. It suggests amending the Education Act to include provisions for home-schooling under specific conditions, such as for children with special needs.

The paper concludes that Mauritius should adopt a clear stance on home-schooling to create an inclusive and effective educational system that accommodates diverse learning needs and ensures every child can achieve his/her full potential.

Home schooling and online classes in Mauritius

Mauritian legislation mandates the attendance of children in school until the completion of the academic year in which they reach the age of 16. Although the law does not explicitly stipulate whether attendance should be at a physical institution or an online platform, as a citizen of Mauritius, it is essential to verify the school's registration with the Ministry of Education.

For "expatriates" residing in Mauritius, there exists a provision to explore alternative educational avenues such as online schooling. If the decision is made to settle permanently in Mauritius and enroll children in local private or government schools, the Ministry of Education will request documentation demonstrating a minimum of two years of school participation, along with a transfer letter.

There are cases where there is no clear-cut demarcation between the two above modes of teaching/learning mode of transmission of knowledge.

We may argue over the modes of transmission of knowledge.

To illustrate my point, I am taking the example of CambriLearn.

"If you wish to have a little more support for your online schooling journey and desire the assistance of a CambriLearn learning pod or support group, there are a variety of options available to you in Mauritius. A learning pod will provide the student with the perfect learning environment where they will receive encouragement and support to achieve the best results possible. Each learning pod will provide a dedicated learning space as well as tutors who will offer the student support on their educational journey. We are currently partnered with 5 Learning Pods in Mauritius."

CambriLearn offers the International British curriculum and is accepted as an alternative curriculum to that provided by the State in Mauritius.

The International British curriculum provided by CambriLearn is accepted by Mauritian universities as well as an array of highly regarded international universities. As such, your

child will have the option to study at a number of universities and will be able to choose the university best suited to their desired field of study.

I am certain that the demarcation in the above case is difficult to establish.

Overarching Recommendations of the Ombudsperson for Children

1. Establishment of a Well-structured and Financed Framework for Non-formal education institutions.

All Non-formal education institutions must operate within a clearly defined structure, with adequate financial support to ensure sustainability and quality education. The Ministry of Education must exercise its “droit de regard” (right of oversight) over all non-formal schools to ensure compliance with national standards and educational objectives.

2. Alignment with International Child Rights Instruments

The education provided in non-formal schools must be consistent with the principles and provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The NFE institutions should promote the full development of the child in a manner that respects their rights, dignity, and well-being.

3. Conformity with Article 29 of the CRC and Article 11 of the African Charter

Non-formal education programs must reflect the aims of education as outlined in Article 29 of the CRC, which emphasizes the development of the child’s personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. They should also uphold the standards of Article 11 of the African Charter, which guarantees every child’s right to education and promotes quality and relevance in educational content and delivery.

4. Capacity Building for Educators in Non-Formal Settings

Educators working in the non-formal education sector must receive adequate training in child-centred, inclusive, and participatory pedagogies. They must also be sensitised to the principles of the UNCRC and the African Charter, ensuring they foster environments that respect and promote children’s rights.

5. Data Collection and Research

The government and civil society organisations should invest in data collection and research on non-formal education to better understand its scope, effectiveness, challenges, and impact on children’s rights and development.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation, followed by the review of the different programmes should be carried out on a regular basis to render them more effective.

Mots de la fin

Equity in education is critical in supporting children, especially those who are at risk and come from economically challenged backgrounds. Equity comes with a cost and this investment has far-reaching benefits. Ultimately it is about building an inclusive society of well-educated and skilled citizens, who will be our future workforce and contribute to build the foundation for a resilient society of the future.

Chapter 3

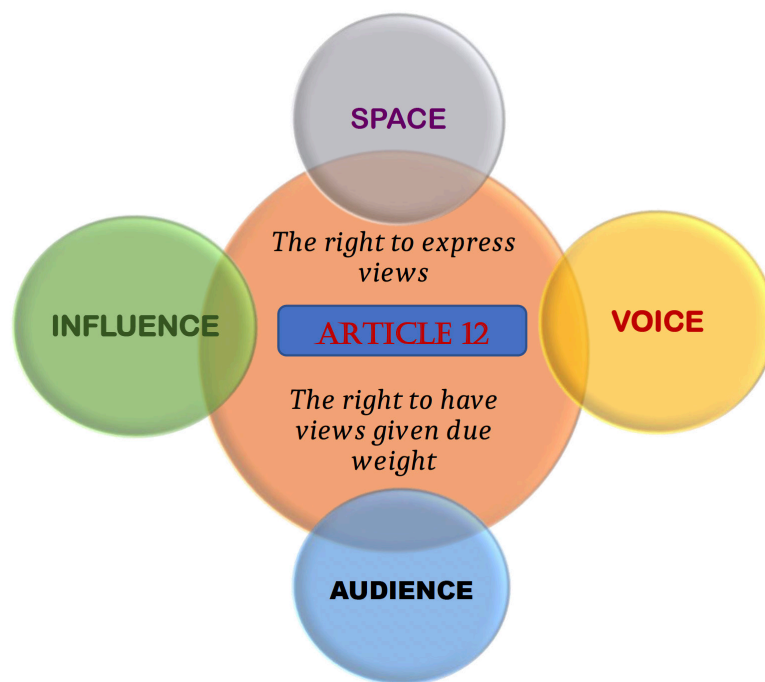
CHILD PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

Article 12 of the UNCRC is one of the four Guiding Principles of the Convention. It refers to the right of the child who 'is capable of forming his or her own views, the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child,' it also stipulates that the views of the child must be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

General Comment No. 12 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child defines participation as part of ongoing processes "that include the sharing of information and dialogue between children and adults, on the basis of mutual respect, and through which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and influence the outcome of these processes"

There are different models of child participation. One of them is the 'Lundy model of child participation (2007)'. This is an important conceptual model for understanding Article 12 of the UNCRC which is intended to focus decision makers on all four elements of the provision.

These four elements are:



SPACE: Children must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their view.

VOICE: Children must be facilitated to express their views.

AUDIENCE: The views must be listened to.

INFLUENCE: The views must be acted upon, as appropriate.

General Comment No. 12 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child defines participation as part of ongoing processes “that include the sharing of information and dialogue between children and adults, on the basis of mutual respect, and through which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and influence the outcome of these processes”

The right to participation does not limit itself to Article 12. In fact, other articles like Articles 13, 15 and 17 make provisions on how the participation rights of children may be implemented. These form part of the Civil and Political Rights provided to children in the Convention.

Article 13

Governments should let children access and share information, unless it is damaging to them or someone else. Article 13(1) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that *“The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice.”* Hence, it is to be highlighted that part of the ‘right to freedom of expression’ involves being able to find out information for yourself. The other part being to express freely on these in the way children want, like:

- talking out loud,
- expressing themselves on the internet, and
- writing articles for a book or newspaper.

However, there is a limitation to that right. This is stipulated in part 2 of the article, which reads:

“The exercise of this right may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

- a. For respect of the rights or reputations of others; or*
- b. For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.”*

The right to freedom of information for everyone is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (article 19). The inclusion of a specific article on freedom of expression in the UNCRC emphasises that civil and political rights apply equally to children as to other human beings.

Other articles of the UNCRC make it clear that a child or young person should be able to express themselves regardless of their religion, social status, culture or disability. (article 3). Hence, special care must be taken to ensure that children and young people with disabilities can express themselves. This can be achieved by making sure information is easily accessible for people with disabilities.

States Parties have an obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil the right to freedom of expression and, accordingly, must take all reasonable measures:

- To respect the right by ensuring that the state does not violate the right
- To protect the right by ensuring that non-state actors do not violate the right
- To fulfil the right by ensuring its effective realisation.

The Committee has consistently recommended that States Parties act with regard to meeting these obligations in respect of Article 13. Such action should include:

- ◊ Explicit recognition in law to safeguard the right of every child to freedom of expression, including guidance on the nature of any restrictions that can be imposed to avoid arbitrary interpretations of state laws and the Convention
- ◊ Effective mechanisms for protection of rights, and remedies when rights are violated (UN Human Rights Committee, 2011, para. 21). Such remedies must be safe and accessible to children.
- ◊ Education and awareness raising to enable children to understand, and therefore be able to exercise, the right to freedom of expression, and to acquire the necessary skills with which to do so. Such measures should address attitudes among parents, communities, and schools that might restrict or undermine children's freedom of expression (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001, paras. 33–34).
- ◊ Measures to ensure that children have access to the information sources necessary to enable them to exercise the right to freedom of expression. The Committee has emphasised the importance of access for children to information from a diversity of national and international sources (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2011c, para. 47(a)). There is also increasing recognition of the necessity for children to have access to the Internet and social media given the extent to which global communications, including the development and exchange of ideas and opinions, now function within this environment (UN Human Rights Committee, 2011, para. 15)

Article 15

Article 15 asserts the right of the child to freedom of association and peaceful assembly. This right was first established for all persons in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequently included in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and many other international and regional human rights treaties. The fact that this right is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child indicates that it applies equally to children. Article 15 reads:

1. *States Parties recognize the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.*
2. *No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of these rights other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.*

Children's interest in building friendships and in civic participation should be nurtured, not suppressed. Article 15 applies to children in the context of their engagement in political and social activities, including political demonstrations, and associations such as youth groups, sports clubs, child-led groups, political parties, and movements like Red Cross, St John Ambulance, Scouting, Girl Guiding, Youth Parliaments, Prefect bodies and School Student's Council as well as informal association and assembly through family, friendships, and social networks, on and offline. It also covers the right to access public spaces (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2017, para. 36).

Article 15 is one of the core civil and political rights in the Convention that, together with Article 12, combine to create the concept of participation. It is a qualified right: paragraph 2 outlines the restrictions on its exercise were deemed necessary for public

safety and security.

Article 17

In the modern world, access to information from different media is crucial in enabling children to acquire information and knowledge which would empower them to participate effectively in society and express themselves freely on societal matters affecting them. These media include:

- print media - such as newspapers or magazines,
- electronic media - such as websites, and
- audiovisual media - such as radio and television programmes.

Information from the media should contribute to a child's education. It should help him/her achieve the aims of education stipulated under Article 29. These include, among others:

- respect for human rights and freedom,
- respect for their parents, cultural identity and language,
- respect for the values of where they live, where they're from and the other countries of the world
- respect for the natural environment, and
- preparation for a responsible life where they treat other people with tolerance.

The media should also provide young people with information about their health. It should enlighten young people, bringing attention to the good things that young people do and taking care to show people who might be marginalised – such as women and those with disabilities – in a way that is not degrading.

INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN WITH THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child values the contributions of children in its work, and emphasizes that their views and recommendations are an integral part of its work. It welcomes the participation of children in the following aspects of its work:

1. Reporting process of States parties' implementation of the Convention and its Optional Protocols

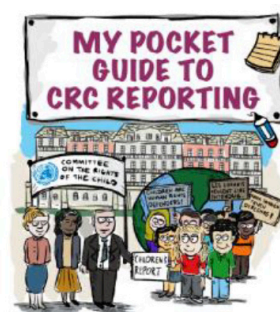
Children can contribute to the Committee's review of State party reports by making submissions and giving oral presentations during the meetings of the pre-session working group. They can also participate in private meetings with Committee members and observe the plenary sessions of the Committee.

2. Days of General Discussion

Children are encouraged to make submissions on the discussion themes; participate in the design and planning of the Discussion Days; attend the Days of General Discussion and related side events; meet members of the Committee; and organize and participate in follow-up activities to the Days of General Discussion.

3. Development of general comments

The Committee consults with children during the drafting



A companion guide for children willing to tell the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child about how children's rights are respected in their country

process of its general comments by holding consultations with children and organizing online surveys to collect their views on the themes of the general comments.

A concrete example of such participation is the methodology used by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in the drafting of General Comment No. 26 on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change (2023). The Committee benefited from the contributions of children at its 2016 day of general discussion on children's rights and the environment. A diverse and dedicated children's advisory team supported the consultation process undertaken for the general comment, with 16,331 contributions from children, from 121 countries, through online surveys, focus groups and in-person national and regional consultations.

4. Commemorative events, in-country visits and other events

The Committee engages children in various events, for example, as part of its 25th anniversary celebrations in 2014, the Committee held online discussions with children from 14 countries using Google+ Hangout, and collected short stories, poems, photos or videos produced by children on the Convention.

In 2020, during the Committee's session in Samoa, six children moderated discussions on children's rights, and more than 80 children contributed as panelists and members of the audience.

CHILD PARTICIPATION AT THE OOC

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children has always valued the voice of children, be it during investigations or sensitization campaigns targeting children. As far as possible the investigators try to listen to the views of the child while dealing with cases concerning him/her while taking into account the age, maturity, and evolving capacities of the child.

Sample case of child being involved at all levels during investigation

Nature of case

The mother of a 10 year boy complained that her son was victim of neglect and humiliation in class perpetrated by the class teacher who allegedly was supported by the school administration.

An investigator met the child separately. The latter was able to express his state of mind in the class and explain in his own words of what he was not personally satisfied. He was able to talk about his relationship with his teacher freely. The child even submitted in his own handwriting his complaints.

The OC organized a case conference at the OOC. The following persons were convened: the school manager, the class teacher, the school counsellor, the parents and the child. At the start of the proceedings, the child was given the opportunity to voice out his qualms and feelings in the context of the situation in the classroom. He attended a large part of the discussion before he was requested to withdraw for some minutes as the discussions were revolving around the conflict between the parents and the school.

The OOC regularly organizes participatory activities for and with children. Platforms to enable the children to express gather information about their rights and to express their opinions freely on these rights were provided. Workshops, painting exhibitions, essay and

project competitions, campaigns like the 15 Days 15 Rights and the 4Rs (Rights, Respect, Responsibilities, Resilience) were organized.

In 2005, this office set up the 'Budi's Friends', a group of young people who voluntarily took an active part in the promotion of child rights with their peers. One of the most visible activities of this group was their active participation in the organization of the Child Rights Carnival in 2005 in the streets of Rose Hill. The group remained active until 2010.

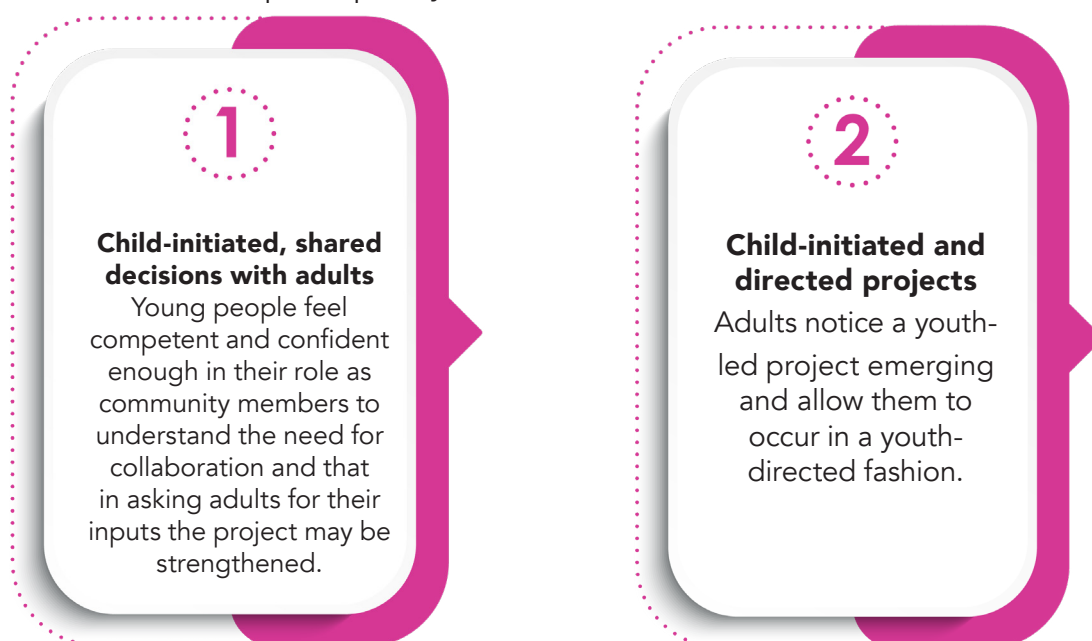
In 2016, another group of young people named "Jeunes ambassadeurs de l'Ombudsperson pour les enfants" was set up. There were two cohorts and each time the members were from the same school. Two main activities were organized: a painting exhibition on children with disabilities and an educational outing with children coming from a deprived region, the "Bus de l'amitié" in 2017.

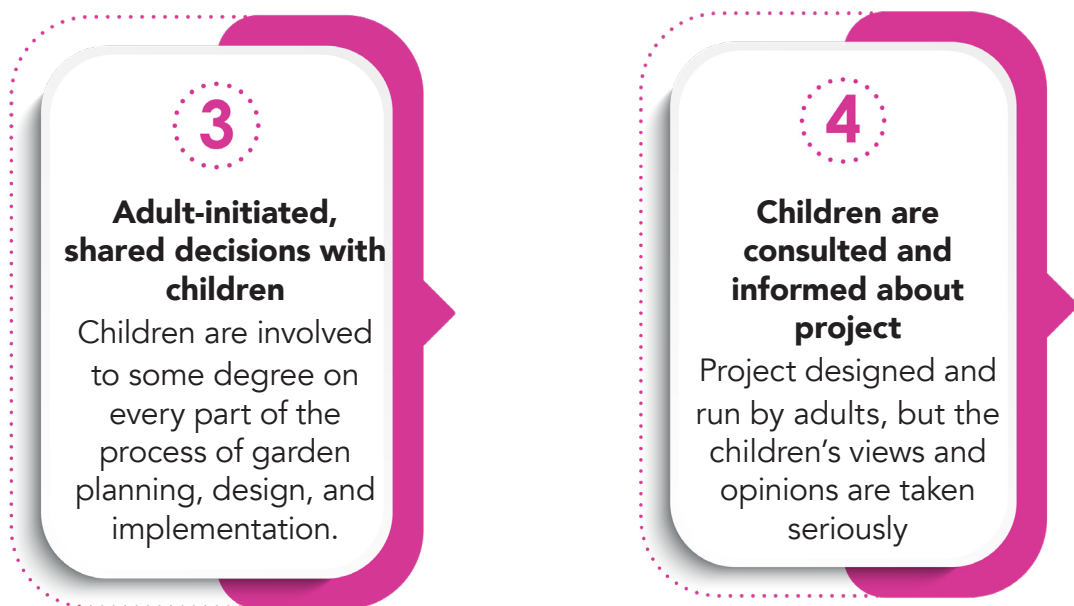
In 2024, the OOC invited young people aged 14 to 18 years to express their interests to join a group of "Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits des Enfants" (JADE). Invitations were sent through schools, NGOs and Youth Associations. An explanatory meeting was held on 28 September 2024 at the Queen Elisabeth College. The JADE was hence set up. In June 2025, a similar exercise was carried out in Rodrigues. The JADE- Rodrigues was set up. A logo for the JADE was designed by the members themselves.

THE "JEUNES AMBASSADEURS DES DROITS DES ENFANTS" (JADE)

In view of promoting the rights of the child to participation in a sustainable way, the OOC decided to set up a structured group of young ambassadors whose mission would be to champion the rights of children among young people themselves and to the public in general. The main objective is for this group of young ambassadors to operate under the aegis of the OOC but to be given a certain autonomy in the management of the affairs of the group. The OOC would provide training in child rights and related issues, procure logistics and materials, assist in the organization of activities and coach the young ambassadors in realizing the tasks allocated to them.

In the organization of the activities, the young ambassadors would move up and down between levels 5 to 8 in Hart's Ladder of Participation depending of projects. Levels 1 to 4 being considered as non-participatory.





In September 2024 the 'Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits des Enfants' was set up following an Introductory Workshop at the QEC. It is a vibrant youth-based organization, falling under the aegis of the OOC and comprising of adolescents aged between 14 to 18 years from a wide array of diverse backgrounds. Our members come from various institutions, including colleges, educational and vocational schools, non-governmental organisations, private schools, and other academic and non-academic entities, reflecting the rich diversity of our community.

The primary objective of JADE is to empower the youth of today by raising awareness of their fundamental rights, ensuring they have the tools and knowledge to stand up not only for themselves but also for their peers and their communities. They are committed to promoting freedom of expression and encouraging a sense of agency among young people. Through various initiatives, they aim to provide numerous opportunities for socialisation, teamwork and personal growth, all while enhancing their overall knowledge and skills. Central to JADE's mission is the respect for the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which serve as the foundation for our advocacy and actions. Membership to JADE is voluntary and open to all youngsters who fit in the age frame, without distinction of any kind. Presently we have 47 JADEs.



In March 2025, a similar call for interest from children aged 14 to 18 years living in Rodrigues and who wish to join the JADE was sent to the Secondary Schools and youth organisations of Rodrigues. All schools responded positively as well as four youth organisations, the Rodrigues Scouts, the Girl Guides, the 'Jeunesse Ouvriere Chretienne' and the "Action Catholique des Enfants". On 3 June 2025, thirty-one children from these schools and organisations attended an Explanatory Workshop at the Cotton Bay Hotel. The JADE Rodrigues Chapter was hence formed.



Both JADEs elected their Executive Committees:



Executive Committee of JADE- Mauritius



Executive Committee of JADE- Rodrigues



Launching of JADE

28 September 2024, Queen Elizabeth College, Rose Hill

The official launch of JADE marked the beginning of a significant youth-led initiative to promote and safeguard children's rights in Mauritius. During the launch, participants were sensitised on the importance of uniting young people to advance the children's agenda and were introduced to the role of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. They also engaged in discussions about their motivations for joining JADE and the areas of children's rights they are passionate about supporting.



Universal Children's Day Film Screening: Inclusion for Every Child

20 November 2024, MCine Caudan, Port Louis

To commemorate Universal Children's Day 2024, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children hosted a special screening of the animated film Zootopia for children from Residential Care Institutions and Special Education Needs Schools. Aligned with the UN theme "Inclusion, for every child," the event highlighted the fundamental right of every child—regardless of race, gender, language, religion, or disability—to be treated equally. 85 participants including the Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits de l'Enfant (JADE) were present on that day.

Zootopia synopsis: Zootopia follows the story of Judy Hopps, a sweet bunny who pursues her childhood dream and becomes the first rabbit police officer. Despite graduating top of her class, Judy faces discrimination in the police force and is assigned to parking duty rather than the important missing mammal cases. One of the animated films that is considered one of the best when it comes to teaching cultural diversity and racism to kids is Zootopia.



The movie was followed by a briefing session of 15 minutes, which was animated by the JADE. The participants, including the accompanying staff, expressed their satisfaction of the movie chosen as it explores several noteworthy themes: stereotypes, race, and racism; the consequences of one's actions; and the power that one being's beliefs can hold. The movie served as both entertainment and an educational tool, helping participants reflect on social issues through storytelling.

Workshop on Children's Rights and Youth Empowerment

22 November 2024, Day Force, Ebene



The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children and Day Force Mauritius, hosted a dynamic workshop aimed at educating adolescents about their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and empowering them to advocate for these rights.

The workshop brought together a diverse group of young individuals, offering them a platform to learn about and discuss various aspects of children's rights, from their right to protection against abuse to their right to education and participation in society.

The main objectives of the event were to raise awareness about the fundamental rights of children as defined by the UNCRC, and to foster a sense of responsibility among the participants towards the realisation of these rights. The event also aimed to empower youth by equipping them with the knowledge and tools they would need to advocate for children's rights within their communities.

The workshop featured interactive sessions—including educational board games (designed by the adolescents), expert talks, and group discussions designed to foster critical reflection on issues such as abuse, education, health, and civic participation. Participants engaged in breakout groups to propose actionable solutions to challenges facing children in Mauritius, such as awareness campaigns, youth-led initiatives, and improved support systems for vulnerable children.



The event served as a powerful platform for young voices, reinforcing their role as active stakeholders in promoting and protecting children's rights locally and globally.

Awareness Programme on Child Safety

Online 11 December 2024 – Labourdonnais Waterfront Hotel, Port Louis



In the lead-up to Human Rights Day, observed globally on December 10, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children partnered with JADE and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Human Rights Division) to host a landmark Awareness Program on Child Safety Online, aimed at empowering adolescents aged 14–17 to navigate digital spaces safely and responsibly.

The program highlighted the importance of digital safety as an integral part of children's fundamental rights. This event focused on educating 14 to 18-year-olds, who are increasingly becoming the primary users of the internet, about the potential dangers they face, such as cyberbullying, exploitation, privacy breaches, and exposure to inappropriate content. The program also aimed to foster collaboration among children, educators, and policymakers to address these concerns and work towards a safer online environment. The program addressed key risks such as cyberbullying, data breaches, and online exploitation, while promoting responsible digital citizenship. Through expert presentations, including those by a representative from the CERTMU and an Investigator from the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, participants gained practical knowledge on digital safety and children's rights online. The JADE Secretary also shared a youth perspective on the psychological impact of online environments and ways to build healthier digital habits.



Interactive group discussions allowed participants to propose actionable solutions, such as creating youth civic platforms and strengthening online protection measures. The event concluded with a call to collective action, emphasising that child online safety requires joint efforts from youth, parents, educators, policymakers, and tech stakeholders.

Santa's Merry Celebration of Children's Rights

13 December 2024 – Dr. Maurice Curée SC



To mark Universal Children's Day 2024 and the 35th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, with JADE, hosted a festive educational event titled "Santa's Merry Celebration of Children's Rights." This Christmas-themed fun day brought together 120 children from shelters across Mauritius, blending joy, learning, and advocacy. The event featured a vibrant parade led by the Scout Band and JADE members, followed by interactive activities like rights-themed board games, a Rights Relay, and a Handicap Awareness Challenge promoting empathy and inclusivity. Children also enjoyed face painting, a creative painting corner, and a lively Santa performance.

The event featured a vibrant parade led by the Scout Band and JADE members, followed by interactive activities like rights-themed board games, a Rights Relay, and a Handicap Awareness Challenge promoting empathy and inclusivity. Children also enjoyed face painting, a creative painting corner, and a lively Santa performance. Through these activities, children learned about their rights to health, education, protection, and expression in an engaging, age-appropriate way. The event fostered joy and empowerment, reminding every child of their value and rights in a celebratory setting.

The children were also invited to take pictures in a special photo booth, capturing the joy and memories of the day. The final moments of the event were marked by a performance from the Scout Band, who played Christmas carols, and an animation by Santa Claus and his Elf, which brought the festive spirit to life. The children sang along to the carols, danced, and interacted with Santa and his Elf, creating a joyful and celebratory atmosphere. The distribution of gifts was another highlight of the day. Santa Claus, aided by his Elf, distributed gifts to the children, ensuring that each child received something special.



½ day activity on the theme “ Learning Rights through Play” & Celebration of Easter

22 April 2025, St Mary’s College, Rose Hill

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, with the support of JADE and in collaboration with the Confucius Institute at the University of Mauritius, hosted a vibrant Easter Celebration for children from Residential Care Institutions. The half-day event, themed “Learning Rights through Play,” used games and creative workshops to teach children aged 8 to 12 about their rights.



Highlights included JADE-led treasure hunts and face painting, alongside Chinese cultural activities like painting, calligraphy, and paper cutting offered by the Confucius Institute. The event fostered self-expression, cultural appreciation, and inclusivity ensuring that children

learned in a joyful, supportive environment. Members of Interact clubs from several secondary schools participated and offered small gifts to the young children.

Two-day workshop: “Empowerment for JADE” & Teambuilding

24 & 25 April 2025 – Emtel World, Ebene

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children organised a two-day workshop aimed at strengthening the capacity of JADE members to take an active role in the group’s initiatives. With support from the Emtel CSR Team, who generously contributed stationery and gifts, the workshop focused on raising awareness about the roles and responsibilities of both JADE.

During the workshop, participants explored key topics such as non-discrimination and ways to better promote the children’s rights agenda through teamwork and leadership. They also discussed on the sensitive issue of bullying and violence at school. Their proposals were later submitted to the MOEHR as input to the Assises de l’Education by the OC.

The JADE Executive members played a vital role preparing introductory exposés and leading group discussions.



Induction Ceremony of JADE members

Saturday 10 May 2025, Caudan Arts Centre

The Induction of the executive committee and the taking of oath of the JADE was held during an Induction Ceremony on Saturday 10 May 2025 at the Caudan Arts Centre. The Speaker of the National Assembly, Mrs Shirin Aumeeruddy-Cziffra graciously accepted to be the Chief Guest for this ceremony. Ms Lisa Singh, the UN Resident Coordinator also graced the event by her presence. Several well-wishers and sponsors as well as the parents of the executive committee members attended the function.



The idea of having an Induction Ceremony to formalize the membership to JADE came from the young ambassadors themselves. They proposed that all the make a pledge to reaffirm their commitment to promote rights of people. As the JADE is for the youth and by the youth, the Ombudsperson for Children agreed to the proposal. By so doing, the Ombudsperson for Children is also encouraging children to commit themselves in promoting rights.

Mrs Shirin Aumeeruddy-Cziffra congratulated the Ombudsperson for Children for the creation of the JADE. She reminded the young ambassadors about the 3 Rs, that is Rights, Respect and Responsibilities on which they should base their actions. Ms Lisa Singh, on her part, stated that her office would support the JADE as this is in line with the Human Rights Treaties which promote the participation of the main people concerned in voicing their views in matter concerning them.



The Ombudsperson for Children reiterated her commitment to make the voice of children heard on matters concerning them. she reminded that JADE's philosophy is 'for the youth, by the youth'. She called on parents to support their children to benefit fully from their experience as a JADE.

Mr Nakul Dussoye, President of JADE, in a brilliant speech, spoke about the commitment of the JADE in the promotion of children's rights. A diaporama showing the activities of JADE was also projected.

After the speeches, the President made his pledge followed by the executive committee members. They then received their pins as executive members from the personalities present. Afterwards, all the other JADE made their pledge. The first edition of the JADE Newsletter, 'The Voice of the Youth' was then launched.

Snapshots of the ceremony





Commemoration of the Day of the African Child 2025

17 June 2025, Emtel Academy, Ebene

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children hosted a commemorative event for the Day of the African Child 2025 at the Emtel Academy in Ebene on 17 June 2025. This year's celebration was aligned with the African Union's theme: "Planning and Budgeting for Children's Rights". The workshop was primarily targeted at the Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits de l'Enfant (JADE), offering them a platform to actively exercise their participative rights and contribute meaningfully to discussions surrounding their rights and well-being. The event was graced by several eminent personalities, including:

- Mrs Aneeta Ghoorah, Ombudsperson for Children
- Ms Anishta Babooram, Junior Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
- Mr Satyajit Boolell, Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission
- Dr Hlamalani Nelly Manzini, High Commissioner of the Republic of South Africa
- Mr Kresh Goomany, CEO of Emtel Ltd



Each of these personalities addressed the youth with impactful and inspiring messages, encouraging them to reflect, engage, speak up, and take ownership of the issues affecting them. The opening ceremony also featured a video clip on the historical significance of the Day of the African Child, recalling the sacrifices of the 1976 Soweto students and underscoring the continued struggle for children's rights across the continent.

The afternoon session was devoted to interactive group discussions. Youth participants, guided by investigators from the Office, explored five critical themes in relation to planning and budgeting:

1. Rights of the Child in the Digital Environment
2. The Right to be Protected from the Illicit Use of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances
3. The Right to Cultural, Artistic, Recreational and Leisure Activities

4. Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
5. Children's Rights and the Environment: Focus on Climate Change

Each group was led by young participants and supported by facilitators, ensuring that the dialogue remained youth-driven. The groups formulated key proposals and presented them during the reporting and open forum session. The identification five key proposals will be compiled and formally shared with policymakers. This process aimed to ensure that the voices of young people are heard and reflected in national decisions on planning and budgeting which impact their rights and futures.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks, acknowledging all contributors and reinforcing the Office's commitment to upholding the rights and voices of children in the Republic of Mauritius.



JADE Team Building Activity

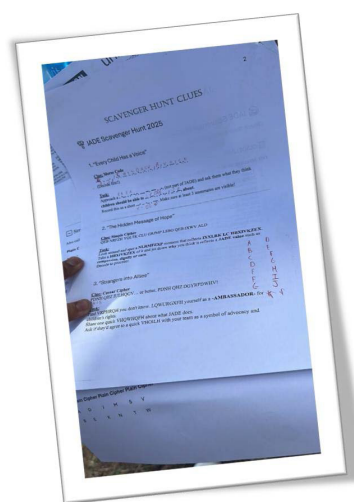
7 August 2025, Flic en Flac Beach

As part of ongoing efforts to promote engagement, collaboration, and unity among members, the Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits de l'Enfant (JADE) organised an informal team building exercise at Flic en Flac Beach on Thursday, 07 August 2025.

A total of 25 JADE members participated in the activity. Transport arrangements were provided to ensure accessibility and encourage maximum participation.

The primary aim of the activity was to:

- Strengthen interpersonal connections among members;
- Foster teamwork and mutual support;
- Promote active involvement in a relaxed, informal setting



The session included a variety of interactive games, and light recreational activities. The informal beach setting allowed JADE members to interact freely, share experiences, and build trust outside the structured training environment. In addition to team building, members also engaged with beachgoers to raise awareness about JADE, its mission, and the importance of promoting children's rights.

Members expressed appreciation for the opportunity to connect with peers in an informal context, which is expected to positively impact their collaboration on future JADE initiatives.

Activities of JADE Rodrigues

Launching of JADE Rodrigues

3 June 2025, Cotton Bay Hotel

JADE Rodrigues was formally launched following an explanatory workshop on Participation Rights of Children and the JADE Project of the OOC. All the 31 children present agreed to become Young Ambassadors of Children's Rights. They elected their Executive Committee and set up 4 subcommittees so as to ensure that all JADEs are actively involved. The themes selected for the subcommittees are as follows:

- Gender Inequality
- Alcohol and violence among children
- Bullying
- Climate Change

Each sub-committee elected a leader and at the level of the executive committee a Coordinator of Sub-committees was designated.

Report of the President on the Meetings and Activities of JADE Rodrigues

Sub-Committee on Bullying

The sub-committee on bullying held its first meeting on 23rd July. Members discussed three key points:

- What is bullying?
- What actions can be taken against bullying?
- The effects of bullying.

They also brainstormed possible projects and agreed on producing a short video series on the theme of bullying.

The second meeting took place on 28th July, where members focused on the content of the video series. The script was finalized, and the recording is scheduled to take place during the upcoming school holidays.



Sub-Committee on Gender Inequality

The sub-committee on gender inequality held its first online meeting, during which members discussed four main points:

- The purpose of gender equality.
- Actions that can be taken against gender inequality.
- Types of gender inequality in Rodrigues and other countries.
- Activities that could help reduce gender inequality.

Discussions revealed that gender discrimination towards women is still prevalent in Rodrigues, which encouraged members to think of various projects such as:

- Awareness sessions in schools
- A sketch
- A poem
- A quiz
- A march

After deliberation, the sub-committee decided to focus on a quiz and a march for Women's Equality Day.

The quiz will take the form of educational playing cards to help children learn more about gender inequality. Several card models were designed, and during a face-to-face meeting on 4th August, members voted for Model 2 as the final version. They also reviewed each proposed question and selected the best ones to be included.

The march for Women's Equality Day was scheduled for 30th August. To promote JADE's identity, members agreed to design and produce JADE T-shirts and polo shirts, which will also be worn during future activities. (unfortunately, this event could not be held due to unforeseen circumstances)

Sub-Committee on Climate Change

The sub-committee on climate change held its first online meeting, where members discussed five main points:

- Definition of climate change
- Effects of climate change
- Causes of climate change
- Impact on future generations
- Actions to take against climate change

Several project ideas were suggested, including:

- An art exhibition using recycled materials
- An eco-walk
- Plantation using recyclable waste
- Awareness sessions in villages

- Plant distribution in collaboration with Wildlife
- Interviews

Members agreed to carry out as many of these activities as possible during the school holidays.

Sub-Committee on Alcohol and Violence

The sub-committee on alcohol and violence held its first meeting on 23rd August. They decided to:

- Create a children's book with a moral lesson on the risks of alcohol and recognizing violence.
- Design a poster/flyer for awareness campaigns.
- Seek guidance from Mr. Jean Baptiste, a retired teacher of Rodrigues College and author, regarding book creation.
- Request a training session with Mr. Aurelio Samois, Programme Manager of CRACK (an anti-drug group).



Training with Mr Samois from NGO CRACK

The training session with NGO CRACK was held on Saturday 23 August at St Louis. The aim was to build confidence in the participants and to help them to understand social engagement. Mr Samois also talked on the negative effects of violence, drugs and alcohol on children and families. He also emphasised on the destructive effects that drugs and alcohol have on the brain, behaviour and overall life.

10 JADEs participated in this training.



Chapter 4: Rodrigues

Introduction

The Ombudsperson for Children's visit to Rodrigues Island aimed to assess the situation and condition of children on the island, focusing on the protection, rights, and welfare of children. The visit was comprehensive, involving key stakeholders and institutions working with children. The activities included meetings with various commissions and authorities; a visit to the Rehabilitation Youth Centre (RYC); a meeting with probation officers; a meeting with the Vicar Apostolic of Rodrigues; and a presentation of the Ombudsperson's Annual Report to stakeholders. Additionally, a workshop for primary school headmasters was organised, to promote the "Rights Respect Responsibility Resilience" project.

04 February 2025 - Visit to the Rehabilitation Youth Centre

The delegation visited the Rehabilitation Youth Centre, a facility dedicated to the rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law. The Ombudsperson for Children had an opportunity to tour the centre and interact with staff and an adolescent girl committed there. It has been noted that the infrastructure of the RYC is well maintained. Children committed to RYC do not attend school. Children are entitled to medical visits twice a week. Staff members highlighted challenges related to the new enacted law, the Children's Act 2020 whereby children are not being sent to RYC. The building is being underutilised. The Ombudsperson emphasized the importance of providing both rehabilitative and educational support to children.

04 February 2025 - Meeting with Probation Officers

A meeting was held with probation officers, who play a significant role in the Parental Support Intervention (PSI) in cases where children are displaying serious behavioural concerns. The Ombudsperson discussed the challenges probation officers face in Mauritius and Rodrigues to ensure that children on probation are adequately supported. In Rodrigues, there are no psychologists attached to the Probation and Aftercare Services to conduct the psycho-social assessments prescribed by the Children's Act 2020. Concerns were raised about the lack of sufficient resources. There is no probation home/hostel yet to rehabilitate children with serious behavioural concerns.

04 February 2025 - Courtesy Visit to Bishop Michel Moura, Vicar Apostolic of Rodrigues

During the visit of the Ombudsperson for Children in May 2024 in Rodrigues, she was apprised of issues affecting the Rodriguan community among which is teenage pregnancy and alcoholism. To have an in-depth understanding of the situation in Rodrigues, the Ombudsperson for Children along with her team paid a courtesy visit to Bishop Michel Moura, Vicar Apostolic of Rodrigues who was ordained Bishop on 19 March 2024.

During the visit, the Ombudsperson for Children discussed several issues among which were teenage pregnancy and alcoholism in youth community. Teenage pregnancy and alcoholism are significant public health concerns affecting various communities differently. In Rodrigues, these issues are intertwined with various societal, cultural and economic factors. The Catholic Church, being the dominant religious institution in Rodrigues, plays a crucial role in shaping community norms and values.

Teenage Pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy is a pressing concern in Rodrigues. Teenage mothers are more susceptible to medical complications during pregnancy due to their bodies not being fully mature. The problem is exacerbated by factors such as inadequate health and sexuality education, stigmatization and limited access to reproductive health services. Teenage mothers often face discrimination and are discouraged from continuing their education, leading to a cycle of poverty and reduced opportunities.

Moreover, young people today have easy access to certain information through their peers, social networks, the media and the Internet. Therefore, it is essential to prepare the child to become responsible and delay his/her first sexual act.

Early pregnancies disrupt traditional family structure. It was suggested that religious teachings should stress on the importance of marriage as a foundation for family life.

In Rodrigues, however, most couples live in free union. Out of ten couples there is only one married couple.

Alcoholism Among Teenagers and Women

Alcohol consumption among teenagers is a major concern in Mauritius and Rodrigues issue, often associated with increased risk-taking behaviours, including unprotected sex, which can lead to teenage pregnancy. In Rodrigues, alcohol misuse might be influenced by peer pressure and lack of effective prevention programs. In recent years, there have been a significant rise of alcohol consumption in women leading to instability in family and abandonment of care towards young children as well as health issues during pregnancy.

The Role of the Church

The Catholic Church has historically been a central institution in Rodrigues, influencing social and cultural norms. There are several community-based associations operating under the aegis of the Church. They support comprehensive sexual education programs that are inclusive and respectful of religious values. Community support is provided for teenage mothers, reducing stigma and promoting their reintegration into education and society.

Effective church moral education can reduce teenage pregnancies by promoting a holistic approach to sex education in schools, encouraging responsible behaviour, carry out outreach programme by going towards people in remote villages. Moreover, there is a strong belief that parents should guide their children in understanding the moral implications of sexual activity, which can lead to early pregnancies if not addressed appropriately. However, lack of resources impedes on the full implementation of these measures.

Conclusion

Addressing teenage pregnancy and alcoholism in Rodrigues requires a multifaceted approach that includes education, community engagement and access to health services. By fostering a supportive environment and promoting education and access to services, Rodrigues can better address this critical issue.

Recommendations:

1. Community-Based Interventions: Given the focus on community-based interventions for teenage pregnancy in Rodrigues, religious bodies could collaborate with local organisations and Non-Governmental Institutions to develop programs that address the root causes of teenage pregnancy, such as lack of education and inadequate knowledge about reproductive health.
2. Empowerment of Teenage Mothers: By empowering teenage mothers, religious bodies can help reduce the incidence of recurrent teenage pregnancies and improve well-being of these young women.
3. Addressing Stigma: Community-based organisations like Movement d'aide a la Maternite (MAM) to play a vital role in reducing stigma around teenage pregnancy by promoting a culture of acceptance and support encouraging pregnant teenagers to remain active in their faith communities.
4. Moral Education and prevention programs: Develop and implement comprehensive education programs in schools and community centres that focus on responsible adolescent sexual health and the risks associated with alcohol consumption and its link to teenage pregnancy.
5. Community Engagement: Engage with local communities to raise awareness about the risks of teenage pregnancy and alcoholism, promoting family and peer support networks
6. Youth Programs: Religious institutions can develop youth-led programs that teach not just about reproductive health, self-esteem and healthy relationships.

05 February 2025 - Presentation of the Annual Report 2023-2024 of the Ombudsperson for Children to Stakeholders

A formal launching of the Annual Report 2023-2024 of the Ombudsperson for Children was made to key stakeholders working with children in Rodrigues namely representatives from Commission for Women's Affairs; manager, psychologist and social worker from REDCO; representative from the Roman Catholic Education Authority and representatives of NGOs. The launching was honoured by the presence of the Commissioner for Women Affairs and Others, Mrs Marie Christiane Agathe. The Ombudsperson's presentation focused on the section dedicated to Rodrigues and shed light on the specific recommendations. The report highlighted key achievements, challenges, and areas of focus such as babies' health; education; the need for comprehensive sexuality education; water crisis; drug problems and children with special educational needs amongst others.

Discussions centered on how the Ombudsperson's office could further support initiatives through advocacy aimed at improving the welfare of children. The Ombudsperson invited all stakeholders to actively contribute to the development of policies and programs that address the specific needs of children on Rodrigues Island. Emphasis was placed on the need for continued collaboration between the Ombudsperson's office and stakeholders present.

05 February 2025 - Courtesy Visit to the Commissioner for Women Affairs

A courtesy visit to the Commissioner for Women Affairs, Mrs Marie Christiane Agathe was held to discuss ongoing initiatives and challenges in the protection and promotion of children's rights. The Commissioner's office is central to coordinating policies related to child welfare, and the meeting focused on the ongoing efforts to implement the Child Protection Framework in Rodrigues. The Ombudsperson reaffirmed their commitment to working closely with the Commissioner's office to address emerging issues related to child abuse, neglect, and the protection of children from exploitation.

Discussions were held on pressing issues related to children in residential care institutions and the need for deinstitutionalization whereby children who are removed from their families by the CDU, move to smaller unit, family-like structures. The main reason children are removed from their families is ill-treatment and gross neglect. Moreover, the Commissioner spoke about the feminisation of alcoholism in Rodrigues, which is impacting the quality of maternal parenting. More and more babies are being neglected and illtreated. Another major challenge in Rodrigues is child care. Nowadays, every parent is working and there is only one day care centre which is registered. The parents have to rely on a relative or neighbour to take care of their child while they are at work. There is definitely a shortage of personnel in the family sector that needs to be addressed. Discussions also revolved around the will to protect the Rodriguan youth from the scourge of drugs. Headmasters and Rectors have to be on the lookout and report drug abuse by youngsters.

06 February 2025 - Courtesy Visit to the Commissioner for Health and Others

The delegation also paid a courtesy visit to the Commissioner for Health, Mr Jean Nicolas Volbert. The Ombudsperson handed over a copy of the Annual Report 2023-2024 to the Commissioner for Health. Mr Volbert handed a magazine on the achievements of his commission during the last 2 years. The Ombudsperson discussed the need to recruit psychologists within the Probation Services in Rodrigues.

The focus of this meeting was on the health challenges faced by children in Rodrigues. We understood that HIV/AIDs cases have become quite serious in Rodrigues. They are presently recruiting psychologist for HIV/AIDS patients. There are three babies living with HIV/AIDS in Rodrigues.

The Commissioner stated that there are several upcoming projects in the health sector, including the construction of a hospital for cancer patients with help from Geneva.

06 February 2025 - Meeting with the Representative of the Commission for Education

The discussion with the Representative of the Commissioner for Education was centered around the education system. There are four community schools in Rodrigues. All four schools run the same programme. Parents are very participative. They work together with the school community to fit the children's needs. The Ombudsperson called for an evaluation of the Special Education Needs Schools starting with an investigation on the number of children in SEN schools. She elaborated on the concept of JADE (Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits de l'Enfant).

06 February 2025 - Workshop with Primary School Headmasters on the "Rights Respect Responsibility Resilience" Project

A highlight of the visit was the workshop with primary school headteachers, where the Rights Respect Responsibility Resilience project was presented and discussed. The primary objective of this project is to sensitise children to their fundamental rights; instil respect for others; help them understand their responsibilities; and foster resilience. The project aims to equip children with knowledge about their entitlements, encourage respectful behaviour in their communities, promote accountability, and empower them with the ability to face challenges with resilience.

Each component (Rights, Respect, Responsibility, Resilience) was thoroughly discussed with the participants. Child rights' perspective from the UN System as well as the Regional system were introduced and debated. The different school of thoughts fostered by the UNCRC and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child were brought forward. During the workshop, headmasters were provided with tools and strategies to integrate the principles of the project into their schools' curricula and daily operations.

06 February 2025 - Launch of report on "Survey on Rodriguan Families"

The OC was invited to the above function organised by the Commission for Women's Affairs, Family Welfare and Child Development on the afternoon of 6 February, at the Centre for Sustainable and Integrated Development.

A scientific approach has been adopted to carry out the above survey, in a context of rapid socio-economic progress which has had an impact on Rodriguan families. The sample surveyed submitted their views on functions of the family, values, distribution of tasks, gender role and bias as well as work-family conflict. The findings provide useful information which serve as a guide for the formulation of policies in an evolving society, facing numerous challenges which have a negative impact on the family structure.

The need to provide support and assistance to families was highlighted by both the Chief Commissioner and the Commissioner for Family Welfare. They both commended the report of the researchers and the team involved in the production of the document. This ceremony provided a platform for networking with various stakeholders.

Recommendations

In light of the above observations, the OC would recommend the following:

1. Psychologists should be recruited in the Probation and After Care Services to provide adequate specialized support to children with behavioral concerns and conduct psycho-social assessment as stipulated by the Children's Act 2020.
2. As highlighted above, child care in Rodrigues is a growing challenge for working parents with only one registered child day care on the island. There is a dire need for setting up nurseries in line with Child Day Care Centres Regulations 2022.
3. Removing children from their families should be a measure of last resort. The focus should be on finding alternative family-based options, like fostering or kinship care, which can provide a more stable and nurturing environment for the child while maintaining family connections. Institutional care should remain the last option when all other alternatives have been exhausted. Furthermore, the CDU should work collaboratively with competent NGOs for empowering families.

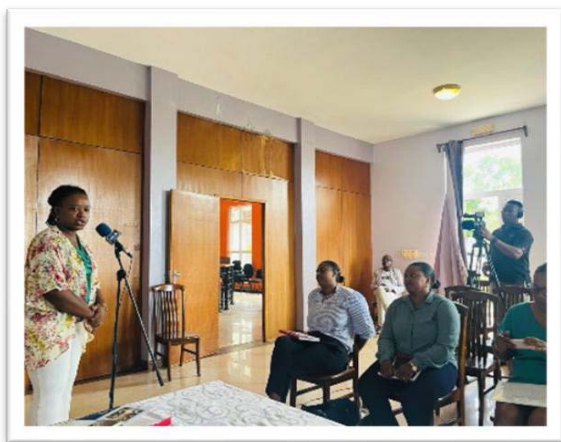
04 February 2025

Courtesy visit to the Vicar Apostolic of Rodrigues, Bishop Michel Moura



05 February 2025

Launching of Annual Report 2023-2024



05 February 2025
Courtesy visit to the Commissioner for Women Affairs,
Ms Marie Christiane Agathe



06 February 2025
Courtesy visit to the Commissioner for Health, Mr. Jean Nicolas Volbert



Workshop with Headmasters Pre-Primary Schools
Theme: Rights Respect Responsibility Resilience



Visit to Rodrigues – 01 to 04 June 2025

During the reporting year, a second visit to Rodrigues was carried out by the Ombudsperson for Children from 01 to 04 June 2025. She was accompanied by Mrs L.Jhugroo, Secretary, Ombudsperson for Children's Office and Mr I.A Bawamia, Investigator.

The objectives of the visit were:

- courtesy visit to the Chief Commissioner;
- working session with the Commissioner for Women Affairs, Child Development, Family Welfare and others;
- visit to Foyer Roseaux;
- Visit to SEN Integrated Schools/Centres
- a one-day workshop on the 4Rs (Rights, Respect, Responsibility & Resilience) with the participation of Educators of Upper Primary and Inspectorate; and
- the setting up of Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits des Enfants (JADE) followed by an induction session with JADE Members

♦ Courtesy Visit

On 02 June 2025, the Ombudsperson for Children and her team paid a courtesy visit to the Chief Commissioner, Mr. Franceau Aubret Grandcourt, GOSK. The OC gave a brief overview of the purpose of her visit in Rodrigues. She also informed the Chief Commissioner of her visit to Foyer Roseaux effected on 01 June 2025 and the situation of the residents. The Chief Commissioner informed that matter will be taken up at the level of the Commission for Women Affairs, Child Development, Family Welfare and others.

♦ Working Session with the Commissioner for Women Affairs, Child Development, Family Welfare and others

On 03 June, the OC had a working session with Ms Marie Christiane Agathe, Commissioner for Women Affairs, Child Development, Family Welfare and others at her office in Malabar in the presence of Mrs Marie Therese Clair, Advisor to the Commissioner.

The session was centered on ongoing challenges, strategic priorities and opportunities for enhanced cooperation on rights and welfare of children in Rodrigues.

» Visit to Foyer Roseaux

The OC informed that she and her team visited Foyer Roseaux on 01 June 2025. Presently, there are 11 residents (Boys) in the Foyer. However, only eight (8) rooms were available. Three (3) children are therefore sharing rooms with other residents. There were also some infrastructural issues regarding leakages in some part of the building and clean up. Concern was also raised for children reaching the age of 18. The OC proposed the half way home concept to allow children to have a safe transitional placement providing essential psychological support and education to facilitate their gradual reintegration into family and community life.

It was also found that residents in Foyer Roseaux experience emotional and developmental challenges. Some Key issues include:

1. children in residential care often have complex needs that require specialised skills, but caregivers may lack specific training in addressing unique developmental, emotional and psychological requirements
2. emotional burnout and limited staff capacity in child protection services which affects the quality and consistency of care and support provided to children. For instance, one caregiver was also fulfilling the role of the cook who was absent on the day
3. there is a challenge in ensuring proper staffing ratios and ongoing training to maintain high-quality care for children
4. the incidence of child abuses cases including neglect, physical and psychological abuse indicates a vulnerable environment for children.

These challenges highlight the need for improved training, staffing and a coordinated approach among stakeholders to better protect the rights of children.

» **Children with Disabilities**

The Commissioner reported that Children with autism and mental health in Rodrigues are facing various challenges including limited specialized facilities, trained professionals and tailored educational programs. She further stated that there are ongoing efforts to provide psychological support and tailored interventions for children with autism and mental health, but staffing and training gaps for carers in institutions have been noted, indicating the need for more specialised care and resources for these children.

Overall, children with autism in Rodrigues are supported by a few specialised centres, access to comprehensive care and education adapted to their specific needs remains limited, highlighting the importance of continued development in services and professional training.

The OC suggested that international expertise in the field need to be sought for professional training.

» **Cases reported at the OOC**

The OC informed that some cases from Rodrigues were reported to the OOC. Follow up on the cases were done through the CDU Rodrigues and other concerned institutions. On a particular case, the OC suggested that a case conference may be organised to get all the stakeholders views. This will facilitate communication among all parties concerned and ultimately prompt solution.

♦ **Visit to Special Needs Integrated Schools and Centres**

On 04 June 2025, the delegation carried out a visit to SEN sector which consist of 3 NGO's namely:

1. Educational and Rehabilitation Centre (EDYCS)
2. Gonzagues Pierre Louis Special Learning Centre
3. Development and Learning Centre for Disabled Children and two integrated

RCEA schools namely:

4. St Esprit RCA Integrated School
5. Antoinette Prudence Sainte Famille RCA School

Children with disabilities in Rodrigues face a unique set of challenges, shaped by the island's limited resources and geographical isolation. While there are dedicated efforts to empower and support these children, significant gaps remain in both specialised and inclusive education. Some of these gaps identified are summarised below:

- resource limitations: There is a shortage of specialised teachers, therapists and adapted learning materials. This restricts the ability of the mainstream schools to accommodate children with disabilities effectively
- educational Approaches and Support: SEN schools in Rodrigues focus on individualised education programs, small group teaching and holistic child development, including life skills for older students.
- no adapted curriculum and no text book specific to SEN. Older students who are now attending school up to the age of 20 are not provided with pre-vocational training and other extra-curricular activities. Moreover,
- Inclusive education in mainstream schools is not yet fully realised and most children with moderate to severe disabilities depend on specialised institutions for their educational and developmental needs.



Taking into consideration the above shortcomings, the OC hereby recommends the following for SEN sector in Rodrigues:

- Advocacy and future directions: NGOs and SEN institutions actively advocate for improved government support, early screening programs, teacher and therapist training and greater regionalisation of services.
- More inclusive education policies are required to ensure children with special needs across Rodrigues have equal access to quality education and support services.
- Children with severe autism require a more conducive environment and dedicated specialised personnel.
- The SENRDC needs to be operational and provide technical support to teachers and parents. Teacher training and parental education programmes may be organised.
- Continued investment in specialised personnel, resource allocation and inclusive policy implementation is needed to ensure these children can fully participate in society and reach their potential.

♦ Workshop on the 4Rs- Rights-Respect-Responsibilities-Resilience Programme

A half day workshop for Educators and School Inspectors of the Primary Education Sector in Rodrigues was organized at the Cotton Bay Hotel on Monday 2 June 2025 at Cotton Bay Hotel. The aim was to introduce the 4Rs programme to Educators of Upper primary classes so that they may add components of child rights, respect and responsibilities in their lessons and at the same time helping pupils to develop resilience. 6 School Inspectors and 34 Educators of Upper Primary attended the workshop. The topics discussed were:

- Importance of teaching children about their rights
- What is the 4Rs project
- How to teach rights to children

The OC explained about the objectives we want to achieve under each 'R', i.e;

Rights:

- to familiarize children with their basic rights.
- to ensure children are aware of the mechanisms available to protect their rights

Respect:

- To encourage children to understand and practice respect for diversity, opinions, and different cultures.
- To build healthy relationships based on respect and dignity

Responsibilities:

- To teach children their responsibilities at home, in school, and in their communities.
- To foster leadership, initiatives, and accountability among children

Resilience:

- To teach children how to cope with stress, setbacks, and challenges in their lives.
- To promote mental health and well-being through resilience-building activities.

The participants were also informed about the expected outcomes of the project, which are:

- Increased Awareness: Children will have a clearer understanding of their rights and how to stand up for them.
- Positive Behaviour: Children will develop respect for themselves and others, contributing to a more harmonious environment.
- Enhanced Responsibility: Children will take ownership of their roles and responsibilities, both at home and in their communities.
- Improved Resilience: Children will develop skills to handle challenges and emotional difficulties more effectively.

A practical classroom activity was then carried out to demonstrate how the project can be integrated in the daily lessons.



♦ **Setting up of the Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits des Enfants**

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children invited the secondary schools of Rodrigues, the Rodrigues Scout Council, the Mauritius Girl Guides Association (Rodrigues), the Jeunesse Ouvrière Chretienne (JOC) and the Action Catholique des Enfants (ACE). Thirty-one children responded to the invitation and attended a one-day Introductory Workshop on Tuesday 3 June 2025 at Cotton Bay Hotel. One adult representative from each participating school/organization also attended the morning sessions.

In the morning part, Investigator Bawamia explained about the Right to participation which are elaborated in Articles 12, 13, 14, 15 and 17 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and on the JADE- its roles and activities.

After lunch, the children worked among themselves and elected a bureau for JADE-Rodrigues. (More details on JADE Rodrigues at Chapter 3)



Chapter 5: Reports on Activities

Report on Workshop: "Safeguarding the Girl Child Rights: Challenges and Opportunities for the Future"

In a thrust to mark the celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children organised a half-day workshop entitled "Safeguarding the Girl Child Rights: Challenges and Opportunities for the Future". This was held on 11 October 2024 at the National Women Development Centre, Phoenix. The workshop aimed to empower and engage young girls, offering them a platform to voice their ideas, aspirations, and challenges while building confidence for their future.



Workshop Overview:

The workshop began with a brief introduction by Investigator Mrs B. Jogarah Ramgoolam on the significance of the International Day of the Girl Child. She emphasised that this day recognises the unique challenges girls face worldwide, while also celebrating their achievements and the potential they have to shape a brighter future.

The Ombudsperson for Children interacted with the young girls, engaging them in conversation about their perspectives on their rights and challenges. Following this, a video presentation on the mission of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children was projected. Additionally, a short video on the "Rights of the Girl Child" was projected, providing the participants with an understanding of their rights in a global context.

Guest Speakers:

Two guest speakers, Ms. Vaibhavi Latchmoodoo, Miss Planet International Mauritius 2024, and Ms. Ojaswini Puddea, National Director of Miss Planet International Mauritius, shared their stories with the participants.

Ms. Latchmoodoo spoke about her personal journey of overcoming societal expectations, limited resources, and various hurdles as a young girl. She shared how determination and perseverance allowed her to transform these challenges into opportunities for growth and success.



**On the left, Ms. Ojaswini Puddea
and on the right Ms. Vaibhavi Latchmoodoo**

Ms. Puddea focused on the challenges that girls often face, from societal pressures to personal struggles. She emphasised the importance of resilience, self-belief, and maintaining a strong sense of purpose. Her journey from adversity to success underscored the message that while the road to achievement may be tough, overcoming obstacles is possible with

the right mindset and support.

Group Discussions:

The workshop included group discussions that centered on key topics affecting young girls today. The discussions covered:

1. Healthy Relationships in Teen Dating – Participants explored the importance of mutual respect, communication, and consent in relationships. They also discussed how to identify and handle unhealthy dynamics in relationships.
2. Digital Safety – Given the increasing role of technology in young people's lives, the work
3. Workshop focused on online safety. Topics such as online harassment, privacy concerns, and the importance of responsible social media use were explored.
4. Respect for Self and Others – This discussion encouraged the girls to reflect on personal boundaries, self-respect, and the importance of respecting others.

The group discussions were a key part of the workshop, providing a conducive space for girls to talk about issues that affect their daily lives. Investigators acted as facilitators, encouraging the participants to think and reflect about the thought-provoking scenarios that were presented to them. This helped the girls relate the topics to their own experiences and understand how these issues impact their personal well-being and growth.

Conclusion:

The workshop was an empowering and enriching experience for the young girls who participated. It provided them with a platform to discuss their rights, challenges, and aspirations, while also offering valuable lessons on resilience, confidence, and self-empowerment.

Talk with parents and Educators of Monad Charity

Established in 2020, Monad Charity is an NGO that aims at preventing and alleviating poverty in Mauritius and support families mainly through free educational activities for children, basic need assistance in emergency cases, healthy leisure for kids, engaging young people in social work amongst others.

Upon the request of the Monad Charity NGO, Investigator S. Johaheer was delegated on 18 October 2024 by the OC to deliver a short talk of 30 minutes to 15 parents and Educators of Monad Charity's Learning Centre, at Lotus Lane, Eau Coulée.

The themes of child neglect, conscious parenting, parent's involvement in children's education and risky online behaviour were raised in meaningful discussions with the participants. Emphasis was laid on the importance of a child's education and how education can open doors to better life opportunities and provide the necessary knowledge and skills to overcome social barriers. The Educators and the parents were encouraged to collaborate with each other and work to the best of their abilities in the best interests of the children.



Report on Parent Talk: Rights of the Child, Parenting Styles, Violence Against Children, and Quality Time During Holidays

Date: November 27, 2024

Location: Centre d'éveil Caritas Beau-Bassin

Talk delivered by: Y.R.Veeramootoo and S.P.Mauree

Audience: Parents and guardians of children

On November 27, 2024, a parent education session was held to discuss several important topics related to child rights. The focus of the talk was on the Rights of the Child, Parenting Styles, Violence Against Children, and the significance of Quality Time with Children during Holidays. The session also featured the screening of two short films: one on the role and function of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children and the other addressing Corporal Punishment by Parents. The talk aimed to empower parents with knowledge and practical guidance on how to promote children's well-being and protect their rights.

Topics Discussed

1. Rights of the Child

The session opened with a detailed overview of the Rights of the child, emphasizing that every child, regardless of background, deserves equal access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, safety, and participation in decisions that affect their lives. Parents were reminded that child rights are a daily responsibility.

2. Parenting Styles

The next part of the talk focused on the different Parenting Styles and their impact on children's emotional and psychological development. The four main parenting styles were discussed.

3. Violence Against Children

A critical portion of the talk addressed Violence Against Children, a rising concern. Parents were educated about the various forms of violence, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect. The speaker highlighted the importance of positive discipline over corporal punishment, explaining that violence is harmful and ineffective in the long term.

4. Quality Time with Children During Holidays

The importance of spending quality time with children during holidays was discussed. The holidays provide an opportunity for families to strengthen bonds, but often, busy schedules and digital distractions can reduce the quality of family interactions. Parents were encouraged to engage in meaningful activities and be present in the moment with their children without the distractions of their phones.

5. Film Screening: The Role of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children

The first short film introduced the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, an important institution that advocates for the rights of children and investigates complaints of violations. Parents were informed about the services available and encouraged to seek guidance if they suspect any child rights' violations.

6. Film Screening: Corporal Punishment by Parents

The second short film focused on the issue of Corporal Punishment by Parents. The emphasized the positive outcomes such as

Information session on Children's Act 2020

On 4 December 2024, Investigators Mrs. S.P.Mauree and Mrs. S. Johaheer carried out an information session on the Children's Act to around 30 Loreto Junior Curepipe school personnel.

Investigators began the information session with the participants by explaining the mandate of the OC, investigation processes at the OOC, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC).

Several provisions of the Children's Act 2020 of relevance to school personnel were elaborated animatedly with the participants. Investigators spoke about several cases dealt by the OOC to enable the participants to understand our duties. Participants were also able to visualise two clips produced by the OOC, namely the role of the OOC and sexual abuse respectively.

It was an interactive session where the participants asked questions and clarification about the role of the OC and on Children's Act 2020.



Sensitisation to Students at Rivière des Anguilles SSS

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children was requested by the Rector of Rivière des Anguilles SSS to conduct sensitisation sessions for 210 students on the following topics: Violence at school, Bullying, and Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation. The main objectives of the session were to raise students' awareness of their rights to protection from abuse and neglect while also promoting responsible behaviour. The sensitisation sessions were carried out over three days, as detailed below:

Date	Grade	Investigator
17 March 2025	7 & 8	S. Johaheer
20 March 2025	9	B.J. Ramgoolam
25 March 2025	10, 12 & 13	S. Johaheer

At the beginning of the sessions, students were first introduced to the role of the Ombudsperson for Children, as understanding this role is essential in addressing children's rights and protection.

To engage the students, the Investigator projected several short video clips on the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, bullying, and internet safety. The Investigator further explored these topics by providing concrete examples of related situations in Mauritius, which led to meaningful dialogue with the students

Additionally, the students were shown three scenarios of Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation through a PowerPoint presentation to engage them in discussions and suggest strategies to stay safe online. Some students admitted being unaware of certain concepts, such as grooming, sexting, and sextortion, which were then explained to them. Students across all classes were highly engaged and actively participated in the sessions, showing keen interest in the discussions.

At the end of the session, they were encouraged to adopt responsible behaviour and to respect their friends and Educators.

Celebration of the World Autism Day 2025

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children advocates for children's rights and promotes inclusivity, ensuring that no child faces discrimination, including those with autism.

In observance of World Autism Day held on 2 April 2025 and in the spirit of promoting autism awareness and inclusion, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children participated in a program organised by the NGO Autisme Maurice. The event began with a walk at 10:00 AM, starting from Mauritius Telecom in Rose-Hill and proceeding to Rose-Hill, Plaza. At Plaza, an awareness-raising session was held, where Managers, Educators, and parents shared their experiences and insights on supporting children with autism.



The function was honoured by the presence of the Hon. Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, Mrs. A. Navarre-Marie and the Ombudsperson for Children, Mrs. A. Ghoorah.

Officers from the OOC, including Investigators Mrs. S. Johaheer and Mrs. B. Jogarah-Ramgoolam, as well as Management Support Officers Ms. B. Darick and Ms. K. Armoogum, actively participated in the initiative. On this occasion, the OOC distributed water bottles to children with autism, symbolising our commitment to inclusion.



The event culminated in a lively dance performance by children with autism, showcasing their talents and celebrating the importance of embracing all abilities.

Workshop "Creating Vision"

Day/Date/Time: Thursday 17 April 2025 @ 10:00 hrs – 14:00 hrs

Venue: Shelter for Children and Women in Distress (RCI), Forest Side

Introduction

As part of its mandate to promote and protect children's rights, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OOC) organised a workshop titled "Creating Vision" on Thursday, 17 April 2025, at the Shelter for Children and Women in Distress (RCI) in Forest Side. A total of 19 children participated in this creative and reflective session. The activity was facilitated by Investigators from the OOC, Mrs. S. Johaheer and Mrs B. Jogarah Ramgoolam.

The workshop aimed to promote children's creativity and self-expression while reinforcing their understanding of their rights, responsibilities, and values. Through a series of interactive and engaging activities, children were encouraged to explore their dreams and aspirations, and to reflect on how their rights and personal values can help shape their future.

Workshop Activities

a. Sensitisation Through Sketch

The session began with a short sketch presented by the facilitators to sensitise the children on the role and functions of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. Using simple language and relatable examples, the sketch illustrated how the OOC protects and promotes the rights of children, highlighting key rights such as the right to be heard, the right to education, and the right to protection.

b. Introduction to Vision Boards

Children were introduced to the concept of a vision board as a visual tool to express their dreams, goals, and values. They learned that a vision board is not only about their future aspirations but also about identifying the rights they hold and the values they wish to embody in their lives. The connection between children's rights and their ability to achieve their goals was emphasised.

c. Creating Vision Boards

Children were provided with cardboards, magazines, markers, scissors, glue, and stickers to create their personal vision boards. They were encouraged to cut out

images and words or draw symbols that reflected their dreams and goals (e.g., future professions, places to visit).

Younger children were given simpler materials and guidance to help them express their thoughts creatively. Throughout the activity, facilitators engaged with the children through open-ended questions to help them link their rights and values to their goals.

Some glimpses..



d. Sharing and Reflection

The Ombudsperson for Children invited children to present their vision board to the group. They shared what the images and words meant to them and how these reflected their aspirations. The workshop concluded with a group reflection where children discussed what they had learned. Questions such as “What can you do every day to protect your rights?” and “How can you show your values in your actions?” encouraged meaningful dialogue and personal reflection.



Conclusion

The “Creating Vision” workshop was a meaningful and engaging experience that supported the OOC’s objective to empower children through rights-based education. By integrating creative expression with reflective dialogue, the activity helped foster a sense of self-worth, hope, and responsibility among the participants.

Workshop on “Bridging the Gap: Effective Criminal Justice Response when handling gender based violence cases”

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) organised a full day workshop on 23rd May 2025 at the Caudan Arts Centre, Port Louis. The workshop brought together a range of legal professionals, law enforcement officers, psychologists, government officials, and civil society representatives with the objective of:

- Raising awareness and sensitisation around the issue of Gender-Based Violence (GBV)
- Examining the effectiveness of current legal frameworks and procedures
- Reviewing both local and international approaches to improve responses to GBV
- Identifying gaps in the justice system and developing collaborative strategies for better victim protection and offender accountability

Through expert presentations and panel discussions, the workshop aimed to strengthen institutional capacity, promote multi-sectoral cooperation, and ensure that victims of GBV receive a sensitive, timely, and effective response from the criminal justice system

The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Mr Rashid Ahmine in his speech stated that Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a complex and challenging problem which requires different forms of actions involving different players ,expert in the field.

Key Points from the Speech of Mr. Rashid Ahmine, Director of Public Prosecutions

1. Increase in Awareness and Prevention

There is an urgent need to enhance education, awareness, and prevention strategies to address Gender-Based Violence (GBV) before it escalates.

2. Adequacy of Victim Protection Measures

The DPP questioned whether the protection mechanisms currently in place are sufficient and effectively enforced to ensure victim safety.

3. Need for Coordinated Services

All stakeholders—police, legal professionals, social workers, psychologists—must work in a coordinated and integrated manner to support victims comprehensively.

4. Handling of GBV Cases

- Are GBV cases treated with the same seriousness as other criminal cases?
- Is there a specialised police unit trained specifically to handle such sensitive cases?

5. Victim-Centred Investigations

He emphasised that the focus should be on investigating the offence, not on discrediting the victim, which often results in secondary victimisation.

6. Weak Investigative Practices

He also mentioned poor investigative patterns as a key reason why many GBV cases are dismissed, stressing the need for better training and procedures.

7. International Best Practice – Namibia

Highlighted Namibia's approach, where prosecutors are involved early in the investigation phase, leading to stronger case building and higher conviction rates.

8. Call for a Multi-Sectoral Response

Advocated for a collaborative approach involving cross-agency information sharing and joint case management.

9. Increasing Complexity of GBV Cases

Flagged that GBV cases are becoming more complex, with drug addiction being a common factor among perpetrators.

10. Special Consideration for Children and Juveniles

Stressed the need for tailored protection for child victims and a focused approach to juvenile delinquency in the context of GBV.

11. Reform of Child Shelters

Raised concerns about the suitability and adequacy of shelters for children, calling for reforms to ensure child-friendly environments and holistic care.

Panel I: Domestic Law and International Convention

The panellists talked about how the International Conventions are key instruments establishing comprehensive standards for preventing, protecting and prosecuting violence against women.

Panellists: Ms. N. Parsuramen (Assistant Parliamentary Counsel), Mrs. Mokshada Pertaub (Barrister at Law & Director Lex Aquila), Mr. Bhoojarut (Coordinator, Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare).

Highlights:

- » Is the definition of 'discrimination' the same as given in the Equal Opportunity Act, and the CEDAW? **No, it is not.**
- » Because Mauritius is a dualist state, the CEDAW does not become law. However, **courts are increasingly referring to provisions of international law when interpreting legislations and delivering judgments.**

- » The Maputo Protocol is a powerful tool in **strategic litigation** for GBV and women's rights.
- » Technology and GBV: **Technology facilitated Gender Based Violence**. GBV amplified by technology. A very grey area amongst the youth. Many young people are committing suicide and this reflects that digital space is becoming dangerous. Urgent need for policy and legal frameworks to regulate harmful content and digital violence, including AI-related abuses.

Panel II: Procedures when dealing with child victim

The panellists focused on how to respond to child victims, to provide practical and legal guidance when dealing with cases that involve child abuse how the agencies and authorities can work together to safeguard the interest of the child in terms of sensitivity and fairness.

Panellists: Mrs. V. Bissessur (Clinical psychologist), Dr. Dowlut-Ramdhonee Karishma (Clinical Psychologist), Mrs Jaunky (Assistant Superintendent of Police)

Highlights:

- » Interview sessions with minors should be video recorded and this filmed interview should be submitted directly to judicial authorities. The video recorded testimony can be presented directly to the Magistrate (judge) or court, minimising the need for the child to appear multiple times and the child does not need to again relate the incident.
- » Unfortunately, some child victims often lack ongoing access to psychological care throughout the judicial process. In certain cases, psychologists are usually called only if the child "freezes" or becomes distressed during court proceedings.
- » It is crucial that the child become familiar with the person representing them in court (lawyer) prior to court appearances. This helps to build trust, reduce anxiety, and promote a sense of safety.

Guiding Principles and Concerns in GBV Cases

Presented by: Mrs. N. Dauhoo, Assistant Director of Public Prosecutions

Key Observations:

- » There has been a significant rise in domestic abuse cases, with many victims already having Protection Orders in place.
- » Effectiveness of Protection Orders is being questioned due to continued abuse despite legal measures.
- » Shelters for women are inadequate, both in quantity and quality, and often lack accessibility to essential services.
- » GBV is still often treated as a "family matter", which leads to underreporting and a lack of seriousness in handling cases.

Recommendations for Strengthening GBV Response:

1. Review Domestic Violence Laws:

Implement a system to register and monitor habitual offenders, such as the use of electronic bracelets for surveillance and deterrence.

2. Harsher Sentencing:

Review and revise sentencing guidelines to ensure penalties are strict enough to serve as a deterrent and a strong message to society.

3. Improved Shelters for Victims:

- Increase the number of safe, suitable, and accessible shelters.
- Ensure shelters provide integrated services including counselling, legal aid, and health support.

4. Use video recording during victim interviews/statements to:

- Reduce retraumatisation of victims.
- Allow direct use of recordings in court proceedings.

5. Introduce gender education programs in schools and communities that promote:

- Respectful relationships
- Gender equality
- Non-violence
- Mutual respect and consent

Panel III: How the policies and laws are implemented when dealing with Gender Based Violence cases

This panel discussion explored how existing policies and laws are applied in practice when dealing with GBV cases, particularly domestic violence. The discussion focused on police-NGO collaboration, challenges in accessing legal protections, and strategies for empowering survivors.

Panellists: Mrs. N. Dauhoo (Assistant Director of Public Prosecutions), Rep of Raise Brave Girls, Mrs Ghoorbin (Family Protection Unit)

One-day Participatory Activity on the theme 'Violence Among Children' to youths of Résidence Anoska

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OOC) organised a one-day participatory activity on the theme '*Violence Among Children*' for 22 youths from Résidence Anoska, aged between 12 and 18 years. The event was held at the Community Centre, 16e Mille. The youths were accompanied by Mr. Ricarl and Mrs. Jolicoeur, both residents of Résidence Anoska. Three JADES (Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits des Enfants) were also present to assist the OOC in facilitating the session and engaging with the participants.

• Welcome Address

Investigator SJ welcomed the participants and introduced the role and mandate of the Ombudsperson for Children. The youths were provided with an overview of the various forms of violence affecting children, with a particular focus on Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Investigator SJ also highlighted the importance of outreach activities, explaining how the Office engages with communities — including vulnerable groups — to promote and protect the rights and welfare of children.

- **Addressing the theme of violence in a pedagogical manner**

Investigator IB used a pedagogical approach to address the issue of violence. He organised the youngsters in a circle and did the 'I stand' activity. He asked the children to stand if ever they have encountered the following events:

- If they know someone who has been victim of discrimination at school
- If they know someone who does not bring food to school
- If they know someone who is beaten by his parents
- If they know someone who has been misled by their boyfriend to have sexual encounters.

Children who volunteered to speak were asked to identify the types of violence presented. They also shared various other examples of violence they were aware of, discussed its impact and proposed solutions, leading to an engaging and insightful discussion.

- **Working in groups**

The children were separated into 4 groups and were facilitated by Investigators and JADE members. There were made to reflect on 5 questions related to violence and their answers were noted. Below are their replies.

1. What do you think are the most common types of violence that children face in your community or school?

- **Physical Violence**

Children reported frequent and normalised physical abuse, both at home and in school. Examples include:

- » Being mistreated or beaten for minor reasons.
- » "Fer domineur"
- » "Gagne calotte" (slapped)
- » "Gagne kout liv lor la tête"
- » "Passe lame ar zélev"
- » Forced actions or coercion.
- » Theft of basic needs, such as food (e.g., bread).
- » Bullying, often targeting weaker children: "Zot rode batte seki pli faible."
- » Aggressive behaviour involving dangerous items like cutters.
- » Physical disputes.
- » Reports of children hitting teachers
- » In the Anoska Community, it was reported that: Parents under the influence of alcohol often use violence, including weapons like sabres and machetes; children become secondary victims of such household violence.

- **Verbal/Emotional Violence**

The children described emotional abuse and discrimination through:

- » Insults and manipulative language.

- » Discrimination and racism experienced in school environments.
- » Hurtful remarks about physical appearance: "Prend nissa lor nu physik."
- » Perceived favouritism: "Pas juste que certaine dimoune gagne plis faveur."
- » Racial bias: "Dimoune raciste – zot guet nu figure."

- **Neglect**

Some children highlighted parental neglect, where their emotional, physical, and developmental needs are unmet, leaving them feeling abandoned or uncared for.

- **Sexual abuse/violence:**

Sensitive but important disclosures included:

- » Being watched in private spaces like school toilets: "Guet camarade dan toilet."
- » Being coerced into sexual acts or exposed to inappropriate behaviour.

2. Why do you think some children stay silent when they experience or witness violence?

- **Fear of Judgment and Rejection**

- » Children are afraid they won't be believed, or that others will judge, laugh at, or feel disgusted by them.
- » There is a deep fear of rejection or abandonment by their own families if they speak out.
- » Children are afraid of being taken somewhere and beaten: "Peur ki atane zot enn plas pou gagn bater".

- **Fear of Exposure and Humiliation**

- » Children worry that if they speak up, everyone will find out about their problems, leading to embarrassment and social stigma.
- » Feelings of shame and humiliation prevent them from facing society, so they choose silence instead.

- **Emotional and Psychological Trauma**

- » Sexually abused children, in particular, are often too traumatised to come forward.

- **Fear of Retaliation or Escalation**

- » Children may remain silent to avoid further violence or punishment, believing that reporting the issue will make things worse.
- » Some even prefer to endure the abuse rather than risk escalating the situation by speaking out.

- **Lack of Knowledge and Support**

- » Many children do not know who to turn to or how to report abuse.
- » Others feel isolated, without friends or a support system, making it harder to reach out for help.

3. How can young people like you help prevent violence against children?

- **Encourage reporting:** The youngsters emphasised the importance of reporting incidents to trusted authorities such as parents, Headmasters/ Headmistresses (HM), or the police.
- **Sensitisation:** Adults, Educators and children need to be sensitised on child rights, especially on the principles of non-discrimination. There needs to be a shift in the change of mentality.
- **Anger/emotion management:** Children should be engaged in activities that help them manage anger, express themselves in healthy ways, and resist provocation. Emotional education is key to developing resilience.
- **Intervention from authorities:** Programs should be developed by authorities to help children understand the dangers of negative peer pressure and to empower them to make independent, positive choices. There should also be effective intervention from authorities to assist children in need or at risk. Moreover, authorities should carry out motivational talks or make motivational videos that address contemporary challenges faced by children. These should aim to uplift, guide, and inspire children in a relatable way.
- **A dedicated, child-friendly website** could be created to offer support to children who have experienced violence, allowing them to share without judgment.
- There should be an **Anti-Violence Campaigns** in Schools. Posters and visual materials promoting non-violence and respectful behaviour should be displayed in all schools to raise awareness and reinforce positive messages.
- **Socio-Emotional Support for Victims:** Children who are victims of violence should have access to socio-emotional support services to aid in their healing and reintegration.

4. What kind of support should be available to children who are victims of violence?

- Children highlighted the need for greater participation in sports and physical activities as a healthy outlet for energy, stress relief, and social interaction.
- Opportunities for children to engage in creative and recreational activities such as drawing, painting, dancing, and even playing age-appropriate video games can promote emotional expression, self-discovery, and relaxation.
- Children expressed the need for consistent emotional and moral support from family members and other trusted adults who can help them regain self-confidence and feel valued.
- Schools should establish anonymous boxes where children can safely share their problems or report incidents without fear of exposure or retaliation. This encourages openness and can serve as an early warning system for those in distress.

5. If you see a friend being mistreated or abused, what would you do?

- Help their friend to overcome fear and speak up about abuse to a trusted adult or authority.
- Be a non-judgmental, compassionate listener that allows the friend to feel safe in sharing their problems and that they are not alone.
- In serious situations, they would accompany their friend to the police station to report abuse, while providing emotional support to him/her.
- In case of having witnessed an act of aggression, they should try to prevent it safely—for example, by seeking immediate help from a responsible adult or authority figure.

• **Youngsters of Residence Anoska have talents!**

In the second part of the activity, the youngsters from Residence Anoska expressed themselves through music. They sang songs, played instruments such as the 'ravanne', and engaged joyfully in the session. The atmosphere was lively and filled with joy. The children shared that they thoroughly enjoyed their day and appreciated the opportunity to learn and express themselves in a fun and supportive environment.

The accompanying adults, Mr. Ricarl and Mrs. Jolicoeur, also extended their thanks to the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children for organising this meaningful initiative. They expressed their hope that similar activities will be organised again in the future, allowing more children to benefit from such enriching experiences.



Chapter 6: Capacity building

Professional Development Training for Caregivers working in Residential Care Institutions

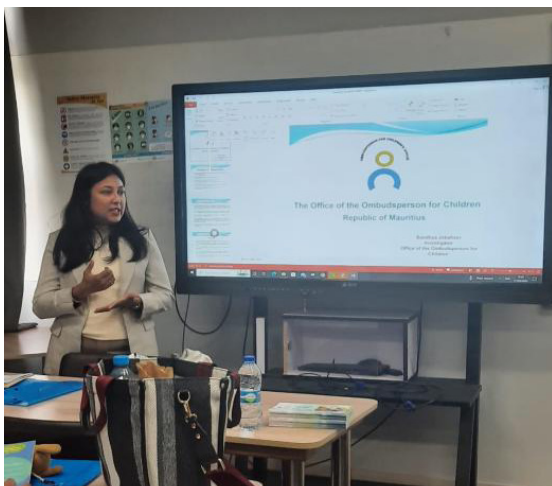
On 17 and 26 September 2024, Mrs. S. Johaheer, Investigator was delegated by the OC as resource person to carry out two training sessions organised by the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) in collaboration with National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF) and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (MGEFW). The theme was 'Child Protection' and target group was caregivers working in Residential Care Institutions (RCIs).

A total of 55 caregivers were trained on the different forms of violence, legal framework for child protection, theories of attachment, psychosocial stages of personality development, ways to provide better care for the children living in RCIs and how to protect children from all forms of violence by identifying, responding and preventing possible signs of child abuse, bullying, violence and neglect at the RCIs.

The training aimed to equip the caregivers with foundation knowledge and necessary skills on how to better protect children coming from vulnerable and challenging backgrounds. It focussed on cultivating essential caregiving skills and attitudes to effectively address the diverse needs of children living in RCIs.

A meaningful discussion on the practical problems faced by the caregivers in their day-to-day lives in RCIs was conducted in parallel with regard to the theme of child protection. The discussion resulted in enhanced understanding of the appropriate measures that caregivers can take in a child protection issue.

The caregivers were encouraged to uphold children's rights without discrimination and to understand that children, including babies and those suffering from disabilities, deserve individualised care, attention and need to be treated with dignity and respect. Caregivers were also invited to reflect on the commitment to prioritise the best interests of children living in RCIs and to ensure that children's voices are heard.



Two-day training organised by Pedostop

1. Monday, 21 October 2024 - 1600 to 1800 Public Conference

Topic: Introduction to the Behavior of Pedophiles and Intervention Strategies for Victims.

Attended by Mr I. Bawamia & Mrs B. Jogarah Ramgoolam, Investigators

2. Wednesday, 23 October and Thursday, 24 October 2024 - 0830 to 1600 2-Day Training for Professionals

Topic: Profiling Pedophiles and Intervention Strategies for the Victims.

Attended by Mr I. Bawamia, Mrs S. Johaheer & Mrs B. Jogarah Ramgoolam, Investigators

Venue: Caudan Arts Centre, Port Louis

This specialised course, hosted by Pedostop from 23–24 October, provided a comprehensive understanding of paedophilic behaviour and intervention strategies for victims. The training featured expert insights from Dr. Micky Pistorius (from South Africa, currently based in Mauritius) and Dr. Carol-Ann Opperman (from Australia). Around 30 professionals attended the course, which offered invaluable guidance on offender profiling, practical support tools for victims, and the types of evidence considered at the court level.

Key Insights from Dr. Micky Pistorius:

Understanding Paedophilic Tendencies: Dr. Pistorius emphasised that understanding is not equivalent to condoning. Her extensive work with perpetrators of paedophilia allowed her to unravel the complex network of factors contributing to paedophilic tendencies. She highlighted several avenues for prevention, early intervention, and treatment.

1. Developmental focus Factors: Unraveling the Roots

To truly understand paedophilia, she emphasized that one must look back to the formative years of an individual's life. Childhood experiences, particularly traumatic ones, often play a significant role in shaping adult sexuality and behaviour patterns.

Many paedophiles report experiencing sexual abuse as children, creating a cycle of victimisation that spans generations. However, it is not only sexual trauma that influences behaviour. Attachment disorders stemming from inconsistent or neglectful caregiving during early childhood can profoundly impact an individual's ability to form healthy relationships later in life. These attachment issues can drive some individuals to seek emotional connections with children, whom they perceive as less threatening or judgmental than adults.

2. Cognitive and Behavioural Patterns: The Paedophile's Mind

Dr. Pistorius elaborated on how paedophiles often harbour cognitive distortions that justify or minimise their actions. Some may convince themselves that children are capable of consenting to sexual activities or believe their actions are beneficial to the child. She provided examples of cases she has worked on, including the case of Norman Afzal Simons, illustrating how understanding these cognitive patterns can help in identifying and addressing the issue.

Key Insights from Dr. Carol-Ann Opperman:

Understanding Trauma Responses: Dr. Opperman, who has worked extensively with victims of abuse, explained how individuals respond to trauma. The body's reaction to perceived threats typically manifests in five primary responses:

- **Fight:** Confronting the threat aggressively.
- **Flight:** Running away or avoiding the threat.
- **Freeze:** Becoming immobilised and unable to act.
- **Flop:** Becoming passive or compliant, almost as if going limp.
- **Fawn:** Trying to please or appease others to avoid conflict.

Addressing Trauma Responses

Dr. Opperman emphasised the importance of recognising one's trauma responses as the first step toward healing. She provided strategies to manage these responses, including:

- **Self-Awareness:** Journaling or therapy to identify trauma response patterns.
- **Therapy:** Techniques such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR), and trauma-focused therapy.
- **Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques:** Practices like meditation, deep breathing, and yoga to calm the nervous system.

Ethical Considerations in Psychological Reports:

The training also focused on the ethical challenges that arise when psychologists work with both victims and perpetrators of abuse. Psychologists, especially those working within the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, are often asked to provide psychological reports on victims. This practice can conflict with professional ethics as it may involve breaches of confidentiality, undermine trust, and potentially harm the client.

The professionals attending the training, including those from various NGOs, expressed concerns over the ethical implications of submitting client reports to the court without proper consent. As it stands, psychologists are bound by confidentiality agreements, and any violation of this trust could have severe consequences for the client.

Dr. Pistorius outlined the approach taken in South Africa, where the court orders a psychologist attached to the court to perform psychological assessments. The court-appointed psychologist then requests a report from the consulting psychologist, which is incorporated into the court's psychological analysis. This system ensures that the consulting psychologist does not compromise their ethical standards by providing a direct report to the court.

Conclusion:

The two-day training provided a critical understanding of the dynamics surrounding paedophilic behaviour and intervention strategies for victims. It also addressed the ethical dilemmas faced by psychologists working within this field. The insights shared by Dr. Pistorius and Dr. Opperman emphasised the importance of balancing ethical standards with the need for effective intervention and support for both victims and perpetrators.

SHARING OF GOOD PRACTICES" FACILIT'ART TRAINING ON CHILD PROTECTION

On Wednesday, 13 November 2024, from 10:00 to noon, the Training Institute for Pedagogical Activities (TIPA) hosted a "Sharing of Good Practices" event called Facilit'art. The session aimed to enhance the knowledge and skills of educators working within the Fortified Learning Environment (FLE) programme. A total of 21 educators participated, focusing on critical issues related to child protection and the responsibilities of individuals and institutions in safeguarding children's rights. As part of the session, I was delegated to lead a sensitisation training, aimed at providing educators with a comprehensive understanding of the role of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OOC) and their individual roles in ensuring the protection of children. The training covered several key topics related to children's rights, legal frameworks, and the roles of various stakeholders in child protection.



The training session covered the following key topics:

1. What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children?

During the session, participants were sensitised on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children (ACRWC). Both legal instruments were introduced, emphasising their core principles and the fundamental rights that children are entitled to.

- The **CRC**, a global treaty, outlines the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of children, with a focus on protection from abuse, access to education, healthcare, and the ability to express opinions on matters affecting them.
- The **ACRWC**, a regional treaty specific to Africa, was highlighted for its focus on issues particularly relevant to African children. The participants were informed about the Charter's provisions, including protection from harmful traditional practices, the importance of family care, and the special care required for vulnerable children. The session emphasised how both the CRC and the ACRWC work together to ensure the safeguarding of children's rights on both a global and regional level.

2. The Responsibility of the State and Institutions for Child Protection:

A significant portion of the session focused on the role of the State and public institutions in child protection. In Mauritius, cases of child abuse are reported to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, which is responsible for collecting and monitoring data related to child protection issues. The educators were made aware of the State's duties to provide services and ensure a protective environment for children.

The role of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OOC) was also discussed in detail. The OOC is primarily responsible for investigating complaints related to violations of children's rights, including cases of abuse and neglect. As part of our

mandate, we intervene to ensure that children's rights are upheld.

3. Legal Framework Surrounding Children's Rights in Mauritius:

The session was complemented by a discussion on the legal framework in Mauritius, particularly the Children's Act 2020. This Act establishes crucial protections for children in the Republic of Mauritius and plays a vital role in the national effort to safeguard children's rights.

The Act includes provisions related to the prohibition of child labor, prevention of child abuse, and measures for children in need of care and protection. Educators were guided on how the Children's Act 2020 can serve as a tool for understanding their legal responsibilities in ensuring child protection.

4. The Role of Citizens, Parents, and Educators in Child Protection:

A key focus of the training was empowering citizens, parents, and educators in their roles as protectors of children. The educators were encouraged to reflect on how they could take responsibility for the safety and well-being of children, both inside and outside the classroom.

The session highlighted the importance of recognising the signs of child abuse or neglect, understanding the ethical and legal responsibilities to report concerns, and how to respond appropriately in critical situations. Additionally, strategies for creating a safe and supportive environment for children were discussed, providing practical guidance on fostering environments where children feel protected and supported.

Conclusion:

The session provided educators with the knowledge and resources necessary to better protect the children in their care. Moreover, it helped reinforce the importance of collaboration between educators, parents, citizens, and institutions to ensure the safety and rights of children. The educators were empowered to recognise their role in promoting and protecting children's rights and to be proactive in safeguarding their well-being. This session further contributed to TIPA's mission of creating a safe, supportive, and knowledgeable community of educators dedicated to the protection and well-being of children.

TIPA also shared that they have been working on safeguarding initiatives at their level, and they expressed a desire to collaborate with the OOC to further strengthen their efforts. This opportunity for sharing practices with the OOC was an important step toward ensuring a coordinated approach to child protection.

Safeguarding Children's Rights in the Domain of Sports and Physical Activities

In an effort to raise awareness about children's rights in the context of sports, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children collaborated with the Mauritius Olympic Committee to participate in a workshop titled "*Safeguarding Children's Rights in the Sports Context*," organised on 16 November 2024. The event brought together 35 participants, including athletes and coaches, to engage in meaningful discussions and training on the rights of children in sports and the ethical responsibilities of those working with young athletes.



The workshop provided a comprehensive overview of key child rights principles, emphasising their importance in ensuring a safe and supportive sporting environment.

Key topics covered included:

- **Right to Safety:** Ensuring sports environments are free from abuse, bullying, and harm.
- **Right to Inclusion:** Promoting equality and non-discrimination, ensuring all children have equal access to sports regardless of gender, race, or ability.
- **Right to Development:** Highlighting the role of sports in children's physical, emotional, and personal growth.
- **Right to Play:** Advocating for equal opportunities for all children to participate in sports, with a focus on accessibility and affordability.

Participants were also informed about coaches' ethical responsibilities, with a focus on fostering an environment that respects and upholds children's rights. This was complemented by a discussion on the legal framework surrounding children's rights in Mauritius, particularly the Children's Act 2020, which establishes protections for children in various spheres, including sports.

Practical tips for coaches were provided on how to identify and prevent abuse, promote fairness, and ensure that children's voices are heard. Emphasis was placed on the necessity of maintaining professional boundaries and the legal consequences of failing to safeguard children's rights.

The workshop concluded with a call for greater accountability in sports organisations, urging all involved to actively contribute to the protection of children's rights and to make sports a safe, enjoyable, and empowering experience for young athletes.

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children is committed to continuing its efforts in raising awareness and providing support to ensure that children's rights are upheld across all sectors, including sports. This initiative is part of the ongoing efforts to promote the well-being of children and ensure that their voices are heard and respected in every arena of life.

OVERSEAS MISSION

XIle congrès des membres de l'AOMF, AOMF, QUEBEC

In October 2024 the OC attended the XII Congres de l'AOMF held in Quebec. The Overarching theme was: "Regards sur la prochaine decennie: Les defis de l'ombudsman dans la défense de l'Etat de droit"

The specific theme with regards to children was « Quel avenir pour les droits de nos enfants? Les defis de l'Ombudsperson. »

The Meeting in Quebec was a follow up of virtual meetings held to familiarise member states about the role of the committee in charge of the Rights of the children and the work undertaken.

A prior training session had been held in Rabat on 23 and 24 April on the theme "**La mise en oeuvre de l'intérêt supérieur de l'enfant par les Ombudsmans.**" as a capacity building for member states of AOMF. A webinar was also held on 26 September 2024 on "**Le traitement des réclamations qui concernent les droits de l'enfant.**"

Mr Eric Delemar, Défenseur des enfants et adjoint de la Défenseure des droits (France). has been elected as chairperson of this Committee. Discussions revolved around the challenges which children will have to face during the next decade and the evolution of the rights of children as well as their protection. Speakers addressed the issues related to Education, mental health, impact of climate change as well as the fast changes in technology. They had to discuss the changing role ombudspersons for children have to face in the next decade

The OC, Mrs A. Ghoorah addressed the participants on the subject "Les defis des mediateurs pour enfants dans l'ere digitale". She highlighted the challenges regarding the formulation of global strategies, legislation, coordination and monitoring mechanisms as well as involvement of different stakeholders She stressed that the innovations in technology should be child appropriate even to the children with Special Needs The changing role of the ombudsperson who should have a multi-pronged approach and be versatile.

Training organised by Association des Ombudsmans et Médiateurs de la Francophonie

Theme of workshop: Lutter contre toutes les formes de discrimination envers les enfants empêchant leur pleine participation – Quelle posture adopter en tant qu'animateurs de projets avec des enfants ?

Date: 24-26 March 2025

Venue: Locaux du Défenseur des droits, Place de Fontenoy, Paris 7e

Objective:

This training aimed to strengthen the awareness and capacity of professionals working with children to understand, prevent, and combat all forms of discrimination—such as 'infantisme', 'adultisme', and 'violence éducative ordinaire'—while encouraging the full participation of children in projects that concern them.

Key Themes and Sessions

DAY 1

Understanding 'Infantisme' and Discriminatory Practices

- Introduction to *Infantisme* and its legal and historical context.
- Country perspectives from France, Benin, and Luxembourg on child rights violations.
- Roundtable on everyday violence and adult-dominated frameworks where the concept of *Adultisme* was introduced and discussed.

DAY 2

Empowering Youth and Reflecting on Adult Roles

- Life narrative of a young person in detention: Un "mineur dessaisi"
- Analysis of the impact of 'violence éducative ordinaire' and discussion of positive, non-violent alternatives.

DAY 3

Voice, Participation, and Group Dynamics

- Strategies for collecting children's voices in humanitarian and legal settings.
- Children voices in investigations.
- Practical session on group facilitation and building youth engagement.



Key Takeaways

- Deeper understanding of systemic forms of discrimination affecting children.
- Expanded knowledge of the concepts of 'infantisme' and 'adultisme' from legal, psychological, and sociocultural perspectives.
- Practical tools for encouraging child participation.
- Insight into how everyday adult behaviours and language may unintentionally perpetuate discrimination.
- Opportunities for valuable cross-cultural exchange with professionals from various Francophone countries.

JOINT MISSION OF COOPERATION ON COMBATTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

28 July – 2 August 2025, Antananarivo, Madagascar

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children was invited to participate in a joint mission of cooperation on combatting human trafficking. Same was held in Antananarivo from 28 July to 2 August 2025. The mission aimed at reinforcing bilateral and regional cooperation between Mauritian and Malagasy authorities in the fight against human trafficking, especially with regards to Malagasy who are victim of trafficking in Mauritius. The mission was organized by the Human Rights NGO DIS MOI (Droits Humains Océan Indien), Passerelles in collaboration with the 'Bureau National de Lutte contre la Traite des Êtres Humains de Madagascar' (BNLTH) in the context of the International Day against Trafficking in Persons. The mission comprised of working sessions with the '*Commission Nationale Indépendante des Droits de l'Homme de Madagascar*', the '*Bureau National de Lutte contre la Traite des Êtres Humains de Madagascar*' (BNLTH), visit to a family of a victim and a visit to a Residential Care Institution for Children. A colloquium was also organized with several Malagasy stakeholders.

Working Sessions

- Direction des renseignements et du contrôle de l'immigration et de l'émigration
The delegation met the Contrôleur Général de Police and his 'Chef de Cabinet'. The discussions were about the procedures of recruitment allocating work permits to potential migrant worker to Mauritius. They were informed about the alarming number of Malagasy nationals who are working illegally in Mauritius. This gives rise to exploitation of these persons. It was highlighted that children accompany their parents when they proceed to Mauritius on tourist visa and later take illegal employment. Mr Bawamia explained the role of the Ombudsperson for Children in protecting the rights of these children in such situation.
- Commission Nationale Indépendante des Droits de l'Homme de Madagascar (CNIDH). The meeting was chaired by the President of the CNIDH. It was an opportunity to share what was being done to prevent trafficking in persons both in Mauritius and Madagascar. Mr Bawamia was invited to explain the mandate of the Ombudsperson for Children as a National Human Rights Institution specialized in the rights of children. The CNIDH has a desk dealing with the rights of the child and people with disabilities.

Colloquium on the theme 'La traite des êtres humains est un crime organisé- mettons fin à l'exploitation' held on 30 July 2025.

The colloquium was organised by the BNLTH and DIS MOI and saw the participation of several stakeholders from public bodies, independent institutions, the judiciary and the civil society. The programme comprised thematic workshops on:

- Prevention measures to reduce trafficking,
- Protection of victims of trafficking, and
- Judicial cooperation and advocacy



Investigator Ismail Bawamia was one of the panelist for the theme 'Protection of victims of child trafficking'. He stressed on children as victims both directly, by being exploited themselves and indirectly as being with their parents who are victims of trafficking. He advocated that in all cases that authorities should ensure that children are not deprived of their rights. The example of two foreign children whose parents were victims of trafficking was mentioned. He explained how the Ombudsperson for Children intervened to protect the rights to education of these two children. Mr Bawamia also stressed that the problem of child trafficking should be tackled without delay. Children are human beings and they have human rights. All stakeholders must work towards protecting children for the benefit of society at large.

During the day, a Protocol of collaboration among DIS MOI, Passerelles, which runs 'Univers'elles' the only shelter for victims of trafficking in the region and the Bureau National de Lutte contre la Traite des Êtres Humains de Madagascar was signed. With this protocol the BNLTH would follow up in the reintegration of the victims.



Visits

The delegation visited the family of one of the victims of trafficking presently sheltered at Univers'elles. This was a very emotional moment and rich in information to understand the problem of trafficking in person.

A visit was also carried out at the Akany Avoko Residential Care Centre for children where some 150 children are being catered for. After learning that the OOC monitors the situation of children in places of safety, trains caregivers on the rights of children and related issues, the Development Manager of the Centre requested for collaboration with the OOC for support and guidance in view of improving the quality of services in the best interests of the children.

Debriefing at the BNLTH, Prime Minister's Office

A debriefing session with the Director of the BNLTH, his staff and the Mauritian Delegation was held on 2 July at the BLNTH located at the Prime Minister's Office in Antananarivo. The discussions were on the follow up actions to implement the protocol. The Director of the BLNTH was of the opinion that it is important for rights of children be considered in all measures taken whether for prevention, protection or advocacy. The OOC could be called to share good practices and exchange.

Chapter 7: Child Online Safety

Lately there has been a growing concern about the number of reported cases of cyberbullying involving children

Today's children are digital natives, they belong to the generation that was born in a digital world and have grown up surrounded by computers, video games, smartphones, tablets and the Internet. Hence, they learn, write and communicate in different ways from previous generations. Undoubtedly, digital technologies give great opportunities for learning and education to children.

On the other hand, the existing delusion of the safe use of ICT tools creates conditions for manipulation leaving the young, immature user alone with information technology without showing the mechanisms of child online safety.

In the era of rapid technological change, many states around the world are struggling with problems concerning children's participation in digital environments. It is associated with lack of necessary knowledge in many areas concerning children's participation in the digital world. The more so, the majority of research focuses on adolescents and overlooks children in preschool and primary schools, although, in most countries, the latter already have a mobile with internet access.

This chapter starts with a brief on the Awareness programmes on the above subject, followed by a write-up on Children's Rights in the context of Evolving ICT technologies and the situation in Mauritius, as well as Child Online safety.

Awareness Programmes on Child Safety Online

In the context of the Human Rights Day 2024, an Awareness Programme on Child Safety Online targeting youngsters of the Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits de l'Enfant (JADE) aged between 14 to 18 years, was launched, in presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Hon. Dhananjay Ramful), and the Junior Minister of the same Ministry (Hon. Hambyrajen Narsinghen), the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Mauritius and Seychelles, (HE Lisa Simrique Singh); and the Ombudsperson for Children, (Mrs Aneeta Ghoorah) at the Labourdonnais Waterfront Hotel in Port-Louis. The event, an initiative of the Human Rights Division in collaboration with the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children and the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, was also marked by the launching of the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) in Kreol Morisien: *Konvansyon Kont Tortir-ek Lezot Tretman ou Pinision Kriel IniminouDegradan*.



The theme chosen by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for this year is 'Our rights, our future, right now'. Addressing the young participants, on Minister Ramful spoke of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, as a landmark document and a powerful affirmation of the fundamental rights of every human being regardless of gender, nationality, race and colour. The use of technology, he noted, is key to the development, education and personal growth of the youngsters hence the holding of the awareness programme which aims to provide a platform for them to voice out their opinions and thoughts and come up with ideas to better protect the rights of children. He lauded the JADE for their active engagement and contribution in the safeguard and promotion of human rights.

Mrs Ghoorah, Ombudsperson for Children spoke on the importance of safeguarding the rights and safety of the children in the digital space. While the internet has its advantages and allows children to access a world of knowledge, communicate with peers and develop skills that will prepare them for the future, conversely, the internet has its significant risks – cyberbullying, online predators, exposure to inappropriate content, and the misuse of personal information, to name a few. She added that, "in a world where the internet has become an integral part of our daily lives, it is our shared responsibility to ensure that the youngest and most vulnerable among us, our children are protected in the digital space." The Ombudsperson for Children emphasised that the first and foremost foundation of online safety lies in Education and stated that parents, Educators and caregivers must take the time to teach children about safe online practices. Children need to understand the importance of privacy, the risks of sharing personal information and how to recognise and report suspicious or harmful behaviour. Monitoring and setting boundaries, such as parental controls, content filters, and monitoring software are also essential to restrict access to inappropriate material and ensure children are engaging in safe online activities. The Ombudsperson for Children highlighted that children need to be empowered to become their own line of defence and stated that the JADE, as Ambassadors will convey strong messages to other children. The Ombudsperson for Children pointed out that by teaching the youth to recognise red flags, avoid risky behaviour and seek help when needed will make them more resilient and capable of navigating the digital world. In her concluding address, Mrs. Ghoorah reiterated that the safety of children is not just a parental responsibility but a societal one and pledged for the commitment of one and all to work together to create an internet that is not only a place of opportunity but also a haven of safety for every child.

In an effort to raise awareness on child safety online, the following information sessions below were organised for the JADE:

- The importance of protecting children's personal data online, digital footprints and strategies to maintain privacy by Mr. Manish Lobin, Information Security Specialist at CERT-MU;
- Data protection by Mrs. Bhawana Narain-Cunniah, Legal Executive at the Data Protection Office;
- Understanding children's rights in the digital space by Mrs. Yecha Rhungapen-Veeramootoo, Investigator at Office of the Ombudsperson for Children; and
- How the digital environment is influencing children's lives by Ms. Saniyya Oozeerally, Secretary of Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits de l'Enfant.



Presentation by Mrs. Y.R. Veeramootoo



Presentation by Mr. Lobin

The information session was followed by group discussions. Participants were divided into five groups to discuss child online safety with regards to: (1) civil and political rights; (2) right to protection from abuse and violence; (3) rights relating to family environment; (4) right to life and development and (5) the right to highest standard of health.

The information session has been a significant opportunity to deepen the children's understanding of child safety online; children's rights in the digital space; data protection and privacy; and strategies to mitigate online risk.

RoundTable held in the context of the Safer Internet Day

Safer Internet Day (SID) is celebrated around the world in February of each year. It is an international education and awareness-raising effort celebrated in around 170 countries. Globally, the SID is coordinated by the joint Insafe/INHOPE network with the support of the European Commission, and national Safer Internet Centres across Europe. In Mauritius, the Computer Emergency Response Team of Mauritius (CERT-MU), a department under the aegis of the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation organizes the event each year.



The theme for SID 2025 is **“Too good to be true? Protecting yourself and others from scams online”** and was celebrated on Monday 17 February 2025 in Mauritius in the presence of **Dr. the Honourable Avinash Ramtohol, Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation**. In this context, the OC was invited to participate in an engaging Roundtable discussions aimed at fostering dialogue and collaboration on making the digital world safer for our kids. This Roundtable Discussion allowed experts dealing with child online safety issues in Mauritius to share their insights, strategies, and best practices for promoting a safer online environment. The topics covered emerging cyber threats, online safety for children and the future of cybersecurity awareness.

Internet Governance Forum 2025

The 9th edition of Mauritius Internet Governance Forum (MIGF) 2025 was officially launched by the President of the Republic of Mauritius, alongside the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, and the representative of the UNRC. Also in attendance were the Ombudsperson for Children , and distinguished guests from civil society, the tech industry, and various participating organisations.



The theme of Mauritius IGF 2025, "AI, Cybersecurity, and Digital Trust: Pioneering a Secure Future," laid a strong foundation for discussions about ethical behaviour online and the role of volunteers in fostering a safer and more inclusive digital world. Speakers and panellists emphasised that the challenges of the digital age should not be met with fear or avoidance, but rather with collective action, particularly through volunteering, advocacy, and digital education programs that empower communities.

This landmark event marks a significant step forward in promoting digital governance, innovation, and inclusivity within Mauritius and the wider African region. The Mauritius IGF 2025 serves as a platform for open dialogue on internet governance, bringing together stakeholders from all sectors to explore the future of technology, digital policies, and their societal impact.

Key Areas of Discussion

- Digital Trust and Ethical Use of AI
- Children’s safety and digital well-being
- How far can Artificial Intelligence go?
- A.I. Ethics, Governance & Responsible Tech Adoption
- Bridging the Digital Divide Through Volunteering

Situation in Mauritius

In spite of sensitisation carried out at various levels, the number of reported cases gives food for thought.

Incidents Statistics Reported on MAUCORS+

The statistics of incidents reported on MAUCORS+ for the year 2024 and 2025. (Please note that the incidents statistics related to child exploitation and abuse have also been provided as from 17 February 2025).

Year 2024

Phishing	14
Fake News*	106
Ransomware*	0
Malware	10
DoS Attacks*	1
Website Attacks*	5
Total	1532

Year 2025 (From 01/01/2025 - 04/04/2025)

Incident Type	No. of Cases
Hacking	122
Online Harassment	532
Offensive Content	157
Sextortion	32
Identity Theft	130
CyberBullying	178
CyberStalking	14
Scam and Fraud	226
Child Exploitation and Abuse*	5
Phishing	14
Fake News*	106
Ransomware*	0
Malware	10
DoS Attacks*	1
Website Attacks*	5
Total	1532

The above figures speak for themselves and there may be even more unreported cases. Extreme cases have led to irreversible actions by the more vulnerable youngsters.

Children's Rights in the context of Evolving ICT technologies

Nowadays online and mobile technologies have become a part of children's daily lives, whatever the social status. The wide infrastructure of online digital networks, increasing reliance on mobile and social media and associated with it new technological opportunities and risks are the reason why children's rights are not only realised in new ways but also very often infringed.

Below the OC has tried to give an overview icw the analysis of children's rights online with respect to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Introduction of Rapid technological progress has generated new needs inevitably changing the living standards, cultural norms, value of life, and social relationships, which requires a different view on the essentials for childhood framework.

According to Article 8 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), offering information society services to children below the age of 13 requires consent from their parents or custodians. This follows the legislative approach of the US, which is present in the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA).

The European Council, through its strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022_2027) and the Better Internet for Kids initiative, focuses on safeguarding children's rights in the digital environment, emphasising protection, empowerment, and respect for their best interests online.

Local context:

Key legislations in the Republic of Mauritius to safeguard children in the digital realm include:

1. Children's Act 2020:

Enacted on January 24, 2022, the Children's Act 2020 introduces comprehensive measures against child abuse, including provisions addressing online threats such as cyberbullying and child pornography. The Act criminalizes child grooming and online harassment.

2. Child Sex Offender Register Act 2020:

Complementing the Children's Act, this legislation establishes a register of individuals convicted of sexual offenses against children. It aims to prevent recidivism and protect minors from potential online and offline predators.

3. Information and Communication Technologies Act 2001 (ICT Act):

The ICT Act empowers the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA) to regulate and curtail harmful and illegal online content. Under Section 18(1)(m), the ICTA is authorized to implement measures such as the Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) Material Filtering initiative, which blocks access to websites containing child sexual abuse material

Digital rights of children in light of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Although the Convention was created at a time when digital technology was not yet that advanced, it is possible and necessary to apply these rights nowadays. Analysis of diverse articles allowed for determining four areas which show how existing rights might be understood or enacted in relation to the digital context.

1.Children's Rights in Digital Environment, children's right to online connectivity is associated above all with active participation in the digital community and includes access to online information and disseminating content through the media (Art. 17), freedom of thought (Art. 14) and association (Art. 15), the possibility of seeking and receiving information ,as well as freedom of expression (Art. 13) without discrimination on the basis of sex, age, economic resources, nationality, ethnicity, place of residence, as well as disability (Art. 2), which is also underlined in Art. 23.

Participation in the online environment obviously requires adequate devices, thus, the kind of digital media children have and how they use them should be taken into consideration

2.Children's right to online empowerment – is connected with the usage of all the opportunities provided by new technologies for educational purposes (Art.28), including freely available content in a language that children understand (Art. 30) to help them reach their full potential and also give them the opportunity to develop their personality, talents and abilities to the full" (Art. 29).

In this context, education is understood also as acquiring competencies and skills relating to internet use, including critical reception of online content. Undoubtedly, universal access to online education may help to avoid intensification or creation of new barriers between the different strata of society.

3.Children's right to online protection –includes especially children's online security from information and material injurious to their well-being (Art. 17) such as protection against all forms of violence, abuse and neglect (Art. 19), including sexual exploitation and abuse (Art. 34) and other forms of exploitation detrimental to the child's welfare (Art. 36) as well the child's right to preserve his/ her identity (Art. 8).

In the virtual environment, Art. 16, underlines children's right to privacy, i.e., the right to withhold their personal data on the Internet and to preserve identity and image from possible unlawful use.

4.Children's right to online play – includes access to cultural and artistic events and all forms of recreation and leisure activities using the Internet and other technologies appropriate to children's age, including computer games (Art. 31).

It is, of course, common knowledge that play and recreation are essential to the development of creativity, imagination, self-confidence, social skills as well as cognitive and emotional strength, and they have a particular influence on children's health and well-being. However, sadly so, adults do not impose the recommended screen time for the different age groups, hence negatively impacting brain development as well as the social-emotional

development and the academic performance of children.

The realization of children's rights in digital space

Certainly, some countries are further ahead in the struggle for children's rights online than other ones. Thus, there are considerable differences not only in the extent of use, but also in the ways in which ICT are utilized in different countries, as well as the social impacts they may have. European countries as well as Australia seem to be on their way to a conscious, critical and responsible use of ICT in children's everyday life.

Lately Australia moved to ban children under 16 from social media and more recently New Zealand is envisaging to follow similar steps.

In an effort to reduce and promote traditional learning methods, Sweden is implementing a ban on digital devices in schools for students in Grades 1 to 9, with a focus on printed books and handwriting practice

There is no doubt that the realisation of children's rights in digital space is highly affected by complex economic and political factors and socio-demographic resources, both across and within countries.

Unfortunately, these circumstances easily become a source of deepening inequality rather than the means of securing children's rights in the digital environment. This applies especially to children with chronic illness or disability, children in poverty and experiencing homelessness, as well as children whose primary language is other than English, who in this way often become victims of discrimination and social exclusion, also in the digital space.

The rapid development of information and communication technology has reshaped children's lives, blurring the boundaries between offline and online, creating a world extraordinarily different from the world experienced by previous generations. In other words, today's children (digital natives) are immersed in digital technology. Computers, smartphones, social networks and the Internet are essential aspects of their everyday lives.

At the same time, these Children's Rights in Digital Environment changes have created one of the biggest challenges facing societies today, which is linked to inequalities and power relationships that underlie them. Info-exclusion, "the digital divide" or the "digital gap" are contemporary realities.

Child Online Protection in Mauritius

In Mauritius, several organizations have implemented measures to enhance child online protection. Below is an overview of the initiatives undertaken by key institutions:

Office of the Ombudsperson for Children:

- **Investigation and Monitoring:** The Office is mandated to investigate complaints regarding violations of children's rights, ensuring that children under the care or supervision of public bodies are treated fairly and that their legal rights are protected. In her 2021-2022 Annual Report, the former Ombudsperson for Children included a chapter on "Online Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation (OCSASE): Every Child has the Right to be Safe" where she carried out an own-motion enquiry. The chapter elaborates on:
 - » the situation regarding the situation of OCSASE in Mauritius;
 - » an evidence-based approach to understanding OCSASE among all relevant stakeholders;

- » recommendations on how to prevent and combat OCSASE, and possible measures that can be taken to provide quality rehabilitation to child victims and offenders.

The Annual Report can be accessed on <https://oco.govmu.org/DocumentsList/OC%20Annual%20Report%202020-2021%20%28FINAL%29.pdf#page=103.21>.

- **Awareness and Sensitization Campaigns:** The Office promotes children's rights and best interests through the production of brochures and videos, development of educational materials, organization of workshops, and delivery of talks on child-related issues, including online safety.

Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation (MITCI):

- **National Awareness Campaign on Internet Risks and Safe Practices:** In February 2025, the MITCI, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, launched a year-long national awareness campaign targeting schools and colleges. The campaign aims to educate young people on responsible and safe internet use, addressing threats such as cyberbullying, hacking, phishing, scams, fraud, and sextortion. Activities include educational sessions in 265 primary schools and 160 colleges across Mauritius.
- **Mauritian Cybercrime Online Reporting System (MAUCORS+):** The MITCI oversees MAUCORS+, a national online system that allows the public to securely report cybercrimes. The system has been enhanced with artificial intelligence capabilities to improve efficiency and responsiveness. MAUCORS+ also provides advice to help users recognize and avoid common types of cybercrime occurring on social media platforms.

Cybercrime Unit:

The Cybercrime Unit operated under the Mauritius Police Force. This unit focuses on preventing, investigating, and prosecuting cyber-related offenses, including crimes targeting minors.

- **Investigation of Online Exploitation:** The unit investigates cases involving child pornography, online grooming, and the distribution of explicit material. By monitoring online activities and collaborating with international law enforcement agencies, they work to identify and apprehend perpetrators exploiting children in the digital space.
- **Public Awareness and Education:** The Cybercrime Unit conducts awareness programs in schools and communities. These initiatives aim to educate children, parents, and educators about the risks associated with the internet, promoting safe online practices and vigilance against potential threats.
- **Enforcement of Cybercrime Legislation:** The Cybercrime Unit enforces laws pertinent to online child protection, such as the Children's Act 2020 and the Information and Communication Technologies Act 2001. These legislations provide the legal basis for prosecuting individuals involved in cyber offenses against minors.

Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA):

- **Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) Material Filtering:** The ICTA has implemented a decentralized CSA filtering solution, requiring Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to block access to online child sexual abuse material. This initiative aligns with the ICT Act 2001, empowering the authority to regulate or curtail harmful and illegal

content on the internet. The filtering mechanism utilizes international partnerships and blacklisting methods to prevent access to such material, aiming to protect children from online sexual abuse.

Computer Emergency Response Team Mauritius (CERT-MU):

- **Safer Internet Day Activities:** CERT-MU coordinates activities for Safer Internet Day, collaborating with various stakeholders to promote safe internet use. Initiatives include training workshops for youth officers, educators, and public awareness campaigns addressing issues such as cyberbullying, sexting, online harassment, and scams.
- **Educational Outreach:** CERT-MU conducts awareness sessions in schools and community centres, educating students, teachers, and the general public on online safety practices.

It works in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Human Resource to direct awareness campaigns in the form of regular talks in schools.

Also online safety forms part of the ICT Curriculum both at primary and secondary as awareness and skills acquisition

The Data Protection Office

- **Parental Consent Requirement:** Section 30 of the DPA 2017 stipulates that processing personal data of children under 16 years is prohibited without explicit consent from a parent or guardian. Data controllers must make reasonable efforts to verify that such consent has been appropriately obtained.
- **Guidance on Children's Data:** The DPO has published an introductory guide detailing the obligations related to processing children's personal data. This guide emphasizes the necessity of obtaining verifiable parental consent and outlines measures to ensure children's data is handled responsibly.

Video Data Protection for the Youth: In 2024, the DPO launched a video entitled “Data Protection for the Youth”. This initiative aims to educate youth on the importance of online privacy, how to protect their personal information, safety tips, and individual responsibilities in safeguarding privacy.

It is a fact that the internet offers incredible opportunities for learning, exploration, and connection. It allows us to access a world of knowledge, communicate with peers, and develop skills that will prepare children for the future. Loads of information is available at the click of a mouse.

However, alongside these benefits come significant risks—cyberbullying, online predators, exposure to inappropriate content, and the misuse of personal information, to mention a few. Hence, in a world where the internet has become an integral part of our daily lives, it is our shared responsibility to ensure that the youngest and most vulnerable among us, our children are protected in the digital space.

Day after day, statistics are growing, alarming and a matter of concern. International studies show that more than half of children and teens have experienced cyberbullying. A significant number have encountered explicit content or been approached by strangers with harmful intent. These are not mere numbers; they represent young lives that could be irreparably harmed if we fail to act.

How do we try to safeguard the rights and safety of the children?

1. First and Foremost, the foundation of online safety lies in education

Parents, educators, and caregivers must take the time to teach children about safe online practices. Children need to understand the importance of privacy, the risks of sharing personal information, and how to recognize and report suspicious or harmful behaviour.

As a matter of fact, UNICEF and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), which are specialised organisations in the United Nations system have already developed a global programme on child online protection and online safety. Different sets of guidelines targeting children, parents, Educators, the ICT industry, and policy-makers are available in several languages for self-paced trainings.

2. Communication is another important aspect which will certainly help to curb down the Risks and associated dangers

Creating an environment of trust and open dialogue is essential. Children should feel comfortable discussing their online experiences with adults, be it parents, Educators or siblings. They should know they have a support system, and that they can share concerns and seek help when needed.

3. Monitoring and Setting Boundaries would be another means of control

As such Technology can be a double-edged sword, but it also provides tools for protection. Parental controls, content filters, and monitoring software can help restrict access to inappropriate material and ensure children are engaging in safe online activities. Though many children, being digital natives, hence more techno-savvy, compared to the older generations know how to circumvent these barriers.

However, this is not a problem that parents alone can solve. Schools, tech companies, governments, and communities must collaborate to create safer digital environments. Technology platforms should prioritize safety features, report harmful content promptly, and take strong action against predators.

Let me now highlight the ongoing international debates:

What age is appropriate for a child to be exposed to social media?

Do we allow students to carry a mobile phone to school?

How do we control screen time, access to disinformation, fake news?

Who guarantees online safety?

amongst an endless array of other related issues?

We All heard about the moves of the Australian Government to ban children under 16 from Social media.

Often as Ombudsperson for Children I am confronted to questions on the above issues.

Here I have to say that there is no magic wand to solve the various problems

Each country has its own specificities and a cut and paste method is not appropriate.

4. Discipline

DISCIPLINE cuts across All sectors of LIFE, including use and misuse of Internet. I firmly recommend that parents and Educators inculcate a strong and constructive approach to positive discipline, rooted in the principles of rights and respect, when raising and educating children.

5. Empowering Children

We must also empower children to become their own first line of defense. It is in this optic that the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children has set up Les Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits des Enfants (JADE). Following the International trend to hear the Voice of the Youth, be it in the UN organisations as well as COP conferences, the concept of “For the Youth, By the Youth” has gained momentum. JADE are being empowered to act as Ambassadors and to convey strong messages to their classmates and other peers. Teaching the Youth to recognize red flags, avoid risky behaviour, and seek help when needed will make them more resilient and capable of navigating the digital world.

Conclusion

While the UNCRC provides a strong foundation for children’s rights, the digital era presents new challenges and opportunities that were not fully anticipated in 1989. Recent initiatives, such as General Comment No. 25 on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment (2021), provide updated interpretations to ensure children’s rights are protected in the online world. Stronger regulations, digital literacy, and ethical technology practices are needed to fully uphold these rights in the modern age.

To conclude, I would say that the safety of our children is not just a parental responsibility—it is a societal one. Protecting children online requires vigilance, compassion, and collaboration from all of us.

Online safety is not a one-time conversation or a single action—it’s an ongoing commitment.

Let us commit to working together to create an internet that is not only a place of opportunity but also a haven of safety for every child.

Together, we can ensure a safer, brighter online future for our children.

Chapter 8: A Selection of Cases

A SELECTION OF CASES DEALT BY THE OOC

A. SCHOOL PROBLEMS

1. BULLYING AT SCHOOL				
REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
6192	Child attending a private secondary school was bullied by classmates and was injured on his head and on his private part. He was mentally affected as well.	Letter sent to MEHR and PSEA.	Letter from PSEA stated that the Responsible Party was contacted and latter stated that a police complaint has been lodged. Minor resumed school normally and showed no signs of health issues. With regard to the bully, he was rusticated for 3 days and his behaviour changed positively. Since then, no act of indiscipline was reported.	Case filed
6203	Child was bullied at school several times. Father requested that her daughter be protected from the bullies. As per complaint, the Rector has not initiated any action. Students even bring cannabis at school. The child is scared and traumatised to go to school.	Letter sent to MEHR and copied to Zone 1.	Report from the MEHR is satisfactory. Close monitoring and enquiry are being conducted as per report.	Case filed

2. BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEM

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
5286	The HM reported that a child exhibits violent behaviour at school and is also undergoing treatment at the hospital. However, it has been flagged that his father is not administering the prescribed medication to the child nor is the child attending his appointments with the School Psychologist. Moreover, the HM highlighted that she had submitted a request for a teaching assistant to the Zonal Director of the MEHR, which remains unaddressed.	A case of alleged child neglect was referred to the MGEFW and the BPF for necessary action. Moreover, a correspondence has been sent to the MEHR to request for a status update regarding the request for teaching assistant.	The report from the MEHR stated that the HM omitted to send her request to SENA through proper channel. Necessary has been done and the child has been allocated a carer. The OOC followed up with the school and confirmed this information. The report from the MGEFW stated that the CDU followed up on this case. The child is following treatment with a hospital Psychiatrist and is on medication. His behaviour has improved. The child's father was counselled to ensure the child's treatment and to attend his appointment with the Educational Psychologist.	Case filed
PRO/ SCH/ 42/2 9/2	A letter from parents highlighted amongst others concerns about leaking roofs in classrooms	This matter was referred to the Rector of the School for necessary actions.	Letter from the Rector of the school stated that with regard to leaking roofs during rainy weather, waterproofing work has already been carried out; with regard to "corbeille	Case filed

	during rain, unfinished projects funded by the annual "corbeille ménagère" event, disrespectful behaviour from some teachers towards students, and activities in the third semester that disrupted exam revision, potentially affecting student performance.		ménagère", the PSEA has cut down maintenance costs in private schools. Thus, the Student Council unanimously organised the "corbeille ménagère" during the last 2 years in order to raise funds for infrastructure improvements. Moreover, a sum of Rs500,000 was required for the resurfacing as per quotation given by the contractor but the funds raised was largely insufficient to meet the required costs. Nevertheless, the matter is under consideration. With regard to complaints against teachers, the allegation is false as there is regular monitoring in all classes throughout the day. With regard to activities organised during the third term, such activities provide an outlet for stress to the students and that extra-curricular activities are an integral part of a balanced student life.	
6288	A parent complained against a student of grade 3 of a primary school for being aggressive towards his	A letter was sent to the MEHR and cc. to Zone Director 1.	Letter from the MEHR stated that a case conference was organised by the HM involving several stakeholders. The Educational Psychologist has recommended that	Case filed

	classmates and disrupting the smooth functioning of the school.		the child undergoes a psychiatric assessment. Close monitoring of child will be ensured by HM at school. Misbehaviour of child would be immediately informed to Cluster Coordinator and School Inspector.	
3.MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL				
REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
48/9 F(86)	A complaint was made against a Headmaster, who reprimanded pupils of grade 5 for having changed the position of tables in the examination room. The problem of indiscipline at school, children deprived of their recreation time, regular absenteeism of oriental Educators were also addressed.	Letter sent to MEHR; 1st reminder sent to MEHR.	Letter from MEHR stated that most of the allegations are unfounded. The HM has set standards of performance and positive work environment at school. The HM has been briefed to ensure that Educators are sensitised on the use of mobile phone in schools. He has also been advised to hold regular meetings with both teaching and non-teaching staff to ensure synergy and communication.	Case filed
48/9 F(91)	A group of parents made a complaint regarding the performance of an Educator of Grade 5. She lacked	Letter sent to MEHR.	Letter from MEHR stated that the Inspectorate was required to investigate and report on the performance of the Educator. A decline in performance has	Case filed

	professionalism and engagement with her student and is often observed distracted by her mobile phone.		indeed been noted, however, this is not the only Grade 5 who has declined in performance. The Educator will be allocated Grade 6 but with a close monitoring by the Zone.	
PRO/ SCH/ 42/3 31	A father alleged that his child is facing harassment by teachers at school. There are several disciplinary issues at school where the children are blamed.	Letter sent to PSEA.	Letter dated from the PSEA stated that no case of students being stressed or having psychological issues has been reported to their office. The staff will be advised to ensure that they do not use harsh language while dealing with students in case of indiscipline. The Rector also held a meeting with the two Educators concerned in which the rights of the child and the child's dignity were outlined. Moreover, in case of misbehaviour, a Disciplinary Committee is held with all the Section Leaders, where the student is given the opportunity to talk to and provide an explanation for his/her actions. Moreover, upon advice of the Authority, the appellation "Name of Offender" was changed to "Name of Student and the term "Offense" was amended to "Misconduct" in all documents used to record cases of indiscipline	Case filed

4. SEXUAL ABUSE IN SCHOOLS

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
6213	A student complained to his parent and School Psychologist that he was bullied by an Educator who sends him out of the class several times and uses inappropriate language with sexual connotations.	Letter sent to the secondary school and copied to SEDEC.	Letter from St Joseph college stated that a letter of concern was given to the Educator; the school will ensure that the student is never again in the Educator's class; all classrooms doors have window panes; SeDEC has set up policy and procedures for all schools with regard to child safeguarding.	Case filed
Misc/ comp /197/3/T F(2)	The HM of a school reported that a student has been accused of misbehaving by touching a classmate inappropriately.	The Rector was advised to report this matter to the SEDEC for appropriate guidance and action.		Case filed

5. SCHOOL TRANSFER

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
6189	A mother stated that the school management requested her to change her son's school. He constantly disturbs the class and has a disruptive behaviour. However, there is no intake in schools at this	Letter sent to SeDEC requesting their collaboration. Investigator spoke to the mother and she informed that her son has been transferred to another school and is faring well.		Case filed

	point (third term). The child has lost his father and closed ones in less than 2 years. Life is tough on him			
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6.SCHOOL ABSENTEEISM/ LOITERING

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
6195	Child was rusticated several times for bullying and misbehaviour. He was transferred to another school and he absented from school regularly. He started befriending young persons who have bad reputations.	Letters send to CP, MGEFW, MEHR and Probation and Aftercare services.	Report from MGEFW stated that minor refused to attend to Child Protection Services and was referred to BPF. Report from MEHR stated that despite interventions and visits carried out by the Educational Social Workers of the Ministry, the mother informed that her ward is not willing to attend school and roams the neighbourhood. The Zone Directorate of the MEHR is following the matter. Second letter from MGEFW stated that the Probation has referred minor to the Ministry for consideration under the Child Mentoring scheme.	Follow up of the case is ongoing

7. HSC GRADING DISCREPENCIES

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
MISC/F(207)	A spokesperson, representing three HSC candidates, sent an email to the OOC raising concerns about what they believe to be inconsistencies in their grading for the 2023 exams. Despite strong performance across various components, the students are dissatisfied with their final results and are seeking clarification on the grading process. The spokesperson had written to MEHR and MES about this issue in March 2024, but as of today, no response has been received.	In a bid to ensure that these students receive a clear and thorough explanation regarding the grading discrepancies, the OOC wrote to the MEHR. The OOC requested that the MEHR liaise with the MES and reach out to the concerned candidates, providing clarification and a detailed explanation regarding the concerns raised in their correspondence.	In a correspondence dated 29.11.24, the MES provided clarification on this matter. A follow-up by the OOC revealed that neither the spokesperson nor the candidate had received any response regarding the issue to date. As a result, the OOC wrote to the MES, clarifying that it is the MES's responsibility to directly address matters with the concerned parties, which is why the OOC referred the issue to the MES for resolution. The OOC also highlighted the ethical importance of providing timely responses to individuals' queries.	Case filed

8.DISCRIMINATION AT SCHOOL

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
6248	A mother complained that her daughter is victim of discrimination at school because she is repeating her grade 9 class	Investigator spoke to the Rector stating that great caution should be exercised while talking to minor, such that she does not feel victimised. The mother was provided with the feedback.	Inv. spoke to the mother. She stated that thanks to the intervention of the OOC, the attitude of the Rector and Educators towards her daughter has changed positively.	Case filed

B. FAMILY PROBLEMS

1.BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
6201	A father, citizen of Mauritius born in Rodrigues, stated that he married a Malagasy woman civilly in Madagascar on 12.10.23. On 06.01.24, his wife applied for a temporary residence permit to enable her to stay in the country as the spouse of a citizen. They have a 7-months old daughter. The father complained that the mother has received a letter	Letter was sent to PIO.	Letter from PIO stated that the mother has made an appeal to reconsider the decision and same has been forwarded to the PMO for consideration. Investigator spoke to complainant who stated that his wife has been allowed to stay in Rodrigues for a period of 2 years.	Case filed

	by PIO to leave Mauritius forthwith. He stated that depriving the child of her mother goes against the best interests of the child.			
2.CHILD AT RISK				
REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
6218	The Manager of an NGO complained that she had sent to the CDU a case of her student, who has behavioural and sexual problems and might be at risk at his place. She wanted to be apprised of developments in this case	Letter sent to MGEFW	Letter from MGEFW stated that necessary intervention had been initiated by the CDU whereby minor and his brother reported having witnessed sexual interactions and violence between their mother and stepfather. The mother has acknowledged same and has been warned and counselled about the inappropriateness of such behaviour. Psychotherapy for minors and parenting effectiveness building for the parents have been initiated. The case was referred to BPF and Family Support Bureaux for other support services. Complainant was apprised of feedback.	Case filed
6208	A complainant reported that 2 children are physically abused by their father and stepmother.	This case was referred to the MGEFW & CP. A second letter was addressed to the MGEFW requesting for a	Following a follow-up call to the CDU, it was gathered that the children, along with their older sibling, had previously been placed in a shelter.	Follow up of the case is ongoing

	Additionally, it has been reported that their father neglects them, failing to provide the appropriate care and attention they need.	comprehensive report on this case.	However, it appears that the reintegration process was not properly carried out. Furthermore, the children's father and stepmother were unaware that both children were receiving treatment at the BSH while staying at the shelter. The Officer also stated that there are no immediate protection concerns, but the children have an unmet medical needs. Letter from MGE GW stated that the Ministry has taken note of the challenges and recommendations made and will deal with the case holistically with different stakeholders.	
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3. SEXUAL ABUSE IN FAMILY

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
6185	Complainant stated that minor was sexually abused by father. The child is admitted to hospital where the father works.	The Superintendent of the hospital was contacted to ensure that no contact is allowed between the victim and the alleged perpetrator.	As per latest report from MGEFW, the mother left for the country. Case is being tackled by the Police.	Case filed

6217	Child was victim of attempt upon chastity by her father. Child refuses to go with paternal grandmother and displays anxiety.	Correspondence sent to MGEFW requesting appropriate action with regards to this child.	Letter from MGEFW stated that psychological support was provided to minor. CP's report stated that enquiry is still in progress into the matter.	Case filed
6211	A complainant alleges that a mother is exploiting her daughter by forcing her to sleep with men, and in return, the mother receives money.	Letter sent to MGEFW & CP.	Report from the MGEFW stated that there was no child protection concerns and that minor is well looked after by her mum. The report from the CP corroborated with that of the MGEFW. The OOC apprised complainant of same accordingly.	Case filed
6219	Child was allegedly sexually abused by maternal uncle, Minor and her sibling were displaying sexualised behaviours.	Letter sent to MGEFW	Letter from MGEFW stated that the maternal uncle who reportedly molested minor does not live at maternal grandmother's place anymore and does not have any contact with the children. Psychotherapy is ongoing for both minors.	Case filed

4. PHYSICAL VIOLENCE/ASSAULT/DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/CONFLICTS

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
6222	Minor was allegedly physically assaulted by his brother-in-law.	Letter sent to MGEFW and copied to CP	Letter from MGEFW stated that minor was handed over to his mother in 2024 by the Children's Court after having stayed at the BSH for almost 2 years. The CDU carried out a follow up visit and minor has adapted well and is taking his medication.	Case filed
6244	A father stated that he is divorced from his wife and has custody of his 3 children. The father complained that since September 2024, his elder daughter has gone to stay at her mother's whereby she was spotted walking hand in hand with his ex-wife's concubine. The father has also retrieved several photos of his daughter in close proximity with the concubine. Despite that the case has been reported to the BPF, Police Station and CDU,	Referral letters were given to BPF and CDU through complainant. A letter was sent to MGEFW and cc to CDU. He stated that he has received a legal document informing that his estranged wife has applied for custody of minor and he was called to Court.	Report from the MGEFW stated that following intervention and assessment, it was gathered that minor is happy at her mother's place and wishes to stay with her. She also reported having a good relationship and bonding with her mother's partner and did not report any issues against him. The mother averred that her daughter and her partner shared a positive relationship, characterised by mutual respect. With regard to allegation concerning indecent videos and the partner entertaining strangers at their residence, they all denied the accusation. The mother was referred to the Legal Resource Person for advice as appropriate regarding custody	Follow up of the case is ongoing

	no concrete actions have been taken. He believed that his child is at risk.			
5.CHILD NEGLECT				
REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
OCO/ INV/ 469	The parents are separated, and a custody agreement was made in January 2023, where the children would stay with their father in the morning and mother in the afternoon. However, since March 2024, the father has not returned the children as agreed. The complainant claims the father is neglecting the children, leaving them in dirty diapers and feeding them mostly sausages and Coca-Cola while they are unwell. The main case was lodged in Court.	Under the Ombudsperson for Children Act, the OOC cannot investigate cases pending before Court. The complainant was advised to report the matter to the CDU for necessary actions and intervention		Case filed

6. PARENTAL ALIENATION/CUSTODY/CONTACT

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
File in Misc F(194)	The complainant is separated from his ex-wife and has the right to spend alternate weekends with their child, the minor. However, the ex-wife is not respecting this arrangement. The complainant reports that the minor gets stressed and upset when returning to his mother's home. With his lawyer's help, the complainant has filed a court case to resolve the issue.	The complainant was informed that the OOC does not intervene in court cases. Violations of court orders, like non-compliance with custody arrangements, are handled by the court. He was advised to report any suspected neglect or abuse to the Brigade pour la Protection de la Famille and the CDU.		Case filed
Referrals F(22)	The father is separated from the mother, and the children live with their mother. While the mother allows the children to visit their father, she does not let them see their paternal grandmother and aunt.	The father was advised to contact BPF for necessary intervention. The BPF can conduct counselling with the mother.		Case filed

6242	A father has been out of jail and wants to have the visit of his 2 children who have been under the responsibility of the CDU since 2021.	Investigator spoke to an Officer affected to the Foster Care Unit, MGEFW and referred to her the case to organise a visit between the father and his 2 children.	Complainant phoned to state that thanks to our intervention, he has been informed by the Foster Care Unit that he will visit his children on 31.01.25. Investigator spoke to complainant thereafter and latter stated that he was able to meet with his children and he informed that after a few months, he will seek for custody of the children in Court. He thanked our Office.	Case filed
6339	A mother reported that her children are yearning for physical contact with their father who is currently detained at a Prison.	Investigator spoke with an Officer at the Prison, who stated that physical contact between detainees and their families is generally not permitted, exceptions can be made under specific circumstances. He requested that a letter be sent to Commissioner of Prison. Letter sent to Commissioner of Prison on 05.06.25.	The mother phoned to state that thanks to the intervention of the OOC, her children have been able to have physical contact with their father at the prison and the children were very happy. Letter from the Commissioner of Prison dated 20.06.25 stated that contact visit was granted to minors in the presence of their mother on Tuesday 17.06.25 from 14.00hrs to 14.30hrs.	Case filed

7. INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
6200	In a statement made on a radio station, minor's mother, recounted that her daughter had ended her relationship with her partner, who did not accept the breakup and continued to stalk her. She reported having filed complaints with the police on several occasions, as well as CDU. The mother expressed concern that the authorities did not take the young man's threats seriously, despite her numerous reports.	Letter sent to the MGEFW and the CP regarding the alleged failure to provide protection to the child.	Report from the MGEFW stated that a minor was referred to them for displaying behavioural issues. Counselling and advice were provided. After an assault by the partner, ongoing counselling and support were given to both the minor and the family. The CDU also coordinated with the school Rector to ensure that the minor received all necessary support. Report from the CP stated that there is case of causing child to be sexually abused and attempt at murder against the partner. Enquiry is ongoing.	Case filed

8. POVERTY

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
6240	A group of neighbours complained that 9 persons, including 5 adults and 4 grandchildren are living in a rented single-room flat of 10x10 ft which is causing inconvenience to them and that the children do not have any space for recreation nor they attend school regularly.	Letter sent to MGEFW, cc to CDU and to NEF.	Letter from MGEFW dated 19.02.25 stated that further to psychosocial assessment carried out by the Child Protection Services, it has been found that the family, comprising of 3 adult women and 4 children ranging from 2 to 10 years, occupy a single room, which is indeed small for so many persons. However, the children were found to be healthy and their health cards are up to date. They also attend school regularly and perform well academically. Basic amenities were available in the house and it was clean at the time of the home assessment. The family has been referred to the NEF and the Social Security Office for other support services. Letter from NEF stated that the family is not registered under the SRM. accordingly she has been advised to attend the nearest Social Security Office to register under the SRM so that her household may benefit from support of the Foundation, upon determination of eligibility.	Case filed

C. PROBLEMS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE INSTITUTIONS

1. VANDALISM

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
OCO/ SHELT/ PARADIS/ 50/7	A residential care institution was vandalised by the inmates. They threatened to assault the staff, jeopardising the security of babies.	Correspondence to the MGEFW and NCC urging that the situation be remedied in terms of conditions of placement and support that the children benefit from. The facility should be equipped with well-trained staff.	Shelter has been closed since 05.06.25. 6 caregivers were suspended and minors have been deployed in another shelter.	Case filed
6257	A lady complained that her sister of 16 years old has been sexually abused by 2 children in an RCI.	Letters sent to MGEFW and CP.	A correspondence from the Managing Director of SOS Children's Village provided a full incident assessment report and Action Plan designed by SOS Children's Villages Child Safeguarding Committee. They have taken more stringent measures inasmuch as the supervision of inmates are concerned. Letter from the CP stated that Minor was admitted to PMOC and was thereafter transferred to BSH. The statements of alleged minor perpetrators were recorded. Being given that minor's biological parents cannot stand as her guardian as there is a case against them, the Children's Court was apprised for the	Case filed

			appointment of a guardian to assist her for enquiry. Correspondence from MGEFW stated that a 'Guardian Ad Litem' has been appointed by the Children's Court in favour of minor and her recording of statement is still pending at the level of the enquiry officer of the Police. The MGEFW has also taken cognizance of the changes that Director of the RCI would bring in, in terms of re-engineering of the placement and rehabilitation of minors, in addition to containers present within the premises of the shelter.	
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D. INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
6069	Children admitted at the hospital, stay there for indefinite period of time after discharge by the treating doctor. Certain children are abandoned by parents. Others have been admitted by residential care institution where the children have been placed by the CDU. Upon discharge, the RCI refuse to take them back because they display violent behaviours.	Enquiry has been initiated on each case, urging the CDU to find a solution for the children as the latter cannot live at the hospital. Children were placed back in the RCI. Others have been placed at the Probation Hostel.		Case filed
6129	An NGO is complaining about incomplete drainage system which stop abruptly halfway instead of connecting to the riverbanks. This is causing a danger to the property and public health hazards for the area.	Investigator wrote to the NGO to state that this matter is more of an administrative nature and does not fall explicitly under the mandate of the OOC.		Case filed

6385	A Police Sergeant complained that minors are living in deplorable living conditions at the juvenile detention centre.	Field visit was carried out to the Juvenile Detention Centre. Letter sent to CP.		Case filed
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E. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
6204	Minor is visually impaired and encountered significant challenges during her SC Examinations. A scheduling conflict between her 3 exams papers, which was reported to the MES. Despite efforts to resolve this issue, the final timetable required Minor to take her 3 papers back-to-back on the same day, creating considerable difficulties given her situation. The mother requested that this is taken into consideration when her papers are corrected.	Letter sent to Mauritius Examination Syndicate. It was recommended that minor's specific vulnerabilities and trauma experienced on the exam's day is taken into consideration and that her performance is assessed fairly.		Follow up of the case is ongoing

6190	SENA Teacher Assistant complained about child being neglected and victimised by class Educator.	Letter sent to SENA.	Letter from SENA stated that a subsequent follow up made by the Paramedical Team, recommendations were made: minor has been referred to an Educational Psychologist for further assessment; the case was referred to the Allied Health Professional Unit for Occupational and Speech Therapy. A reassessment is to be conducted in April 2026 to determine whether the learner can follow the academic program independently.	Follow up of the case is ongoing
6243	Parents complained that their child, suffering from autism does not have a carer at school as the latter is on maternity leave. Despite requests made to the SENA several times, no actions were taken. Upon a follow up call by Investigator, she was apprised that the problem of carer has been solved, however the parents were requesting for a Teacher Assistant.	Letter sent to MEHR, cc to SENA.	Letter from MEHR stated that the carer of Minor was on maternity leave until 11 March 2025. She resumed duty on 13 March 2025. The Head of Riviere des Anguilles SENRDC delegated a Carer as from 25.01.25 until 11.03.25. SENA has also informed that the allocation of Teacher Assistant depends on the recommendations of the Paramedics. The recruitment exercise for the post of Teacher Assistant and Carer have not yet been effected. Once Teacher Assistants and Carers will be recruited, selected candidates will be posted by region accordingly, depending	Case filed

			on the report from the Paramedics. Parents were informed accordingly.	
6306	A mother alleged that her daughter who has special need, has been denied her right to education and to live and learn like other children in her class. Despite the existence of an inclusive education policy, Minor has reportedly faced ongoing humiliation and discrimination at school from her Assistant Teacher and the HM. Minor was being taught by her mother (who was also her carer) at the corridor of the school for 2 years.	Letter sent to MEHR, HM and MGEFW. A field visit was carried out at the school. A mediation exercise was organised chaired by the OC. A letter was sent to MEHR. Inv. spoke to the HM on who stated that minor would reintegrate her classroom and that the MEHR would bring adapted chair and desk by this week and an officer had taken measurement to place a ramp at the school. Follow up is being done at the school.	Email from HM stated that minor was admitted to the school in June 2023. Minor has a severe handicap. She cannot hold a pencil and cannot respond to any question directed to her. The mother was appointed as carer by SENA. She was allowed to stay in class with pupils and teacher. Since the beginning the mother has allegedly been creating problems for class teachers and disrupting administrative work with endless complaints. For the past 2 years, Mrs. Mohan refused to let her child stay in the classroom, arguing that the Teacher Assistant has threatened her.	Awaiting report/ Follow up of the case is ongoing
6389	A mother complained that her son has been removed from school on the instruction of the Director as he is "not normal"	Investigator requested the mother to send an official correspondence. A letter was sent to ECCEA		Awaiting report

F. TARDY DECLARATION

1. PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CARE

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
6215	The medical social worker reported that a baby, who is now 10 months old, has not yet been officially declared. The baby's mother, a teenager, was informed and sensitised on the steps required for the declaration, but no action has been taken so far. Currently, the baby is being cared for by the teenager's aunt, who is willing to adopt the child. Despite multiple attempts to contact the teenager regarding the baby's declaration, she has remained unresponsive.	A letter was addressed to the MGEFW & CP for a report on this case and on actions being taken to address the teenager's situation. A first reminder was also sent to the MGEFW and CP.	Report from the MGEFW stated that the advice were tendered to the parents about tardy declaration, but the parents are not making concrete efforts to do so. The Ministry only handles cases of tardy declaration of birth of children under its responsibility and placed in RCIs or registered foster care families who are under Court Order. Parents whose children are not declared are referred to District Court to initiate procedures to declare their child.	Awaiting report

G. INFORMAL GUARDIANSHIP & LEGAL AUTHORISATION

1. CHILD WELFARE AND CARE

REF	Nature of complaint	Action(s) taken by the OOC	Outcome/Follow up	Case Status
Ref F(23)	A paternal aunt has been caring for minor since the death of the child's mother and the father's imprisonment. She now wishes to open a bank account for the minor. The father has sent a letter authorising the aunt to open the account, but it does not have an official stamp from the prison.	The aunt was advised to make an official register at her local police station to certify that she is caring for the minor. She was also advised to have the father's letter stamped by the prison authorities. Only then will she be able to open a bank account. If she faces any difficulties in opening the account, she should contact the OOC for further assistance.	Report from the MGEFW stated that the advice were tendered to the parents about tardy declaration, but the parents are not making concrete efforts to do so. The Ministry only handles cases of tardy declaration of birth of children under its responsibility and placed in RCIs or registered foster care families who are under Court Order. Parents whose children are not declared are referred to District Court to initiate procedures to declare their child.	Case filed

Chapter 9

Call for Action: Advancing the Children's Agenda

"It takes a whole village to raise a child."
- An African Proverb



(Image Source: Lawnn.com)

A Plea for Our Children: Time for Decisive Action in Mauritius

As we reflect on the advancements made in the protection and promotion of children's rights, it is critical that we do not lose sight of the pressing issues that continue to affect our most vulnerable population. The voices of my predecessors have provided clear, thoughtful recommendations that remain relevant and essential for strengthening the child protection framework in Mauritius. It is time for us to take bold and decisive actions to implement these recommendations in order to fulfil our collective responsibility to our children.

This chapter addresses key areas where reform is necessary. Most of these recommendations have repeatedly been made in previous annual reports, they offer practical, rights-based solutions to enhance child protection, well-being, and rights in Mauritius. They are being reiterated in this Annual report as they can be easily implemented with some restructuring.

1. Creating a Lifeline: The One-Stop-Shop for Child Protection

The establishment of a 'One-Stop-Shop' for child victims of abuse is crucial to improving the coordination and delivery of services. As recommended in the 2018-2019 Annual Report of the Ombudsperson for Children, we must integrate child protection services across various agencies and sectors. Drawing inspiration from the model of the 'One-Stop-Shop' in Rodrigues, it is imperative that all Child Development Unit (CDU) outstations be transformed into integrated zonal child protection hubs. These hubs should house representatives from all relevant agencies working on child protection, thus facilitating effective communication and a more holistic approach to cases of child abuse, both routine and emergency. By doing so, we can ensure that the needs of children are met efficiently and in a timely manner, without unnecessary delays or fragmentation of services.

(Source: Ombudsperson for Children Annual Report 2018-2019)

2. Ensuring Justice with Dignity: Addressing Systemic Gaps in the Handling of Child Sexual Abuse Cases

In accordance with Section 5(a) of the Ombudsperson for Children's Act 2003, which mandates the Ombudsperson to "ensure that the rights, needs and interests of children are given full consideration by public bodies, private authorities, individuals and associations of individuals," it is imperative to urgently address the procedural shortcomings that continue to impact children who are victims of sexual abuse.

It is crucial to reiterate that investigations into child sexual abuse cases must maintain a **child-rights-focused approach**. The primary emphasis should be on thoroughly investigating the offence itself, rather than on discrediting the victim, which regrettably often leads to secondary victimisation and further trauma to vulnerable children.

Children who have experienced sexual abuse, along with their families, are in a deeply vulnerable psychological and emotional state. It is essential that systems and professionals respond with empathy, efficiency, and coordination. To this end, the following measures must be implemented without delay:

- **Fast-tracking of child sexual abuse cases** within the judicial system to minimise prolonged exposure to stress and uncertainty;
- **Introduction of multi-disciplinary case management**, ensuring coordinated efforts among police, the Child Development Unit (CDU), prosecutors, health professionals, and psychological services;
- **Adoption of one-time, video-recorded child interviews**, recognised as admissible in court proceedings. This prevents repeated questioning and significantly reduces trauma for the child;
- **Mandatory child-sensitive training and capacity building** for professionals interacting with child victims, including law enforcement, social workers, and court personnel.

Video-recorded interviews, in particular, stand out as a highly effective and internationally endorsed tool for protecting children from further harm. These recordings can be submitted directly to judicial authorities, enabling the child's voice to be heard while eliminating the need for multiple appearances or relating traumatic events several times.

Addressing these issues is not just a legal or procedural necessity; it is a moral and societal obligation. Our justice and protection systems must be reformed to work for, not against, the children they are meant to serve.

3. Empowering Young Minds: Comprehensive Sexuality Education

The importance of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) cannot be overstated. As highlighted in the 2019-2020 Annual Report (OC, 2020), CSE provides a rights-based approach to youth sexuality education, which can empower children to understand their rights, bodies, and relationships. I will further recommend the introduction of gender

equality and respect education from early grades, as part of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). This education should be made compulsory for all students from Grades 1 to 13 (obviously in a staggered manner suitable for the different age groups), incorporating topics such as online sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as sexual violence! Such a curriculum should involve educators, parents, health professionals, and other relevant stakeholders to create an inclusive and collaborative approach. By equipping children with the knowledge and tools to protect themselves, we can build a safer society and foster healthier attitudes towards sexuality in Mauritius.

(Source: Ombudsperson for Children Annual Report 2019-2020)

4. Creating Truly Safe Schools: A Comprehensive Approach to Eradicating Bullying and Violence

The safety and well-being of children within school walls are non-negotiable. Bullying and violence cast a long shadow, hindering their ability to learn and thrive. To truly address these issues at a systemic level, a multi-faceted approach that goes beyond simply punishing the aggressor is crucial.

The strategy must include:

- **Developing thoughtful action plans:** When bullying occurs, the response must be more than just punitive. Action plans for disciplining bullies that also delve into the underlying reasons for their behaviour and focus on positive change must be considered.
- **Establishing clear and safe reporting channels:** Children need multiple avenues to report bullying without fear of reprisal. This includes designated school counsellors they can trust, confidential online platforms, and accessible hotlines.
- **Ensuring child-friendly reporting:** The entire reporting process must be easy for children to understand and navigate. They must feel safe, believed, and fully supported when they come forward.
- **Empowering bystanders to act:** A crucial element of prevention is equipping students with the skills and confidence to safely and responsibly intervene when they witness bullying. Schools should actively teach bystander intervention strategies.
- **Investing in teacher expertise:** The educators are on the front lines. Comprehensive training on how to identify, prevent, and address bullying is essential. Thus dedicated bullying modules must be introduced in teacher training programs at all levels – primary, secondary, and tertiary – ensuring all educators are well-prepared.
- **Healing and Restoration:** Providing access to counselling and therapy for both those who bully and those who are victimised is vital. This restorative approach helps address the root causes of bullying and promotes healing for everyone involved.
- **National Framework and Potential Legislation:** To create lasting change, a

robust National Bullying Programme is needed. Furthermore, enacting relevant legislation must be seriously considered to establish clear guidelines, structures, and accountability for managing and preventing bullying effectively across the nation. Alongside this, national awareness campaigns are crucial for long-term prevention.

- **Prompt and Effective Response:** When bullying incidents are reported, swift and effective action is paramount. This includes thorough investigations, appropriate interventions, and comprehensive support for the victims.
- **Ongoing Education and Awareness:** Regular educational programs for students, teachers, and parents are essential to raise awareness about bullying, its devastating impact, and how all concerned stakeholders can work together to prevent it.
- **Cultivating a Culture of Kindness:** Ultimately, a school culture that deeply values empathy, respect, and inclusion must be fostered. This culture must actively challenge bullying behaviour and celebrate kindness and understanding.

By implementing these comprehensive measures, we can move beyond simply reacting to bullying and instead create school environments where every child feels safe, respected, and empowered to learn.

(Source: Ombudsperson for Children Annual Report 2016-2017)

5. The Critical Need for Specialised Therapeutic Residential Care for Children with Mental Health Issues

Providing appropriate care and support for children with mental health issues demands the establishment of specialised therapeutic facilities. These children have unique needs that often exceed the capacity and expertise of standard residential care settings. As previously recommended by my predecessors, creating a dedicated residential mental healthcare facility in Mauritius is not merely advisable, but a critical necessity. Such a facility would serve as a sanctuary, offering individualised, therapeutic care within a genuinely supportive environment, fostering the healthy development these vulnerable children deserve.

Key Reasons for a Specialised Facility:

- **Specialised Expertise and Training:** Residential care institutions (RCIs) staff and officers of the Child Development Unit typically lack the in-depth knowledge and clinical skills to effectively manage complex childhood mental health conditions. Specialised facilities would employ multidisciplinary teams of psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health nurses, and therapists specifically trained in this area.
- **Tailored Therapeutic Milieu:** Children with mental health need to thrive in therapeutic environments designed to promote emotional safety, stability, and healing. This includes smaller, more intimate living units (5-8 children proposed) to minimise overstimulation and enhance predictability and support, as well as separate units for boys and girls to address specific developmental and emotional considerations.
- **Personalised Care Plans:** Unlike the often-generalised approach of standard residential care, children with mental health conditions require individualised care plans. These plans would integrate specific psychological therapies, alternative therapies, and consistent psychiatric monitoring, subject to regular review and adjustment based on the child's progress.

- **Effective Management of Challenging Behaviours:** Children with mental health issues may exhibit behaviours that staff of RCIs find difficult to manage and that can disrupt or harm other children residents. A specialised facility would equip staff with training in de-escalation, crisis intervention, and strategies to understand the underlying causes of these behaviours, focusing on skills deficits and distress rather than simple labels.
- **Seamless Integration of Mental Health Services:** A specialised setting allows for the seamless integration of essential mental health services, including therapy, medication management, and crisis support, as a routine part of care – a coordination often challenging in RCIs.
- **Trauma-Informed Approach:** Recognising the prevalence of trauma in the histories of children with mental health issues, specialised facilities are designed to be trauma-informed. This approach prioritises safety, trust, and empowerment in all interactions and interventions.
- **Prioritising Family Involvement and Community Reintegration:** While providing specialised care, these facilities would actively involve families in the treatment process and work towards the child's successful reintegration into the community through collaborations with schools, healthcare providers, and other community resources.
- **Combating Stigma:** By establishing a dedicated and professional environment for mental health care, such facilities can play a vital role in reducing the stigma associated with mental illness within the wider community.

The Inadequacies of General Residential Care:

- Lack of the necessary specialised staff training and expertise to effectively manage complex mental health needs.
- Significant difficulty in providing truly individualised and effective therapeutic interventions.
- Increased potential for stress and burnout among general care staff who are not equipped for these challenges.
- The risk of negative impacts on the well-being and safety of other children residing in the facility.
- An inherent inability to consistently create a truly therapeutic environment tailored to the specific needs of children with significant mental health challenges.

6. A Bridge to the Future: Reintegration and Follow-Up for Children Leaving Care

For children who have been placed in Residential Care Institutions (RCIs), the process of reintegration into society must be carefully monitored and supported. The transition out of care can be a challenging experience for children, and without the proper follow-up, there is a risk of them falling through the cracks. It is essential to establish a comprehensive follow-up system to ensure that children are reintegrated successfully into their families or communities and that they receive ongoing support to build a stable and fulfilling life. Presently, to my knowledge there exists only one NGO which has come up with a Half -way home for the girls leaving RCIs at the age of 18 years. It is therefore essential that a system of halfway homes and community reintegration services be developed and expanded.

7. A Voice for the Voiceless: Creating the Role of a Child Advocate

A critical gap in our child protection system is the lack of dedicated professionals to represent and fight for the rights of children during legal proceedings. As recommended in the 2018-2019 Annual Report, creating the role of a 'Child Advocate' would be a game-changer in ensuring that children's rights are upheld throughout the legal process. These dedicated professionals would provide vital support to child victims, advocate fiercely on their behalf, and ensure their voices are truly heard in court. This role would also help to make our legal system more sensitive to the unique needs of child victims, safeguarding their well-being at every step.

(Source: Ombudsperson for Children Annual Report 2018-2019)

8. Policy formulation and intervention for Children with Disabilities aged 3 to 5 years

Recent cases received at the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children have highlighted a critical gap in the early childhood education and care framework for children with disabilities, particularly those aged between three and five years. Under the current Child Day Care Centre Regulations 2022, daycare attendance is restricted to children under three. It seems that other existing institutions do not adequately cater to the specific needs of children with disabilities, aged between three and five. This leaves children with disabilities in a service vacuum during a key developmental period. Parents of these children face immense difficulties in finding suitable facilities or programs that can address the developmental, educational, and care needs of their children. The lack of a cohesive policy exacerbates the risk of exclusion and inequity for children with disabilities, which contravenes international commitments. In this regard, the Ministry of Education and Human Resource is urged to:

- formulate a targeted policy framework addressing the needs of children with disabilities aged three to five years. This policy should bridge the current gap and ensure continuity of care and education for this age group.
- Adopt a multi-stakeholder approach by collaborating with all stakeholders including the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, the Special Education Needs Authority, the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority, healthcare professionals, NGOs, and parents to design and implement inclusive programs and services. The involvement of all stakeholders will ensure that the policy reflects the practical realities and needs of children and their families.

Addressing this gap is imperative to uphold the principles of equity, inclusion, and dignity enshrined in the UNCRC.

9. Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: The Urgent Need for Policy and Legal Frameworks

In today's interconnected world, technology has become both a tool for empowerment and a platform for exploitation. The rise of digital platforms has unfortunately coincided with an alarming increase in technology-facilitated gender-based violence (GBV), particularly among youth. This form of violence encompasses cyberbullying, online harassment, sexual exploitation, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

According to UNICEF:

- One in five girls globally experiences some form of online sexual harm before the age of 18.
- Over 650 million women and girls have experienced either physical or non-contact forms of sexual violence, including online harassment.(UNICEF, 2023)

While specific local statistics are limited, the global trends are mirrored in Mauritius. The increasing use of digital platforms among young people has led to a rise in incidents of online harassment and exploitation. The anonymity provided by the internet often emboldens perpetrators, making it challenging to address and prevent such abuses.

The current legal and policy frameworks in Mauritius are insufficient to combat technology-facilitated GBV effectively. There is an urgent need to:

- Develop legal definitions and criminal penalties for TFGBV, including AI-generated content
- Develop comprehensive policies that address online safety and digital rights for children and youth.
- Implement legal measures that criminalise technology-facilitated GBV and ensure perpetrators are held accountable.
- Educate young people, parents, and educators about the risks of online platforms and the importance of digital literacy.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer digital environment for our youth and uphold their rights in both the physical and digital realms.

10. Reimagining Shelters

As we present this annual report, it is crucial to re-emphasise the unique vulnerability of children in residential care institutions. These children, often separated from their families due to complex circumstances, rely entirely on the state and designated caregivers for their safety, education, and emotional growth. Therefore, the quality and appropriateness of care within these institutions must be a perpetual priority. We must redouble our efforts to ensure these environments are truly therapeutic, protective, and conducive to a child's holistic development.

11.A Critical Knowledge Gap: Call for a Study on the Impact of Domestic Violence on Children

Domestic violence remains a pervasive and deeply damaging issue, with children often caught in the crossfire, either as direct victims or witnesses. Despite growing recognition of the harmful effects of domestic abuse on children's emotional, psychological, and developmental well-being, there is a critical lack of systematic research and data specific to Mauritius. This knowledge gap hampers the ability of policymakers and practitioners to develop evidence-based interventions that adequately address children's needs in these contexts. UNICEF's report *Behind Closed Doors: The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children* (2006) emphasises the urgent necessity for governments to undertake comprehensive studies on how domestic violence affects children and to incorporate findings into child protection policies and programmes. This call for a dedicated study complements and reinforces the broader action areas outlined in this chapter namely, the urgent

need to strengthen child protection services, reform the justice system, implement comprehensive sexuality education, and address technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Each of these reforms is interconnected, and together they form a holistic approach to safeguarding children's rights and well-being in Mauritius. By filling this critical knowledge gap, we can ensure that policies and practices are grounded in robust evidence and tailored to the lived realities of our most vulnerable children, ultimately enabling more effective protection and support.

Conclusion: A Collective Responsibility

The recommendations outlined above have been/are made and are being reiterated, these are not merely suggestions they are urgent calls for action that must be addressed in a timely and effective manner. The well-being of our children cannot wait. It is our shared duty – government, NGOs, educational institutions, and every member of society – to make these changes a reality. By doing so, we will build a safer, more supportive Mauritius for our children, a place where their rights are respected, their voices are valued, and their futures are protected.

Let us not only reflect on the progress we've made but also commit ourselves, with renewed energy, to the vital work that still lies ahead. Together, we can forge a future where every child in Mauritius is safe, supported, and empowered to reach his/her full potential.

WE MUST ACT NOW AND TOGETHER

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ANFEN	Adolescent Non-Formal Education Network
BNLTH	Bureau National de Lutte contre la Traite des Êtres Humains de Madagascar
CERT-MU	Computer Emergency Response Team of Mauritius
CNIDH	Commission Nationale Independante des Droits de l'Homme de Madagascar
COP	Conference of the Parties
COPPA	Children's Online Privacy Protection Act
CP	Commissioner of Police
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
ECCEA	Early Childhood Care and Education Authority
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
ICTA	Information and Communication Technologies Authority
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MAUCORS	Mauritian Cybercrime Online Reporting System
MEHR	Ministry of Education, Human Resources
MGEFW	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
MIE	Mauritius Institute of Education
MITD	Mauritius Institute of Training and Development
NCE	National Certificate of Education
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NSIF	National Social Inclusion Foundation
PSAC	Primary School Achievement Certificate
SEN	Special Education Needs
SENA	Special Education Needs Authority
SID	Safer Internet Day
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRC	United Nations Resident Coordinator

ANNEXES

OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN ACT

Act 41 of 2003 – 20 November 2003

Annex A

Am 13/20 (cio 24/1/22);

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

1. Short title
2. Interpretation
3. Establishment of office of Ombudsperson for Children
4. Appointment of Ombudsperson for Children
5. Objects of office of Ombudsperson for Children
6. Functions of Ombudsperson for Children
7. Investigation
8. Protection of witnesses
9. Protection from liability
10. Staff of Ombudsperson for Children
11. Report of Ombudsperson for Children
- 11A. Offences
12. Regulations
13. Schedule

1. Short title

This Act may be cited as the Ombudsperson for Children Act.

2. Interpretation

“African Charter” means the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;
[Inserted 13/20 (cio 24/1/22).]

“child” means a person under the age of 18;

“Convention” means the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989;

“Minister” means the Minister to whom responsibility for the subject of child development is assigned;

“Ombudsperson for Children” means the Ombudsperson for Children whose office is established under section 3;

“public body” means—

- (a) a Ministry or Government Department;
- (b) a local authority;
- (c) a statutory corporation;
- (d) any other company, partnership or other entity of which Government is, by the holding of shares or some other financial input, or in any other manner, in a position to influence the policy or decision of such body.

[S. 2 amended by s. 73 of Act 13 of 2020 w.e.f. 24 January 2022.]

3. Establishment of office of Ombudsperson for Children

- (1) There is established for the purposes of this Act the office of Ombudsperson for Children.
- (2) The Ombudsperson for Children shall be a person who has a wide knowledge of the issues and the law relating to children in Mauritius.
- (3) The Ombudsperson for Children shall take before the President the oath specified in the Schedule before assuming the duties of his office.

4. Appointment of Ombudsperson for Children

- (a) The Ombudsperson for Children shall be appointed by the President of the Republic, acting after consultation with the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Minister and such other persons as he considers appropriate.
- (b) An appointment under subsection (1) shall be subject to such terms and conditions as the President may determine.

- (3) The Ombudsperson for Children shall hold office for 4 years and shall be eligible for reappointment for only a second term of 4 years.
- (d) The President may remove the Ombudsperson for Children from office for inability to perform the functions of his office, whether arising from infirmity of body and mind or any other cause, or for misbehaviour.
- (e) The Ombudsperson for Children shall not engage in any trade, business, profession or political activity.

6. Objects of office of Ombudsperson for Children

The Ombudsperson for Children shall—

- (a) ensure that the rights, needs and interests of children are given full consideration by public bodies, private authorities, individuals and associations of individuals;
- (b) promote the rights and best interests of children;
- (c) promote compliance with the [Convention and the African Charter](#). [Amended 13/20 (cio 24/1/22).]

[S 5 amended by s. 73 of Act 13 of 2020 w.e.f. 24 January 2022.]

6. Functions of Ombudsperson for Children

In carrying out the duties of his office, the Ombudsperson for Children shall—

- (a) make proposals to the Minister on legislation, policies and practices regarding services to, or the rights of, children;
- (b) advise the Minister on public and private residential placement facilities and shelters established for the benefit of children;
- (c) advise public bodies and other institutions responsible for providing care and other services to children on the protection of the rights of children;
- (d) take such steps as he may deem necessary to ensure that children under the care of, or supervision of, a public body are treated fairly, properly and adequately;
- (e) propose measures to ensure that the legal rights of children in care are protected and that the placement facilities promote the safety of children and conform with such norms as the Ombudsperson for Children may, from time to time, recommend;
- (f) initiate an investigation whenever the Ombudsperson for Children considers that there is, has been or is likely to be a violation of the rights of a child;
- (g) investigate cases relating to the situation of children in the family, in schools and in all other institutions, including private or public bodies, as well as cases of abandoned children or street children;
- (h) investigate any suspected or reported case of child labour;
- (i) investigate any case concerning a child who is a citizen of Mauritius and who may

be abroad at the time of the investigation, or a child who is not a citizen of Mauritius but who is residing in Mauritius;

- (j) investigate complaints made by a child, or any other person, in relation to the rights of any child;
- (k) advise the Minister on the establishment of mechanisms to afford children the ability to express themselves freely, according to their age and maturity, especially on all matters concerning their individual or collective rights;
- (l) advise the Minister on the creation of partnerships with parents, teachers, non-governmental as well as governmental organisations, local authorities and any other stakeholders committed to the promotion of children's rights.

7. Investigation

- (1) Where the Ombudsperson for Children considers, either upon complaint made to him or on his own motion, that it is necessary to investigate a matter relating to the rights of a child, the Ombudsperson for Children shall investigate the complaint in such manner as he considers appropriate.
- (2) For the purposes of an investigation under this Act, the Ombudsperson for Children may—
 - (a) request any person, including any public officer, to provide information
 - (b) enter premises where—
 - (i) a child is present, either temporarily or permanently, including an educational or health institution and a place of detention, in order to study the environment of such a place and assess its suitability;
 - (ii) a child may be in employment;
 - (iii) there is reasonable ground to believe that the moral and physical safety of a child may be in danger;"
 - (c) request the Commissioner of Police to enquire and report to the Ombudsperson for Children on any allegation relating to the breach of the rights of a child;
 - (d) enter any licensed premises where the Ombudsperson for Children suspects that alcohol and tobacco may be handled, consumed or purchased by children;
 - (e) record the statement of any person in connection with an investigation;
 - (f) request the assistance of the Commissioner of Police and the officer-in-charge of any public body or institution, as the case may be, to facilitate any entry and effect, where appropriate, any seizure pursuant to paragraphs (b) and (d);
 - (g) summon witnesses and examine them on oath;

- (h) call for the production of any document or other exhibit; and
 - (i) obtain such information, file or other record, upon application to the Judge in Chambers whenever necessary under any law, as may be required for the investigation.
- (3) Following an investigation under subsection (1), the Ombudsperson for Children shall—
- (a) act as a mediator to resolve any dispute relating to the rights of the child;
 - (b) make a report to such person or authority as the Ombudsperson for Children considers appropriate;
 - (c) make proposals of a general nature to the Minister on any matter which may have arisen in the course of the investigation.
- (4) The Ombudsperson for Children shall not investigate any case which is pending before any Court but may refer any child involved in such a case to the Ministry for advice, assistance or counselling.

[S. 7 amended by s. 3 of Act 8 of 2005.]

8. Protection of witnesses

Notwithstanding any enactment, no statement made in good faith by any person by way of a written complaint, or by the giving in writing of a statement made in the course of an investigation, to the Ombudsperson for Children, or any member of the staff of the Ombudsperson for Children, shall subject the maker of the statement to, or be used against him in, any civil or criminal proceedings.

9. Protection from liability

No liability, civil or criminal, shall lie against the Ombudsperson for Children, or any member of the staff of the Ombudsperson for Children, in respect of anything which is done, or purported to be done, in good faith under this Act or in respect of the publication, by or under the authority of the Ombudsperson for Children, of any report, proceedings or other matter under this Act.

10. Staff of Ombudsperson for Children

The Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service shall make available to the Ombudsperson for Children such administrative and other staff as the Ombudsperson for Children may require.

11. Report of Ombudsperson for Children

(1) The Ombudsperson for Children shall, not later than 30 September in each year, submit a report on its activities during the preceding year, to the President.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), the Ombudsperson for Children may at any other time, submit a special report on any matter which, in his opinion, is of such urgency or importance that it should not be delayed until submission of an annual report to the President.

(3) The President shall cause every report sent to him under this section to be laid before the Assembly within one month of its submission.

11A. Offences

(1) A person shall commit an offence—

(a) where he—

- (i) fails to attend before the Ombudsperson for Children;
- (ii) refuses to take the oath before the Ombudsperson for Children; or
- (iii) wilfully refuses to furnish any information or to produce any document, record, file or exhibit, when required to do so under section 7;

(b) where he—

- (i) refuses to answer to the best of his knowledge any question lawfully put to him by the Ombudsperson for Children; or
- (ii) knowingly gives to the Ombudsperson for Children false evidence or evidence which he knows to be misleading, in connection with an investigation under section 7;

(c) where at any sitting held for the purposes of an investigation under section 7, he—

- (i) insults the Ombudsperson for Children; or
- (ii) wilfully interrupts the proceedings.

(2) Any person who commits an offence under this section shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding 10,000 rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months.

[S. 11A inserted by s. 4 of Act 8 of 2005.]

12. Regulations

The Minister may—

- (a) make such regulations as he thinks fit for the purposes of this Act;
- (b) after consultation with the Ombudsperson for Children, make regulations for the purpose of regulating the procedure to be applied for the investigation of complaints by the Ombudsperson for Children.

13. — Schedule

[Section 3]

I having been appointed to be the Ombudsperson for Children under the Ombudsperson for Children Act do swear/solemnly affirm that I shall faithfully, impartially and to the best of my ability discharge the trust and perform the duties devolving upon me by such appointment and that I shall not, without reasonable cause, disclose any information imparted to me in the performance of such duties.

(S)

Before me,

Date:

(S)

President of the Republic

ANNEX B

TABLE OF ACTIVITIES

WORKSHOPS/ MEETINGS/ ACTIVITIES ATTENDED BY STAFF OF THE OOC (SEP 2024 – AUG 2025)

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ MEETINGS/ ACTIVITIES	ORGANISER/ VENUE (S)	PARTICIPATION OF OC/ OOC'S STAFF
1.	17.09.24 & 26.09.24	Workshop on 'Professional Development Training for Caregivers in Residential Care Institutions (RCIs)	MIE Réduit	Mrs S.J, Inv
2.	01.10.24	Meeting with President of the Republic of Mauritius in connection with Annual Report of the OC	Office of the President State House Réduit	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec Mr I.A.B, Inv
3.	03.10.24	Deuxième Edition 2024 de la journée du droit dans le réseau	Institut Français de Maurice Rose Hill	Mrs A.G, OC
4.	05.10.24	Teacher's Day Celebration	SENA MGI Auditorium, Moka	Mrs A.G, OC
5.	09.10.24	Lancement de « Galimatias », un récit de Kinsley David (violence domestique sur les enfants)	Edition Léko Hennessy Park Ebène	Mrs A.G, OC (<i>Guest of honour</i>)
6.	18.10.24	Talk in connection with children's rights and parental responsibility	Monad Charity Eau Coulée	Mrs S.J, Inv
7.	23.10.24 & 24.10.24	2-days training for professionals profiling Paedophiles and Intervention Strategies for the Victims	Pédostop Caudan Arts Centre Port Louis	Mr I.A.B, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv Mrs B.J, Inv
8.	29.10.24	Launch of UNESCO Island watch project in Mauritius and the celebrations of the UN Day	New Academic Complex, UoM Lecture Theatre 1 Réduit	Mrs A.G, OC
9.	03.11.24	Commemoration of the forcible removal of the Chagossian community from the Chagos Archipelagos	Chagos Monument, Quay C Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC
10.	12.11.24	Show of Dukesbridge musical spectacular, Aladdin	Dukesbridge Trianon Convention Centre	Mrs A.G, OC (<i>Guest of honour</i>)
11.	13.11.24	Capacity Building for Educators in connection with safeguarding children's right	TIPA St Pierre	Mrs B.J, Inv
12.	15.11.24	Training in connection with protection of the rights of children in the domain of sports and physical activities	Mauritius Olympic Committee Trianon	Mrs B.J, Inv

13.	25.11.24	Graduation Ceremony at Mauritius Institute of Education	Mauritius Institute of Education Paul Octave Wiëhe Auditorium Reduit	Mrs A.G, OC (Chief Guest)
14.	27.11.24	Meeting in connection with a case concerning both Office of the OC and Office of the Ombudsman	Office of the Ombudsman Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec Mr I.A.B, Inv
15.	27.11.24	Sensitisation activities with parents on the rights of the child	Caritas Ile Maurice Port Louis	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.P.M Inv
16.	29.11.24	Meeting in connection with school indiscipline and violence	Ministry of Education Zone 4 Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology	Mrs S.P.M, Inv
17.	29.11.24	Talk in connection with protection of the rights of the child	Monad Charity	Mr I.A.B, Inv
18.	04.12.24	Sensitisation activities on the rights of the child and Children's Act	Loreto Curepipe	Mrs S.P.M, Inv MRS S.J, Inv
19.	06.12.24	Consultative workshop in connection with 'Age-Appropriate, Evidence Based Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for out-of-school adolescents and youth in Mauritius'	The Ministry of Health and Wellness, in collaboration with UNFPA Henessy Park, Ebène	Mrs S.P.M, Inv
20.	07.12.24	Teacher's Day Celebration	UPSEE Indira Gandhi Centre Indian Culture Phoenix	Mrs A.G, OC
21.	09.12.24	Meeting with stakeholders of the Primary Sub-Sector	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Octave Wiehe Auditorium Réduit	Mrs A.G, OC
22.	10.12.24	Meeting in connection with 'Assises de la femme et de la famille' on the occasion International Day for Elimination of Violence against women 2024	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare United Docks Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC
23.	10.12.24 to 13.12.24	4-day consultative workshop on 'Comprehensive Abortion Care'	The Ministry of Health and Wellness, in collaboration with UNFPA United Docks, Port Louis	Mrs S.P.M, Inv

24.	11.12.24	Celebration of Human Rights Day and workshop in connection with child online safety	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade Labourdonnais Hotel Caudan	Mrs A.G, OC OOC staff JADE
25.	16.12.24	Meeting with stakeholders of the Pre-Primary sub sector	Ministry of Education and Human Resource MITD Phoenix	Mrs A.G, OC
26.	07.01.25	Courtesy Call upon Hon. Mahen Gungapersad, Minister of Education and Human Resource	Ministry of Education and Human Resource MITD Phoenix	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec
27.	09.01.25	Courtesy Call upon Hon Mrs Marie Arianne NAVARRE-MARIE, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec
28.	24.01.25	Meeting in connection with type 1 diabetes patients including children	Office of the Ombudsman Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec
29.	28.01.25	Meeting in connection with Data protection	Data Protection Office Ebène	Mrs S.P.M Inv
30.	31.01.25	Meeting in connection with Gender Based Violence	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare Port Louis	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv
31.	03.02.25	Opening ceremony of International conference on UNESCO routes of enslaved peoples	Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture Trust Fund, under the Aegis of the Ministry of Arts and Culture Octave Wièhe, Réduit	Mrs A.G, OC
32.	17.02.25	Workshop on keeping children safe online from harmful web contents	Computer Emergency Response Team of Mtius (CERT-MU)	Mrs A.G, OC
33.	18.02.25	Colloque « l'Observation de la parentalité de l'Océan Indien »	Lekol Colonel Maingard Beau Bassin	Mrs B.J , Inv
34.	20.02.25	Meeting in connection with recommendations on rights of child	Law Reform Commission Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC Mr I.A.B, Inv Mrs B.J, Inv

35.	20.02.25	Training to RYC officers in connection with 'Children Act'	Prison Training School Beau Bassin	Mrs S.P.M, Inv MRS S.J, Inv
36.	03.03.25	'Formation sur la gestion des comportements suicidaires des adolescents en milieu scolaire'	Konekte ICJM, Rose Hill	Mrs A.G, OC
37.	09.03.25	Award Ceremony for all women and girls in connection with Rights, Equality and Empowerment	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare MGI Moka	Mrs A.G, OC
38.	10.03.25	Validation Workshop SoP GBV – Elimination Gender Based Violence	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv
39.	10.03.25 & 18.03.25	'Formation sur la gestion des comportements suicidaires des adolescentes en milieu scolaire'	Konekte ICJM, Rose Hill	Mrs B.J, Inv
40.	11.03.25	Flag Raising Ceremony	Bon Accueil Government School	Mrs A.G, OC (Guest of honour)
41.	17.03.25	Talk to Grade 8 and 9 students in connection with violence at school, bullying and online child sexual abuse	Rivière des Anguilles SSS	Mrs S.J, Inv
42.	19.03.25	First Meeting in connection with Revamping of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre	Prime Minister's Office New Government Centre Port Louis	Mr I.A.B, Inv Mrs B.J, Inv
43.	19.03.25	Meeting in connection with Rights, Responsibilities, Respect and Resilience (4 Rs)	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Phoenix	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.P.M, Inv
44.	20.03.25	Talk to Grade 10 &11 students in connection with online child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation	Rivière des Anguilles SSS	Mrs B.J, Inv
45.	21.03.25	Workshop on World Syndrome Day	Loretto Quatre Bornes	Mrs A.G, OC Invs Mr I.B and Mrs BJ
46.	25.03.25	Talk to Grade 12 students in connection with violence at school, bullying and online child sexual abuse	Rivière des Anguilles SSS	Mrs S.J, Inv
47.	27.03.25	Workshop 'Accelerate action to mitigate the impact of illicit drug abuse in the family and our society'	Gold Crest Hotel Quatre Bornes	Mrs A.G, OC
48.	02.04.05	Celebration of the World Autism Day	Autisme Maurice	Mrs A.Navarre Marie, Hon Minister of GEFW Mrs A.G, OC OOC staffs Managers, Educators

49.	05.04.25	Mauritius Internet Governance forum on the theme 'AL, Cybersecurity and Digital Trust pioneering a secure future	Halley Mouvement , United Docks Business Park, Caudan	Mrs A.G, OC (keynote speaker)
50.	08.04.25	Sensitisation talk at TIPA	TIPA St Pierre	Mr I.A.B Inv
51.	10.04.25	Celebration of International Women's Day at UoM – UoM Women of Excellence Awards	UoM Paul Octave Wiëhe Auditorium Reduit	Mrs A.G, OC
52.	10.04.25	Press conference on "Child Protection Online"	Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation Ebène	Mrs A.G, OC
53.	10.04.25	Second Meeting in connection with Revamping of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre	Prime Minister's Office	Mr I.A.B Inv and Mrs BJ
54.	15.04.25	Opening ceremony of 'Les Assises de l'Education 2025	Ministry of Education and Human Resource MGI, Auditorium	Mrs A.G, OC
55.	16.04.25	'Les Assises de l'Education'	Ministry of Education and Human Resource	Ins Mrs Y.R.V, Mrs S.J, Mrs B.J
56.	17.04.25	'Les Assises de l'Education' (Secondary)	Ministry of Education and Human Resource	Mr I..B Inv JADE
57.	17.04.25	Activities with children at Shelter for Women and Children in Distress	Shelter for Women and Children in Distress Forest Side	Mrs A.G, OC Invs MRS S.J, Mrs B.J
58.	17.04.25	Opening ceremony of the National Cyber Drill 2025	CERT-MU Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation Caudan Arts Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC
59.	23.04.25	Meeting in connection with Revamping of the of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre	Prime Minister's Office (via zoom)	Mrs B.J Inv
60.	24.04.25	One-day workshop on Gender, Youth, Social and Health Inclusion Mauritius NDC 3.0	Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change The Docks Port Louis	Mrs S.J, Inv

61.	08.05.25 & 09.05.25	Panel for the presentation of project to media in connection with raising awareness on bullying	Twinkle Stars Jr School St Julien D'hotman	Mrs A.G, OC
62.	08.05.25	Workshop with teachers in connection with 4 Rs	Twinkle Starts Jr Domain Reets St Julien d'Hotman	Invs Mrs Y.R.V, Mrs S.P.M
63.	12.05.25	Goodlands Mirabella Day Care Inauguration	Cœur de Ville Goodlands Route Royale St Antoine Goodlands	Mrs A.G, OC
64.	14.05.25	Meeting in connection with National Lexicon on harmful social media contents	CERT-MU Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation	Mrs S.P.M Inv
65.	16.05.25	Meeting in connection with protection of the Right of Child Athletes and Child Artists	Law Reforms Commission Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, Invs Mr I.A.B, and Mrs S.J, <u>Law reforms Commission</u> Mr S.Kadel, Chief Executive Officer Staff LRC
66.	23.05.25	Workshop in connection with 'Bridging the gap effective criminal Justice Response when handling gender based violence cases'	Office of the DPP Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs B.J , Inv
67.	23.05.25	Meeting in connection with policy formulation to cater for children with Disabilities aged 3-5 years	Ministry of Gender and Family Welfare Port Louis	Mrs S.P.M Inv
68.	26.05.25	40 th anniversary celebration and Inauguration of 1 st floor of the Southern Handicapped Association Lady Sushil Ramgoolam	Southern Handicapped Association Lady Sushil Ramgoolam SEN School Riambel	Mrs A.G, OC
69.	26.05.25	Launching of a Blueprint for Mauritius for Digital Transformation 2025-2029 (A Bridge to the Future)	Ministry of ICT Sir Harilall Vaghjee Hall, New Government Centre Port Louis	Mrs A.G,OC
70.	29.05.25	Projection – débat dans le cache du projet "Safer Internet"	Mcine Trianon Dis Moi	Mrs A.G, OC (Chief Guest)
71.	31.05.25	Celebration of World Foster Day 2025	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC

72.	10.06.25	Workshop on 'Preventing Financial Crimes: The Role of Rectors	Financial Crimes Commission in collaboration with MEHR Integrated Customs Clearance Centre of the MRA Le Chaland, Plaine Magnien	Mrs A.G, OC
73.	12.06.25	Meeting with Hon. Mahen Gungapersad, Minister of Education and Human Resource icw Rodrigues	Ministry of Education and Human Resource MITD Phoenix	Mrs A.G, OC
74.	18.06.25	Submission of special report the protection of the rights of child artists and child athletes	Office of the President State House Réduit	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec Mr I.A.B, Inv Mrs B.J, Inv
75.	26.06.25	Virtual meeting in connection with Child Day Care Centre (CDCCs)	Ministry of Education and Human Resource	Mrs B.J, Inv
76.	26.06.25	International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking	The Mayor in collaboration with Dr Idrice Goomany Port Louis	Mr I.A.B, Inv
77.	29.06.25	Anti-Bullying Concert	Reets' High School Cote d'Or National Sports Complex	Mr I.A.B, Inv
78.	06.07.25	Submission of special report the protection of the rights of child artists and child athletes to honourable Minister of Arts and Culture	Ministry of Arts and Culture Port Louis	Mrs A.G, , OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Mr I.A.B,Inv
79.	06.07.25	Training to RYC officers in connection with 'Children Act'	Prison Training School Beau Bassin	MRS S.J, Inv
80.	08.07.25	Submission of special report the protection of the rights of child artists and child athletes	Senior Counsel Attorney General's Office Port Louis	Mrs A.G, , OC Mrs L.J, Sec, Mr I.A.B, Inv
81.	10.07.25	'Formation sur la gestion des comportements suicidaires des adolescentes en milieu scolaire'	Konekte ICJM, Rose Hill	Mrs B.J Inv
82.	10.07.25	Submission of special report the protection of the rights of child artists and child athletes to honourable Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare Port Louis	Mrs A.G, , OC Mrs L.J, Sec, Mr I.A.B, Inv

83.	24.07.25	Meeting in connection with National Mechanism for reporting and follow-up	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International trade Municipal City Council Port Louis	Mrs S.J, Inv
84.	25.07.25	Sensitisation with different stakeholders 'awareness day against Human Trafficking'	Passerelle Women Centre The City Trianon	Mr I.A.B, Inv
85.	01.08.25	Meeting in connection with serious indiscipline at a Government School	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Zone 2 Beau Bassin	Mrs S.J, Inv
86.	04.08.25	National Youth Parliament 4 th Edition	National Youth Parliament Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC
87.	05.08.25	Training of FLEU education	Tipa St Pierre	Mr I.A B, SJ
88.	06.08.25	Podcast on seminar wellness – Role and Responsibilities of OOC	Heypumpkin Ltd Whitefield Business School, Curepipe	Mrs S.P M, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
89.	09.08.25	Opening ceremony local conference of youth	NAFCO MGI, Moka	Mrs A.G, OC
90.	10.08.25	Closing ceremony of local conference of youth	NAFCO MGI, Moka	Mrs A.G, OC
91.	12.08.25	Talk to 45 parents of Ti Rayon Soleil	Ti Rayon Soleil Vacoas	Mr I.A B, Inv
92.	14.08.25	Talk to 20 students of MITD, Mont Roches	MITD, Mont Roches	Mrs S.J, Inv
93.	14.08.25	Prize Giving Ceremony of the Youth in Focus SDG Photography	United Nations Resident Coordinator for Mauritius and Seychelles Institut Français de Maurice Rose Hill	Mrs A.G, OC

**WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS/MEETINGS ORGANISED BY
THE OOC (SEP 2024 – AUG 2025)**

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ MEETINGS/ ACTIVITIES	ORGANISER/ VENUE (S)	PARTICIPATION OF OC/ OOC'S STAFF
1.	24.09.24	Session in connection with National Human Rights Action Plan 2024-2030	OOC	All Invs Consultant from United Nations Development Dr Roopannad Mahadew
2.	25.09.24	Meeting in connection with ‘une étude sur la prévalence de la violence sexuelle envers les enfants’	OOC	Invs Mrs Y.R.V, And Mrs S.J, Mrs Lorianne D’Analysis Kantar Ebène
3.	28.09.24	Workshop in connection with “Jeunes Ambassadeurs des droits de l’Enfant” (JADE)	QEC Assembly Hall, Rose Hill	Mrs A.G, , OC All Invs
4.	09.10.24	Launching of Annual Report 2024	OOC Gold Crest Hotel Quatre Bornes	Mrs A.G, , OC UNRC Ambassadors High Commissioners Representatives from: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Gender and Family ECCEA, SEDEC, MIE, ODPP, Office of Ombudsman, MPF, Mtius Prisons Service, SENA, NGOs, RICs Press All Invs OOC staff
5.	11.10.24	Celebration of Girl Child Day 2024 themed “Safeguarding the Girl Child Rights: Challenges and Opportunities for the Future”	OOC National Women Developme nt Centre Hall, Phoenix	Mrs A.G, , OC All Invs OOC staff Ecole de Fatima Anou Grandi Association Safire 2 Representatives – Miss Planet Earth

6.	28.10.24	Meeting in connection with JADE Activities	OOC	Mr I.A.B Inv Ms B.Darick, MSO Ambassadors of JADE
7.	01.11.24	Meeting in connection with 35 th Anniversary Convention on the rights of Children	OOC	Mr I.A.B Inv Ms B.Darick, MSO Ambassadors of JADE
8.	13.11.24	Preparatory meeting in connection with Universal Children's Day 2024	OOC	Mr I.A.B Inv Ms B.Darick, MSO Ambassadors of JADE
9.	22.11.24	Celebration of Universal Children's Day 2024	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC All Invs OOC Staff Ambassadors of JADE
10.	06.12.24	Film projection titled 'Zootopia' for children of the Residential Care Institutions and Special Education Needs School	OOC MCine Caudan	Mrs A.G, OC OOC staffs Children of RCI and NGOs Ambassadors of JADE
11.	13.12.24	Celebration of Children's Day and 35 th anniversary of the Convention on the rights of the child	OOC Dr Maurice Cure State College	Mrs A.G, OC OOC staff Selected RCIs Scouts Band JADE
12.	16.01.25	Meeting in connection with survey on non-formal education sector	OOC	Mrs A.G,OC Invs Mrs YRV Mrs S.P.M Mrs S.J, Mrs Kussa ,statistician Ministry of Education and Human Resource
13.	28.01.25	Meeting in connection with how to contribute finding a solution for the future of the shelter l'Oiseau du Paradis	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mr I.A.B and Mrs Y.R.V, Invs Representatives from: SOS Children's Village
14.	28.01.25	Meeting in connection with "Healthier Kids programme"	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs S.J, Inv Dr Mrs Oogarah-Pratab <u>From MIE</u>
15.	03.02.25	Meeting in connection with action plan online sexual abuse	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs S.J, Inv <u>From Nafco Mtius</u> Mr M.Dacruz,

16.	12.02.25	Meeting in connection with non formal education sectors	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec,OCO All Invs <u>From NSIF</u> Mr V Raghoobur Mrs P Ravata
17.	13.02.25	Meeting on violence with children with ARIGATOO Ethics Education	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Ms Maria Lucia Vribe, Executive Director
18.	19.02.25	Courtesy visit by new chairperson Pédostop	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs S.P.M, Inv
19.	18.03.25	Courtesy Visit by Mr Chetanand Bundhoo of SOS Village International with African Delegations	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC
20.	03.04.25	Coordination meeting with stakeholders of Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Invs Stakeholders from MGEFW
21.	08.04.25	Meeting in connection with DIS-MO‘Avenues collaboration’	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Mrs S.J, Inv, Mr Linley Couronne, Director Dis Moi, Mrs M.V Ciceron Passerelles Mr B.Budhoo Barrister-at-law
22.	15.04.25	Workshop with Students & Educators of Non-Formal Education Sector	OOC Gold Crest Hotel, Quatre Bornes	Mrs A.G, OC Invs Mr IB MRS S.J, Mrs B.J OOO Staffs JADE Students and Educators
23.	18.04.25	Meeting in connection with Child Online Safeguarding	OOC	Mrs A.G,OC Inv Mrs B.J <u>Securus Africa</u> Mr Garth Bell
24.	21.04.25	Meeting in connection with Observatoire de la parentalité de l’océan Indien (OPOI)	OOC	Mrs A.G,OC Mrs B.J, Inv Mr Reedha Rajendra Coomar, OPOI

25.	22.04.25	Easter Fun Day	OOC Ste Marys	Mrs A.G, OC Invs Mr I.A.B, Mrs B.J OOC staff The Confucius Institute (University of Mauritius) Scout Band JADE
26.	23.04.25	Meeting in connection with University project for a 8 to 10 minutes documentary film on street children	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Invs Mr Jean Marie St Cyr Défi Media
27.	24.04.25	Empowerment of JADE and team building	OOC Emtel Ltd Ebène	Mrs A.G, OC Invs Mr I.A.B, Mrs Y.R.V Mrs B.J OOC staffs
28.	25.04.25	Empowerment of JADE and team building	OOC Emtel Ltd Ebène	Mrs A.G, OC Mr I.A.B, Inv OOC staffs JADE
29.	29.04.25	Meeting in connection with protection of the right of child athlete and child artists	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Invs Mr I.A.B Mrs S.J, Law Reform Commission Mr S.Kadel, Chief Executive Officer
30.	10.05.25	Induction ceremony of the JADE and launch of first Newsletter JADE	OOC Caudan Arts Centre Port Louis	Mrs S.Aumeeruddy- Cziffra, Speaker of the National Assembly Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Mr I.A.B, Inv OOC staffs JADE Parents Media
31.	29.05.25	Steering committee in connection special report on the protection of the rights of child artists and child athletes in collaboration with the Law Reform Commission	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Mr I.A.B, Inv Officers from Law Reform Commission

32.	17.05.25	Celebration of the Day of the African Child 2025 – general discussions on the theme ‘Planning and Budgeting for Children Rights’	OOO Emtel Academy, Ebène	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO All Invs OOO Staffs Hon. Ms Anishta Babooram, Junior Minister MGEFW H.E Dr Hlamalani Nelly Manzini, High Commissioner, Republic of South Africa Me Satyajit Boolel NHRC Mr Kresh Goomany Chief Executive Officer EMTEL LTD
33.	02.07.25	Meeting in connection with Non Formal Education	OOO	Mrs A.G, OC All Invs OOO staffs Stakeholders from NGOs
34.	30.07.25	Meeting with Residents of Anoska in connection with workshop with youth	OOO Residence Anoska Curepipe	Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Mrs S.J, Inv OOO staff
35.	06.08.25	One day Participatory activity on the theme ‘Violence among Children’	OOO 16^{èmes} Mille Community Centre Residence Anoska	Mr I.A.B, Inv Mrs S.J, Mrs B.J OOO staffs
36.	07.08.25	Empowerment of JADE (team building)	OOO Flic en Flac	Mrs A.G, OC Invs: Mr I A B, Mrs S.J Ms B.J, OOO staffs

MISCELLANEOUS

SEP 2024 – AUG 2025

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ MEETINGS/ ACTIVITIES	ORGANISER/ VENUE (S)	PARTICIPATION OF OC/ OOC'S STAFF
37.	23.09.24	Meeting in connection with Africa Regional Resilience Initiative on Climate Education (ARRICE) Project	OOC	Mrs A.G., OC Mrs S.J, Inv Mr Desha Madoo Local Consultant BAASTEL

MEDIA

SEP 2024 – AUG 2025

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ MEETINGS/ ACTIVITIES	ORGANISER/ VENUE (S)	PARTICIPATION OF OC/ OOC'S STAFF
1.	14.10.24	Interview by l'express in connection with 'la société continue de se dégrader, en grande partie à cause de l'érosion des valeurs'	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC
2.	20.11.24	Interview by MBC in connection with Children's Day 2024	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC
3.	02.12.24	Emission in connection with 'la maltraitance envers les enfants et les moyens de prévention de telles situations'	Top FM	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.P.M Inv
4.	02.12.24	Emission 'Tempo la So' in connection with 'vulnérabilité des enfants, détraqués en liberté : comment protéger nos enfants'?	Top FM	Mrs B.J Inv
5.	03.12.24	Emission au coeur de l'info in connection with violence envers les enfants : des lanceurs d'alerte encouragés à se manifester	Radio Plus	Mrs A.G, OC
6.	03.12.24	Interview in connection with protection of sexual abuse on children	Radio One	Mrs A.G, OC
7.	06.12.24	Interview in connection with Protection of children's rights	Radio Plus	Mrs A.G, OC
8.	10.01.25	Interview in connection with violence on children	Top FM	Mrs A.G, OC

9.	16.01.25	Interview on Role of family with reference to child protection	Teleplus Info Soirée	Mrs A.G, OC
10.	22.01.25	Interview in connection with online safety	MBC	Mrs A.G, OC
11.	05.03.25	Interview in connection with mental health of youngsters	Radio Plus	Mrs A.G, OC
12.	09.06.25	Interview in connection with Bullying	Top FM	Mrs A.G, OC
13.	23.06.25	Press conference in connection with special report “the Protection of the Rights of Child Artists and Child Athletes”	Top FM MBC Radio Plus	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Invs Mr I.A.B, Mrs S.J, Mrs B.J <u>From Law Reform Commission</u> Mr Sabir Kadel, Chief Executive Officer and staff
14.	18.08.25	Interview – ‘grossesse precoce’	MBC	Mrs A.G, OC

CALENDAR FOR SENSITIZATION PROGRAMME YEAR 2024/2025 IN COLLABORATION WITH CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAU

CAB OFFICE/VENUES	DATE	NAME OF INV
Keats College	19.09.2024	Mrs S.J
Vacoas	03.10.2024	Mrs S.P.M
Floreal	17.10.2024	Mrs S.P.M
Curepipe/Midlands	07.11.2024	Mrs Y.R.V
Rose Hill/Quatre Bornes	14.11.2024	Mrs S.P.M
CAB Petite Rivière/CAB Beau Bassin	21.11.2024	Mrs S.P.M
CAB PETITE RIVIERE/CAB BEAU BASSIN	20.03.25	Mr I.A.B
ROSE HILL	27.03.25	Mrs S.P.M
QUATRE BORNES	03.04.25	Mrs B.J
CUREPIPE/MIDLANDS	10.04.25	Mrs Y.R.V
FLOREAL	17.04.25	Mrs Y.R.V
VACOAS	15.05.25	Mrs S.P.M
CHEMIN-GRENIER/RIVIERE-NOIRE	08.05.25	Mrs S.J
CAB BAMBOUS	24.04.25	Mrs B.J
GRAND-BOIS/RIVIERE-DES-ANGUILLES	22.05.25	Mr I.A.B
PLAINE-MAGNIEN	29.05.25	Mrs Y.R.V
MAHEBOURG	05.06.25	Mrs Y.R.V
BOIS DES AMOURETTES	12.06.25	Mr I.A.B
ROSE BELLE	19.06.25	Mrs S.J,
BEL-AIR	26.06.25	Mrs B.J
MONTAGNE-LONGUE	03.07.25	Mrs S.J,
CAB LALLMATIE	10.07.25	Mrs B.J
CAB CENTRAL FLACQ	17.07.25	Mrs B.J
SAINT PIERRE	24.07.25	Mr I.A.B
QUARTIER MILITAIRE	31.07.25	Mrs S.J,
RIVIERE DU REMPART	07.08.25	Mrs S.P.M
PITON	14.08.25	Mr I.A.B
GRAND BAY	21.08.25	Mr I.A.B

FIELD VISITS ORGANISED BY
THE OFFICE OF THE OC (OOC)
SEP 2024 – AUG 2025

SN	DATE	FIELD VISIT	ATTENDED BY
1.	30.09.24	Rehabilitation Youth Centre (RYC) and Correctional Youth Centre (CYC), Beau Bassin	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec Mr I.A.B, Inv Mrs B.J, Inv
2.	04.10.24	Esperance 2000 NGO, Curepipe	Mrs S.J, Inv Mrs S.P.M, Inv
3.	07.10.24	Residential Care Institution (RCI), Oiseau du Paradis, Cap Malheureux	Mr I.A.B, Inv Mrs B.J, Inv
4.	25.10.24	Rehabilitation Youth Centre (RYC) and Correctional Youth Centre (CYC), Beau Bassin	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec Mr I.A.B, Inv
5.	25.10.24	Juvenile Detention Centre Boys, Petite Rivière	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec Mr I.A.B, Inv
6.	26.10.24	SOS Village Bambous	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec Mrs Y.R.V, Inv
7.	29.10.24	Maisons familiales Rurales du Nord NGO, Calebasses	Mrs B.J, Inv
8.	09.04.25	L'école Technique de St Joseph, Rose Hill	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs B.J, Inv
9.	10.04.25	Midlands Government School	Mrs S.J, Inv
10.	11.04.25	Association pour les Handicapés de Malherbes, Curepipe	Mrs Y.R.V Inv MRS S.J, Inv
11.	14.04.25	L'Oiseau du Paradis	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L/J, Sec
12.	21.04.25	Worldlight RCI	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
13.	04.06.25	Women Prison, Beau Bassin	Mrs S.J, Inv Mrs B.J, Inv
14.	13.06.25	Nouvelle France Government School (SEN Integrated)	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
15.	26.06.25	Nouvelle Decouverte Government School	Mrs S.J, Inv
16.	27.06.25	Women Prison	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv

17.	27.06.25	Association pour les Handicapés de Malherbes, Curepipe	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
18.	22.07.25	SOS Children, Bambous	Mr I.A.B, Inv
19.	23.07.25	Shelter for Women and Children in Distress	Mrs S.J, Inv Mrs B.J, Inv
20.	30.07.25	Petite Riviere Detention Centre	Mrs S.J, Inv Mrs B.J, Inv
21.	08.08.25	Hope and Dream Early Learning Centre	Invs: Mrs S.P M, Ms B.J

**PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL MISSION
BY STAFF OF THE OOC (SEP 2024 – AUG 2025)**

SN	DATE	THEME	ORGANISER	OC/OOC'S STAFF
1.	14.10 .24 to 15.10.24	XII ^e congrès des membres de l'AOMF, AOMF, QUEBEC	AOMF, QUEBEC	Mrs A.G,OC
2.	24.03.25 to 26.03.25	Formation AOMF	AOMF Paris, France	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv
3.	28.07.25 to 02.08.25	Mission de Coopération 'Lutte contre la traite des êtres Humains'	Dis-Moi and Passerelle in collaboration with the Bureau National Lutte contre la traite des êtres Humains' Madagascar	Mr I.A.B, Inv

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL WEBINARS
BY STAFF OF THE OOC (SEP 2024 – AUG 2025)

SN	DATE	THEME	ORGANISER	OC/OOC'S STAFF
1.	26.09.24	Webinaire Comité enfant de réclamation qui concernent les droits de l'enfant	AOMF	Mr I.A.B, Inv Mrs Y.R.V, Inv
2.	08.10.24	Webinar in connection with Role of the Ombudsman: Increasing awareness & Recognition of the Institution's importance	African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC)	Mrs A.G, , OC Mr I.A.B, Inv
3.	25.10.24	Webinar in connection with Annual Ombudsman 2024: Promoting Good Governance in the City of Johannesburg	AOMF	Mrs A.G, , OC Mr I.A.B, Inv
4.	18.12.24	Webinar in connection with AOMA Indian Ocean Region Coordinating meeting	AOMA	Mrs A.G, , OC Mr I.A.B, Inv
5.	30.01.25	Virtual meeting with Y Hosanoo from Australia in connection with Safer Internet Day	Australian High Commission	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs S.J, Inv
6.	30.01.25	Virtual meeting in connection with potential collaboration between OOC and Brent Council	UK High Commission Brent Council	Mrs A.G, OC All Invs
7.	18.02.25	Webinar: The Role of Ombudsman in Building Trust & Resolving conflict	University of Kwazulu-Natal South Africa	Mrs A.G, OC All Invs
8	25.03.25	AORC Webinar: Showcasing specialised Ombudsman Offices – Children's Ombudsman	African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC)	Mrs A.G, OC Mr I.A.B, Inv Mrs S.P.M, Inv Mrs B.J, Inv

MISSIONS TO RODRIGUES

SEP 2024 – AUG 2025

<i>DATE</i>	<i>AGENDA</i>	<i>PARTICIPANTS</i>	<i>VENUE</i>
<u>Mission to Rodrigues: Mrs Aneeta.Ghoorah, OC</u> Mrs Lata Jhugroo, Sec Mrs Yecha Rhungapen-Veeramootoo, Inv			
04.02.25	Visit to RYC followed by meeting with Head of RYC and Officers	Head of RYC and Officers	Baie aux Huites
04.02.25	Meeting with Mr Benjamin Leste Officer in Charge Probation	Officer in Charge Probation	Mont Lubin
04.02.25	Courtesy Visit to Mgr Michel Moura Vicaire Apostolique de Rodrigues	Mgr Michel Moura Vicaire Apostolique de Rodrigues	Vicariat Apostolique de Rodrigues St Gabriel
05.02.25	Meeting with Stakeholders working with children		Centre des Femmes Malabar
05.02.25	Working session with Ms Marie Christiane Agathe, Commissioner for Women Affairs, Child Development, Family Welfare and others	Ms Marie Christiane Agathe, Commissioner for Women Affairs, Child Development, Family Welfare and others	Commission for Women Affairs, Child Development, Family Welfare and others Malabar
06.02.25	Working Session with Mr. Jean Nicolas VOLBERT Commissioner for Health & Ors.	Mr. Jean Nicolas VOLBERT Commissioner for Health & Ors.	Commission for Health MHC Building Camp du Roi
06.02.25	Meeting with Departmental Head Education Discussions on: 4 Rs and Non-Formal Education		Commissioner for Education Malabar
06.02.25	Meeting on 4 Rs–Rights, Respect, Responsibility and Resilience Participants: Headmaster of Primary Schools		Amphitheatre Antoinette Prudence Human Resource Development Centre Malabar

<i>DATE</i>	<i>AGENDA</i>	<i>PARTICIPANTS</i>	<i>VENUE</i>
<u>Mission to Rodrigues (01 June to 04 June 205):</u> Mrs Aneeta.Ghoorah, OC Mrs Lata Jhugroo, Sec Mr I.A.Bawamia, Inv			
01.06.25	Visit to shelter boys at Roseau		Roseau
02.06.25	Workshop on the 4Rs (Rights, Respect, Responsibility & Resilience)	Participants: Educators of Upper Primary and Primary Inspectorate	Cotton Bay Resort & Spa Pointe Cotton
02.06.25	Working session with Mr Franceau Aubret Grandcourt G.O.S.K Chief Commissioner		Chief Commissioner Office Mutual Aid Building François Port Mathurin
02.06.25	Meeting with Mrs Tolbize, Manager of RCEA school		Port Mathurin
03.06.25	Workshop on the Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits des Enfants (JADE)	Young people aged 14-18 years from schools and youth organisation	Cotton Bay Resort & Spa Pointe Cotton
03.06.25	Setting up of the JADE – Rodrigues Chapter		
03.06.25	Working Session with Ms Marie Christiane Agathe, Commissioner for Women Affairs, Child Development, Family Welfare and others Development and Learning Centre for Disabled Children Gonzagues Pierre Louis Special learning Centre, Camp du Roi Educational and Rehabilitation Centre (EDYCS) St Esprit RCA Integrated School		Commission for Women Affairs, Child Development, Family Welfare and others La Ferme Malabar Camp du Roi

ANNEX C

Some key points that illustrate how Mauritius generally aligns with the principles of the UNCRC are as follows:

1. Compulsory Education:

Education is compulsory up to the age of 16, which supports the UNCRC's emphasis on the right to education and the importance of making education accessible and compulsory for children.

2. Pre-Primary Education in Mauritius:

The early years of a child's life are very important for his/her health and development. A healthy development requires an environment where the children's social, emotional and educational needs are met. Therefore, it is vital that pre-primary education, which is the building block of a child's elementary education, be given due consideration.

Pre-primary education ensures a smooth transition to primary education and it lays the foundation for lifelong learning.

With respect to the above, the following steps have been taken:

- (i) The free Pre-Primary Education Scheme has been implemented since January 2024 for children aged 3 to 5 years attending registered private pre-primary schools. Out of the 559 registered private pre-primary schools, around 427 have joined the Free Preprimary Education Scheme.
- (ii) There exists a Revised National Curriculum Framework for teaching pre-primary children aged 3 to 5 years. The curriculum aims at fostering the holistic development of children during preschool years including social skills, core values, emotional and self-regulation skills as well as academic knowledge

3. Universal Primary Education:

Mauritius provides free primary education to all children, which is a core requirement of the UNCRC.

Primary Education in Mauritius is free and compulsory for all children as from five years old, comprising six years of schooling (grade 1 to 6), culminating in the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC).

The curriculum includes English, French, Science and Mathematics as well as History/ Geography and Information and Communications Technology. The pupil may also opt for an Asian Language or Arabic or Kreol Morisien.

In a bid to provide a holistic approach, all children are exposed to performing Arts, physical activities, music and dance as well as visual Arts.

Grade 4 pupils are given the possibility to follow swimming classes in the swimming pools nearest to their schools.

After school Sports are organised in specific schools for those interested, obviously with parental consent.

With the Reform put in place a decade ago, the Nine Years Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) has been introduced, allowing a transition to the lower Secondary sector (Grades 7 to 9)

All children in the formal sector can participate in co and extracurricular activities (competitions involving reading and writing, school greening projects, Eco-friendly measures, music and dance, performing Arts etc.

Current Policies for the primary subsector:

- (i) The Learner Developmental Profile to ensure smooth transition from pre-primary to Primary.
- (ii) Primary School Readiness (PSR) at the start of the Primary Education cycle to assess the readiness of the learner to embark on primary education.
- (iii) Early Support Programme in place to close learning deficits in terms of competencies in literacy and numeracy identified through the PSR and during the education cycle. Early Support Educators have been recruited and trained to cater for the slow learners
- (iv) Holistic Education Programme in place for the wholesome development of the learner. Some 450 Holistic Educators have been recruited and are servicing the primary schools of the Republic.
- (v) The Early Digital Learning Programme put in place to develop and consolidate the ICT skills
- (vi) As part of the equity drive, policies also address gaps in learning achievement. Low-achieving primary schools, classified as the Zone d'Education Prioritaire, receive additional support in terms of a supplementary feeding programme, enhanced learning environments, strengthened school leadership, a differentiated pedagogy, and greater linkages with parents.
- (vii) Digital equity and inclusion are also important in a modern 21st century context. Digital tablets have been provided to all primary school children to promote technology-enabled learning and also to bridge the digital divide.
- (viii) Social skills, core values, emotional and self-regulation skills and academic knowledge are imparted to the pupils.

4. Secondary subsector:

The country also provides opportunities for Students in the secondary subsector supporting the UNCRC's broader educational goals.

Divided into two: Lower secondary (grades 7 to 9) and Upper secondary (Grades 10 to 13)

A broad-based curriculum, including languages, Science, Mathematics and the Arts, is offered to lower secondary students.

After completing Grade 9, students who succeed receive the National Certificate of Education, which allows them to progress to the Upper Secondary subsection. At this stage Students opt for subjects they want to study for Cambridge School Certificate (SC) and subsequently those who pass the SC are allowed to move to Grade 11 for a two-year course leading to the Higher School Certificate (HSC), after a further choice of subjects.

The Extended Programme (EP), designed to provide a supportive pathway for students who did not meet primary school exit standards, has failed to achieve its objectives. Introduced as part of the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) reforms, the EP aimed to offer inclusive and equitable education. However, a confluence of interconnected factors has resulted in low success rates and significant student attrition.

Hence the establishment of a foundational programme in literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills to address this critical need and provide a stronger foundation for these vulnerable learners.

As from the beginning of 2025 a dedicated Foundational Programme in Literacy, Numeracy, and Skills (FPLNS) offers a more targeted and effective approach to address the needs of students transitioning from primary school without the minimum proficiency.

5. Special Education Needs

Inclusive Education and the Rights of Children with Disabilities

Article 24(1) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006) states: *"States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:*

- a) The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;*
- b) The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;*
- c) Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society."*

Disability

According to the Preamble of the CRPD (UN, 2006), disability is "an evolving concept" and "results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

Article 1 of the CRPD also states that "persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in

interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

Inclusion

Inclusion is a philosophy that is based on the belief that education is a fundamental right of every individual; that s/he has an inherent right to fully participate in society. Inclusion respects diversity, celebrates differences and promotes non-discrimination.

Inclusive Education

“Inclusive education means that all learners can benefit from the same education systems and the same schools. Learning methods and educational materials that address the needs of all students are mainstreamed into the system so that barriers that potentially limit participation are removed. Disability is just one cause of exclusion, among other social, physical, and institutional limitations” (UNESCO, 2019, p.6).

In Mauritius children who have handicaps are not left behind:

The Special Education Needs (SEN) legal and institutional framework has been strengthened with the setting up of Special Education Needs Authority (SENA) to cater for and respond to the diverse needs of learners with impairments and disabilities

However, there is still room for improvement Recommendations have been made since the past few years to shift to a human –right based model

LOOPHOLE for 3 to 5 years (a section addressing the loopholes is detailed in chapter 1, part 4A)

ANNEX D

Non-Formal Education schools in Mauritius

At present, approximately 28 Non-Formal Education schools in Mauritius, are registered with NSIF, including 17 under the aegis of ANFEN (numbered 1 to 17 for ease of reference).

1. Ecole Père Henri Souchon - Oasis de Paix
2. Ecole Familiale de l'Ouest
3. Ecole Technique St Joseph de Beau-Bassin/Rose-Hill
4. Esperance 2000
5. Etoile de Mer
6. Ferme Pédagogique de Safire
7. Federation des Maisons Familiales Rurales FMFRM)
8. Mahebourg Espoir Education Centre
9. Maison Familiale Rurale du Nord
10. Muslim Educational Society - Rabita School
11. Mouvement Sociale de la Jeunesse Mauricienne (Ecole Technique de St Joseph)
12. Mouvement pour le Progrès de Roche Bois
13. Terre de Paix
14. Association ANSAM
15. Future Hope
16. Bâtisseurs de Paix
17. MFR de l'Est
18. MFR de la Savanne
19. Maison Familiale Rurale du Nord
20. Muslim Educational Society - Rabita School
21. Mouvement Sociale de la Jeunesse Mauricienne (Ecole Technique de St Joseph)
22. Mouvement pour le Progrès de Roche Bois
23. Terre de Paix
24. Association ANSAM
25. Future Hope
26. Bâtisseurs de Paix
27. MFR de l'Est
28. MFR de la Savanne
29. Halley Movement

With the following notes:

- 17 schools (No. 1–17) are affiliated with ANFEN.
- Remaining schools (No. 18–19) are non-formal centres registered with NSIF but not directly part of ANFEN.
- All centres receive funding and support from NSIF under the F1 category, based on project-based grants rather than per-student allocation.

ANNEX E : QUESTIONNAIRE NFE

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PUPILS

Dear Pupil,

This study is designed to find out the quality of education provided by Non-Formal Schools. You are requested to answer all the questions by putting a tick where choices are provided and filling in the blank spaces where necessary. Note that this is not a test. Do not write your name. Your cooperation is appreciated

Schools Name.....Division.....

1. Indicate your Sex. (Tick one)

- i) Male (16)
- ii) Female (12)

2. Age (Tick one)

- i) Less than 13 years old (3)
- ii) 13 years old (2)
- iii) 14-15 years old (13)
- iv) 16 and above (11)

3. a) Do you live with your parents?

- i) Yes (24)
- ii) No (4)

b) If yes indicate the current occupation of your parents (where applicable)

- i) Father.....
- ii) Mother.....

c) If no,

- i) Indicate whether both your parents are alive (9)
- ii) One of the parents alive (1)
- iii) None of parents is alive (0)
- iv) Parents separated (8)
- iv) Other (specify)

4. Indicate where you stay/live to be able to attend school?

- i) With parents (27)
- ii) With relatives/guardian (1)
- iii) At a children home (1)
- iv) On the street (0)
- v) Other (specify)

5. Where applicable indicate:

(a) Your mother's/female guardian's level of education:

- i) University /post secondary college (6)
- ii) Secondary (11)
- iii) Primary (11)
- iv) Not completed primary school (0)

(b) Your father's/male guardian's level of education

- i) University /post secondary college (6)
- ii) Secondary (10)
- iii) Primary (6)
- iv) Not completed primary school (0)

6. To what extent do your parents/guardians assist you with school homework?

- i) To a great extent 10)
- ii) To some good extent (5)
- iii) To some fair extent (0)
- iv) To some little extent (6)
- v) Not at all (8)
- vi) Other (specify)

7. Why did you join a non-formal school (Tick relevant reasons)

- ☐ It was nearer our home/residence (1)
- ☐ My parents/guardians could not afford levies in formal schools (1)
- ☐ Lunch is provided to us and was not in formal schools (2)
- ☐ Pupils who drop out of school can re-join without problem (3)
- ☐ Incase of lack of school uniform, one can use home clothes (1)
- ☐ Teachers and pupils are more friendly and understanding (11)
- ☐ My parents/ guardians insisted that I attend non-formal school (3)
- ☐ The rules and regulations are friendlier than those in formal schools (8)

8. Provide the information in the following table

Resource	Who provides	Do you have enough	Are you allowed to carry them home
Textbooks			
Exercise books			
Pencils/erasers			

(NB. Textbooks are considered enough when every two pupils have a book. Exercise books are considered enough when there is an exercise book for every subject or as required by the teacher).

9. Are you normally provided with lunch at school?
 (i) Yes (25) ii) No (4)
10. Are you allowed in school incase you have no school uniform?
 (i) Yes (18) ii) No (11)
11. a) When you are sick, while at home where do you obtain treatment?
 i) Health centre (20)
 ii) Home with drugs from shop/chemist (7)
 iii) Rarely get treated /go without treatment (4)
 iv) Taken for treatment at any facility by well wishers (2)
- b) How do get treatment incase you fall sick in school?
 i) Given pain killers in school (9)
 ii) Taken to health centre (9)
 iii) Parents/guardians called to take one to hospital (19)
12. a) How many meals do you normally take in a day?
 i) One (1)
 ii) Two (6)
 iii) Three (15)
 iv) Other (7)
- b) Is the amount of food you get adequate?
 i) Yes (26)
 ii) No
 iii) Not applicable (2)
13. a) On a scale of 1-5 (where 1 stood for very high, 2 for high 3 for fairly high 4 for low and 5 for non-extent) rate the practice of the use of corporal punishment in their schools.....
- b) Do you experience other forms of insecurity at school?
 i) Yes (7) ii) No (21)
- c) If your response for (b) is yes, what are the common forms of insecurity?
 i) violence (2)
 ii) rape ()
 iii) sexual harassment ()
 iv) bullying ()

d) Do you experience incidences of insecurity on your way to and from school?

i) Yes (4) ii) No (17)

e) If your response for (d) is yes, what are the common forms of insecurity?

i) violence (1)

ii) rape ()

iii) sexual harassment ()

iv) bullying (1)

v) corporal punishment ()

14. What are the main challenges you experience in attending school?

Not reported here, reported in qualitative focus group discussion.

The End

Thank you so much!

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EDUCATORS' OF NON-FORMAL SCHOOLS

Dear Educator,

This study is designed to investigate the quality of education provided by Non-formal primary schools in Mauritius. You are kindly requested to answer the following questions by putting a tick where choices are provided and filling in the blank spaces where necessary. Your responses will be treated in great confidentiality.

Schools Name.....

1. Your age

- i) 24 years and below (1)
- ii) 25-34 years (5)
- iii) 35-44 years (7)
- iv) 45-54 (4)
- v) 55 and above (1)

2. Sex

- i) Male (2)
- ii) Female (16)

3. Marital status (Tick one)

- i) Married ()
- ii) Divorced ()
- iii) Single ()
- iv) Separated ()

4. Indicate your academic qualification

- i) SC (10)
- ii) HSC (4)
- iii) Graduate (4)
- iv) Other (Specify)

5. For how long have you taught at the current school? (tick appropriate answer)

- (i) Less than a year (5)
- iv) 11-15 years (4)
- (ii) 1-5 year (4)
- v) 16-20 years (4)
- (iii) 6-10 years (1)
- vi) More than 20 years ()

6. a) Have you undergone any form of in-service training or attended workshops/ seminars on teaching in Non-Formal Schools?

- i) Yes (14) ii) No (4)

b) If yes briefly explain the nature of training, the duration it took and the organisation that arranged for the training.....

7. Does your school have adequate books for Educators and pupils in the following subjects for your class (Tick as appropriate).

Subject	Pupils' books	Educators' guide	Reference books/readers
English	8	7	1
French	9	6	1
Maths	7	6	1
Science	2	2	
Social Studies		1	
Religious Studies	1	1	
Other (specify)....			

8. Would you recommend the course books currently used for your class in your school to others? (Tick as appropriate)

Subject	Highly recommend	well recommend	Fairly recommend	Not recommend
English	3	5	2	
French	4	5	2	
Maths	3	3	1	
Science	1			
Social Studies				

9. (a) On a scale of 1-3 describe the state of lighting of the classrooms in your school.

- i) Very well light 8
- ii) Well light 9
- iii) Poorly light ..1

- b) On a scale of 1-3 describe the state of aeration of the classrooms in your school.
- i) Very well ventilated (12)
 - ii) Well ventilated (3)
 - iii) Poorly ventilated. (7)
- (c) How adequate are the sitting/writing surfaces for pupils in your class?
- i) Sitting/writing surfaces available and pupils sit (17) comfortably
 - ii) Sitting/writing surfaces available but pupils sit squeezed () together
 - iii) Sitting surfaces not enough some pupils sit on the floor ()
 - iv) Writing surfaces not enough pupils write on their laps (1)
- (d) How often do you use the following learner- centred instructional techniques?

	How often do you use each of these techniques?			
Teaching method	Very Often	Often	Rarely	Not at all
Story-telling	9	6	2	
Displays, pictures, flash cards and models	10	4	3	
Experiments/demonstrations	6	5	4	2
Question and answer	12	5		
Discussion	13	2	2	
Role-play	7	6	2	2

- e) Indicate your current employer
- Volunteer (1)
 - NSIF (1)
 - NGO (21)

Indicate your level of satisfaction in the aspects of your job indicated

	Level of satisfaction			
Aspects of the work	Highly satisfied	satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not satisfied
Amount of salary	1	6	3	5
Mode of salary payment	8	5	1	
Working time	5	8	2	2
Job security	2	8	1	3
Working environment	3	10	2	1

10. What are the main methods you use to measure the progress and achievement of your pupils?

Assessment method	How often it is used					
	Daily	Once a fortnight	Once a Month	Once a term	Once a year	Weekly
External exams						
School based exams				1	2	2
Continuous Assessment		4	3	5		
Observation	2	5	4	1		3

11. Which of the following attitude behaviour do you encourage in your school?

- i) Tolerance (14)
- ii) Care for others (17)
- iii) Taking and accepting responsibility (16)
- iv) Working hard (13)
- v) Neatness (14)
- vi) Politeness (17)
- vii) Punctuality (16)

12. (a) Have you been absent from school in the last one month?

Yes (5) No (12)

(b) Are you assigned any administrative duties that it difficult for you to perform your teaching assignments effectively.

Yes (6) No (11)

Thank you for your help

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MANAGERS OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Dear Manager,

This study is designed to investigate the quality of non-formal education provided by institutions across Mauritius. You are kindly requested to answer the following questions by putting a tick where choices are provided and filling in the blank spaces where necessary. Your responses will be treated in confidentiality.



ORGANISATION / Association

Name:

Name of the centre (if other than association):

Address:

Objectives of the organisation/association :

INFORMATION ABOUT THE MANAGER

Name of Manager/Director

.....

1. Indicate your gender

☐ Male 4

☐ Female 9

2. What is your age?

☐ Below 30 years

☐ 31-40 years 2

☐ 41-50 years 4

☐ 51 years and above 7

3. (a). Highest academic qualification

- ☐ Diploma 2
- ☐ Graduate 4
- ☐ Postgraduate 4
- ☐ Other (specify) (lower 6) 2
- ☐ HSC 1

b) Highest professional qualification (if any)

- ☐ Pedagogical courses at Service Diocese Diapprentissage at ANFEN
- ☐ Master in Education/Certificate in Pedagogy
- ☐ HSC
- ☐ BSC
- ☐ SW

4. a) Number of years as Manager at current institution Less than 3 years 6

- ☐ Three to eight years 1
- ☐ More than eight years 6

b) Have you attended any leadership/ institution management training?

- ☐ Yes (11)
- ☐ No (2)

5. a) Is the organization/association registered?

- ☐ Yes (12)
- ☐ No (1)

b) If yes, indicate the registered body/ organisation

- ☐ Registrar of associations 10
- ☐ Ministry of Education and Human Resource 2
- ☐ National Social Inclusion Foundation 11
- ☐ Mauritius Qualifications Authority 2
- ☐ Other (specify) ANFEN 1

INSTITUTION MANAGEMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

6. What are the operating hours of the organization?

- ☐ 08.45-14.30hrs
- ☐ 08.30hrs-15.00hrs
- ☐ 07.45-14.00
- ☐ 09.00-14.30hrs

7. How would you rate the level of discipline of pupils in your institution?

- ☐ Very Good 3
- ☐ Good 6
- ☐ Fair 3
- ☐ Poor

8. How would you rate pupils' class attendance in your institution?

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Very good 3
- ☐ Good 9
- ☐ Fair 1
- ☐ Poor

9. (a) Is there a proper governance structure in place to take key decisions?

- ☐ Yes 13
- ☐ No

(b) If Yes, please tick the appropriate box below:

- ☐ Board of members 12
- ☐ Institution management committee 3
- ☐ The proprietor/ Owner
- ☐ Other (specify)

10. What is your annual budget?

1-2 million	2-3 million	3-4 million	4-5 million	5-6 million	6-7 million
2	1	3	2	1	1

11. What are the sources of funding for your organization?(You may tick more than one)

- ☐ National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF) 10
- ☐ Parents/ Community 3
- ☐ Church/ Sponsoring Organization 2
- ☐ Private companies via CSR 10
- ☐ International Funding 1
- ☐ Donors 11
- ☐ Other (specify)

12. a) Is there a food program for the pupils in the organization?

- ☐ Yes 10
- ☐ No 3

b) If yes give reasons for its introduction in the organization

- » Most of the students don't bring their lunch due to social problem.
- » The food nutrition program is to ensure that allchildren according school receive a decent breakfast and complete lunch to give them vitamin and energy for their physical and mental development
- » To boost brain function, focus and learning come from underprivileged background and broken home – food program caters for food diet for adolescence.

c) Who finances the lunch program?

- ☐ National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF) 6
- ☐ Parents/ Community 1
- ☐ Church/ Sponsoring Organization
- ☐ Private companies via CSR 5
- ☐ International Funding 1
- ☐ Donors 5
- ☐ Other (specify) 1 (foodwise)/Sena, Eccea, own fundraising

13. a) Do you have enough classrooms for each stream in your institution?

- ☐ Yes 10
- ☐ No 3

b) Indicate the number of classrooms available

1-5	5-10
	2

c) Do you have specific rooms/specialist rooms/laboratories for specific subjects?
Please give details.

Computer lab	5
Hair Dressing	4
Library	1
Music	2
Bakery/kitchen	9
Conference	1
Garden	3
Workshops (atelier) welding and metal fabrication	11
Wood cabinet making	3
Mechanic	1

d) Indicate with a Yes or No if your institution has office for

- Managers 13
- Assistant Manager 6
- Staff (staffroom) 8

14. a) To what extent does your institution give attention to the teaching of non-examinable subjects? (e.g arts, sports, life skills etc)

- ☐ Very high extent 7
- ☐ High extent 4
- ☐ Moderate extent 2
- ☐ Low extent
- ☐ No extent

b) Which National Exams do the students sit for? (You may tick more than one)

- ☐ NCI 6
☐ PSAC 3
☐ NCE 1
☐ Others 5

c) If yes, give details about the students' performance in the last 5 years (% pass)?

Year	Student's Performance(%)			
	0-30	30-50	50-70	70-100
2020				
2021				1
2022			1	6
2023			3	4
2024			1	7

d) Number of students enrolled at MITD in the last 5 years?

Year	No of students enrolled at MITD	
	0-5	6-10
2020		10
2021		14
2022	12	11
2023	13	16
2024	17	6

e) Number of students enrolled at other Vocational Training Institution?

Year	No of students enrolled at other Vocational Training Institution		
	0-5	6-10	>10
2020			43
2021	3		56
2022	3		71
2023	8		83
2024	10	7	62

15. a) How many times has your institution/ institution been visited by the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers in the last one year (as per the institution logbook/ visitor's book)

- ☐ None 10
- ☐ Once
- ☐ Twice 1
- ☐ Thrice and more 2

b) Indicate the main reasons for the visit (Tick where applicable) (same, n/a)

- ☐ Routine Institution Inspection 8
- ☐ Inspection for the purpose of registration 1
- ☐ Monitoring of NFE programs 1
- ☐ Other 2
- ☐ (specify).Monitoring for NCI

15. a) In what ways does your institution get parents involved in their children's learning at home? (Tick where applicable)

- ☐ Asking parents to assist their children with homework 6
- ☐ Asking parents to sign the student's diary once the homework is done 3
- ☐ Asking parents to sign student's academic report card 9
- ☐ Getting parents involved in decision making at the institution level 4
- ☐ Other 4
(specify) Social worker communicating where children are absent or when being punished. Meeting of parents/inviting parents to open day. Communication with parents.

(b) Do you have regular meetings with the parents? (no. of times on average per year?). 11

Thrice a year as and when required

16. a) Are the teachers required to sign in and out when they report for work?

- ☐ Yes 12
- ☐ No 1

b) On a scale of 1-4 (where 1 stand for excellent, 2 for good, 3 for fair and 4 for poor) rate the teacher's punctuality in institution attendance.

- ☐ Excellent 5
- ☐ Good 8
- ☐ Fair Poor

17 a). Do the students benefit from the services of a Psychologist/ Counsellor?

- ☐ Yes 12
- ☐ No 1

b). Is the Psychologist/ Counsellor employed on a

- ☐ Full-time Basis
☐ Part-Time Basis 9
☐ Sessional Basis 3

C) How many times per week or month does the Psychologist/Counsellor come to your organization?

Once a week	Twice a week	>2 times a week	1 times a month
4	3	3	1

18 a). Do the students benefit from the services of a social worker?

- ☐ Yes 11
☐ No 3

b). Is the social worker employed on a:

- ☐ Full-time Basis 5
☐ Part-Time Basis 6
☐ Sessional Basis

C) How many times per week or month does the social worker come to your organization?

Twice a week	>2 times a week	Daily
3	4	3

TEACHING AND NON-TEACHING STAFF

Has the Educator undergone any form of In service training or attended any workshops/ seminars on No-Formal Education: If yes do provide details on the nature and duration of the training as well as the organization offering the training below:

ANFEN PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING: 13

Cooperative entrepreneurship/experience dress marker, embroidery, child psychology, master

Number of years working for organization

<1year	1-5 years	5-10 years	>10 year
8	29	13	22

TEACHING AND NON TEACHING STAFF

Gender		Age Range			
M	F	20-30	30-40	40-60	60-70
36	60	10	21	43	17

HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

Grade 6	14
Form III	6
SC	25
HSC	9
Diploma	8
Degree	7
Vocational Training	12
MSC/Post Graduate	4
PHD	1

17. a) Are the textbooks produced by MIE used in your schools?

☐ Yes 3

☐ No 9 (we use alphabetization functional by Caritas)

(b) Does your institution have adequate books for teachers and pupils in the following subjects (Answer by: Yes 1 or No)

LITERACY AND NUMERACY	PUPIL'S BOOKS	PEDAGOGICAL TOOLS Projector, laptop, whiteboard, speaker
English	3	9
French	3	9
Mathematics	3	9
History and Geography	1	3
Information and Technology	2	4
Science	1	2
Social Studies		1
Art/Music/Dance	2	4
Other (Specify) Woodwork & metal work subject	1	4

18. Would you recommend the course books currently used in your institution to others? (Tick as appropriate) Yes: 11

SUBJECT	Highly recommended	Well Recommended	Fairly Recommended	Not Recommended
English	1	3	2	
French	1	3	2	
Mathematics	1	3	2	
History and Geography	1			
Information and Technology	1	1		
Science	1			
Social Studies				
Art/Music/Dance		2		
Other (Specify)		1		

Note: Course Book for educators & handouts for trainers

19. How often do they use the following learner-centered instructional techniques?

	How often do you use each of these techniques?			
Teaching method	Very often	Often	Rarely	Not at all
Story Telling	6	4	2	
Displays, pictures, flash, cards and models	7	5		
Experiments/Demonstration	5	6		
Questions and answers	7	5		
Discussions	5	6		
Role-Play	3	4	4	

Other?

20. What are the main methods used to measure the progress and achievements of the pupils?

Assessment Method					
External Exams	Once a fortnight	Once a month	Once a term	Once a year	Everyday
School based exams	1		8	1	
Continuous assessment	3	5	3		
Observation	7	1			2

21. (a) How adequate are the sitting/writing surfaces for pupils in the class?

- ☐ Sitting/ writing surfaces available and pupils sit comfortably 11
- ☐ Sitting/ writing surfaces available but pupils sit squeezed together
- ☐ Sitting surfaces not enough, some pupils sit on the floor
- ☐ Writing surfaces not enough, pupils write on their laps.

(b) Provide a plan of a classroom.

22. Which of the following attitude/ behavior is encouraged in the institution?

- ☐ Tolerance 10
- ☐ Care for others 11
- ☐ Taking and accepting responsibility 11
- ☐ Working hard 11
- ☐ Neatness 9
- ☐ Politeness 11
- ☐ Punctuality 11

Other?

Empathy/respect/thankfulness/timeliness/tidyness

23. Are Educators assigned any administrative duties as well?

- ☐ Yes 8
- ☐ No 3

24. Child Participation: Do you have a student's committee?

- ☐ Yes 2
- ☐ No 9

STUDENT'S SECTION

STUDENT	AGE	GENDER
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		

25. According to you, tick from the list below the main reasons why students joined the non-formal institution.

- ☐ Failed PSAC twice 7
- ☐ Dropped out from mainstream institution 11
- ☐ Did not meet the exam requirements to be promoted to higher grades 7
- ☐ It is nearer to their home/ residence 2
- ☐ The parents/ guardians could not afford, levies in formal institutions 1
- ☐ Lunch is provided and was not provided in formal institutions 2
- ☐ Teachers and pupils are more understanding and friendly 6
- ☐ Their parents/ guardians insisted that they attend non-formal institution 2
- ☐ The rules and regulations are friendlier than those in formal institution 3

Thank you for your participation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children extends its heartfelt appreciation to all those who have contributed to advancing children's rights and well-being throughout the year. We express our gratitude to our team of Investigators and Support Staff for their unwavering commitment and tireless efforts, which have been essential in fulfilling our mission.

Our sincere thanks also go to our partners and stakeholders, whose continued collaboration and support have been invaluable in driving forward our shared vision for the protection and promotion of children's rights. We remain grateful to government agencies and officials for their cooperation in addressing the challenges faced by children and families.

Special recognition is extended to the Law Reform Commission for their continual collaboration and especially this year with regard to the Special Report on the Protection of the Rights of Child Artists and Child Athletes.

Our appreciation as well to the involvement of the diplomatic corps and the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the advancement of the safeguarding of the rights of the child.

We also acknowledge the important role played by Non-Governmental Organisations, whose advocacy, support and field work continue to enrich our understanding and inspire meaningful change. In particular, the contributions of NGOs working in the non-formal sector have provided valuable insights into the realities faced by children.

We also extend our recognition to the *Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits de l'Enfant*, a vibrant youth-based initiative under the aegis of the Office. Their engagement serves as an inspiration and demonstrates the essential role of youth participation in shaping a society that is more responsive to the voices of children.

We are especially grateful to EMTEL and Dayforce, who have supported the OOC and JADE by providing office space and sponsoring activities, thereby enabling these young ambassadors to further develop their potential and extend their impact.

We are deeply appreciative of the trust and engagement of all our partners and stakeholders, and we look forward to continuing this collective effort in the coming year to ensure that every child's voice is heard and every child's rights are respected.



OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN

All children have all these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what language they speak, what their religion is, what they think, what they look like, if they are a boy or girl, if they have a disability, if they are rich or poor, and no matter who their parents or families are or what their parents or families believe or do. No child should be treated unfairly for any reason. 2	When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. All adults should do what is best for children. Governments should make sure children are protected and looked after by their parents, or by other people when this is needed. Governments should make sure that people and places responsible for looking after children are doing a good job. 3	Governments must do all they can to make sure that every child in their countries can enjoy all the rights in this Convention. 4	Every child has the right to be alive. Governments must make sure that children survive and develop in the best possible way. 6
Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children seriously. 12	Children have the right to share freely with others what they learn, think and feel, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms other people. 13	Children can join or set up groups or organisations, and they can meet with others, as long as this does not harm other people. 15	Every child has the right to privacy. The law must protect children's privacy, family, home, communications and reputation (or good name) from any attack. 16
Children have the right to get information from the Internet, radio, television, newspapers, books and other sources. Adults should make sure the information they are getting is not harmful. Governments should encourage the media to share information from lots of different sources, in languages that all children can understand. 17	Governments must protect children from violence, abuse and being neglected by anyone who looks after them. 19	Every child with a disability should enjoy the best possible life in society. Governments should remove all obstacles for children with disabilities to become independent and to participate actively in the community. 23	Every child has the right to an education. Primary education should be free. Secondary and higher education should be available to every child. Children should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level possible. Discipline in schools should respect children's rights and never use violence. 28
Children's education should help them fully develop their personalities, talents and abilities. It should teach them to understand their own rights, and to respect other people's rights, cultures and differences. It should help them to live peacefully and protect the environment. 29	Every child has the right to rest, relax, play and to take part in cultural and creative activities. 31	Governments must make sure that children are not kidnapped or sold, or taken to other countries or places to be exploited (taken advantage of). 35	Governments should actively tell children and adults about this Convention so that everyone knows about children's rights. 42