



OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023

*Inculcate the Love for Nature in
Every Child of the Republic of Mauritius*

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List of Acronyms

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
AU	African Union
BIP	Basic Invalid's Pension
BPF	<i>Brigade pour la protection de la famille</i>
BSMHCC	Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre
CAB	Citizen Advice Bureau
CCA	Climate Change Act 2020
CDE	Convention against Discrimination in Education
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
COP	Conference of the Parties (of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change)
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CWD	Child with disability
CYC	Correctional Youth Centre
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
ECCEA	Early Childhood Care and Education Authority
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
ENOC	European Network of Ombudspersons for Children
EPO	Emergency Protection Order
EU	European Union
EWS	Early Warning System
FSB	Family Support Bureau
GEP	Green Education Partnership
GHG	Greenhouse gases
ICRI	Independent children's rights institution

IOC	Indian Ocean Commission
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LRC	Law Reform Commission
MEHR	Ministry of Education and Human Resources
MES	Mauritius Examinations Syndicate
MESWMCC	Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
METEST	Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
MFPWA	Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association
MGEFW	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
MHW	Ministry of Health and Wellness
MIE	Mauritius Institute of Education
MMS	Mauritius Meteorological Services
MOI	Mauritius Oceanography Institute
MSISSNS	Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity
MWF	Mauritius Wildlife Foundation
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NCC	National Children’s Council
NCE	National Certificate of Education
NDRRMC	National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre
NEOC	National Emergency Operations Command
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSIF	National Social Inclusion Foundation
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OC	Ombudsperson for Children
OCA	Ombudsperson for Children Act 2003
OCO	Ombudsperson for Children’s Office
PIO	Passport and Immigration Office
PSAC	Primary School Achievement Certificate
PSEA	Private Secondary Education Authority
PSI	Parenting Support Intervention
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
PWD	Person with disability
RCEA	Roman Catholic Education Authority

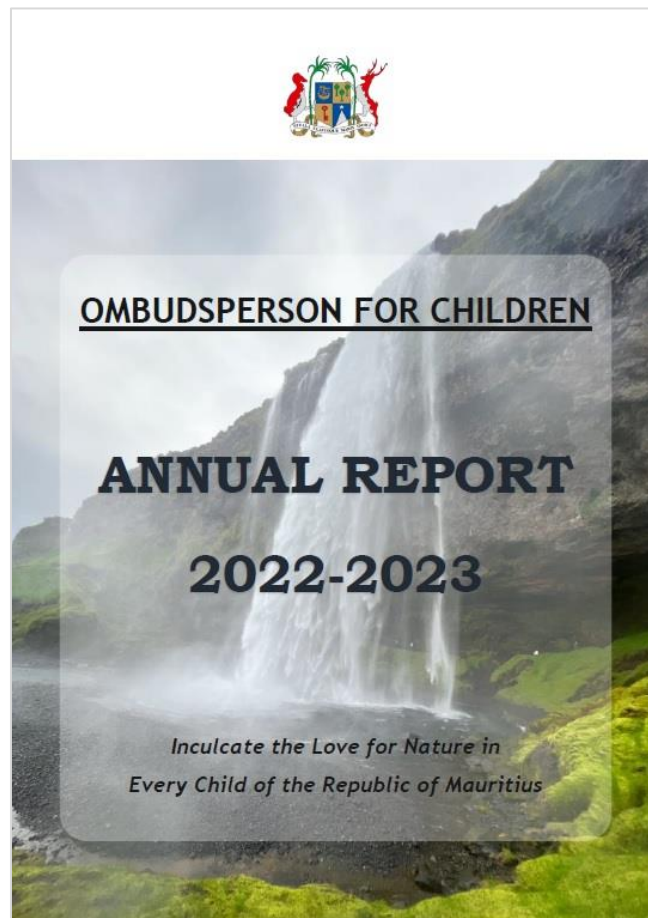
RCI	Residential Care Institution
RGSC	Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre
SCAR	Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SeDEC	Service Diocésain de l'Education Catholique
SENA	Special Education Needs Authority
SENRDC	Special Education Needs Resource and Development Centre
SERP	School Emergency Response Plan
SIDS	Small Island Developing State
SSS	State Secondary School
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPSEE	Union of Private Secondary Education Employees
UVR	Ultraviolet radiation
WHO	World Health Organisation
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation
YMPP	Young Mauritians for the Planet Plan

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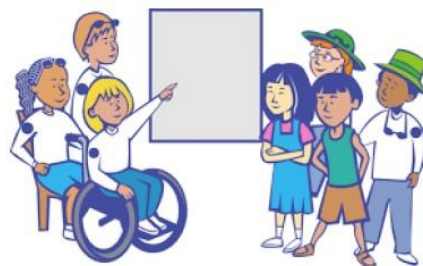
General Introduction



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The Climate Crisis
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CHAPTER 3:
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CHAPTER 4:
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CHAPTER 5:
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General Introduction

Every year when I hold my pen to write the first word of my annual report, I inevitably reflect on my former ones. Each time, the same question comes to my mind: Has my previous annual report made a positive impact on the lives of children last year? It is difficult to give a straightforward answer to this question. However, I can confidently say that all my reports are carefully prepared following thorough literature searches, field work, investigations, interviews, workshops and meetings with stakeholders engaged with children, and interactions with children themselves. Each year, my team and I also attend training sessions at national and international levels to improve our knowledge and practice.

Before I comment on the core components of my Annual Report 2022-2023, I must highlight that, during this reporting year, the Ombudsperson for Children's Office (OCO) registered 446 complaints and resolved more than 90 per cent of them. We organised and participated in around 150 workshops, meetings with different stakeholders and field visits. We also responded to more than 100 queries from the media regarding children's rights and their situation in the country.

Dear Readers, these figures matter because they show that we have dedicated team members who work hard to make our country a more child rights-friendly place. I also acknowledge all the people who contacted us over the year through several means to report on child rights violations so that these could be addressed promptly. I appeal to all citizens to always come forward to protect children's wellbeing, safety and rights. Do not hesitate to make yourself heard to us if you feel that we are not doing what we are supposed to do. Join our struggle to uphold children's rights and say NO to all forms of violations.

I have said this several times, and I say it again: **Networking is sine qua non if we want to win the fight against those who harm our children.** All too often, I have come across 'child rights activists' who, instead of collaborating with one another, compete and argue with one another. This is a sad reality in our country and it must STOP. This malpractice impacts negatively on children. Effective governmental agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations are governed by the principles of

transparency, accountability and good governance. They work in the best interests of children as one entity. They do not fight over trivial things which draw them away from the promotion and protection of children's rights. Instead, they work relentlessly TOGETHER with only one common goal: **the wellbeing of all children at all costs**. Children are considerably affected when adults who are supposed to care for them fight amongst themselves. I remember, Clara¹, a child who lives in a residential care institution (RCI), who told me the following:

Madam Rita, my parents used to fight a lot and, when I was placed in a small group home, I was relieved because my mother used to beat me a lot and my father had attempted to rape me. Home was hell for me. For the last five years, I have been living peacefully in my small group home. I love my 'aunties' and 'sisters'. Yesterday, I have been told that I have to go to a foster family. I do not want to leave my family at the small group home. The officers and my 'aunties' are fighting because of me. My 'aunties' are insisting that I am very happy with them. The officers stated again and again that I will be happier in a foster family. They did not ask for my opinion. When I went to Court, I told them clearly that I did not want to be transferred to another home. They finally understood my plea and I went back to my small group home!

After a thorough investigation, I found that the officers who were deciding about Clara's future did not carry out any in-depth analysis on her social and emotional needs and had not actively involved all the necessary stakeholders, including the child herself, in deciding this change of placement. Fortunately, today the Children's Court is a reality and the voices of children are heard. Nevertheless, it is ESSENTIAL for all those who work with children to be a TEAM and work TOGETHER. In the present case, the 'professionals' were fighting ABOUT Clara and not FOR Clara.

I reiterate that all child rights activists must receive adequate training and work as part of multidisciplinary teams. Nobody can and should decide about any child's future without proper consultation. For instance, in the case of children in need of alternative care, the Child Development Unit (CDU) of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare

¹ This is a pseudonym to protect the child's identity.

(MGEFW) must work closely with RCIs and not engage in any power struggle. In the case of children with disabilities, the Special Education Needs Authority (SENA) must support and seek the advice of Special Education Needs (SEN) schools and vice versa. For children in conflict with the law, the Police, the CDU, the Rehabilitation Youth Centres (RYCs), the Correctional Youth Centres (CYCs) and the Probation and Aftercare Service must collaborate fully. **Without a multi-stakeholder participatory approach, children are the ones who suffer the most.** As at date, the Republic of Mauritius has enacted several laws which aim to protect children, but for them to positively impact children's lives, collaboration among professionals and the latter's ongoing and in-depth training are a MUST.

For the Annual Report 2022-2023, I dedicated a significant part of this document on the impact of climate change on the rights of the children of our country. I realised that the climate crisis is one of the most pressing global realities that is affecting all the rights of children across the world. Consequently, I opened an own-motion investigation on this matter, a process which was both challenging and enriching at the same time. In **Chapter 2** of the current report, I discussed the complex matter of climate change in a simple language that can also be understood by children. I also prepared fact sheets that can be used by parents, educators and other stakeholders working with children to develop their vocabulary on this subject matter so that children can express themselves and reflect on the impact of climate change on their daily lives, wellbeing and rights. Additionally, I provided information on different local governmental agencies and NGOs in the field of climate change, and made child rights-based recommendations toward the need to combat the adverse effects of climate change at a local level.

I would like to highlight that, this year, with the support of the European Union, my office has had the unique opportunity to organise, amongst others, two training workshops led by four international experts, two from the Department of Education of Statewide Services in Western Australia, and two from the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South Africa. Their field of expertise relates mainly to the right of children with disabilities to inclusive education. These Australian and South African professionals helped the Investigators of the OCO, as well as stakeholders from the SENA, the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (METEST), the Ministry of Social Integration,

Social Security and National Solidarity (MSISSNS), the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MHW), the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) and several NGOs to reflect on good practices in Western Australia and have a better understanding of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC; Organisation of African Unity [OAU], 1990)² respectively, in order to better promote and protect the rights of children with disabilities in the Republic of Mauritius.

In addition, I have been working closely this year with the SENA which has the potential to play a key role in making the right to quality education of children with disabilities a reality in our country, through its mandate under the SENA Act 2018. Since the setting up of the SENA, the monitoring of the quality of special education provided to children with disabilities is being ensured. I have also noted that foundation and ongoing training courses are being offered to teachers, assistant teachers and carers working in this sector. However, it is my duty to point out that, in the years to come and 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. Hence, professionals would require intensive training to be able to promote the human rights model of disability. In [Chapter 3](#) of the present report, I summarised the main findings and recommendations on how to improve our educational system in relation to children with disabilities and align with a human rights model of disability to promote inclusive education for all children.

Next, in [Chapter 4](#) of this Annual Report 2022-2023, I did not only provide an illustrative overview of selected local, regional and international activities and missions carried out by my Office, but also a detailed list of all activities done from September 2022 to August 2023. Finally, in [Chapter 5](#) of the current report, I presented statistics on all cases handled by my Office in the period from July 2022 to August 2023. I also provided summaries of 107 cases of child rights violations that outline the different types of cases received by my Office during the reporting year and how they are processed.

² Organisation of African Unity (1990). *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*. Addis Ababa: Author.

As per section 11(3) of the Ombudsperson for Children Act 2003 (refer to [Appendix A](#)), “*The President shall cause every report sent to him under this section to be laid before the Assembly within one month of its submission*”. I sincerely hope that this Annual Report 2022-2023 will be widely read by not only Parliamentarians, but also other citizens of our country, including children. **The promotion and protection of children’s rights must remain one of the fundamental principles of any society.** I am optimistic that the Republic of Mauritius is moving in the right direction to align as far as possible to its international obligations in relation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC; UN, 1989)³ and the ACRWC (OAU, 1990).

Long live children’s rights!

Mrs. Rita Venkatasawmy, OSK
Ombudsperson for Children

³ United Nations (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Geneva: Author.

CHAPTER 2:

The Climate Crisis - A Child Rights Crisis







A Heartfelt Cry from Mother Nature

*Child of Earth, I call upon you, who savours
its water and air, who destroys it, in spite of
you.*

*Hear my plea and open your eyes. Nay, open
your eyes, ears, hands, toes, mind, and
heart upon that which surrounds you.
Open your conscience upon the languor of
your kind and let your soul preserve Earth.*

*Within, I hold your isle. Soft sand, dense
forests, rivers all over, endemic birds, idyllic
hills, serene lagoons, abundant sea,
catastrophic cyclones, treasures hidden.*

*Within, I hold Africa. Arid desert,
impenetrable jungles, endless Nile, lion
kings, zippy zebras, hilarious hyenas,
howling macaques, terrible famines,
precious mines.*

*Within, I hold Asia. Insurmountable peaks,
explosive festivals, land of spices, Great
Wall, ancient civilizations, Siberian cold,
Indian Summer, endangered tigers,
economies emerging.*

*Within, I hold Europe. Old Continent, vast
empires, curious explorers, colonies in
reconnaissance, Industrial Revolution,
Mediterranean trade winds, snowy tops,
killer heatwaves, economic force.*

*Within, I hold the Americas. New World,
urban jungles, corn fields, Grand Canyon,
immense Amazon, lone wolves, coloured
Aras, firearms, The American Dream.*

*Within, I hold the Arctic and Antarctica.
Deserts of ice, frozen mysteries, protected
species, Emperor penguins, polar bears,
deep-diving whales, melting glaciers, ice
floes alive.*

*Those lands lather in my oceans and seas,
wildly at times, calmly in their depths.*

Love them.

Protect them.



Poem (English Version) by Rita Venkatasawmy, Ombudsperson for Children



Cri de Cœur de Mère Nature

Toi, enfant de cette Terre, qui jouit de son eau, de son air, et qui la détruit malgré toi, je fais appel à toi.

Je te demande d'ouvrir les yeux, les oreilles, les mains, les pieds, l'esprit et le cœur sur ce qui t'entoure. Ouvre ta conscience sur l'inaction de tes paires et choisis en ton âme de préserver la Terre.

En moi, j'abrite ton île. Sable fin, forêts denses, rivières ubiquistes, oiseaux endémiques, collines idylliques, lagons paisibles, mer abondante, cyclones dévastateurs, trésors cachés.

En moi, j'abrite l'Afrique. Désert aride, jungles impénétrables, le Nile interminable, lions royaux, zèbres furtifs, hyènes rieurs, macaques hurleurs, famine ravageuse, mines précieuses.

En moi, j'abrite l'Asie. Montagnes infranchissables, explosions festives, cuisine épicée, la Grande Muraille, civilisations anciennes, froid sibérien, l'été indien, tigres en danger, économies émergentes.

En moi, j'abrite l'Europe. Vieux continent, vastes empires, curieux explorateurs, colonies découvreuses, révolution industrielle, vents méditerranéens, pics enneigés, canicules meurtrières, forces économiques.

En moi, j'abrite les Amériques. Le Nouveau Monde, gigantesques métropoles, champs de maïs, le Grand Canyon, l'immense Amazone, loups solitaires, Ara multicolores, armes à feu, le rêve américain.

En moi, j'abrite les pôles de l'Arctique et de l'Antarctique. Déserts de glace, mystères enfouies, espèces protégées, manchot empereur, ours polaires, baleines plongeurs, glaciers en fonte, banquises vivantes.

Ces terres baignent dans mes océans et mes mers, déchaînés parfois, calmes en profondeur.

Aime-les.

Protège-les.

Poem (French Version) by Rita Venkatasawmy, Ombudsperson for Children



2.1. Introductory notes



2.1.1. Why a chapter on climate change?

As the Ombudsperson for Children (OC), it is my responsibility in line with the Ombudsperson for Children Act (OCA) 2003 (see Appendix A) to promote and protect the rights of all Mauritian children residing within the Republic of Mauritius and abroad. I must also ensure that the rights of foreign children living on Mauritian soil are respected.

When it comes to the promotion and protection of children's rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) adopted by the United Nations⁴ (UN) General Assembly on 20 November 1989 is the foundation of all my actions in favour of children. All the articles of the CRC and its four fundamental principles, notably non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development, and the respect for the views of the child, aim to give children a good start in life; unequivocally, children are holders of rights.

Today, climate change has a serious impact on all the rights of children around the world. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF; 2021)⁵ referred to the climate crisis as a crisis of children's rights.



“IT IS ALREADY CLEAR THAT CHILDREN ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SHOCKS THAN ADULTS.”

~ Henrietta Fore,
UNICEF Executive Director
(UNICEF, 2021, p.4)

All Mauritian citizens must become aware of the urgent need to better understand the impact of climate change on the lives of children in Mauritius and abroad, as well as foreign children living in Mauritius. It is important here to emphasise the words of the UNICEF's Executive Director, H. Fore, as follows:

Almost every child on earth is exposed to at least one climate and environmental hazard, shock or stress such as heatwaves, cyclones, air pollution, flooding and water scarcity. (UNICEF, 2021, p.4)

⁴ United Nations (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Geneva: Author.

⁵ UNICEF (2021). *Summary Edition: The climate crisis is a child rights crisis. Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index*. Retrieved 03 July 2023 from www.unicef.org/media/105531/file/UNICEF_climate%20crisis_child_rights_crisis-summary.pdf



In other words, no child will be spared from the adverse effects of climate change, including the children of the Republic of Mauritius.

Respecting the views of children is one of the fundamental principles of the CRC (UN, 1989). Therefore, it is imperative to educate children about climate and eco-citizenship which can prepare them to become active stakeholders in decision-making processes on climate change both locally and internationally. In February 2023, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023a)⁶ also recommended that Mauritius involves children in the implementation of the Climate Change Act (CCA) 2020 and in the development of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

It is for those reasons that I have chosen this topic for my Annual Report 2022-2023. My main goal is to use simple language to explain to children the dangers of climate change. This matter is complex, but the stakes are high. It is more than urgent that our children understand climate change and that they play a significant part in the preparation and implementation of its adaptation and mitigation measures.

I invite educators to use the fact sheets provided in this chapter as teaching aids to explain climate change to children in a simple language. I also encourage them to adapt and improve these sheets as per the specific needs of their students. This chapter can enable children to learn basic concepts on climate change and build their vocabulary. Other explanatory sheets can also be added by readers.

2.1.2. Important notes to readers

1. This is **NOT** a technical chapter on climate change.
2. Having said that, I have researched and read through several experts' reports, parsing reputable websites on the topics of climate change, and our planet, and its flora and fauna, to gain a better understanding on the climate change conundrum.

⁶ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023a). *Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Mauritius*. Retrieved 03 July 2023 from digitallibrary.un.org/record/4003964



3. The Internet is flooded with information on climate change. It took me a considerable amount of time to extract useful findings and present them in a coherent way so that readers, both adults and children, could benefit from them.
4. At no time should educators assume that children already have certain notions about the topic of climate change. Surveys carried out with several primary and secondary school children across the country have shown that many of them do not have the vocabulary they need to understand, reflect and talk about climate change. The glossary (see subsection 2.4) and fact sheets (see subsection 2.5) that I have designed in this chapter are intended to enhance children's vocabulary on climate change and to help them take an active role in debates on this matter.

2.1.3. Statement on children's participation

I have included the contributions of a group of 125 students from various local secondary schools on the issue of climate change in this chapter. These students led and participated in meetings, workshops and projects related to this subject. They spoke out and their voices were heard. I highly value their opinions and perspectives.

Some of these students have taken on the role of *Climate Ambassadors* who obtained further training about climate change. I hope that they, in turn, will put forward their ideas and proposals to different stakeholders in Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agalega, Tromelin, the Indian Ocean, Africa and throughout the world. Our Mauritian children are more than capable of contributing to the preservation and protection of our planet. However, to do so, they need dedicated adults to support them both in accessing information on climate change and in teaching them about the topic.

I would like to thank the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (MESWMCC), the Private Secondary Education Authority (PSEA) and the *Service Diocésain de l'Éducation Catholique* (SeDEC), among others, who are collaborating with the Ombudsperson for Children's Office (OCO) to raise awareness and provide guidance to students on climate change.



***2.2. An own-motion
enquiry by the OC on
the impact of climate
change on children's
rights***



2.2.1. Rationale of the own-motion enquiry

Section 7(1) of the OCA 2003 stipulates that “[w]here 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 context, I opened an own-motion enquiry on the impact of climate change on children’s rights for the following main reasons:

1. According to UNICEF (2021), climate change, the destabilisation of the planet’s ecosystem and the increase in natural disasters are having a direct impact on children’s physical integrity and health.
2. Climate change affects all children’s rights. On 23 February 2023, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that the Republic of Mauritius involves children in climate actions and strategies.
3. In 2015, this same Committee⁷ had already recommended that the Mauritian Government raise children’s awareness on climate change and prepare them for it.
4. Children born today will experience the terrible consequences of global warming. If carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, which contribute to global warming, are not reduced rapidly, those children will be living in a world that is 4 degrees Celsius warmer on average in around 70 years’ time. Their health will be affected, accentuated by pollution, the risks of epidemics and malnutrition. Across the planet, extreme climatic phenomena will no longer be isolated, but will become commonplace in their lives.

⁷ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2015). *Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Mauritius*. Retrieved 03 July 2023 from documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/037/17/PDF/G1503717.pdf?OpenElement



2.2.2. Objectives of the investigation

1. To help all those responsible for educating children (parents, educators, pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers, staff of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), governmental officials, and members of the civil society, among others) realise that one of the priorities of education is also to impart to children the love and respect for the Earth and Nature. There will be no eco-citizen children if they are not taught to cultivate those values for our planet and its preservation.
2. To raise awareness among the above-mentioned stakeholders on the need to use active pedagogical methods to impart knowledge about climate change and global warming to children. Climate change is a complex subject and can only be explained to children if the language used is child-friendly and accessible.
3. To emphasise the need to develop pedagogical strategies for teaching about climate change and to advocate for their adoption in the effort to educate children about the subject.
4. To sensitise officers and managers of governmental institutions and NGOs on the fact that children have the right to be involved in national debates and in the development of environmental and climate change policies.
5. To formulate recommendations on how to protect children from the adverse effects of climate change in the Republic of Mauritius.



2.2.3. Methodology

First, my team and I at the OCO had to gain a better understanding of climate change and its impact on our planet. Over several days, we researched reliable information on the Internet. That was a challenging and time-consuming exercise given the volume of data available online.

Moreover, a two-day training workshop on climate change was organised for the OCO's team and childcare professionals, followed by several meetings with governmental and non-governmental agencies. Children were also interviewed on the matter at hand, attending preparatory meetings that led to the organisation of interactive workshops on climate change.

In June 2023, I met with my counterpart, Mrs Salvör Nordal, Ombudsperson for Children of Iceland, who is also the President of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC), to discuss the importance of climate change and its impact on the world's children.

Furthermore, I spent a few hours exploring the glaciers at *Sólheimajökull* and the glacial lagoon at *Jökulsárlón* in Iceland. Coming face to face with these glaciers opened my eyes even more to the realities of our planet. Glaciers are huge, dense walls of ice hiding millions of years of history and information. Majestic and imposing as they are, their fragility is just as palpable. In a fraction of a second, a block of ice weighing several tonnes can get detached from the rest of the glacier, and get carried away by the ocean currents, slowly melting down. That allowed me to contemplate the magnitude of changes that await us due to global warming. For example, our naked eye cannot detect the slight but gradual rise in sea level, which can sometimes make us sceptical about the phenomenon. However, the dangers of rising sea levels for islands and coastal regions around the world are very real for future generations.

Thereafter, I also had the unique opportunity to visit an exhibition on climate emergency held at a science museum in Paris known as *Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie*. In subsection 2.2.4, a detailed table listing the activities and meetings carried out in relation to the impact of climate change on children's rights is provided.



2.2.4. Activities and meetings on the impact of climate change on children's rights

SN	Activities / Meetings	Venue	Date
1.	Meeting with Mr. Vassen Kauppymootoo Oceanographer and Environmental Engineer	OCO, Beau Bassin	08 February 2023
2.	Sensitisation workshop on climate change Delivered by Mr. Vassen Kauppymootoo	Le Suffren Hotel, Port Louis	16 & 17 March 2023
3.	Online research on climate change by the OCO's team followed by discussions	OCO, Beau Bassin	18 March 2023 - 18 April 2023
4.	Meeting with representatives of Zones 1,2,3 & 4 of the Ministry of Education, SeDEC and PSEA	OCO, Beau Bassin	18 April 2023
5.	Meeting with representatives of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) Prof. Vêlayoudom Marimoutou, Secretary General & Mr. Gilles Ribouet, Head of Communications	IOC, Ébène	21 April 2023



SN	Activities / Meetings	Venue	Date
6.	<p>Meeting with the CEO of the Law Reform Commission (LRC)</p> <p>Mr. Sabir Kadel, Chief Executive Officer</p>	LRC, Port Louis	08 May 2023
7.	<p>Meeting with the Officer-in-Charge of the Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI)</p> <p>Dr. Daniel Marie, Officer in Charge</p>	MOI, Albion	09 May 2023
8.	<p>Celebration of the EU-Mauritius partnership for the oceans on Europe Day</p> <p>Organised by the EU Ambassador to the Republic of Mauritius, H.E. Mr. Vincent Degert, and Honourable Mr. Sudheer Maudhoo, Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping</p>	Odysseo Oceanarium Indian Ocean, Harbour Front, Port Louis	09 May 2023
9.	<p>Meeting with the Director of the Department of Climate Change, Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (MESWMCC)</p> <p>Mrs. S. Meeheelaul, Director, Department of Climate Change, MESWMCC</p>	MESWMCC, Port Louis	10 May 2023



SN	Activities / Meetings	Venue	Date
10.	<p>Meeting with representatives of the Mauritius Meteorological Services (MMS)</p> <p>Dr. Ram Dhurmea, Deputy Director & Dr. G. Veerasamy, Ag. Deputy Director</p>	MMS, Vacoas	12 May 2023
11.	<p>Online meeting with an expert on the climate in Europe and around the world</p> <p>Mr. Jean Krug, Glaciologist</p>	Online	12 May 2023
12.	<p>Meeting with the Conservation Director of the Wildlife Foundation</p> <p>Mr. Vikash Tatayah, Conservation Director</p>	Wildlife Foundation, Vacoas	15 May 2023
13.	<p>Meeting with the Director of the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre (RGSC)</p> <p>Dr. Aman Kumar Maulloo, Director</p>	RGSC, Bell Village	16 May 2023
14.	<p>Meeting with the General Director of Reef Conservation Mauritius</p> <p>Mrs. Kathy Young, General Director</p>	Reef Conservation, Péreybère	16 May 2023



SN	Activities / Meetings	Venue	Date
15.	<p>Follow-up meeting with the Director of RGSC</p> <p>Dr. Aman Kumar Maulloo, Director</p>	RGSC, Bell Village	17 May 2023
16.	<p>Meeting with the Director of the NGO Eco-Sud</p> <p>Mr. Sebastien Sauvage, Director</p>	Agricultural Ecology Centre, Ville-Noire, Mahebourg	17 May 2023
17.	<p>Meeting with inhabitants</p>	Coastal Region, Providence-Bois des Amourettes	17 May 2023
18.	<p>Preparatory meeting with representatives of Zones 1, 2, 3 & 4 of the Ministry of Education, SeDEC and PSEA</p>	OCO, Beau Bassin	18 May 2023
19.	<p>Preparatory meeting with various resource persons in the area of climate change from the following agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOI • Climate Change Department, MESWMCC • MMS • Eco-Sud • RGSC 	OCO, Beau Bassin	30 May 2023



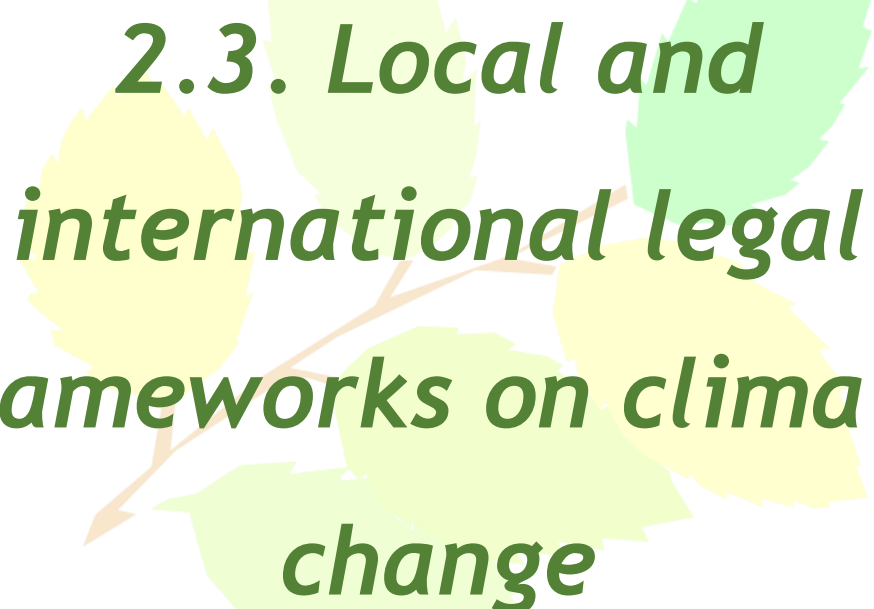
SN	Activities / Meetings	Venue	Date
20.	Workshop organised by the OCO on “The Impact of Climate Change on Children’s Rights”	Gold Crest Hotel, Quatre Bornes	06 & 07 June 2023
21.	Science exhibition visited by the OC on the theme of climate emergency	<i>Cité des Sciences et de l’Industrie</i> , La Villette, Paris, France	08 & 09 June 2023
22.	Meeting of the OC with the Ombudsperson for Children of Iceland (also the President of ENOC) to discuss the impact of climate change on the rights of children in Europe	Iceland	13 June 2023
23.	Visit of the OC to the environment and climate change exhibition at the Perlan Interactive Nature Museum	Reykjavík Iceland	13 June 2023
24.	Glacier Tour by the OC at Sólheimajökull	Iceland	14 June 2023
25.	Glacier Tour by the OC at the Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon	Iceland	15 June 2023
26.	Meeting with the Director of <i>Mission Verte</i> Mr. Sebastien Raffray, Director	Curepipe	26 June 2023



SN	Activities / Meetings	Venue	Date
27.	<p>Meeting with the Officer-in-Charge of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre (NDRRMC)</p> <p>ACP Premanand Budhoo, Officer-in-Charge</p>	Citadelle Mall, Port Louis	27 June 2023
28.	<p>Preparatory meeting with educators from schools taking part in the climate change project organised by the OCO</p>	OCO, Beau Bassin	10 July 2023
29.	<p>Deliberation of the jury panel members on the student project on climate change</p> <p><i>Jury panel members:</i> Mr. Ismail Bawamia (OCO's Investigator), Mrs. Yecha Rhungapen-Veeramootoo (OCO's Investigator), Mr. Maxwell Sardoo (Senior Environmental Officer, MESWMCC), Mr. Vipin Dunnoo (Architect) & Mrs. Gina Bonne (Head of Mission, COI)</p>	OCO, Beau Bassin	17 & 20 July 2023
30.	<p>Meeting with the Honourable Mr. Kavydass Ramano, Minister of the Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change</p>	MESWMCC, Port-Louis	03 August 2023



SN	Activities / Meetings	Venue	Date
31.	Chapter on climate change drafted, illustrated, and finalised by the OC, assisted by Emma, OCO's intern who is a student at the University of Paris-Est-Créteil, and Sandhya Johaheer, OCO's Investigator	OCO, Beau Bassin	July 2023 - September 2023
32.	Sensitisation session organised by the OCO on the impact of climate change on children's rights, followed by an Award Ceremony	Gold Crest Hotel, Quatre Bornes	Scheduled in November 2023



2.3. Local and international legal frameworks on climate change



Local and international legal frameworks on climate change

The local and international law frameworks on climate change provided in the current section give an overview of the different national and global commitments in place that guide actions in responding to the climate crisis, as well as how they are related to children's rights, where applicable.

2.3.1. What do laws say about climate change in the Republic of Mauritius?

2.3.1.1. Climate Change Act 2020

According to the Climate Change Act 2020, 'climate change' is defined as "a change of climate which is attributed, directly or indirectly, to human activity which alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is, in addition to natural climate variability, observed over comparable time periods" (section 2).

2.3.1.2. Environment Protection Act 2002

In relation to climate change, the Environment Protection Act 2002 provides for the National Network for Sustainable Development which acts as an intergovernmental committee that, according to section 11(2)(a-c) of the said Act:

(a) examine, and comment on, any relevant climate change guidelines, having regard to this Act, the Climate Change Act 2020 and the international obligations of Mauritius under UNFCCC⁸, the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement and any other related instrument on climate change;

⁸ UNFCCC stands for United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The UNFCCC secretariat (UN Climate Change) is the United Nations entity tasked with supporting the global response to the threat of climate change (Source: unfccc.int/about-us/about-the-secretariat)

- (b) make recommendations for policies and approaches to achieve climate change-resilient sustainable development;*
- (c) make recommendations for policies and approaches for greenhouse gas emission reduction to achieve a low emission economy.*

The importance of the above-mentioned laws should be highlighted and acknowledged. Not only do they provide a framework to the Republic of Mauritius to address climate change and other environmental concerns locally, but they also provide a means to honour the international obligations on climate change.

[2.3.1.3. Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the impact of climate change on children's rights in the Republic of Mauritius](#)

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2015, paras.57-58) made the following comments and recommendations in relation to the implications of climate change for children in its Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Mauritius:

57. While noting the activities of the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development, Disaster and Beach Management and the operation of the National Disaster Committee in disaster prevention and planning, the Committee notes with concern that policies and programmes addressing climate change and disaster risk management, such as in the case of cyclones, do not address the special vulnerabilities and needs of children, and that data available to formulate policies do not identify the types of risk faced by children.

58. The Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Ensure that the special vulnerabilities and needs of children, as well as their views, are taken into account in developing policies or programmes to address issues of climate change and disaster risk management;*



(b) Collect disaggregated data identifying the types of risk faced by children due to the occurrence of a variety of disasters in order to formulate international, regional and national policies, frameworks and agreements accordingly, with a view to avoiding preventable death and injuries of children;

(c) Increase children's awareness and preparedness for climate change and natural disasters by incorporating them into the school curriculum and teachers' training programmes;

(d) Seek bilateral, multilateral, regional and international cooperation in implementing the above recommendations.

In its latest Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Mauritius (2023a, para.36), the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child stated that:

Taking note of Sustainable Development Goal targets 1.5 and 13.b, the Committee recalls its previous recommendation and further recommends that the State party involve children in its implementation of the Climate Change Act 2020 and in renewed climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies and action plans, in particular in addressing children's food, water and energy insecurity, and also ensure synergies with the impact assessment and claims mechanisms established by the Environment Protection Act 2002.

2.3.2. An overview of some international references on climate change

2.3.2.1. Sustainable Development Goals and Targets

Targets 1.5 and 13.b of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; Division for SDGs, n.d.)⁹ are directly linked to the subject of climate change and how it can impact vulnerable groups including children, as quoted below:

- **SDG Target 1.5:** *By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.*
- **SDG Target 13.b:** *Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.*

2.3.2.2. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

The UNFCCC (UN, 1992)¹⁰ is an international treaty aimed at supporting the global response to the threat of climate change. This Convention has a high level of membership across the world (198 Parties) and is the parent treaty of the 2015 Paris Agreement (see subsection 2.3.2.3) and that of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol (see sub-section 2.3.2.4) (UN Climate Change, n.d.)¹¹.

⁹ Division for Sustainable Development Goals (n.d.). *Sustainable Development Goals*. Geneva: UN. Retrieved 03 July 2023 from sdgs.un.org/#goal_section

¹⁰ United Nations (1992). *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. New York: UN. Retrieved 03 July 2023 from unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf

¹¹ UN Climate Change (n.d.) *About the secretariat*. Retrieved 03 July 2023 from unfccc.int/about-us/about-the-secretariat



2.3.2.3. The Paris Agreement

Mauritius was one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Paris Agreement on 22 April 2016 (UN Climate Change, 2015)¹², the first international agreement on climate change adopted by 195 State parties in December 2015 and entered into force in November 2016. The main objective of this Agreement is to prevent the global average temperature rise from exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius above the mean world temperature at recorded in pre-industrial times.

2.3.2.4. The Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol (UN, 1997)¹³ provided the action guidelines to a specific list of developed and industrialised countries including Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America, to implement the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN, 1992) by limiting or lowering their emissions of greenhouse gases as per pre-defined targets. These countries also have the duty to adopt mitigation policies and measures and to periodically report to the UN on their progress. It can be argued that adhering to the Kyoto Protocol can also be seen as a way of safeguarding children's fundamental rights to health and a conducive environment for their survival and development.

2.3.2.5. Articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child linked to climate change

There is no doubt that the adverse effects of climate change threaten the rights of children such as their rights to life, survival, development and health. Children also have a right to the latest information on climate change and they must be supported to actively engage in the development of adaptation and mitigation measures. In the current subsection, articles 12(1-2), 13(1), 24(1), 24(2)(c), 24(2)(e) and 29(1)(e) of the CRC (UN, 1989) respectively are quoted and discussed in terms of their relation to climate change.

¹² UN Climate Change (2015). *The Paris Agreement*. Paris: UN. Retrieved 03 July 2023 from unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement

¹³ United Nations (1997). *Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. Kyoto: UN. Retrieved 03 July 2023 from unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/kpeng.pdf

First, in line with article 12(1-2) of the CRC (UN, 1989) [see quote below], I believe that it is high time for children of the Republic of Mauritius to be systematically consulted and involved in policy decisions about climate change. There already exist groups of children and youth from around the world who advocate strongly with their respective governments on sustainable climate strategies. For instance, in Norway, there is a children's climate panel supported by experts who lobby government on the issue of climate change and who produce an annual climate report for children (ENOC, 2022)¹⁴. Another example is a group of young people in Iceland who organised strikes on climate change (ENOC, 2022). This eventually led to them being invited to a meeting in the year 2019 with the Prime Minister, the Minister for Environment, the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Communications, to draw up an action plan and develop sustainable development objectives (ENOC, 2022).



Article 12 (1-2) of the UNCRC

1. States Parties shall assure to 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, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.



I would like to stress upon the fact that Mauritian children need to be properly educated on climate change before they can effectively participate and contribute to this issue.

¹⁴ European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (2022). *ENOC Synthesis Report: Children's Rights & Climate Justice*. Strasbourg: Author. Retrieved 04 July 2023 from enoc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022-Synthesis-Report-Climate-Justice.pdf



Article 13(1) of the UNCRC

1. 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.



Second, for children to be involved in the matter of climate change, it is essential that their right to seek, receive and impart information is fully respected. This means that children must readily have access to information on climate change appropriate to their level of understanding, as promoted in article 13(1) of the CRC (UN, 1989) [see quote above].

Although the Internet is awash with information about the environment and climate change, it is not always easy for children to select out accurate information and to understand technical jargon. Consequently, educational institutions and authorities have the responsibility to make information about climate change available to children in age-appropriate language and adapted formats. Regarding children's rights in relation to the digital environment, it is noteworthy that the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2021, para.51)¹⁵ highlighted the following:

States parties should provide and support the creation of age-appropriate and empowering digital content for children in accordance with children's evolving capacities and ensure that children have access to a wide diversity of information, including information held by public bodies, about culture, sports, the arts, health, civil and political affairs and children's rights.

¹⁵ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2021). *General comment No. 25 on children's rights in relation to the digital environment*. Geneva: UN. Retrieved 04 July 2023 from tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC/C/GC/25&Lang=en

Third, the right of the child to quality health as provided in article 24(1) of the CRC (UN, 1989) [see quote on the right] is a global priority. Child rights activists are fully aware that rights are indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and that the realisation of all the other rights stipulated in the CRC (UN, 1989) depends on the protection of the child's right to health. For instance, a child who is sick cannot go to school, play, participate in leisure activities, make his or her voice heard, and so on. Children's good health is therefore a pre-requisite for the enjoyment of all other rights.



Article 24(1) of the UNCRC

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.



Fourth, the right to quality health is intrinsically linked to the right to a healthy environment and this is also supported through the articles 24(2)(c) and 24(2)(e) of the CRC (UN, 1989) [see quote on next page]. On 26 July 2022, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)¹⁶ recognised in its seventy-sixth session the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a universal human right. Contextually, Inger Anderson (2021)¹⁷, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), pointed out that:

It is a message to one billion children at extremely high risk of the impacts of a changed climate: a healthy environment is your right. No one can take away nature, clean air and water, or a stable climate from you.

¹⁶ United Nations General Assembly (2022). *The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment*. Geneva: UN. Retrieved 04 July 2023 from documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N22/436/72/PDF/N2243672.pdf?OpenElement

¹⁷ Anderson, I. (2021). *Statement by Inger Andersen on UN recognition of the Right to a Healthy Environment*. Geneva: United Nations Environment Programme. Retrieved 04 July 2023 from www.unep.org/news-and-stories/statements/statement-inger-andersen-un-recognition-right-healthy-environment



Articles 24(2)(c) & (e) of the UNCRC

2. States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures:

(c) To combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution;

e) To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breastfeeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents



It is important to remember that, due to their specific vulnerabilities, children are more easily exposed to the negative effects of environmental degradation due to climate change. UNICEF (2022)¹⁸ warned on food and water shortages and the transmission of diseases in the following words:

Natural disasters, environmental degradation, and biodiversity loss can devastate agriculture, cutting children off from nutritious foods and safe water. They can lead to dangerous environments and disease outbreaks, and destroy the safe shelter, quality health care and education systems children need to survive and thrive.

¹⁸ UNICEF (2022). *Climate change and environment. A liveable planet for every child*. Retrieved 04 July 2023 from www.unicef.org/environment-and-climate-change



Article 29(1)(e) of the UNCRC

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

e) The development of respect for the natural environment.



Fifth, through article 29(1)(e) of the CRC (UN, 1989) [see quote on the left], it has been recognised by the international community that children must learn to respect the natural environment as part of their education. Indeed, no child can become involved in the fight against climate change if the latter has not learnt to love and respect the natural environment at home, at school and within the community.

In relation to the same article, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2001)¹⁹ further explained that outdoor education in nature is essential for learning and that children should be actively involved in environmental projects at local, regional and global levels.

2.3.2.6. UN General Comment No. 26 on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change

As with other human rights conventions, the CRC (UN, 1989) regroups various experts, together known as the Committee on the Rights of the Child, who oversee the efficacy and extent of its implementation by State parties. To help countries take measures that are consistent with the CRC, this Committee drafts general comments. To date, it has adopted 26 general comments on various aspects of the CRC (UN, 1989).

The most recently published general comment on 22 August 2023 is on the theme of children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2023b)²⁰. It is clear that the creation of this general comment was based on worldwide consultations with different stakeholders, including children

¹⁹ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2001). *General Comment No. 1 (2001) Article 29(1) The aims of education*. Geneva: UN. Retrieved 04 July 2023 from www.refworld.org/docid/4538834d2.html

²⁰ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023b). *General comment No. 26 (2023) on children's rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change*. Geneva: UN. Retrieved 28 August 2023 from tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2FC%2FGC%2F26&Lang=en



themselves: “A diverse and dedicated children’s advisory team, comprising 12 advisors of between 11 and 17 years of age, 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” (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2023b, para.2). This was a commendable example of child participation and the respect of the right of children to express their views and opinions on their rights, the environment and climate change. The following are three examples of comments collected from children by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023c)²¹ during the global consultations for this general comment:

“We need the government to work twice as hard to repair past mistakes, to repair the natural habitat, and to protect the remaining resources and native animals that we have.”

(Child, 12 years old, Lebanon)

“Children should be involved in the development of the curriculum, providing advice and guidance on teaching methods and ways of disseminating information effectively and accessibly.”

(Child, Scotland)

“They should have a consequence. Businesses should not be allowed to operate. They should have their licences taken away or pay really big fines that reflect how serious it is to not respect their responsibility to people and the planet. Governments should have to pay compensation to future generations and should have legal consequences like individuals do if they break the law.”

(Child, 14 years old, Australia)

²¹ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023c). *Findings from the Second Phase of Consultations with Children and Young People for General Comment No.26*. Retrieved 04 July 2023 from childrightsenvironment.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Findings-from-the-Second-Phase-of-Consultations-with-Children-and-Young-People-for-General-Comment-No.26-6.pdf

**Children's Voices on
Climate Change Matter!
Listen to us. Respect our
views. Involve us.**





2.4. Glossary on climate change



Glossary on climate change

To talk about a phenomenon as complex as climate change, it is necessary to use specific and appropriate vocabulary. That is why this glossary has been compiled to offer simple explanations on commonly used terms regarding climate change.

Adaptation

Adapting to the inevitable consequences of climate change.

Albedo

Albedo is a measure of the percentage of sunlight reflected by a surface. A perfectly white surface reflects all the light and has an albedo of 100 per cent. Conversely, a perfectly black surface has an albedo of 0 per cent and does not reflect any light and therefore absorbs all the solar radiation it receives.

Carbon footprint

An indicator used to measure the impact of an activity on the environment, and more specifically the greenhouse gas emissions associated with that activity. It can apply to an individual, a company or a region. This impact is generally expressed in terms of carbon dioxide. Reducing our carbon footprint is necessary to limit the effects of climate change.

Climate justice

Refers to political, ethical, moral or justice-based movements that address the issue of equality in the face of climate change. This concept goes beyond the scientific and environmental aspects that have been dominant until now.

Climate sceptic

A person who questions the anthropogenic cause, that is the extent to which humans are responsible for global warming. In their view, the scientific foundations that involve humans and highlight their environmental impact are too fragile to be absolute.

Condensation

The higher the water molecules rise in the atmosphere, the more they cool. They then move closer together to form water droplets, which in turn become clouds or, alternatively, simply mist or fog.



Conference of the Parties (COP)

Annual meeting of the signatory states of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, signed in 1992. The aim is to review the application of this Convention and negotiate new commitments.

Evaporation

With the Sun's heat, the water in the seas and oceans evaporates into the atmosphere, leaving behind minerals and sediments. Evaporation can also come from the ground, in which case we talk about evapotranspiration.

Glaciers

Our planet's glaciers are found in Antarctica and the Arctic. They are formed on land, and the ice acts as a climate regulator. About 80 per cent of the sun's rays reflected off the ice are reflected directly back into space. Glaciers also provide water resources through their meltwater.

Ice cap

An ice cap is a thick mass of land ice. It sits on a continental base and can be from a few hundred metres to 3 kilometres thick. It was formed over tens of thousands of years by snow consolidation

and glaciation. This mass of ice covers an area of less than 50,000 km².

Ice core

A sample obtained by digging vertically through the thickness of a glacier or an ice cap, formed by compressing successive layers of snow, year after year. An ice core is a cylinder of ice that can be used to reconstruct the composition of the atmosphere, in particular the presence of greenhouse gases, by analysing air bubbles that have been trapped for hundreds of thousands of years.

Ice floe

A large area of ice floating in the sea.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

Set up in 1998, the IPCC is made up of scientists from all over the world and its role is to take stock of scientific knowledge about the climate. The IPCC regularly publishes reports on the state of the climate so that current data can be summarised.



Melting permafrost

Ground that was once permanently frozen in Alaska, Canada and Siberia. In recent years, scientists have noticed that it does not refreeze in winter. Permafrost contains large quantities of carbon. Melting permafrost could release these greenhouse gases, exacerbating global warming.

Mitigation

All actions aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions caused by human activities. Adaptation and mitigation strategies are complementary and inseparable, as their success depends on one another.

NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration)

The American civilian programme and world leader in space exploration. The agency's mission is to explore, discover and expand knowledge for the benefit of humanity. NASA's satellites contribute to weather forecasting, help predict extreme weather events and track and monitor climate change.

Ozone

Ozone is a gas present in small quantities in the upper atmosphere. The ozone layer is a fragile shield that absorbs a large

proportion of the sun's ultraviolet radiation (UVR), preventing them from reaching the Earth's surface. Overexposure to UVR has harmful effects on humans (e.g., skin cancer, weakening of the immune system) and on plants (inhibition of photosynthetic activity). The ozone layer protects us from these adverse effects.

Precipitation

Clouds become heavier and fall to the ground in the form of rain, hail or snow. About 79 per cent of precipitation replenishes the oceans, and the remaining 21 per cent falls on land. So, it also feeds the water or groundwater tables through infiltration or run-off

Resilience

The capacity of a socio-ecological system to resist a disturbance or dangerous event, enabling it to respond or reorganise itself in such a way as to retain its essential function and identity, while retaining its capacity to adapt, learn and transform.

Sea ice

Large expanse of ice formed by the freezing of salt water in polar or very cold regions; its melting does not cause the waters to rise.

The water cycle

About 70 per cent of the Earth's surface is covered with water. Approximately 97 per cent of the Earth's water is salty, contained in the oceans. Freshwater,

which is found in artificial reservoirs, lakes, rivers, glaciers, sea ice and groundwater, represents the remaining 3 per cent of the Earth's water.





2.5. Fact sheets on climate change

2.5.1. Clarification on the fact sheets and the pedagogy used


- 🍃 The fact sheets provided (subsections 2.5.2 - 2.5.24) are intended to help children and the public to understand climate change in a simple language and build up their vocabulary on the subject. I would like to reiterate that the preparation of these sheets was challenging and time-consuming because the Internet is flooded with information on climate change, and I had to carefully select useful and reliable sources of information and content.
- 🍃 Without a basic understanding and working knowledge of this concept, it will be difficult to advocate for the climate, especially with and for children.
- 🍃 The proper use of these fact sheets depends primarily on our love and passion for the world, Earth and Nature.
- 🍃 I encourage readers, parents and educators to first cultivate your love for Nature so that, in turn, children can get be inspired from you and grow in respect and dedication towards Earth.





2.5.2. Understanding the world

- It is essential to help children understand the world in which we live. Mauritian children need to learn as much as possible about their country, the Republic of Mauritius, including about the islands of Rodrigues and Agalega. They also need to know more about the Indian Ocean region, the African continent and the different regions of the world.
- All Mauritian children must be aware that our planet, Earth, must be preserved, and that today, climate change due to human activity threatens the very survival of human beings.
- The consequences of climate change in the present and in the future are tangible in all areas of life: health, education, the economy, employment, and nutrition, among others.
- We should be able to count on children's understanding and input on climate change, and we should help them to formulate recommendations on actions to be taken to slow down and counter the climate crisis.



**“NATURE IS ETERNALLY YOUNG, BEAUTIFUL AND GENEROUS.
SHE POSSESSES THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS, AND NO ONE HAS
BEEN ABLE TO TAKE IT AWAY FROM HER.”**

~ Georges Sand,
French novelist, playwright and journalist

Quote translated in English from the original French version:

« *La nature est éternellement jeune, belle et généreuse. Elle possède le secret du bonheur, et nul n'a su le lui ravir.* »



2.5.3. Understanding our Earth

- Our beautiful planet, Earth, is the only one in the solar system that is habitable by humans. Its distance from the Sun and its atmosphere determine the average temperature and climatic conditions, as well as other factors, creating a delicate balance among Nature, the environment, the flora and fauna, including human beings.
- The Sun, at the centre of the solar system, is the closest star to Earth. The Solar System is just one of the billions of star systems (i.e., stars and their orbiting planets) that abound in our galaxy, the Milky Way. Our galaxy itself is one of billions of galaxies in the observable universe. The distances between stars and galaxies, and the size of the universe, are immense, almost unimaginable.
- To date, hundreds of planets, known as exoplanets, have been identified around stars other than the Sun. Some of these planets are found in the 'habitable' zone (also known as 'Goldilocks Zone'), where certain basic factors, such as the distance from their star and the ambient temperature, seem favourable for the existence or appearance of life. No traces of life have yet been detected there.
- I hope that, like me, you realise how lucky we are to find ourselves on a planet that offers the conditions to shelter us and allow us to evolve.
- Our planet alone is resilient, having survived several catastrophes since its birth some 4.5 billion years ago. That said, our planet has been home to incredible flora and fauna, including us, for several million years.
- Since the 19th century, human activity has endangered the flora and fauna around us, and by extension ourselves. I am sure that if our children realise the beauty of our planet and how lucky we are to live here, many of them, present and future eco-citizens, will make sure that we take care of it.





2.5.4. The climate and the weather

- First, it is important to differentiate between the terms ‘climate’ and ‘weather’. The National Geographic Society (2023)²² provides a good explanation as follows: “*Climate is the long-term pattern of weather in a particular area. Weather can change from hour-to-hour, day-to-day, month-to-month or even year-to-year. A region’s weather patterns, usually tracked for at least 30 years, are considered its climate.*”
- Climate also refers to a set of meteorological factors, for example, surface variables such as temperature, precipitation and wind, that characterise a given location over a given period, which may extend over several years (CLIMAT.BE, 2019)²³. Climate exhibits repetitive and seasonal characteristics. Two examples are the tropical wet climates expected in rainforests and the polar climates in the Arctic and Antarctic regions.
- The 30-year reference period for climate data was a recommendation made by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO; 2017)²⁴ to provide a global benchmark for calculating climate changes in a specific region over similar lengths of time.
- Weather, on the other hand, is an assessment of the weather we are likely to experience in the very short term. It is defined by instantaneous and local values of temperature, precipitation, pressure, and cloud cover (cloud density), among others (CLIMAT.BE, 2019).

“CLIMATE IS WHAT WE EXPECT, WEATHER IS WHAT WE GET.”

~ Andrew John Herbertson,
British Geographer

²² National Geographic Society (2023). *All About Climate*. Retrieved 05 July 2023 from education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/all-about-climate/

²³ CLIMAT.BE (2019). *Le climat* [The climate]. Retrieved 05 July 2023 from climat.be/changements-climatiques/causes/climat-et-meteo

²⁴ World Meteorological Organisation (2017). *WMO Guidelines on the Calculation of Climate Normals*. Geneva: Author. Retrieved 05 July 2023 from library.wmo.int/doc_num.php?explnum_id=4166



2.5.5. The Earth's climate

- 🍃 Ever since the Earth's atmosphere and oceans were formed, the climate has set the pace for our planet and influenced the evolution of its flora and fauna.
- 🍃 The main factors that are known to influence the Earth's climate are solar energy, the greenhouse effect and atmospheric and oceanic circulations. The Foundation La Main à la pâte (n.d.)²⁵ explained that Earth's climate (temperature, sunshine, precipitation) is influenced by the circulation of air and water. Air and water masses move as they warm and cool, based on levels of exposure to solar radiation.
- 🍃 The Sun plays a crucial role in climate. It is the main driving force behind atmospheric movements, warming the Earth and making life possible.
- 🍃 Every 100,000 years or so, the Earth's climate changes from an ice age to an interglacial period.



The Sun is more than just the central star of the solar system, it is a source of energy for life on Earth and a fundamental variable for our well-being.

²⁵ The Foundation La Main à la pâte (n.d.) *Les climats de la Terre* [The Earth's climates]. Retrieved 05 July 2023 from fondation-lamap.org/en/node/1283



2.5.6. What is climate change?

- According to the definition of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN, 1992), also adopted by the Mauritius's Climate Change Act 2020, climate change means *“a change of climate which is attributed, directly or indirectly, to human activity which alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is, in addition to natural climate variability, observed over comparable time periods”*.
- The Mauritian government has passed several laws to protect the environment and combat the effects of climate change. Today, our children cannot ignore the existence of these laws and must be educated on what they imply.



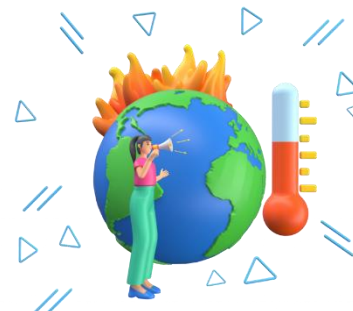
“Our planet cannot be saved unless we leave fossil fuels in the ground where they belong.”

~ Leonardo DiCaprio, United Nations Messenger of Peace,
in his address at the High-level Signature Ceremony for the Paris Agreement
in New York City in April 2016



2.5.7. Climate change and global warming

- Global warming simply means an increase in the average temperature on Earth.
- In addition to temperature, climate change encompasses other parameters such as precipitation, winds and the length of seasons, among others.
- Extreme weather events such as intense storms and severe droughts are part of climate change. These phenomena can also be linked to global warming, in other words, global warming can contribute to climate change.
- Climate change and global warming do not have the same causes. The causes of climate change are generally natural. Planet Earth has always experienced glacial periods followed by interglacial periods. During an interglacial period, average temperatures on Earth are relatively high.
- Global warming, on the other hand, is due to greenhouse gas emissions linked to human activities. The rise in concentration of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere can considerably delay the next ice age, which, according to research, is unprecedented.
- In the early 1980s, Claude Lorius, famous glaciologist and lover of the white continent of Antarctica, demonstrated the existence of global warming after analysing samples of Antarctic ice (The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research [SCAR], 2023)²⁶. Lorius extracted ice cores of several hundred metres deep, allowing him to understand what the climate was like hundreds of thousands of years ago (SCAR, 2023). Above all, Lorius understood how greenhouse gas emissions could change the Earth's climate (SCAR, 2023).



²⁶ The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (2023). *Obituary: Claude Lorius (1932-2023)*. Retrieved 06 July 2023 from www.scar.org/general-scar-news/obituary-claude-lorius-1932-2023/



2.5.8. Who are climate sceptics?

- Climate sceptics are people who question the anthropogenic cause of global warming, that is the extent to which humans are responsible for rising average world temperatures. In their view, the scientific foundations that involve humans and highlight their environmental impact are too fragile to be absolute. They base their theory on the fact that there is still no real consensus among scientists that humans are solely responsible for environmental degradation and current and future climate change.
- In their perspective, CO₂ has less influence on global temperature. Instead, they point to the fact that the planet has often, over the course of its history, experienced a similar situation to the present one.
- Indeed, some well-known scientists are climate sceptics. This section of the population cannot be ignored, even though it is very small in number.
- Yet the scientific evidence that human activity is responsible for climate change is confirmed by research, observations, tests and consensus.





2.5.9. Evidence for climate change: Research and measuring instruments

One day, a teenage girl asked me these questions:
*"How do you know that the climate is changing?
Do you really have any proof?"*

- For several decades, researchers and experts have been observing the planet Earth. Many satellites deployed are orbiting the Earth and several measuring instruments have been installed all over the world to gather information on the ground, the atmosphere, the oceans and the poles. This is how we could note that the Earth's temperature fluctuated many times between hot and cold. However, over the last few decades, the international community has observed an accelerated rise in the average global temperature.
- Satellite images taken over the years show that the cryosphere is shrinking, in other words, the ice-covered regions of the Earth are becoming smaller and smaller.
- Local temperatures in most parts of the world have been recorded and analysed for over a century. This allows us to note the increase in the Earth's average temperature.
- The Earth's average temperature has risen by more than one degree Celsius since 1900, and the global concentration of greenhouse gases has continued to increase, reaching 410 ppm (parts per million) in 2019, a level never reached in the last two million years (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2023)²⁷. At first sight, this information might seem insignificant to the lay person, but we must understand that these increases are having significant and serious repercussions on the whole planet. Our daily lives in the future are set to change dramatically.

²⁷ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2023). *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Geneva: Author. Retrieved 06 July 2023 from www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_SYR_LongerReport.pdf

2.5.10. Evidence for climate change: Palaeoclimatology

When I explained the science of palaeoclimatology to the young teenager who had asked me for proof of climate change, she told me that she wanted to become a palaeoclimatologist.

- Palaeoclimatology is a science that studies the Earth's climate over a period of thousands or even millions of years. A palaeoclimatologist will attempt to reconstruct the planet's climatic conditions of the past, even before mankind disturbed the composition of the atmosphere.
- Polar glaciers are not only actors in Earth's climate, but also witnesses to its evolution. The science of glaciers emerged in the 1950s. As mentioned earlier, Claude Lorius, famous glaciologist, had the intuition to analyse the air bubbles in samples extracted from the ice caps, formed by the compression of thousands of successive layers of snow. By analysing the air bubbles that have been trapped for centuries in these 'cores' of ice, it is possible to discover the composition of the atmosphere during different periods in the past.



Glaciers can tell us the stories of the world's climates



2.5.11. Evidence for climate change: Forests, corals and seas

- 🍃 To measure climatic variations, palaeoclimatologists also study coral reefs, marine sediments, rocks and forests, and compare their current compositions with those in the past.
- 🍃 Tree rings, for example, are extraordinary witnesses of past climates. There is no need to cut down a tree to study it. We can simply extract a sample of its cross-section using an instrument called the Pressler's auger.



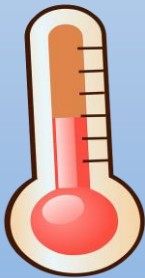
- 🍃 Satellite images taken over the last few decades show the 'bleaching' of Australia's Great Barrier Reef, mainly due to rising temperatures of the ocean and its acidification. Other satellite images over similar periods demonstrate the shrinking of the cryosphere, the ice-covered regions on Earth.

“TREE RINGS ... CONTAIN A LOT OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE CLIMATE. WHEN THE RING IS BIGGER, IT MEANS THAT THE WEATHER HAS BEEN WARMER.”

~ Professor Dominique Arseneault,
Professor of Biology, University of Quebec



2.5.12. Irrefutable proof that the climate is changing...



Temperature rise

The average global temperature has risen by at least 1.1° Celsius since the 19th century. The IPCC (2023) recommends that the global temperature should not rise by more than 1.5° Celsius.



The oceans are warming up and expanding

CO₂ emissions and their concentration in the atmosphere are contributing to the warming of the oceans. Sea levels are rising as a direct result of global warming: melting of ice (glaciers and polar ice caps) and expansion of seawater.



Ocean acidification

The oceans absorb around 30% of the CO₂ emitted by human activity. Without this absorption, the greenhouse effect and global warming would be amplified. When higher concentrations of CO₂ are absorbed by the oceans, this contributes to the acidification of the oceans; coral reefs are directly affected, threatening not only coastal regions inhabited by humans but also a large marine ecosystem that depends on corals.

(Source: www.ocean-climate.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/150601_ScientificNotes.pdf)



Melting of glaciers

Ice sheets and glaciers around the world (in the Arctic, Antarctic, Alps, Iceland, Alaska, the Andes in South America, Afghanistan, the heart of the Himalayas in Nepal, among others) have formed over hundreds of thousands of years. As temperatures rise rapidly, glaciers are melting just as fast, but they do not have time to return to their original thickness during the winter. This accelerated melting of ice is threatening glaciers all over the world.



2.5.13. The natural greenhouse effect makes the Earth habitable

- 🍃 The Earth constantly receives rays of light and energy from the Sun. Around 30 per cent of those rays are reflected by clouds and cannot reach the ground. About 20 per cent are absorbed by greenhouse gases (mainly water vapour, carbon dioxide and methane) that are naturally present in the atmosphere. The remaining 50 per cent are absorbed by the soil and seas. The surface of Earth and its oceans reflect some of the absorbed radiation back into space, in the form of infrared rays (heat).
- 🍃 The greenhouse gases in the atmosphere act as a sponge for the Sun's rays. The atmosphere acts like the glass in a greenhouse. It lets through the rays and light but slows down the outflow of heat. Only 5 per cent of infrared rays can pass through the barrier of greenhouse gases. The remaining 95 per cent are reflected to the ground, where they are re-heated and re-emitted into space, creating a repeating cycle.
- 🍃 This mechanism warms the planet and allows it to reach an average temperature of around 15° Celsius. These relatively stable conditions preserve life in all its forms on Earth. Without this mechanism, the average temperature on the planet would have been -18° Celsius (WMO, 2022)²⁸, which would have made it difficult for any form of life to exist.
- 🍃 In fact, it is mainly solar energy and the presence of an atmosphere that determine the Earth's temperature. The greenhouse effect is a natural phenomenon that is essential to human life and that of other species. **It is therefore a positive effect!**

²⁸ WMO (2022). *Greenhouse gases*. Retrieved 06 July 2023 from public.wmo.int/en/our-mandate/focus-areas/environment/greenhouse-gases

2.5.14. Greenhouse gases: climate disruptors?

- 🍃 We have seen that, without the natural greenhouse effect, the planet would have been icy cold, and life would have difficulty to sustain itself. So why do some people say that greenhouse gases are disruptive to the climate?
- 🍃 Quite simply, because since the Industrial Revolution, human activity has caused a rapid increase in the quantity of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere to dangerous levels.
- 🍃 We burn coal, oil and natural gas, among others, in most industries, producing the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide (CO₂). These additional CO₂ emissions disturb the natural balance of the atmosphere and our planet.
- 🍃 Deforestation also causes an increase in the percentage of CO₂ in the air: dead trees release CO₂, as do burning trees (Surfrider Foundation Europe, 2015)²⁹.
- 🍃 Intensive farming contributes to the emission of two other greenhouse gases: methane and nitrous oxide. They are found in the use of fertilisers, maize fields, rice crops and the rearing of ruminant cattle.
- 🍃 Experts are worried because the greenhouse effect is intensifying, and our planet is warming up too rapidly.



²⁹ Surfrider Foundation Europe (2015). *The Greenhouse Effect*. Retrieved 06 July 2023 from en.oceancampus.eu/cours/GS7/the-greenhouse-effect



2.5.15. Anthropogenic greenhouse effect

- According to the sixth synthesis report of the UN's IPCC (2023, p.46), it has been established that *“human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land.”*
- Other than climate change induced by human activity, natural climate variations obviously continue to exist.
- However, in the short term on the scale of history, the anthropogenic greenhouse effect (the result of human's influence) will clearly exceed natural variations.

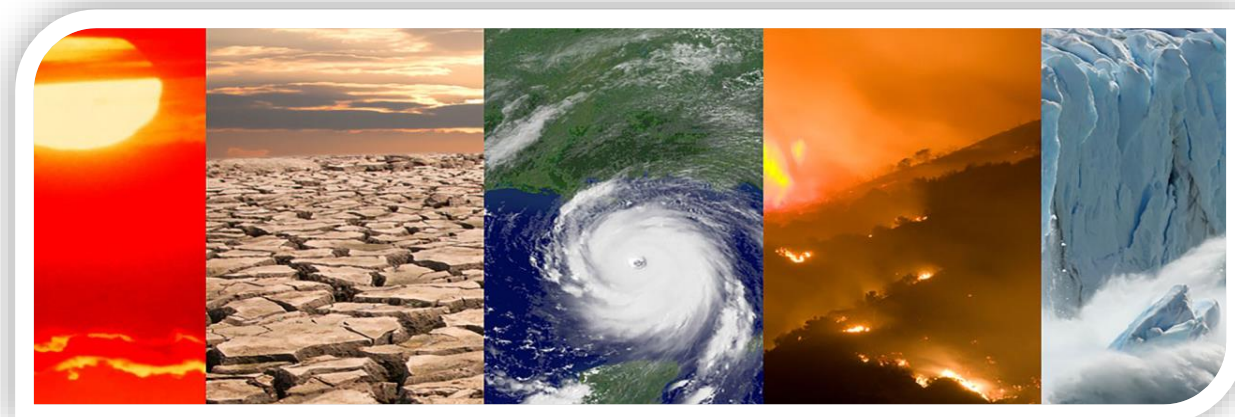







“Global warming is not just a question of behaviours. It is about the way our whole society is organised.”³⁰

~ Philippe Squarzoni, French graphic novelist

³⁰ This quote has been translated in English from its original French version as follows: « *Le réchauffement climatique n'est pas uniquement une affaire de comportements. C'est toute l'organisation de notre société qui est en cause* »

2.5.16. Extreme climatic events



-  Heatwaves, storms, floods, heavy rain, rising sea levels, forest fires and droughts are making the news at an alarming rate.
-  Extreme weather events can last for several weeks, months even, and can occur over short periods of time but with high intensity.
-  The IPCC (2023) affirms that extreme weather events are linked to human activity.
-  In an article by Oxfam France (2022)³¹, Valérie Masson-Delmotte, Palaeoclimatologist and co-chair of the IPCC advanced that the 2019 heatwaves that hit France would not have happened without human influence on the climate.
-  In Mauritius, extreme weather events are generally linked to cyclones, localised flooding and the dry season. Global warming would intensify each of these events.

³¹ Oxfam France (2022). *Les événements climatiques extrêmes : quand la planète s'emballe* [Extreme climatic events when the Earth is getting carried away]. Retrieved 06 July 2023 from www.oxfamfrance.org/climat-et-energie/les-evenements-climatiques-extremes-quand-la-planete-semballer/#:~:text=Autrement%20dit%2C%20l'impact%20de,%20sur%20le%20climat%20%C2%BB.

2.5.17. The impact of global warming on the water cycle

- Global warming has a direct impact on the water cycle. How exactly, we ask? Well, when temperatures rise, so does **evapotranspiration**. Consequently, there is more water vapour in the atmosphere and less liquid water available. As a result of this imbalance, extreme phenomena become more frequent and more powerful: violent rains and floods, long periods of drought, and so on.
- The IPCC (2021)³² warned that the rise in global temperatures increases the likelihood of extreme rainfall during storms and thunderstorms.



“The recent torrential rains and severe flooding occurring around the world are worrisome signs that climate changes are beginning to spin out of control even faster than climate scientists have warned.”

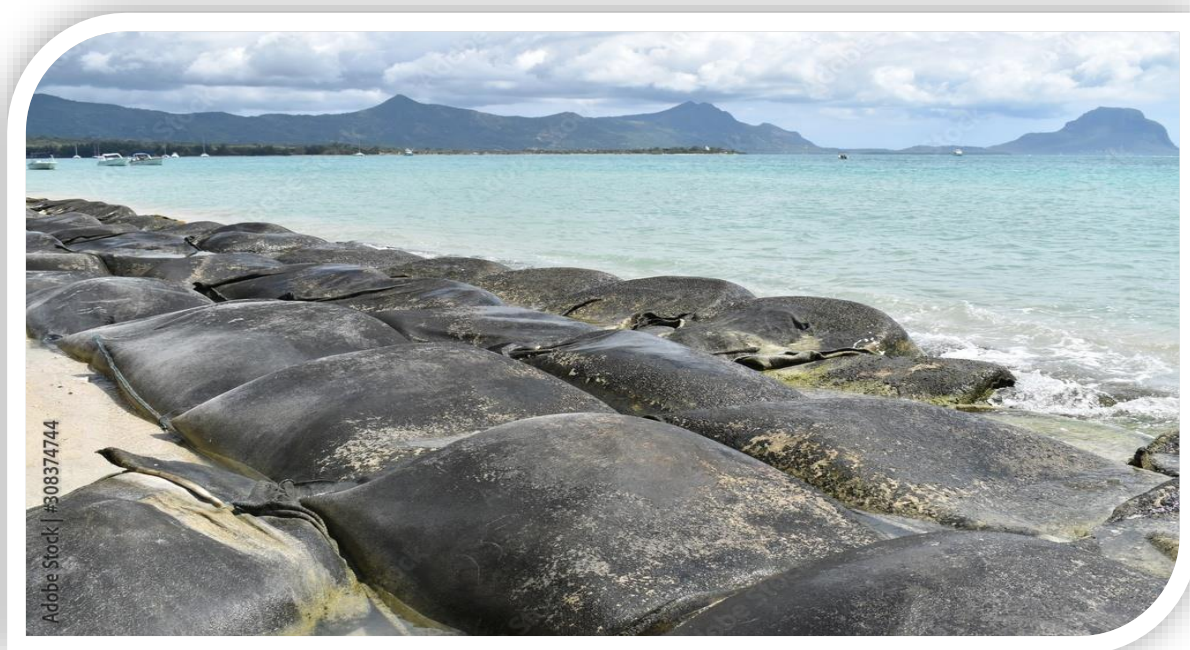
~ Dr Peter Gleick, American Environmental Scientist, Financial Times (2023)³³

³² IPCC (2021). *Climate Change 2021. The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. New York and UK: Author. Retrieved 10 August 2023 from report.ipcc.ch/ar6/wg1/IPCC_AR6_WGI_FullReport.pdf

³³ Financial Times (2023). *Climate graphic of the week: Global warming is supercharging weather events, say scientists*. Retrieved 02 August 2023 from www.ft.com/content/bbc0256a-f151-44c2-9bc9-ef8f280a70b9

2.5.18. Ocean warming and sea level rise





- 🍃 The latest IPCC (2023) report underlines that the rise of sea levels is inevitable. Global warming causes oceans to expand thermally, that is seawater increases in volume under the effect of heat. In Mauritius, for example, the sea is rising in several places, including at Trou aux Biches, Albion and Blue Bay.
- 🍃 The rise of sea levels is also a consequence of the melting of Greenland and Antarctica's ice caps. Undoubtedly, a small island state like Mauritius could be affected by rising sea levels. In fact, if all the ice on Earth melted, sea levels would rise by around 216 feet, which is equivalent to approximately 65 metres (National Geographic Society, 2013)³⁴!
- 🍃 Marine heatwaves are also a major threat to coral reefs. Indeed, those reefs are where a large proportion of marine life reproduces and where artisanal fishing takes place.



Climate change and rising sea levels are affecting coastal areas around the world. In Mauritius, sandbags are being installed to combat rising sea levels.

³⁴ National Geographic Society (2013). *What the world would look like if all the ice melted*. Retrieved 06 July 2023 from www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/article/rising-seas-ice-melt-new-shoreline-maps

2.5.19. Temperature rise in many countries

-  In 2022, a heatwave spanning 33 days was recorded in France. More than 2,800 people lost their lives (Le Monde, 2022)³⁵.
-  In 2022, as well, the UN and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies noted that North Africa, Australia, Europe, South Asia, the Middle East, China and the western United States suffocated under record temperatures (L'Info Durable, 2022)³⁶. They also warned that heat waves will become so frequent and intense due to global warming that some regions of the world will become unliveable over the next few decades (L'Info Durable, 2022).
-  Temperatures have also risen in Mauritius. The average annual temperature has increased by around 1.39°C from 1951 to 2020 (Source: Mauritius Meteorological Services).
-  A global average temperature of 16.95°C was recorded in the month of July 2023, the highest ever recorded since the pre-industrial period (Copernicus, 2023)³⁷.








³⁵ Le Monde (2022). *With three heat waves, the summer of 2022 was the deadliest in France since 2003*. Retrieved 06 July 2023 from www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2022/11/22/with-three-heat-waves-the-summer-of-2022-was-the-deadliest-in-france-since-2003_6005172_7.html

³⁶ L'Info Durable (2022). *Canicules : sous l'effet du réchauffement climatique, plusieurs régions deviendront invivables ces prochaines décennies* [Heatwaves: with global warming, many regions will become unliveable in the next decades]. Retrieved 06 July 2023 from www.linfordurable.fr/environnement/canicules-plusieurs-regions-invivables-ces-prochaines-decennies-34657

³⁷ Copernicus (2023). *July 2023 sees multiple global temperature records broken*. Retrieved 10 August 2023 from climate.copernicus.eu/july-2023-sees-multiple-global-temperature-records-broken

2.5.20. Drought and water shortages

-  In the year 2000, the researchers Donald Wilhite and Mark Svoboda proposed a working definition of the term ‘drought’ and argued that “[i]n contrast to aridity, which is a permanent feature of climate, **drought is a temporary occurrence and is a direct consequence of a reduction in the amount of precipitation received over an extended period of time, usually a season or more. It results in a water shortage for some activities, groups or environmental sectors**” (as cited in United Nations Development Programme [UNDP]; 2011, p.12)³⁸.
-  Recent drought waves in the European-Mediterranean region were directly linked to anthropogenic climate change, according to a study by some researchers at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (Faranda *et al.*, 2023)³⁹. It is worth knowing that, in Mauritius, the average annual rainfall has decreased by 104mm in 70 years. This decline is more significant on the central plateau, and on the northern and western regions of the island.
-  According to the UN (2019a)⁴⁰, more than two billion people around the world do not have access to water that is adequately distributed and safe to drink.
-  As global temperatures rise, freshwater reserves (rivers, lakes, reservoirs, snow on mountains, etc.) will diminish through accelerated evaporation.
-  Rising sea levels will contribute to the **salinisation of groundwater**: underground water reserves will become salty and difficult to convert into drinking water.

³⁸ United Nations Development Programme (2011). *Mainstreaming Drought Risk Management*. Kenya: Author. Retrieved 06 July 2023 from www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Mainstreaming%20DRM-English.pdf

³⁹ Faranda, D., Pascale, S. & Bulut, B. (2023). Persistent anticyclonic conditions and climate change exacerbated the exceptional 2022 European-Mediterranean drought. *Environmental Research Letters*, 18, 1-11. Retrieved 24 August 2023 from iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/acbc37/pdf

⁴⁰ United Nations (2019a). *WHO and UNICEF launch updated estimates for water, sanitation and hygiene*. Retrieved 10 August 2023 from www.unwater.org/news/who-and-unicef-launch-updated-estimates-water-sanitation-and-hygiene



2.5.21. Decline in biodiversity

- 🍃 Biodiversity, that is, all the living things on our planet, is in serious decline. The main cause is human activity, including pollution, climate change, overhunting and overfishing, deforestation, intensive monoculture and urbanisation.
- 🍃 The United Nations (2019b)⁴¹ reported that one million species are threatened with extinction, noting that: ***“The average abundance of native species in most major land-based habitats has fallen by at least 20%, mostly since 1900. More than 40% of amphibian species, almost 33% of reef-forming corals and more than a third of all marine mammals are threatened”.***
- 🍃 Forests, one of the most important components of our flora, are known to absorb on average between 25 and 30 per cent of the greenhouse gases emitted by human activity. The effects of global warming would be worse without our planet's ‘lungs’. In the coming years, forests might no longer be able to properly play the role of carbon sinks, which will be aggravated by further deforestation.
- 🍃 Mauritius’ insular flora is one of the most threatened ones in the world. It is estimated that around 89 per cent of its endemic flora is endangered. Endemic fauna - animal species found only locally - are also at high risk.



⁴¹ United Nations (2019b). *UN Report: Nature’s Dangerous Decline ‘Unprecedented’; Species Extinction Rates ‘Accelerating’*. Retrieved 06 July 2023 from www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/

2.5.22. Climate refugees

Floods, storms, forest fires, drought and rising sea levels are forcing people around the world to leave their homes and land. In the most affected areas of the world such as the Asia-Pacific region, millions of people have become climate refugees (UN Refugee Agency, 2023)⁴².



The African continent has been hit by intense droughts and flooding. The lives and lifestyles of families in affected countries are under threat; the victims of natural disasters linked to climate change are unable to remain in their towns and villages and are forced to relocate to other regions within their borders.

Greenpeace France (2023)⁴³ has affirmed that there are many possible concrete solutions. Among those, it is imperative to keep the rise in global average temperatures below 1.5°C before the end of the century, by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

⁴² UN Refugee Agency (2023). *Climate change and disaster displacement*. Retrieved 06 July 2023 from www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/build-better-futures/environment-disasters-and-climate-change/climate-change-and?_gl=1%2A_xj8mgv%2A_ga%2AMTQ5Mzk4NTk3NC4xNjkyODg3NTI3%2A_ga_N9CH61RTNK%2AMTY5Mjg4NzUyNy4xLjAuMTY5Mjg4NzUyNy4wLjAuMA..%2A_rup_ga%2AMTQ5Mzk4NTk3NC4xNjkyODg3NTI3%2A_rup_ga_EVDQTJ4LMY%2AMTY5Mjg4NzUyNy4xLjEuMTY5Mjg4OTAwNy4wLjAuMA..#_ga=2.105007811.1581463910.1692887527-1493985974.1692887527

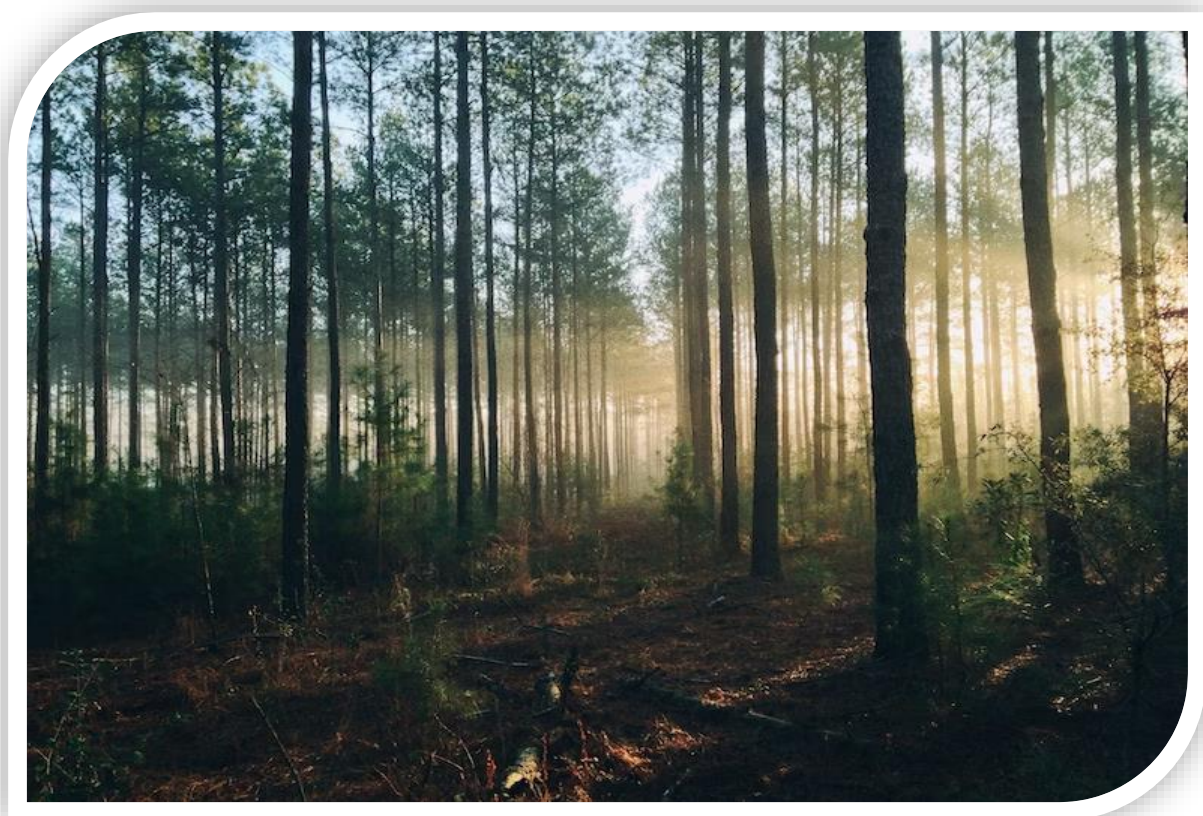
⁴³ Greenpeace France (2023). *Objectif: 1,5°C*. Retrieved 06 July 2023 from www.greenpeace.fr/dereglement-climatique/



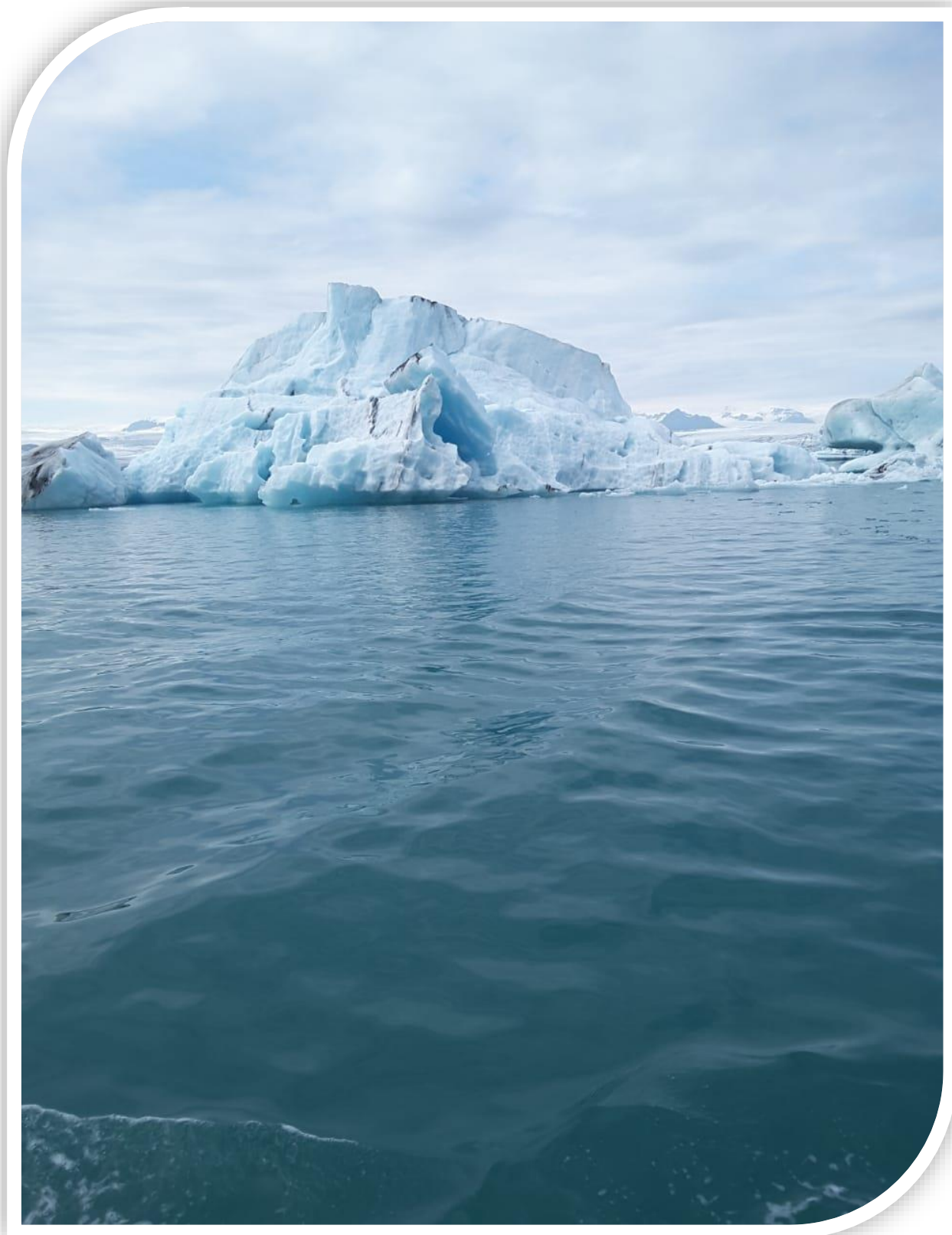
2.5.23. To sum up: Nature's role in life on Earth

The Earth is home to a huge number of ecosystems, all in harmony with each other:

- Seas and oceans
 - Forests
 - Ice floes
 - Glaciers
 - Mountains
- Arid and humid lands
 - Deserts
- All the flora and fauna
- And thousands of others, from the microscopic to the global scale.



The forest, the planet's 'green lungs'



“I’m thinking of the glaciers that are melting here...”



... and of the islands drowning out there".

~ Claude Lorius, Glaciologist

2.5.24. To sum up: The consequences of global warming

- Increase in global temperature
- Melting of glaciers and sea ice
 - Rise in sea levels
 - Flooding
- Catastrophic storms
- Intense droughts and fires
 - Water shortages
- Decline in biodiversity
 - Climate refugees



The melting ice caused by climate change is threatening the survival of penguins, which are considered to be an endangered species. According to a French news article, more than 9,000 baby penguins lost their lives to extreme cold or drowning in November 2022 in the west of Antarctica mainly due to a lack of feather density as in adult penguins and disappearing sea ice (Le Soir, 2023)⁴⁴. If global warming continues at this pace, it is possible that 90 per cent of these species might be extinct by 2100 (Le Soir, 2023).

⁴⁴ Le Soir (2023). *La fonte de la banquise en Antarctique mortelle pour les bébés manchots* [The melting of sea ice in Antarctica deadly for baby penguins]. Retrieved 27 August 2023 from www.lesoir.be/533181/article/2023-08-25/la-fonte-de-la-banquise-en-antarctique-mortelle-pour-les-bebes-manchots



2.5.25. The climate crisis concerns the Republic of Mauritius, despite its low contribution to greenhouse gas emissions

Being a small island state, Mauritius is already experiencing the adverse effects of climate change first-hand. According to a recent report published by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (n.d.)⁴⁵, the average annual temperature has risen by around 1.39° Celsius over the past 70 years (1951-2020) in Mauritius. That is above the global average of 1.1° Celsius. The same report points out that the country is likely to face prolonged periods of drought, Mauritius is predicted to experience a water shortage as early as 2030. Although floods and cyclones are expected to be more intense, the number of dry days will increase. Mauritius is situated in a tropical cyclone basin and is starkly exposed to climate risks.

It is also important to note that the average sea level around Mauritius is rising faster than global averages (3.4 mm per year). Coastal erosion has increased and the width of Mauritian beaches has decreased. That has had a direct impact on tourism and the economy.

During my investigative visits surrounding the impact of climate change on children's rights in Mauritius, I met with *Ton Marco*⁴⁶, who has spent 86 years of his life in a coastal village. Under the veil of anonymity, he expressed his concerns about climate change in Mauritius in Creole:

Mo pou koz avek twa, selma pa anrezistre. Mo ve pa zournalis rod mwa. Mo trankil la les mwa ek mo lasagrin. Twa to va dir sa to bann zanfan mo kone to kontan zanfan. Apel mwa Ton Marco. Pa mo vre nom sa. Premie dernie zour to koz ar mwa. Mo pe sey pran mo bis pou al lakaz la. Non ! Pa de foto !

Mo ti ena 16 an kan mo ti kontan mo premie madam. Nou ti ape marse lor laplaz toulezour. Ti ena boukou kokiyaz, aster napa ! Nou marse, marse, marse rod koki-boner. Aster napa, napa, napa ! Mo leker fermal parski laplaz fini, delo lamer monte,

⁴⁵ MESWMCC (n.d.). *Database on climate-related risk drivers*. Retrieved 06 July 2023 from environment.govmu.org/DocumentsList/Database%20on%20Climate-related%20Risk%20Drivers.xlsx

⁴⁶ This is a fictitious name used to protect the identity of this person.



soley for. Extra so gagne. Zame mo'nn gagn so koumsa. Mo'nn malad boukou boukou ek saler. Mo ti-zanfan ousi inn malad boukou ek saler. Dokter inn dir gard li lakaz. Dan Moris zame inn fer otan so. Samem sanzman klimatik sa mo kone mwa. Tro boukou vwatir, mwa mo'nn pedale mo 'bicycle' touletan. Kan mo finn remarye, mo pedal mo 'bicycle' mo al frekante, aster zot tou rod frekante dan vwatir. Samem gagn sanzman klimatik !

Mwa mo ti enn plonzer soumarin. Sa kalite lamer zoli, enn lot lemond sa. Boukou pwason ti ena, delo ti prop mo santi mwa mem kouma enn pwason dan-lo. Koray ti tou kouler, ble, rouz, roz, zonn. Zordi mo boukou sagrin. Koray pe vinn blan. Bann dokter lamer apel sa blansiman koro. Sa arive parski fer pli so lor later ek dan lamer. Pwason rod sove. Mo sagrin mo lamer Moris, mo bann ti zanfan pou extra soufer dan sa pei la. Taler pwason napa, zot pou mor ek dilo sale so. Dir to bann zanfan pa fer move ek nou lamer, pa zet boutey plastik dan lamer...

The ocean is an enormous carbon sink, absorbing huge quantities of CO₂. However, as its CO₂ concentration increases, so does its acidity. In Mauritius, as *Ton Marco* said, corals are becoming more fragile, and as the sea warms, coral bleaching can be observed. Corals are living beings, and their bleaching means that they are dying, which also threatens the survival of local fish species. *Ton Marco* also said “*pwason lontan ek pwason aster napa mem gou, zot aval tro boukou plastik*”.

2.5.26. Conceptualise other information sheets

Children, with the help of their educators, parents, teachers and social workers, can conceptualise other information sheets on climate change or even improve on those presented in the current chapter. My meetings with many educators and children have convinced me that, in Mauritius, Rodrigues and Agalega, we have children who are eager to learn and explore the natural world in which they live. I have also met many teachers and parents who are ready to pass on to their children their love for the planet and the values that will enable them to preserve the environment and mitigate the effects of climate change. I have no doubt that they are all capable of initiating educational activities to help everyone better understand the climate crisis.





2.6. The climate crisis is threatening the rights of children of the Republic of Mauritius. But how? Let us hear it from themselves



Artwork by five Grade 10 students of Sebastopol State Secondary School:

Vajesh Dursun

Stevie Sanstoupet

Yogessen Pariatamby

Rihun Lokhun

Jean Damien Lieutier



Extracts of children's words from the student-led project on climate change organised by the OCO

Students of Shrimati Indira Gandhi SSS

- *"My family's house was destroyed during a cyclone, our belongings and foods were damaged and we had to go to an emergency shelter where we were provided with basic necessities".*
- *"During heavy rainfalls, I had to drink boiled water instead of fresh tap water. Additionally, I had to buy mineral water at school due to contaminated tap water".*

Students of Professor Basdeo Bissoondoyal College

- *"Diran lasesres delo pa ti pe koule. Mo mama pa ti pe kapav lav mo linz lekol ki ti sal. Mo pa ti pe gagn delo pou bwat, ti pe bizin aste delo vital pou bwat atansion mo malad."*
- *"Sa zour-la delo ti rant dan mo lakaz ek ti mouy tou mo kaye, liv, soulie ek linz lekol. Mo paran ti bizin aste nouvo lekipman pou mo al lekol. Mo ti pe gagn difikilte pou revize pou lexamin akoz tou mo bann nots ek devwar ti fini abime ar delo."*

Students of Sebastopol SSS

- *"I'm scared when there's heavy rainfall. Our house was flooded last year, and I don't want that to happen again."*
- *"There are no classes during torrential rain. There's flooding everywhere, the road is impassable. Students are the losers."*

Students of Soondur Munrakhun College

- *"I find myself living in an insecure world... Torrential rains... they scare me.... For so many days schools are closed... I miss important classes... My wealthy friends can attend to online classes... Even our school holidays are shortened!"*
- *"I love going to the beaches... But my parents say that in some years they might disappear... I feel so scared..."*



Students of Droopnath Ramphul State College

- **What do you think climate change is?**
- Response 1: *It is when people pollute and their pollution causes our earth's temperature to change.*
- Response 2: *I think that it is when we get more rainy days and cyclones in our homes.*
- **How does a big cyclone affect you and the people around you?**
- Response 1: *A big cyclone destroys many of our possessions like our houses and other infrastructures. It can also hurt people.*
- Response 2: *I feel bad for the birds who lose their nests and people who don't have a house to live in.*
- **Do you think we can keep living in a world with climate change? If yes, why? If no, what can we do to stop it?**
- Response 1 : *No, it will ruin us if we don't stop it. We need to change our lifestyles and mindsets. We can raise awareness, reduce, reuse and recycle.*
- Response 2 : *No. Stop polluting and clean up instead of littering. We should not waste food and water. Travel into the future to see what we come up with.*

Students of Adolphe de Plevitz SSS

- One child stated that *"when water is accumulated and stays stagnant, mosquitoes lay their eggs and I am afraid of them since a relative of mine died from dengue"*.
- Another child expressed his concern over access to safe drinking water and said, *"when there is rainfall, you cannot drink tap water as it has been contaminated by bacteria and also there is waste that has been dumped into the reservoir"*.
- One child was worried about shortage of food and complained, *"as we are vegans and we eat only vegetables, it affects us as the prices of vegetables increase and we need to limit our purchases"*.



Students of Swami Sivananda SSS

- *“Lekol inn res ferme, ti ena ‘online teaching’, ena dimounn pa kapav aford innternet. Lekol inn res ferme 12 zour.”*
- *“Kan inondasion, lakaz inonde... pa kapav revize, liv inn abime.”*
- *“Mantalman li afekte zot... paran planter pa kapav amenn kas dan lakaz.”*
- *“Pa gagn manze... pa kapav ranz lakaz kot lakot, zot bizin deplase...”*
- *“Bizin al kot refiz... pa ti ena ase delo dan Moris, ti pe koup-koupe delo.”*
- *“Kan retourne bien danzere... inonde partou...”*
- *“Drenn delo la pa ale mem... fini bouse... delo fini ariv kot zenou.”*

Students of Sir Abdool Raman Osman SSS

- *Testimonies on 'How has climate change affected the life of students?'*
- *“Too hot in summer and too cold in winter which is not suitable for learning”*
- *“Cannot afford some delicacies as they are too expensive”*
- *“Affected my performance as I cannot concentrate for a long period of time for online classes”*
- *“Staying indoors makes me feel unhappy and low”*
- *“Swimming and hiking are not often possible”*

Students of Marechal College Rodrigues

- *“Climate change is one of the greatest threats that the world had seen since the past centuries”.*
- *“In Rodrigues, it has already caused its effects. In winter we get more cold and in summer we get hotter”.*



Students of Sookdeo Bissoondoyal State College

- **They shared their recommendations and measures at school level:**
- *“Our school’s eco club can partner up with NGOs, such as the one they partnered with which is called “Sov Lanatir”, to replant mangroves around the island as they produce more oxygen than trees typically found on land. The school’s eco club can in fact also implement and sensitise people at the school and outside of it as well about the measures to take against climate change while being fun, creative and innovative, while sustaining a great environment.”*
- *“A monthly collection of dry cells and batteries can be arranged for the prevention of battery acids which are extremely injurious to our environment to propagate any further”.*

Students of AHGM Issac SSS

- *“Children are highly affected, physically and mentally by all types of pollution. They are the most vulnerable among all in the society.”*
- *“Climate change is affecting children’s rights such as their daily activities and from access to food and safe water, the housing, education, freedom from exploitation, violence, their right to survive and thrive.”*

Students of Imperial College

- *“Since we are in a tropical country, rise in global temperature is increasing the incidence of water and vector-borne diseases such as cholera and also favors breeding of insect vectors such as mosquitoes which spread diseases such as chikungunya, malaria and dengue fever”.*
- *“Children are disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change largely because the early stage of their physiological and cognitive development makes them less-equipped to deal with climate-related shocks and stresses”.*

Students of Curepipe College

- **“Extract from a dialogue between two children imagined by the students:**
- *“Because we live on an island... and climate change can have significant impacts on the rights of children living on islands...”*
- *“Me too, Léa. But you know that in some islands, many children can't go to school for several days because their schools have been destroyed by devastating and very dangerous cyclones!”*
- *“Do you remember the beginning of this year? The schools were closed every time there was heavy rain! And because of that, we missed several days of school!”*



Students of Universal College

- *«I want clean air and I want everyone to work together to stop harming our planet.»*
- *“We don’t want our future to be affected by adults’ actions and do not want to inherit a world where we cannot live.”*
- *“I’m worried about my future, and I’m worried about my friends and family. We need to take action now to protect our planet.”*

Students of Dr. Regis Chaperon SSS

- *“Learning to take care of the earth is a significant part of development and educating our students about their personal responsibility to reduce, reuse and recycle. Creating a better environment starts with our youth, and it starts at school. Young boys at Dr Regis Chaperon SSS see a problem and are instantly motivated to act. Our school gives students the platform they need to take action on the environmental issues they feel passionate about. Channeling student energy and enthusiasm into an environment project enable students take a leadership role in identifying and achieving the school’s environmental goals. It puts them in the mindset to minimize their carbon footprint for the rest of their lives.”*

Students of Royal College Port Louis

- *“We all say ‘right to adequate standard of living’.”*
- *“Rising sea level storms and floods threaten to destroy housing and create unsafe living conditions for children”.*



2.7. Children should be aware of the local governmental and non-governmental bodies involved in the fight against climate change



2.7.1. Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (MESWMCC)

It is important for children to know that there is a Department of Climate Change under the aegis of the MESWMCC in the Republic of Mauritius, a governmental body legally mandated to coordinate climate change policies and actions.

2.7.1.1. Brief

Following the enactment of the Climate Change Act in November 2020, and its entry into force on 22 April 2021, the Department of Climate Change became operational within the MESWMCC. The MESWMCC aims to make the Republic of Mauritius a climate change resilient and low emission country. The Department of Climate Change is mandated to promote adaptation and mitigation measures in line with the country's commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN, 1992) and the Paris Agreement (UN Climate Change, 2015). It addresses, among others, the following issues:

- Climate change in relevant sectors by developing and coordinating policies, projects, strategies, programmes and action plans; and
- The adverse effects of climate change and overseeing their implementation by relevant stakeholders, including government departments, statutory bodies and private institutions.

2.7.1.2. Main actions taken on climate change

1. As part of a UNDP-funded project on adapting the coastal zone to climate change, 20,000 mangrove trees have been planted in *Grand Sable*; 995 artificial reef units have been placed in the lagoon; 450 metres of coastline have been rehabilitated by planting endemic trees; an early warning system (EWS) has been developed and implemented; and a refuge centre has been built in *Quatre Sœurs* - the first of its kind in the Indian Ocean.



2. Under the National Budget 2022-2023, 182 million rupees have been earmarked for beach rehabilitation and the following work has been undertaken:
 - (a) Coastal protection works from *Pointe aux Feuilles* to *Anse Jonchée*;
 - (b) Replacement of casuarinas with endemic plants in the dynamic zone of the beach to control beach erosion on 3 public beaches, namely *Flic-en-Flac*, *Belle Mare* and *Le Morne*;
 - (c) Consultancy services to assess the performance and effectiveness of previous coastal protection works;
 - (d) Consultancy services for the design of the *Deux Frères* waterfront project over 900 metres long; and
 - (e) Consultancy services for coastal protection works at 16 sites over approximately 8.4 km.

3. Regarding awareness-raising, a series of communication tools, namely short videos, clips, games, brochures and posters, including those in Creole, have been prepared to raise awareness among children in schools and at community level. Conferences on climate change mitigation and adaptation are also organised on a regular basis.



2.7.2. The Mauritius Meteorological Services (MMS)

Every year, children visit the MMS in Mauritius to learn more about the methods used to measure temperatures and study the climate.

2.7.2.1. Brief

The MMS operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management. The MMS is an essential service that operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The main mission of the MMS is to provide accurate and timely weather and climate services, as well as early warnings on natural hazards, to enhance the socio-economic development of the Republic of Mauritius.

2.7.2.2. Main actions taken to tackle climate change

The MMS provide the essential data for studying the climate and its variations. They observe the weather over the last few years, in order to understand the climate and take relevant adaptation measures. Climate change activities in Mauritius have been consistent with sustainable development objectives. The concept of a sustainable island is clearly defined in the "*Maurice Ile Durable*" programme presented to Parliament in June 2008. Since then, the public and private sectors have been working to integrate climate change into new development strategies.

Monitoring of climate change and sea level rise has been stepped up as follows:

- A strong network of automatic weather stations;
- Installation of a new tide gauge at Agalega and in Blue Bay to monitor sea levels; and
- Monitoring of sea surface temperatures recorded in Blue Bay as well as from those reported by ships navigating in the Indian Ocean.



In view of achieving the objectives of the UNFCCC (UN, 1992), the following reports have been published by the MMS:

- United States National Study Program on greenhouse gases (GHG) inventory, and vulnerability and adaptation;
- Climate Change Action Plan;
- Initial National Communication;
- Vulnerability and adaptation of sugar cane cultivation;
- Economics of GHG mitigation;
- Vulnerability of the coastal zone;
- Technology needs assessment;
- Self-assessment of national capacity needs;
- Assessment and stakeholder consultation; and
- The Second National Communication.



2.7.3. Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI)

There is an oceanography institute in Mauritius that studies various aspects of the ocean, including sea-level rise, erosion and coral bleaching.

2.7.3.1. Brief

The MOI was established in January 2000 by the proclamation of the MOI Act (Act 24 of 1999), with a view to rationalising and coordinating oceanographic research and development activities in the Republic of Mauritius.

2.7.3.2. Main actions taken to tackle climate change

1. Sea level rise project:

In 2019, MOI launched a project to monitor sea level rise in the Republic of Mauritius. From 1993 to 2019, the rate of change of sea level rise has been estimated to be about 5.05 mm/year around Mauritius.

2. Study on erosion patterns in coastal regions:

Rising sea levels are leading to continued degradation of our beaches. In the latest study undertaken by the MOI, grain size distribution and topographic data of beaches around Mauritius were used to observe erosion patterns on the public beaches of Mon Choisy, Flic-en-Flac, Le Morne, Belle Mare and Blue Bay. The results confirmed the deterioration of our beaches.

3. Project on restoring marine ecosystem services by rehabilitating coral reefs to cope with future climate change:

A successful ecosystem restoration programme involves identifying organisms that are well adapted to current and future environmental conditions. In this project, MOI will seek to reduce the impact of climate change on local communities and coral reef-dependent economic sectors in Mauritius, Rodrigues and Seychelles by implementing



coral reef restoration using heat-tolerant corals as an adaptation to climate change. In addition, coral genomics will be used to select heat-tolerant coral species.

4. **Community coral culture in the Republic of Mauritius:**

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Mauritius relies heavily on its coral reef resources. As part of this project, 102 fishermen from four coastal localities (*Quatre Sœurs*, *La Gaulette*, *Grand Gaube* and *Bel Ombre*) were trained in the creation and maintenance of coral nurseries and gardens. In addition, 6,000 coral colonies were transplanted to the four coastal localities mentioned above, and reefs were rehabilitated by creating coral gardens covering an area of 1,400 square metres.

5. **Assessment of living marine resources in the Mauritius Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ):**

The world's living marine resources are under constant stress from climate change and human activities, and many species are disappearing before they have even been documented. It is therefore important for each country to assess its living marine resources to ensure their long-term conservation and sustainable use. To understand the marine biodiversity of Mauritius, the MOI launched an assessment of the living marine resources in the EEZ of Mauritius using both taxonomy and DNA-based techniques. While the initial focus was on commercially important fish around Mauritius, the project has also produced an inventory of sea cucumbers and marine molluscs. The MOI is currently working on the identification of marine crustaceans using a DNA-based approach.



2.7.4. Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre (RGSC)

A visit to the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre to see the exhibition on climate change is a must. It is a fun way for children to understand the basics of climate change.

2.7.4.1. Brief

Operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (METEST), the RGSC's mission is to promote science and technology, complement school education with non-formal programmes and raise public awareness on scientific and technological developments.

The Centre has a gallery devoted to climate change. The exhibitions and interactive displays in this gallery highlight the causes and consequences of climate change, emphasising the role of all citizens in finding sustainable solutions. The exhibitions also present the science behind climate change, renewable energy systems and environment-friendly practices.

2.7.4.2. Main actions taken to tackle climate change

1. **Young Mauritians for the Planet Plan (YMPP):**

This programme engaged young people across the country in implementing the SDGs through strategic planning. The YMPP was organised on a pilot basis in 2018 in 10 schools, after which the students' works were published in a book in the form of young people's recommendations for achieving the SDGs. Projects developed included promoting healthy eating and exercise at school, aquaponics, creating vegetable gardens, reducing plastic waste, drug awareness, peer-to-peer counselling, organising conferences in other schools and clean-up campaigns.



2. **Workshop on climate change:**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the RGSC jointly organised a workshop entitled "*Climate Change and Sustainability: Challenges and Opportunities*" on 12 October 2022 at the RGSC. The workshop consisted of two in-depth lectures given by the UNDP's National Project Coordinator and the RGSC's staff. This was followed by a series of group discussions involving workshop participants.

3. **"Deba Klima" (debate):**

The Mauritius Commercial Bank, in partnership with the RGSC, organised a debate competition for secondary school students entitled "*Deba Klima*", launched in February 2023. Participants presented arguments in Creole on various topics related to climate change. The competition consisted of teams of students confronting one another in structured debates on motions for or against a given topic, backed up by appropriate research.

4. **Workshops to empower pre-school teachers to teach about climate change:**

To support pre-primary teachers in their efforts to teach climate change in an engaging and age-appropriate way, the RGSC, in collaboration with the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), invited Dr Sue Dale Tunnicliffe from University College London (United Kingdom) to run a series of workshops from 15 to 19 May 2023 to enable pre-primary teachers to teach climate change.

5. **Science Quest 2023:**

The RGSC organised the Science Quest 2023 competition from 06 to 09 June 2023 at the Côte d'Or National Sports Complex. This project-based competition was being held for the seventh consecutive year and has become a popular event among secondary school students on the island. The aim of the competition was to raise awareness among pupils and encourage them to apply science and technology for a sustainable way of life.



2.7.5. Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (MWF)

Climate change is threatening endemic species. Children should be aware that NGOs such as MWF play a key role in species conservation in Mauritius.

2.7.5.1. Brief

The MWF is a registered charity established in 1984. MWF works closely with the Government of Mauritius and the Regional Assembly of Rodrigues, formalised through separate memoranda of understanding. The head office is situated in Vacoas, Mauritius, and the Rodrigues branch is based in Solitude. MWF is the largest Mauritian NGO to focus exclusively on the conservation of terrestrial endemic species and their habitats, and in Rodrigues it specialises in habitat restoration and education. The organisation's main objective is to save endangered native and endemic species from extinction.

2.7.5.2. Main actions taken to tackle climate change

1. **Conservation of terrestrial endemic species and their habitats:**

The MWF's best known achievement is saving the Mauritius Kestrel. In recent years, the MWF has brought the Pink Pigeon, the Echo Parakeet and the Mauritian Fody back from the brink of extinction. The MWF's work in captive breeding and practical management of endemic animals in the wild is internationally renowned.

2. **Restoring offshore islands:**

The MWF is currently working on several islands, including *Ile aux Aigrettes*, *Ile Ronde*, *Ile aux Cocos* and *Ile aux Sables*. All are large-scale projects of national and global biological importance. The MWF is convinced that the work it does benefits the Mauritian nation, both for present and future generations. Most of the MWF's projects are of international importance for the conservation of biological diversity and therefore place Mauritius at the forefront of the conservation world, giving high visibility to all projects in need of funding.



3. Propagation of native plants:

In Rodrigues, in response to the problems of habitat degradation caused by climate change, the MWF is propagating native plants in nurseries and planting them to restore plant communities.

4. Raising awareness on climate change:

Regarding climate change, the MWF gave educational talks to 77 school children and 150 adults in the year 2022.



2.7.6. Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)

This Commission coordinates cooperation and collective action among islands in the Indian Ocean, particularly in the fight against climate change.

2.7.6.1. Brief

The IOC was created in 1982 by Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles. It was institutionalised two years later, in 1984, by the Victoria Agreement, in the Seychelles. In 1986, the Commission was expanded to include the Comoros and Reunion Island. The IOC is the only regional organisation in Africa comprising islands exclusively.

For over 40 years, the IOC has taken collective action to build a sustainable future based on solidarity. Aware of the many challenges facing the islands of the Indian Ocean, the Commission is active in a wide range of sectors: fisheries, health, cultural and academic cooperation, food security, peace promotion, maritime safety, adaptation and resilience to the effects of climate change, regional connectivity, preservation of marine and coastal ecosystems and the blue economy, to name but a few.

2.7.6.2. Main actions taken to tackle climate change

1. Coastal zone management and biodiversity:

- Implementation of a sustainable coral reef monitoring system and a regional network of 26 marine protected areas (RAMP-COI project; 2005-2010).
- Development of 63 sustainable coastal zone management projects (RECOMAP project; 2009-2011).
- Preparation of 29 local projects aimed at preserving biodiversity and improving living conditions for local communities. These projects include agroforestry and wood energy, mangrove and coastal management, ecotourism, marine mammal protection and scientific research (Biodiversity Project; 2014-2018).



- Awarding of 39 grants to local project leaders to preserve ecosystems and create sustainable sources of income, including community management of mangroves or marine protected areas; alga farming; food crops; and restoration of coastal forests.
- Implementation of a project for the resilience of coastal populations and ecosystems (RECOS; ongoing).

2. Education and environmental awareness:

- Distribution of an educational pack on sustainable development to over 100 schools.
- Creation of a pedagogical guide for primary and secondary school teachers on coastal management.
- Production of a comic strip on sustainable development entitled 'Dylans' Journey' with local school children and cartoonists and its distribution to over 50 schools (ISLANDS project).
- Creation of a teaching manual and activity sheets on the Sustainable Development Goals (ISLANDS project).
- Development of the "Eco Schools" network in the Member States with more than 100 schools awarded the label, more than 25,000 pupils involved and 300 teachers trained.

3. Climate

- Providing support to Member States in negotiating and participating in international conventions on climate and disaster risk reduction.
- Training countries in natural disaster management (e.g., diagnostic study on land use planning in Moheli).
- Developing tools and services based on Earth observation technologies and facilitating access to these data. These technologies are used to monitor the degradation of the Earth and coastal environments, including the management of fisheries resources, the monitoring of coastal erosion and the prevention of health risks linked to the temporary proliferation of algae.



2.7.7. Eco-Sud

Climate change is destroying ecosystems. That is why it is important to know about climate NGOs such as Eco-Sud, which is taking action on the field to help protect ecosystems.

2.7.7.1. Brief

Eco-Sud is one of the leading environmental NGOs in Mauritius working to protect marine ecosystems and conserve marine biodiversity. Eco-Sud recognises that nature is a major player in human activities. The organisation's vision is to create a sustainable Mauritius by advocating for legal rights to nature, protecting natural ecosystems through inclusive conservation and building resilient food systems through agro-ecology.

2.7.7.2. Main actions taken to tackle climate change

1. **“Lagon Bleu” project - Preservation of the marine and coastal ecosystems of Blue Bay and Pointe d'Esny:**

The project aims to contribute to restoring the ecological and biological integrity of Blue Bay and Pointe d'Esny by:

- Raising awareness among fishermen, tourist operators and coastal residents of the importance of marine biodiversity and the protection of the marine ecosystem; and
- Encouraging fishermen to preserve traditional fishing methods and local know-how to help conserve species, thereby contributing to sustainable fishing.

2. **The ‘Resilient Organic Community’ project:**

The Resilient Organic Community project is a major initiative of the NGO Eco-Sud aimed at sustainably increasing food security in Mauritius. The agro-ecological centres in Ville Noire support beneficiaries through:



- A solidarity shop that will distribute food and provide psychological support programmes;
- A training area and the construction of food production kits (agro-kits) for the community;
- A facility to produce soil improvers and compost; and
- Plantations for food production.



2.7.8. Reef Conservation Mauritius

Reef Conservation Mauritius is an NGO you really need to know about because it organises practical activities that appeal to children and are effective in promoting a better understanding of climate change.

2.7.8.1. Brief

Reef Conservation, a local NGO in Mauritius, is committed to the protection of coastal and marine environments. Using a holistic and integrated approach through stakeholder partnerships and the 'Ridge to Reef' concept which includes interconnected terrestrial and marine ecosystems, Reef Conservation's research and education programmes are rich in knowledge and practical activities, with the involvement of students and community members at the heart of all programmes.

2.7.8.2. Main actions taken to tackle climate change

1. *Bis Lamer*:

Bis Lamer is a mobile education unit with bespoke teaching tools that encourages learning through exploration and discovery. It has been developed to share marine science and environmental issues to various groups of people. From the launch of the *Bis Lamer* in July 2014 up to December 2022, 57,831 individuals have been reached and the *Bis Lamer* visited schools 363 times.

The main topic addressed through the *Bis Lamer* sessions is the interconnection between the terrestrial, coastal and marine environments. Within this broad area, several specific themes are addressed. The underlying universal themes are the ocean and the coast, loss of biodiversity, climate change and pollution. However, *Bis Lamer* often adapts its sessions to suit the needs of schools, communities, groups and special environmental days celebrated throughout the year. The caravan includes tailored teaching tools for interactive hands-on learning and awareness-raising, such as

magnetic boards, three-dimensional models, a microscope, touch tablets, flash cards and games.

2. **Eco-Schools Mauritius:**

Eco-Schools is an international programme developed by the Foundation for Environmental Education to encourage environmental awareness, education and action for environmental sustainability in schools, local communities and everyday life. Eco-Schools was introduced by the IOC, funded by the European Union from 2015 to 2017, to support the integration of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in line with the UNESCO Global Action Programme on ESD and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Eco-Schools programme has also been introduced at regional level for the Indian Ocean countries. Madagascar, Comoros, Zanzibar, Seychelles and Mauritius have set up a regional network of Eco-Schools. The ten themes of the Indian Ocean Eco-Schools are climate change, energy, water, waste, healthy living, biodiversity, soil and air, livelihoods, cultural heritage, and ocean and coast. Examples of school activities include rainwater harvesting, soil stabilisation, food production, sanitation and waste management projects, to name but a few.

Of the 32 schools initially selected, 29 decided to implement the programme in 2015. To date, 187 schools have joined the Eco-Schools programme, including 40 per cent of schools in Mauritius and 100 per cent in Rodrigues. The Eco-Schools programme acts as a powerful force for change in the implementation of sustainable development projects in schools. The most successful schools are those that have established strong partnerships with government institutions, NGOs and the private sector.



2.7.9. Mission Verte

Mission Verte is an important NGO in Mauritius which carries out essential actions concerning waste sorting and recycling. Children need to be made aware of these skills so that they can take environment-friendly actions in their daily lives.

2.7.9.1. Brief

Mission Verte is a non-profit association in Mauritius set up in 2007 to help preserve the environment through education and positive action. Its aim is to raise public awareness on the need to reduce, reuse, recycle and compost waste. It helps to develop new and more eco-citizen habits to reduce our impact on the consumption of resources and energies, both by sorting waste and raising awareness. The organisation currently manages around a hundred recycling bin sites throughout Mauritius. The waste collected (paper, cardboard, aluminium and plastic cans) in the bins is sent to the appropriate channels, which are recycling and export companies.

Mission Verte organises education sessions for schools, community centres and businesses. To date, around 30,000 people have attended these sessions. The NGO also produces short educational videos, runs a website and several social media pages, and organises monthly clean-ups, mainly on beaches.

2.7.9.2. Main actions taken to tackle climate change

1. In 2012, an educational DVD was launched by *Mission Verte* to raise awareness on ecological issues. Its primary aim was to educate as many Mauritians as possible to understand and respond to the environmental degradation of their own country.
2. In 2017 and 2018, the association launched two educational animated films to raise awareness among the Mauritian population on the problem of plastic waste on the beaches and the importance of recycling.



3. In 2019, a partnership was established with Emtel (telecommunications company) to operate the recycling of used batteries and mobile phones on an ongoing basis.
4. In 2020, the project entitled "*Pa Zet Plastik Dan Lamer*" was launched to sensitise the masses on the damaging consequences of plastic waste reaching our coasts and seas.
5. In 2023, Mission Verte is rolling out the 'Captain Fanplastic' programme in 25 schools. This story-based educational programme is helping more than 1,700 children to change the way they look at plastic waste and turn it into a treasure.
6. Again, in 2023, with the support from the UNDP's SGP-GEF (Small Grants Programme - Global Environment Facility), the Mauritius Plastic Challenge project is currently under way. Five pilot areas have been set up with green ambassadors equipped with electric cargo bikes to sensitise individuals and small businesses. A national campaign is also taking place, including communication campaigns, workshops with citizens, clean-up campaigns, competitions, an exhibition of solutions and training sessions for journalists, among others.



2.7.10. National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre (NDRRMC)

Climate change is causing disasters around the world. It is therefore necessary to have a centre like the NDRRMC to prevent and manage the risks of these disasters at a national level.

2.7.10.1. Brief

The NDRRMC is the government's main coordinating body for planning, organising, coordinating and monitoring disaster risk reduction and management activities at all levels. The NDRRMC coordinates with all stakeholders to ensure that risk reduction and preparedness planning are included at the required levels, including national, municipal and district councils, the private sector and communities.

2.7.10.2. Main actions taken to tackle climate change

1. **School Emergency Response Plan:**

On 11 April 2019, the Cabinet of the Prime Minister's Office took note of the School Emergency Response Plan (SERP) for nursery, primary and secondary schools and the implementation of the SERP in schools is underway. The SERP identifies the measures to be adopted to prevent an incident from escalating, and establishes the human and material resources required for a rapid and timely response to such an emergency.

2. **Awareness campaigns:**

- The NDRRMC, in collaboration with the METEST, organised awareness campaigns on disaster prevention and preparedness with approximately 200 head teachers of public and private primary schools in Mauritius on 22 December 2017 and 24 May 2018 respectively. An awareness campaign on the same subject was also organised with 51 participants comprising Head Teachers and representatives from primary and secondary schools in Rodrigues on 17 April 2019.



- In September 2022, awareness campaigns were organised with pupils of Grades 5 and 6 at the Clavis International Primary School, who were very interested and receptive. They also submitted disaster risk reduction projects to their school, such as the designing of an emergency kit, which counted in their final evaluation.
- Furthermore, in the same context, an EU-funded project entitled ‘Eco-Schools Indian Ocean Disaster Risk Reduction (Eco-Schools DRR) Toolkit’ under the aegis of the IOC Secretariat is being implemented in collaboration by the METEST, the Mauritius Red Cross Society and the NDRRMC to deploy Eco-Schools Disaster Risk Reduction Toolkits in schools. The toolkit will help to strengthen students’ knowledge and skills in disaster risk reduction, enabling them to plan activities that they can implement in their schools and communities to reduce the vulnerability and impact of disasters on their schools. Ten public primary schools in flood-prone areas have been selected in Mauritius for this project.

3. **Integrating disaster risk reduction into the primary school curriculum:**

The NDRRMC is working with the METEST and the MIE to integrate disaster management into the primary and secondary school curriculums to raise awareness of students on disaster preparedness, response and mitigation, thereby improving their knowledge and understanding on disaster risks. Children will learn the basics of disaster management. At this stage, the topics taught will not be examined, but will be introduced during activity periods. It is expected that children will gain a better understanding of disaster risk reduction and management through play and activities. In an initial phase, disaster risk reduction will be integrated in the curriculum for students of Grades 3 to 6.



***2.8. An illustrated
overview of the
activities and field
visits carried out
related to climate
change***



2.8.1. Two-day sensitisation workshop on climate change with child professionals

Le Suffren Hotel, Harbour Front, Port-Louis (16 & 17 March 2023)

To raise awareness among those working with children on the impact of climate change on children's rights and well-being, the Ombudsperson for Children (OC) organised a two-day sensitisation workshop. The resource person for those two days was Mr Vassen Kauppaymuthoo, Oceanographer and Environmental Engineer.



Group photo with the participants

During those two days, the participants explored the definition of climate change, the concepts of mitigation and adaptation, and, most importantly, the impact of climate change on children's rights. They acknowledged the emergency of the situation and the dire need for climate change awareness among adults and children.

2.8.2. A series of local field visits conducted in connection with climate change

In accordance with section 7(1) of the Ombudsperson for Children Act 2003 which 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”, the OC opened an **own-motion enquiry** on the impact of climate change on children’s rights. This investigation was initiated following the recommendations made by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its Concluding Observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Mauritius in February 2023, as quoted below.

Impact of climate change on the rights of the child

36. Taking note of Sustainable Development Goal targets 1.5 and 13.b, the Committee recalls its previous recommendation and further recommends that the State party involve children in its implementation of the Climate Change Act 2020 and in renewed climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies and action plans, in particular in addressing children’s food, water and energy insecurity, and also ensure synergies with the impact assessment and claims mechanisms established by the Environment Protection Act 2002.

In the context of this inquiry, the OC assisted by Investigator, Mrs. S. Johaheer, undertook a series of field visits in the public and private sectors with the following objectives:

- 🍃 To deepen the understanding on climate change through interactions with key persons working in domains linked directly or indirectly to the subject of climate change; and
- 🍃 To seek possible avenues of collaboration in the context of the OCO’s workshop on the World Environment Day on ‘The impact of climate change on children’s rights’ with 60 students from 7 secondary schools across the four educational zones.



2.8.2.1. Meeting at the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)

Indian Ocean Commission, Ebene (21 April 2023)

The Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) is an intergovernmental organisation which brings together five member states, namely the Union of the Comoros, Reunion Island, Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles. These islands face several vulnerabilities with respect to climate change and the IOC is committed to addressing these issues. Since the last decade, the IOC's project portfolio has expanded considerably to include climate change mitigation, sustainable coastal zone management and renewable energy.



The OC, along with Investigator, Mrs. S. Johaheer, met with Prof. Vêlayoudom Marimoutou, Secretary General of the IOC (third from the left), and Mr. Gilles Ribouet, Head of Communications of the IOC (first from the left).

Important topics such as the IOC's initiatives on tackling climate change, the impact of climate change on soil conservation and biodiversity, eco-friendly schools in Reunion Island, the ascension of eco-friendly innovative buildings, children at the forefront of climate change and mitigation actions were discussed at length during the meeting. In the context of a growing number of extreme weather conditions, notably soaring temperatures and the rising sea level, the OC applauds IOC's endeavours and its engagement in tackling climate change.

2.8.2.2. Meeting at the Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI)

Mauritius Oceanography Institute, Albion (09 May 2023)

The MOI was established in January 2000 with a view to rationalise and co-ordinate oceanographic research and development activities in the Republic of Mauritius.



The OC and the OCO's Investigator, Mrs. S. Johaheer, met Dr. D. Marie, Officer-in-Charge, MOI

The oceans play a crucial role in regulating our weather and climate trends globally and regionally. Climate change has severe effects on oceans. There are numerous uncertainties as to the impact on children and families living in the Republic of Mauritius. With excessive heat and energy, the temperature of oceans rises, which leads to unparalleled cascading effects, including melting of ice, sea-level rise, marine heatwaves, and ocean acidification. These changes ultimately cause a lasting impact on marine biodiversity, and the lives and livelihoods of coastal communities and beyond.

Dr. Marie stated that over the past decades, the deleterious effect of climate change in Mauritius has intensified coral bleaching events. In view to reduce the impact of climate change on local communities and coral reef-dependent economic sectors, the Republic of Mauritius has been allocated grants from the Adaptation Fund for implementing the project entitled '*Restoring marine ecosystem services by rehabilitating coral reefs to meet a changing climate future*'. The project is focused on coral reef restoration in Mauritius and Rodrigues with thermal tolerant corals as an adaptation to climate change.

Children, as the heirs of the future, need to be aware of their environment in which they are living and the ocean that surround their island. They have a right to information and education about climate change and its impact. They must also be aware of the existence of various organisations in place working for the protection of the environment and ecosystems.

The OC and the OCO's Investigator met with professionals working in the departments of physical oceanography, chemistry, biology, marine geosciences, and biotechnology in Mauritius.

*In the picture on the right:
Mrs. R. Venkatasawmy, OC,
observing micro plastics of
less than 5mm in diameter,
under the microscope.*



2.8.2.3. Meeting at the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (MESWMCC)

Department of Climate Change, MESWMCC, Port Louis (10 May 2023)

Following the promulgation of the Climate Change Act in November 2020, and its enforcement on 22 April 2021, the Department of Climate Change became operational within the MESWMCC. Its main objective is to implement the legislative framework that can make the Republic of Mauritius a climate resilient and low emission country.

From left to right in the picture:

Mrs. V. Kanhye, Environment Officer; Mrs. S. Meeheelaul, Director of the Department of Climate Change; the OC; Mrs. S. Johaheer, Investigator



The Director of the Department of Climate Change gave an insight on the climate trend in Mauritius and mentioned that, over the period 1951-2020, average temperature rose by 1.39°C and that sea level is increasing by a rate of 5.6 mm per year. She also mentioned that there has been a decrease in annual rainfall by around 8 per cent since 1950.

To address the challenges linked to adapting to climate change, the MESWMCC has carried out rehabilitation works in several coastal regions around Mauritius. The MESWNCC also conducts regular awareness programs using short videos, posters and booklets to sensitise children in schools and at community levels on climate change mitigation and adaptation.



2.8.2.4. Meeting at the Mauritius Meteorological Services (MMS)

Mauritius Meteorological Services, Vacoas (12 May 2023)

Discussions about climate change are bound to involve the MMS which operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management. As per section 5(k) of the Mauritius Meteorological Services Act 2019, the MMS shall “*monitor, assess and conduct research on climate change, in particular on the science of climate change and sea level rise, and provide baseline information for the sustainable development of the Republic of Mauritius*”.

The OC, accompanied by Investigator, Mrs. S. Johaheer, met with Mr. Ram Dhurmea, Acting Director, MMS, and Dr. G. Veerasamy, Acting Deputy Director, MMS, and had fruitful interactions regarding the topic of climate change. To give an example of how the climate has changed over the years in Mauritius, Mr. Dhurmea provided an example on how tropical fruits such as litchis and mangoes can now be harvested in the central plateau, while the growth of these same fruit trees has been affected in the coastal regions due to high temperatures and drought. He also stated that beaches such as Mon Choisy, Bras d’Eau and Flic-en-Flac have particularly been affected due to sea level rise. He added that, in many schools, there are very few trees which barely provide shade to students when temperatures are high.



Meeting with Dr. R. Dhurmea, Ag. Director and Dr. G. Veerasamy, Ag. Deputy Director at the MMS

[2.8.2.5. Meeting at the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation \(MWF\)](#)

Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, Vacoas (15 May 2023)

The MWF is the largest NGO in Mauritius to be exclusively concerned with the conservation and preservation of the nation's endangered plant and animal species. To gain an insight into how climate change is affecting the biodiversity, the OC, accompanied by Investigator Mrs. S. Johaheer, met with Dr. Vikash Tatayah, Conservation Director, MWF.



Meeting with Dr. V. Tatayah, Conservation Director of the MWF (first from the right)

Dr Tatayah spoke on the restoration of the islets around Mauritius to conserve its unique plants and animals and saving them from extinction. Education and sensitisation on the conservation of biodiversity are core endeavours of the MWF. To that effect, the NGO has raised the awareness of many people, including students, on *Ile aux Aigrettes* and Rodrigues Islands. They also visit schools on request to talk about conservation and environmental issues. Climate change is a central issue in all their interventions.

2.8.2.6. Meeting at the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre (RGSC)

Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre, Bell Village (16 May 2023)

The RGSC actively contributes to raising awareness on environmental challenges like climate change facing Mauritius and the world. The centre focuses on educating the public, especially children and young people, on the importance of mitigating climate change and adapting to it. The RGSC has a gallery dedicated to climate change, where exhibitions and interactive displays highlight the causes and consequences of climate change, emphasising the role of all the citizens in finding sustainable solutions. The exhibits also showcase the science behind climate change, renewable energy systems, and eco-friendly practices.



In the picture on the left: The OC in conversation with Dr. Aman Kumar Maulloo, Director, RGSC, (second from the left) and Mr. Soodeo Rungen, Manager / Curator Education, RGSC, (first from the left).

The RGSC, in partnership with the Mauritius Commercial Bank, has organised a debate contest entitled “*Deba Klima*” whereby participants presented their argumentation in Creole on various topics related to climate change. The contest was in the form of structured debates among teams of students on motions for or against a given topic related to climate change, supported by appropriate research. Dr. Maulloo recalled that A.P.J Abdul Kalam, former President of India, used to say that curiosity in young minds is of paramount importance to expand our understanding of this universe. Children should be inspired to take the lead to tackle climate change.

2.8.2.7. Meeting at the Reef Conservation Mauritius

Reef Conservation Mauritius, Péreybère (16 May 2023)

Founded in 2004, Reef Conservation Mauritius strives for the conservation and restoration of the marine environment of Mauritius through research, education and training. Mrs. Kathy Young, Director of Reef Conservation Mauritius, believes that the protection of the marine ecology begins in the classroom. To that effect, the organisation regularly sensitises students on issues related to the marine ecosystem. Through projects, it has developed several tools and materials devoted to the discovery of the marine habitat in Mauritius.

In the picture on the right: The OC, in discussion with Mrs. Kathy Young, Director, Reef Conservation Mauritius (first from the left) and Mr. Ahmad Ismael Ramjaun, Head of Education, Reef Conservation Mauritius (second from the left), on the topic of climate change.



Reef Conservation Mauritius in partnership with Rogers Foundation has founded the *Bis Lamer* project, a mobile education unit that aims to sensitise Mauritians about marine and environmental issues. The project provides interactive marine educational material to primary and secondary school students, and to the public in various locations such as beaches, shopping malls, private companies, and community centres, among others.

The organisation has also been working with primary schools to set up environmental corners. Those included in-classroom murals illustrating aquariums, posters or even gardens with endemic plants in the schoolyard.

2.8.2.8. Meeting at Eco-Sud

Eco-Sud, Ville Noire, Mahebourg (17 May 2023)

Eco-Sud is an NGO working to protect the environment and biodiversity in Mauritius. It aims to educate the public on ecological issues by bringing together, informing and mobilising a strong and engaged civil society. It also aims to defend and save endangered species and sites in Mauritius, while promoting socioeconomic development and environmental protection.

According to Eco-Sud, Mauritius is highly dependent on food importation. The fragility of food processing and distribution systems in Mauritius is quite apparent when we consider the consequences of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, there is a pressing need to increase the country's self-sufficiency regarding food. The Resilient Organic Community (ROC) is an important initiative of Eco-Sud to sustainably increase food security in Mauritius. The agro-ecological centres at Ville Noire support beneficiaries through soil amendment and compost-producing facilities, training, making of food production kits for the community; and crop-planting for food production.

Beneficiaries have also learned how to create their own backyard gardens. On Thursdays, they learn how to cook traditional meals such as cassava or green bananas as they used to be consumed by our forefathers. It is a hive of activity with a sense of community in partnership as everyone works and laughs together.



Demonstration of food composting

2.8.2.9. Meeting with local residents

Providence - Bois des Amourettes (17 May 2023)

The most vulnerable areas to sea level rise in Mauritius are the coastal regions around the island. Over the years, the amount and quality of sand on beaches has significantly decreased. To have a better understanding of the situation, the OC, accompanied by Investigator Mrs. S. Johaheer, carried out a field visit at *Providence-Bois des Amourettes*. The MESWMCC has undertaken beach rehabilitation works in that region, notably, rock revetment at the critical sites to control erosion.



Rock revetment at Providence - Bois des Amourettes

Two fishermen, Stephen Joseph and Syvester Beniff, were interviewed on the impact of climate change on their daily lives as residents of a coastal region. They stated the following:

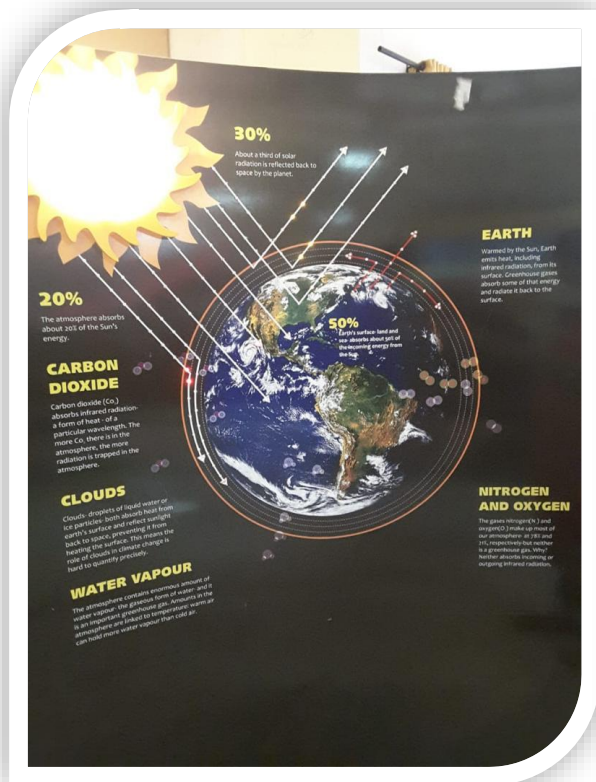
- *“Fer telman so, nou gagn pwason bien mwins aster”*
- *“Kan lamer monte, li vinn ziska lor sime, ki danzere”*
- *“Isi pena laplaz me later. Later inn bien retresi. Minister pe fer bon travay pou met bann ros pou sekirite bann abitan”*

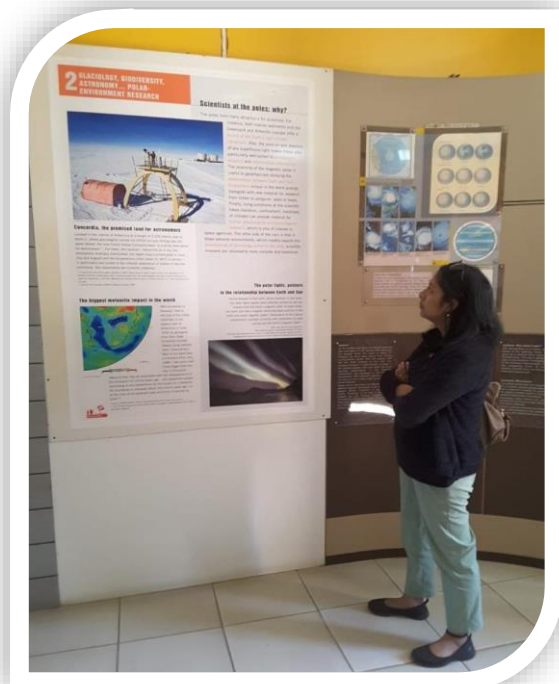
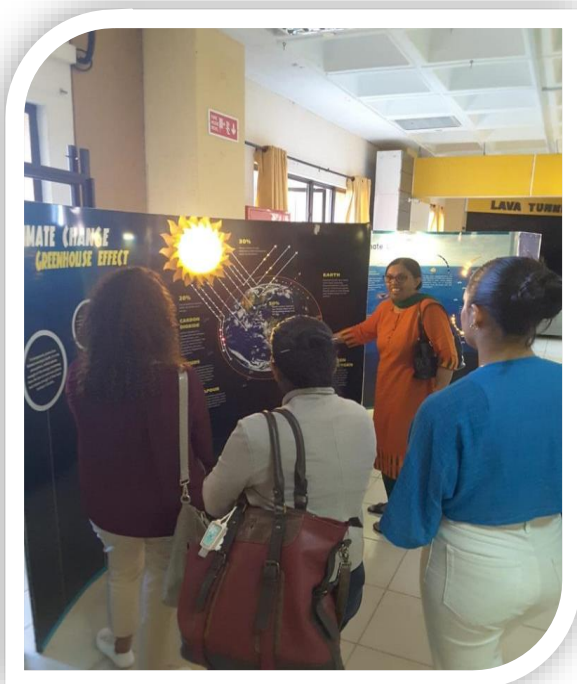
2.8.2.10. Visit at the exhibition on climate change of the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre

Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre (RGSC), Bell Village (23 June 2023)

The aim of the RGSC is to promote Science and Technology, complementing school education through non-formal programmes, and sensitising the public on developments in this domain. The centre contributes to raising awareness on environmental challenges like climate change facing Mauritius and the world. It focuses on educating the public, especially children and young people, about the importance of climate change. The RGSC has a gallery dedicated to climate change. The OC and her team visited the centre to learn more about climate change and understand it better, and to gather information to relay to children.

Some glimpses of the climate change exhibition at the RGSC





Through fun, colourful and interactive displays, a visit at the RGSC can help children become more aware of events about climate and its effects around the world. The exhibition is comprehensive, detailed and accessible to all. It highlights the essential points to understand climate change, its natural effects and the consequences of human activity on climate. The various informational posters at the exhibition show the impact of climate change on different areas such as ecosystems, tourism, health and food production, particularly in Mauritius.





2.8.2.11. Meeting at the NGO Mission Verte

Mission Verte, Curepipe (26 June 2023)



Mr. Raffray explaining how waste collection and recycling works

The OC, along with Investigator Mrs. S. Johaheer, met Mr. Sebastien Raffray, Director of the NGO *Mission Verte*, who is actively engaged in shaping recycling activities in Mauritius. Recycling helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing energy consumption and is beneficial to the climate crisis. The OC congratulated *Mission Verte* for having won the first runner-up prize on the theme ‘Solutions to Plastic Pollution’ organised by the MESWMCC to commemorate the World Environment Day 2023.

Mr. Raffray stated that since the creation of the NGO in 2007 and with a limited budget, they have been sensitising the public, including children in schools, about the importance of preserving the environment through recycling. The organisation also operates several recycle bin sites around Mauritius and ensures that the collected waste (paper, cardboard, aluminium and plastic) goes through the proper channels via recycling and exporting companies. The OC noted that there are dedicated organisations in place which are carrying out good work in the view to promoting a cleaner, safer and greener Mauritius, and they should be more visible in the public eye to make a greater impact.

2.8.2.12. Meeting at the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre

National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre (NDRRMC), Citadelle Mall, Port Louis (26 June 2023)



A guided tour was conducted at the National Emergency Operations Command to take note of the level of preparedness and response mechanisms in place. The OC, along with Investigator Mrs. S. Johaheer, met with ACP Mr Premanand Buddhoo, Officer-in-charge of the NDRRMC, and his team members.

With the adverse impact of climate change, Mauritius has become highly vulnerable to extreme weather events, such as heavy rainfall and flash floods which can jeopardise people's lives, including children. In the aftermath of the flash floods in 2013, the Government of Mauritius decided to create the NDRRMC to improve overall coordination among emergency services and to define roles and responsibilities in the event of a disaster. With the passing of the law in 2016, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre Act became operational. The NDRRMC works together with concerned communities, local authorities and volunteers who rally together to help mitigate damage.

The National Crisis Committee is convened under the chair of the Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management where decisive and timely actions are taken through the National Emergency Operations Command (NEOC) to safeguard the lives of people in danger. Depending on the extent, magnitude and severity of a crisis, the multi-agency NEOC is activated to coordinate and monitor all preparedness, response, relief and recovery activities associated with the event.



Meeting with ACP Buddhoo and his team at the Conference Room of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre

2.8.3. Sensitising students on the impact of climate change on children's rights

2.8.3.1. Preparatory meeting in view of a two-day workshop on the impact of climate change on children's rights

Conference room, Ombudsperson for Children's Office (18 April 2023)

In the context of the World Environment Day, the OCO organised activities intended to actively engage secondary school students on climate change. A preparatory meeting in this regard was held with representatives from Zone Directorates; the SeDEC and the PSEA.



From left to right: Mrs. Ramanjooloo, Senior Educational Psychologist (Zone 2); Mr. Mohitram, Administrator (Zone 1); Mrs. Ramkoosalsing, Administrative Assistant (PSEA); Mrs. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs. Bachoo, Ag. Assistant Director (Zone 4); Mrs. Chan Shin Yu, Senior Educational Social Worker (Zone 3); Mr. Rose, Representative of SeDEC

2.8.3.2. Two-day workshop on the impact of climate change on children's rights

Gold Crest Hotel, Quatre Bornes (06 & 07 June 2023)

Workshop Day 1 (06 June 2023):

The OCO organised a two-day workshop on climate change, focusing on its impact on children's rights. A group of 56 students and 10 teachers were invited from 7 different colleges in Mauritius, namely BPS College, Dr Marice Cure SSS, Floreal SSS, La Confiance College, Queen Elizabeth College, Royal College of Port Louis and St Esprit College. Mrs. Bachoo, Acting Assistant Director of Zone 4, and Mr. Mohitram, Administrator of Zone 2, from the Ministry of Education were also present.



Investigator Mrs. Sandhya Johaheer (picture on the left) gave a welcome speech, emphasising the aim of the two-day workshop, which was to raise children's awareness on climate change. She explained that this workshop is in response to the recommendation of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child to involve children more closely in discussions on climate change.

The OC, Mrs. R. Venkatasawmy, welcomed the children, mentioning that the UN's recommendation appealed to her because « *Zanfan ena drwa a la parol* ». She stated that the Earth is in danger, and it was paramount for children to understand what climate change really is, so that they can evaluate how it affects their rights.

Address by Dr. Aman Kumar Maulloo, Director of the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre

As a scientist and mathematician, Dr. Maulloo’s role is to promote science and technology. He pointed out that science is a double-edged sword: it can help improve people’s daily lives, but it can also be misused. He stated that misinterpretation in science can be very dangerous. He warned about the role of social media in spreading information, which can sometimes be false or erroneous. Finally, he encouraged children to go and find out more on climate change and other science topics at the RGSC.



Address by Mr. Gilles Ribouet, Head of Communications, Indian Ocean Commission

Mr G. Ribouet explained how the IOC can participate in providing answers and help with the problem of global warming. He mentioned that one of Mauritius’s greatest assets, our lagoons, are endangered. High temperatures affect corals and fish populations are decreasing. Fish is an important source of food for people in several regions of the world. Without this source, malnutrition could become prevalent. He also said that if schools are closed because of flooding or other climatic events, then the right to education would also be threatened.





Presentation by Mr. Maxwell Sardoo, Senior Environment Officer, Department of Climate Change, MESWCC

Mr. Sardoo explained the term climate change by breaking it down: “*What is climate?*” and “*What is change?*”

He then turned to the notion of greenhouse gases (GHGs). When these gases accumulate in the atmosphere, they increase the Earth's overall heat content. Understanding GHGs is essential to understanding global warming.



Presentation by Dr. Prithviraj Booneedy, Acting Director, Mauritius Meteorological Services

Dr P. Booneedy differentiated between weather and climate. Weather is assessed over a short period of time, and it can change from one day to the next. Climate, on the other hand, is assessed over a long-term period (20-30 years). There are many parameters to study such as temperature, humidity, sunshine, and wind. Temperature analysis can give a good indication on whether the climate is changing.

Presentation by Mr. Sébastien Sauvage, Director, NGO Eco-Sud

He outlined the limits of planetary ecosystems, such as global warming, atmospheric ozone depletion, chemical pollution, ocean acidity and he explained the notion of resilience, which is synonymous to adaptation. Eco-Sud is sensitising the public on restoring marine biodiversity, using agro-ecology and decreasing dependency on food importation. The NGO is also a proponent of diversification and responsible farming.



During interactive activities at the workshop...

The OC asked the students if they had to explain climate change to an elementary school child, how would they go about it?

Ronan (in the picture on the left) proposed a manual activity that reproduces the workings of greenhouse gases using accessible materials.

In another activity, the OC placed layers of fleece on Sandeena (picture on the right), to understand GHGs and how heat gets trapped. Then a weighted blanket was placed on top of the fleece layers. The student said *“I’m suffocating! I’m feeling so hot!”*. That showed just how real the effects of heat can be. The OC asked her if she stayed like this for a day, what could happen? She promptly answered: *“I’m going to die!”*.





The OC assigned another exercise to the students: writing a poem about the environment, the sea, the beach... The students impressed us with their inspired creations. Their poems are showcased below:

*Moris ! Mo pays,
Lontan to la plage dorée,
Ti p protez mo l'amour.
Ti p abrite mo la famille,
Protez mo bane zanfan.
A zordi, nous p detrire sa l'amour
d'aparavant la.
Moris, mo ti z'il,
Mo manque toi.
Nous l'amour pa pareil azordi,
Ruiner par nouveau technologie,
Et qui eloigne nous depi nous richesse.*

Royal College Port-Louis

By Luckhun Asgar Ally

*Lamer, Lamer, sans ou mo pena mo pair.
To mem ki apaise mo douleur,
Dan to presence mo gagne bon l'air.
Dan saler to mem mo freser,
To disab embeli mo later,
Se avec ou ki mo trouve mo boner.
Lamer, Lamer, mo kontan toi.*

Floreal SSS

By Gregory René

*Oh! beaches
Grains of gold, falling from my hands.
I remember, the time when my eyes could
see beautiful beaches.
I remember, its softness beneath my feet.
Where now I see erosion.
Sand of time, the hourglass turns upside
down.
Upside down is now the world,
For mother nature is slowly dying.
Lost in the sky of pollution
Human greed, like claws caging the
environment.
My beaches, my sky, my nature.
Let us all unite to protect its beauty.
Let's restore our world beauty once
again.*

BPS College

By Firdaus Ramjan



*Nous tous lésés rêveurs,
 Nous nous plaignons dans nos malheurs,
 Le monde entier s'en plaint,
 Mais pourtant comme moi tu ne fais rien.
 L'eau des plages se tourne en larmes,
 Mais selon eux ce n'est que du
 mélodrame.
 Soumis, toi, t'aime trop te taire,
 Même si tu crois le contraire.
 Paradis abstrait...
 Le tout rayé d'un trait...
 Voir le soleil se coucher,
 Ne se passe maintenant que dans les
 dessins animés.
 Soyons réalistes,
 Même dans la course de la vie,
 Nous ne serons pas finalistes.*

Saint Esprit College

By Djendel Baboo

*Premier amour, un beau jour,
 Sur la plage en été où l'empreinte de
 notre amour se perd dans les vagues.
 Oh ma plage où es-tu ?
 De jour en jour ta beauté se perd...*

*Mo laplaz, to rappel moi certain zimaz.
 Lor la terre, toi ek moi ti fer nous passaz
 Comores, Seychelles, Moris partout nous
 fin fer voyaz.*

*Dans nous zeness, nous fin ramasse
 coquillaz,
 Zordi dan vieillesse nous p bizin ramasse
 piaz
 Pou ki demain nou zanfana capav trouve un
 bout disab ek trouve l'amour qui nous fin
 trouve.*

*The stars above, shine bright and clear,
 A love so true, it's always near.
 The sea below, it ebbs and flows,
 A love so deep, it always grows.
 So let us dance, beneath the stars,
 A love so sweet, it's ours and ours.
 And let us swim, beneath the sea
 A love so pure, it's meant to be.*

Dr Maurice Curé College

**By Matadeen Ratra, Yeten Sandeena,
 Ahamudally Saarah, Ransita Bhagbuth,
 Talljee Khushal, Dhunnoo Vaishnavi &
 Aliza Dhonye**



*Ma plage, où seras-tu ?
Après toutes ces années perdues,
Malgré les hauts et les bas,
Ta beauté reste sans débat.
Tu n'es désormais qu'un souvenir,
Que j'aimerai préserver pour l'avenir.*

Queen Elizabeth College

**By Melissa Kong Pun Cheung, Melissa Kut
May Cheung, Tanushi Nursimooloo, Kelly
Leuny Siong Fat, Emmanuelle Donat,
Ekta Boodhun, Skujun Deepshikka,
Jogee Vidushi**

*La plaze,
Toi ki donne nou,
Un zolie imaze avec
To bane coquillaze.
Nous zanfane la plaze,
Nou p rod passe un message.
Pour partage l'importance nous paysage
A tou bane l'age.
Alors nou tou ensame nou protez nou
l'heritaze.*

La Confiance College

**By Ronan Bienvenue, Logan Agathe &
Mathieu Beesela**





Distribution of medicinal plants to each student

Workshop Day 2 (07 June 2023):

In the morning, each participating school presented its song or slam that they had created on the first day of the workshop. In a short time, they had come up with impressive creations. Some used musical instruments, others sang in chorus or in solo. The OC was impressed by the children's performance, saying that *"in the schools of Mauritius there is a lot of talent"*. She then explained to the students that it was very important that they protect their creations and work by ensuring that all students had their names written to avoid any form of plagiarism, or appropriation of their work by someone else without reference.



Students of La Confiance College performing their song



Presentation by Dr. Daniel Marie, Officer-in-Charge of the Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI).

Dr D. Marie introduced the MOI, its mission, and its different departments. He then switched to the subject of climate change, focusing in more detail on sea level rise, its causes and consequences.



He discussed *El Nino* and *La Nina* in the Pacific Ocean. He pointed out that these phenomena also affect Mauritius. He spoke on ocean acidification and its consequences, such as the depletion of fish species and bleaching of corals. He concluded by presenting coral restoration projects at various sites in Mauritius.

The students interacted actively with the Resource person. A sample question from a student was as follows:

Student: "Why keep planting corals when they will eventually die? Would not it be better to reduce CO₂ levels and emissions?"

Dr Marie: "Very good question! We have to continue planting corals and also reduce our use of fossil fuels, because we cannot wait for people to reduce their CO₂ emissions before we can plant corals. Nothing will be done otherwise."



The students were requested to search a definition of carbon footprint on the web. One student from each school presented their definition.



The OCO organised a two-round quiz on climate change. Each group chose a Climate Ambassador to represent their school. The seven participants in each round had to raise their hands as quickly as possible to answer first. The result of the quiz was as follows: three schools ranked first with three correct answers each, namely Queen Elizabeth College, Dr. Maurice Curé College and St. Esprit College.



All the schools received boxes of chocolate as gifts to congratulate them on their participation and involvement. Each student also received a reusable water bottle.



Mrs Bachoo (picture on the left) and Mr Mohitram (picture on the right) handing gifts to the winners.



At the end of the day, one student from each school came forward to write a slogan on a banner to express their passion for the protection of the environment.



2.8.4. Student-led action project on the impact of climate change on the rights of the child

2.8.4.1. Debriefing session with educators of secondary schools who participated in the student-led action project

Conference room, Ombudsperson for Children's Office (10 July 2023)



The OC met with educators from secondary schools whose students had participated in the OCO's competition on designing a student-led action project surrounding the impact of climate change on the rights of the child. She shared her appreciation on the students' involvement in producing high-quality work.

She also engaged the educators in discussions regarding climate change. The educators pointed out that the theme of climate change is not covered sufficiently covered in depth in school curriculum, and above all, that it focuses too much on theory and not enough on practice. The educators said that children need to learn through experience and go out in field to see the effects of climate change by themselves. For example, Mr Soukar, an Educator, said that, on the East coast of Mauritius, damage to coral reefs has increased due to the presence of more hotels, nautical activities and mass tourism. However, children think that the sea is healthy because they only see the surface. They do not see the seabed and dying corals, that can be observed when diving.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for the OC to explain future planned activities such as the jury's deliberation and an awards ceremony for the best student-led projects.



2.8.4.2. Jury's deliberation on the student-led action projects on the impact of climate change on the rights of children

Ombudsperson for Children's Office, Beau Bassin (17 & 20 July 2023)

In the context of the competition for a student-led action project on the impact of climate change on the rights of the child, the main aim was to enable children to become active agents in mitigating the impact of climate change.

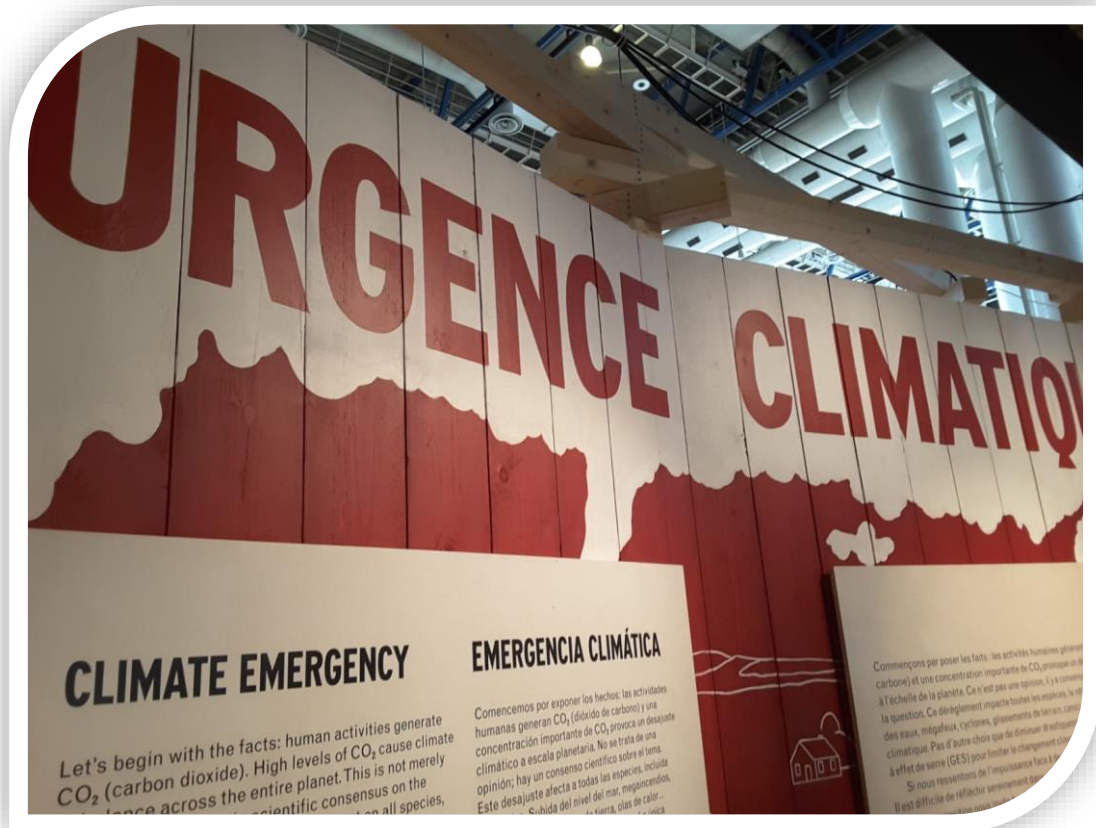
This initiative was intended for secondary school students of Grade 10. They were requested to comply with several instructions. The project was to be in the form of a 15-slide graphic presentation and had to address the three questions stated below in any one of the following languages - English, French or Kreol Morisien - supported by pictures.

- 1. What is climate change in simple terms?*
- 2. How can climate change impact on children's rights in your region (include testimonies of children's voices)?*
- 3. What concrete actions do you think your school could undertake to mitigate the impact of climate change?*

A jury panel was set up to shortlist the most deserving projects. The panel met on two days, 17 and 20 July 2023. The jury members were Mr. Ismail Bawamia, Mrs. Yecha Rhungapen-Veeramootoo, Mr. Maxwell Sardoo, Mr. Vipin Dunnoo and Mrs. Gina Bonne. An awards ceremony for the best projects is expected to take place in November 2023 in the context of the upcoming International Day of the Child.

2.8.5. International visits and activities in connection with climate change

2.8.5.1. Visit of the OC to the Climate Emergency exhibition in Paris, France (8-10 June 2023)



Between 08 and 10 June 2023, the OC visited the *Urgence Climatique* [Climate Emergency] exhibition, which has been on permanent display since 16 May 2023 at the *Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie*, located in the park of *La Villette* in Paris. This exhibition offers an overview of the major aspects of climate change and the measures to be taken, particularly in terms of decarbonising our societies.

It is important to take children to visit exhibitions like these because they allow them to assimilate information and understand a complex subject in a fun and enjoyable manner. Museum exhibitions give children the chance to explore new things in a resourceful educational environment. Some exhibitions are also equipped with interactive child-friendly activity trails.

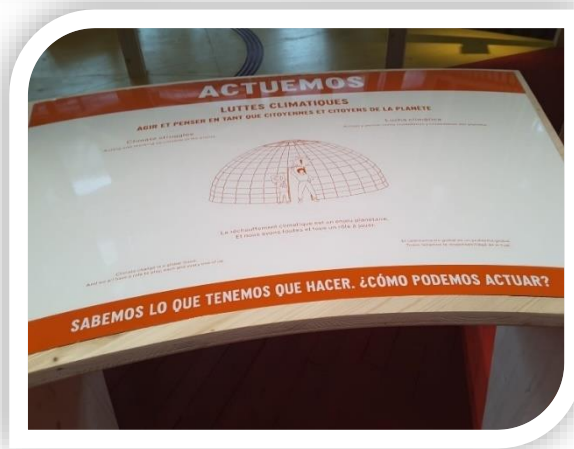
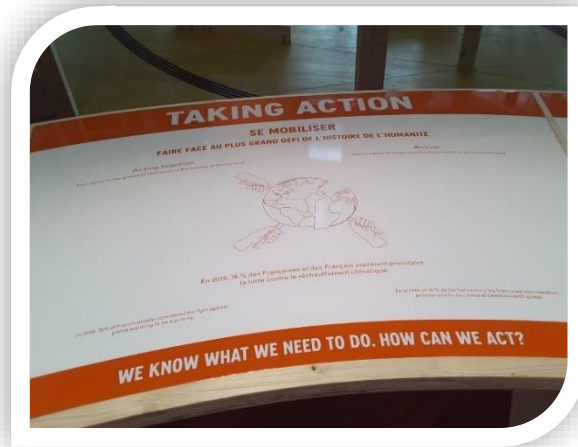
The Paris Agreement was adopted on 12 December 2015 at the end of the COP21 negotiations, and was enforced 04 November 2016. In 2019, out of 197 parties, 183 had ratified it. As the first universal international climate agreement, it represents a major step forward in the fight against global warming. Based on scientific reports, almost all the countries of the world agreed on a common objective by 2100, to contain global temperatures to within 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to continue efforts to limit the rise in temperature to 1.5°C. It also proclaims the objective of carbon neutrality (or zero net emissions), that is, a balance between greenhouse gas emissions and the compensation provided by carbon sinks or reservoirs, such as forests.



The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was created in 1988 by the United Nations Environmental Programme and the World Meteorological Organisation.

It regroups 195 member states. As a centre of expertise synthesising the state of knowledge on climate change and the role of human activity, the IPCC publishes scientific reports that are used by governments to reach agreements in the fight against global warming. Since its creation, it has published six assessment reports showing the intensification of the greenhouse effect due to human activity, as well as reports on other climate-related themes.





The exhibition is in several languages, as can be seen from the pictures above (French, English and Spanish). This showed the openness of this exhibition to other countries and the desire to be accessible to a maximum of people, especially on the matter of climate change, a global phenomenon that affects us all.

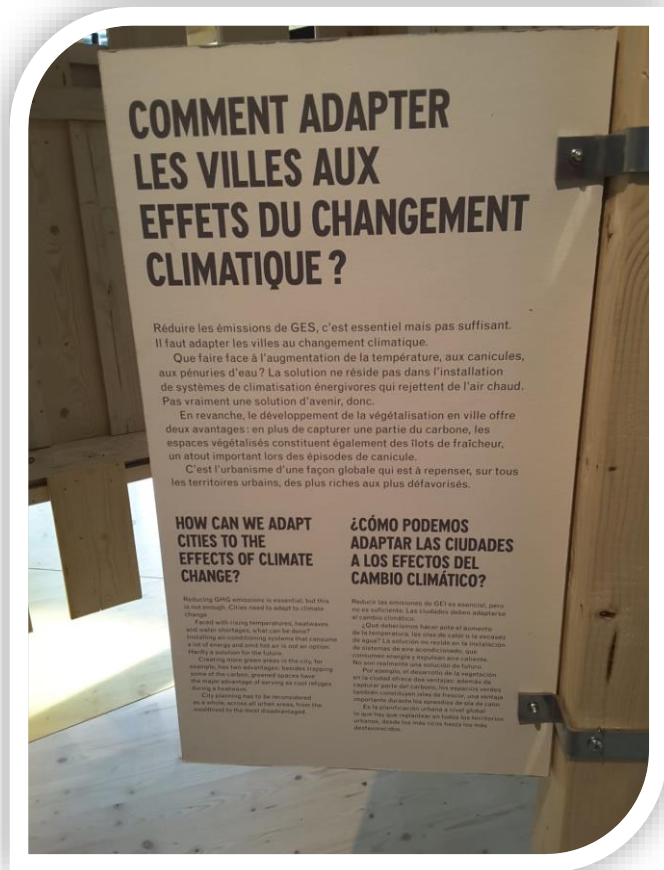
As shown in the picture on the right, the full exhibition is equipped with Braille panels and audio systems to ensure that visitors with disabilities enjoy all the displays and activities.





Some of the panels, such as the one on the right, provide information on the solutions to be considered in the future to mitigate climate change. One example is decarbonisation (reduction or elimination of CO₂ emissions in the atmosphere), an interesting concept that is not often explained to children.

Picture on the right: An information panel on how to adapt urban areas to the effects of climate change





This exhibition can provide children and adults with ideas on how to adapt their daily lives to hinder climate change. The earlier children are engaged on this subject, the more they will be able to develop constructive actions as future adults.

The exhibition also has the potential of raising awareness of people on the consequences of climate change without inducing a feeling of guilt. There is a growing phenomenon of eco-anxiety across communities. In response to this, the exhibition makes information on climate change understandable and accessible to all, thereby promoting high civic engagement and participation.



2.8.5.2. Visit to Iceland and meeting between the Ombudsperson for Children from Mauritius and Iceland

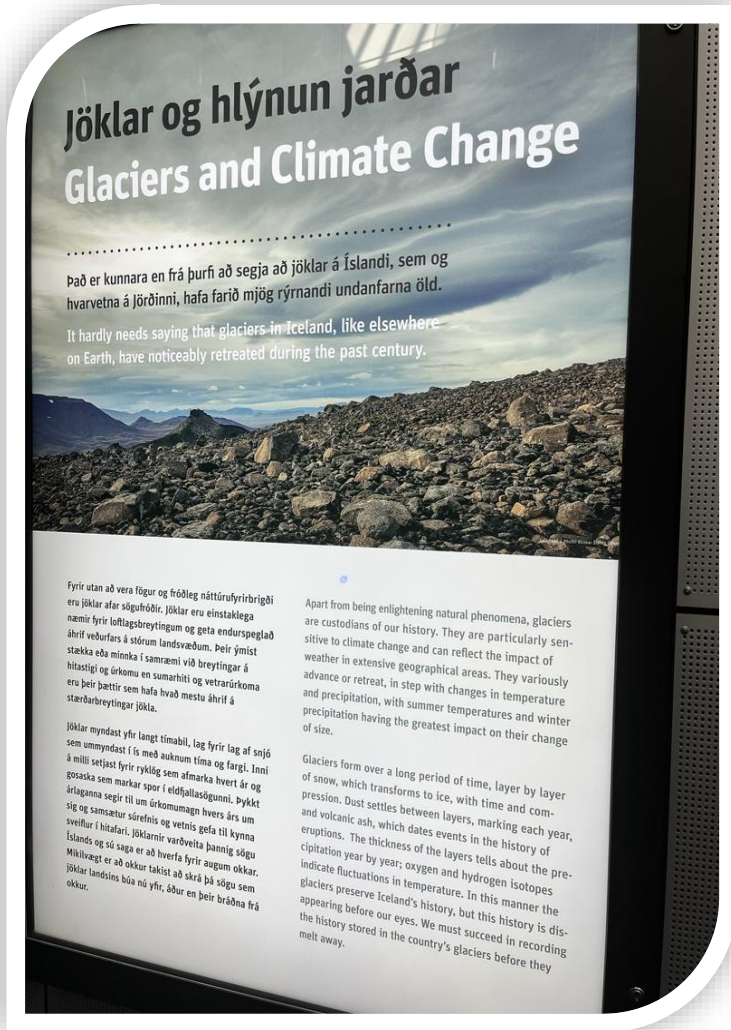
Iceland (13-16 June 2023)



On 13 June 2023, the OC met the Ombudsperson of Iceland, Salvör Nordal, who is also the President of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC). The meeting was highly enriching for the two counterparts who discussed the importance of educating children on global climate change. Both Ombudspersons agreed that networking opportunities between Mauritian ambassadors and Icelandic experts would be organised.

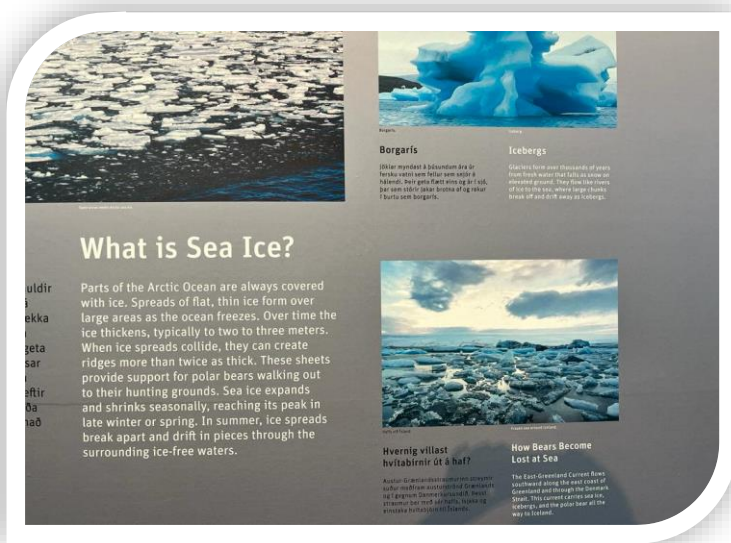
ENOC is a not-for-profit association of independent children's rights institutions (ICRIs). Its mandate is to facilitate the promotion and protection of children's rights as formulated in the UNCRC. The main objectives of the ENOC are to

- promote and safeguard children's rights;
- ensure the fullest possible implementation of the UNCRC;
- promote the establishment of ICRIs in countries worldwide;
- ensure, through advocacy and policy work, that relevant European-wide bodies place children's rights at the centre of their activities, legislation and policies; and
- promote the active participation of children and young people in decision-making processes, legislation, and policies concerning them.



Also on 13 June 2023, the OC visited an exhibition on the environment and climate change at the Perlan museum in Reykjavík, Iceland. The structure of the museum resembles a pearl sitting on top of Reykjavík. It accommodates a modern nature exhibition, an ice cave, a 4K planetarium, a fully rotating viewing platform, and much more.

Perlan museum's nature exhibition brings alive the wonders of Iceland to experience and learn about. It features innovative technology, spectacular photography and fun activities for all. Such as the experience of the forces of volcanoes, Iceland's geological history, a realistic replica of Europe's largest bird cliff and some oceanic wonders of Iceland. Notably, there is a 100-metre-long ice cave where we get to experience a glacier.



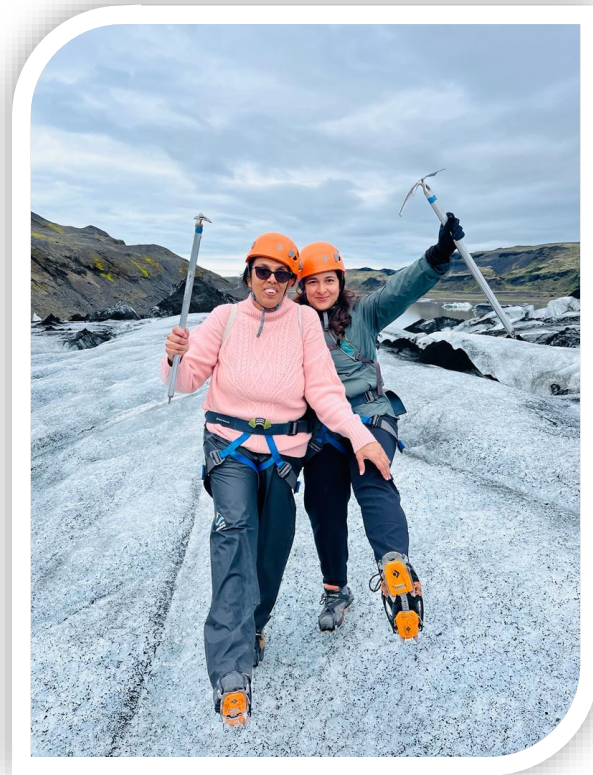


A visit to the Perlan museum remains quite informative. It promotes quality education on climate change with evidence-based information. It is important for children to visit museums like this one; these places offer memorable and immersive learning experiences, and they can help children to develop their imagination and open their minds to different themes. They are a source of knowledge and fun that can trigger more discovery.

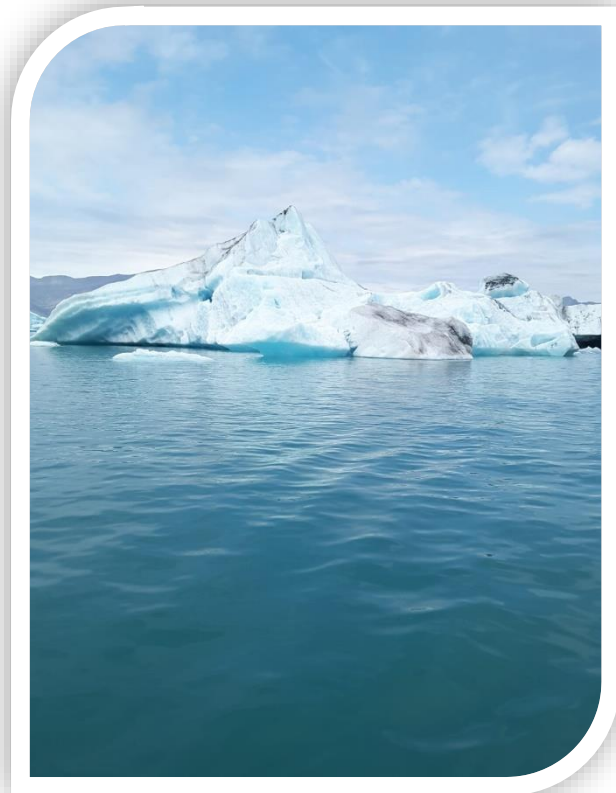


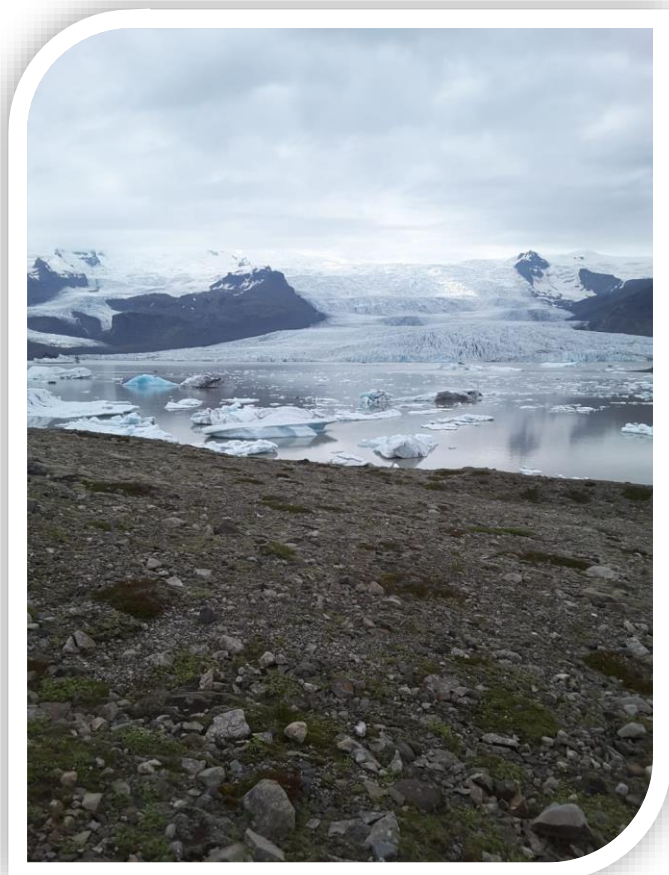
On 14 and 15 June 2023, the OC visited the *Sólheimajökull* and the *Jökulsárlón* glaciers respectively.

Glaciers account for 11 per cent of Iceland's surface area. However, global warming is threatening those glaciers by accelerating their melting rate. During the visit at the *Sólheimajökull* glacier (picture on the right), the OC saw the significant retreat of the glaciers. The consequences of melting glaciers are numerous. Ice exerts pressure on the walls of volcanoes, but as it melts, the pressure is released, which can lead to volcanic eruptions. When an eruption occurs beneath a glacier, the lakes that are contained can drain abruptly, resulting in devastating flash floods.

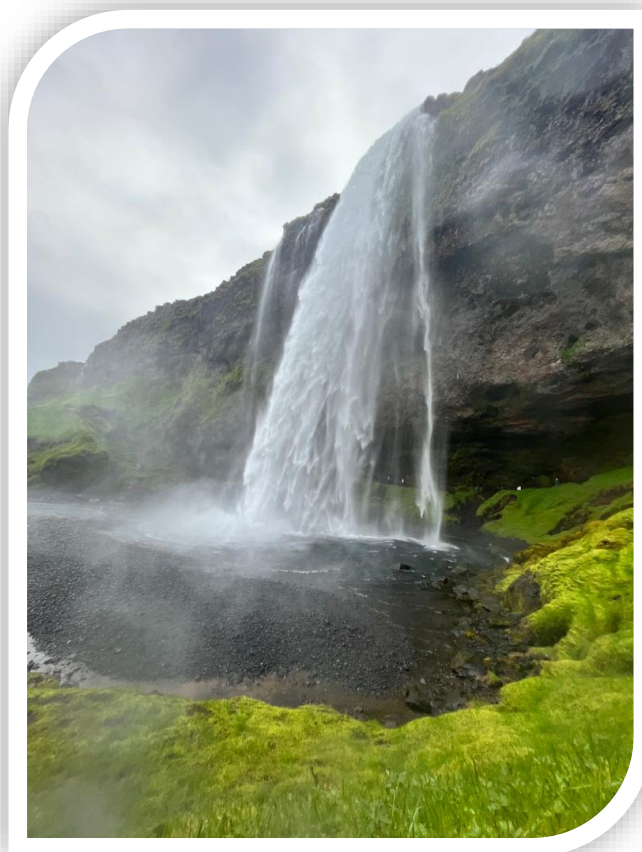


In the long term, melting ice is likely to make electricity generation more difficult. Glaciers are immense reservoirs of fresh water (see *Jökulsárlón* Glacier Lagoon in the picture on the right). As they melt, Iceland will have more water than it can store for several years. Then, when the water stored by the mountains will have run off and disappeared, Iceland might face drought.





The *Vatnajökull* glacier (in the picture on the left), Iceland's largest glacier, shows the visible consequences of global warming - a significant reduction in the ice mass.



In Iceland, thanks to the abundance of water throughout the country and the relatively young landscape, it is commonplace to find waterfalls around the island, especially at the foot of glaciers or along the course of powerful rivers. Most of Iceland's waterfalls have a high flow rate in Spring and Summer due to the melting of glaciers. The picture on the left shows the 65-metre high, *Seljalandsfoss* Waterfall, fed by the *Eyjafjallajökull* glacier in Iceland.



***2.9. Child rights-based
recommendations
toward the need to
combat the adverse
effects of climate
change at the local level***



Children of this Earth, let us Live Green, Save the World and Hug a Tree!

Child rights-based recommendations toward the need to combat the adverse effects of climate change at the local level

Before even talking about climate change, it is imperative to inculcate to children of all ages the love of nature and the responsibility to take care of the environment.

There is no doubt that everyone is concerned with climate change, including children. Preparing children to adapt to a changing climate and to limit its negative consequences on their current lives and future is undeniably a necessity. In this context, I propose in the following subsections some recommendations that can be applied at the local level in relation to children’s rights, namely:

- the right to leisure, play and culture linked to the environment and climate change;
- the right to quality health in the context of climate change;
- the right to education on climate change;
- the right to access information on climate change;
- the right to participation on matters concerning climate change; and
- the right to a climate-resilient environment.



2.9.1. The child's right to leisure, play and culture linked to the environment and climate change

2.9.1.1. Children of the Republic of Mauritius must learn to appreciate the beauty of their country and preserve it

There is an important question that needs to be asked by parents, teachers, educators, social workers, and governmental and non-governmental agencies: **How can we instil love for Nature in children?** We will not be able to raise children's awareness on the dangers of the climate crisis if they have not first learnt to cultivate their love for our blue planet, Earth, and its biodiversity, forests, coral reefs, oceans, animals, plants, wetlands, seagrass beds, mangroves, ecosystems, glaciers and so on.

I would also like to highlight the documentaries produced by Sir David Attenborough, British broadcaster, biologist, natural historian and author, who has devoted his life to recounting the stories of love between human beings and Nature, and has shared them to the world. He is best known for his work with the British Broadcasting Corporation's Natural History Unit, including documentaries such as 'Life on Earth', 'The Living Planet', 'Our Planet' and 'Our Blue Planet'. **I would recommend that children watch these documentaries to better understand climate change via a medium that is different from what they experience in class.** I believe that watching those films' viewings can inspire children greatly to dedicating themselves to the protection of Nature.

2.9.1.2. Children must take part in outings to discover and appreciate the natural beauty of their country

Thousands of tourists visit Mauritius and Rodrigues every year, attracted by our beaches, lagoons, mountains, green spaces, waterfalls, and ocean. But, do children of the Republic of Mauritius know and appreciate enough their own islands (Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agalega, Tromelin, St Brandon and the Chagos)? **I recommend that students are given regular opportunities to go on outings to discover and appreciate the natural beauty of our islands.**

During meetings with secondary school students, I was concerned to note that, during their school holidays, they chose going to private tuitions over exploring the great outdoors! In my view, they cannot study and understand the history and geography of their islands through textbooks alone. They need to carry out activities such as climbing mountains, swimming in our lagoons, scuba diving, strolling along sandy beaches, breathing in the fresh air of our natural forests, to name just a few. **In other words, children need to be out in the field, in nature, so that they can appreciate Nature's beauty and figure out why it needs to be protected.**

Schools must regularly encourage and organise those outings because the development of our children's eco-citizenship depends on their experience in natural environments, not just from theoretical knowledge in books. It is true that it is difficult for children to visit Agalega, Tromelin, St. Brandon and the Chagos. Nevertheless, they should be encouraged to get to know these islands better through research and videos, along with discussions with those who have already been there. For example, Chagossians who have visited their homeland can share the beauty of their archipelago through videos. The same goes for Agaleans who visit Mauritius regularly. **Exchanges among children from Mauritius, Rodrigues and Agalega regarding climate change and its impact on the environment and children's rights should be organised.**

2.9.1.3. Children of our country must be exposed to its vibrant nature from an early age

Even before they are born, **babies in the womb can and should be exposed to the benefits of Nature.** We now know that babies perceive their mother's emotions, both positive and negative. **Pregnant women should be encouraged to breathe in sea breeze, out on beaches, and to stroll in gardens and nature parks.** Exposure to Nature can only do good to both the mother and her baby, and it is known to have positive effects on the physical and mental health of the unborn baby. **Parents and families should regularly go out in natural environments with their infants and young children. Education about Earth and Nature, and ecological values and practices, must be continuously inculcated to young children well before they go to school.**



2.9.2. The child's right to quality health in the context of climate change

2.9.2.1. Climate change effects on the physical and mental health of children should not be underestimated

We often think of the consequences of climate change on the planet in general, but we sometimes forget its direct impact on individual health. Physically, children are at greater risk than adults of infectious diseases, malnutrition, diarrhoeal diseases, respiratory difficulties and stress. Article 24(1) of the CRC (UN, 1989) recognises the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. **Therefore, our country has a duty to implement measures to protect children's health and to prevent diseases in the context of climate change.**

Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that what is happening to the climate is on an unprecedented scale. The psychological effects induced on people cannot be discounted. Nobody is fully prepared for it, least of all children, who will suffer the consequences before they have even understood all the causes. A researcher explained in 2020 that *“children are more vulnerable to climate change's mental health effects as they have stronger responses to extreme weather events like PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], depression, and sleep disorders”* (as cited in Coffey *et al.*; 2021). This makes it even more essential for climate change to be explained simply but effectively to children, without hiding the truth or creating an atmosphere of anxiety that could be harmful.

2.9.2.2. Preventing skin and eye problems in children from overexposure to ultraviolet radiation

According to an article by the World Health Organisation (2022)⁴⁷, *“climate change, including through variations in ozone and cloud cover, is expected to impact UVR [ultraviolet radiation] levels at the Earth's surface”*. UVR are invisible electromagnetic

⁴⁷ World Health Organisation (2022). *Ultraviolet radiation*. Retrieved 31 August 2023 from www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ultraviolet-radiation



radiation emitted by the sun and can be beneficial to health in small amounts. Overexposure to UVR can be detrimental to human health and can even cause cancers. Children are often more exposed to the sun than adults. Their skin and eyes can be damaged without adequate protection. I would like to highlight some protective measures recommended by the WHO (2022) for all people, including children:

- *Limit time in the midday sun.*
- *Seek shade.*
- *Wear protective clothing.*
- *Wear a broad brimmed hat to protect the eyes, face, ears and neck.*
- *Wear wraparound-style sunglasses that provide 99 to 100% UV-A and UV-B protection.*
- *Use broad-spectrum sunscreen on skin areas that cannot be covered by clothes. Sun protection is best achieved by seeking shade and wearing clothes rather than applying sunscreens. Sunscreens should not be used for extending time spent in the sun.*

Children are more vulnerable to harmful UVR than adults, and they should be guided into adopting the simple precautions listed above, especially when they are outdoors in the sun.

2.9.3. The child's right to education on climate change

2.9.3.1. At the pre-primary and primary school levels

For the pre-primary and primary school levels, I recommend that activities are organised to develop children's ecological awareness and love for the planet. I think it might be premature to talk to the youngest ones about the climate crisis. Information about climate change should be introduced gradually and in a fun way for children between 3 and 12 years old. They also need to regularly play outdoors, enjoy Nature and learn to love and respect the environment.



A social and behavioural science study argued that “[r]esponsibility towards nature is a character trait that must be formed and developed from a young age” (Caciuc, 2014, p.136)⁴⁸. The researcher also posited that “[a] special role in building up pupils from the ecological point of view is the teachers’ own attitude towards nature, an attitude which is reflected in the influence they have over the mentality and the personality of their pupils” (Caciuc, 2014, p.140). Children learn a lot from imitating adults and it is important that we are conscious of this so we can transmit the right ecological attitudes and behaviours to our children.

For children of the above-mentioned age group, I recommend similar activities to the following:

- **Ecological colouring on recycled paper⁴⁹** which can help raise children’s awareness on ecology while having fun;
- **Telling tales about the sea, nature, the importance of biodiversity and the effects of climate change to children in a dynamic way.** Storytelling entertains, educates and helps children understand the world and life. As a storyteller, I am convinced that children can be made aware of climate change in that manner; and
- **Creating songs to convey messages about the climate and nature to children.** For example, during a two-day workshop on climate change organised by the OCO (see subsection 2.8.3.2), students from secondary schools wrote songs about the climate in a very short time.

⁴⁸ Caciuc, V. (2014). Reflections on the Ways to Build up Responsibility towards Nature in Primary School. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 149, 136 - 141. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.08.177.

⁴⁹ This site provides interesting pedagogical models of ecological colouring: www.pimpant.com/media/coloriage-ecologie

2.9.3.2. At the secondary school level

Secondary school students and young people in general have a capacity to become active change agents in the battle against the adverse effects of climate change. To build on their ecological awareness and to foster their development as future eco-citizen adults, I would make the following recommendations:

- 1. Raise young people's awareness as much as possible by accompanying them to museums, exhibitions, workshops and training courses, among others, on climate change:**

This type of measure ensures learning through real-life experiences and interactions. Museums, for instance, offer memorable, immersive learning experiences to children and young people in different areas and types of knowledge. They act as a mine of information brought together in an educational and age-appropriate environment.

- 2. Ensure access to climate change education for all young people, including those living in disadvantaged circumstances:**

Climate change education (formal and non-formal) must be made accessible to all young people, regardless of their backgrounds. They need to acquire a sound knowledge of climate change so that they can protect themselves from its harmful effects and can build a secure and sustainable future.

- 3. Engage young people on climate change through active pedagogical initiatives:**

Such initiatives may include writing essays on climate change; inter-class and inter-school debates; participating in local and international film festivals on climate change; guided outings in Nature during the day or at night; opportunities to explore other islands and countries; or visiting ice floes or glaciers.

- 4. Strengthen the participation of young people and adolescents in decision-making processes on climate change:**

Mechanisms and platforms adapted to young people must be put in place so that they can participate actively in climate-related political processes. They could also be engaged in these processes as 'climate ambassadors', 'eco-delegates' or 'young delegates to the CRC', among other designations.



2.9.3.3. Setting up green schools: UNESCO's Greening Education Partnership

This year, UNESCO (2023a)⁵⁰ expressed significant concerns regarding climate education globally, as laid out below:

- *Around half of 100 countries reviewed in a recent UNESCO survey had no mention of climate change in their national curriculum;*
- *While 95% of surveyed primary and secondary teachers felt that teaching climate change is important, less than 30% expressed a readiness to teach it; and*
- *70% of young people say that they do not feel ready for climate change based on what they have learned.*

Given the above, and to promote education that considers the challenges of climate change in line with international standards, I recommend that policy decision-makers, educational institutions, NGOs and citizens in general consult the websites of UNESCO and UNICEF to review the importance of setting up green schools. As part of the Greening Education Partnership (GEP)⁵¹ movement, UNESCO (2023b)⁵² defines a 'green school' as

an educational institution that promotes knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes for social, economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development through a whole-school approach to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in its teaching and learning, facilities and operations, school governance and community partnerships.

⁵⁰ UNESCO (2023a). *Greening Education Partnership. Getting every learner climate-ready*. Retrieved 29 August 2023 from www.unesco.org/sdg4education2030/en/knowledge-hub/global-initiatives/greening-education-partnership

⁵¹ More information on the Greening Education Partnership can be found on the UNESCO's website: www.unesco.org/en/education-sustainable-development/greening-future

⁵² UNESCO (2023b). *Greening every school. UNESCO Quality Standard on Green Schools. Concept Note*. Retrieved 29 August 2023 from www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2023/06/greening-every-school-cn-en_0.pdf

A whole-institution or whole-school approach is about “[moving] the culture of the learning institution towards collaboration, solidarity, sustainable practices and inclusion of all genders and backgrounds so that students can learn what they live and live what they learn” (UNESCO, 2023c)⁵³. The GEP (UNESCO, 2023d)⁵⁴ is built upon four pillars which provide a highly informative framework towards the setting up of green schools and climate education:

1. Greening schools.
2. Greening curriculum.
3. Greening teacher training and education systems’ capacities.
4. Greening communities.

More details on the visions and goals of each of these pillars (UNESCO, 2023d) respectively are provided in the diagram on the next page. **I believe that our education policies and legislation could be reviewed to better incorporate the four pillars of UNESCO’s GEP (2023d).**

During my field visits in this own-motion enquiry, I took note that a good proportion of educational institutions in Mauritius, from pre-primary to secondary levels, have already taken interesting initiatives to make their schools green. **However, with an intensifying climate crisis, I believe that such actions need to multiply significantly. The schools of tomorrow should invest in educating students about sustainable development. To achieve this in our country, high-quality training for teachers on climate change and its impact on the environment is a sine qua non.**

⁵³ UNESCO (2023c). *Greening every school. Development of the Quality Standard on Green Schools*. Retrieved 29 August 2023 from www.unesco.org/en/education-sustainable-development/greening-future/schools#:~:text=A%20%E2%80%9Cgreen%20school%E2%80%9D%20is%20defined,school%20governance%20and%20community%20partnerships.

⁵⁴ UNESCO (2023d). *Greening Education Partnership. Getting every learner climate-ready*. Retrieved 29 August 2023 from www.unesco.org/en/education-sustainable-development/greening-future



GEP Pillar 1: GREENING SCHOOLS

- Vision:** From early childhood through adult education, work to ensure that all schools achieve green school accreditation, including teacher training and higher education institutions.
- Goal:** All countries will have adopted a green school accreditation scheme with at least 50% schools, colleges, and universities with green accreditation and are operating sustainably.

GEP Pillar 2: GREENING CURRICULUM

- Vision:** Embrace a life-long learning approach that integrates climate education into school curricula, technical and vocational education and training, workplace skills development, teaching materials, pedagogy, and assessment.
- Goal:** The number of countries which include climate education in school curricula at the pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels will have at least doubled from the current ~45%.

GEP Pillar 3: GREENING TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION SYSTEMS' CAPACITIES

- Vision:** Support teachers and policy makers through the integration of climate education in pre-service and in-service teacher training, building the capacity of school leaders and key education stakeholders.
- Goal:** All school leaders and at least 1 teacher per school will have been trained on how to integrate climate education into teaching and learning throughout the school.

GEP Pillar 4: GREENING COMMUNITIES

- Vision:** Engage the entire community by integrating climate education in life-long learning, in particular through community learning centres and learning cities.
- Goal:** All countries will be able to report at least 3 different ways learning opportunities are made available for adults outside the formal education system to develop the skills, attitudes, and actions that will foster community resilience to tackle climate change.

2.9.4. The child's right to access information on climate change

I refer to subsection 2.7 of the current chapter where I provided information on ten local governmental and non-governmental agencies involved in the fight against climate change within the Republic of Mauritius. From my experience of meeting and discussing with these different stakeholders, I realised that our country has a wealth of local information and resources to offer on how to better deal with the climate crisis.

I recommend that visits and meetings with those local organisations must be facilitated for children through school outings to

- **access accurate and reliable information on the state of the country's ecological systems, the aims and scopes of these organisations, and the main actions they take to tackle climate change;**
- **understand their fundamental role in developing and participating in positive climate actions; and**
- **develop multi-stakeholder collaborative initiatives among the local authority, NGOs and children's groups to address the adverse effects of climate change.**

I insist that, although the Internet can provide a lot of information on climate change to children, we cannot discount the value of educational visits to local organisations, which can provide unique experiential and interactive learning opportunities for children on climate change and how this is affecting their country and daily lives.

2.9.5. The child's right to participation on matters concerning climate change

Children must be given as many opportunities as possible to have their voices systematically heard on climate change and its effects on their lives. They must be allowed to express themselves because their views significantly matter. If they do not speak out, we will not be able to understand their experiences and listen to their perspectives and creative solutions to combating the effects of climate change.



I would like to point out the input of thousands of children worldwide, from more than 100 countries, which was used in the formulation of the General Comment No. 26 on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change. Various in-person and online methods were mobilised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023b) to achieve this level of child participation. **I believe that our country can also devise a child-friendly mechanism to ensure that our children have the appropriate platforms and communication channels to make their opinions heard to policy makers and legislators on the measures being taken to combat climate change.**

We must also protect children from developing eco-anxiety, which is defined as the *“distress caused by climate change where people are becoming anxious about their future”* (Coffey *et al.*, 2021)⁵⁵. There is no doubt that children are the ones who suffer the most from the consequences of climate change, so they have a right to have their say on what concerns them.

2.9.6. The child's right to a climate-resilient environment

2.9.6.1. Climate-friendly infrastructure, particularly schools, to mitigate the effects of climate change on children's life, survival and education

The climate emergency is leading us to rethink the construction of our buildings, focusing on sustainable solutions in terms of glazing, facades, insulation and waterproofing. These may include:

- a better choice of construction materials such as reflective cladding to mirror heat upwards, and light-coloured materials and planted facades to prevent too much heat accumulating during the day; and
- the use of more resistant materials against storms and cyclones which are becoming increasingly intense.

⁵⁵ Coffey, Y., Bhullar, N., Durkin, J., Islam, M. S. & Usher, K. (2021). Understanding Eco-anxiety: A Systematic Scoping Review of Current Literature and Identified Knowledge Gaps. *The Journal of Climate Change and Health*, 3, 1-6. Retrieved 28 August 2023 from doi.org/10.1016/j.joclim.2021.100047

Climate-friendly schools and buildings can protect children despite extreme weather conditions, which are expected to increase in the future.

2.9.6.2. More green spaces around homes and schools to mitigate the effects of global warming

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), green spaces bring countless benefits to public health. Nathalie Röbbel, an expert from the WHO, stated that (as cited in UN; n.d.)⁵⁶:

Parks, green spaces and waterways are important public spaces in most cities. They offer solutions to the effects of rapid, unsustainable urbanization on health and well-being.

The development of green spaces around residential areas is highly recommended by the international community to counter the effects of climate change and to allow people to benefit from greenery.



PLANTING TREES TO ABSORB CO₂ AND FILTER POLLUTANTS

“THROUGH THE MECHANISM OF PHOTOSYNTHESIS, PLANTS ABSORB CARBON DIOXIDE AND RELEASE OXYGEN. TREES, IN PARTICULAR, ARE CONSIDERED AS ‘CARBON SINKS’ OWING TO THEIR CONSIDERABLE CAPACITY TO TRAP THIS GREENHOUSE GAS THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES. A LARGE TREE CAN RETAIN UP TO 5.4 TONNES OF CO₂, EQUIVALENT TO THE EMISSIONS OF AN AIRBUS A320 FLYING 600 KILOMETRES.”

~ *Les Entreprises du Paysage (2018)*

Quote translated to English from the original French version extracted from Les Entreprises du Paysage (2018). *Climat : La ville de demain sera verte*. [Climate: The cities of tomorrow will be green]. Retrieved 29 August 2023 from www.lesentreprisesdupaysage.fr/content/uploads/2019/12/unep-guide-climat-bd-mars18.pdf

⁵⁶ United Nations (n.d.). *Green Spaces: An Invaluable Resource for Delivering Sustainable Urban Health*. Retrieved 29 August 2023 from www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/green-spaces-invaluable-resource-delivering-sustainable-urban-health



Groups of researchers (Amoly *et al.*, 2014⁵⁷; Dadvand *et al.*, 2015⁵⁸) who studied the impact of green spaces at the Centre for Research in Environmental Epidemiology in Barcelona and other tertiary institutions in Spain found compelling connections between the presence of green spaces and child development, notably:

- The longer time spent in green spaces, in residential spaces surrounding greenness and on beaches was associated with reduced behavioural and emotional difficulties, peer relationship problems and inattention difficulties in primary school children aged 7 to 10 years (Amoly *et al.*, 2014).
- Among primary school children aged 7 to 10 years, there were positive associations between their exposure to green spaces - mainly from surrounding greenness at school - and their cognitive development, specifically better scores on their working memory abilities, which were predictors of their learning and academic attainment (Dadvand *et al.*, 2015). The researchers reaffirmed that:

Natural environments including green spaces provide children with unique opportunities such as inciting engagement, risk taking, discovery, creativity, mastery and control, strengthening sense of self, inspiring basic emotional states including sense of wonder, and enhancing psychological restoration, which are suggested to influence positively different aspects of cognitive development” (Dadvand et al., 2015, p.7937).

The researchers also recommended to policy makers to improve the greenness of schools, given the evidence of the beneficial effects on child development and lasting effects in adulthood (Dadvand *et al.*, 2015).

⁵⁷ Amoly, E., Dadvand, P., Forn, J., López-Vicente, M., Basagaña, X., Julvez, J. *et al.* (2014). Green and blue spaces and behavioral development in Barcelona schoolchildren: The BREATHE Project. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 1-33. Retrieved 29 August 2023 from www.researchgate.net/publication/265474909-Green_and_Blue_Spaces_and_Behavioral_Development_in_Barcelona_Schoolchildren_The_BREATHE_Project

⁵⁸ Dadvand, P., Nieuwenhuijsena, M.J., Esnaola, M., Forn, J., Basagaña, X., Alvarez-Pedrerola, M. *et al.* (2015). Green spaces and cognitive development in primary school children. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 112(26), 7937-7942. Retrieved 29 August 2023 from www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.1503402112

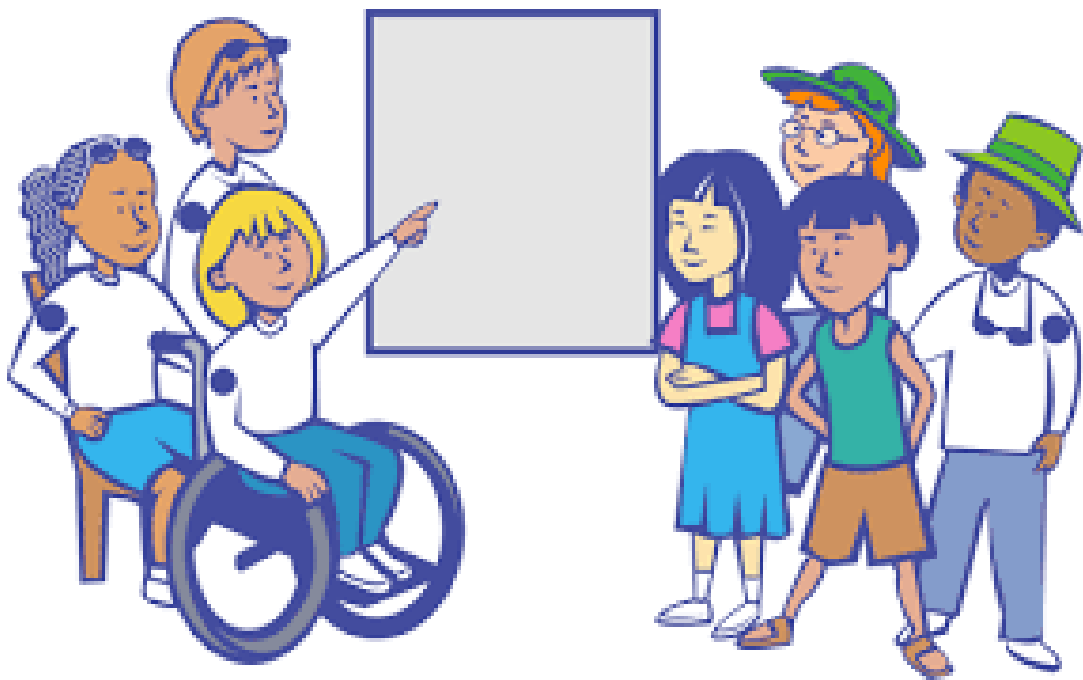
I emphasise that creating green spaces around homes and schools are in the best interests of the children of our country and can also act as a powerful tool in countering the effects of global warming. I would recommend that every district in Mauritius develop at least one large green space area accessible to all.



*Together, let us fulfil our responsibility to
pass on a clean, healthy and sustainable planet to
future generations!*

CHAPTER 3:

The Right of Children with Disabilities to Inclusive Education





Article 24(1) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006)

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.*

3.1. Introductory notes



In the period of 2020-2021, my team and I visited all the Special Education Needs (SEN) Schools run by NGOs, Integrated Units and SEN Resource and Development Centres (SENTRDCs) across Mauritius and Rodrigues to assess the challenges met by the Managements of these institutions, and on the quality of education provided to children with disabilities (CWDs) and children with SEN. My main observations across these visits were that:

- these institutions adopted mainly a medical or charitable model of disability;
- the curriculum being used was not well-defined;
- the teaching and pedagogical methods were not adapted enough to the needs of children with disabilities; and
- the infrastructure lacked learner-friendliness.

To aim at shifting mentalities and practices in the education of CWDs and children with SEN in the Republic of Mauritius, I organised three workshops for Managers of SEN Schools in the period of 2021-2022 to introduce the concept of the **human rights-based model of inclusive education**. A workshop was also organised in Rodrigues on 03 March 2023 with the same objective. This year, with the support of the European Union, the Ombudsperson for Children's Office (OCO) organised, amongst others, two training workshops for a wide variety of stakeholders related to the right of CWDs to inclusive education, led by four international experts, two from the Department of Education of Statewide Services in Western Australia, and two from the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South Africa, in May 2023 and July 2023 respectively.

It is important to highlight that the Republic of Mauritius has ratified the Convention against Discrimination in Education (CDE; UNESCO, 1960)⁵⁹, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC; UN, 1989) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD; UN, 2006). With regards to the right of the child to education, these ratifications confer a duty on our country to provide inclusive education to CWDs as well as children with SEN. Our country acceded to the CDE (UNESCO, 1960) in the year 1970, to which no reservation is allowed. This CDE (UNESCO, 1960) proclaims that discrimination in education represents

⁵⁹ UNESCO (1960). *Convention against Discrimination in Education*. Paris: Author. Retrieved 20 August 2023 from www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-against-discrimination-education

a violation of human rights and it prohibits discrimination among pupils during the admission process in educational institutions by means of proper legislation at its article 3(b). Next, the CRC (UN, 1989), ratified by Mauritius in July 1990, was the first UN Convention to explicitly forbid in its article 2 any form of discrimination against a child based on disability. The CRC (UN, 1989) also recognised in its article 23 the special needs of children with disabilities and calls on State Parties to ensure the effective access to education for this vulnerable group of children.

On 13 December 2006, the United Nations adopted the CRPD, ratified by the Republic of Mauritius in January 2010. The right to education of persons with disabilities, including CWDs, is firmly established at article 24 of the CRPD (UN, 2006) calling for appropriate actions by State Parties for CWDs to access to free and inclusive primary, secondary and tertiary education as well as vocational training. However, our country put a reservation in relation to article 24(2)(b) of the CRPD (UN, 2006) stipulating that it has a policy of inclusive education which is being implemented incrementally alongside special education. This implies that, although the vision of achieving inclusive education is there, the Republic of Mauritius still require fundamental legislative, administrative and other changes to make this model of education a reality for all our children.

Of note, as a Member State to the African Union (AU), our country has signed several human rights treaties at the level of the African continent which also relate to the rights of CWDs. As such, Mauritius has ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC; OAU, 1990) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR; OAU, 1981)⁶⁰ on 14 February 1992 and 19 June 1992 respectively. Yet, Mauritius has not yet ratified the Protocol to the ACHPR on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa (AU, 2018)⁶¹.

⁶⁰ Organisation of African Unity (1981). *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*. Nairobi: Author. Retrieved 20 August 2023 from au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36390-treaty-0011_-_african_charter_on_human_and_peoples_rights_e.pdf

⁶¹ African Union (2018). *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa*. Addis Ababa: Author. Retrieved 20 August 2023 from au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36440-treaty-protocol_to_the_achpr_on_the_rights_of_persons_with_disabilities_in_africa_e.pdf

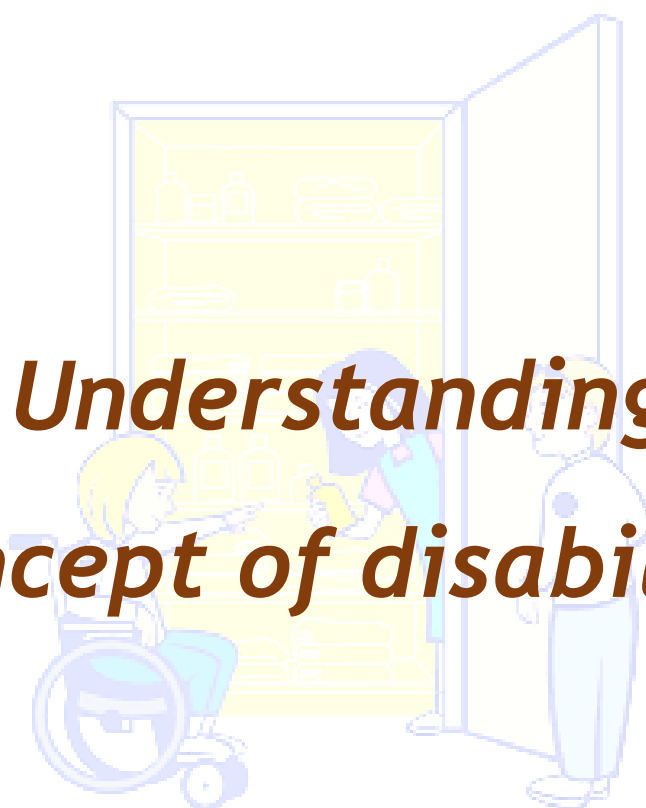
As the Ombudsperson for Children, I have the mandate under the Ombudsperson for Children Act (OCA) 2003 to ensure that the rights, needs and interests of ALL children, including those with disabilities, are given full consideration by public bodies, private authorities, individuals and associations of individuals; to promote the rights and interests of children; and to promote compliance with the CRC (UN, 1989) and the ACRWC (OAU, 1990). According to section 6 of the OCA 2003, I must also, amongst other duties:

- make proposals to the Minister on legislation, policies and practices regarding services to, or the rights of, children;
- 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; and
- 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.

Given the existence of these various human rights treaties regarding persons with disabilities that guarantee the right to inclusive education to all children, especially those with disabilities, and that the Republic of Mauritius has ratified the CDE (UNESCO, 1960), the CRC (UN, 1989) and the CRPD (UN, 2006), I believe that this area requires priority attention from policy makers and legislators to domesticate these international provisions and pave the way to an inclusive education system at all levels. The setting up of the Special Educations Needs Authority (SENA) upon the enactment of the SENA Act 2018 is also an important step towards regulating the quality of special needs education and addressing barriers that limit the access of CWDs to mainstream education.

In the present chapter, I first describe common terminologies used in the sector of disability and a historical overview on the evolution of disability rights. I then focus on the recommendations made by UN treaty bodies to the Republic of Mauritius regarding inclusive education of CWDs. Moreover, I provide information on local policies related to inclusive education, followed by initiatives taken by the OCO to promote a human rights-based model of inclusive education. Finally, I state my general observations and recommendations on how to better protect and promote the right to inclusive education of CWDs.

3.2. Understanding the concept of disability



3.2.1. Common terminologies in the disability sector

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 (UN, 2006) also states that “[p]ersons 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. Those who have been excluded from the system for any reason or have been marginalized due to other social disadvantages have as much a right to be included and enjoy full participation in society” (Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology [METEST], 2017, p.8)⁶².

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)⁶³.

⁶² Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (2017). *Inclusive Education for Children and Youth with Special Needs in Mauritius: Concept to Reality*. Retrieved on 20 August 2023 from education.govmu.org/Documents/educationsector/Documents/Special%20Education%20Needs/SEN_Strategy_2017_Final.pdf

⁶³ UNESCO (2019). *On the road to inclusion*. Paris: Author. Retrieved on 20 August 2023 from unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000372193

Medical Model of Disability

“The Medical Model views disability as a defect within the individual. Disability is an aberration compared to normal traits and characteristics. In order to have a high quality of life, these defects must be cured, fixed, or completely eliminated. Health care and social service professionals have the sole power to correct or modify these conditions.” (Office of Developmental Primary Care, n.d.)⁶⁴.

Social Model of Disability

“This model states that disability is the inability to participate fully in home and community life. The interaction between functional limitations or impairments and physical and social barriers to full participation create disabling environments. The social model distinguishes between disabilities and impairments. Disabilities are restrictions imposed by society. Impairments are the effects of any given condition. The solution, according to this model, lies not in fixing the person, but in changing our society” (Office of Developmental Primary Care, n.d.).

Human Rights Model of Disability

The human rights model, is based on basic human rights principles. It recognises that (Disability Advocacy Resource Unit, 2021)⁶⁵:

- *Disability is a natural part of human diversity that must be respected and supported in all its forms;*
- *People with disability have the same rights as everyone else in society; [and]*
- *Impairment must not be used as an excuse to deny or restrict people’s rights.*

While the social model of disability is more concerned with removing physical and social barriers to the full participation of person with disabilities (PWDs) in society, the human rights model also acknowledges the impact of impairment in the lives of PWDs and the State’s obligations to provide them with the necessary support.

⁶⁴ Office of Developmental Primary Care (n.d.). *Medical and Social Models of Disability*. Retrieved 06 September 2023 from odpc.ucsf.edu/clinical/patient-centered-care/medical-and-social-models-of-disability

⁶⁵ Disability Advocacy Resource Unit (2021). *Human Rights model of disability*. Retrieved 06 September 2023 from www.daru.org.au/?s=human+rights+model

A Case Example to differentiate among the Medical, Social and Human Rights Models of Disability

Case Example

The parents of Sasha, a 13-year-old mainstream school student with urinary incontinence, is told by the school management that, due to limited financial resources, they cannot provide an individual carer to meet their daughter's needs in class. The management recommends that Sasha is transferred to a Special Education Needs (SEN) School.

The Medical Model of Disability says...

Sasha's urinary incontinence is an inherent problem to her for which she requires medical treatment. Until she is cured, she cannot attend a mainstream school and her education can only be continued in a SEN School.

The Social Model of Disability says...

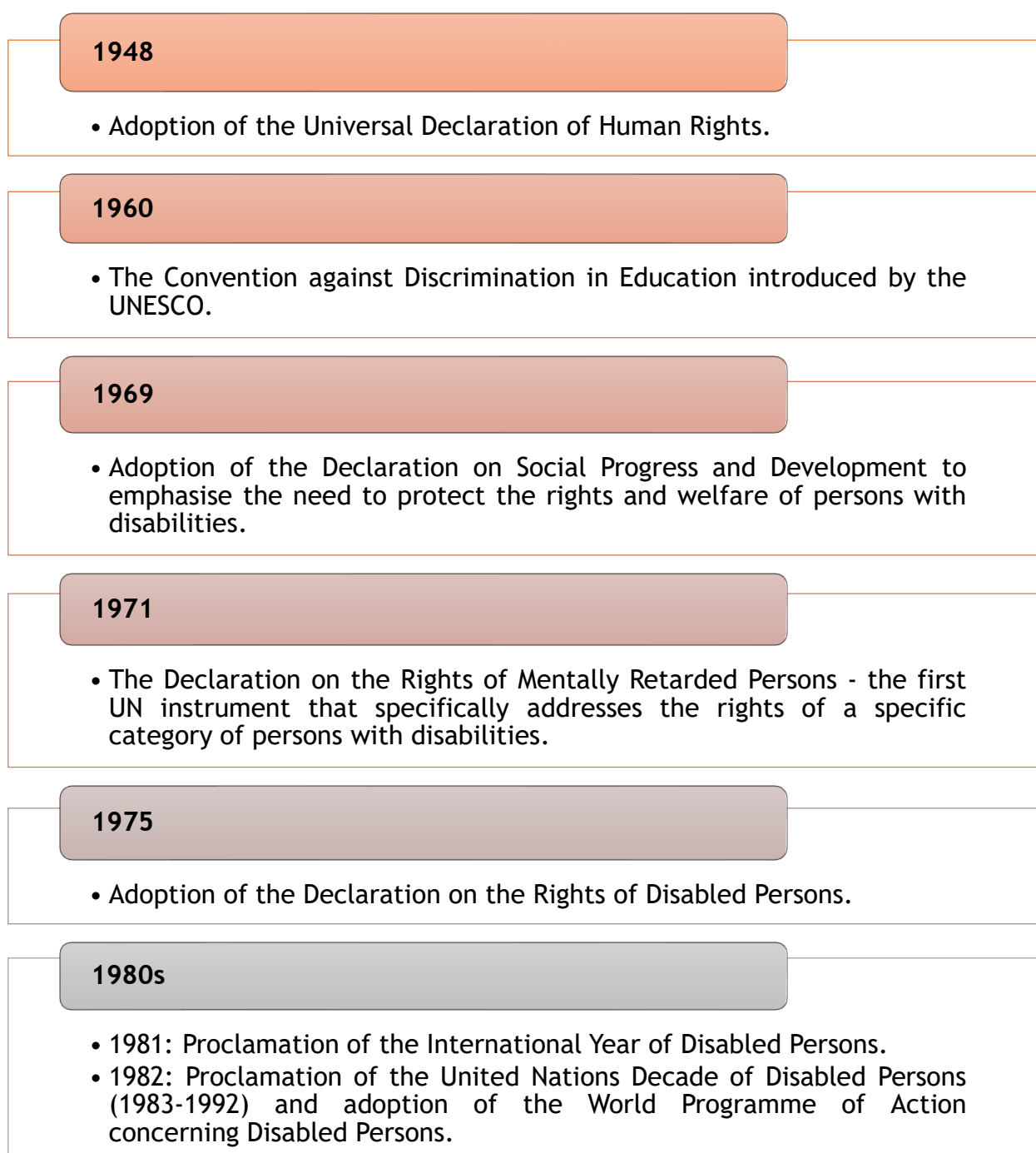
Although Sasha has an impairment (urinary incontinence), the school or education authority bears the responsibility to provide the necessary accommodation to this student so that she could continue her education within the mainstream school.

The Human Rights Model of Disability says...

Sasha has rights to education on an equal basis with all her other schoolmates and to express her views on matters concerning her education. She needs to be provided with the necessary support for her impairment at school while tackling all physical, social and attitudinal barriers that can disrupt her schooling. All possible efforts must be made by the parents, school and education authority to uphold the rights of Sasha and act in her best interests.

3.2.2. Disability rights: A historical overview

Since the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December 1948 whose article 2 states that “[e]veryone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind”, the international community has introduced several tools to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society. The historical timeline provided in the diagram below highlights the main actions by the UN to that effect:



1989

- Adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - article 2 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and article 23 is dedicated to children with disabilities.

1993

- Adoption of the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.
- A Special Rapporteur on Disability under the Commission for Social Development appointed.

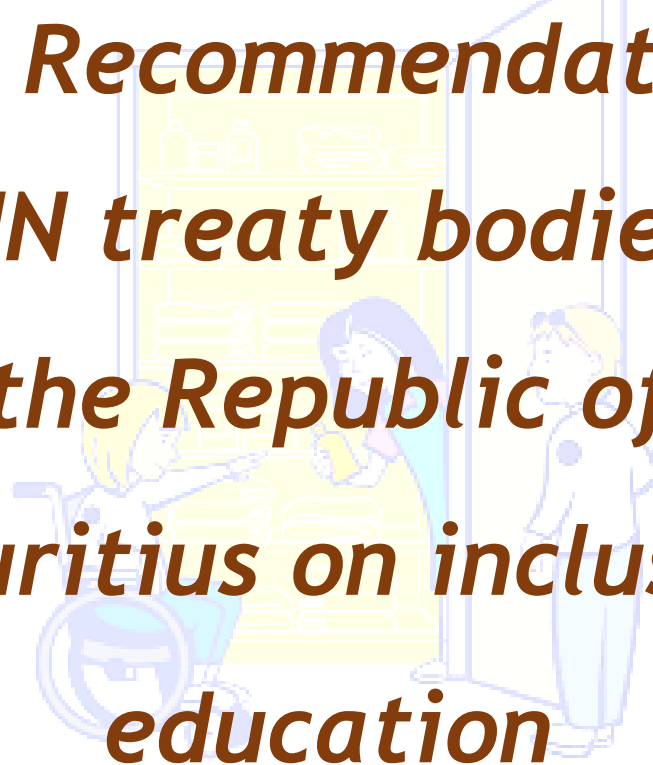
2006

- Adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

2015

- Adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - persons with disabilities are specifically included under five SDGs and seven targets.

Referring to the timeline above, it can be noted that the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities has remained of international importance from the onset of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, gaining momentum in the 1970s, bearing its own Convention in 2006, and currently an undeniable part of global sustainable development. The rights of children with disabilities (CWDs) are also a core component of the CRC (UN, 1989), and promoting the right to inclusive education of CWDs using a human rights-based approach forms part of my responsibility as the Ombudsperson for Children under the OCA 2003. I encourage policy makers and relevant stakeholders to review these international instruments in view to enabling a paradigm shift from the medical to the human rights-based model of disability in our society.

A faint, light blue illustration of a classroom scene is visible in the background. It shows a teacher standing and talking to a group of children. One child is in a wheelchair, and another is using a white cane. There are bookshelves filled with books in the background.

***3.3. Recommendations
of UN treaty bodies to
the Republic of
Mauritius on inclusive
education***

Having ratified the CRPD (UN, 2006) and the CRC (UN, 1989), the Republic of Mauritius has the duty as a Member State to present periodic reports at specified intervals to their respective UN treaty bodies, namely the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. In the current subsection, I cite the concerns and recommendations made to the Republic of Mauritius in relation to children with disabilities and their right to education by these two UN Committees. This can help us better understand the current gaps in our system relative to these Conventions (i.e., the CRPD and the CRC) and how these could be filled.

3.3.1. Concluding Observations on Mauritius of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2015)

In its Concluding Observations on the initial report of Mauritius, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2015)⁶⁶ stated the following with regards to children with disabilities at its paragraphs 13 and 14, and on the right to education of these children at paragraphs 33 and 34:

Children with disabilities (art. 7)

13. The Committee shares the concern expressed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (see CRC/C/MUS/CO/3-5, para. 49)⁶⁷ that the State party gives precedence to an integrative approach instead of eliminating the physical, socioeconomic and cultural barriers that prevent their full inclusion in schools and in society. The Committee is also concerned about the overreliance of the State party on non-governmental organizations to provide specialized services to children with disabilities without the necessary support, monitoring and regulatory guidance for these organizations; the insufficient measures to prevent the placement of children

⁶⁶ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2015). *Concluding observations on the initial report of Mauritius*. Geneva: Author. Retrieved 10 September 2023 from documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/222/66/PDF/G1522266.pdf?OpenElement

⁶⁷ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2015). *Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Mauritius*. Retrieved 03 July 2023 from documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/037/17/PDF/G1503717.pdf?OpenElement

with disabilities in “centres de sauvegarde” (“abris des enfants en détresse”) and the rejection and stigmatization faced by these children.

14. The Committee recommends that the State party take effective measures to ensure the provision of quality inclusive services for boys and girls with disabilities both in the public and private sectors, in compliance with the Convention, and allocate the necessary resources to these services. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that the State party ensure that non-governmental organization-run programmes be regulated and closely supervised and that staff of such organizations undergo specific monitoring. The Committee also recommends that the State party amend the national children’s policy and the national child protection strategy with a view to incorporating targeted measures for children with disabilities to enjoy their rights on an equal basis with other children.

Education (art. 24)

33. The Committee is concerned about the slow implementation of the 2006 official policy on inclusive education, resulting in the education system remaining mostly segregated and many children with disabilities being completely deprived of any form of education. The Committee is also concerned about clause 11 of the draft disability bill, which provides for a general exception to inclusive education and for the planned creation of 14 “integrated” units in mainstream schools, which would prolong the segregation of pupils and delay the creation of a fully inclusive school. The Committee is further concerned about children with disabilities aged 2 or 3 years being enrolled in nongovernmental organization-run specialized schools, especially pupils with sensory disabilities, thus preventing from the very beginning their inclusion in mainstream schools. The Committee is concerned about pupils with disabilities who do not have access to public transport in rural areas without reimbursement for other means of transport being covered.

34. The Committee recommends that the State party reconsider clause 11 of the draft disability bill and renounce to the creation of integrated units in schools, and instead promptly engage in the creation of a fully funded and inclusive quality

education system while ensuring that those who have been deprived of education can access lifelong education and vocational training. The State party should provide tailored education plans to all students with disabilities, mandatory pre-service and in-service specific training to all teachers on inclusive education, including assistive devices, individual support in classrooms, accessible educational materials and curricula, and accessible transport, equipment and school environments, with the corresponding budget allocations. The State party should also promote the enrolment of all children with disabilities in quality inclusive education.

3.3.2. Concluding Observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Mauritius of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023)

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023a)⁶⁸ recently presented in February 2023 its Concluding Observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports submitted by the Republic of Mauritius. It also outlined its concerns and recommendations in relation to children with disabilities in our country as quoted below (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2023a, section G, paras.31-32):

G. Children with disabilities (art.3)

31. The Committee welcomes the particular focus given to children with disabilities in the Children’s Act 2020 and the Children’s Court Act 2020. However, the Committee is concerned about:

(a) The lack of a legal framework based on the human rights model of disability to advance the rights of children with disabilities;

⁶⁸ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023a). *Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Mauritius*. Retrieved 03 July 2023 from digitallibrary.un.org/record/4003964

(b) Negative attitudes and discrimination against children with disabilities that hamper access to family support, education, health and social services and participation in matters concerning them;

(c) The lack of social and community-based services and family support, as well as lack of clarity and accessibility on receiving basic invalidity pension and carer's allowance, to enable parents to care for their children;

(d) The insufficient number of inclusive schools resulting in a disproportionate number of children with disabilities leaving school without a certificate;

(e) The lack of access to early screening and intervention with regard to developmental disabilities.

32. Recalling its general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee urges the State party to adopt **a human rights-based model of disability**, set up a comprehensive strategy for the inclusion of children with disabilities and

(a) Urgently finalize the Protection and Welfare of Persons with Disabilities Bill, ensuring meaningful consultation of children with disabilities in developing legislation grounded on a human rights-based approach to disability and which is responsive to protecting and promoting the rights of children with disabilities;

(b) Strengthen training for all relevant professionals engaging with and for children, including teachers, health care providers, social workers and justice sector personnel, on the rights of children with disabilities, including their right to express their views on matters affecting them and have their views taken into account;

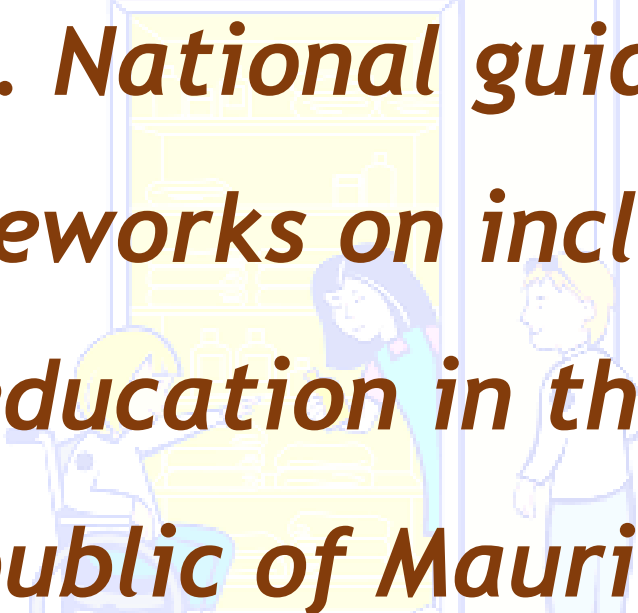
(c) Strengthen implementation of the Special Education Needs Authority Act 2018, to ensure that all children with disabilities have access to inclusive

education in mainstream schools, that schools are equipped with specialized teachers and professionals providing individual support, accessible infrastructure and teaching materials adapted to the needs of children with disabilities;

(d) Strengthen support for the parents of children with disabilities and ensure the right of those children to grow up in their family environment, including by increasing the availability of early care, home nursing and relief services, providing timely and adequate socioeconomic support to all children with disabilities and improving outreach to parents about the services available;

(e) Assess the impact of the Community Based Rehabilitation programmes for persons with disabilities, particularly evaluating the reach of and appropriateness of health and rehabilitation services delivered to children with disabilities and revise the programmes accordingly.

It is important that due consideration is given to these recommendations by all relevant stakeholders to align with international obligations and to ensure that children with disabilities are not discriminated within our country owing to inadequate policies, lack of a disability-specific legislative framework and segregatory attitudes. The next subsection takes stock of the available national frameworks that have so far been produced by the local education authority in view of making inclusive education a reality in our country.



3.4. National guiding frameworks on inclusive education in the Republic of Mauritius

3.4.1. Special Education Needs and Inclusive Education in Mauritius: The Policy and Strategy Document (2006)

In March 2006, the then Ministry of Education and Human Resources (MEHR; 2006)⁶⁹ had published a policy and strategy document with a focus on understanding the special education needs of children with disabilities and determining the provisions needed for the inclusion of these children in the general educational system through appropriate services, in partnership with relevant governmental bodies and NGOs. The shared vision regarding the education of children with special needs was based on the following **general policy guidelines** (MEHR, 2006, p.8):

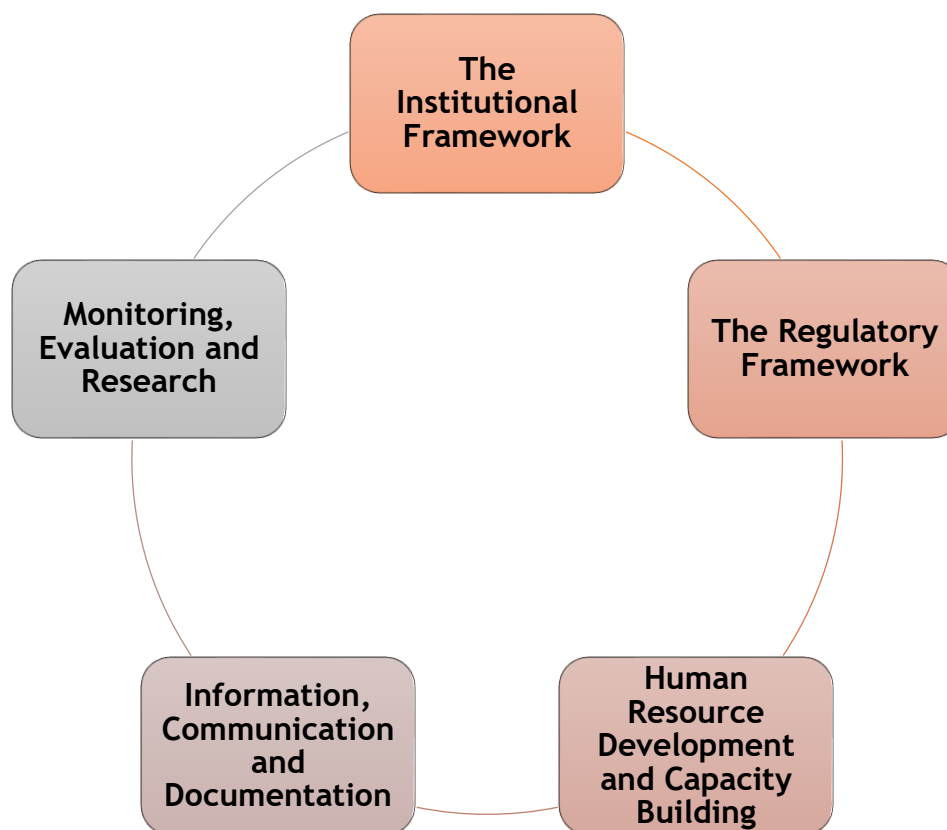
- i. Parity and Equity regarding quality educational services.*
- ii. Inclusion and integration of all children in our educational system.*
- iii. Inter-sectoral partnership with all relevant Ministries, private sector and parents for collaborative holistic services.*

The MEHR (2006, p.8) more specifically aimed to create an inclusive education system through a rights-based approach, structured systems meeting the individualised needs of children and multi-disciplinary school services and environments, as quoted below:

- i. Access to education and recognition of our children with special educational needs having the same right and enjoying equality of education opportunities as their counterparts.*
- ii. Relevance and Quality through the setting-up of structured systems aimed at meeting each child's needs.*
- iii. Achievement in terms of teaching and learning as well as provision of support services within the classroom and the school through the collaboration of all school personnel and the multi-disciplinary team: educational, social, psychological, therapeutic and medical.*

⁶⁹ Ministry of Education and Human Resources (2006). *Special Education Needs and Inclusive Education in Mauritius: The Policy and Strategy Document*. Retrieved 10 September 2023 from planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/mauritius_inclusive_education_policy.pdf

This policy and strategy document also came up with different key lines of actions as categorised under its **five strategy directions** to help the country advance towards an inclusive education system.



These five strategy directions are quoted below (MEHR, 2006, pp.9-10):

I. The Institutional Framework

The Special Education Needs Unit will operate within a proper institutional framework to

- *Co-ordinate all existing Special Education Needs schools or specialised schools as known in Mauritius.*
- *Facilitate provision of services, starting with the early years of development and beyond.*
- *Network both at local and international levels for inter-ministerial and organisations' collaboration.*
- *Work with the school community, stakeholders and parents.*

- *Set up a user-friendly mechanism such as a National Special Education Needs Resource Centre that will act as a one-stop-shop providing various services at one premise.*

II. The Regulatory Framework

A regulatory framework will be established with a view to

- *Ensuring standard quality through proper mandatory norms in order to safeguard the holistic development of the child.*
- *Facilitating registration of existing Special Education Needs schools.*
- *Upgrading existing services.*
- *Formulating recommendations for entitlement to grants.*

III. Human Resource Development and Capacity Building

The Special Education Needs Unit will

- *Develop human resources for special needs education.*
- *Support special learning skills in the field of disabilities through in-service and immersion courses.*
- *Facilitate, through the proper institution, standard pre-service training to pre-primary and primary school teachers.*
- *Help to develop and evolve a component related to disabilities and severe learning difficulties as well as detection and appropriate pedagogical approach.*
- *Facilitate specialisation in a specific field of disability or learning difficulty.*

IV. Information, Communication and Documentation

To start this special education needs programme, actions will be geared towards

- *On-going information, communication and documentation.*
- *Campaigns to inform the public, parents and all stakeholders.*
- *Information compiled in a Directory of services and setting up of an Information Desk.*
- *Database and evaluation with the aim of improving the special educational needs sector.*

V. Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

Key actions will be in

- *Setting up a Special Education Needs Intervention Team with medical and para-medical personnel.*
- *Recruiting, training or contracting personnel for detection and early screening.*
- *Developing an evaluation system with indicators and a referral system aiming at giving each child the best possible opportunities for his/her integrated development, protection and education.*

3.4.2. Inclusive Education for Children and Youth with Special Needs in Mauritius: Concept to Reality (2017)

In the National Budget Speech of 2017-2018 (Republic of Mauritius, 2017, p.43)⁷⁰, it was announced that “*a new Strategy Paper for the Special Education Needs will be developed and an authority will be set up to harmonise and promote policies for that sector*”. Following the 2006 policy and strategy document of the then MEHR (2006), the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (METEST)⁷¹ brought forward a new policy framework on inclusive education for children and youth with special needs in Mauritius in 2017.

This framework received the Government’s approval in October of the same year of its publication. It was designed to be in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on achieving quality education for all and to advocate for a shift from the social model to a human rights model of disability for learners with SEN. In the current subsection, the main highlights of this publication are summarised to get a better understanding of the conceptual framework, goals and strategies of this policy.

⁷⁰ Republic of Mauritius (2017). Budget Speech 2017-2018: Rising to the challenge of our ambitions. Mauritius: Author. Retrieved 10 September 2023 from edbmauritius.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2017_18budgetspeech.pdf

⁷¹ Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (2017). *Inclusive Education for Children and Youth with Special Needs in Mauritius: Concept to Reality*. Retrieved on 20 August 2023 from education.govmu.org/Documents/educationsector/Documents/Special%20Education%20Needs/SEN_Strategy_2017_Final.pdf

Through this paper, the Government reiterated its commitment to achieve an inclusive education system for all (METEST, 2017, p.3) and listed the various international agreements that it had adhered to in this area:

- *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989);*
- *Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (1990);*
- *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994);*
- *Dakar Framework for Action (Dakar World Education Conference, UNESCO 2000);*
- *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).*

The **guiding principles** of this policy (METEST, 2017, p.11) were:

- *Ensuring Right to education as a human right;*
- *Sustaining the efforts towards the elimination of barriers in the education system;*
- *Designing, developing and implementing a system of Inclusive Education;*
- *Building the professional capacity of the workforce and stakeholders;*
- *Strengthening and empowering support service providers;*
- *Infusing flexibility and elasticity in curriculum and assessment to take on board the diversity of learning needs;*
- *Consolidating network, communication, partnership and collaboration.*

The **vision, mission and goal** of this strategy paper (METEST, 2017, p.12) were defined as follows:

- ***Vision:*** *Inclusionary and empowerment measures for all persons with disabilities today for an inclusive society tomorrow.*
- ***Mission:*** *To achieve inclusion by creating and providing a conducive environment to ALL learners that ensures equal access to relevant and quality education and training.*
- ***Goal:*** *Maximize and optimize inclusive practices to facilitate and achieve inclusion of ALL learners with Special Education Needs (SEN), in the Republic of Mauritius, by 2030.*

Furthermore, the eight **objectives** of this policy were to (METEST, 2017, p.13):

1. *Identify and classify the learning needs of children with disabilities;*
2. *Provide for appropriate placement to learners with special needs either in inclusive or special settings;*
3. *Promote the culture of inclusiveness in All schools by providing an environment free from physical, psycho-social, attitudinal barriers;*
4. *Develop a unified system of inclusive education for learners in formal and non-formal settings;*
5. *Establish a reciprocal relationship between access and quality of inclusive education and training for children with special needs;*
6. *Provide holistic education as a Right to all learners with special needs;*
7. *Introduce flexibility, elasticity in curriculum through adaptation, modification, substitution, accommodation and acceleration to address the diverse needs of learners, including talented and gifted;*
8. *Enrich and strengthen all training programs for professionals involved in inclusion of children with special learning needs.*

A Technical Committee of the METEST (2017, p. 18) elaborated a list of **eight categories of disabilities**, as shown below, on which the strategies of the policy paper were based:

1. *Physical Disability (mobility problems, spinal cord injuries, spina bifida, hemiplegia, cerebral palsy)*
2. *Social, emotional and behavioural disturbance (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, antisocial personality disorders)*
3. *Intellectual and neurological impairments (Down syndrome, William syndrome, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, epilepsy)*
4. *Visual Impairment*
5. *Hearing Impairment*
6. *Multiple disabilities (skeletal deformities, sensory disorders, seizure disorders)*
7. *Other health-related disabilities (cancer, Lyme's disease, lupus, multiple sclerosis)*
8. *Autism Spectrum Disorder (autism, Asperger's syndrome, pervasive developmental disorders)*

The publication highlighted the **affirmative actions taken by the METEST prior to 2017** to improve services for children with disabilities and those with SEN (METEST, 2017). These included, among others:

- i. Setting up of 13 SEN Integrated Units on the premises of Government primary schools;
- ii. Provision of barrier-free access with schools being retrofitted with ramps in a phased manner;
- iii. Development of a set of norms and standards in consultation with all NGOs in 2014 for all SEN Schools;
- iv. Delivery of various courses for Teachers working in SEN schools;
- v. Classification of disabilities into eight categories to address the diverse needs of children with disabilities;
- vi. Full operationalisation of five Special Education Needs Resource and Development Centres (SENTRDCs) in collaboration with four NGOs registered with the METEST, while two others were expected to be open by 2018;
- vii. Provision of financial support in the form of a Grant-in-Aid (GIA) to meet the recurring costs of registered SEN schools; and
- viii. Creation of a Directorate of Health and Wellness at the METEST responsible for health promotion, rehabilitation measures and provision of therapies to learners with or without disabilities from the primary to the tertiary education levels.

However, the METEST (2017) acknowledged that, despite these actions, children with disabilities were still facing marginalisation and attitudinal barriers, and they called for a significant conceptual shift based on the following two assertions (Ibid., 2017, p. 21):

- *All children have the potential to learn, given the necessary support.*
- *Lack of attention to recognise, accommodate and address the diverse range of learning needs results in a breakdown of learning.*

Learning needs of children being a vast domain, the policy also advanced **a classification of children with disabilities according to their learning needs** as provided in the table on the following page (METEST, 2017, p.22):

CATEGORY	LEARNING NEEDS
Category I: Mild/ Moderate	Includes children with mild/moderate learning needs including the gifted and talented who can study in a general class with some special inputs [45% of CWD belong to this category]
Category II: Moderate	Children with mild and moderate disabilities who need counseling services from time to time can study in general mainstream class [30% CWD come in this category]
Category III: Severe	Children with moderate/severe disabilities, needing resource assistance including corrective aids and periodical help in academic areas will study in Special Schools [15% CWD can be classified in this category]
Category IV: Severe/ Profound	Children with severe/profound disabilities who require direct attention from special teachers can be placed in Special schools [10% of disabled children come under this category]
Children from the Non-Formal sector who remained unidentified would be included in the system through identification, assessment and appropriate placement.	

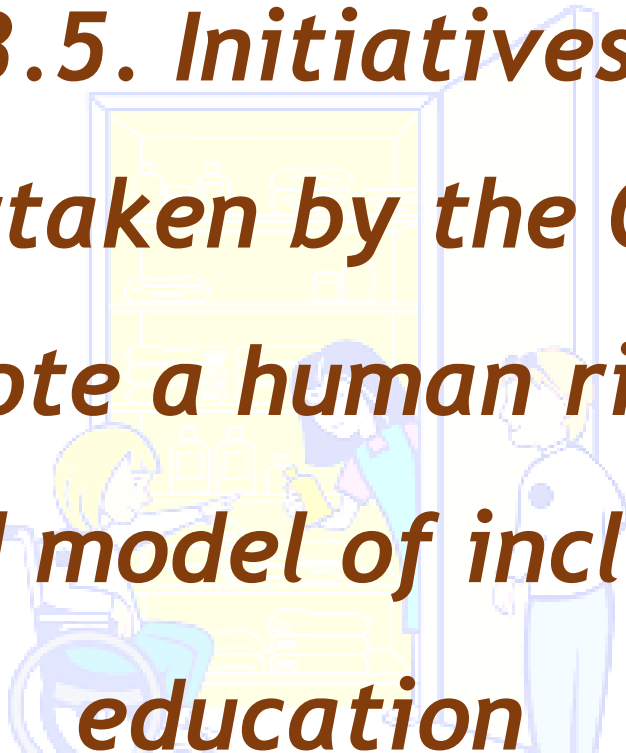
Finally, **eight strategic goals** were proposed by the METEST (2017), namely:

- **Strategy Goal 1:** Legal Framework and Human Rights
- **Strategy Goal 2:** Establish Regulatory, Advisory, Monitoring and Research Bodies
- **Strategy Goal 3:** Screening, Identification and Assessment of Learning Needs
- **Strategy Goal 4:** Curriculum, Assessment, Evaluation and Placement
- **Strategy Goal 5:** Capacity Building of Professionals
- **Strategy Goal 6:** Creation, Provision and Strengthening of Support Service
- **Strategy Goal 7:** Preparation for Life through Holistic Education
- **Strategy Goal 8:** Advocacy, Partnership and Empowerment

A full extract of these strategic goals and their respective key actions is provided in Appendix B for further reading. These guidelines appear to be promising towards building

an inclusive education system based on the human rights-based model of disability. Adequate resources must continually be earmarked for their application to create the necessary shift and readiness in our education system to welcome any child within the same school community irrespective of their differences, especially those on the ground of disability.

3.5. Initiatives undertaken by the OC to promote a human rights-based model of inclusive education

A faint, light blue illustration of a classroom scene is visible in the background. It shows a teacher standing and interacting with a group of children. One child is seated in a wheelchair, and another child is standing. The scene is set within a yellow rectangular frame that has a slightly 3D effect.

Referring to the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023a; see subsection 3.3.2 in the present chapter), they recommended to our country to adopt a human rights-based model of disability which is responsive in protecting and promoting the rights of children with disabilities. Following this recommendation, I, as the Ombudsperson for Children (OC), organised **awareness-raising workshops and interactive sessions in Mauritius and Rodrigues** on the said model with various stakeholders engaged in the education of children with disabilities and those with special education needs. As shown in the diagram below, these included:



More details on the above-mentioned initiatives are provided in the subsections 3.5.1 to 3.5.4 below.

3.5.1. Workshop with SEN Educators and Managers in Rodrigues

During my mission to Rodrigues in March 2023, I organised a one-day workshop at the Conference Hall, Villa Koki Boner, Cotton Bay, with Educators and Managers from SEN schools run by NGOs as well as from Integrated Units in primary schools of the Island on 03 March 2023. It was an opportunity to discuss with the participants on the human rights-based model of disability and demonstrate practical activities which could be used by the participants to better respond to the needs of children with disabilities and SEN at their

respective schools. The workshop was preceded by visits to all SEN schools run by NGOs and the Integrated Units of three Roman Catholic Education Authority (RCEA) Primary Schools. Subsection 4.3.3 of the current report provides an illustrative overview of the visits and the one-day workshop carried out in Rodrigues.

3.5.2. Two-day workshop on inclusive education based on the Western Australian model

In the context of the project entitled ‘Promoting and Protecting Rights of Vulnerable Children in the Republic of Mauritius’, funded by the European Union and implemented by the Ombudsperson for Children’s Office (OCO), I invited two experts from Western Australia in the field of inclusive education to Mauritius from 21 to 26 May 2023 namely, Mr. Stuart Percival, Assistant Executive Director, Professional Capability, Department of Education, Statewide Services, and Dr. Catherine Ann Kapiteyn, Principal Advisor, Leadership Institute, Statewide Services. My Office organised a two-day workshop on inclusive education facilitated by Mr. Percival and Dr. Kapiteyn which was attended by different local professionals in the fields of SEN from NGOs, governmental agencies and educational institutions.

The aim of this workshop was to serve as an interactive learning platform to share good practices between the Mauritian and Western Australian education systems and discuss ideas on improving teaching quality and moving towards a more inclusive education system. The two experts provided some **interesting facts about the Australian education system**, as follows:

- Education is compulsory until 16 years old.
- Sixteen and 17-year-olds must be enrolled in a school or training organisation, be employed, or be in a combination of school, training or employment programmes.
- After Year 10, students have the option to study at a technical college or continue through to Year 12 with vocational courses or university entrance courses.

They also highlighted sections 22(1, 2 & 2A) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 of Australia, which provide for **prohibitions on educational authorities against discriminating any person on the ground of disability** in admission processes, access to education and curriculum design, as quoted below:

(1) It is unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a person on the ground of the person's disability:

(a) by refusing or failing to accept the person's application for admission as a student; or

(b) in the terms or conditions on which it is prepared to admit the person as a student.

(2) It is unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a student on the ground of the student's disability:

(a) by denying the student access, or limiting the student's access, to any benefit provided by the educational authority; or

(b) by expelling the student; or

(c) by subjecting the student to any other detriment.

(2A) It is unlawful for an education provider to discriminate against a person on the ground of the person's disability:

(a) by developing curricula or training courses having a content that will either exclude the person from participation, or subject the person to any other detriment; or

(b) by accrediting curricula or training courses having such a content.

Moreover, the Australian experts pointed out that more than 60,000 children were identified in Western Australian Government schools as having a diagnosed or imputed⁷² disability. These children attend two types of schools:

⁷² An imputed disability is an undiagnosed disability the school team considers a student to have that is having a functional impact on their learning (Source: www.nccd.edu.au/tools/imputing-disability-nccd#:~:text=An%20imputed%20disability%20is%20an,functional%20impact%20on%20their%20learning.).

1) Mainstream schools:

- Attended by 92 per cent of children identified with a diagnosed or imputed disability;
- 828 mainstream schools;
- 18 Endorsed Education Support Programs integrated into mainstream school sites under the management of the mainstream School Principal;
- 16 Specialist Learning Programs for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), integrated into 8 Primary and 8 Secondary schools under the management of the mainstream School Principal; and
- 7 Engagement Centres that are co-located on mainstream school sites.

2) Segregated schools:

- Attended by 8 per cent of children identified with a diagnosed or imputed disability;
- 12 Education Support Schools;
- 47 Education Support Centres;
- 5 Language Development Centres;
- 8 Engagement Centres that are not located on mainstream school sites; and
- 4 Early Intensive Intervention Programs for students with ASD in Kindergarten and Pre-primary schools.
- 2 Special Educational Needs Schools and Sensory Early Childhood Services.

Since 2012, Western Australian inclusive education system has been using a new model of service delivery in the form of **Schools of Special Educational Needs (SSEN)**. The SSEN should not be confused with SEN schools delivering educational services to CWDs in physical attendance. Instead, the SSEN act like specialised educational and resource centres employing professionals who can deliver onsite specialised services to children with diagnosed or imputed disabilities upon the request of any mainstream school. There are 4 different SSENs in Western Australia, namely:

- **SSEN Disability:** Provides support services to CWDs with diagnosed or imputed disabilities for the effective delivery of classroom programmes;

- **SSEN Sensory:** Gives specialised educational support to children with hearing and visual impairments;
- **SSEN Medical and Mental Health:** Delivers specialised educational support to facilitate the participation of children with medical conditions, intellectual impairments, and mental illness in their enrolled mainstream schools; and
- **SSEN Behaviour and Engagement:** Caters for specialised educational support to children in mainstream schools who manifest complex behaviour.

Furthermore, the Australian facilitators explained that the Western Australian Inclusive Education Model used a guiding tool to improve the efficiency of teachers in public schools, entitled '**Teaching for Impact**', developed by the Department of Education of the Government of Western Australia. This framework is based on seven premises as listed below:

1. Effective teachers believe they can unlock the learning potential of every student.
2. Effective teachers believe they have the responsibility to evaluate the impact of their practice and seek to improve.
3. Effective teachers believe in **inclusion and value student diversity**.
4. Effective teachers believe **student wellbeing** and **engagement** are essential to student achievement.
5. Effective teachers believe they share the responsibility for student success with schools, families and the broader community.
6. Effective teachers believe in equity and reconciliation.
7. Effective teachers believe in preparing students to become their own teachers and successful life-long learners.

Another important aspect elaborated during the workshop was complex behaviour among children with disabilities. The two Australian professionals explained that the standard Student Behaviour Policy in public schools does not apply to students with disability for whom behaviour may be a symptom or manifestation of the disability. Hence, each school develops, implements and monitors **a whole-school plan to support positive student behaviour**. Mainstream School Principals are also required to provide individual student behaviour support. Such support includes monitoring students whose behaviour needs are

not adequately met by the whole-school support plan; soliciting advice from the staff of Regional and Statewide Services; liaising with external agencies or experts as required; interviewing the student and his/her parents to inform the personalised behaviour support plan; and conducting reviews to enhance behaviour supports for students and their outcomes.

Of note, Australian school programmes use several curricular tools to help students manage their feelings through effective social emotional learning in a fun way. One very popular tool being employed is known as **'The Zones of Regulation'**, a curriculum developed in 2011 by Leah Kuypers⁷³, an American Occupational Therapist and Autism Resource Specialist. This method consists of four coloured zones representing a set of emotions each, as provided below:

- The 'Red Zone': Feelings such as overjoyed, elated, panicked, angry, or terrified;
- The 'Blue Zone': Feelings such as sadness, tiredness, boredom and sickness;
- The 'Yellow Zone': Emotions such as worried, frustrated, silly, or excited; and
- The 'Green Zone': Emotions such as happiness, focus, calmness and pride.

'The Zones of Regulation' provides a framework to teachers and students to identify their emotions and use different techniques adapted for each coloured zone to regulate their feelings and improve their wellbeing and educational outcomes.

Overall, it was noted that there are significant differences between the legal and instrumental frameworks for the right to education of children with disabilities (CWDs) in the Republic of Mauritius and Western Australia. The right to inclusive education of CWDs and its parameters are not explicitly stated under Mauritian Law. I believe that the Australian education system can serve as a model in our country's progress towards creating an inclusive education system for all children with disabilities and SEN. The best interests of CWDs and children with SEN deserve to be at the centre of policy changes, law reforms and educational system restructuring in this direction.

⁷³ More information on The Zones of Regulation can be found on the following website: zonesofregulation.com/about/

3.5.3. Two-day working session with members of the SENA

I conducted a two-day working session on 11 and 12 July 2023 with members and inspectors of the SENA to discuss on the local SEN sector. The aim of this meeting was to take stock of the present situation in the SEN sector, and its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). It was also an opportunity to discuss about the role and functions of the SENA and the model of disability being implemented. The outcome of the working session was compiled in a SWOT analysis on the SEN sector as shown below:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The setting up of the SENA. • The existence of the SEN Unit within the METEST. • The setting up of SENRDCs. • The presence of SEN schools across the island. • Parents do send their children to SEN schools. • SEN schools employ educators and carers. • The MIE offers basic training to SEN educators. • Three primary schools in Rodrigues have implemented inclusive education. • The Government is investing into the SEN sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEN schools are fee-paying institutions. • SEN schools are not well structured. • Most SEN educators and carers only have basic training. • The physical structure of SEN schools is not appropriate. • Classes are arranged like traditional classrooms with lack of space. • SEN schools are not well equipped. • SEN educators and carers are not well paid. • A lack of vision on what we want to achieve for SEN pupils. • A shortage of qualified professionals in the country to work in the sector. • The medical model of disability still prevails in schools.

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SENRDCs could be converted to regional hubs, where training in SEN is provided to educators, resources are made available as reference or on loan to SEN schools, and parental education sessions are conducted, among others. • SENRDCs could empower mainstream educators in dealing with children with SEN. • The MIE could propose SEN as a specialisation to mainstream educators. • The three RCEA schools in Rodrigues could be supported to become pilot schools for inclusive education and the same model could be replicated in Mauritius in schools where space is available to set up additional facilities. • The University of Mauritius could consider to offer postgraduate degrees in speech therapy and occupational therapy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a separate authority of its own (i.e., the SENA), the SEN sector might be perceived as a segregated sector, hence hindering the inclusiveness process. • The sustained operation of SEN schools cannot be guaranteed in the long term due to lack of funding and risks of closures. • The turnover of SEN educators and carers could be problematic as these persons might be attracted to sectors where they could be better paid. • There could be resistance from SEN schools to adopt inclusive education practices as their schools might cease to operate. • Negative mindsets or attitudes on inclusive education of educators, parents and other stakeholders could hinder its implementation. • The costs of training as a speech or occupational therapist could be very high abroad.

While formulating the above-listed points, interesting discussions and debates arose at the working session among the present stakeholders. As the OC, I stressed upon the fact that the medical approach to disability still prevails in our educational system. One example

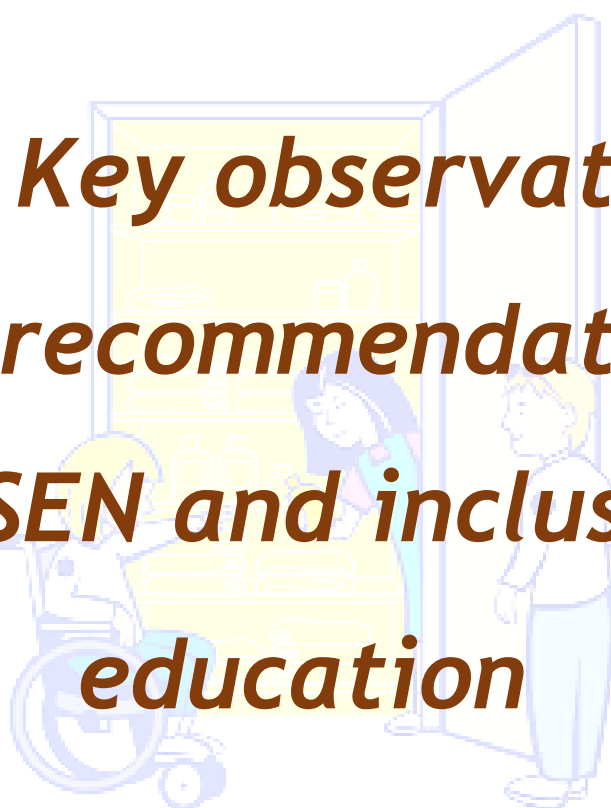
can be found in section 2.3 of the Norms and Standards for SEN Institutions published by the SENA (2021)⁷⁴ regarding admission to a SEN institution, which states that: “*All learners admitted to a SEN Institution should have a medical certificate attesting their disability and an assessment report from the multidisciplinary team of the SENA, detailing their disability*”. I think that the requirement of a medical certificate to certify a disability locates the ‘problem’ more within the child, rather than an interaction between the child’s impairment and the related social and environmental factors.

3.5.4. Two-day workshop on the rights of children with disabilities in the African Context

Two African experts in human rights and the African Human Rights System, Professor Nkatha Murungi and Ms Dianah Msipa, from the Centre for Human Rights of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, were invited by my Office, under our project on ‘Promoting and Protecting Rights of Vulnerable Children in the Republic of Mauritius’ funded by the European Union, to raise the awareness of key local actors in the fields of SEN and disability rights including disability activists and representatives from SENA, LRC, Office of the DPP, the MIE, the RCEA, SeDEC and NGOs. A two-day workshop was organised on 24 and 25 July 2023 at the Royal Green and Wellness Resort, Moka, on ‘The rights of children with disabilities in the African Human Rights System’. Within the frameworks of regional and international instruments, the two experts discussed several areas such as terminologies in disability, attitudinal barriers, and disability rights education, among others. An illustrative representation of this initiative is available in subsection 4.2 of the present report.

⁷⁴ Special Education Needs Authority (2021). *Norms and Standards for Special Education Needs Institutions*. Mauritius: Author.

3.6. Key observations and recommendations on SEN and inclusive education



3.6.1. Key observations

I made the following observations based on my visits to all SEN schools and Integrated Units in Mauritius and Rodrigues and from discussions with members of the SENA and other key stakeholders in the fields of SEN and disability rights:

1. As a welfare state, our country is annually allocating more financial support towards children with disabilities (CWDs) and those with SEN. Children with disabilities are eligible to social aids, refund of transport to attend schools, and a carer's allowance, among other schemes. SEN schools are also receiving Grant-in-Aid for their operation.
2. The setting up of the SENA has been a very important addition to the SEN sector to monitor and facilitate the implementation of government policies pertaining to SEN. All SEN schools are presently monitored on a regular basis by the inspection body of the SENA.
3. A few decades ago, CWDs were mainly viewed as individuals who were fully dependent on others for their needs and treatment, and who would not benefit from going to school due to their impairments. Today, much has evolved in that way of thinking, and most CWDs are receiving education in school settings. I am optimistic that, with intensive sensitisation campaigns and the allocation of the appropriate budget, inclusive education for ALL children can become the next educational system in the Republic of Mauritius.
4. Equipment available at SEN schools or SENRDCs, such as physio balls, weighted blankets, and other specialised pedagogical materials, are not being put to optimum use.
5. The medical model of disability still prevails in the educational system, be it in the training of teachers, the delivery of education to learners or the way learners are treated in schools. There is more emphasis on the impairment than on the learner as a person and a rights holder.

6. The physical infrastructure of the existing SEN institutions is not adapted enough to children with disabilities and SEN pupils.
7. A traditional classroom model is still being used in many SEN institutions and children of different ages are put in the same class with the same programme to work on.
8. Children with disabilities have very few opportunities to interact with other similar-aged children without disabilities on a regular basis. Their segregation affects their development, socialization skills and self-esteem.
9. There appears to be a climate of resistance to inclusive education as it seems that many Educators or Heads of mainstream schools still believe that children with disabilities cannot be handled in regular classrooms, and that they need specialised treatment which can only be provided by a SEN school. They say that they have not been prepared and trained to cater for pupils with disabilities or those with SEN.
10. Most early childhood care and education institutions in Mauritius and Rodrigues are not equipped to cater for children with disabilities or those with SEN. The teachers have not been trained in this respect, the infrastructure is not adapted and sometimes there may be resistance from both staff and parents.

3.6.2. Recommendations

In the current subsection, I present some recommendations that I think can contribute to shifting the momentum of our education system towards inclusive schools as the new education reality for all children, with or without disabilities and SEN, in the Republic of Mauritius.

3.6.2.1. Paradigm shift from the medical model to the human rights-based model of disability

I refer to the strategy paper published by the METEST (2017) entitled ‘Inclusive Education for Children and Youth with Special Needs in Mauritius: Concept to Reality’. This policy can set the pathway to enable a paradigm shift from the medical model to a human rights-

based model of disability. However, implementation of this policy must be first and foremost accompanied by a change in negative perceptions of key stakeholders towards disability and SEN. Children with disabilities must not be seen as ‘less abled’ or treated as victims suffering from their impairments, but rather as persons holding rights.

In this context, I recommend that, based on the METEST’s (2017) strategy document on inclusive education, a plan of action could be prepared with clear key performance indicators by all relevant stakeholders. However, I propose that the classification for children with disabilities proposed in this publication (METEST, 2017) be reviewed in view of maximising opportunities more towards inclusivity than segregation. I also suggest that the services and expertise of Disability Activists are retained when implementing this policy. I also recommend that the assessment of CWDs and children with SEN for admission to educational institutions is based on a human rights-based model of disability rather than a medical model (refer to subsection 3.2.1 in the present report).

3.6.2.2. Phased conversion of schools with integrated units to inclusive schools

In 2015, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended our country to renounce to the creation of integrated units in schools, and instead redirect resources to engage in the creation of a fully funded and inclusive education system, while ensuring that those who have been deprived of education can access lifelong education and vocational training. Despite the recommendation of this Committee, Integrated Units still exist in Mauritius and Rodrigues and additional ones are being envisaged.

I recommend that the State implements the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2015; refer to subsection 3.3.1 in the current chapter) and those of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023; see subsection 3.3.2 in the present chapter). I also propose that existing Integrated Units in mainstream schools could be provided with adequate financial, human and material resources to convert in a phased manner to pilot inclusive schools which are open to all children without any distinction. All teachers would need to be appropriately trained to cater for a wider variety of learner needs.

3.6.2.3. SENRDCs as regional hubs to provide support to educational institutions and specialised interventions to children with disabilities

I refer to the Australian model of Schools of Special Educational Needs (SEEN) in subsection 3.5.2 in the present chapter. I propose that our existing SENRDCs could be reorganised to act, not as SEN schools, but as regional hubs that can provide specialised and timely support to any mainstream or SEN school to ensure the educational progress of children with disabilities and those with SEN. The SENRDCs could be resourced adequately with a multi-disciplinary team of medical and allied health professionals from the MHW or the private sector to provide this outreach support. These may include medical doctors including paediatricians and child psychiatrist, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, clinical and educational psychologists, medical and educational social workers, specialised educators and other alternative therapists.

3.6.2.4. Reforming early childhood care and education in view of inclusive education

Incorporating a culture and mindset of inclusivity must start within the early years of childhood. The very first school environment of any child must be characterised by learning opportunities to understand, accept and respect individual differences. In this regard, I recommend a legal reform that ensures that no child with disability is denied access to early childhood care and education institutions. These institutions must also be equipped to cater for the special needs of CWDs and the staff properly trained.

3.6.2.5. Reconfiguring teacher education and training towards the vision of inclusive education

Teacher education and training must be specialised to include core components on addressing the needs of a variety of learners with or without disabilities. With the right shift in mindset and upgrading of skills and competencies to embrace inclusive education, I believe that School Managers and Educators can become the agents who ensure that no child is denied access to a mainstream school on the grounds of disability. I recommend that the Mauritius Institute of Education in collaboration with the METEST, SENA and

other relevant actors could come up with a comprehensive educational and training programme on inclusive education for current and future educators.

3.6.2.6. Investing in the reasonable accommodation of schools

According to the CRPD (UN, 2006, p.4), reasonable accommodation means “*necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms*”. In relation to this, I recommend that the relevant governmental agencies come together and, in a first stage, invest in renovating the infrastructure of existing schools and acquiring assistive equipment to provide reasonable accommodation to children with disabilities. In a second stage, I propose that new schools must be created following the concepts of reasonable accommodation and ‘Universal design’ to enable the reality of inclusive school environments. Universal design refers to “*the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design*” (UN, 2006, p.4). I would add that the concepts of reasonable accommodation and ‘Universal design’ for schools must also be responsive to the effects of climate change (refer to subsection 2.9.6.1 in the current report).

3.6.2.7. Intensive and sustained awareness-raising campaigns

I recommend that awareness-raising initiatives on the human rights-based model of disability and the benefits of inclusive education must be intensive and sustained in order to achieve a positive shift in the mindset of all stakeholders in the existing education system. **Inclusive schools are the blueprint of inclusive societies.** Unless we fundamentally believe in this concept, which is already a reality in many countries of the world such as Australia, delaying the adoption of inclusive education would also mean compromising the many rights of children with disabilities, mainly their rights to non-discrimination and quality education, as enshrined by the CRC (UN, 1989) and the CRPD (UN, 2006). Every possible effort must be made to address stigma and discrimination towards children with disabilities in the education system, and to challenge physical, social and attitudinal barriers that hinder their functional abilities.

CHAPTER 4:

Report on Activities of the Ombudsperson for Children's Office 2022-2023





“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.”

Section 11(1), Ombudsperson for Children Act 2003



4.1. Reporting Year 2022-2023 in figures

Reporting year 2022-2023 in figures



1 Secretary

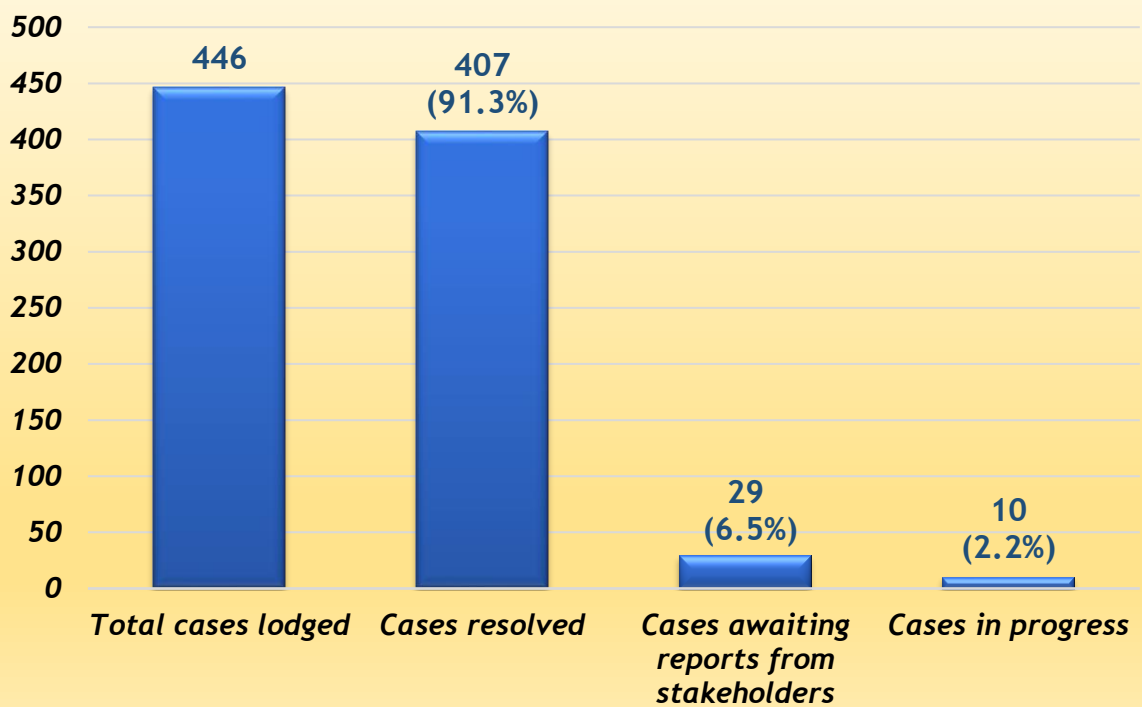


5 Investigators



15 Support Staff

Caseload and case status at the OCO for the reporting period from July 2022 to August 2023



Reporting year 2022-2023 in figures

148

Number of cases regarding school problems

134

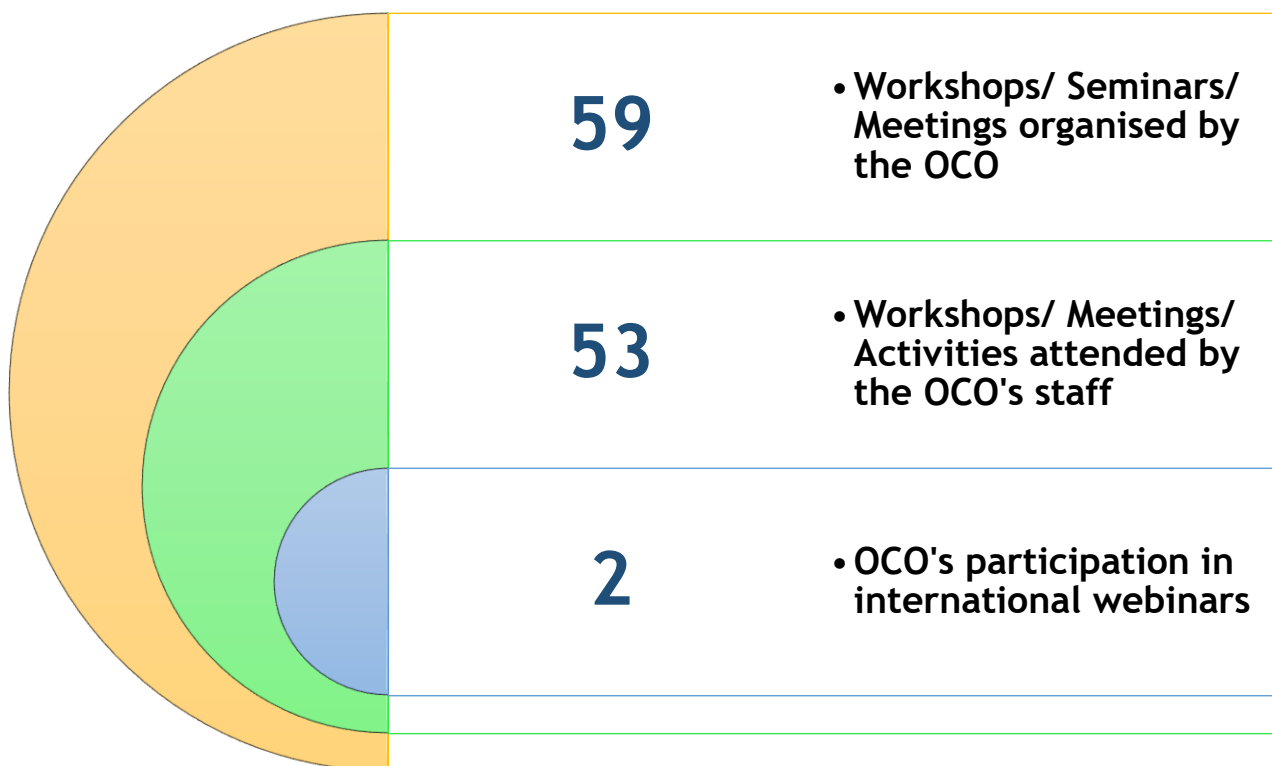
Number of child abuse cases

More than 100

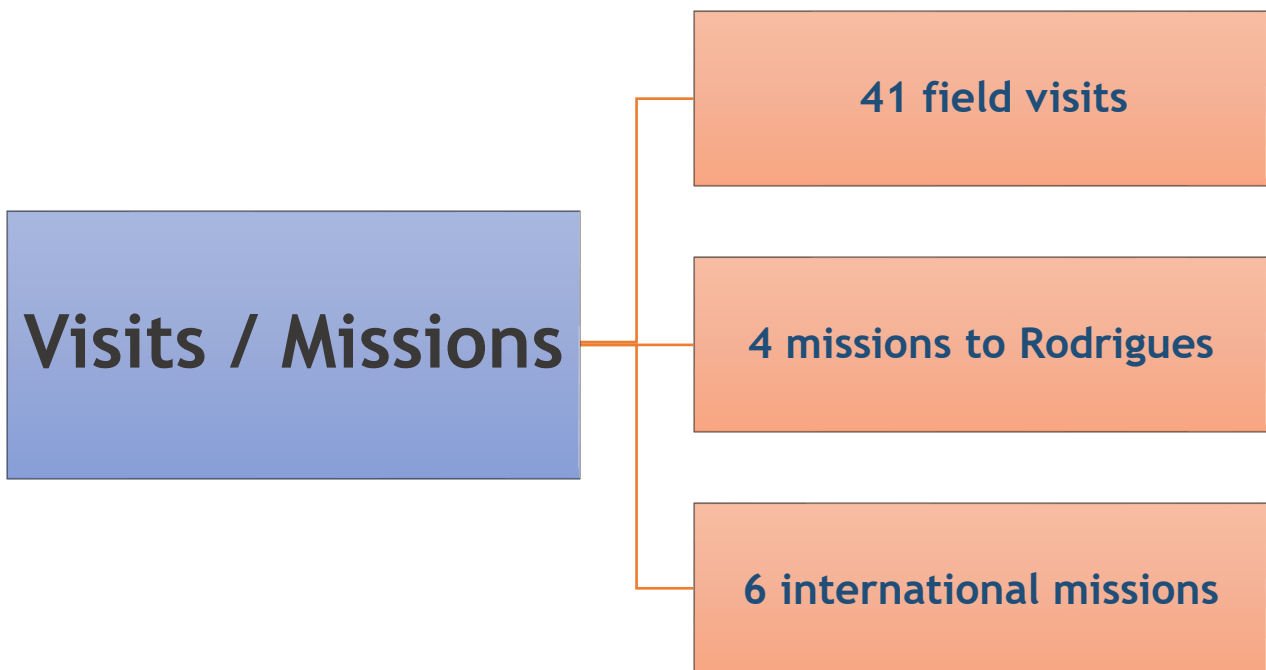
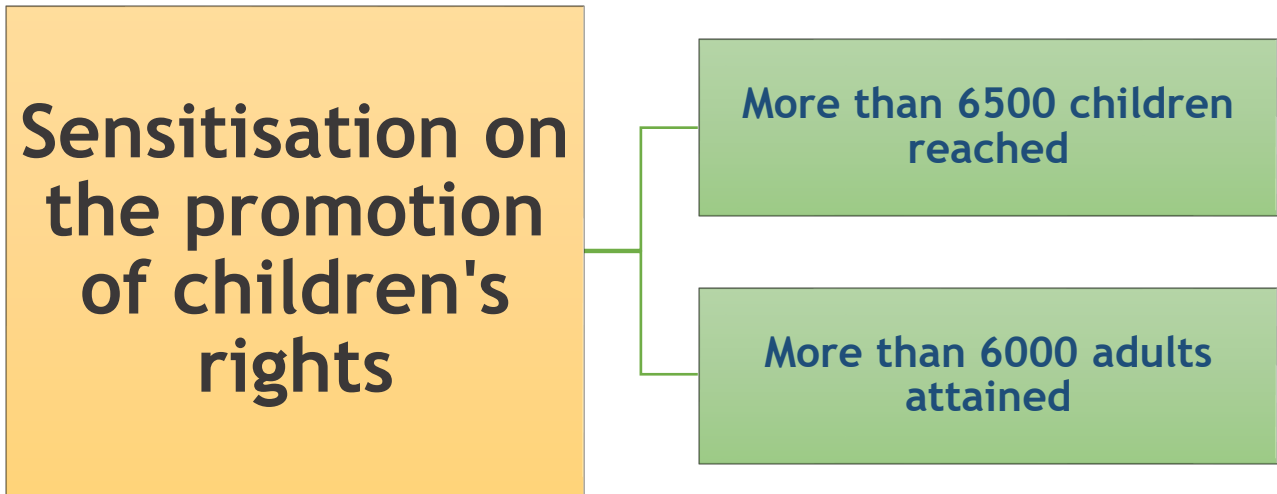
Media interviews

Around 8500

Phone calls



Reporting year 2022-2023 in figures





4.2. Promotion of Children’s Rights in Mauritius: A Selection of Activities

Report on Activities for the Year 2022-2023

The Ombudsperson for Children (OC) has the duty to submit her report annually before the 30th of September to the President of the Republic of Mauritius on the activities carried out by the Ombudsperson for Children's Office (OCO) during the preceding year. Every year, it is a marking event for the OCO and an opportunity for the OC and her team to renew their commitment to protect and promote the rights of children.

The target groups chosen by the OCO for the year 2022-2023 include Caregivers of Residential Care Institutions (RCIs), Officers of the Citizen Advice Bureaus, Officers of the Child Development Unit, Managers of Special Education Needs Schools, Managers of NGOs, Primary and Secondary School Students amongst others. In this regard, a series of activities including sensitisation workshops were organised.

“In all actions concerning the child undertaken by any person or authority, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”

- Article 4(1), African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Submission of the OC's Annual Report to the President of the Republic of Mauritius

Submission of the OC's Annual Report 2021-2022 to the President of the Republic of Mauritius

State House, Reduit

As required by section 11(1) of the Ombudsperson for Children Act 2003, the OC submitted her report on activities during the preceding year, that is, 2021-2022 to the President of the Republic of Mauritius. This serves as an important opportunity to disseminate the OCO's recommendations to policy makers.



(From left to right) Mrs. L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO, Mrs. R. Venkatasawmy, Ombudsperson for Children, H.E Mr. Prithviraj Roopun G.C.S.K, President of the Republic of Mauritius, and Mr. I. A. Bawamia, Investigator at the OCO

Launching of the OC's Annual Report 2021-2022

Launching of the OC's Annual Report 2021-2022

Conference Room,
OCO, Beau Bassin
06 October 2022

The Ombudsperson for Children officially launched her Annual Report 2021-2022 on 06 October 2022. The objective of this event was to disseminate the findings and recommendations of the OC on an area of high significance for the Republic of Mauritius - the promotion and protection of children's rights in alternative care.



The event was marked by the presence of Mrs. K. Chooramun, Head of the Child Development Unit, Mr. P. Boojharut, Coordinator at the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (MGEFW), Mr. S. Kadel, Chief Executive Officer at the Law Reform Commission, 2 Officers from the Law Reform Commission, 2 Investigators from the Office of the Ombudsman and 17 Representatives of NGOs. The OC informed the audience that the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children should be a framework for change in order to deinstitutionalise alternative care for children.

Celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child 2022

The year 2022 marks the 10th anniversary of the International Day of the Girl Child. The theme for that year was “Our Time is now - our Rights, our Future.” It comes as a reminder that the rights that girls seek are universal: equality, the ability to make their own choices about how they look, dress and express their identities, and the freedom to do so without facing harassment, intimidation and violence. This is a day that honours young girls and reminds them that they can be change makers & leaders. True power comes from the effort to build a better future by focusing on education and a successful career.

Helen Stawski, Europe Policy Director of the International Rescue Committee, stated that the International Day of the Girl Child provides an opportunity for all of us to elevate the voices of girls worldwide demanding rights and representation. She also pointed out that we must use this day to turn words into meaningful actions for girls because they deserve no less!

“Nou bizin ena lanbision ek rev. Nou papa pena milyon selman nou ena enn vizion.”

~ Subhasnee Luchmun Roy, Member of Parliament

Celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child 2022

Celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child (EU-funded Project)

La Cannelle,
Domaine les Pailles
11 October 2022

To mark the International Day of the Girl Child, the OCO organised an EU-funded workshop entitled 'Stop a Violans dan lekol'. Fifty-one girls from Labourdonnais College and the NGO Safire attended the workshop. It was also marked by the presence of Hon. (Mrs.) Subhasnee Luchmun Roy, Member of Parliament, Ms. Priscilla Mottee, President of Raise Brave Girls Association, Mr Ally Royals, famous TikToker, and Bigg Frankii, local artist. The girls were reminded that they can become agents of change and empowerment.



The OC stated that the focus of this day is on girls because they play an important role in society. She stressed upon the necessity to focus on their educational journey and emphasised that children's place is at school and not in a marriage. The aim of this session was to empower the participants on leadership and to sensitise them on the rights of the girl child and their ability to become civic actors and human rights defenders.

Celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child 2022

Keynote Addresses by Inspiring Women



Hon. (Mrs.) S. Luchmun Roy informed the children that being a girl in today's world can be quite complicated. She urged them to respect their bodies, to focus on their dreams, ambitions, their school life and make their parents proud. Education should be their priority. She admitted that life can be hard at the ages of 13 to 16 years old, but she also added that they only have one life so they should make the most of it.



Ms P. Mottee added that, as leaders, the girls should always help and defend their peers. She asked the children to come up with some hashtags on leadership. They thought of #EmpowerGirls, #StopBullying, #AretLager.

Celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child 2022

Gifts to the Winners of the Quiz



All children who gave correct answers were given water bottles as gifts on behalf of the Ombudsperson for Children's Office and presented by Hon. (Mrs) S. Luchmun Roy.



Picture of the OC and Hon. Mrs. S. L. Roy together with the winners of the quiz!

Celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child 2022

Surprise Guest - Bigg Frankii

The children danced to some of the hits of Bigg Frankii such as “La Kaz Tol”



Active participation of the children



The children actively participated in group discussions on the following topics:
Dangers of the internet; intimate partner violence; teenage pregnancy; and leadership.

One of the themes was **leadership** - the girls described a leader as a captain who believes in human rights, can take her team on the best route and who gives everyone the chance to talk and express themselves. She knows how to defend herself and she helps others as much as she can.

Two-Day Workshop with CAB Organisations (EU-funded Project)

Two-Day Workshop on “How CAB Organisations can contribute to the Protection and Promotion of Children’s Rights”

In the reporting year 2022-2023, the Ombudsperson for Children conducted a two-day workshop on the rights of the child with Officers of the Citizen Advice Bureaus (CABs) and Municipal Councils. Officers of CABs are in constant contact with the community and this was a marking event for them to make a commitment to protect and promote the rights of children within the community. It is more than ever necessary for all stakeholders to consolidate their networking efforts and coordinate their actions to uphold the rights of the child. Through this workshop, the OC aimed to improve their awareness on children’s rights and strengthen their partnerships in safeguarding these rights. After all, building a safer childhood is the responsibility of all stakeholders.

“The Ombudsperson for Children shall ensure that the rights, needs and interests of children are given full consideration by public bodies, private authorities, individuals and association of individuals.”

~ Section 5(a), Ombudsperson for Children Act 2003

Two-Day Workshop with CAB organisations (EU-funded Project)

**Two-Day Workshop on
“How CAB organisations
can contribute to the
Protection and Promotion
of Children’s Rights”**

*La Cannelle,
Domaine les Pailles
07 & 08 November 2022*

With a view to promoting the rights of children, the Ombudsperson for Children’s Office organised a two-day workshop on the theme “How CAB organisations can contribute to the Protection and Promotion of Children’s Rights.” The workshop was attended by 38 Officers from CABs and Municipal Councils. The aim of the workshop was to empower the CABs’ Officers/Coordinators and the Municipality Officers to advance the cause of children’s rights.



From left to right in the picture above: Mr. L. G. Eleonore, Coordinator of the Citizen Advice Bureau; Mrs. R. Venkatasawmy, Ombudsperson for Children; and Mrs. L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO.

Two-Day Workshop with CAB organisations (EU-funded Project)

Artistic expressions with the participants

The OC invited the participants to engage in artistic expressions through movements, dance and music. Her aim was to encourage them to teach children about the UNCRC through artistic activities such as slams, creative arts and quizzes.

One-day workshop on Strengthening the Chain of Protection for CSBC

Strengthening the chain of protection for children with serious behavioural concerns and in conflict with the law

Following the proclamation of the Children’s Act 2020 in January 2022, and in line with the EU-funded project “Promoting the Rights of Vulnerable Children in the Republic of Mauritius”, the Ombudsperson for Children’s Office organised a one-day workshop entitled “Strengthening the chain of protection for children with serious behavioural concerns and in conflict with the law”. Given that children with serious behavioural concerns and in conflict with the law are vulnerable groups of children, stakeholders working with them such as Officers of the Brigade pour la protection de la famille, Child Development Unit, Probation & Aftercare Services, and Representatives of specialised NGOs including Terre de Paix, Safire and Kinouété must be empowered on strategies to adopt to safeguard the dignity and respect of these children.

“State Parties recognise the right of every child alleged as, accused of, or recognised as having infringed the penal law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child’s sense of dignity and worth...”

~ Article 4(1), UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

One-Day Workshop on Strengthening the Chain of Protection for CSBC

**One-Day Workshop on
“Strengthening the chain of
protection for children with
serious behavioural concerns
and in conflict with the law”**

**Ravenala Attitude Hotel,
Balaclava
10 November 2022**

The OCO organised this one-day workshop with 70 stakeholders working with children including Officers of the Police, Child Development Unit, Probation & Aftercare Services, Rehabilitation Youth Centres, Correctional Youth Centre and Brigade pour la protection de la famille, and Representatives of specialised NGOs working with children such as Terre de Paix, Safire and Kinouété.



From left to right in the picture above: Mrs. R. Jaunky, Chief Inspector of Police; Mr. Paraouty, Assistant Commissioner of Police; H. E. Mr. V. Degert, Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Union; Mrs. R. Venkatasawmy, Ombudsperson for Children; and Mrs. L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO.

One-Day Workshop on Strengthening the Chain of Protection for CSBC



H. E. Mr. V. Degert highlighted the fact that all stakeholders must cooperate to protect the rights of children. Children with serious behavioural concerns and in conflict with the law are victims and it is up to us as stakeholders to understand these children and protect them from all harms.



The Ombudsperson for Children elaborating on the issue of children with serious behavioural concerns and section 41 of the Children’s Act 2020.

Universal Children's Day Celebrations 2022

Celebration of the Universal Children's Day 2022

**Collège du Saint
Esprit,
Black River
17 November 2022**

The Universal Children's Day is celebrated on 20 November each year to promote the rights of children. The Universal Children's Day is an important event on the OCO's agenda because it is a time to reflect, advocate and sensitise on children's rights. The celebration was carried out with the students of St Esprit College in Black River. There were around 100 participants, in the presence of the Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Constituency No. 14, Mr. Daniel Rico Auckbar, Acting Chief Technical Officer at the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, and representatives of SeDEC.



Honourable Mr. Alan Ganoo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and Minister of Land, Transport and Light Rail expressing his appreciation to the pupils for their talents. He also conveyed his congratulations to the Ombudsperson for Children and to the school management for the success of the event.

Universal Children’s Day Celebrations 2022



Honourable Mrs. S Mayotte (in the picture on the left) spoke about the vulnerability of children and on the significance of making the right decisions to protect the children of Mauritius.



The Ombudsperson for Children interacting in a child-friendly way with the audience.

Mass sensitisation in the context of the Universal Children’s Day 2022

Mass sensitisation in the context of the Universal Children’s Day 2022 through billboards

Several regions across the Island 18 to 22 November 2022

In the context of the Universal Children’s Day 2022, the Ombudsperson for Children’s Office, in collaboration with the European Union, raised awareness and visibility of the rights of the child through billboards for 5 consecutive days from 18 to 22 November 2022 around the island. The billboards were strategically placed and targeted to sensitise both children and adults.



Visual representation used for the billboards

Mass sensitisation in the context of the Universal Children's Day 2022

List of 52 locations in Mauritius where billboards were strategically placed

1. Terre Rouge Motorway	27. Cascavelle
2. Pamplemousses	28. Rivière Noire
3. Triolet	29. Rivière Noire (London Way)
4. Grand Baie	30. St Jean Church
5. Goodlands (Bus Station)	31. Belle Rose (Pepsi)
6. Rempart (Bus Station)	32. Rose Hill (P. Paris)
7. Centre de Flacq (Ste Ursule)	33. Vandermeersch
8. Flacq (Boulet Rouge)	34. Beau Bassin (Square area)
9. Flacq (Bus Station)	35. Chebel (Opposite Confort)
10. Quartier Militaire	36. Trianon (M1 Motorway)
11. St Pierre	37. Quatre-Bornes (St Jean Road)
12. G. R. N. W (tailor)	38. Bonne Terre (Toyota)
13. Old Pailles Road	39. Vacoas (London Way)
14. St Louis	40. Vacoas (Municipal Council)
15. Old Moka Road	41. Vacoas (St Paul Road)
16. Mgr Leen	42. Phoenix
17. Cassis (Oasis)	43. Eau Coulée (towards Phoenix)
18. Caudan	44. Curepipe Road (Notre Dame)
19. Edinbourough	45. Nouvelle France
20. Docks (M1 Motorway)	46. Rose Belle
21. Military Road	47. Mare D'Albert (La Rosa)
22. Arsenal (St Joseph)	48. Plaine Magnien
23. Petite Rivière	49. Mahebourg (roof top)
24. Gros Cailloux	50. Mahebourg
25. Bambous	51. Mahebourg (London Way)
26. Flic en Flac	52. Chemin Grenier

Preparatory Meeting: Training of caregivers from Residential Care Institutions

Preparatory meeting in relation to the training of caregivers from Residential Care Institutions

**Conference Room, OCO
Beau Bassin
20 January 2023**

In order to sensitise caregivers on the rights of children who are placed in Residential Care Institutions (RCIs) and on the quality of caring which these children have a right to, the Ombudsperson for Children’s Office proposed to organise a 3-day training for caregivers working in RCIs. In this context, a meeting was organised with all Managers of RCIs to discuss on the content of the workshops and on the necessity to prepare the caregivers prior to attending the event.



The Ombudsperson for Children explaining the objectives of the training sessions for caregivers and on the necessity to be well prepared prior to the workshop for effective participation.

Listening to the Voices of Children with Special Education Needs

Listening to the Voices of Children with Special Education Needs

**Conference Room,
OCO
Beau Bassin
24 January 2023**

The Ombudsperson for Children (OC) received a delegation of 13 pupils from Trochetia SEN School on 24 January 2023 at the OCO to engage in a dialogue on the problems they face at school and in their studies. The OC was assisted by Investigators Mr. I. A. Bawamia and Mrs. S. P. Mauree. The pupils were accompanied by an educator. The pupils visited the office and were introduced to its different sections. The OC welcomed them in her office where she explained about her role in protecting the rights of children. Investigator Mr. I. A. Bawamia discussed with them about the dangers of the internet and Mrs. S. P. Mauree led them in a group discussion on their rights to education.



The Ombudsperson for Children welcomed the children in her office. She interacted with the pupils about her role and functions.

Collaboration with NGO TIPA in its 'Sharing of Good Practices' workshop

**Collaboration
with NGO TIPA
in its 'Sharing
of Good
Practices'
workshop**

**NGO TIPA,
St Pierre
26 January 2023**

Every year, the NGO TIPA requests the collaboration of the Ombudsperson for Children's Office (OCO) in its 'Sharing of Good Practices' workshop for educators from NGOs working with TIPA. Mr. I. A. Bawamia, Investigator, was delegated as resource person to that workshop. The topics he presented were the role and functions of the Ombudsperson for Children, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children's Act 2020. Several issues were raised and the educators admitted that they were not aware of the existing services at the different Ministries and departments. Mr. I. A. Bawamia explained clearly the different channels through which complaints can be made at the OCO.



Mr. I. A. Bawamia, Investigator at the OCO, explaining how and when should a person report a case at the Ombudsperson for Children's Office. He reminded the participants that the OCO is not an emergency service.

Promoting the Rights of Children to Quality Care in Residential Care Institutions

Promoting the Rights of Children to Quality Care in Residential Care Institutions

Gold Crest Hotel,
Quatre Bornes
26 January 2023,
02 & 03 February
2023

The Ombudsperson for Children's Office organised 3 days of workshops on the theme 'Sensitisation on the Rights of Children to Quality Care in Residential Care Institutions' with around 150 caregivers from both Government-owned RCIs and NGO-managed RCIs. They were participants from Gayasing Ashram, Maison Don Bosco, Foyer Père Laval, CEDEM, Crèche Coeur Immaculée de Marie, Foyer Monseigneur Leen, Etoile du Berger, Fondation pour L'Enfance -Terre de Paix, Havre D'Avenir, Pure Mind Haven, Shelter for Women and Children in Distress, SOS Children's Village, Wordlight, Shelter La Marguerite, Shelter La Cigogne, L'Oasis, L'Oiseau du Paradis and Notre Dame Relay Centre. The main objectives of these workshops were first to sensitise the caregivers on the rights of the child and the impact of quality care on children and second to empower caregivers to better care for, support and protect children in RCIs.



The picture above shows the Ombudsperson for Children narrating a story using a puppet as support. Story telling can be an efficient way to communicate with children in RCIs.

Promoting the Rights of Children to Quality Care in Residential Care Institutions

The OC considers that all caregivers are Very Important Persons in the eyes of the children living in RCIs as they are the ones who take care of them daily. These are children who have been victims of different forms of abuse and ill-treatment and have been removed from their families by the CDU through Court Orders. The caregivers represent a mother figure and a hope for these children, which is why it is important that they acquire proper training so that they develop the necessary skills and a rights-based approach to deal with them.

The OC explained on the rights of children in alternative care including their rights to parental contact, good nutrition, quality health, education, play and leisure, freedom of religious and cultural beliefs, privacy, and protection from all forms of abuse. The participants were also sensitised on the different forms of child abuse. The OC underlined the importance of enabling children to develop to their full potential through love, care, and developmental stimulations. She also emphasised that little children need to be stimulated through play, songs, short stories, simple activities or simply going for a walk or in the stroller outside the building or the house. The OC also explained on how camping can be therapeutic for children and adolescents with behavioural and emotional challenges and that each caregiver must push forward for good practices in their respective RCI.



Promoting the Rights of Children to Quality Care in Residential Care Institutions



The caregivers were invited to reflect on the causes of children's anger in RCIs. They were divided into 8 groups and each group was facilitated by a caregiver. In their discussion, the participants stated that children are not bad; rather their anger stems from a multitude of factors, such as missing their parents, overhearing a caregiver's negative comment on their behaviours, not receiving parental visits, incomprehension, being victims of discrimination at school, being unable to express themselves, trying to attract a caregiver's attention, depriving them of their liberty, jealousy and rivalry between children, lack of activities in RCIs and so on.

The OC raised the point that the role of caregivers for taking care of the society's most vulnerable groups of children needs to be recognised and regulated. She stated that, in her previous annual report, she made recommendations that caregivers must be provided with better salaries and relevant incentives that fairly reflect the intensity and complexity of their roles. She also recommended to the National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF) to redress this disparity for all NGO-run RCIs by funding the reimbursement of unused annual leave and any other relevant work entitlement as per the Workers' Rights Act 2019 for all RCIs' staff.

Women's Day at BPS College

Women's Day 2023 at BPS College

*BPS College, Beau Bassin
08 March 2023*

The OC was invited as Guest Speaker at the BPS College to give a keynote address to the young college students on Women's Day 2023.



“On this day, we stand with girls everywhere as they inspire, innovate and take charge of their own future. We celebrate the strength and potential of the 1.1 billion girls in today’s world.”

**~ Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under Secretary-General
& Executive Director of UN Women**

Roundtable discussion with members of the Student Council of Royal College Curepipe

Roundtable discussion with members of the Student Council of Royal College Curepipe

Gold Crest Hotel,
Quatre Bornes
21 March 2023

The OCO organised a roundtable discussion funded by the European Union on the theme entitled “Children’s Rights and Responsibilities in a multicultural society” with members of the Student Council of the Royal College of Curepipe.



The main objectives of the roundtable were to, sensitise the students on their rights and responsibilities and, allow them to express their opinions, thoughts and feelings on issues affecting them. The roundtable was also an opportunity to reflect on human values of students with respect to peace, tolerance and mutual respect for all communities.

Roundtable discussion with members of the Student Council of Royal College Curepipe

Opening Speech by Investigator Mrs. S. Johaheer

Investigator Mrs. S. Johaheer explained in simple terms the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). She particularly focused on article 12 of the UNCRC which states that “States Parties shall assure to 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, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”. This includes any matter affecting the child including administrative and judicial proceedings. She emphasised that child participation is one of the core principles of the UNCRC and that the views and voices of children must be actively listened to through debates, reflections and discussions, and not by mere tokenism.

Intervention by Investigator Mrs. Y. R. Veeramootoo

Investigator Mrs. Y. R. Veeramootoo explained how every child is entitled to his/her rights without discrimination. Rights are universal, inalienable, interconnected and indivisible, and no right is more important than the other. She elaborated on article 13 of the UNCRC which enshrines children’s right to freedom of expression and the responsibility that accompanies that right. She also spoke about stereotypes, and stressed upon the fact that they can influence our actions in a negative way and give rise to prejudice which may eventually lead to acts of discrimination. For example, the assumption that children with disabilities cannot do well or practice sports is a discriminatory belief or bias. Understanding how stereotype works, helps build tolerance and an impartial and objective mind towards all communities.



Students engaging in group work

Roundtable discussion with members of the Student Council of Royal College Curepipe

**Address by Angelo Mars,
Laureate 2023 of Royal
College of Curepipe**

“It is important to take into consideration what kind of image students project in society. Excelling in academic studies or undertaking activities does not mean that one is an elite. Being an elite comes with responsibility! One must be humble enough to learn from our actions and students must treat everyone with equality, dignity and respect.”



Students voicing their perspectives at the roundtable discussion

Roundtable discussion with members of the Student Council of Royal College Curepipe



Address by the Ombudsperson for Children, Mrs. R. Venkatasawmy

The OC opened her intervention by thanking the RCC’s Prefect Body for the good initiative undertaken to celebrate the World’s Down Syndrome Day 2023 at the school. She pointed out that, as per the law, a person under the age 18 is considered a child and is entitled to rights as per the UNCRC. This does not mean that children can do whatever they want, as alongside they also have their share of responsibilities to fulfill. The OC carried out a small exercise with the students and asked them to answer a few questions (see below) before providing an in-depth explanation on each one.

<p>1. <u>What is a Constitution?</u></p> <p>Siddharth: “A Constitution is a text of laws which govern the country.”</p> <p>Sania: “It is a book of law which contains rules and regulations.”</p>	<p>2. <u>What is the United Nations?</u></p> <p>Siddharth: “It is an organisation regrouping several countries in the world to address problems and issues.”</p>
<p>3. <u>What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?</u></p> <p>An RCC Prefect: “A document setting out a list of Human Rights.”</p>	<p>4. <u>What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child?</u></p> <p>Purvi: “A document, akin to a Bible, signed universally by most countries and which protects the rights of the child.”</p>

Roundtable discussion with members of the Student Council of Royal College Curepipe



The OC stated that we live on an island governed by laws to ensure a safe and peaceful society. She gave examples of certain provisions of the law. While speaking about the Children’s Act 2020, she said that no child under the age of 18 has the right to cohabitation and marriage and that, as from the age of 14, a child can be held criminally responsible for an offence committed. She also informed the students on the provision under section 282 of the penal code that counts ‘stirring up racial hatred’ as a criminal offence.

The OC highlighted the importance of a rights-based education to promote values such as peace, equality, tolerance and respect for human dignity. She referred to the UNESCO which promotes a culture of peace in education. She affirmed that students must be endowed with values and humility which are the qualities of a true leader.

Roundtable discussion with members of the Student Council of Royal College Curepipe

Intervention by Professor Arnaud Carpooran

Holder of a PhD in the Science of Languages and with a teaching career of 30 years, Prof. A. Carpooran was the Chief Guest for the workshop. He introduced his dictionary the “Diksioner Morisien”, the first monolingual dictionary which provides the meaning of kreol words. Prof. Carpooran also outlined the various challenges which he faced in creating his dictionary. He explained that if his team and himself had to cut off abusive words, they would be committing an act of puritanism.



Words in a dictionary are often defined through their denotations but the way they are perceived by others are generally by their connotations. Denotation, being the first meaning of words is often overtaken by the connotation of words; connotations being the interpretation of the words. The way of saying a word has its own weight, which can at times have more impact than English or French words. Prof. Carpooran also laid emphasis on liberty of expression and said that every individual has the right to express themselves and to feel offended as well, depending on factors such as connotation, weight and environment.

He explained that most of the words in the kreol language are derived from French. However, according to him, the same words spoken in kreol may be perceived as more vulgar and may carry a different connotation. Moreover, he advanced that the internet has in a way blurred the line between public and private today. That is why, it is important that students be more responsible and know their limits as to what are being said in public as every action has its consequences.

On an ending note...

The members of the Student Council of RCC shared their appreciation for this very insightful workshop and stated that they will now attempt to collaborate with the OCO in spreading awareness on children’s rights and participate in future projects.

Teenage Pregnancy: A Complex Child Rights Issue

Teenage Pregnancy: A Complex Child Rights Issue (EU- funded project)

Labourdonnais Waterfront
Hotel,
Port Louis
29 & 30 March 2023

The OCO organised a two-day workshop on the theme “Teenage Pregnancy: A Complex Child Rights Issue”. The target group for the workshop were teenage mothers and teenage girls. Thirty-one students from Grades 8 to 11, mainly from Medco Secondary schools, and 3 teenage mothers participated in the workshop. Resource persons involved were Dr. Goolamnubee, Child Psychiatrist at Brown Sequad Mental Healthcare Centre, Mrs. A. Veerasawmy, Director of Gender Links, and Dr H. Bhoma, Consultant in Charge, Gynaecology at the Ministry of Health and Wellness.



Dr Goolamnubee, Child Psychiatrist spoke on the theme “The impact of teenage pregnancy on adolescent health from a mental health perspective”.

She explained that teenagers are not yet adults because their body and mind are still developing. When a minor gets pregnant, there is a lot of stress from her peers and family and this may lead to depression, especially if the girl has had a difficult childhood.

Dr Goolamnubee elaborated on the the symptoms to detect depression: neglect, sadness in expression, anger, frequent crying, suicidal thoughts. She also explained that when a teenager gives birth to a baby, there is a period after the pregnancy where the teenager can develop postpartum psychosis - a condition that disrupts a person's sense of reality.

Teenage Pregnancy: A Complex Child Rights Issue



Dr H. Bhoma, Consultant in Charge Gynaecology at the Ministry of Health and Wellness, spoke on “The impact of teenage pregnancy on adolescent health from a medical perspective”. She elaborated on teenage pregnancy symptoms, which are, unusual fatigue, frequent urination, unusual mood swings, weight gain, swelling belly.

She explained the importance of prenatal care which looks for medical problems in both the mother and the baby. Pregnant teenagers are at risk of not getting the right prenatal care and this may affect both their health and the health of the baby.

According to Dr Bhoma, pregnant teenagers are at risk of high blood pressure, pre-eclampsia and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). All this can lead to premature labour and pre-mature birth which can affect both the health of the mother and that of the baby. The earlier a baby is born, the more risk there is of respiratory, digestive, vision, cognitive and other problems.

Voices of Children

The children actively participated in group discussions on the following topics: the school as a safe place, children of the future and violence in different settings. Some of their responses were as follows:

- ✚ “We need to talk in the morning assembly about what we learnt in the workshop.”
- ✚ “There is a need to raise awareness among young girls through activities. Pregnant teenagers or teenage mothers could share their experience.”
- ✚ “We should not judge people. Education is key.”
- ✚ “We can have a club in school where twice a week different issues can be addressed and students sensitised.”
- ✚ “Teachers also should be empowered to discuss the issues of teenage pregnancy.”

Teenage Pregnancy: A Complex Child Rights Issue



The participants had an interactive session with Dr Bhoma.



The students were divided into groups and were asked to prepare a role play on teenage pregnancy. Each group enacted a scenario where a girl gets pregnant and the situation is addressed from different perspectives.

Film Projection: Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway

Film Projection: Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway

MCine, Caudan
Waterfront,
Port Louis
04 April 2023

The Ombudsperson for Children’s Office organised a private screening of an Indian movie “Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway”, directed by Ashima Chibber, starring Rani Mukerji. The OCO invited around 98 persons among which were representatives from Residential Care Institutions, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, the Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies, the Law Reform Commission, the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the NGOs Dis-Moi, Safire and Gender Links.



The movie is based on a true story about an immigrant Indian mother’s legal and emotional struggle to win back custody of her two young children who were placed in the Norwegian foster care system. The movie highlights strong topics like motherhood and its challenges, how society’s perception of the ‘ideal’ mother varies from country to country and the impact of cultural differences on parenthood.

Meeting with Disability Activists on Inclusive Education

Meeting with Disability Activists on Inclusive Education

Conference Room, OCO,
Beau Bassin
12 April 2023

The OC chaired a meeting with Disability Activists on the theme of inclusive education on 12 April 2023. As a human rights institution, the OCO is mandated to investigate complaints pertaining to the special educational needs of children. The key for children with disabilities to have a good start in life is early intervention and an education that supports their individual needs, strengths and capabilities.



Interactive dialogue with inmates of the CYC

Interactive dialogue with inmates of the Correctional Youth Centre

Office of the OC, OCO,
Beau Bassin
24 April 2023

The child's right to be heard is one of the underpinning principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this context, the OCO organised an interactive dialogue session with 9 minors from the Correctional Youth Centre (CYC) in view of raising their awareness on children's rights and providing the minors with the opportunity to have their voices heard.



As a human rights institution, the OCO has always been committed to listen to children's voices and taking their views into account. The minors were divided into 3 groups and each group was facilitated by an Investigator. The minors were able to reveal the problems they encountered in the CYC. They also had the opportunity to reflect on their past actions and future goals.

As for the accompanying officers, they participated in a group discussion facilitated by the OC on the management of children under their authority at their workplace. The OC reassured them that her office will continue to sensitise the staff and inmates of the CYC on their rights and responsibilities as per the UNCRC.

Visit of Australian Experts in the field of Inclusive Education

Visit of Australian Experts in the field of Inclusive Education (EU-funded Project)

From 21 to 26 May 2023

From 21 to 26 May 2023, the OCO invited two experts in the field of inclusive education to Mauritius to share their best practices with local stakeholders on inclusive education. The trip was funded by the European Union under the project entitled 'Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Vulnerable Children in the Republic of Mauritius'. The experts were Mr Stuart Percival, Assistant Executive Director, Professional Capability, Department of Education Statewide Services, and Dr Catherine Ann Kapiteyn, Principal Advisor, Leadership Institute, Statewide Services.

Visit to Moka SEN Resource and Development Centre, Moka (22 May 2023)

Moka Special Education Needs Resource and Development Centre (Moka SENRDC) is a governmental institution catering for the special education needs of some twenty students with disabilities, aged between 5 and 20 years old. The Centre provides educational as well as therapy services to those students. There are also outpatients and children from other schools in the vicinity who attend therapy sessions. Occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech therapy are provided on a sessional basis. The services of Psychologists may also be made available upon request.



In the picture on the left: Mr V. Bhollah from the Moka SENRDC (first from the right) showing a changing table and an Appropriate Paper-based Technology Chair made from recycled materials to the Australian Experts.

Visit of Australian Experts in the field of Inclusive Education

Visit to NGO Lizie Dan La Main, Forest Side (23 May 2023)

Lizie Dan la Main is an NGO which was set up in 1981. It focuses mainly on the rehabilitation of the blind and partially sighted persons. The NGO offers a wide range of services like eye care, mobility and activities of daily living, special education, accessibility to information and technology with adapted software, vocational training, sports and music, amongst others.



From left to right: Mrs. L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO; Dr. C. A. Kapiteyn, Principal Advisor; Mr. S. Percival, Assistant Executive Director; Mr. Reynolds Permal M.S.K, Director of Lizie Dan La Main.

Visit of Australian Experts in the field of Inclusive Education

Visit to NGO Southern Handicapped Association, Riambel (23 May 2023)

The Southern Handicapped Association (SHA) is an NGO founded in 1985 in Riambel village in the south of Mauritius and which presently operates special education needs services for 80 youths with disabilities in the age range of 5-20 years. It also caters for 20 young adults with disabilities aged above 20 years old who follow the employment ability program (job coaching and job training). There are around 35 staff members working with the organisation on a full-time basis and 5 on a part time basis. The school includes different units such as the pre-primary, primary and prevocational sections, a rehabilitation unit, and an aquaponic area.



The Australian Delegation had fruitful interactions with children with special education needs along with their SEN teachers at the SHA.

Two-Day Workshop on Inclusive Education

Two-Day Workshop on Inclusive Education

**Gold Crest Hotel,
Quatre Bornes
24 & 25 May 2023**

A two-day interactive workshop on the rights of children, including children with disabilities, to inclusive education, was organised by the OCO. The workshop was facilitated by the Australian Experts, Mr. S. Percival and Dr. C. A. Kapiteyn.



There were around 20 participants including Investigators of the OCO, Mr. J. F. Favory, Disability Activist, Mrs. A. Burtony, Disability Activist, representatives of different SEN Schools (Southern Handicapped Association, CEDEM, Autisme Maurice, Moka SENRDC, School for the Blind, Trochetia Special Needs School, Roman Catholic Education Authority - SEN Integrated Unit Signal Mountain), representatives of the Mauritius Institute of Education, the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity and SeDEC.

Meeting with the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Education

Meeting of Mr S. Percival and Dr C. A. Kapiteyn with the Hon. Mrs. Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun G.C.S.K., Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology

***Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education,
Science and Technology,
Phoenix
25 May 2023***

Mr S. Percival and Dr C. A. Kapiteyn paid a courtesy call to the Hon. Mrs. Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, G.C.S.K., Vice-Prime Minister. Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology. They were accompanied by the OC, Mrs. R. Venkatasawmy. The aim of the visit was to exchange knowledge and practices regarding inclusion in the education system with a focus on children with special needs.



From left to right in the picture above:

Mr A. Jookun, Board member of the Special Education Needs Authority (SENA); Mr A. Authelsingh, Director of SENA; Dr C. A. Kapiteyn, Principal Advisor; Mrs. Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun G.C.S.K., Vice-Prime Minister; Mr S. Percival, Assistant Executive Director; Mrs. R. Venkatasawmy, Ombudsperson for Children; Mrs. S. Oogarah, Chairperson of the SENA.

Celebration of the Day of the African Child 2023

Celebration of the Day of the African Child 2023

**Grand Baie Government School,
Grand Baie
22 June 2023**

The Day of the African Child is celebrated on 16 June every year to reflect on the progress made towards Children's Rights as well as the barriers children continue to face. This year, the OC was invited to carry out a talk on Children's Rights with pupils of Grand Baie Government School.



The OC reminded the children that with rights come responsibilities. She emphasised that all children should respect their teachers and classmates.

Celebration of the Day of the African Child 2023



The children raised their hands affirmatively when the OC asked them whether they respected their teachers.



The OC carried out an interactive activity with the children which aimed at sensitising them about their rights through pedagogical means.

Meeting with the Climate Change Ambassadors of the OCO

Meeting with the Climate Change Ambassadors of the OCO

Office of the OC, OCO,
Beau Bassin
20 July 2023

The OC organised a meeting with the Climate Change Ambassadors of the OCO. It was an opportunity to build on the workshop on climate change (refer to subsection 2.8.3.2) and to have their views heard regarding same.



They discussed future activities that the OCO could organise for them, such as a visit to the Odysseo aquarium or watching Sir David Attenborough's documentaries. In the meeting, the students shared with the OC that they would like to take part in a mission to clean up corals and plant them in the sea.



The OC related her experience on her trip to Iceland and the joint initiative set up by herself and the Ombudsperson for Children of Iceland to bring together Mauritian and Icelandic Climate Change Ambassadors at a zoom meeting in the near future.

Two-day workshop on ‘The Rights of Children with Disabilities in the African Human Rights System’

Two-day workshop on ‘The Rights of Children with Disabilities in the African Human Rights System’

Royal Green & Wellness
Resort, Moka
24 & 25 July 2023

The OCO organised a two-day workshop on the rights of children with disabilities in the African Human Rights System. Experts from the University of Pretoria, South Africa, were invited to share their knowledge and shed light on the subject, focusing on international and regional conventions and charters as a framework. There were around 30 participants at the workshop, including Investigators of the OCO, Mr. J.F. Favory, Disability Activist, Mrs. A. Burtony, Disability Activist, Representatives from SENA, Law Reform Commission, Office of the DPP, NGOs APEIM, Dis-Moi, Terre de Paix and Anfen, Moka SENRDC, MIE, RCEA and SeDEC.



Mr. I. A. Bawamia, Investigator, gave a welcome speech and a presentation of the OCO. He stressed the importance of raising awareness on inclusive education and the fact that children need to understand disability if they are to live in the society. He also explained about the different types of complaints related to disability received at the OCO.

Two-day workshop on ‘The Rights of Children with Disabilities in the African Human Rights System’

Professor Nkatha Murungi (see picture below) provided a brief overview on the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, which is an internationally recognised university-based institution combining academic excellence and effective activism to advance human rights, particularly in Africa.



Dianah Msipa (see picture below) talked about terminology regarding disability so as not to offend people, including children, with disability. She did an exercise on words often used to refer to people with disabilities, for example, imbeciles, mad, sick, retarded, lunatic, wheelchair-bound, person living with or suffering from disability, unsound mind, etc. She then presented appropriate terms: person with physical disability, person with visual impairment, person with speech impairment, person with hearing impairment, person with intellectual disability, etc. The right choice of words is important because words can have negative or positive connotations.



Two-day workshop on 'The Rights of Children with Disabilities in the African Human Rights System'

Professor Nkatha Murungi continued the session on the African Human Rights System. She addressed the following topics:

- *African Union and Human rights;*
- *The normative frameworks and standards;*
- *The institutions and mechanisms;*
- *Locating disability and children's rights in the African Human Rights System;*
- *Main human rights institutions;*
- *The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights;*
- *The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights; and*
- *The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.*

Regarding Disability Rights in the African Human Rights System, Dianah Msipa explained further what the system looks like in this regard in Africa. She also discussed on the definition of human rights and the importance of establishing treaties based on a human rights approach.

She stated that the rights of persons with disabilities are covered in various regional instruments, but these had some shortcomings such as the fact that most of these instruments adopted a medical and/or welfare model of disability with provisions focusing on 'care', 'protection', 'treatment' and 'rehabilitation'.

Meeting in connection with the Universal Periodic Review National Report 2023

Meeting in connection with the Universal Periodic Review National Report 2023

Human Rights Division,
St James Court, Port Louis
07 August 2023

The OC and Investigator Mrs. S. Johaheer attended a consultation meeting chaired by the Hon. Mr Alan Ganoo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, along with other national human rights institutions, in view of finalising the Universal Periodic Review Report 2023.



Networking is an important part of human rights monitoring.

Two-day training session for CAB organisers

Two-day training session for CAB organisers: Protecting and Promoting Children's Rights in vulnerable regions of Mauritius

**Conference Room, OCO,
Beau Bassin
14 & 15 August 2023**

The OC organised a two-day workshop for 12 Officers from the Citizens Advice Bureaus (CABs) on how they can protect and promote children's rights while providing services to vulnerable families and children. The Officers first reflected on their roles as CAB Organisers and their commitment to provide quality services to the public, including families and children. They were introduced to the child rights-based approach when handling children's matters.



Using her Survey Report on Residence Anoska as a reference, the OC explained to the CAB Officers the importance of learning about the target population before starting any project. She emphasised the need to engage with inhabitants, children and civil society at the very start, even before beginning the elaboration of a project. The CAB Officers can reach out to people living in poverty and collect data on the field.

Workshop on 'A Child Rights Based Approach to Provide Quality Services to Children'

Workshop on 'A Child Rights-Based Approach to Provide Quality Services to Children'

Royal Green Wellness Resort, Moka
17 & 18 August 2023

The OCO organised a two-day workshop on the importance of a child rights-based approach to provide quality services to children with 39 participants including Officers from relevant Ministries, Managers of NGOs and Disability Activists.

During the workshop, the OC essentially spoke on the UNCRC and its 4 Universal Principles. She highlighted the importance of translating these fundamental principles into professional practice in order to meet the best interests of the child. The participants were also sensitised on the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 1 and General Comment No. 10. Several important themes were also outlined in the workshop, such as the rights of children with disability, children's rights in alternative care and children in conflict with the law.



The OC stated that there needs to be emphasis on the application of the UNCRC in order to provide quality services to children.

*Meeting with a delegation from the Parliament of the Republic of Zambia****Meeting with a delegation from the Parliament of the Republic of Zambia***

**Conference Room,
OCO,
Beau Bassin
22 August 2023**

A delegation from the Parliament of the Republic of Zambia on Child Safeguarding and Protection was on a Study Visit to Mauritius from 21 to 26 August 2023. The delegation, led by Hon. Mr. Sydney Mushanga, Chairperson of the Committee on Youth, Sports and Child Matters, comprised of 10 Members of Parliament from Government, Opposition and Independents, and 8 High Government Officials from the Zambian Administration. The delegation had a half-day meeting with the OC to learn on the best practices in child protection and about the functions of the OCO. The delegation also talked about the situation of children in Zambia. The OC presented a soft copy of her Annual Report 2021-2022 to Hon S. Mushanga.



Group photo of the delegation from Zambia at the OCO



4.3. Promotion of Children's Rights in Rodrigues

OCO's Missions to Rodrigues 2022-2023

The Ombudsperson for Children (OC) has the mandate to promote and protect the rights of children, in compliance with the UNCRC and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, in the Republic of Mauritius including Rodrigues and Agalega.

Each year funds are earmarked in the budget to accomplish the above mandate. Workshops for the benefit of stakeholders working with children in Rodrigues were also organised under the project entitled 'Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Vulnerable Children', funded by the European Union (EU).

During the reporting year 2022-2023, the OC and her team carried out four missions to Rodrigues:

- ❖ 04 to 09 September 2022 (EU-funded);***
- ❖ 04 to 07 December 2022;***
- ❖ 01 to 04 March 2023 (EU-funded); and***
- ❖ 25 to 29 April 2023.***

Some information on Rodrigues

(Source: Statistics Mauritius - Digest of Statistics on Rodrigues, 2022)

About the island

Rodrigues is a 110 km² autonomous outer island of the Republic of Mauritius, found in the Indian Ocean about 560 km East of Mauritius. From July 2011 to December 2022, the resident population of Rodrigues increased from 40,434 (19,904 males and 20,530 females) to 44,783 (21,881 males and 22,902 females).

Demography of children in Rodrigues

Extract from table on the estimated resident population by age group and sex, 1 July 2021 and 1 July 2022

Age group (Years)	1 July 2021				1 July 2022			
	Male	Female	Both Sexes		Male	Female	Both Sexes	
			Number	%			Number	%
0	425	424	849	1.9	451	468	919	2.0
1 - 4	1,593	1,570	3,163	7.2	1,623	1,625	3,248	7.3
5 - 9	1,751	1,747	3,498	7.9	1,780	1,748	3,528	7.9
10 - 14	1,897	1,871	3,768	8.5	1,865	1,790	3,655	8.2
15 - 19	2,118	2,076	4,194	9.5	2,090	2,113	4,203	9.4
TOTAL	7,784	7,688	15,472	35	7,809	7,744	15,553	34.8

Primary schools in Rodrigues

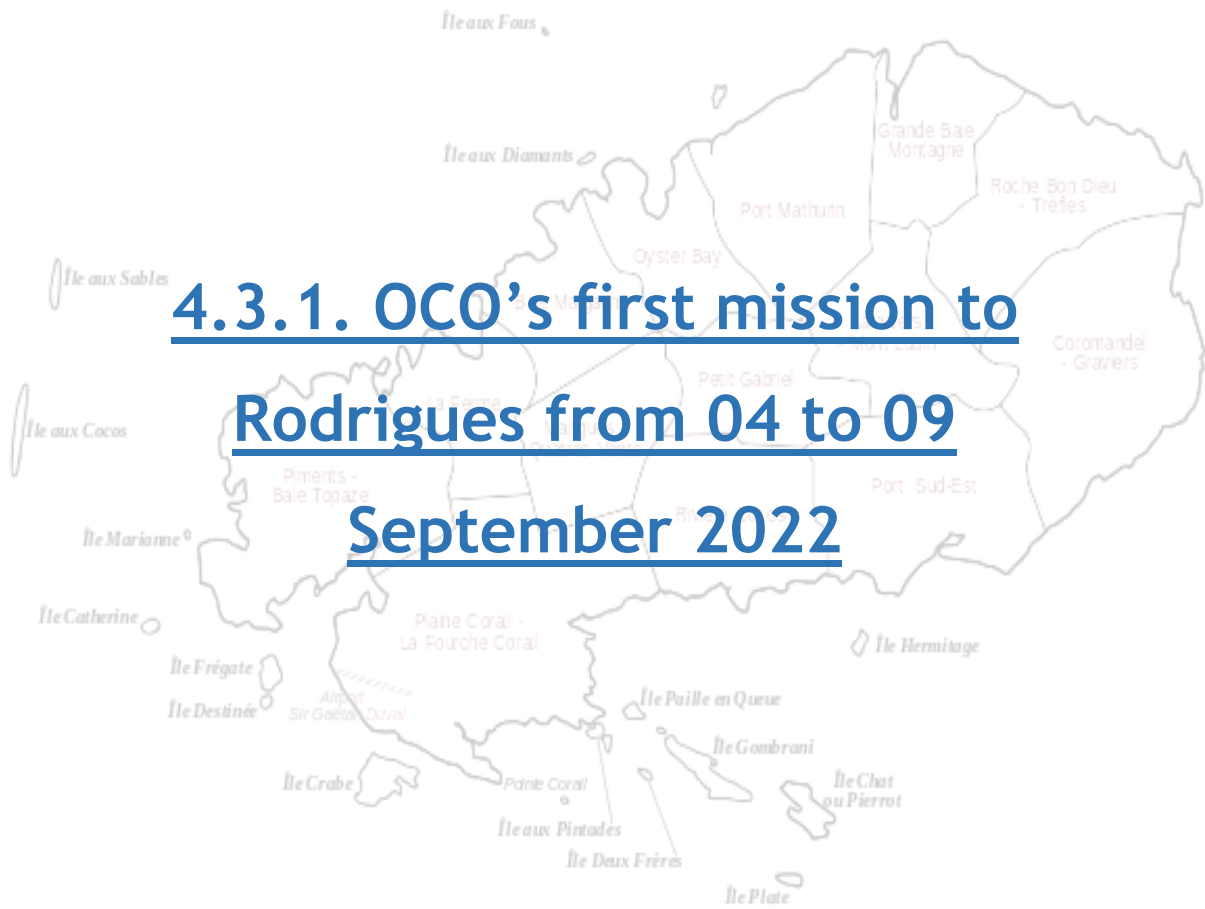
In 2021/2022, there were 17 primary schools around the island of Rodrigues including community schools to cater for children from Grades 1 to 6. The total number of male and female students enrolled in primary schools in 2021/2022 was 4,755.

Secondary schools in Rodrigues

In 2021/2022, Rodrigues counted 8 secondary schools and the total number of male and female students enrolled in secondary schools in 2021/2022 was 5,169.

List of 17 Primary Schools visited in March & April 2023 in Rodrigues

Date	Primary Schools Visited
01 March 2023	1. St Esprit RCA, La Ferme (integrated school)
02 March 2023	2. Antoinette Prudence RCA School at Latanier (integrated school)
25 April 2023	3. Anse Quitor Community School, Anse Quitor 4. Grand La Fouche Corail Government School, Grand La Fouche Corail
26 April 2023	5. Marc Etienne Roche Bon Dieu Government School, Roche Bon Dieu 6. Ste Thérèse de L'Enfant Jésus RCA School, Rivière Coco 7. Port Sud-Est Government School, Port Sud Est 8. Batatran Government School, Batatran 9. Montagne Goyaves Community School, Montagne Goyaves
27 April 2023	10. Terre Rouge Government School, Terre Rouge 11. Father Ronald Gandy RCA School, Petit Gabriel 12. Fock Seng Ho Tu Nam Mangues Government School, Mangues 13. Notre Dame De Lourdes RCA School, Brulé
28 April 2023	14. Araucaria Community Government School, Araucaria 15. Basile Allas Port Mathurin Government School, Port Mathurin 16. Mont Charlot Community Government School, Mont Charlot 17. Oyster Bay Government School, Oyster Bay



OCO'S MISSION TO RODRIGUES FROM 04 TO 09 September 2022

05 September 2022	06 September 2022	07 & 08 September 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Ms. M. C. Agathe, Commissioner for Child Development and Others, at the Integrated Family Centre, Malabar • Meeting with stakeholders working with children including Officers from RYC, RCI, Probation and Aftercare Services, Police, Prison, and Brigade pour la protection de la famille at the Meeting Room, Antoinette Prudence, Human Resource Centre, Malabar • Visit to Rehabilitation Youth Centre • Visit to Foyer Marie Madeleine de la Croix, Baladirou 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundtable session on children's rights to be protected from all forms of violence • Participants: 40 students from Grade 7 (Secondary Schools) • Venue: Cocotiers Rodrigues, Anse aux Anglais 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop on Promoting Children's Rights to Quality Education • Participants: 35 Deputy Headmasters from Primary Schools of SeDEC and Government Primary Schools • Venue: Cotton Bay Resort and Spa, Pointe Coton, Rodrigues

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-09 September 2022

Meeting with Rodrigues Commissioner for Child Development and Others

**Integrated Family Centre,
Malabar
05 September 2022**

The OC met with the Commissioner for Child Development and Others, Ms. Marie Christiane Agathe. She stated that the Residential Care Institution (RCI) in Rodrigues has the potential to become a model shelter. She emphasised that for deinstitutionalisation to occur, the number of children in an RCI must be reduced to 12. Living in small groups facilitate the welfare and best interests of children.



From left to right in the picture: Ms. M. C. Agathe, Commissioner for Child Development, Family Welfare and Women's Affairs; Mrs. R. Venkatasawmy, Ombudsperson for Children; Mrs. A. Swamber, Confidential Secretary of the OC; and Mrs. M. A. Francois-Nicholas, Departmental Head.

Promotion of children’s rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-09 September 2022

Meeting with different stakeholders

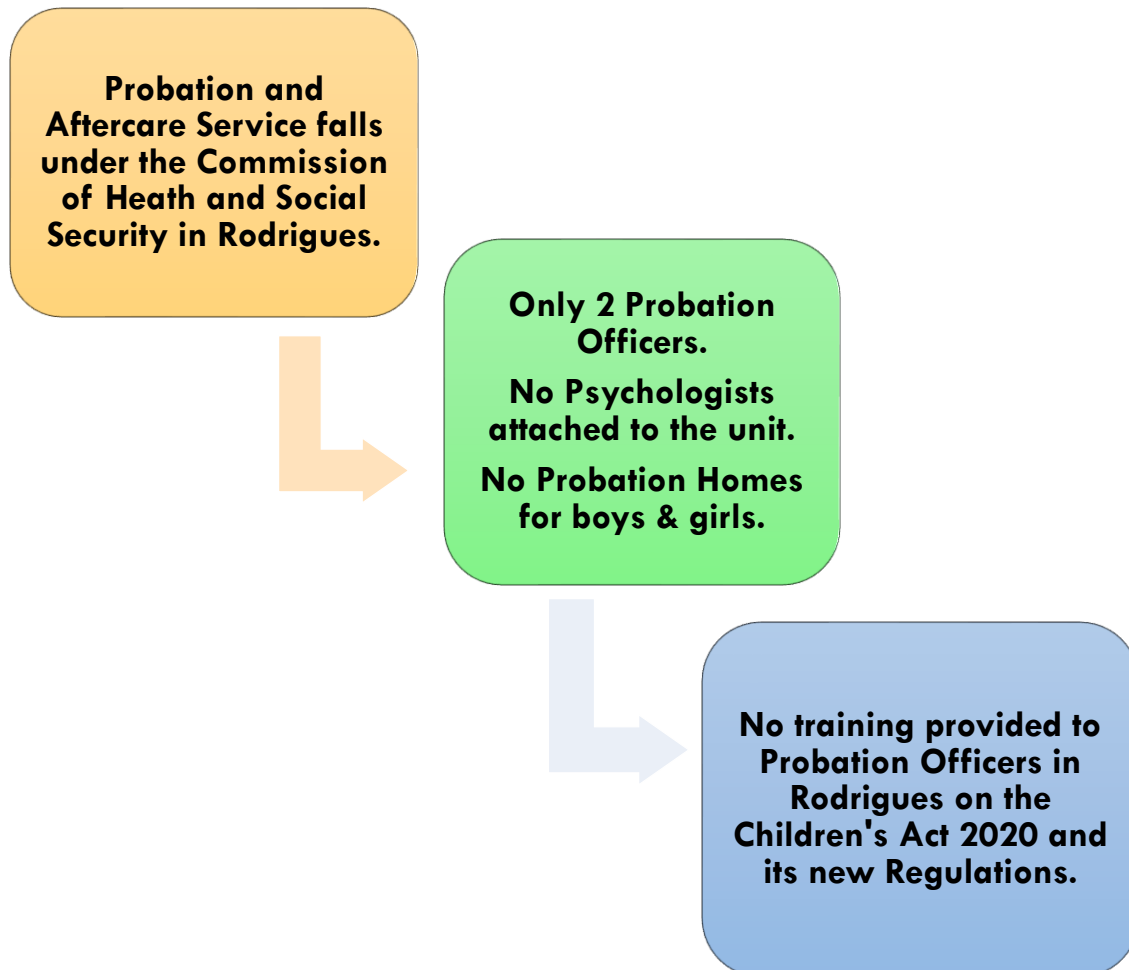
**Antoinette Prudence, Human Resource Development Centre, Malabar
05 September 2022**

The OC met with different stakeholders working with children including Probation Officers, Officers in charge of RYC and RCI, Police Officers and Prison Officers. She stated that, with the advent of the Children Act 2020, there have been divergences regarding its sections 41 and 42 on children with serious behavioural concerns. However, in Rodrigues, all stakeholders including the Sisters working in the Foyer Marie Madeleine de la Croix, the Police and the Commission for Child Development and Others cooperate very closely and try their best to resolve issues regarding these children and preventing them from going under Probation and Aftercare Services.



Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-09 September 2022

Probation and Aftercare Services in Rodrigues



Possible solutions proposed:

- ✚ With the advent of new legislations, different categories of children are being sent to Probation and Aftercare Services instead of the RYC. The Probation and Aftercare Services must thus be reinforced with Probation Officers as well as Psychologists.
- ✚ Probation Officers also need ongoing training so that they can make psychosocial assessments and decide as to which placement will be more appropriate for the child with serious behavioural concerns. The Court is divided into 2 sections: Protection & Care and Criminal Justice System.
- ✚ There is also the need to set up Probation Homes for boys and girls in Rodrigues.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-09 September 2022

Visit to Foyer Marie Madeleine de la Croix

Baladirou
05 September 2022

The OC along with her team visited the Foyer Marie Madeleine de la Croix and met with Sister Benilde, who oversees the RCI, as well as the children. They visited the entire building and the playground to ensure that the rights and needs of the children were being respected. As depicted in the picture below, the children were enjoying their right to leisure and engaging in recreational activities with their friends on the slide and the merry-go-round!



“State Parties shall recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.”

~ Article 12(1), African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-09 September 2022

Roundtable Session on Children's Rights to be Protected from all Forms of Violence

Conference Room,
Cocotiers,
Anse aux Anglais
06 September 2022

A Roundtable Session on 'Children's Rights to be Protected from all Forms of Violence' in Rodrigues was held on 06 September 2022. The session was funded by the European Union under the OCO's project entitled 'Promoting the Rights of Vulnerable Children in the Republic of Mauritius'. The event was attended by 26 students of Grade 7 as well as their respective teachers. The OC informed the children on the new provisions of the Children's Act 2020 such as the age of criminal responsibility being as from 14 years and the legal age for marriage being as from 18 years.



The OC explained that a violent act committed when one is 14 years old is an arrestable offense. She warned the children that small acts of violence can have great consequences and she emphasised the fact that we need to promote a culture of peace. A child has rights such as the right to leisure, to education and to food but he/she does not have the right to hit or swear at people.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-09 September 2022



The OC requested the children to take a firm decision to tell their friends that violence causes harm: “Zis ek mots ou kapav blesse enn dimunn!”



The OC also urged the children to be aware of the four forms of violence including emotional/verbal abuse, physical abuse, neglect and sexual violence. She informed them about grooming which is a major risk to being sexually abused.

Promotion of children’s rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-09 September 2022

Group discussions to encourage teamwork and participation



Most common types of violence:
“violans verbal (pran nisa, zoure sikane), violans fizik (lager), violans sexiel (pas lame, touse konpletman) neglizans (inior kikenn)”

Causes of violence at school:
“pran nisa lor laparans fizik, lor la povrete enn zanfan, enn zanfan ki so mama papa inn separe, zalouzi”



Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-09 September 2022

Some more exercises with the children



Some empathy building exercises were conducted to let children be in the shoes of people with physical impairments. The OC asked the children to try walking on only one foot.

To say NO to violence, we need to say YES to peace. One of the ways to do so is through songs. Children should be free to sing and express themselves at school assemblies and in classrooms.



Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-09 September 2022

Two-Day Workshop on The Rights of Primary School Children to Quality Education

**Conference Room,
Cotton Bay Resort and Spa
08 & 09 September 2022**

The OCO organised a two-day workshop under the EU-funded project on 'The Rights of Primary School Children to Quality Education' with 40 Deputy Headmasters of Primary Schools, Rectors, Senior Educators and Teachers of Secondary Schools in Rodrigues. The OC stated that the role of her office is to promote children's rights as well as to promote compliance with the UNCRC. Children should have access to quality education. When children learn through play, they enjoy schooling.



“States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to: The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.”

~ Article 29(1)(a), United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-09 September 2022

Time for some exercises!



The OC stated that the educator should be a relaxed person. He/she should be able to animate the classroom and keep the children's energy flowing. One of the ways to do so is stimulation through movements.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-09 September 2022

Group Work on the Importance of Active Pedagogy



Classroom activities to promote active pedagogy:

Songs, role play, drama, games, outdoor activities, presentations, group work & peer teaching, debates, tongue twisters, storytelling, poems, picture description, slam, visual aids, book corner, musical instruments, etc.



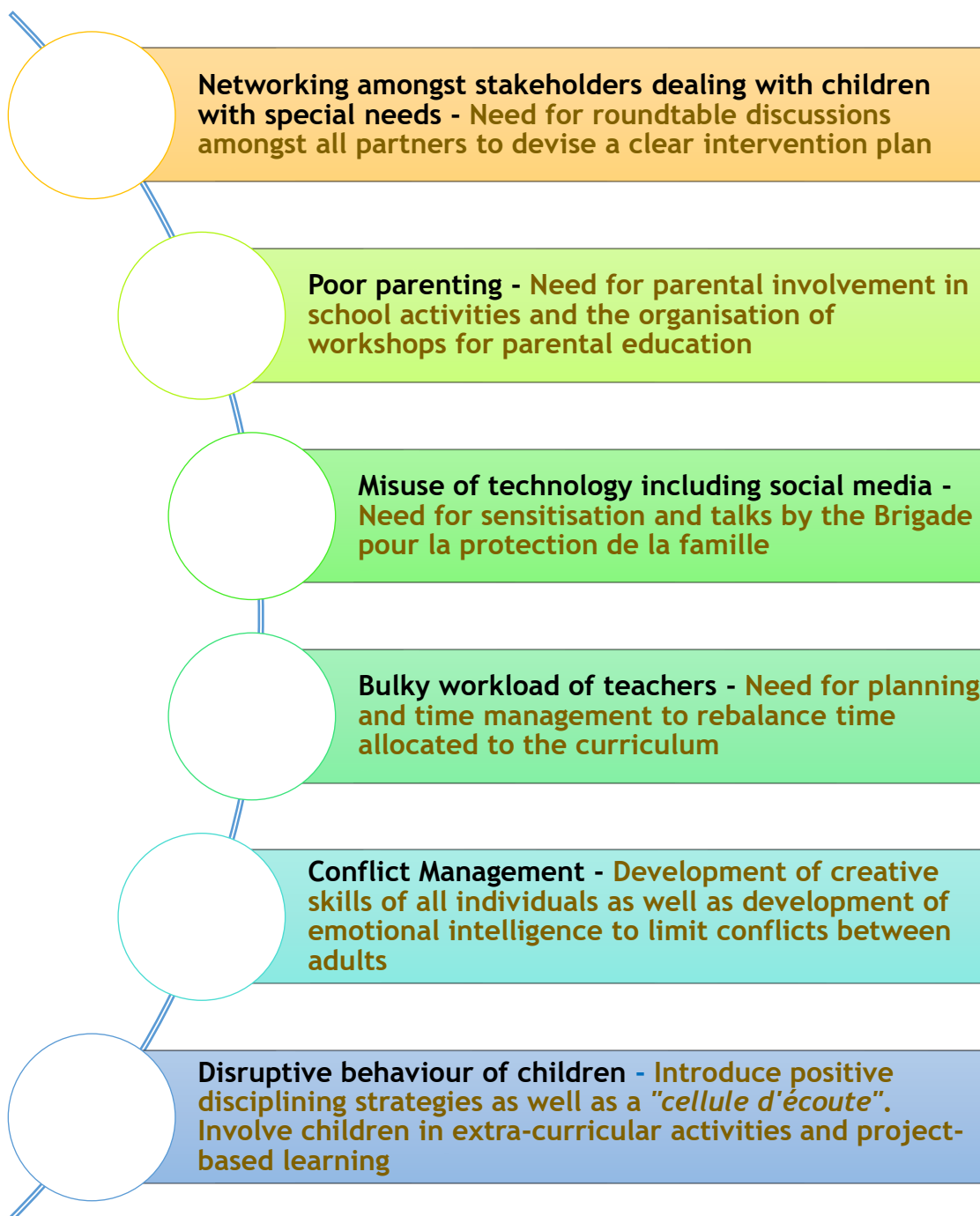
Training on active pedagogy benefitted by educators:

MIE Courses (Primary),
Crash courses.

Specific training educators would like to benefit from:

Life skills, child psychology, refresher courses on active pedagogy.

Challenges faced in managing the school as well as solutions to overcome these challenges



Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-09 September 2022

The importance of storytelling in classrooms



One participant was asked to start a story on a particular theme and the remaining participants had to continue the story. Storytelling can thus be a pedagogical tool with therapeutic value. It can help a child process a traumatic event just as it can help teachers solve the problems that they face in working with children with challenging behaviours. The latter can be sensitised through storytelling. The story must have a message so that it can touch the hearts of children and make them reflect on their behaviour. Storytelling is also an excellent way to transmit values and the culture of Rodrigues to the children. It can have a great impact on them!

“Make a day for storytelling in your schools. Teachers must prepare different stories in each classroom. Students can walk from classroom to classroom to listen to the different stories.”

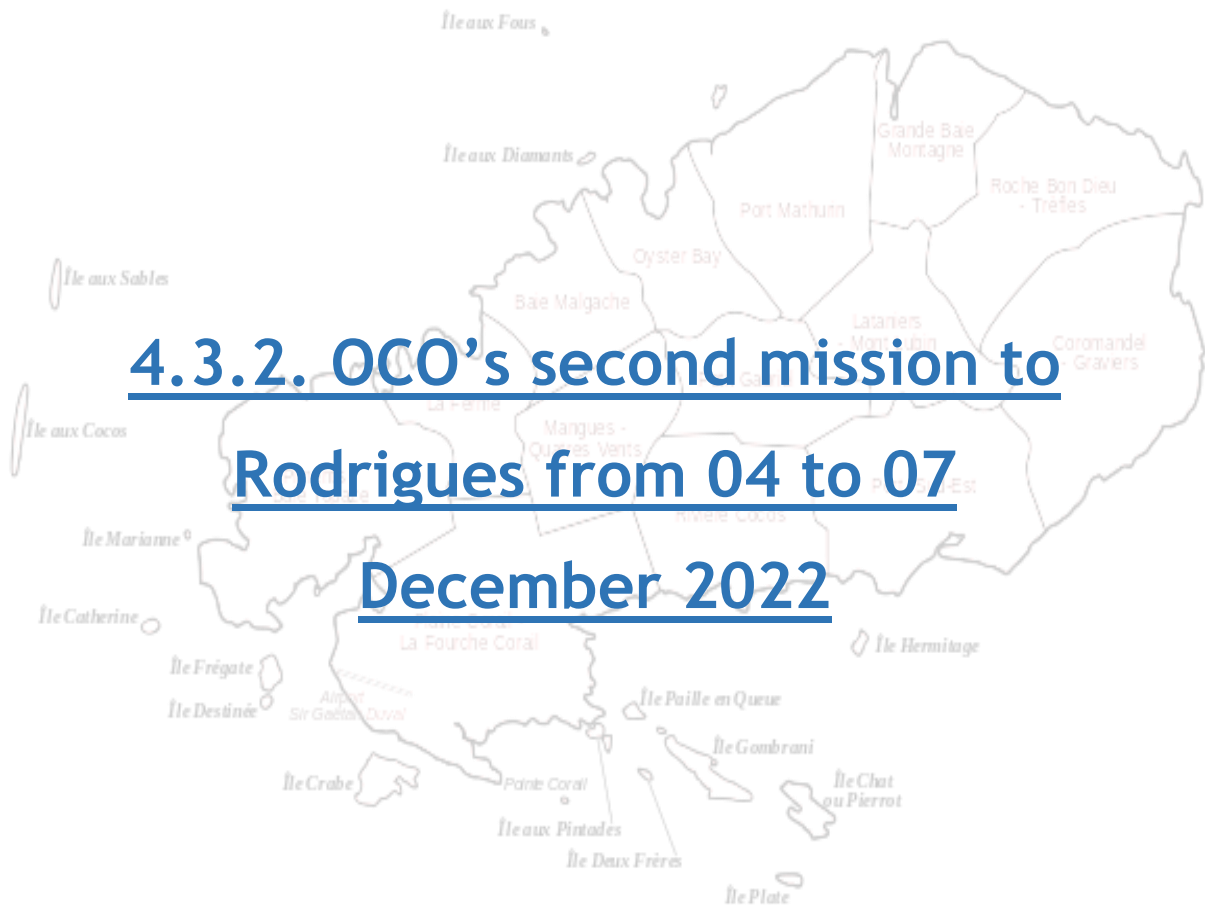
~ Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, Ombudsperson for Children

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-09 September 2022

Group Work - Becoming a Creative Storywriter



Creative storytelling is a fun and interactive activity which can be replicated for children as a pedagogical tool.



4.3.2. OCO's second mission to Rodrigues from 04 to 07 December 2022

OCO'S MISSION TO RODRIGUES FROM 04 TO 07 December 2022

05 December 2022

- Launching of the OC's Annual Report 2021-2022 in Rodrigues
- Venue: Cotton Bay Resort & Spa, Rodrigues
- Invitees: Commissioner for Child Development and Others, Speaker of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, Minority Leader, Departmental Heads of the Office of the Chief Commissioner, the Commission for Child Development and the Commission for Education, Representatives of Residential Care Institutions, the Child Development Unit, Brigade pour la protection de la famille, Police Department, MAM, NEF and Social Workers
- Visit to the Residential Care Institution at Baladirou

06 December 2022

- One-day workshop on '*Strengthening the chain of protection for children with serious behavioural concerns and in conflict with the law*'
- Venue: Cotton Bay Resort & Spa, Rodrigues
- Participants: Commissioner and Departmental Head of Child Development, Divisional Commander, Officers of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre, the CDU and the Commission of Education, Representatives from NGOs and Residential Care Institutions

“State Parties undertake to make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike.”

~ Article 42(2), UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-07 December 2022

Launching of the OC's Annual Report 2021-2022 in Rodrigues

Conference room,
Cotton Bay Resort & Spa
05 December 2022

The OC launched the Ombudsperson for Children's Annual Report 2021/2022 in the presence of Mr. Christian Leopold, Chairperson of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, Ms. Rose Marie Franchette Gaspard Pierre Louis, CSK, Minority Leader, Ms. M. A Nicolas, Departmental Head of the Commission for Child Development and Others, the Acting Head and Officers of the CDU, Representatives of RCI, Police, and Probation and Aftercare Services. The launching ceremony was held in the presence of stakeholders who work in the field of child rights in Rodrigues.



In the picture on the left:
Mrs Franchette Gaspard Pierre Louis (first from the front left), Minority Leader and Mr Christian Leopold (second from the front left) Chairperson of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly listening to the presentation of the Ombudsperson for Children.

The OC had an open discussion with the Rodriguan stakeholders after the presentation of the OC's Annual Report 2021-2022. The guests expressed their views on several aspects of children's rights in their families and at school and on factors which could have prevented children to be removed and placed in RCIs. They also gave examples of cases where children have developed challenging behaviours due to certain situations which could have been prevented. The OC then presented the soft copies of the Annual Report 2021-2022 to the organisations/institutions present.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-07 December 2022

**Workshop on
“Strengthening the
chain of protection
for children with
serious behavioural
concerns and in
conflict with the
law”**

**Conference room,
Cotton Bay Resort and Spa
06 December 2022**

The Ombudsperson for Children organised a one- day workshop on the theme “Strengthening the chain of protection for children with serious behavioural concerns and in conflict with the law.” Fifty-one participants attended this workshop, of whom 40 were Police Officers. The other participants were from the Probation and Aftercare Services, the Rehabilitation Youth Centre, the Child Development Unit, the Commission of Education, the Brigade pour la protection de la famille and NGOs. The objective of the workshop was to discuss the new provisions in the Children’s Act 2020 with a focus on sections 41 and 42 on children with serious behavioural concerns and sections 49 and 50 on the minimum age of criminal responsibility of children.



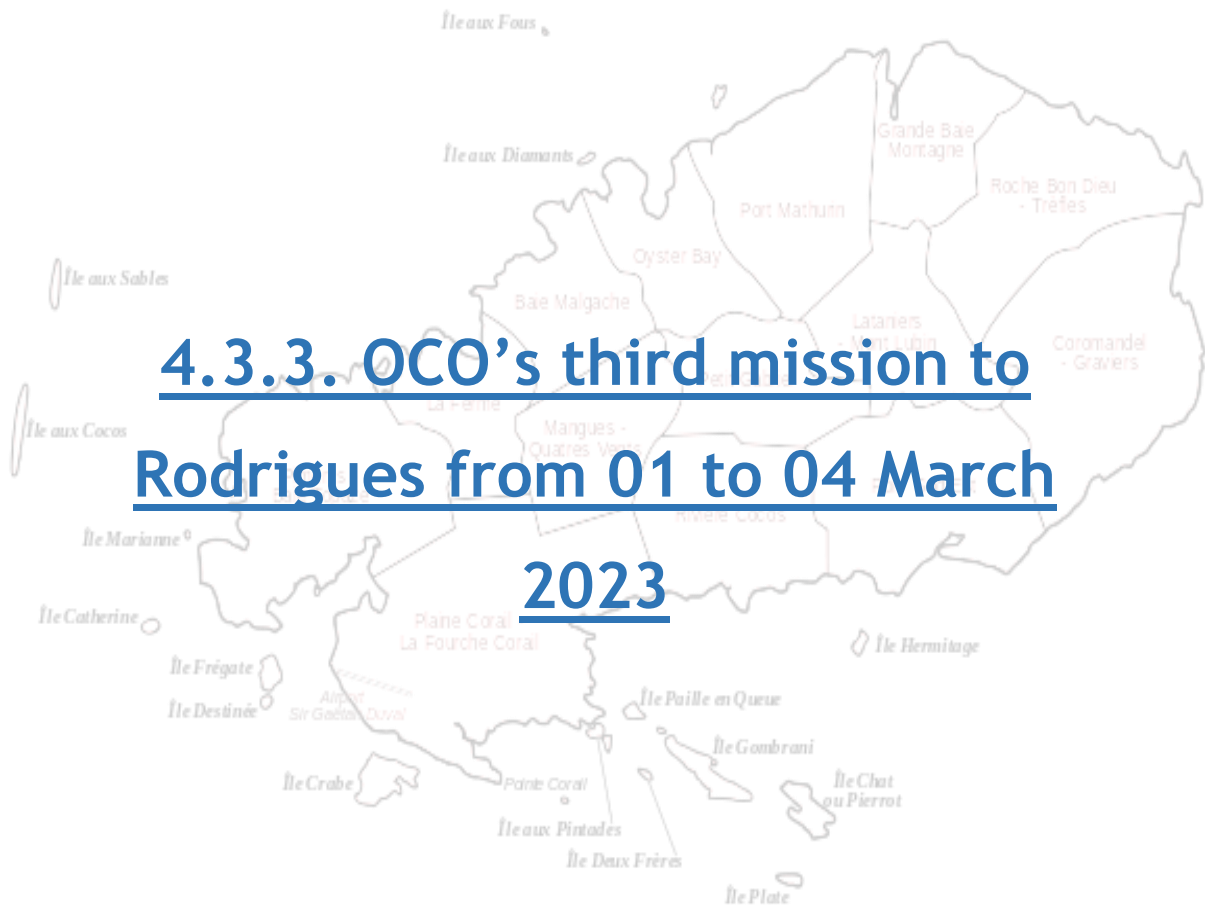
From the left: Mr. D. Goundory, Departmental Head of the Commission of Education; Mrs. L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO; Mrs. R. Venkatasawmy, Ombudsperson for Children; and Mr. Russeawon, Divisional Commander, Rodrigues.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 04-07 December 2022



The sessions were very interactive. The participants engaged actively in the discussions. Some of them explained their understanding of sections 41 and 42. The definition of children with serious behavioural concerns was examined in detail. The challenges which government stakeholders had to face while implementing section 41 were also discussed. Some of these problems were:

- *There are no RYC for girls, Probation Home or Hostel in Rodrigues;*
- *Non-cooperation of responsible parties of children in the procedures;*
- *Lack of CDU and Probation Officers in Rodrigues;*
- *Child Mentoring Scheme is not well established;*
- *Children suffering from negative peer pressure, bullying or mental health issues do not receive appropriate treatment and support.*



4.3.3. OCO's third mission to Rodrigues from 01 to 04 March 2023

OCO'S MISSION TO RODRIGUES FROM 01 TO 04 March 2023

01 March 2023	02 March 2023	03 March 2023	04 March 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrival • Visit to St Edycs Centre, La Ferme • Visit to St Esprit RCA School, La Ferme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit to Antoinette Prudence RCA School, Lataniers • Visit to the Development and Learning Centre for Disabled Children, Malabar • Visit to Gonzagues Pierre Louis Special Learning Centre, Camp du Roi • Visit to Rodrigues College, St Barnabas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-day workshop with stakeholders working with children with Special Needs including children with disabilities at Koki Boner, Cotton Bay • Visit at Foyer Marie Madelaine de la Croix, Baladirou 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departure

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 01-04 March 2023

Visit to EDYCS Help to Grow Educational and Rehabilitation Centre

La Ferme
01 March 2023

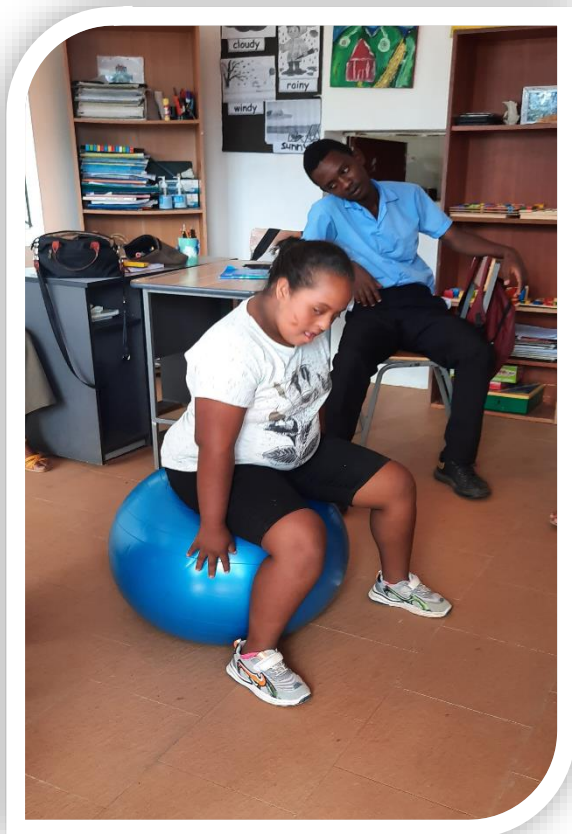
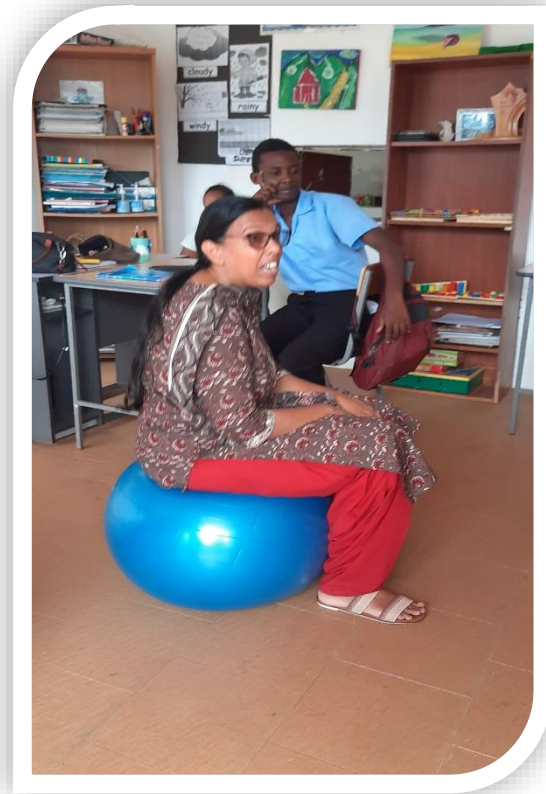
EDYCS Rodrigues was set up in 2012. It runs a SEN School at La Ferme which caters for 13 children with multiple disabilities. It employs a Manager, two teachers and two assistant teachers. The Manager, Mrs Arnachellum, told the OC that the staff needs training. They are ready to follow courses even if these are dispensed online. She also raised the problem of the salaries of teachers and assistant teachers, which were on the same figure. The OC inquired about any support EDYCS got from the SENA. The Manager stated that the organisation obtained a one-off grant of Rs 100 000 to purchase educational equipment. However, the material purchased were not appropriate for SEN pupils. The OC brought some specialised materials and demonstrated how to use them.



The Ombudsperson for Children (first from the right) and the Secretary of the OCO (second from the right) discussing with Mrs. Arnachellum (first from the left), Manager of EDYCS Rodrigues, about the challenges the centre is facing to provide quality services to its pupils.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 01-04 March 2023

The Ombudsperson for Children introduced specialised materials like the weighted blanket, the physio ball and an adapted spoon for people with disabilities. She demonstrated how to use the physio ball in different ways and depending on the type of disability.



After the demonstration, pupils and members of the staff were keen to try the exercises. This moment was quite fun for them. Their reactions were very positive.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 01-04 March 2023

Visit to St Esprit RCA Integrated School

La Ferme
01 March 2023

St Esprit RCA School situated at La Ferme is one of the two primary schools, ran by the Roman Catholic Educational Authority, which proposes an integrated approach in the education of children with special education needs. The integrated classes fall under the responsibility of the Headmistress. Pupils with special education needs are also admitted in the mainstream class. The specialised teacher has received training at the MIE. The school has also invested on a few specialised materials. However, one considerable problem the school is facing is that there is only one Occupational Therapist in Rodrigues.



Specialised materials purchased by the school for the benefit of children with special education needs.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 01-04 March 2023



The Ombudsperson for Children (first from the right) discussing with the teacher about the types of special education needs he works with, how the screening is done among the pupils and how the materials are being used.



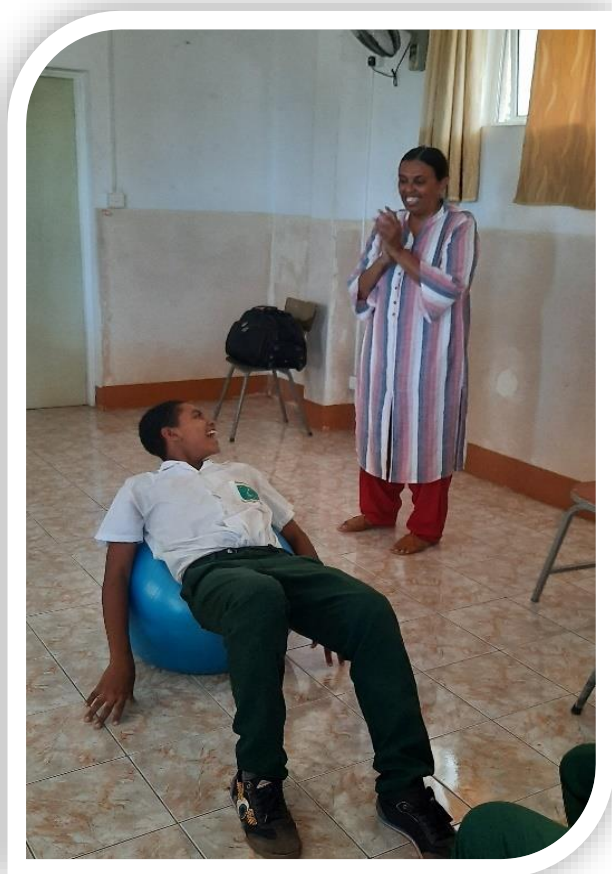
Special activities to stimulate the brain are also provided to pupils on tablets.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 01-04 March 2023

Visit to Rodrigues College

St Barnabas Department,
Port Mathurin
02 March 2023

Rodrigues College has enrolled a few pupils with Special Education Needs in the Extended Education Classes. They have two pupils with mental health problems, one of whom is on the autistic spectrum. The Rector and the Section Leader try their best to give special attention to these children. There are also other pupils with learning difficulties and behavioural problems. The OC introduced the use of the physio-ball, weighted blanket and sound muffs to some teachers and the pupils at the College.



A child overcoming his shyness and fears volunteered to perform a difficult move on the physio ball as demonstrated by the Ombudsperson for Children.



A girl participating in an exercise aiming at sensitising the audience on the problems which a person with visual disability may face in his/her everyday life. This exercise was very enlightening to the other pupils too.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 01-04 March 2023

Workshop on the Right to Quality Care and Education of Children with Disabilities including Children with Special Education Needs

**Conference Hall, Villa Koki Boner, Cotton Bay
03 March 2023**

In view of sensitising major stakeholders working with children with disabilities and children with special education needs on the latter's right to quality care and education, the OC organised a one-day workshop at Villa Koki Boner on Friday 03 March 2023.

The objectives of the workshop were to

- a) discuss the present situation in the SEN Sector in Rodrigues;*
- b) identify challenges faced by the actors in the field; and*
- c) introduce instructional materials to the stakeholders to improve the services they provide to SEN pupils.*



263 persons which include representatives of the Commission for Education and the Roman Catholic Education Authority, Social Workers, SEN Educators, and Managers, Headmasters and Educators of integrated schools attended the workshop.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 01-04 March 2023



The OC used a participatory approach to involve the attendees in practical activities such as use of the weighted blanket to elicit a calming effect (see picture on the left). The OC believes that sensitisation must be experiential instead of instructional to make the content more meaningful. Using a weighted blanket is an effective way to comfort a child with disability.



Mrs. R. Venkatasawmy, OC (first from the right), and Mr. Joseph Prosper, Specialised Educator (first from the left), demonstrating the different ways to use the physio ball.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 01-04 March 2023

Discussions with the RCEA on the Integrated Approach

During her visits to the two RCEA schools, the OC had in-depth discussions with Mr Tolbize and Mr Prosper, teachers at the St Esprit RCA and Antoinette Prudence RCA respectively. Both teachers had trained in special modules in SEN Education at the MIE while doing their Diploma in Education. They explained that, out of the five RCEA schools, two have special facilities for SEN pupils. They pointed out that there is no Occupational Therapist or Speech Therapist in Rodrigues. They informed the OC that the special materials in their respective schools were acquired by Dr. Anick Tolbize, Manager of the RCEA in Rodrigues.

The OC also met Dr A. Tolbize who has a PhD in Educational Psychology. She expressed her appreciation on the efforts made by the RCEA in Rodrigues to include children with special education needs in the education system. She stressed on the importance to recruit Occupational Therapists and to set up multi-sensory rooms which are essential in the care and education of SEN pupils.

The OC also discussed the situation in the NGOs working with SEN pupils where there is a lack of training, assistive devices, specialised materials and adequate infrastructure. She requested the RCEA to share its knowledge and knowhow with the NGOs. She discussed with Dr A. Tolbize on inviting NGOs and creating a network where the NGOs can get support. It should be highlighted that, on the last day of the workshop, Dr Tolbize held a meeting with the NGOs and her staff involved in SEN.



From the left Mr Joseph Prosper, Educator; Mr Orlando Auguste, Educator; and Dr Anick Tolbize, Manager of the Roman Catholic Educational Authority, Rodrigues.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 01-04 March 2023

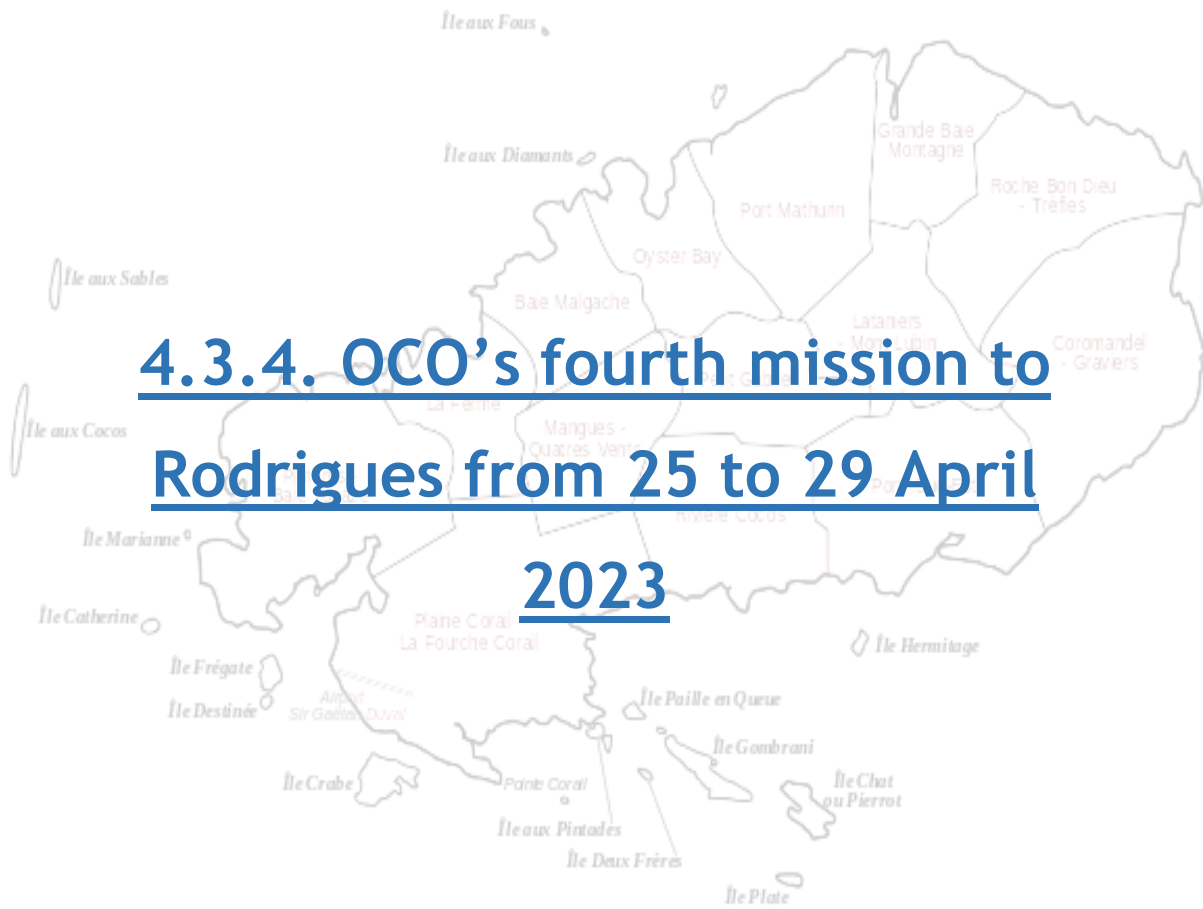
Concluding Remarks on the Mission to Rodrigues 01-04 March 2023

This mission to Rodrigues was a very fruitful one. The Ombudsperson for Children (OC) got an insight on how care and education were provided in NGO-run schools. Despite their goodwill and determination, the SEN educators faced challenges in providing quality services to the children. The OC listened to their perspectives. They wanted more training by professionals which means that they are committed to their job. They also need more resources, starting with a decent salary. They need to be valued for their job. Moreover, they were not aware enough of specialised materials like the physio-balls, weighted blankets or ear muffs that could be used with children with disabilities. Now that they have been exposed to these materials, they need funds to purchase them.

The OC also took cognizance of the education programme proposed in two integrated RCA schools. Both schools acquired physio-balls and other specialised materials. However, their use is quite restricted due to a lack of adapted space. In both schools, it was the Headmistress who oversaw the SEN classes. The OC stressed on the need to recruit Occupational Therapists and set up multi-sensory rooms. The Manager of the RCEA played an important role in the setting up of the two integrated schools, having herself studied SEN during her PhD in Educational Psychology. The OC invited her to provide support to NGO-run schools.



The OC discussing the problems which participants face in performing their job.



OCO'S MISSION TO RODRIGUES FROM 25 TO 29 April 2023

Aim	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote a culture of peace among children in primary schools and initiate inclusive education in the mainstream education system in Rodrigues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 primary schools were visited from 25 to 28 April 2023 Headmasters/Headmistresses, Primary School Educators and Students of Grades 4 to 6 participated fully in the promotion of a culture of peace in their respective schools.

“A respectful, supportive child-rearing environment free from violence supports the realization of children’s individual personalities and fosters the development of social, responsible and actively contributing citizens in the local community and larger society. Research shows that children who have not experienced violence and who develop in a healthy manner are less likely to act violently, both in childhood and when they become adults. Preventing violence in one generation reduces its likelihood in the next.”

~ Paragraph 14, General Comment No. 13 on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011)

Why Promoting a Culture of Peace in Primary Schools?

During this visit, the OC promoted a culture of peace in all Primary Schools of Rodrigues with a view to sensitise all children of Rodrigues that they have rights. Alongside, they have the responsibility to respect their parents, teachers and classmates including those with disabilities. Parents, elders, teachers and childcare professionals are the main agents to making positive changes in children's lives. Children tend to learn from adults and develop mindsets and patterns of behaviour. Adults must embody compassion, respect for others, appreciation of difference and diversity, and peaceful resolution of conflict.

The OC also laid emphasis on article 31 of the UNCRC which recognised the rights of the child to rest, leisure and play. Play and recreation are essential to the health and well-being of children, and contribute to all aspects of learning. They enhance the development of creativity, imagination, self-confidence, self-efficacy, as well as physical, social, cognitive and emotional strength and skills of children.

Furthermore, the OC advocates for an inclusive education system for children with disabilities. Children with disabilities are still experiencing significant difficulties and barriers to the full enjoyment of their rights as enshrined in the UNCRC. The specific educational needs of all children, including those with disabilities should be taken into consideration. An inclusive education system, starting in the early years of development, and aimed at responding to the educational needs of each student through a child-centred pedagogical approach and a flexible and adapted curriculum can help each child develop his or her full potential.

In this regard, article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities promotes that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation, sport and leisure activities, including in the mainstream school system. Pro-active measures are needed to remove barriers and promote accessibility to and availability of inclusive opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in all these activities. This can be achieved through adapting the curriculum, teaching and organisation of learning and providing the necessary human and material resources to enable a conducive learning environment for all.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 25-29 April 2023



Two right-handed students of Anse Qitor Community School trying to write their names using their left hand. The OC explained to the children how difficult it is for children with disabilities who have hand deformities or malformations to write properly.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 25-29 April 2023



The OC was demonstrating to children of Grand La Fouche Corail Government School that they should respect and help children with disabilities. The student in the picture above was trying to read contents of the book held upside down by the OC.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 25-29 April 2023



The OC went in search of the King of Ste Thérèse De l'Enfant Jésus RCA School with her big spectacles. Finally, the magical suitcase was opened!

Promotion of children’s rights in Rodrigues: Mission 25-29 April 2023



The OC asked the children on how they would help a child with disabilities. Each of them was crowned with special hats from her magical suitcase on their responses including the hat of the king, the queen, the king of football, the magical band, the umbrella, the queen of the forest, and Disneyland.



Singing and storytelling are pedagogical ways to captivate the attention of students and sensitise them on their rights. In the picture on the left, the OC was interacting with the students of Batatran Govt School on whether children with disabilities have rights.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 25-29 April 2023



The OC using her big comb to encourage students to come to school neat and clean



The OC explaining that children with dreadlocks have the same right as other children

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 25-29 April 2023



A born leader was crowned King at the Father Ronald Gandy RCA School. The child expressed himself freely in front of the audience and gave a brilliant speech.



At Araucaria Community Government School, both students and the Headmistress showed their interest and enthusiasm in the promotion of child rights.

Promotion of children's rights in Rodrigues: Mission 25-29 April 2023

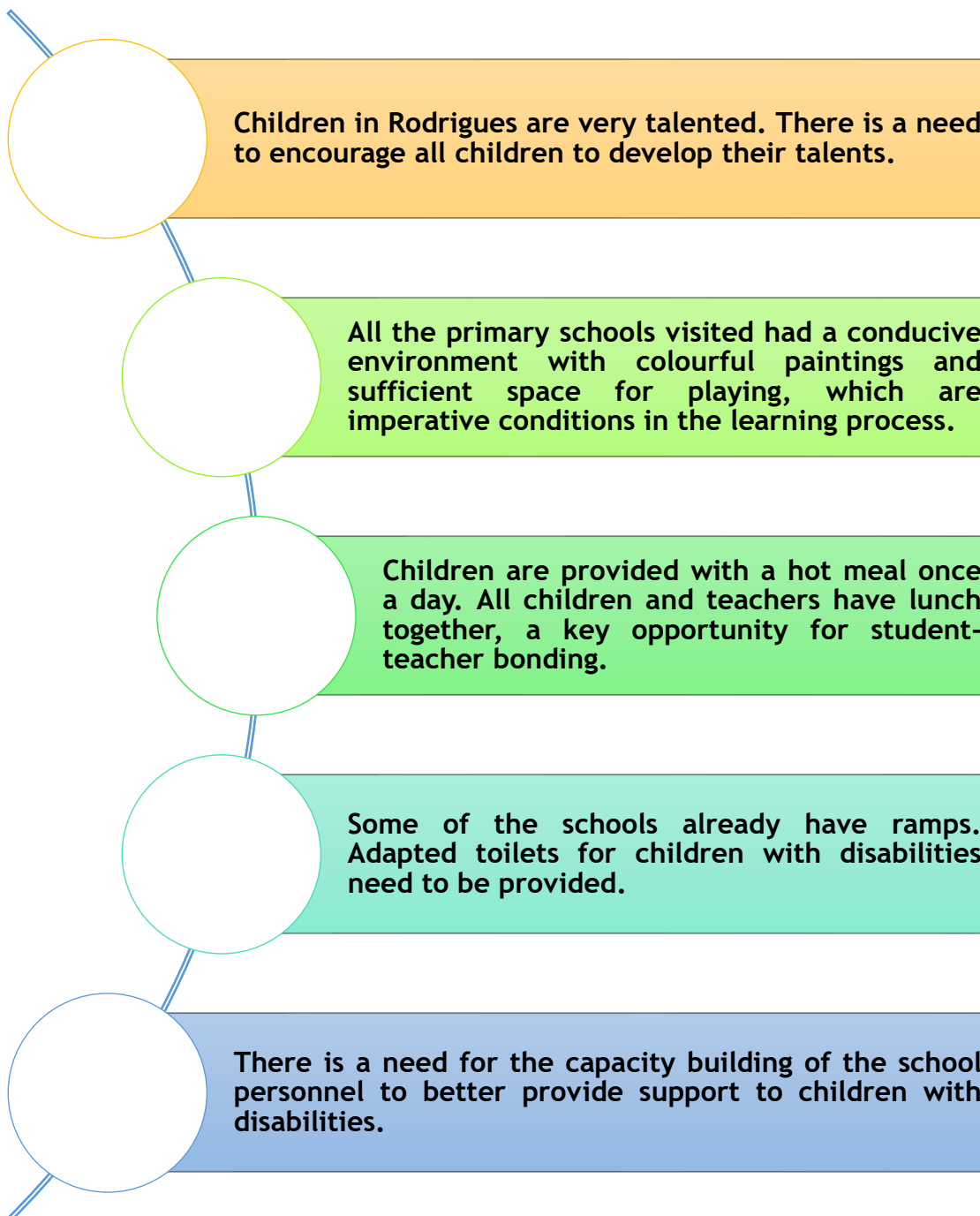


Children captivated by the OC's story



Proud to be the Princes and Princesses of Mont Charlot Community Government School!

Observations during the mission to Rodrigues 25-29 April 2023





4.4. International Missions of the OCO



4.4.1. Study tour / exchange programme in Oslo, Norway from 17 to 22 October 2022

STUDY TOUR/EXCHANGE PROGRAMME IN OSLO, NORWAY FROM 17 TO 22 October 2022

17 October 2022

- Meeting with the senior advisors at the Office of the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children
- Meeting with the Representatives of the SOS Children's Villages in Norway

18 October 2022

- Visit to Margarinfabrikken Barnehage (Margarine Factory Kindergarten)

**19 - 21 October
2022**

- Visit to Holmen Skole (Elementary School)
- Meeting at the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (BUFDIR)
- Meeting at the Barnevernsvakten (Child Welfare Emergency Unit)

Study tour to Oslo, Norway

Why a study tour in Norway?

Targeted offices in
Oslo, Norway
17-21 October 2022

Four Investigators of the OCO went for a study tour in Oslo, Norway, and visited offices related to their field. Norway is known to be one of the most child-friendly countries in the world, having several family-friendly policies. Norway, like other Scandinavian Countries is an avant-gardist country in child-related matters. Besides, the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children is the world's first Ombudsman for Children, established in 1981. The OCO was based on the Norwegian model of the Ombudsman for Children.



General information on Norway

Objectives of the study tour:

- (i) To understand the work of the Ombudsman for Children of Norway and other authorities catering for children;
- (ii) To share experiences and best practices in the field of the promotion and the protection of children's rights; and
- (iii) To visit educational institutions catering for children in Oslo, Norway.

Study tour to Oslo, Norway

Meeting with the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children

Torgatta 2-4 0181
Oslo, Norway
17 October 2022

On 17 October 2022, the delegation of the Ombudsperson for Children's Office comprising of 4 Investigators namely Mr. I. A. Bawamia, Mrs. Y. R. Veeramootoo, Mrs. S. P. Mauree and Mrs. S. Johaheer paid a courtesy visit to the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children, Ms. Inga Bejer Engh, at her office in Oslo. The Investigators then met with the senior advisors of the Ombudsman for Children namely Ms. S. S. Hasle and Ms. E. S. Kjørholt in their conference room where they had the opportunity to exchange experiences and best practices in the field of the protection of children's rights.



Exchange of experiences and best practices between the Ombudsman for Children's Office (Norway) and the OCO in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation.

The Norwegian Ombudsman for Children, or Barneombud (Norwegian language), is the world's first Ombudsperson for Children and its Office was established by the Parliament through the Children's Ombudsman Act 1981. The Ombudsman for Children's Office is a national, independent supervisory body with a statutory mandate to monitor and promote children's rights in Norway. There are currently 19 staff members working at the Ombudsman for Children's Office; 5 advisors working directly with the Ombudsman for Children; 4 are involved in communication-related work and 10 are technical staff members.

Study tour to Oslo, Norway

Meeting with Representatives of SOS Children's Village (Norway)

Oslo, Norway
17 October 2022

On 17 October 2022, the delegation of the Ombudsperson for Children's Office met with representatives of SOS Children's Village, namely Sissel Aarak, General Secretary; Morten Nurvawg, Team Leader; Bente Jorgensen, Program Advisor; Maria Reklev, Advisor; and Samuel Sanders, International Programs Manager. The meeting enabled the OCO to gain an insight into the work and projects being undertaken by this organisation.



Mr I. A. Bawamia (first from the right) presenting a token of heartfelt appreciation, a Mauritius's map souvenir, to the Head of SOS Children's Village of Norway (second from the right)

The SOS Children's Village in Norway was established in 1964 and has grown to be one of the largest NGOs in Norway with emphasis on child development work. The organisation works nationally to ensure that children grow up with good care in a family. They work to strengthen families in crisis so that they can take care of their children themselves, and that new, safe families are established for children in need of it. SOS Children's Villages work together with municipalities and other agencies to develop and disseminate models to ensure that more children have a safe upbringing and good care.

Study tour to Oslo, Norway

Visit to Margarinfabrikken Barnehage (Margarine Factory Kindergarten)

Bjølseren, Oslo
18 October 2022

The delegation visited the Margarinfabrikken kindergarten, the biggest kindergarten in Oslo, on 18 October 2022 and was welcomed by Mrs Jane Lilleberg, the Director, and by Mrs Pamela Calou, a Mauritian national working at the institution. This public institution is run under the aegis of the Commune of Oslo. The kindergarten can accommodate a population of around 500 children aged 1 to 6 years old. It is located in an old Margarine Factory which has been redesigned as a kindergarten after its closure. It comprises of two buildings, one catering for children aged 1 to 3 years old and the other one for children from 4 to 6 years old.



The school yard is a big playground where all children have enough space to do outdoor activities of their choice. It comprises nine different zones that contain, among other things, climbing frames, sandboxes, swings, bike path, slides, mazes, grass areas, a stage and a ship structure.



Inside the buildings, the kindergarten contains different child-friendly common rooms where various activities and learning opportunities can be organised. They have, among other things, a theatre/drama room, a gymnasium, a climbing room, a library and multimedia room, and a water playroom.

Study tour to Oslo, Norway

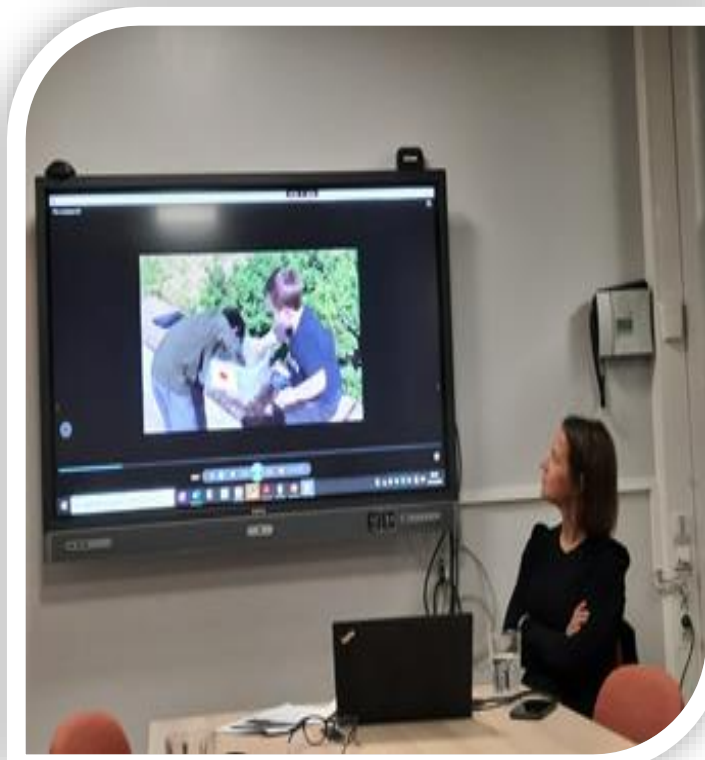
Visit to Holmen School



The Holmen School

The Holmen School is a public educational institution located in Bjornveien, Oslo. It was opened in August 2018 with 1st and 2nd grade pupils. In 2022, the school had a student population of 473 pupils from ages 6 to 11 years (1st to 6th grades). In 2023, it has become a full-scale elementary school with children from 1st to 7th grades and has a school population of around 600 children. It employs about 120 dedicated teachers and other employees to teach and take care of the children.

The OCO delegation visited the Holmen School on 19 October 2022. The visit was coordinated by the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Mauritius in Norway. The aim of the visit was to see how inclusive education was implemented at the school. The OCO delegation was welcomed by the Headmaster, Ms Bente Talasen Boye, and by the Head of the Department of PLUSS, Ms Giske Valdar. Ms Boye showed the delegation a presentation on the school before conducting a visit of the school premises and different departments.



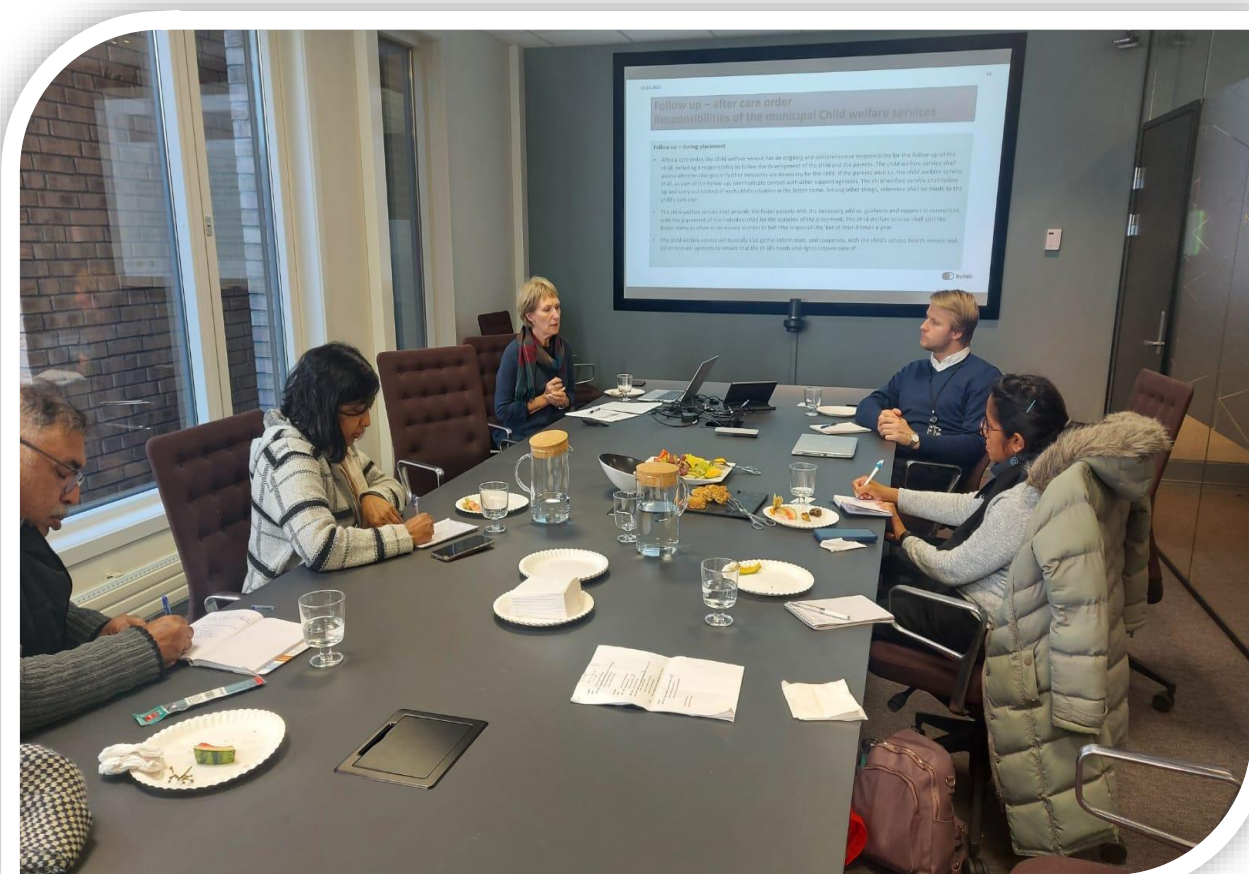
The Headmaster showing a video on the activities of the school

Study tour to Oslo, Norway

Meeting at the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (BUFDIR)

Oslo, Norway
20 October 2022

On 20 October 2022, the OCO’s delegation met with Mrs. U. Nygaard, Special Adviser, and Mr. E. Rydland, Adviser at the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (BUFDIR). Through a presentation, they provided information on the different services of BUFDIR and on the management and operation of child welfare and family counselling.



Meeting at the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, Norway

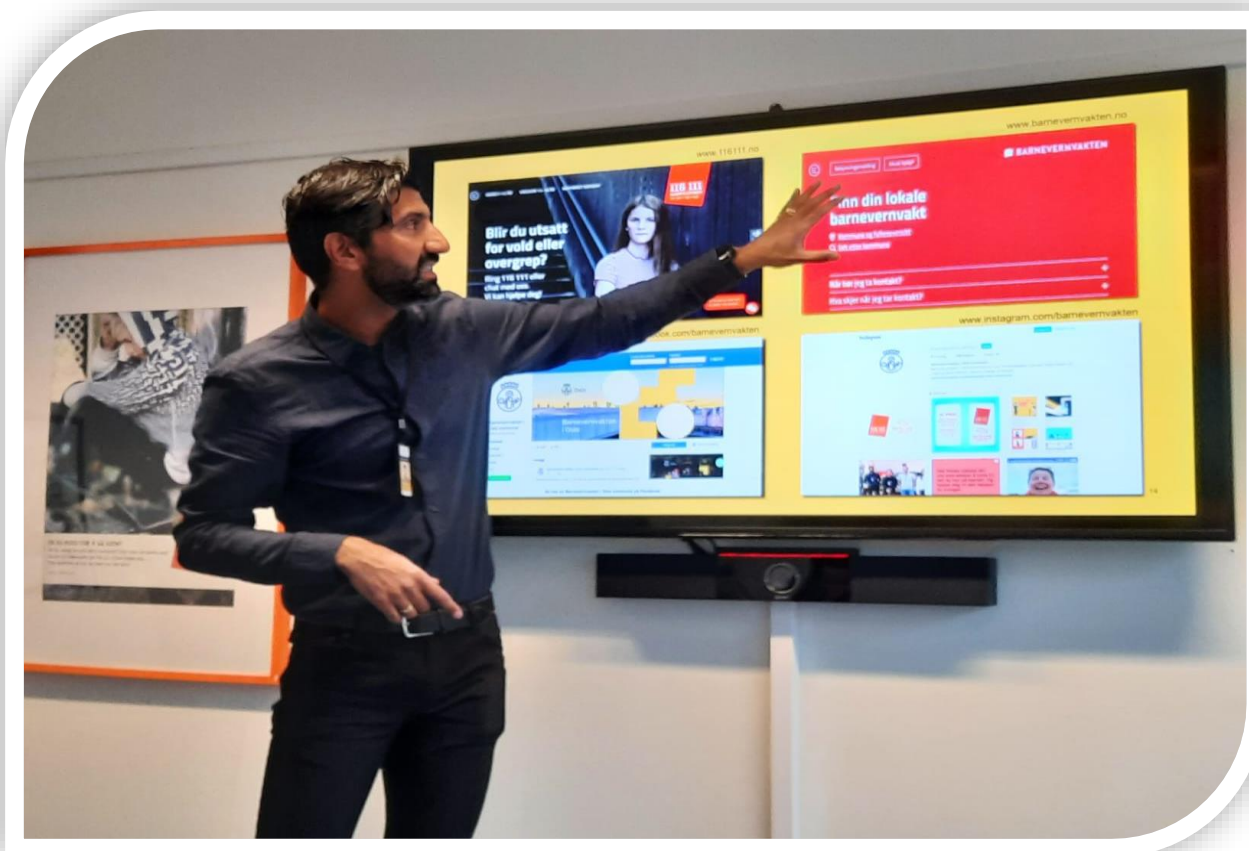
The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (BUFDIR) is a government administrative body under the aegis of the Ministry of Children and Families, based in Oslo. It is responsible for matters relating to state-funded child welfare services, family counselling and adoption. Its main task is to provide children, young people and families in need of help and support with appropriate, high-quality assistance in Norway.

Study tour to Oslo, Norway

Meeting at Barnevernsvakten in Oslo: Emergency Child Care Unit

Oslo, Norway
21 October 2022

During the OCO's delegation's study tour, the Investigators had a meeting at Barnevernsvakten, the Child Welfare Emergency Unit, located in the building of the Oslo Police District, on 21 October 2022. Mr. Younas Mohammad-Roe, Head of the Unit, delivered a presentation on the services offered by this department.



Presentation on the services offered by the Emergency Child Care Unit of Norway by Mr. Y. Mohammad-Roe

This unit is part of the Norwegian Child Protection Services. Norway has a revised law based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This Act must ensure that children and young people who live in conditions that may harm their health and development receive the necessary help, care and protection at the right time. The Act shall contribute to ensuring that children and young people are met with security, love and understanding and that all children and young people have good and safe growing up conditions.

Concluding Remarks of the OCO's Delegation on the Study Tour

The OCO's Investigators have had the opportunity to visit one of the most progressive countries in the world, which also often ranks globally in the first 10 happiest countries on Earth. From a human rights perspective, Norway works hard to stay on track to achieve the UN Sustainable Developmental Goals and the provisions of the UNCRC.

From the observations, and meetings with technicians of different state agencies, the OCO's delegation understood that Norway is as an inclusive society in terms of group identities, including race, ethnicity, gender, and disability. Besides, research shows that Norway scores high on the inclusiveness index.

Education in Norway is based on the principle of inclusion. Inclusive education is a fundamental principle in Norwegian primary and secondary education. It means that all children and young people receive education in an atmosphere of mutual collaboration and respect, irrespective of their gender, social background, ethnic, religious or linguistic affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. Each pupil has an opportunity to learn in a way that is adapted to their talents and abilities. Norway also spends significant amounts of resources on providing special educational support and special needs education.

Norway is known to have a high level of social and family stability, and provides an equality model for health, child care, and social growth. In the delegation's view, the way children are treated in Norway can be considered as an epitome of children's rights.

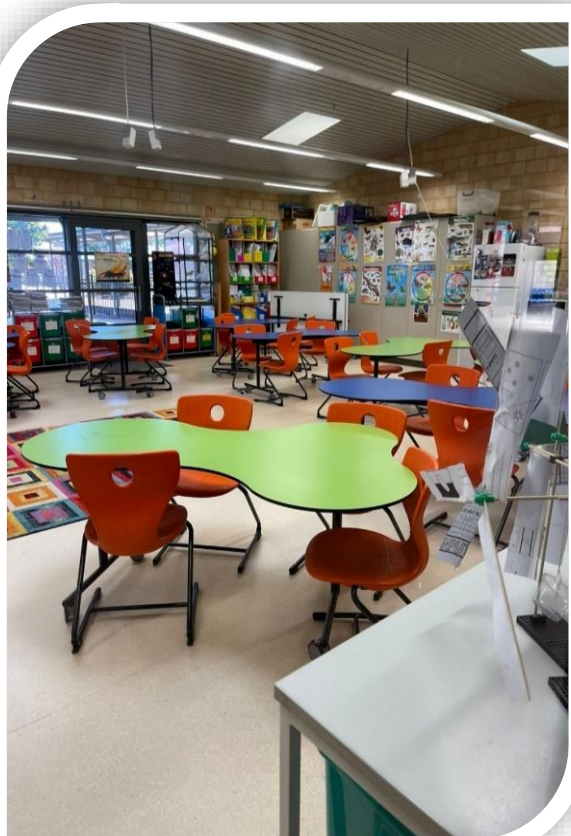


4.4.2. Children with Special Needs: Visit to schools in Perth, Western Australia from 21 to 23 November 2022

Study visit of the OC

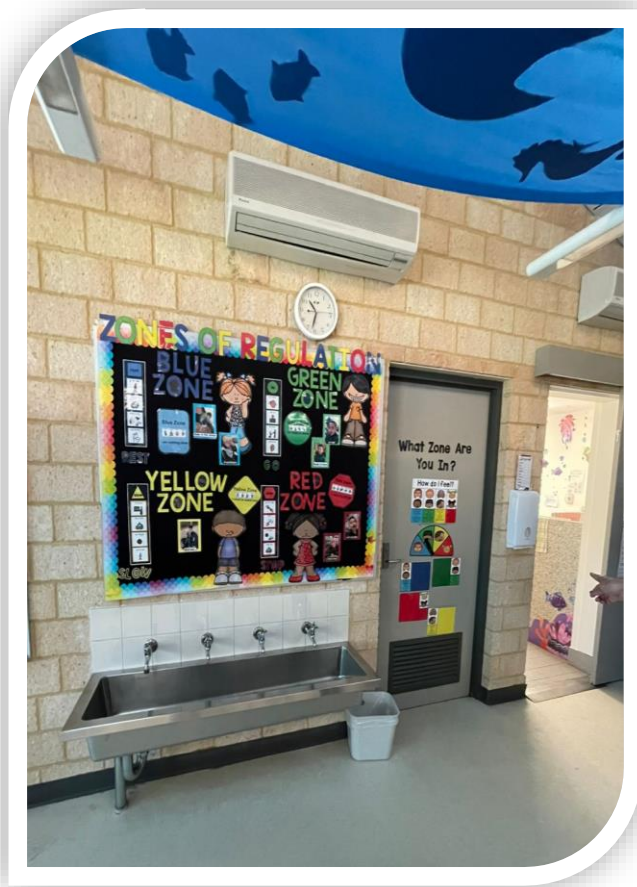
Perth,
Western Australia
21-23 November
2022

Australia is renowned for its infrastructure and the education it provides to children with special needs, particularly those with disabilities. The main aim of the OC's study visit in Australia was to visit primary and secondary schools operating under the Australian model of inclusive education, and to take inspiration from this model to make recommendations for our local education system, especially on what could be put in place for children with special needs. The visits were very enlightening and informative.



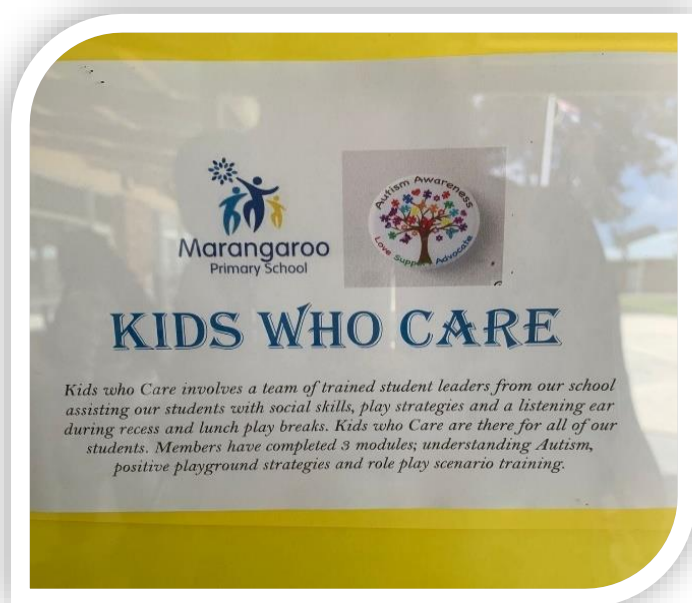
The schools and services visited by the OC were namely Success Primary School, Atwell College, Statewide Services SSEN Sensory, Statewide Services SSEN Disability, Marangaroo Primary School and Ashdale Secondary College. The OC also met the Western Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People. All schools provide a supportive environment for children with special needs. The classrooms are spacious, bright and colourfully decorated. The equipment is appropriate and of good quality. All special schools can benefit from the equipment, which are adapted to the individual needs of the children.

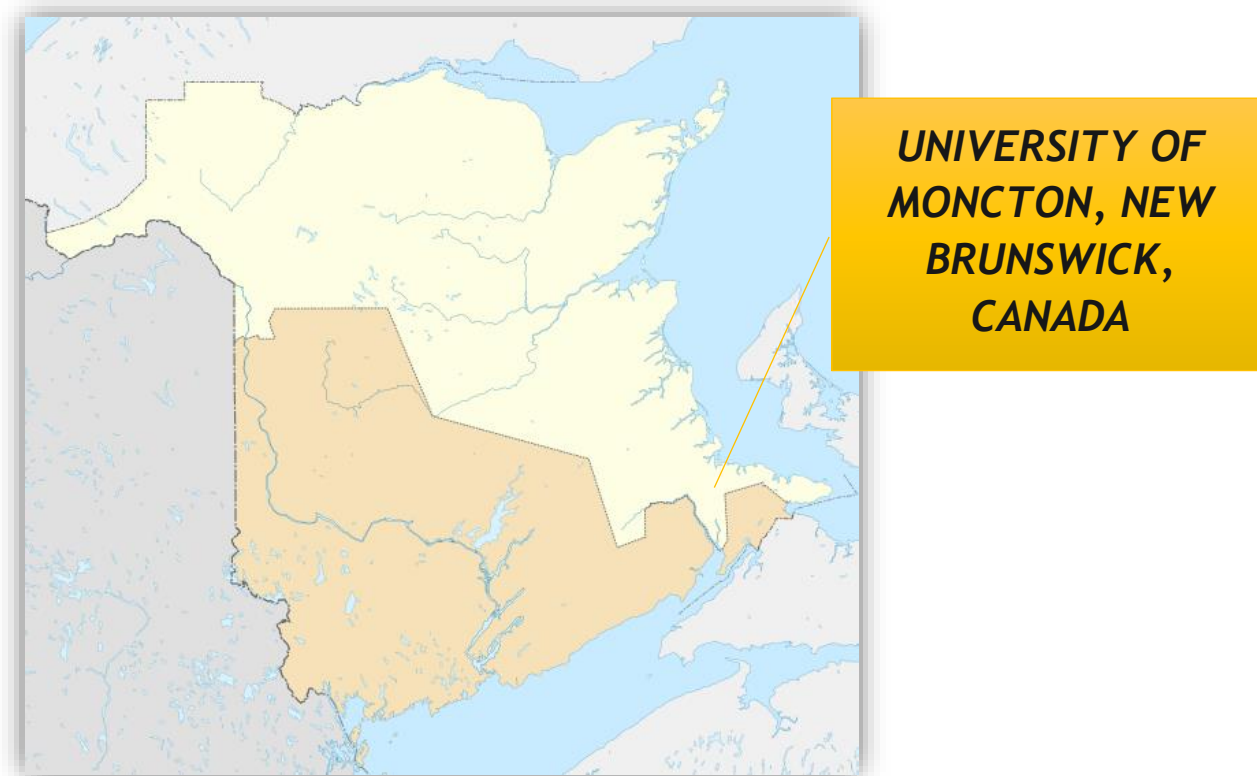
Study Visit in Western Australia



In Australia, programmes have been set up to teach children how to manage their emotions. Thanks to panels like this one (as shown in the picture on the left), they are taught to manage feelings through effective social emotional learning in a fun way. There is even a room where they can go to in a crisis. This programme is called **Zones of Regulation**. The Zones of Regulation provide an easy way to think and talk about how we feel on the inside and sorts emotions into four coloured zones, all of which are expected in life. For example, the blue zone corresponds to feelings of sadness, tiredness, boredom and sickness. The yellow zone corresponds to a child who is worried, frustrated, silly, or excited. The green zone is for happiness, focus, calmness and pride. Finally, the red zone indicates a child who is overjoyed, elated, panicked, angry, or terrified.

The photo on the right was taken at the Marangaroo Primary School, where the OC met Principal Adrian Keenan. He explained to the OC that behaviour management is a lot of work for the staff. This is why they have a very organised structure and system in place.





**4.4.3. International Summer
Course on the Rights of the Child
from 25 to 30 June 2023 at the
University of Moncton, New
Brunswick, Canada**

International Summer Course on the Rights of the Child, Canada

International Summer Course on the Rights of the Child

University of Moncton,
New Brunswick,
Canada
25-30 June 2023

The International Summer Course on the Rights of the Child organised jointly by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate of New Brunswick, Canada, and the University of Moncton, Canada, is a yearly event which privileges exchanges among professionals working with children globally. It contributes to the promotion of best practices and the rights of the child as fundamental human rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The 12th Edition of the Summer Course focused on a collective reflection on issues related to activism and civic participation of children and young people in relation to article 12 of the UNCRC.



Along with non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, and the survival and development of the child, participation is one of the main principles of the UNCRC. This principle is guaranteed under article 12(1) of the UNCRC which provides that “States Parties shall assure to 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, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”. Moreover, article 13(1) is the basis for the realisation of article 12, and it states that “[t]he 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”. Children need to have access to appropriate information to express themselves in an informed way and influence decisions concerning them.

International Summer Course on the Rights of the Child, Canada

The main sub-themes covered in relation to children and young people during this one-week course were:

- (i) The right to the highest standard of healthcare and development (including the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment);*
- (ii) The education, inclusion and protection from discrimination;*
- (iii) Mental health and access to mental health services;*
- (iv) Participation in justice and political life; and*
- (v) Activism and civic engagement.*



Noel Millae (in the photo on the left), influential member of the First Nation (Native Indians) talked about how children from his community are denied their rights. Despite all the mechanisms established by the authorities, native children do not enjoy these rights. He advocated for an approach to make the rights of children accessible to all children. He stressed that all children do not have the same experiences of life and cultural backgrounds. He highlighted that there should not be a one-size-fits-all approach. We should rather consider the child's ancestral background, his/her present life experience and his/her cultural identity. He said that Native Indians have gone through a lot of injustice, violence and sufferings. These are still impacting on their life today. At the end of his address, in a Native Indian's traditional way, he called the spirits of the ancestors to bless this gathering.

Child participation in research and report writing

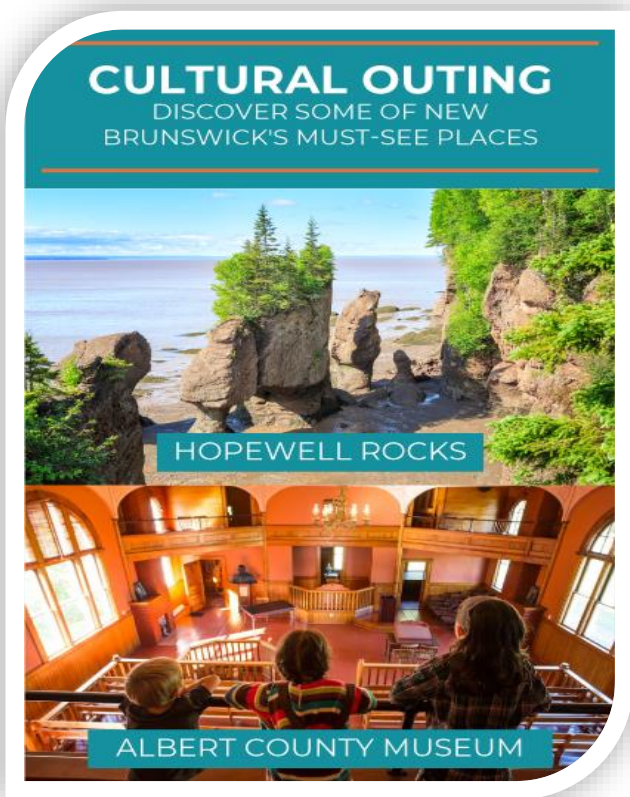
Several presenters elaborated on how children were involved in advocating for their rights in different sectors. For example, there was a presentation on the implication of young people in the drafting of the General Comment No. 15 on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013) and the General Comment No. 26 on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2023).

The “Défenseur des Enfants” of France also spoke on how children were involved in the preparation of the annual report which he submits to the President of the Republic. The children are given the opportunity to express their views to decision makers freely on matters concerning them. They are also given the opportunity, if they so wish, to present the topic they have worked on to Parliamentarians.



The Ombudsman for Children of the Republic of Ireland, Dr Niall Muldoon (first from the left in the picture on the left), delivered a presentation on the Children's Report of Ireland that was submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Report was prepared with the Youth Advisory Panel of the Ombudsman for Children's Office. The single biggest issue raised was mental health. An online qualitative survey was carried out to which 5,515 children responded and a focus group with 200 children was also organised. Mr I. A. Bawamia (first from the right in the picture on the left) had the unique opportunity to meet him during this event.

International Summer Course on the Rights of the Child, Canada



A cultural visit was organised on 28 June 2023 to help participants and interveners discover some of New Brunswick’s must-see places. This was also an opportunity for participants to bond and network in a relaxed atmosphere. The visits to the Hopewell Rocks at low and high tides were impressive. These rocks are still being shaped by the tides which can rise to more than nine metres high, a process happening since three millenia. Furthermore, the Albert County Museum depicts the history of the old capital of the Albert County, County Gaol. The Court Room was a highlight of the museum. Artifacts are still being preserved to depict the life of the inhabitants who lived there in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Child and Youth Advocate of New Brunswick, Mr Kelly Lamrock (picture on the right), made his State of the Child address during the workshop. He identified 3 urgent areas where the children of New Brunswick deserve better:

- **Literacy** - Give the child the ability to read and learn by the time they reach 8 years old
- **Mental Health** - Give teens the mental health services they need to feel safe and secure
- **Civics Education** - Give the next generation the tools to learn about and shape the world around them.



International Summer Course on the Rights of the Child, Canada

Youth participation in intergenerational dialogue

One very interesting project which was presented throughout this course is the International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership where 9 children from 5 continents worked with older children, researchers, and other professionals as a team in a Participatory Action Research Project. The children actively participated in shaping the research content and direction, in writing the research questions, deciding on research methodologies, data analysis and dissemination. This intergenerational dialogue was beneficial for both adults and children.



Mr. I.A. Bawamia (first from the left in the picture above), Investigator, participating in a group work on the Participatory Action Research Methodology

Concluding notes

Child participation is at the heart of any child rights-based approach. If a child does not have the opportunity to voice out his/her views on matters concerning him/her, all our actions as duty bearers may be irrelevant to the child's needs. As discussed during the course, the child's views should be heard in homes, schools, Courts and any other settings where children are involved to enjoy their rights. Article 13 of the UNCRC is complementary to article 12 of the same Convention in the sense that, along with the right to freedom of expression of the child, it provides for the right of the child to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kind, regardless of frontiers. We should stop considering children as adults of tomorrow, they are citizens in today's world and their voices count.



4.4.4. Seminar on Female Capacity Building for Developing Countries in Jinhua, Zhejiang Province, China from 14 to 27 July 2023

Seminar on Female Capacity Building for Developing Countries, China

Seminar on Female Capacity Building for Developing Countries

Jinhua, Zhejiang Province, China
14-27 July 2023

Investigator, Mrs. S. Johaheer (first from the right in the picture below) and Management Support Officer, Ms. K. Chellamootoo (second from the right in the picture below) were delegated by the Ombudsperson for Children to attend a seminar on “Female Capacity Building for Developing Countries” from 14 to 27 July 2023 in Jinhua, Zhejiang Province, China. The seminar consisted of a combination of lectures, study tours and cultural experiences. The main content covered the basics of national conditions of China, the theory and practice of women’s development and laws on the protection of the rights and interests of women and children.



Take-away messages from the seminar:

- The family is the foundation of the Chinese social structure. The Government invests thoroughly in programs that foster family values, traditions and filial unity. As President Xi Jinping puts it, “a family is the smallest unit of a nation while a nation is thousands of families put together”.
- China’s Ministry of Public Security has launched a special campaign from 1 March 2021 to 31 December 2021 to tackle the issue of trafficking of women and children. In 2021, the cases of trafficking in women and children dropped by 88.8% compared to those in 2013.

Seminar on Female Capacity Building for Developing Countries, China

Global development needs to be placed on a level that is more equal, inclusive and sustainable, and women’s development is an important criterion to gauge its progress. Protection of women’s rights and interests must become a commitment at national level. As China pursues post-COVID recovery, new opportunities must be created for women to participate in decision-making processes and be more involved in national, economic, cultural and social governance. Prejudice, discrimination and violence against women must be eliminated and gender equality must be made a social norm and a moral imperative observed by all.



Investigator, Mrs. S. Johaheer presenting on how the International Day of the Girl Child is celebrated at the OCO



4.5. Global List of Activities (September 2022 to August 2023)



4.5.1. Workshop, meetings and activities **ATTENDED BY** the staff of the OCO (Sep 2022-Aug 2023)



WORKSHOPS/MEETINGS/ACTIVITIES ATTENDED BY STAFF OF THE OCO

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ MEETINGS/ ACTIVITIES	ORGANISER/ VENUE(S)	ATTENDED BY
1.	09.09.22	Case conference	SSS Beau Bassin, Beau Bassin	Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
2.	20.09.22	Case Conference	B. Rosunee Government School, Bramsthan	Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
3.	03.10.22	Case Conference	Willoughby Government School, Mahebourg	Mrs B. Jogarah-Ramgoolam, Investigator
4.	12.10.22	Reflection on the Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association (MFPWA): Past, Present and Future, 65 th Anniversary Celebration	MFPWA, Domaine Anna, Flic-en-Flac	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
5.	15.10.22	50 th anniversary celebration on the theme of 'Children's Rights'	District Council Village Hall, Rivière des Anguilles	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
6.	27.10.22	20 th anniversary of the song "Ti Marmit"	ABAIM, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
7.	03.11.22	Workshop addressing child sexual abuse and teenage pregnancy in the Republic of Mauritius	Gold Crest Hotel, Quatre Bornes	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC (Invited as Chief Guest)
8.	04.11.22	Training session on the Children's Act 2020 with staff of the Loreto College Mahebourg	Loreto College Mahebourg	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC (Invited as Resource Person)

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ MEETINGS/ ACTIVITIES	ORGANISER/ VENUE(S)	ATTENDED BY
9.	08.11.22	The Dukesbridge Musical 2022 entitled 'Beauty and the Beast'	Dukesbridge, J & J Auditorium, Phoenix	Mrs R Venkatasawmy, OC (Invited as Chief Guest)
10.	09.11.22	3-day Symposium in connection with harmonising and promoting programmes and policies in inclusive and special education needs	SENA, Cote d'Or National Sports Complex	Mr I. A. Bawamia & Mrs S. P Mauree, Investigators
11.	11.11.22	10 th Anniversary of the Ruche, Quartier de Lumière on the theme « <i>Face à la pauvreté, l'éducation favorise l'intégration sociale : mythe ou réalité ?</i> »	Institut Cardinal Jean Margéot, Rose Hill	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
12.	15.11.22	Sharing of best practices and consolidating the collaboration between the OCO and the SOS Children's Villages	SOS Children's Village, Bambous	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
13.	18.11.22	APRIM - 35 th Anniversary Celebration and end of year party 2022	APRIM school ground, Roches Brunes	Mrs R Venkatasawmy, OC
14.	22.11.22	Consultative meeting on the situation at Marcel Cabon SSS	Zone 2 Directorate, METEST, Beau Bassin	Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
15.	08.12.22	Meeting with the National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF) in connection with children's rights	Hennessy Park Hotel, Ebène	Mrs S. P. Mauree, Investigator

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ MEETINGS/ ACTIVITIES	ORGANISER/ VENUE(S)	ATTENDED BY
16.	08.12.22	Half-day reflection workshop with school staff of CEDEM Vacoas on the theme 'How to improve the fulfilment of the rights of children with special education needs in the school environment'	CEDEM, La Caverne No.2, Vacoas	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC (Invited as Keynote Speaker)
17.	08.12.22	Launching of videos on 'Project Based Learning: School Gardening in Pre-Primary Schools'	Early Childhood Care and Education Authority, Paul Octave Wiehe Auditorium, Réduit	Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO
18.	09.12.22	CEDEM's Youth Educational workshop on 'Understanding our rights and responsibilities as young people'	CEDEM, Choice Palace, St. Paul	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
19.	10.12.22	Invitation on the occasion of the « <i>Journée Internationale des Droits de l'Homme</i> »	Dis-Moi, Municipal Council of Beau Bassin Rose Hill	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
20.	12.12.22	Reception in honour of the Diplomatic Corps to foster bilateral relations in Mauritius	Le Meridien Hotel, Pointe aux Piments	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
21.	23.12.22	Meeting at the MGEFW regarding the submission of the Country's Report to be submitted to the UNCRC	MGEFW, Newton Tower, Port Louis	Mr I. A. Bawamia & Mrs B. Jogarah-Ramgoolam, Investigators
22.	06.01.23	Meeting with His Excellency, Mr Prithvirajsing Roopun G.C.S.K, President of the Republic of Mauritius, in connection with the Annual Report 2021-2022 of the Ombudsperson for Children	Office of the President, State House, Réduit	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs L Jhugroo, Secretary & Mr I.A. Bawamia, Investigator

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ MEETINGS/ ACTIVITIES	ORGANISER/ VENUE(S)	ATTENDED BY
23.	07.01.23	Meeting with Ambassador Mrs Usha Canabady in relation to the submission of the Country Report of Mauritius to the UNCRC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Port Louis	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
24.	17.01.23 & 18.01.23	Meeting in relation to the reporting of the 6 th and 7 th Periodic Report of the Republic of Mauritius to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child	MGEFW, Newton Tower, Port Louis	Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
25.	26.01.23	Workshop on 'Sharing of Best Practices' with NGO Educators	TIPA, St Pierre	Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator (Delegated as resource person)
26.	30.01.23	Conference on 'Protecting Data Across All Economic Sectors'	Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Tower, Ebène	Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO
27.	08.02.23	Launching of the NSIF Impact Report 2022	Sir Harilall Vagjee Hall, Port Louis	Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO
28.	08.02.23 & 09.02.23	2-day Consultative Workshop on 'Implementation of the Children's Act: The Way Forward for the Rehabilitation Youth Centre and Probation Institutions'	Lecture Theatre, Prison Training School, Beau Bassin	Mrs Y. Rhungapen-Veeramootoo & Mrs S. P. Mauree, Investigators

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ MEETINGS/ ACTIVITIES	ORGANISER/ VENUE(S)	ATTENDED BY
29.	08.02.23	One-day workshop on sexual and reproductive health for women with disabilities	Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, Port Louis	Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
30.	15.02.23	Meeting of the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up	Council Chamber, Municipal City Council of Port-Louis	Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
31.	08.03.23	International Women's Day	BPS College, Beau Bassin	Mrs R Venkatasawmy, OC (Invited as Guest of Honour)
32.	07.04.23	Kick-off meeting regarding the implementation of the OC's recommendations on RCIs	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, Port Louis	Mr I. A. Bawamia & Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo, Investigators
33.	05.05.23	Follow-up meeting on the implementation of the OC's recommendations	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, Port Louis	Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO & Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
34.	09.05.23	Europe Day - Celebration of the EU-Mauritius Partnership for Oceans in presence of the Ambassador of the European Union, H.E. Mr. Vincent Degert, and Hon. Mr Sudheer Maudhoo, Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping	Delegation of the European Union, Odysseo Oceanarium, Harbour Waterfront, Port Louis	Mrs R Venkatasawmy, OC
35.	30.05.23	Workshop organised by NSIF	Hennessy Park Hotel, Ebène	Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo, Investigator

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ MEETINGS/ ACTIVITIES	ORGANISER/ VENUE(S)	ATTENDED BY
36.	31.05.23	Meeting with the Delegation of the EU	St James Court, Port Louis	Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO; Mrs S. P. Mauree, Investigator & Mrs Bissessur, Finance Officer
37.	09.06.23	The Science Quest Competition organised by the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre	Cote d'Or National Sports Complex, Cote d'Or	Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
38.	13.06.23	Case Conference	La Briquetterie Government School, Port Louis	Mrs S. P. Mauree, Investigator
39.	15.06.23	Commemoration of the Day of the African Child	National Children's Council (NCC) and MGEFW, Gold Crest Hotel, Quatre Bornes	Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo, Investigator
40.	20.06.23	Follow-up meeting on the implementation of OC's recommendations	MGEFW, Newton Tower, Port Louis	Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO & Mrs Y. Rhungapen-Veeramootoo, Investigator
41.	05.07.23	Follow-up meeting on the implementation of OC's recommendations	MGEFW, Newton Tower, Port Louis	Mr I. A. Bawamia & Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo, Investigators
42.	17.07.23	Interactive sensitisation talk with children	Lovebridge, Tamarin Village Hall, Tamarin	Mrs R Venkatasawmy, OC (Facilitator) & E. Martini, Intern (Assistant)

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ MEETINGS/ ACTIVITIES	ORGANISER/ VENUE(S)	ATTENDED BY
43.	18.07.23	Interactive sensitisation talk with children	Lovebridge, Starlight Club, Curepipe	Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator (Facilitator)
44.	19.07.23	Interactive sensitisation talk with children	Lovebridge, Centre Emilien Pierre, Ste Croix	Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator (Facilitator)
45.	19.07.23	Meeting regarding project on climate change	Citizen Support Unit, Port Louis	Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
46.	19.07.23	Workshop for Swimming Teachers	Gymnasium, Phoenix	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC (Facilitator)
47.	19.07.23	Cocktail Dinner of the 'First Emotional Wellbeing International Conference 2023' on the theme of 'Advancing the understanding and impact of emotional wellbeing towards flourishing societies'	Pearl Beach, Flic-en-Flac	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
48.	31.07.23	World Day against Trafficking in Persons	University of Technology, La Tour Koenig	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC (Facilitator) & E. Martini, Intern (Assistant)
49.	01.08.23	Professional Development Workshop for Caregivers in Residential Care Institutions	Mauritius Institute of Education, Réduit	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC (Facilitator) & E. Martini, Intern (Assistant)

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ MEETINGS/ ACTIVITIES	ORGANISER/ VENUE(S)	ATTENDED BY
50.	03.08.23	Professional Development Workshop for Caregivers in Residential Care Institutions	Mauritius Institute of Education, Réduit	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC (Facilitator)
51.	07.08.23	Meeting chaired by Honourable Mr Alan Ganoo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, regarding the Universal Periodic Review National Report	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Port Louis	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mrs S Johaheer, Investigator
52.	12.08.23	Meeting with the Secretary to Cabinet in relation to the restructuring of Reform Institutions	Prime Minister's Office, Port Louis	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
53.	31.08.23	Sensitisation talk with secondary school students of Swami Vivekananda SSS	Swami Vivekananda SSS, Souillac	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO



4.5.2. Workshop, seminars and meetings **ORGANISED BY** the OCO
(Sep 2022-Aug 2023)



WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS/MEETINGS ORGANISED BY THE OCO

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ SEMINARS/ MEETINGS	VENUE(S)	ATTENDEE(S)
1.	06.10.22	Launching of the Annual Report 2021-2022 of the Ombudsperson for Children	OCO, Beau Bassin	<p>Mrs K. Chooramun, Head of the CDU, MGEFW;</p> <p>Mrs H. Luckeenarain, Commissioner of the Mauritius Probation and Aftercare Service;</p> <p>Mr G. Rambojun, Ag. Deputy Commissioner of the Mauritius Probation and Aftercare Service;</p> <p><u>Participants from:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RCIs and NGOs; - Law Reform Commission; - Brigade pour la protection de la famille; - Media representatives; - OCO's staff.
2.	11.10.22	Workshop in connection with the Celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child 2022 on the theme 'Our time is now, our rights, our future' facilitated by the OC and assisted by the Secretary of the OCO, Mrs L. Jhugroo and Investigators Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo and Mrs B. Jogarah-Ramgoolam	La Cannelle, Domaine les Pailles	<p>Students and Educators of Labourdonnais College;</p> <p>Students from Safire Bambous/ Camp Levieux/ Bois Marchand/ Triolet</p>

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ SEMINARS/ MEETINGS	VENUE(S)	ATTENDEE(S)
3.	13.10.22	Meeting regarding deinstitutionalisation of Residential Care Institutions chaired by the OC	OCO, Beau Bassin	Mr A. Muneean, Terre de Paix, & Mr C. Arlanda, SOS Children's Village
4.	26.10.22	Follow-up meeting in relation to the OC's Annual Report 2021-2022 chaired by the OC	OCO, Beau Bassin	Participants from RCIs, CDU, NSIF, Planning and Research Unit of the MGEFW
5.	07.11.22 & 08.11.22	Workshop entitled 'How Citizens Advice Bureaus can contribute to the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights' facilitated by Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC, Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO and Investigators I. A. Bawamia, Mrs S. Johaheer and Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo	La Cannelle, Domaine Les Pailles	CAB Officers; Officers from Municipal Councils
6.	10.11.22	Workshop entitled 'Strengthening the chain of protection for children with serious behavioural concerns and in conflict with the law' facilitated by the OC, Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary, OCO, and Investigators Mr I. A. Bawamia, Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo, Mrs S. P. Mauree and Mrs B. Jogarah Ramgoolam	The Ravenala Attitude Hotel, Balaclava	Representatives of the Office of the Commissioner of Police; Police Officers; Probation Officers; Officers of the Prime Minister's Office; Representatives of the RYC, CYC and CSU; NGOs leaders

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ SEMINARS/ MEETINGS	VENUE(S)	ATTENDEE(S)
7.	17.11.22	Celebration of the Universal Children's Day on the theme 'Zanfan ena drwa koze, sante, danse, fer teat' facilitated by Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC, Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO and Investigators Mr I. A. Bawamia, Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo, Mrs S. P. Mauree, Mrs B. Jogarah Ramgoolam and Mrs S. Johaheer	College du St Esprit, Rivière Noire	<u>Chief Guests</u> Hon. Alan Ganoo, Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade Hon. Marie Monia Sandra Mayotte, Member of the National Assembly Mr Daniel Rico Auckbar, Ag Chief Technical Officer, Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
8.	09.12.22	Team building activity for the Young Ambassadors of the OC and visit to Odysseo Oceanarium	Odysseo Oceanarium, Port Louis	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator Ambassadors of the OCO
9.	16.12.22	Meeting in connection with the United States' Report on the 'Worst Forms of Child Labour'	OCO, Beau Bassin	Mrs Chikouri, Economic and Commercial Specialist; & Ms Catherine Volman, Economic Officer, US Embassy
10.	06.01.23	Meeting with the Permanent Secretary, MGEFW, in connection with children's rights	OCO, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs P. Rampadaruth, Permanent Secretary of the MGEFW

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ SEMINARS/ MEETINGS	VENUE(S)	ATTENDEE(S)
11.	20.01.23	Preparatory meeting with Managers of RCIs in relation to a 3-day workshop for caregivers	OCO, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator; Managers of RCIs
12.	24.01.23	Dialogue with pupils of Trochetia SEN School on the Right to Education	OCO, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mr I. A. Bawamia & Mrs S. P. Mauree, Investigators
13.	26.01.23, 02.02.23 & 03.02.23	3-day workshop on 'Promoting the Rights of Children to Quality Care in Residential Care Institutions'	Gold Crest Hotel, Quatre Bornes	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO; Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator; and Caregivers from RCIs
14.	08.02.23	Interactive session on the rights of the child facilitated by the OC and Investigator Mrs S. Johaheer	OCO, Beau Bassin	31 students and 4 Educators from Ruth School
15.	27.02.23	Case Conference	OCO, Beau Bassin	Chaired by the OC assisted by Investigator Mrs S. Johaheer; Probation Officers; Police officers; & Representatives of Foyer Père Laval
16.	28.02.23	Meeting with the Board of <i>Foyer Père Laval</i> in relation to the project of 'Lacaz Père Laval'	OCO, Beau Bassin	Chaired by the OC assisted by Investigator Mrs S. Johaheer; Board representatives of Foyer Père Laval

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ SEMINARS/ MEETINGS	VENUE(S)	ATTENDEE(S)
17.	28.02.23	Meeting with the Rector and Manager of New Eton college	OCO, Beau Bassin	Chaired by the OC assisted by Investigator Mrs S. Johaheer
18.	14.03.23	Meeting with Mayors	OCO, Beau Bassin	Chaired by the OC, assisted by Investigator Mrs S. P. Mauree
19.	16.03.23 & 17.03.23	Workshop for OCO's staff and child professionals on the impact of climate change on the rights and welfare of children	Le Suffren Hotel, Port Louis	Workshop facilitated by the resource person, Mr Vassen Kauppamuthoo
20.	21.03.23	Roundtable discussion on the 'rights and responsibilities of children in a multicultural society'	Goldcrest Hotel, Quatre Bornes	Prefect Body of the Royal College of Curepipe
21.	29.03.23 & 30.03.23	Workshop entitled 'Teenage pregnancy: A complex child rights issue'	Labourdonnais Hotel, Port Louis	Students of MEDCO Cassis; teenage mothers
22.	12.04.23	Meeting with disability activists on the theme of inclusive education	OCO, Beau Bassin	Chaired by the OC assisted by Investigators Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo & Mrs S. Johaheer
23.	18.04.23	Online meeting on inclusive education with two Australian experts (Mr Stuart Percival & Mr Alan Kelly from Australia)	OCO, Beau Bassin	Chaired by the OC assisted by Mrs L Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO, and Investigator Mrs S. Johaheer

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ SEMINARS/ MEETINGS	VENUE(S)	ATTENDEE(S)
24.	18.04.23	Preparatory meeting in relation to a project on climate change by secondary school students in the context of the World Environment Day Celebration	OCO, Beau Bassin	Chaired by the OC assisted by Investigator Mrs S. Johaheer; & Representatives from 4 Zone Directorates; PSEA and SeDEC
25.	21.04.23	Meeting with Prof. Vêlayoudom Marimoutou, Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission in relation to climate change	Indian Ocean Commission, Ebène	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
26.	24.04.23	Workshop with children of the Correctional Youth Centre (CYC)	OCO, Beau Bassin	10 children of CYC accompanied by 10 Prison Officers
27.	08.05.23	Meeting with Mr. Sabir Kadel, Chief Executive Officer of the Law Reform Commission in relation to climate change	Law Reform Commission, Port Louis	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
28.	10.05.23	Meeting with Mrs. S. Meeheelaul, Director of Climate Change in relation to climate change	Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, Port Louis	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ SEMINARS/ MEETINGS	VENUE(S)	ATTENDEE(S)
29.	12.05.23	Meeting with Dr. R. Dhurmea, Deputy Director, and Dr. G. Veerasamy, Ag. Deputy Director, of the Mauritius Meteorological Services	Mauritius Meteorological Services, Vacoas	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
30.	12.05.23	Online meeting on the topic of climate in Europe and around the world with Mr. Jean Krug, Glaciologist	OCO, Beau Bassin	Mrs R Venkatasawmy, OC
31.	15.05.23	Meeting with Mr V. Tatayah, Conservation Director of the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation	Mauritius Wildlife Foundation, Vacoas	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
32.	16.05.23	Meeting with Dr. A. K. Maulloo, Director of the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre	Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre, Bell Village	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
33.	16.05.23	Meeting with Mrs. K. Young, Managing Director of the Reef Conservation Mauritius	Reef Conservation Mauritius, Péreybere	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
34.	17.05.23	Meeting with Mr. S. Sauvage, Director of the Agricultural Ecology Center operated by the NGO Eco-Sud	Eco-Sud, Ville-Noire, Mahebourg	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
35.	17.05.23	Meeting with local residents in relation to the environment and climate change	Coastal region, Providence-Bois des Amourettes	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ SEMINARS/ MEETINGS	VENUE(S)	ATTENDEE(S)
36.	18.05.23	First preparatory meeting in relation to a workshop on climate change facilitated by the OC and assisted by Investigator Mrs S. Johaheer	OCO, Beau Bassin	Representatives from 4 Zone Directorates; PSEA and SeDEC
37.	21.05.23 - 26.05.23	Visit of Australian Experts in the field of Inclusive Education (An EU-funded Project)	Moka SENRDC; Lizie Dan La Main, Curepipe; Southern Handicapped Association, Riambel; Gold Crest Hotel, Quatre Bornes	Resource Persons: Mr Stuart Percival, Assistant Executive Director, Professional Capability, Department of Education Statewide Services, & Dr Catherine Ann Kapiteyn, Principal Advisor, Leadership Institute, Statewide Services
38.	30.05.23	Second preparatory Meeting in relation to the workshop on climate change facilitated by the OC and assisted by Investigator Mrs S. Johaheer	OCO, Beau Bassin	<u>Resource Persons from:</u> - Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI); - Department of Climate Change, Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change; - Mauritius Meteorological Services; - NGO Eco-Sud; & - Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ SEMINARS/ MEETINGS	VENUE(S)	ATTENDEE(S)
39.	06.06.23 & 07.06.23	2-day workshop on the 'Impact of Climate Change on Children's Rights'	Gold Crest Hotel, Quatre Bornes	Students of Royal College Port Louis, La Confiance College, Queen Elizabeth College, BPS College, Floreal SSS, St Esprit College & Dr Maurice Cure College
40.	21.06.23	Celebration of the Day of the African Child facilitated by the OC	Grand Baie Government School, Grand Baie	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO; Mrs S. P. Mauree, Investigator; & E. Martini, Intern
41.	26.06.23	Meeting with Mr S. Raffray, Director of the NGO Mission Verte	NGO Mission Verte, Curepipe	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
42.	26.06.23	Meeting with ACP Premanand Buddhoo, Officer in Charge of the NDRRMC	Citadelle Mall, Port Louis	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S Johaheer, Investigator
43.	05.07.23	Meeting with Mr M. Sardou, Senior Environment Officer, Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change	OCO, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
44.	10.07.23	Meeting with Rectors on the school-led project on the Impact of Climate Change on Children's Rights	OCO, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S. P. Mauree, Investigator; & Ms E. Martini, Intern

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ SEMINARS/ MEETINGS	VENUE(S)	ATTENDEE(S)
45.	11.07.23 & 12.07.23	2-day workshop on Inclusive Education with the Director and Members of the Board of SENA	OCO, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Investigators Mr I. A. Bawamia, Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo, Mrs S. P. Mauree & Ms E. Martini, Intern
46.	14.07.23	Meeting with Mr E. Gerty regarding the collaboration between the OCO and the CSU on Poverty and Child Abuse	OCO, Beau Bassin	Chaired by Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
47.	17.07.23	Jury deliberation on the student-led project on the Impact of Climate Change on Children's Rights	OCO, Beau Bassin	Investigators Mr I. A. Bawamia & Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo; Mr M. Sardoo, Senior Environmental Officer, MESWMCC; Mr V. Dunnoo, Architect; & Mrs G. Bonne, Head of Mission, IOC
48.	20.07.23	Meeting with Climate Change Ambassadors of the OCO	OCO, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator; & Ms E. Martini, Intern
49.	21.07.23	Meeting with the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)	Office of the DPP, Port Louis	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ SEMINARS/ MEETINGS	VENUE(S)	ATTENDEE(S)
50.	25.07.23 & 26.07.23	Two-day workshop on the 'Rights of Children with Disabilities in the African Human Rights System'	Royal Green Wellness Resort, Moka	Resource persons: Mrs Nkatha Murungi, and Mrs Dianah Msipa, African Experts, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria
51.	27.07.23	Meeting with Mr P. Neerunjun, Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service	PMO, Port Louis	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
52.	27.07.23	Meeting with Mrs B. Rajabalee-Cader, Permanent Secretary, PMO	PMO, Port Louis	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
53.	02.08.23	Meeting with Hon. Mr Kavydass Ramano, Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change	MESWMCC, Port Louis	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
54.	02.08.23	Meeting with Mrs E. Dhunnoo, Chairperson of the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre Trust Fund Board	Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre, Bell Village	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
55.	09.08.23	Meeting with members of Union of Private Secondary Education Employees (UPSEE)	OCO, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
56.	11.08.23	Meeting with the Chairperson and Secretary General of the NSIF	OCO, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/ SEMINARS/ MEETINGS	VENUE(S)	ATTENDEE(S)
57.	14.08.23 & 15.08.23	Two-day workshop for CAB organisers on the theme 'Protecting and Promoting Children's Rights in vulnerable regions of Mauritius'	OCO, Beau Basin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO; Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
58.	17.08.23 & 18.08.23	Two-day workshop on 'A Child Rights-Based Approach to Provide Quality Services to Children'	Royal Green Wellness Resort, Moka	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Investigators Mrs S. P. Mauree and Mrs S. Johaheer; Ms E. Martini, Intern; & Around 30 stakeholders working with children
59.	22.08.23	Meeting with a delegation from the Parliament of the Republic of Zambia and High Government Officials from the Zambian Administration	OCO, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO; Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator



4.5.3. Field visits **ORGANISED BY** the OCO (Sep 2022-Aug 2023)



FIELD VISITS ORGANISED BY THE OCO

SN	DATE	FIELD VISITS	CONDUCTED BY
1.	14.09.22	Quinze Canton Government School, Quinze Canton	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mrs B. Jogarah-Ramgoolam, Investigator
2.	15.09.22	Centre d'Education et de Développement pour les Enfants Mauriciens (CEDEM), Vacoas	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mrs B. Jogarah-Ramgoolam, Investigator
3.	26.09.22	Worldlight, Beau Bassin	Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
4.	26.09.22	Crèche Coeur Immaculée de Marie, Quatre Bornes	Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
5.	27.09.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crèche Cœur Immaculée de Marie, Quatre Bornes 	Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO; Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
6.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worldlight, Beau Bassin 	
7.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foyer Monseigneur Leen, Rose Hill 	
8.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SOS Children's Village, Bambous 	
9.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Havre d'Avenir, Beau Bassin 	
10.	28.09.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Association Des Amis de Don Bosco, Port Louis 	Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO; Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
11.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gayasing Ashram, Port Louis 	
12.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Etoile du Berger, Chebel 	
13.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SOS Children's Village, Bambous 	

SN	DATE	FIELD VISITS	CONDUCTED BY
14.	29.09.22	• Terre de Paix, Albion	Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO; Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
15.		• Etoile du Berger, Chebel	
16.	10.10.22	Rehabilitation Youth Centre, Beau Bassin	Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
17.	30.01.23	Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
18.	30.01.23	St Mary's College, Rose Hill	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
19.	30.01.23	Ebène SSS (Girls), Ebène	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
20.	09.02.23	St Mary's College, Rose Hill	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Ms. K. Chellamootoo, Management Support Officer (MSO)
21.	15.02.23	Youth Detention Centre, Petite Rivière	Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
22.	06.03.23	Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
23.	08.03.23	Royal College of Curepipe, Curepipe	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
24.	09.03.23	Correctional Youth Centre, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
25.	14.03.23	Moteeputh Fowdur Government School, Camp de Masque Pavé, Flacq	Attended by Mrs S Johaheer, Investigator

SN	DATE	FIELD VISITS	CONDUCTED BY
26.	06.04.23	Lycée Beau-Bassin, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
27.	11.04.23	Youth Detention Centre, Petite Rivière	Mr I. A. Bawamia & Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo, Investigators
28.	13.04.23	Correctional Youth Centre (Boys), Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo, Investigator
29.	20.04.23	Ebène SSS (Boys), Ebène	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo, Investigator
30.	20.04.23	Belle-Rose SSS, Belle Rose	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo, Investigator
31.	20.04.23	Centre Lois Lagesse, Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo, Investigator
32.	27.04.23	Morcellement Raffray Government School, Port Louis	Mrs S. P. Mauree, Investigator
33.	17.05.23	Centre Eco-Sud, Mahebourg	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
34.	22.05.23	Moka SEN Resource Centre, Moka	Mr I. A. Bawamia & Mrs S. P. Mauree, Investigators (along with the Australian delegation)
35.	23.05.23	Lizié dan La Main, Curepipe	Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO & Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo, Investigator (along with the Australian delegation)

SN	DATE	FIELD VISITS	CONDUCTED BY
36.	23.05.23	Southern Handicapped Association, Riambel	Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO & Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator (along with the Australian delegation)
37.	05.06.23	Royal College of Curepipe, Curepipe	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
38.	23.06.23	Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre, Bell Village	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Investigators Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo, Mrs S. P. Mauree & Mrs S. Johaheer; & Ms E. Martini, Intern
39.	05.07.23	Rehabilitation Youth Centre (Boys and Girls), Beau Bassin	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Ms E. Martini, Intern
40.	23.08.23	Etoile du Berger, Chebel	Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator & Ms E. Martini, Intern
41.	31.08.23	Swami Sivananda Government School, Tyack	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC & Mrs. L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO



4.5.4. Missions to Rodrigues
CONDUCTED BY the staff of the
OCO (Sep 2022-Aug 2023)



MISSIONS TO RODRIGUES CONDUCTED BY THE OCO

DATE	AGENDA	STAKEHOLDERS	VENUE(S)
<u>1ST MISSION TO RODRIGUES (04-09 SEPTEMBER 2022) - EU-FUNDED PROJECT</u> (Delegation: Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs A. Swamber, Confidential Secretary; and Ms. M. Kaudeer, STM Intern)			
05.09.22	Courtesy Call to the Commissioner for Women's Affairs, Child Development, and Family Welfare	Commissioner for Women's Affairs, Child Development, and Family Welfare	Commission for Women's Affairs, Child Development and Family Welfare, Integrated Family Centre, Malabar
	Meeting with stakeholders working with children	Officers of the Rehabilitation Youth Centre (RYC); Probation Officers; Police Officers; and Officers of the Residential Care Institution (RCI)	Lecture Theatre, Antoinette Prudence, Human Resource Development Centre, Malabar
	Field visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCI • RYC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baladirou • Oyster Bay
06.09.22	Roundtable Session on Children's Rights to be protected from all forms of violence	26 Secondary School students of Grade 7	Le Cocotiers, Anse aux Anglais, Rodrigues
08.09.22 & 09.09.22	Two-day workshop on the Rights of Primary School Children to Quality Education	Deputy Headmasters of SeDEC Primary School and Government Primary Schools	Cotton Bay Resort & Spa, Pointe Cotton, Rodrigues

DATE	AGENDA	STAKEHOLDERS	VENUE(S)
<u>2ND MISSION TO RODRIGUES (04-07 DECEMBER 2022)</u> <i>(Delegation: Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO; and Mr. I. A. Bawamia, Senior Investigator)</i>			
05.12.22	Launching of the OC's Annual Report 2021-2022	Chairperson and Members of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and stakeholders working with children	Cotton Bay Resort and Spa, Pointe Cotton, Rodrigues
06.12.22	Workshop on "Strengthening the chain of protection for children with serious behavioural concerns and in conflict with the law"	Police Officers; Probation Officers; Officers of the Child Development Unit, Department of Education, Brigade pour la protection de la famille and; representatives from NGOs	Cotton Bay Resort and Spa, Pointe Cotton
<u>3RD MISSION TO RODRIGUES (01-04 MARCH 2023) - EU-FUNDED PROJECT</u> <i>(Delegation: Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC and Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO)</i>			
01.03.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits to SEN Schools to initiate dialogue with stakeholders working with children with special educational needs including children with disabilities. Demonstration classes were carried out during the visits. • The NGO EDYCS • St Esprit RCA Integrated School 	Stakeholders working with children with special education needs including children with disabilities	La Ferme, Rodrigues

DATE	AGENDA	STAKEHOLDERS	VENUE(S)
02.03.23	<u>Field visits to:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antoinette Prudence RCA Integrated School (Lataniers) • Development Learning Centre for Disabled Children (Malabar) • Gonzagues Pierre Louis Special Learning Centre (Camp du Roi) • Rodrigues College St Barnabas Department (Port Mathurin) 	Stakeholders working with children with special education needs including children with disabilities	Latanier; Malabar; Camp du Roi; & Port Mathurin
03.03.23	One-day workshop on the theme 'Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Children with Special Needs including Children with Disabilities'	Representatives of the Commission for Education and the Roman Catholic Education Authority; Social Workers; SEN Teachers, Managers, Headmasters and Educators of Integrated Schools	Koki Boner, Pointe Cotton, Rodrigues
<u>4TH MISSION TO RODRIGUES (25-29 APRIL 2023) - VISITS TO 15 PRIMARY SCHOOLS TO PROMOTE A CULTURE OF PEACE AMONG STUDENTS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION</u> <i>(Delegation: Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC; Mrs L. Jhugroo, Secretary of the OCO; and Ms Bassa, Management Support Officer)</i>			
25.04.23	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anse Quitor Community School 2. Grand La Fouche Corail Government School 	Students and teachers	Anse Quitor; Grand la Fouche Corail

DATE	AGENDA	STAKEHOLDERS	VENUE(S)
26.04.23	3. Marc Etienne Roche Bon Dieu Government School 4. Ste Thérèse De L'Enfant Jésus RCA School 5. Port Sud-Est Government School 6. Batatran Government School 7. Montagne Goyaves Community School	Students and teachers	Roche Bon Dieu; Rivière Coco; Port Sud-Est; Batatran; & Montagne Goyaves
27.04.23	8. Terre Rouge Government School 9. Father Ronald Gandy RCA School 10. Fock Seng Ho Tu Nam Mangues Government School 11. Notre Dame De Lourdes RCA School	Students and teachers	Terre Rouge; Petit Gabriel; Mangues; & Brulé
28.04.23	12. Araucaria Community Government School 13. Basile Allas Port Mathurin Government School 14. Mont Charlot Community Government School 15. Oyster Bay Government School	Students and teachers	Araucaria; Port Mathurin; Mont Charlot; & Oyster Bay



4.5.5. International Missions
ATTENDED BY the staff of the OCO
(Sep 2022-Aug 2023)



INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS ATTENDED BY STAFF OF THE OCO

SN	DATE	ACTIVITIES	ATTENDED BY
1.	<u>STUDY TOUR/EXCHANGE PROGRAMME IN OSLO, NORWAY</u> <u>(15-22 OCTOBER 2022)</u>		
	17.10.22	Meeting with the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children; and Visit to the SOS Children's Village (SOS-Barnebyer)	Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator; Mrs Y. R. Veeramootoo, Investigator
	18.10.22	Visit at the Margarine Factory Kindergarten	Mrs S. P. Mauree, Investigator
	19.10.22	Visit at the Holmen School; and Visit at the Oslo's Municipality's Child Welfare Emergency Unit	Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator
	20.10.22	Meeting at the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, Oslo	
2.	<u>MISSION IN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA</u> <u>(21-23 NOVEMBER 2022)</u>		
	21.11.22	Visit at the Success Primary School; Visit at Atwell College; and Meeting at the Educational Authority	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
	22.11.22	Visit at Statewide Services SSEN Sensory-Deaf Education and Vision Education; Visit at Statewide Services SSEN Disability; and Meeting with the Western Australia Commissioner for Children	
	23.11.22	Visit at the Makangaroo Primary School; and Visit at the Ashdale Secondary College	

SN	DATE	ACTIVITIES	ATTENDED BY
3.	<u>MISSION IN PARIS, FRANCE</u> <u>(08-10 JUNE 2023)</u>		
	08.06.23 - 10.06.23	Visit of the “ <i>Urgence Climatique</i> ” exhibition at the <i>Cité des Sciences et de l’Industrie</i> , Paris, France	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
4.	<u>MISSION TO ICELAND REGARDING CHILDREN’S RIGHTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE</u> <u>(13-16 JUNE 2023)</u>		
	13.06.23	Meeting with Mrs Salvor Nordal, Ombudsman for Children of Iceland and President of ENOC; and Visit of the exhibition on environment and climate change at Perlan Museum, Iceland	Mrs R. Venkatasawmy, OC
	14.06.23 & 15.06.23	<u>Visit to glaciers in Iceland:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Solheimajokull glacier; • the Jokulsarlon glacier lagoon; • the Vatnajokull glacier; and • the Seljalandsfoss waterfall 	
5.	<u>MISSION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONCTON, NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA</u> <u>(25-30 JUNE 2023)</u>		
	25.06.23 - 30.06.23	International Summer Course on the Rights of the Child 2023 on the theme of ‘Participation Empowers: Article 12 of the UNCRC and the child’s right to participation’ organised by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate of New Brunswick in collaboration with the University of Moncton	Mr I. A. Bawamia, Investigator
6.	<u>MISSION TO JINHUA, ZHEJIANG PROVINCE, CHINA</u> <u>(14-27 JULY 2023)</u>		
	14.07.23 - 27.07.23	Seminar on Female Capacity Building for Developing Countries sponsored by the Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China and Zhejiang Normal University, China	Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator & Mrs K. Chellamootoo, MSO



4.5.6. International Webinars
ATTENDED BY the staff of the OCO
(Sep 2022-Aug 2023)



INTERNATIONAL WEBINARS ATTENDED BY STAFF OF THE OCO

SN	DATE	WEBINAR'S THEME	ORGANISER	ATTENDED BY
1.	14.10.22	Virtual inception meeting on 'Improving the social protection system in the Republic of Mauritius'	Expertise France	Ms M. Kaudeer, STM
2.	15.11.22	Webinar on 'Dealing with challenging behaviour'	The University of Kwazulu Natal and the African Ombudsman Research Centre	Mrs S. Johaheer, Investigator

CHAPTER 5:

Handling of Cases at the Ombudsperson for Children's Office 2022-2023



Investigation Flowchart of the OCO

Complaint received at the OCO **OR** initiation of an own-motion inquiry by the OC on an alleged violation of child rights



Is the case pending before Court?

If **yes**, refer to relevant authorities. If **no**, proceed with preliminary assessment.



Preliminary assessment

Have all the options (e.g. contacting relevant authorities) been exhausted in finding a solution to this case?

If **yes**, proceed with full investigation. If **no**, refer to the relevant authorities.



Full investigation

This stage consists of calls for files, summons and examinations on oath, individual and group interviews, field visits, mediation, case conferences and consultations, among others.



Reporting and Recommendations

This may include written correspondences, case reports, or Special or Annual Reports that are submitted to the President of the Republic of Mauritius and rendered public, all including recommendations to relevant stakeholders on the concerned child-related matters.



Monitoring and Evaluation

This may include visits to different organisations or institutions to follow-up on proposed remedial actions or recommendations, surprise checks and requests for feedback from concerned parties within a timeframe of one week to three months, among others.



5.1. Introductory notes on the handling of cases at the OCO

The Ombudsperson for Children (OC) represents and defends the rights of all children living in Mauritius, Rodrigues and Agalega, children of Mauritian origin who are abroad, and children of other nationalities who reside within the Republic of Mauritius. Based on the Ombudsperson for Children Act 2003 (refer to [Appendix A](#)), the overarching mandate of the OC relates to the following main areas:

- monitoring compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) among relevant local stakeholders;
- promoting the rights of children in the Republic of Mauritius including their rights to health, education, leisure and freedom of expression among others, as well as their best interests; and
- collaborating with public bodies, private organisations, individuals and associations of individuals in the promotion and protection of child rights.

In order to achieve its mandate, one of the core functions of the OC is to carry out investigations on any alleged case of child rights violations, either on his or her own motion or driven by a complaint made by any party. This is clearly set out in sections 6 and 7 of the OCA 2003. The Ombudsperson for Children's Office (OCO) receives complaints on various types of cases, including,

- a father who complained about the excessive use of pesticides and herbicides by his neighbour which could harm his children's health;
- a child victim of corporal punishment perpetrated by his teacher;
- children studying in deplorable conditions at a SEN School which was delivering poor quality education and misusing funds; or
- a case of maltreatment whereby the father obtained custody of the children and the mother alleged that he was abusing the children.

The present chapter gives information on the 8 principles that guide the actions of the OCO. An overview of the number and types of cases handled at the OCO in the period from 01 July 2022 to 31 August 2023 is then provided. Brief vignettes on 107 cases handled at the OCO over the reporting period 2022-2023 have also been provided for reference and anonymised as necessary.



5.2. The 8 guiding principles of OCO's investigations

The OCO gives high importance to good governance which is translated into **eight guiding principles** that underlie its actions on promoting and protecting children's rights:

THE 8 GUIDING PRINCIPLES AT THE OCO

Guiding Principle 1: Jurisdiction

The OC has a clear mandate through the OCA 2003 which specifies her role, powers and functions. Her decisions and actions are formulated and executed within the parameters of the OCA 2003.

Guiding Principle 2: Independence

Operating within the limits of the OCA 2003, the OC performs her functions independently and does not take directives from any public or private authority.

Guiding Principle 3: Impartiality and fairness

The OC remains a neutral party during dispute resolution and does not take sides. At the OCO, each complaint is received and reviewed in an objective and fair manner, free from bias. All parties are treated without favour or prejudice. The views of the child are also given due consideration based on his/her age and level of maturity.

Guiding Principle 4: Best interests of the child

The OC has a mandate to protect the best interests of the child in all circumstances. Being the primary local advocate of the principles and rights enshrined in the UNCRC, the OC's interventions are always motivated by the best interests of the child.

Guiding Principle 5: Confidentiality

The OC has the privilege and discretion to keep confidential or release information related to a complaint or investigation as appropriate. The OC does not disclose confidential information about individual cases or visits and cannot be compelled to testify about concerns brought to her attention. Confidentiality is very important to build the credibility of the OCO mainly because people who complain to the OC and who respond to the OC's investigations may fear retaliation. Therefore, protecting the

identities of witnesses and safeguarding the information communicated to the OC enable her to advocate for the rights of children effectively and efficiently.

Guiding Principle 6: Transparency

In line with the OCA 2003, proper referral, assessment, intervention, and review mechanisms have been created at the OCO to deal with every single complaint. Transparency is considered fundamental to accountability. In this regard, the OC submits to the President of the Republic of Mauritius an annual report showcasing the activities carried out by the OCO during the preceding year that is subsequently rendered public.

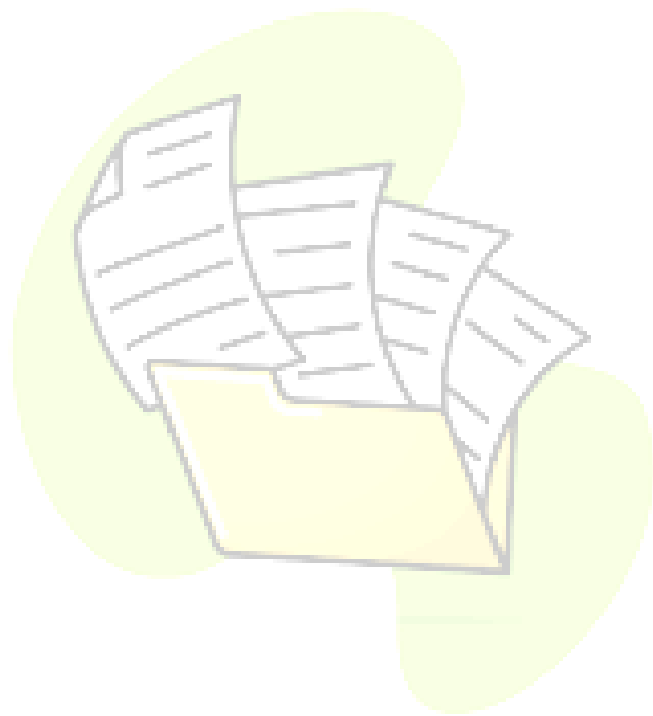
Guiding Principle 7: Responsiveness

The OCO provides a free and responsive complaint procedure for anyone who requires it. There are several ways through which a complaint can be made by or on behalf of children as follows:

- coming in person or phoning the office to speak with an Investigator or the OC;
- downloading a complaint sheet from the OCO's website, filling it in and send it back to the OCO;
- writing a letter to the OC about the complaint; or
- sending an email about the complaint to the OC.

Guiding Principle 8: Public awareness

In order to make the general public aware of the role and functions of her office, as well as the rights and responsibilities of children as promoted by the UNCRC, the OC works in close collaboration with the media, and regularly organises awareness campaigns throughout the Republic of Mauritius.





5.3. Summary of cases handled at the OCO in 2022-2023

For the reporting period from July 2022 to August 2023, the OCO registered a total of **446 cases**. People are becoming increasingly aware of the role and functions of the OCO owing to the different public sensitisation campaigns led by this Office during this reporting year.

Tables 1 to 4 below provide an overview of the case statuses of complaints registered for the period from July 2022 to August 2023; the different categories of complaints received; the profile of complainants; and the gender distribution of complainants, respectively.

Table 1. Number of cases handled by the OCO from 01 July 2022 to 31 August 2023.

Case status	Number of cases	Percentage (%)
Cases resolved	407	91.3
Cases awaiting reports	29	6.5
Cases in progress	10	2.2
TOTAL	446	100

As shown in Table 1 above, out of the 446 new complaints registered and investigated from 01 July 2022 to 31 August 2023, the OCO successfully resolved and closed 91.3 per cent of its caseload (i.e., **407 cases**). As at 31 August 2023, 29 case reports were being awaited from various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, and the remaining 10 cases were in the process of investigation.

In Table 2 on the next page, the categories of complaints vary from basic school problems to complex societal issues, including family conflicts, domestic violence, abuse, neglect and poverty. The main category of complaints investigated during the reporting year 2022-2023 was related to school problems regarding transport, transfers, admissions and infrastructure (i.e., **78 cases**). The next most frequent categories were those related to corporal punishment and violence at school (i.e., **70 cases**), and child neglect, ill-treatment and child at risk (i.e., **70 cases**). It must be noted that the category indicated as 'Others' in Table 2 represents those cases that involve compounded difficulties, in other words, cases constituting of two or more types of complaints (e.g., family conflict, child behavioural problems and sexual abuse).

Table 2. Categories of complaints registered at the OCO from 01 July 2022 to 31 August 2023.

Category of complaints	Number of cases
• School problems - Transfer/ Admission/ Transport/ Infrastructure	78
• Corporal punishment/ Harassment/ Verbal abuse by school personnel/ Bullying/ Violence/ Assault at school	70
• Child neglect / Child ill-treatment / Child at risk	70
• Family Conflict/ Custody/ Right of Access	45
• Sexual abuse and harassment	39
• Child behavioural problems	28
• Institutional abuse and neglect/ Police brutality	21
• Physical violence in family/ Domestic Violence	19
• Children with disabilities / Social aid	9
• Poverty - Lack of means/ Social aid/ Lack of school materials	8
• Prostitution/ Child trafficking	6
• School absenteeism/ Dropout	4
• Child Abduction	4
• Suicidal tendencies	3
• Adoption	3
• Drug use	2
• Sale of cigarette and alcoholic drinks to minors	1
• Others	36
TOTAL	446

The OCO registers complaints from people and organisations from a vast range of backgrounds. It also pursues own-motion investigations based on identified areas of concern. Table 3 on the following page provides a breakdown of complainants' profiles and own-motion inquiries for the reporting period from July 2022 to August 2023.

Table 3. Profile of complainants at the OCO recorded from 01 July 2022 to 31 August 2023.

Complainant	Number
• Mothers	156
• Fathers	86
• Education professionals	42
• Anonymous complainants	40
• Grandparents	30
• NGOs	28
• Ministries/ Departments	18
• Relatives/ Friends	16
• Groups of parents	9
• Neighbours	5
• Own-motion inquiries	5
• Children	3
• Foster parents	3
• Medical Social Workers	2
• Media	1
• Others	2
TOTAL	446

Moreover, as shown in Table 4 below, there were 40 more male complainants than female complainants registered in the period from July 2022 to August 2023.

Table 4. Gender distribution of complainants for the period from 01 July 2022 to 31 August 2023.

Gender of complainants	Number
Female	203
Male	243
TOTAL	446



5.4. A selection of 107 cases dealt by the OCO in 2022-2023

Case No.: 1	File No.: 5706	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>The father of a minor had a conflict with a person residing in the same locality on the issue of road traffic. The person threatened to harm him and his family comprising of his wife and three children. The concerned minor was allegedly verbally abused and threatened by the person in question. The matter was reported to the Police.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The complainant was advised to lodge a complaint at the <i>Brigade pour la protection de la famille</i> (BPF) and the Child Development Unit so that the minor and her siblings get the necessary psychological support.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow-up:</u></p> <p>A report from the CP stated that the case is still under enquiry and that the concerned minor has been referred to the MGEFW for psychological assistance. The case was filed.</p>		
Case No.: 2	File No.: 5707	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A mother (foreign national) of two children accused her husband of sexual assault on her minor son. She made a statement against the father at the Police Station. The father filed a civil case at the Supreme Court seeking guardianship of the two children to which the mother objected.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The case of guardianship is directly linked to the case of alleged sexual assault. According to section 7(4) of the OCA 2003, “<i>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</i>”.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow-up:</u></p> <p>The complainant was requested to revert to this office after the case hearing. The case was filed.</p>		

Case No.: 3	File No.: 5708	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A mother complained that the teacher of her 6-year-old daughter pulled her by her right arm with force which left a red mark on her arm. A PF 58 was issued and the matter was reported at the Police Station. The complainant informed that her child was traumatised and she wanted the teacher to have limited contact with her child until she finishes schooling.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The complainant was informed that a mediation can be carried out with the school. She was also advised to report the matter to the CDU so that the child could be seen by a Psychologist. Further, the case was referred to the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA) for necessary action. The ECCEA carried out an inquiry and reported that, as per the footage of the CCTV camera in the school premises, the teacher's hand was found on the child's left shoulder and she did not touch her right arm at all as alleged by the complainant. When the child attended school the next day, there was no bruise on either of her arms. The teacher resigned a few days later. Thereafter, the child attended school normally.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow-up:</u></p> <p>The complainant was acquainted of the report and the case was filed.</p>		
Case No.: 4	File No.: 5729	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>The OC received a video showing a father beating his 9-year-old child with his belt. The child was at risk. The minor along with her two siblings used to reside with their father in Agalega. Their parents were separated and the father had taken the 3 minors to Mauritius with him. The mother, the complainant, resides in Mauritius as well. She expressed her interest to have the custody of all the three children.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The case was reported immediately to the MGEFW as the priority was the safety of the child. The child was taken under the responsibility of an official on humanitarian ground</p>		

after consent of the parents. It was reported that one of the siblings was wearing a dirty school uniform with unpleasant smell and uncombed hair. The father was taken into police custody and released on parole. A case of ‘inflicting corporal punishment to a child’ was filed by the Police against the father. The minor benefitted from counselling to help her rebuild her self-esteem.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The child now lives with her mother and attends school. As per the OCO’s follow-up, the minor seems to have adjusted well at the mother’s place.

Case No.: 5

File No.: 5675

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The OC was apprised that a child aged 6 years old, attending Grade 1 in a mainstream primary school, was facing challenges to fulfil his toilet needs. The child has delayed speech and language difficulties and his parents are at times requested to attend school to take care of the child’s toilet needs. It was reported that, when the parents fail to attend school, the child remained half naked and roamed around in that state as he cannot put on his pants/underwear on his own. The complainant requested either a carer to be provided to support him or the child be placed in a Special Education Needs School near to his home which could cater for the child’s specific needs and challenges.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

A letter was sent to the METEST. It was reported that the child was referred to the National Education Counselling Service for learning difficulties and behavioural issues and was followed by an Educational Psychologist. Since the child was having difficulties in a mainstream class setting, a special education needs programme was recommended.

Outcome/Follow-up:

In light of the recommendations made, the complainant was contacted. The latter was agreeable to shift her child to an Integrated Unit, where a carer was already available to provide the necessary support.

Case No.: 6	File No.: 5682	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>An anonymous complaint was received at the OCO stating that a child of 10 years old was allegedly beaten by his parents. It was alleged that the case was dealt with by the CDU and the minor was removed from his parents and admitted at the hospital for medical treatment and relevant procedures. The OC was apprised that the minor was returned to his parents even though he was at risk.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The MGEFW was requested to report on the matter.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow-up:</u></p> <p>It was reported that an enquiry was carried out as per the established protocol. The minor was interviewed regarding the alleged case of physical assault by his mother. The minor admitted that he was slapped by his mother due to his behaviour and added that his mother took good care of him.</p> <p>Moreover, it was reported that the minor was not attending school regularly due to a history of fever post vaccination against COVID-19, which resulted in motor activity issues and epileptic fits. According to the mother, his son is following treatment at the hospital and the Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre (BSMHCC). As per a psychological assessment, it was found that the parents appeared supportive and possessing adequate parenting skills to take care of their son. The case was filed.</p>		
Case No.: 7	File No.: 5684	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A complaint was received about a 9-year-old minor who was bullied by another child at school, and that when he reported same to the Headmistress, the latter allegedly spoke rudely to him. According to the complainant, the minor was bullied twice in the past and no action was taken.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The METEST was requested to look into the matter and report accordingly.</p>		

Outcome/Follow-up:

An enquiry was carried out and the findings were as follows:

- (i) The minor was bitten on his thigh after school hours by another pupil while playing during the time they were waiting for their respective parents;
- (ii) The pupil who bit the minor said that he acted in defence as the latter and another pupil were bullying him;
- (iii) The School Administration talked to the pupils concerned and they were reminded on proper behaviour in school premises; and
- (iv) The Headmistress denied having been rude to the concerned minor.

The Education Directorate was advised to follow-up on the matter. The case was filed.

Case No.: 8

File No.: 5691

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A father complained that his daughter of 7 years old was ill-treated by her mother. The parents were divorced and the father was co-habiting with another woman. The minor was under the custody of the mother who was an Educator in the same school as her daughter. The complainant informed that his daughter was victim of verbal abuse by the mother and he had made a recording on his phone while visiting the child. He also stated that the child stayed most of the time with her paternal grandmother who has health issues and who could barely take care of the child. The matter was reported to the CDU.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The MGEFW was requested to submit a report on the matter.

Outcome/Follow-up:

It was reported that an inquiry was carried out as per the established protocol. The minor and her mother were interviewed and no child ill-treatment was reported by the minor. The mother reported custodial conflicts and the minor showed no signs of neglect. No child protection issues were disclosed by the minor. Follow-up was maintained at the level of the CDU. The case was filed.

Case No.: 9	File No.: 5888	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A complaint was received that a Grade 8 student aged 15 years old was not attending school. The minor allegedly comes from a broken family whose parents are dependent on alcohol. The minor and her sibling were placed in an RCI from the age of 2-3 months old. At the age of 14, the minor’s responsibility was entrusted to her elder brother. The latter having family issues, left the minor in the hands of a stranger who accepted to take care of her. The minor, who liked going to school, called the complainant to inform that the stranger is not letting her go to school. The matter was reported to the CDU.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The CDU informed that the stranger was convened for a meeting. She did not turn up. The OC spoke to the stranger and explained to her that the minor has the right to education and it was an offence for depriving a child of this right. The stranger informed that the minor is no longer residing at her place. Her elder brother and sister have taken her responsibility and doing needful for her to be admitted to another school in their locality. The CDU confirmed that minor is under the responsibility of her siblings and she is attending school. The Officer-in-Charge of the school was contacted. She confirmed that the minor is attending school.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow-up:</u></p> <p>The minor is being provided with psychological support by the CDU. The complainant was informed accordingly. The case was filed.</p>		
Case No.: 10	File No.: 5752	Case status: In progress
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>The OCO received a complaint from a parent whose son run away from home. The mother suspected that the minor went to live at his girlfriend’s place and she feared that he would be exposed to drugs. It seemed that the minor’s girlfriend’s mother had been arrested for drug possession. The complainant said that she had already filed a statement at the level of the Police and that she had an OB number.</p>		

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the Police Station. The Policeman explained that the OB number was not found on their system. The Investigator called the complainant regarding the OB number and advised her to file a case of missing person. After two days, the complainant called back to provide the OB number to the OCO. A letter was sent to the Commissioner of Police for a report on the case.

Outcome/Follow-up:

A report from the Commissioner of Police revealed that the Magistrate of the Children's Court had ordered that the minor is placed at the Probation Hostel for Boys. However, he absconded from the said institution. The *Brigade pour la protection de la famille* in collaboration with the Divisional Field Intelligence officers are deploying all possible efforts to recapture the minor.

Case No.: 11

File No.: 5693

Case status: In progress

Nature of complaint:

A mother called at the office to complain about her husband who abandoned their child. The parents were separated since a long time, but they are not divorced yet. However, both have new partners and the complainant is even pregnant. The minor concerned has been living with his paternal grandmother for some years. It was reported that the paternal grandmother is working and can no longer take care of the minor. The complainant said that, since she is herself pregnant, it would be difficult for her to look after the minor and she claimed that the father should take the minor's responsibility.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator explained to the complainant that both parents are responsible for their child. The complainant was made aware of section 7 of the Children's Act 2020 which read as follows:

- *More than one person may hold parental responsibilities and rights in respect of a child.*
- *The parental responsibilities and rights which a person may have in respect of a child shall include the responsibility and right to -*

- *have custody of the child, provide for the child’s basic needs, including the responsibility to take decisions relating to the child’s day to day upbringing;*
- *maintain contact with the child;*
- *act as guardian of the child; and*
- *contribute to the maintenance of the child as co-holders of parental responsibilities and rights.*

The Investigator told the complainant that mediation could be carried out with her and the minor’s father to find a solution in the best interests of the child. The mother said that she would think about it and get back to the OCO.

Outcome/Follow-up:

An Investigator called the complainant for a follow-up on the case. She stated that father has started taking care of the minor. The minor is still living with his paternal grandmother. The father sees him every week and attends to his needs. The complainant told the Investigator not to intervene any further and, if there are any other issues, she would get back to us. Hence, the case was filed.

Case No.: 12	File No.: 5720	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

The OC received a complaint from a parent whose children attend swimming classes in a swimming pool centre managed by the Municipal Council. According to the complainant, the swimming coaches are freelance and do not have the skills to teach children. The parent reported that sometimes the coaches verbally abuse the children and use foul language. The complainant’s children are traumatised and no longer want to go to swimming lessons. The parent had also reported the case to the Municipal Council. However, during his children’s last swimming lesson, the complainant said that one coach was aggressive and asked the children whether they complained to their parents.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the Municipal Council and spoke with the Chief Welfare Officer who was aware of the case. He stated that he had spoken with the coaches. The Investigator explained to him that the situation has not changed and the coaches even

threatened the children for telling on them to their parents. He said that he will monitor the situation. The Investigator told the Chief Welfare Officer that, in the best interests of children, coaches must be trained to work with children, even if they work freelance.

Outcome/Follow-up:

An Investigator contacted the complainant for a follow-up of the case. He stated that the situation had very much improved and that the coaches were no longer aggressive and abusive. The case was filed.

Case No.: 13

File No.: 5724

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A father made a complaint to the OCO stating that his wife left their home and took their youngest son away. The father stated that he went to the Police station and made a statement that he took his son back to his house. However, he was apprised that the minor's mother had put a case of kidnapping against him and the Police told him to return the child. The father felt that the minor was at risk in the custody of the mother because he alleged that the latter had poor health and mental health issues.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

Since the complainant feared that the minor was at risk, an Investigator referred him to the CDU. He was also advised that he could apply for an Immediate Care and Control of the minor at the level of the Supreme Court.

Outcome/Follow-up:

An Investigator followed up on the case and found that the minor was willingly living with his father and faring well. The case was filed.

Case No.: 14

File No.: Pro/Sch/42/251/1

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The OCO received an anonymous complaint that an Educator in a State Secondary School had made attempt upon chastity on several students. According to the complainant, it seemed that the Headmaster of the school was aware of the situation, but he did not

report the case to the authorities concerned. The students were afraid to go to the authorities because of their reputation.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

A letter was sent to the Commissioner of Police for urgent and appropriate enquiry and action at their end. The Senior Chief Executive of the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (METEST), was also notified.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The METEST replied to the OCO stating that an enquiry was initiated at their level and it was found that five students had reported that they had been sexually harassed by the accused teacher. The following actions were taken at the level of the METEST:

- A Senior Education Officer and the School Superintendent reported the matter to the Police where they were informed that, since one of the students is 18 years old, she has to make a statement herself at the level of the Police.
- The matter was also referred to the National Educational Counselling Service of the METEST and psychological assistance was proposed to the students.
- Individual and group counselling sessions were held with the students.
- The METEST is in the process of planning a workshop to sensitise Head of Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Special Education Needs Resource and Development Centres on the existing protocol and procedures on reporting cases of abuse towards students.
- The accused Educator was transferred to a boys' school.

The *Brigade pour la protection de la famille* enquired into the matter. However, since no declaration has been made against the Educator, they were unable to enquire further. The case was filed.

Case No.: 15

File No.: 5778

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A single mother called at the OCO and stated that while trying to discipline her daughter aged 7 years old, she hit her and there is a case against her at the level of the Police.

She recognised that she did not act well and that she should not have hit her daughter. She said that she had placed the minor in a shelter. Since she was the accused, she could not accompany her daughter to give her statement at the Police Station. She said that the Police contacted her sister to accompany the minor. The complainant did not want her sister to accompany her daughter because she is afraid that her sister would take her daughter away. According to her, her sister lives in a place where there is prostitution, alcohol and drugs. The complainant wanted to know whether the minor's father could accompany her.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the *Brigade pour la protection de la famille* to get an overview of the case and whether complainant's request may be acceded. An Inspector stated that the minor has to be accompanied by a relative and not the mother because she is the accused. The Inspector informed that the father of the minor can accompany the minor.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The Investigator informed the complainant accordingly. She made the necessary arrangements for the father to accompany the minor. The case was filed.

Case No.: 16

File No.: 5786

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The OCO received an anonymous complaint regarding a Grade 2 teacher. It was alleged that the teacher used verbal abuse against children and the children were traumatised. The mother wanted to keep anonymity because she feared that her child would be penalised.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the Headmaster of the school to get an overview of the situation. The latter stated that there has never been a complaint made against the teacher. He added that the Principal Inspector recently effected a visit at the school and took the teacher's class as a good example.

Outcome/Follow-up:

Since the complainant for the case was anonymous, there was no way to contact her. The Investigator kindly requested the Headmaster to nevertheless monitor the situation and, if there is any issue, to contact the OCO. The case was filed.

Case No.: 17	File No.: 5644	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A father made a complaint to the OCO in relation to a statement that he made at the Police station concerning an alleged attempt upon chastity on his daughter by his former wife’s partner. He stated that he went to the Police station several times for an update, but nothing had been done. He requested the intervention of the OCO to know about the status of the case at the level of the Police.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

A letter was sent to the Commissioner of Police requesting a report on the case and its status.

Outcome/Follow-up:

A reply from the Commissioner of Police revealed that the Police enquired into the complainant’s declaration that his daughter was allegedly a victim of attempt upon chastity. The enquiry was completed and the case was sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice. The complainant was informed accordingly. The case was filed.

Case No.: 18	File No.: 5792	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A paternal grandmother made a complaint at the OCO regarding her grandson. The boy’s parents are separated and the boy lives with his mother. She said that she had not seen her grandson for months and had only spoken with him briefly on a social media platform. She complained that the minor was sleeping on a couch and felt that he was at risk and neglected. She had already contacted the CDU, but received no response.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the CDU and spoke with the relevant officer. She stated that they had carried out several visits at the minor's place of residence and there was no evidence that he was sleeping on the sofa. The Officer added that the minor is well cared for by his mother and he is very close to his step-sister. The minor is being followed by a Psychologist of the CDU.

The Investigator also contacted the minor's mother for her side of the story. She stated that she did not want her son to go to his father's place because the latter is aggressive. She often observed that, when the minor returned from his father's place, he displayed similar aggressive behaviour. She confirmed that the minor is being followed at the level of the CDU. She also stated that she has entered a case in Court for custody of the minor.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The complainant was apprised of the actions taken by the OCO. She was informed that the OCO can no longer intervene in the case since there is a case in Court. The case was filed.

Case No.: 19

File No.: 5637

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The OCO received a complaint that a mother was using her son, aged around 9 years old, to beg for money. According to the information received, the minor was often in a lethargic state.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The case was referred to the Commissioner of Police and the CDU.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The CDU carried out an enquiry. During a joint intervention by *the Brigade pour la protection de la famille* and the CDU, they found the mother and the minor begging at the place described by the complainant. They were both taken to the hospital and an Emergency Protection Order was applied for and issued for the minor. The minor had to

be admitted at the BSMHCC for mental health follow-up. The mother was sentenced to pay a fine before the District Magistrate. The case was filed.

Case No.: 20	File No.: 5506	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

The OCO received a complaint from a minor’s stepmother and her paternal grandmother. According to them, the minor frequently ran away from home. They suspected that the minor was living with her cousin who is aged 17 years old and the latter’s boyfriend. They already reported the case to the *Brigade pour la protection de la famille* (BPF).

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the BPF and sent a letter to the Commissioner of Police for a report on the case.

Outcome/Follow-up:

According to the Police’s report, the minor repeatedly absented herself from her place of residence. The Responsible Party of the minor was counselled by the BPF on the psychological support required by the minor. A Probation Officer was informed on the case. According to the BPF, a Preventive Intervention Order would be made if the need arose and the matter would be referred to the Children’s Court for further actions. The case was filed.

Case No.: 21	File No.: 5770	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

The OC received a complaint from a couple who applied to be foster parents. According to the complaint, they had submitted all their relevant documents to the CDU to become foster parents. A CDU officer effected a visit at their house and they also met with a Psychologist of the MGEFW. The couple had made some changes to their home and had a room ready to welcome a child. However, they received their official certificate to become foster parent one year after their application, and their certificate would expire in one year. They tried to contact the CDU, but to no avail, so they requested the intervention of the OC.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the Officer-in-Charge of foster care at the level of the CDU in order to understanding the situation regarding this couple. The officer stated that he would look into the matter and he would contact the foster parents.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The Investigator contacted the complainant for a follow-up. The couple said that the CDU Officer contacted them shortly after the OC's intervention. They had also already met a minor who would soon be welcomed at their home. The case was filed.

Case No.: 22

File No.: 5831

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The Ombudsperson for Children received an anonymous complaint regarding a 3-year-old minor. According to the information received, the minor is malnourished, often sick, and at times victim of corporal punishment.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The case was referred to the MGEFW for appropriate enquiry and action.

Outcome/Follow-up:

A letter was received from the MGEFW stating that a psychosocial assessment had been carried out and no child protection concerns were identified. The minor had some speech delay and was being followed by a speech therapist in his school. According to the report, he lives in a conducive home environment and is well cared for by his parents. The case was filed.

Case No.: 23

File No.: 5795

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The OCO received a complaint from a teacher regarding the violent behaviour of a student in her class. According to her, the minor hits other students in the classroom and in the school playground. The teacher recounted that, at one time, the minor refused to listen to her and lifted a desk to try to throw on the other students and herself. She

added that the minor’s aggressive behaviour disrupted the class and he was a danger to himself and to other students.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the Headmaster of the school to enquire on the situation. He stated that minor resides in a Residential Care Institution (RCI) and that he is being followed by the Educational Psychologist and the Psychologist of the RCI. According to the Educational Psychologist, the minor would do better in a Special Education Needs School. A letter to the METEST has been sent in this regard and the Headmaster is awaiting a reply. The latter was advised that she can contact the OCO if there was any other issue.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The Headmaster contacted the OCO after two weeks. She stated that the minor had been admitted to a Special Education Needs School and is faring well. The case was filed.

Case No.: 24	File No.: 5689	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A mother made a complaint to the OCO regarding the compulsory acquisition of her plot of land by the New Social Living Development Ltd for a housing project, against a compensation. The mother has a child with disability who has cerebral palsy and suffers from epilepsy. Her husband and herself bought this plot of land and built a house on the ground floor according to the needs and requirements of their child. They felt that the compensation proposed was not enough to cover the cost to buy another plot of land and build another house adapted for their child.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator sent a letter to the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning and kindly requested them to intervene favourably in the best interests of the child, as stipulated in section 4(1) 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*”. The OC also met with the complainant who stated that she feared that her family would become homeless. At the request of

the OC, the complainant sent the medical certificate of her son and pictures of her house and yard to show how she had made the landscaping to meet the requirements of her son. The OC spoke with a High Cadre from the said Ministry.

In a letter addressed to the OC, the Ministry affirmed that they are taking into consideration the complainant's requests. Different stakeholders in the Ministry are working on the case and, following their favourable views and subject to administration's approval, an offer would be made to the complainants on their relocation and amount of compensation payable to them.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The complainant received a letter from the New Social Living Development Ltd, whereby they proposed her a new compensation after having assessed the value of the portion of land and that of the existing building. The complainant is agreeable to the amount offered, but made a request to consider other costs which she will have to incur when searching for and acquiring a property. The Investigator called the complainant for a follow-up and the latter stated that her demand had been acceded to. The case was filed.

Case No.: 25

File No.: 5783

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The OC received an anonymous complaint regarding a minor who is in Grade 8. According to the information received, the minor is known to the Police for drug trafficking. The complainant stated that people were using the minor to deliver drugs and that the minor was at risk.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The case was referred to the Commissioner of Police and the CDU.

Outcome/Follow-up:

A letter from the CDU informed the OCO that, with the assistance of the Police, they verified the minor's family background and home environment which was found to be conducive with no indication of suspicious activity. The CDU carried out a psychosocial

assessment. The authority found that the minor lives with her mother and no child protection concern has been identified. However, it seemed that the minor had been irregular at school because of bullying. According to the CDU's report, the minor resumed school and follow-up will be maintained. The case was filed.

Case No.: 26

File No.: 5807

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A father called at the OCO requesting the intervention of the OC for the transfer of his two children to another school. He stated that he is separated from the children's mother with whom the children used to live. He alleged that the mother's partner was violent with the children and there was even a case of attempt upon chastity against him which was already reported to the Police and the CDU. The complainant stated that his daughters now live with him and he went to the Zone Directorate of the METEST for a school transfer, but he was denied the transfer because the mother of the children had previously objected to it.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the CDU to confirm the version of complainant. The CDU confirmed that there is a case upon chastity on one of the minors and they were aware that the children are living with the father. A letter was sent to the Zone Directorate of the METEST to take into consideration the best interests of the children and facilitate the school transfer of the minors.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The Investigator contacted the complainant for a follow-up and he stated that the school transfer of his daughters had been facilitated by the METEST and his children are faring well. The case was filed.

Case No.: 27

File No.: 5824

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The OCO received a complaint from an NGO regarding a minor aged 14 years old. According to the NGO, the minor lives within a household where there is a high level of

promiscuity, and verbal and physical violence. The NGO also reported that the minor was irregular at school and even had suicidal tendencies.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The case was referred to the CDU for appropriate action.

Outcome/Follow-up:

According to the CDU's report, no child protection issues were identified. However, it was found that the minor has behavioural concerns and the Psychologist of the CDU initiated behaviour modification therapy. The CDU also noted that the minor was not attending school because of bullying, therefore the matter was referred to the METEST for necessary action at their end. Minor has also been referred to Life Plus for the alleged suicidal tendencies. The case was filed.

Case No.: 28

File No.: 5849

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A complainant called at the OCO regarding his wife's son who was unable to attend school because his mother had not yet got a resident permit in Mauritius. The complainant married minor's mother in India and they all came to live in Mauritius. It has been 6 months since he started procedures for a resident permit for his wife and her son, and he was still awaiting a reply from the Passport and Immigration Office (PIO). The complainant had applied for a school for the minor, but without a resident permit, he was unable to complete the formalities. The complainant informed the OCO that he contacted the PIO several times and they told him that the resident permit is not ready.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the PIO and spoke with the relevant officer regarding the case. It seemed that there had been a change in the law and consequently the PIO suffered a backlog. He explained that they worked on cases in order of the request dates. The Investigator reminded the officer that for this particular case, a minor is being denied his right to education and that as per section 4(1) 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”. The Officer said that he would look into the matter and work on the case as a priority.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The complainant contacted the OCO to inform that the PIO Officer contacted him to say that the resident permits for his wife and her son were ready. The case was filed.

Case No.: 29	File No.: 5830	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A mother made a complaint to the OCO that she is not being allowed to meet her son. According to her, she is separated from the minor’s father and the minor lives with the father. She went to school to be able to meet her son, but the school denied her access. The mother did not have the contact details of the father. She requested the intervention of the OC so that a mediation could be carried out with the minor’s father and that she could meet her son since there is no case in Court for either divorce or custody.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the school and spoke with the Headmaster. The Headmaster stated that, as per their protocol, when parents are separated, they have to ask the parent with whom the child is residing if the child can get access to the other parent. In this particular case, it seems that the father was unwilling for the son to meet his mother on the school premises. The Headmaster also added that, when the mother comes to school and her son sees her, he becomes upset and cries. The Investigator sent an email to the Headmaster requesting the contact details of the father to which the Headmaster replied promptly. The father was convened to the OCO.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The father called at the OCO and the Investigator explained to him that he was convened to the OCO following a complaint. The Investigator informed him that the goal was to understand the situation and find a solution in the best interests of his son. The father stated that he has no objection that the complainant meets their son. He was saddened that the complainant only wants to see one son and not the eldest son. He said that the complainant had made false allegations against him. The children were aware of that

and they did not want to see their mother. He further declared that his sons often go to their maternal grandparents' house and their maternal aunt's house and he was willing for the complainant to go to see her children there or a meeting could be organised at the level of the CDU.

The Investigator contacted the complainant to apprise her of the outcome of the meeting with the father. She was unwilling to go to either her parents' or her sister's house saying that she is not on speaking terms with them. Both parties were advised that, for the stability of the children, they could enter a case in Court for custody. The case was filed.

Case No.: 30

File No.: 5822

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A grandparent called at the OCO regarding her grandson. Minor's parents were deceased and she has taken the responsibility to look after the child. She has been to the Police Station to state that the minor is living with her and the CDU is also aware of this. However, they have not done any necessary legal procedures for the guardianship of the minor. Since the minor is now staying with her, she had applied for a school transfer, which was not being granted because the Zone Directorate of the METEST asked for a paper stating that minor is living with her.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

Since the minor has a right to education, an Investigator contacted the CDU and spoke to the officer in charge of the case. She stated that the minor is indeed living with her grandparent and that they are ensuring follow-up. The Investigator wrote a referral letter to the Zone Directorate asking them to take into consideration the best interests of the minor and to facilitate his transfer as a temporary measure so that his right to education is not violated. The grandparent was advised to start all the necessary procedures so that she may become the legal guardian of the minor.

Outcome/Follow-up:

An Investigator contacted the complainant for an update on the case. She stated that the minor had been transferred to a school near her house and he was faring well. She

added that she has started the process to become the minor’s legal guardian. The case was filed.

Case No.: 31	File No.: 5843	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A mother called at the OCO regarding her daughter. She was concerned that her daughter was allegedly victim of attempt upon chastity on several occasions by the complainant’s half-brother. She said that her half-brother had threatened the minor that he would harm her if she told anyone. The case was already reported to the Police and the minor was examined by the Police Doctor. The mother complained that it has been 2 weeks since the case was reported to the Police, but the alleged perpetrator was not yet arrested. She reported that the minor was afraid to go to school because she feared that the alleged perpetrator would come to school and harm her.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the Police to enquire on the case. A Policeman stated that they are working on the case and gathering information. The complainant was contacted and was apprised of the same.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The complainant was contacted for a follow-up of the case. She stated that she went to an NGO which provided her with a Psychologist for her daughter, and she retained the services of a lawyer who is making the necessary arrangements and supporting her in the case. The case was filed.

Case No.: 32	File No.: 5893	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A grandmother made a complaint to the OCO that her grandson was a victim of bullying at school. She looks after her grandson because his parents are drug addicts and do not take care of him. According to her, her grandson was being bullied at school and the teacher did nothing to protect him. She said that there was a school incident whereby a group of students came to hit the minor when he was in class and the teacher told that group to wait after school hours if they wanted to settle account with the minor. The

complainant also alleged that the teacher used humiliating comments toward the minor. The grandmother has also made a statement to the Police in this regard.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the school and spoke with the Deputy Headmistress. The latter stated that there was indeed an incident where a group of students hit the minor, but the teacher did not incite them. She added that the school has been having difficulties with the minor who displays aggressive behaviours, causes disturbance in class and often steals. The Deputy Headmistress was advised to report the case to the METEST.

A visit to the school was also carried out and the Investigator met with the teacher of the minor. She said that she understood the minor's family situation and has tried to coach him. According to her, the minor steals from his classmates and she never leaves the classroom unattended. When other students accused the minor of stealing, she looked into his bags and found the missing objects. She added that she had called the grandmother to the school several times, but she did not come. She stated that she was aware that the minor needs guidance and she was trying her best.

The Investigator also met with the minor. He said that he likes coming to school, but sometimes there are students who mock him. He confirmed that the teacher is nice to him and, when a group of students was teasing him, he told his teacher to talk to them and they subsequently stopped.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The complainant was apprised of the investigation. She stated that, since she went to the Police, the teacher is polite toward the minor. She agreed to make a request at the level of the school for an Educational Psychologist for the minor. The case was filed.

Case No.: 33

File No.: 5835

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A Medical Social Worker contacted the OCO regarding the case of a minor aged 11 years old who was admitted at the hospital with history of assault and neglect allegedly perpetrated by her mother. She said that the minor told her that she was often left alone

at night with no dinner and that she was a victim of verbal and physical abuse. The case was reported to the *Brigade pour la protection de la famille* (BPF) who brought the minor to the hospital. The Police Officer was informed that it was a case of ill-treatment, assault and neglect.

The CDU was updated by the Medical Social Worker and they said that the minor has behavioural problems and cannot be placed in a Residential Care Institution. The minor was medically discharged from the hospital, but could not be sent back to her mother because she allegedly assaulted the minor. The minor has been in the hospital for 21 days with risk of infection and missing school, while awaiting a decision from the authorities.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the CDU. The relevant Officer stated that they were aware of the case and that it was the mother who had made a complaint against the minor, claiming that the minor wanted to poison her. According to the CDU officer, the minor has behavioural issues and they were awaiting a decision from higher level officials on how to proceed.

The Investigator also contacted the BPF who confirmed that the minor is a victim of ill-treatment and neglect, and that the mother assaulted her. Since there is a case against the mother, the minor cannot go back to live with her mother. A letter was sent to the CDU, stating that as per information gathered by the OCO, the minor was a victim and the case was referred to the MGEFW for appropriated action.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The Investigator contacted the Medical Social Worker for an update on the case. According to her, the CDU sent a letter maintaining that the case was not within their mandate and that they referred the case to the Probation Office for Parenting Support Intervention (PSI). Meanwhile, the minor was still in the hospital.

After two weeks, the Investigator contacted the Medical Social Worker again for a follow-up on the case. The minor was still in hospital after 100 days, and the Probation Office did not find any behavioural issue. Since there was a case of assault against the minor's

mother, the minor could not return to live with her mother. The Medical Social Worker was worried about the minor's mental health. At the request of the OC, the Investigator contacted the Permanent Secretary of the MGEFW regarding the case. Following the intervention of the OC, the minor was placed in an RCI. The case was filed.

Case No.: 34

File No.: 5854

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The OCO received a complaint from a teacher who works in a SEN school regarding two brothers. The teacher said that the brothers were victims of neglect and domestic violence. According to her, the younger brother used to go to a mainstream school, but the parents claimed that he has behavioural problems and they transferred him to the SEN School. The teacher further stated that the children did not attend school regularly and there were often visible marks of beating on their bodies. When she asked the mother about the marks, the latter replied that the children fell while playing or fighting. She feared that the children were at risk with the parents.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator called the CDU to report the case and a letter was sent to the MGEFW to ask for a report on the actions taken.

Outcome/Follow-up:

Two months had lapsed since the referral to the CDU, and the OCO had not received any update on the case. The Investigator contacted the complainant for a follow-up. She stated that the children were still irregular at school and she did not know whether the CDU intervened. As per the report from the MGEFW, the case is being followed by the Family Support Bureau due to alleged family problems. The case was filed.

Case No.: 35

File No.: 5738

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The OC received a complaint regarding administrative slowness in the foster care department. The complainant had applied to the MGEFW to become a foster parent one year ago. She stated that, despite obtaining the 'certificate for foster parent' and that the matching exercise was completed, she did not receive any response from the

concerned authority. The complainant had already taken steps ahead in terms of child care and ensured that the child's needs are met when she would eventually come to her home.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The Investigator contacted the Foster Care Unit to inquire if there was any issue regarding this case. We were informed that the file was being processed at management level. Two weeks later, the Investigator phoned to check on the status of the case. We were informed that the case was going forward and that a court hearing would soon be scheduled.

Outcome/Follow-up:

Five days later, the complainant's case was settled in Court and she officially became a foster parent to an 11-month-old baby. The case was filed.

Case No.: 36

File No.: 5734

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The OC received a complaint regarding a lady holding an apparently two-year-old child begging for money from the public. It was reported that the child seemed neglected and at risk.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the *Brigade pour la protection de la famille* (BPF) for urgent intervention at their end.

Outcome/Follow-up:

Patrols were conducted by the BPF. The lady and the child were identified. They were both brought to the office of the BPF. The intervention of the CDU was requested. The child was handed over to the grandmother in presence of the CDU personnel. As per the Police's report, the respondent was sentenced before the District Court to pay a fine. The case was filed.

Case No.: 37	File No.: 5698	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A grandfather lodged a complaint that his grandson, born in the UK, did not possess a birth certificate. He only had a certified copy of his birth registration. He was concerned that, without his birth certificate, admission to school, opening a bank account in the child's name, getting a passport and inheriting property would be practically impossible. The grandfather and grandmother had the custody of their grandson after the latter's mother passed away, and the child's father who is a foreigner had little to no contact with his son. However, the grandfather reported that legal custody papers of the child had been misplaced.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The OC was very much concerned that this child could miss out on his rights including educational rights. A formal request was made to the Mauritian High Commission in London for assistance regarding the procedures in obtaining the child's birth certificate. Moreover, a formal letter was forwarded to the Master and Registrar about the missing custody papers.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow-up:</u></p> <p>In a reply from the Head of Mission from the Mauritius High Commission in London, the OCO was informed that the concerned authorities have been approached for the issue of a birth certificate for this child. In view of the urgency of the situation, the Commission acted promptly and facilitated the procedures for the obtention of the child's birth certificate. The Master and Registrar also provided a certified true copy of the legal custody document. The case was filed.</p>		
Case No.: 38	File No.: 5673	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A complainant alleged that her family and herself were victims of physical and verbal violence by her husband. She said that the latter also drank heavily and physically abused her adult daughter who is also the mother of a little boy with intellectual impairment.</p>		

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The Investigator liaised with the Family Support Bureau (FSB) of the MGEFW and SOS Femmes Mauritius. The complainant was referred to the FSB where she had previously lodged a case.

Outcome/Follow-up:

From the information gathered by the OCO, she was advised by the FSB to move out of the house with her two adult daughters. She was also given psychological assistance and legal advice. The Investigator also contacted SOS Femmes Mauritius from whom the complainant could receive additional support. As per the latest feedback, the complainant stated that things were better at home after the intervention of the authorities. The case was filed.

Case No.: 39

File No.: 5767

Case status: In progress

Nature of complaint:

The OC received a complaint from a parent who felt that his son had been unfairly discriminated in the education system. At the beginning of the last academic year, the child joined Grade 7 in a private secondary college without the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) after passing the college's entry exams. While being admitted in Grade 7, the child prepared for his upcoming PSAC exams. The child obtained excellent results at both his PSAC and Grade 7 exams. Despite this, the child was denied admission in Grade 8 in a college of his choice even though he met all the academic requirements.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

Information, explanation and documentation were sought from the concerned authorities. The OC requested that the parent's appeal be given due consideration in the best interests of the child.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The case is still being closely monitored.

Case No.: 40	File No.: 5590	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>The OC received a complaint from parents alleging that their 5-year-old daughter had been victim of bullying and ill-treatment by her primary school teacher. The parents deplored the way children were spoken to in class, taking into consideration that these children were fresh out of kindergarten. They reported that their child had become anxious, had sleep problems and was stressed about attending school.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The Investigator enquired on the situation with the School Director. The teacher was convened by the OC. The respondent attended the convocation.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow-up:</u></p> <p>According to the parents, the classroom situation improved for a short while, but they were still dissatisfied with the teacher’s approach. The parents decided to terminate the contract with the school because they believed that the school culture did not meet the needs of their child. The OC requested the school director to submit the child’s progress report to the parents. The case was filed.</p>		
Case No.: 41	File No.: 5669	Case status: In progress
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>The OC received a complaint from a mother who stated that her daughter had been sexually assaulted by her father. The complainant deplores the way the enquiry was conducted by the CDU, which she believed impacted the decision of the Court. The father, the alleged perpetrator was granted a “<i>droit d’hébergement</i>” [right to accommodate a child] which she believed would jeopardise the security and well-being of her children.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>An official correspondence was sent to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare to gather more information on the case.</p>		

Outcome/Follow-up:

Follow-up is being maintained.

Case No.: 42	File No.: 5756	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A father complained at the OCO that he was aggrieved by the school allocation decision for her daughter who, according to him, obtained excellent results for the PSAC examinations. He stated that pupils of the same class obtaining the same results were attributed to a different school. The parent appealed to the METEST to revise their decision.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The OC referred the case to the METEST for urgent consideration.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The child was granted transfer to the college of her choice. The case was filed.

Case No.: 43	File No.: 5753	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

The OC received a complaint from a mother whose daughter was allegedly abused sexually by their teenage neighbour. The complainant stated that she called at a Police Station, but was then referred to the *Brigade pour la protection de la famille* (BPF) to give a statement. The complainant said that she could not go through the procedures because she had no financial means to travel to the BPF.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator referred the case to the BPF for any assistance deemed necessary.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The BPF acted promptly and one of their teams were deployed to the complainant's house so that the latter could give her statement. The case was filed.

Case No.: 44	File No.: 5761	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>The OC received a complaint from a paternal grandmother who said that she cares for her three grandchildren. She reported that the mother and father are drug addicts, and that, at some point, the youngest child was removed and placed in an RCI. The grandmother willingly fought for guardianship and she was granted same on the condition that the parents did not live on the same premises as the children. However, recently the father returned to the grandmother's house. The disruptive presence of the father was impacting on the well-being of the children. They were scared and began to display defiant behaviours. When the CDU visited their home, the complainant could not give her version to the Officers as the father was present.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The Investigator liaised with the CDU officer in charge of the case. The complainant spoke to the officer from the OCO and gave her version. The Investigator also spoke to the BPF and requested information on Protection Order and Eviction Order. Both the CDU and the BPF are following up on this case.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow-up:</u></p> <p>As per the report of the MGEFW, one of the children has been placed at an RCI, while the other two are being taken care of by a relative. The minor who is in the RCI is in the process of reintegration with the family. The case was filed.</p>		
Case No.: 45	File No.: 5766	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A mother called at the OCO requesting for a document supporting the school transfer of her ward. The child previously lived with his father and the complainant's mother-in-law. The child came to reside at his mother's house because of family conflict. For easier access, the mother wanted to transfer her child to a school nearer to her house. The father was supposed to give his approval for the school change, but he did not.</p>		

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The Investigator explained to the complainant that the OCO does not provide documentation for school transfer. However, she assured her that the father would be informed that his approval was necessary in the best interests of the child’s education.

Outcome/Follow-up:

A phone call to the OCO from the mother confirmed that the child was successfully transferred to the school of her choice. The case was filed.

Case No.: 46	File No.: 5723	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

The OC received a complaint from a mother regarding the alleged abduction of her child by the father. The complainant alleged that she had lost her case in Court and the father obtained the custody of their child.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The Investigator attempted mediation by calling the father. The latter’s version challenged that of the mother. He alleged that the mother lost interest in the child and remarried. The father stated that he would respect the Court Order and allow the mother to have access to the child when she would come on holidays. From information received from the MGEFW, the case was referred to the Attorney General’s Office to be dealt at Court level. Afterwards, the mother wrote to the Supreme Court stating that she was no longer insisting for return of the minor to the country where she resided.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The case was filed.

Case No.: 47	File No.: 5784	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

The OC received a complaint from a mother who felt that her son’s right to the highest attainable standard of health and treatment facilities was being baffled. Her 3-year-old son swallowed caustic soda and, for the past year, he has been undergoing medical treatment at public hospitals. From information gathered from the complainant, the

child was being fed exclusively via gastrostomy because he could not swallow anything. The complainant alleged that she was told by the General Surgeon that her son could not undergo surgery because of a lack of equipment and that he would have to be sent abroad for the intervention. However, she stated that, at the time, the General Surgeon refused to call a board for overseas treatment.

One year after the incident, the complainant claimed that she was told by the General Surgeon that the medical file of her child was missing and that they were back to square one. The mother expressed was highly distressed and felt powerless at this news. She stated that that her son was a victim of injustice and discrimination within the health system. She was upset that her little boy who was already in great pain was being denied appropriate medical care.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

Mauritius has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and has the obligation to respect, protect and fulfill article 24 of the Convention which clearly states that *“States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services”*. The OC brought the case to the attention of the Senior Chief Executive of the Ministry of Health and Wellness for urgent appropriate action. Information was sought on whether a medical board was called for this child to benefit from overseas treatment and whether the medical record of the child is available.

Outcome/Follow-up:

As per the correspondence from the Senior Chief Executive of the said Ministry, a medical board was convened for the patient and he was referred to a medical institution in India for treatment. Moreover, the medical records of the child were available at the hospital level. The case was filed.

Case No.: 48	File No.: 5780	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>The OC received a complaint from a mother who alleged that the CDU removed her four children in her absence without giving her the opportunity to give her version of events. She said that she was not granted a visit to her children during seven months. After this long wait, she claimed that she finally met her two eldest children only. The two youngest children aged 2 and 3 years old respectively were not present during the visit. She felt that she was being denied access to her own children.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The CDU was contacted to urgently organise visits for all the children to meet up with their parents.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow-up:</u></p> <p>As per information gathered from the complainant on follow-up, the CDU organised a visit for all the children. CDU Officers were also conducting regular monitoring visits at the family home and were planning to enter a case in Court for the children to go back home. The mother pointed out that it was very painful to see her 2-year-old child unwilling to come near her and her father because she did not recognise them. On follow-up, it was reported by the MGEFW that all four children had been discharged to the care of their parents.</p>		
Case No.: 49	File No.: 5774	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A parent from Rodrigues complained to the OCO that Grades 2 and 3 are being merged and that this may be prejudicial to elder children who have already completed the Grade 2 syllabus.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The Investigator spoke to a high cadre of the Commission for Education in Rodrigues and informed her of the complaint. The latter explained that this batch of Grade 2 pupils had a Grade 3 level since they were given the possibility to move to Grade 2 when they were in Grade 1 after an academic assessment. Even if they were younger than the students</p>		

in Grade 3, they did have a similar academic level. She further stated that there was a shortage of primary school educators across schools and this decision was taken by the Commission for Education. The parent was informed accordingly.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The case was filed.

Case No.: 50

File No.: 5812

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The “*Département de Protection Internationale de l’Office des étrangers*” contacted the OCO regarding the irregular situation of two Mauritian children in Belgium. They requested the OCO’s collaboration to investigate on the family’s situation in Mauritius. Based on this investigation, the Belgian authority would take a decision in the best interests of the children.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

Investigators enquired on the family’s situation of the children in Mauritius by gathering information from close family members who were involved in the lives of the minors. They conducted enquiries with the schools attended by the minors. They also gathered information from the CDU and the Police. The report was sent to the Belgian authority.

Outcome/Follow-up:

Follow-up is being maintained with the Belgian authority. The case was filed.

Case No.: 51

File No.: 5791

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A mother lodged a complaint regarding the disruptive and aggressive behaviour of one of her son’s classmates. According to her, the latter had violent outbursts. The complainant reported that her son was assaulted by this child and got a shoulder injury which required medical attention. The complainant requested the intervention of the OC so that the other children could enjoy a safe and conducive school environment.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator enquired on this matter with the concerned authorities and the Headmaster of the school. They were requested to do the needful for all children of that school to benefit from a violence-free environment.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The Headmaster spoke to the parent of the child with behavioural problems and apprised him of the seriousness of the incident. The Headmaster also spoke with the child. The Educational Psychologist who was already following the child called at the school for a session. A talk was also carried out for the whole class. The child requested to be seated alone, which was agreed to. As per the report of the concerned authority, the child’s behaviour is being closely monitored. The case was filed.

Case No.: 52

File No.: 5825

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A grandmother called at the OCO and complained that her grandson had serious behavioural concerns. She said that he was very aggressive and disrespectful towards her, and that he also used objects to hurt his brothers. She added that he was not attending school and roamed the streets at night time. The grandmother explained that the child’s parents were separated and that the father did not take any responsibility for his son. The mother lives with another man and it was the grandmother who is currently taking care of her grandchildren.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The case of serious behavioural concerns was referred to the Probation and Aftercare Service. An Investigator spoke with the mother and the father of the child, urging them to take more responsibilities towards the children because they may be exposed to other risks if they did not attend school and stayed outside at night. The mother stated that she does take care of her children before leaving at night. She explained that her son was not attending school because he went through difficult times following the loss of his paternal grandfather. She however reassured that he would be resuming school during the coming week.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The case was filed.

Case No.: 53

File No.: 5823

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A maternal grandfather complained that her grandson was not going to school. According to his complaint, the child was attending a private school previously. After the COVID-19 pandemic, the mother could not pay for the school anymore, and the child stayed at home and followed online classes. The grandfather believed that the child should be at school and make friends.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator attempted mediation with the mother. She provided her version of the story, explaining that her son is being home schooled with one of the best Australian educational institutions, and that her son’s education had never been disrupted. However, she did initiate procedures for her son to be admitted to a public school. She was of the view that she needed to consider the educational option that was in the best interests of her child.

She further stated that her family have toxic traits and did not wish for her son to be near them. She said that her own father is abusive and her mother manipulative. She underwent therapy as she claimed that her mother failed to protect her as a child. She distanced herself from her family to preserve her own mental health. She explained that her parents were trying to get to her through complaints to authorities, while she was trying to sever all ties with them.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The case was filed as it was assured that the mother was acting in the best interests of her child and that the child’s right to education was being upheld.

Case No.: 54	File No.: 4249/1	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>The case of a 15-year-old boy detained in police cell at Petite Rivière Detention Centre for more than 45 days was brought to the attention of the OC. The child had been living in a residential care facility since his young age. It was viewed as not in the best interests of the child to be locked up in a police cell for such a lengthy period of time interrupting his rehabilitation and schooling.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>A visit was carried out at the Petite Rivière Detention Centre where the child was found in a very uncondusive and unhygienic environment. The OC contacted the Commissioner of Police to highlight her concerns on the child’s mental health and physical well-being.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow-up:</u></p> <p>After a few days, the child’s case was heard in Court and he was sent on remand to the Correctional Youth Centre (CYC). The OC accompanied by an Investigator visited the child at the CYC and took note of the state of the children at the centre. Following this visit, a dialogue with inmates of the CYC was organised at the OCO. The case was filed.</p>		
Case No.: 55	File No.: 5850	Case status: In progress
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>The OC received a complaint from a parent stating that her son attends a Special Educational Needs (SEN) School where there were no services of a Speech Therapist for the past three months. Moreover, the complainant felt aggrieved that her child was not eligible to receive speech therapy from public hospitals as he was turning five. She also stated that private therapies were very costly.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The OC spoke with the SEN School Director. The latter acknowledged that there is a serious lack of speech therapists in Mauritius. Her educational institution caters for 120 children with speech and language impairments and mental disabilities.</p>		

Outcome/Follow-up:

A systemic investigation on the SEN sector was opened. The authorities concerned have been apprised of the scarcity of para-medical professionals in the field of SEN. A follow-up is being ensured.

Case No.: 56	File No.: 5886	Case status: In progress
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Nature of complaint:

Further to a complaint regarding attempt upon chastity on a minor in a SEN school, the OC opened an investigation.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The OC accompanied by an Investigator carried out a visit at the SEN school.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The enquiry concluded that the general infrastructure of the SEN school was not conducive enough to the learning and development of children with disabilities. There was a serious need for renovation and refurbishment. Very few staff members were present at the time of the visit. Adults with disabilities were being offered courses on the same premises as children. There was no proper categorisation of children in younger and older sections. The concerned authority was apprised of the urgency of the matter and the need for remedial action. A follow-up is being ensured.

Case No.: 57	File No.: 5782	Case status: In progress
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Nature of complaint:

The OC received a complaint regarding the ceasing of operation of a day care centre. Seventy children aged between 2 and 3 years, mostly from single parent families, attended this centre. As per the complaint, the closing of the day care centre left children unattended at home with limited care.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The concerned authority was contacted immediately. The authority highlighted that the day care centre was not complying with Early Childhood Development Regulations 2022. The centre was granted several derogations to amend their practices and comply with

the regulations, but still, it did not meet the requirements. As per information received from the authority, most of the staff including the manager, cook and carers were not registered. The day care centre did not have an emergency plan. They also had sharp-edged toys which were dangerous for children. The authority had to close the day care centre in the best interests of children.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The authority's final report is being awaited and follow-up is ongoing on this case.

Case No.: 58

File No.: 5836

Case status: In progress

Nature of complaint:

The OC received a complaint regarding the verbal and physical abuse of a young boy by his father. It was reported that the latter even tried to strangle his son and humiliated him at every occasion. The complainant also said that the father compelled his son to work which was affecting his schooling.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The case was immediately referred to the CDU.

Outcome/Follow-up:

Follow-up is being maintained.

Case No.: 59

File No.: 5840

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The OC received a complaint from a parent alleging that four children living in her locality steal and bully other children. These children did not go to school, roamed the streets all day along and until late at night. The parent was concerned about the well-being and security of her own children who she said were terrified to walk on the streets after school.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The complaint was referred to the Commissioner of Police for urgent action at their end.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The BPF enquired into the matter and no child was found loitering or roaming the streets in the area indicated. It was also reported that the complainant and her family had already moved out of that neighbourhood. The case was filed.

Case No.: 60	File No.: 5700	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A mother, living in the United Kingdom, complained that her daughter's passport was expired. She wished to renew it so that her daughter and her could visit the minor's ailing grandmother in Mauritius. The minor's biological father had had no contact with the family for years and his address was unknown. The mother complained that, despite having legal documentation which provides for her to exercise parental authority, legal administration and custody over the minor while she is abroad, and is entitled to take all necessary measures in respect of the safety, security and morality of the child, the Passport and Immigration Office (PIO) was not facilitating the process of renewing her daughter's passport.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The case was referred to the PIO.

Outcome/Follow-up:

According to the report from the PIO, no application for the renewal of the Mauritius passport of the minor has been received at the office. The PIO informed the OCO that, according to clause 6 of the Application Passport Form 136A, for a minor to be issued with another passport, the consent of both parents is mandatory. In the absence of such consent, a Judge's Order would suffice. The report further stated that the document of the complainant relates to an affidavit sworn by both parents and was not a Judge's Order. Hence, the Office cannot accept the application for renewal of the Mauritius passport unless the above-explained condition (clause 6) was fulfilled. Feedback was provided to the complainant who stated that she would undertake the necessary legal measures. She appreciated the support of the OCO on this matter. The case was filed.

Case No.: 61	File No.: 5739	Case status: In progress
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A mother complained that, due to socio-economic problems, she had requested the assistance of the CDU to take in charge her two children in June 2022 until her situation improved. She stated that she had changed residential address and had moved to her mother's house. Within two months, that is by August 2022, she found that her situation improved considerably and she made a request to the CDU to take back her children. As at November 2022, she explained that she was still waiting to get back her children despite several requests made to the authority. The children were living in an RCI and she received only one parental visit from June 2022 to November 2022.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>An Investigator spoke to an Officer of the MGEFW and sent a correspondence to the said Ministry for a report on actions taken in this matter.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow-up:</u></p> <p>A report to the OCO from the MGEFW stated that, in an interview carried out by the CDU with one minor, it was gathered that the children's mother smoked illicit substances and that the children did not eat food for several days. In September 2022, the mother attended the CDU and requested parental visits with her children. Two parental visits were carried in the months of October 2022 and December 2022 with the mother and maternal grandparents of the minors. A house visit was also carried out at the new residence of the mother in October 2022 and the house was found to be conducive to accommodate the minors. With regards to the allegation of illicit substance use, the MGEFW sent a memo to the addiction unit of a hospital for a drug screening test of the mother and same is being awaited. Feedback was provided to the complainant. Follow-up on that matter is being ensured.</p>		
Case No.: 62	File No.: 5749	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A father complained that her daughter who got grade aggregate 8 for the National Certificate of Education (NCE) Assessment did not obtain the college of her choice, while other students with lower grade aggregates in the core subjects got admission in that</p>		

college. The minor was depressed and demotivated. The father alleged that her daughter had been victim of discrimination.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The case was referred to the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) for further enquiry.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The report received from the MES revealed that, following the first admission exercise, all the girls admitted at the college in demand have achieved grade aggregate 8 and a higher relative performance than the concerned candidate. The report also explained that any transfer request would be based on requests made by responsible parties of candidates, existing criteria for admission in the academies and vacancies in the academies. Following a transfer request by the complainant, the concerned minor got admission into the college of her choice. The case was filed.

Case No.: 63

File No.: 5688

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A mother complained that her son was undergoing his School Certificate examination and, owing to his complex medical issues, he had been granted extra time of 25 per cent. In September 2022, the minor was diagnosed with autism by a diagnostic centre attached to a hospital which recommended that the minor should be provided with adequate extra time to process instructions and understand examination questions to allow him the opportunity to complete his paper successfully. The mother brought several documents to the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) as evidence from the hospital and an NGO in the field of autism to request that the minor be granted 50 per cent extra time under section 1.3.7.5(a) and (c) of the regulations and guidance for administering Cambridge International exams.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator scrutinised the relevant documents. A correspondence was sent to the MES whereby the OC recommended that the minor's special request be entertained favourably in his best interests.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The child was granted 50 per cent extra time by the MES to complete his School Certificate examination. The case was filed.

Case No.: 64

File No.:5667

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A mother complained that her daughter, student of Grade 4, was often being verbally harassed in a sexual way at her school by a male student of Grade 6 with behavioural problems. She stated that the latter would come at any time in her daughter’s classroom, irrespective of the teacher’s presence, sit near the girl and verbally harass her. According to her, the teachers were often unable to handle the situation. Her daughter was distressed and refused to attend school. The mother complained that she had raised the matter with the Headmistress of the school, but the situation had not been redressed.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator spoke to the Headmistress of the school.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The boy was placed under constant supervision at school and was being followed by an Educational Psychologist. The girl also reported to be faring well at school. The case was filed.

Case No.: 65

File No.: 5635

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A mother complained that her 13-year-old son was victim of bullying perpetrated by a boy of Grade 9 in a secondary school. The mother had applied for a school transfer for her son.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The case was reported to the Rector of the school and to the METEST for enquiry and action at their end.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The Rector held a meeting with the child perpetrator and his parents in the presence of the *Brigade pour la protection de la famille* and affirmed that the child would be under strict scrutiny at school. The report received from the METEST stated that, further to the recommendation of the Educational Psychologist for a change in the learning environment of the victimised minor, the latter was given admission in another secondary school. The mother thanked the OCO for its support and assistance. The case was filed.

Case No.: 66

File No.: 5658

Case status: In progress

Nature of complaint:

A minor of 17 years old complained that he had been subjected to police brutality on two occasions; firstly, at a light rail station by four Police Officers and later, at the Police Station by the same Police Officers. According to information received, the minor saw four Police Officers pointing a truncheon to another boy at the light rail station, and when he started filming the scene on his mobile, the Police Officers noticed him and rushed on him. The latter was allegedly beaten by these officers on the face with the truncheon which left a scar on his face. He said that he was then forcefully taken to the Police Station where he was subjected to more police brutality. The minor also reported the case to the Independent Police Complaints Commission. The minor's mother stated that she would take up the matter to Court.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The case was reported to the Commissioner of Police for actions at their level.

Outcome/Follow-up:

A response is awaited and follow-up is ongoing.

Case No.: 67

File No.: 5661

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A person lodged a complaint of child mendicity at the OCO. It was alleged that a woman was seen using three girls in the approximate age range from 4 to 7 years to beg from people on the parking lot of a shopping mall until as late as 19 00 hours on 05 September 2022. The girls were reportedly in a pitiful state.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The case was referred to the Commissioner of Police.

Outcome/Follow-up:

A report from the Police stated that personnel of the *Brigade pour la protection de la famille* had performed regular patrols at the shopping mall and in the vicinity, but no person and minors were seen begging. Moreover, this information was confirmed by the Security Officer of the shopping mall. The case was filed.

Case No.: 68

File No.: 5672

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A father lodged a complaint against a former Director of a pre-primary school at the OCO alleging that the latter had shown several photographs of children of her school to a ‘sorceress’. It was also alleged that the former Director carried out several unethical practices such as mixing milk with water, offering poor quality rice to children and sharing one food item belonging to a child with four others, amongst others. The OC was apprised that the school had closed and a police case had been lodged against the former Director by several parents.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator sent a correspondence to the Commissioner of Police.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The Police report stated that, following several complaints received against the school, the Director was served with a notice for cessation of her business. Regarding the issue of witchcraft, no declaration had been reported to that effect. A site visit was carried out by the BPF and no such activity was found. The Director had been arrested and a provisional charge was lodged against her before the District Magistrate. She was released on bail upon furnishing a surety and acknowledgement of debt. The case is still under enquiry at the level of the Police. The case was filed.

Case No.: 69	File No.: 5747	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A mother complained that she was accused by her husband several times of being the cause of their son’s death in December 2021. She reported that she had to leave the conjugal house from the western region to stay at her mother’s place in the central region because of an escalation in tension and verbal conflicts between the spouses. She stated that this situation was deeply affecting her and her two-and-a-half-year-old daughter. The mother requested the assistance of the OC to have her daughter transferred from her current school campus to another one in the central region, both campuses being managed by the same educational organisation, to facilitate the conveyance of her daughter to and from school.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>An Investigator spoke to the Manager of the school and to two officers of the MGEFW on that case. The Investigator also called the minor’s father at the OCO. The latter informed that the CDU would carry out mediation between him and his spouse.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow-up:</u></p> <p>The mother was informed that the school transfer of the child could be carried out only with a Court Order. She was furthermore informed that the father had lodged a case of divorce and Immediate Care and Control in Court. The mother decided not to send her child to school pending the Court’s decision. With the case lodged in Court, the OCO could not investigate the matter further. The case was filed.</p>		
Case No.: 70	File No.: 5631	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A Social Worker reported that a minor of 15 years old had been beaten by her maternal grandfather near her school premises. The minor along with her friends had lodged the case at the nearby Police Station and alerted the CDU. The Social Worker informed that she was concerned on the minor’s security as she was under the responsibility of her maternal grandparents.</p>		

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator spoke to a CDU Officer.

Outcome/Follow-up:

It was gathered that the maternal grandfather did a small tap on the minor's hand as the latter was taking time to go home. The minor's friends who witnessed this incident coerced the minor to lodge a case at the Police Station. The Police then informed the CDU of the case. A visit was conducted by the CDU at the hospital where the minor was examined. As per the medical examination report, there were no marks on the minor's body. The minor was faring well and she did not wish to proceed with any police investigation against her maternal grandparents. Follow-up is being ensured by the CDU. The case was filed.

Case No.: 71	File No.: 5754	Case status: In progress
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Nature of complaint:

A Social Worker reported that a father had been granted only one visit in the year 2022 to meet his two children who are under the authority of the MGEFW, despite several requests made to the said Ministry over several years. It is to be noted that the two siblings had been residing in an RCI for the past ten years. Moreover, the father was not notified by the MGEFW when one of his children was admitted to the Brown Sequad Mental Health Care Centre (BSMHCC) in 2022.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator spoke to the minors' father, a Nursing Officer of the BSMHCC, the Manager of the RCI where the two minors were placed, and to an Officer of the MGEFW. A correspondence was also sent to the MGEFW.

Outcome/Follow up:

The report received from the MGEFW stated that the two minors were referred to the CDU in the year 2014 as a case of gross neglect. One parental visit was provided in December 2022, following contact made by the father with the OCO. Prior to that, no visits were possible because the whereabouts of the parents were unknown and could not be traced by the Police. On 14 December 2022, the CDU conducted a field visit at

the residence of the father to assess his living condition. The room of the minors still needed to be renovated including ceiling repairs and installation of basic furniture. The father stated that the renovation would be completed in the month of February 2023. In the meantime, a request was made to an NGO to help the father improve his housing condition. The NGO agreed to sponsor some basic furniture so that the minors can be reintegrated with their father as soon as possible. Follow-up is being ensured and a second letter has been sent to the MGEFW to be updated on the progress of the case.

Case No.: 72

File No.: 5804

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A Grade 4 Primary School Educator made a complaint that one student in her class had very aggressive and violent behaviour towards his classmates and other students of the school and had even assaulted several of them. According to information gathered, the minor's behaviours had become highly unmanageable at school and, even when he was absent, he waited for students outside the school premises to assault them. This situation had led to panic among teachers and students at school. Despite the intervention of several authorities, the situation had not been contained.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator spoke to the Headmaster of the school and a CDU Officer. A letter was sent to the METEST requesting for a report from the Educational Psychologist on the child perpetrator and a report on the actions taken by METEST in this case.

Outcome/Follow up:

A case conference was carried out at the level of the METEST with all concerned stakeholders to find the best possible solutions for the minor. The mother of the minor was given the option of admitting her son to a SEN school, which she refused. The SENA proposed that the minor continues his schooling in the same school under the assistance of a male carer, to which the mother agreed. An investigator called the complainant for a follow-up on the case. She stated that the minor was being assisted by a male carer at all times, and special vigilance was being ensured during recess. The case was filed.

Case No.: 73	File No.: 5805	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A group of parents complained that the Rector of a college did not allow latecomer students to enter school premises after 08 00 hours, even if the students came from far regions. They were made to return home even if some of the students were only two minutes late. Despite efforts made by parents to make her change her mind, the Rector remained inflexible. The parents complained that their children's right to education was being violated.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The OC had a meeting with the Rector of the college.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow up:</u></p> <p>The Rector stated that she would take the advice of the OC and would be flexible with students who are unintentionally late. She also stated that she would speak to the parents of every latecomer student as a disciplinary measure. The complainants were informed accordingly. The case was filed.</p>		
Case No.: 74	File No.: 5798	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A Director of an NGO complained that a woman in his locality was prostituting herself and her eldest daughter of 12 years old in exchange of money to buy her drug supply. It was also alleged that she utilised her 12-year-old and 8-year-old daughters as mules to collect her drugs from shady suppliers.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>An Investigator spoke to a CDU Officer. A letter was sent to the MGEFW for urgent action at their end.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow up:</u></p> <p>A report from the MGEFW stated that the CDU met the mother and a good bonding was observed between the mother and the minors. The housing condition was found to be conducive. No child protection issue or sign of neglect were detected. Counselling was</p>		

done with the mother in relation to her daughters' schooling as it was observed that the children were not regular at school. The matter was also referred to the METEST for appropriate actions. With regards to the Police enquiry, the *Brigade pour la protection de la famille* informed that the investigation was under way. Follow-up is being ensured by the CDU. The case was filed.

Case No.: 75

File No.: 5801

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A father stated that his former partner abducted his son on 02 February 2023 to fly to France, transiting through Reunion Island, with a one-way ticket. He complained that he had never signed for his son's passport. He lodged the case at the Police Station.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator spoke to a CDU Officer who advised that the father came in person to lodge the case at the MGEFW. A correspondence was sent to the Passport and Immigration Office and to the MGEFW.

Outcome/Follow-up:

A report from the MGEFW revealed that the complainant was convened to the MGEFW and was handed an application form to secure 'Rights of Access' pursuant to article 2 of the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. He was requested to submit the necessary documents at the level of the Mauritius Central Authority. The case was filed.

Case No.: 76

File No.: 5789

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A mother complained that her daughter born in January 2020 has had her left arm amputated until her elbow below a month after she was born. At the time, she was benefiting from a Basic Invalid's Pension (BIP) of Rs 9000 monthly. However, the mother stated that she was informed that the BIP of the minor was disallowed after six months following a decision of the Medical Board which had found that the degree of disablement is less than 60 per cent under the National Pensions Act 1976.

The mother had made an appeal against this decision at the Medical Tribunal. She complained that she and her husband are facing difficulties, including financial ones, in attending to their daughter’s complex needs. The mother also forwarded medical certificates from an orthopaedic specialist of a public hospital who stated that the minor would need social aid and specialised assistance at school. The mother complained that the father of the minor, a Police Constable, is the only breadwinner in his household. Despite financial difficulties, they had had to enrol their daughter in a private pre-primary school and pay extra fee for a carer to attend exceptionally to their daughter’s special needs at school.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator spoke to the Deputy Commissioner of the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity (MSISSNS). A letter was also sent to the MSISSNS requesting for financial assistance to help the family in the best interests of the child pending the decision of the Medical Tribunal.

Outcome/Follow-up:

A report from the MSISSNS stated that an application for BIP in favour of the minor was made in February 2021. Her BIP was allowed for one year by the Medical Board as from March 2021 after the minor was found to be suffering from a disability of at least 60 per cent. Upon re-examination by the Medical Board in August 2021, the child was not found to be suffering from a disability of at least 60 per cent and her BIP was disallowed. The report also stated that the parents of the child did not qualify for Social Aid and that the parents may apply for financial assistance at the National Solidarity Fund. The mother was informed accordingly. The case was filed.

Case No.: 77	File No.: 5857	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A Social Worker complained that a child was allegedly being abused by his father and was at risk. According to information obtained, the minor occasionally visited his father who lives separately from his mother. However, since a few weeks, the minor had been unwilling to visit his father and threatened to commit suicide if he was forced to meet

him. The complainant also stated that the child had self-harmed by making cuts on his wrists.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The case was referred to the MGEFW for appropriate action at their end.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The MGEFW reported that, during the CDU's enquiry, the minor said that he did not want to go to school because he was being bullied by some students. The CDU provided psychosocial support to the minor and referred the bullying matter to the METEST and the *Brigade pour la protection de la famille*. The CDU also found that the minor had suicidal tendencies due to family issues, and therefore the case was referred to Life Plus. The CDU is maintaining follow-up on the case.

Case No.: 78

File No.: 5884

Case status: In progress

Nature of complaint:

A mother complained that her son, who has learning difficulties and suffers from epilepsy, had to abandon his apprenticeship at a Technical School in June 2022 as he was allegedly bullied by his teacher. Since then, the mother had been seeking admission from Special Education Needs (SEN) schools in her area, but she never got a reply. She requested the support of the OCO to admit her son in a SEN school, ideally in proximity of their residence, which can help him develop skills and facilitate his job prospects.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The case was referred to the Special Education Needs Authority.

Outcome/Follow-up:

A report is awaited from the authority.

Case No.: 79	File No.: 5099	Case status: In progress
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A mother complained that her son, a Grade 8 student in a secondary school, has been bullied by his classmate since the year 2021. She informed the OCO that, despite the intervention of the school, the bullying was still happening and deeply affecting her son.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The case was referred to the METEST.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow-up:</u></p> <p>A report is awaited from the said ministry.</p>		
Case No.: 80	File No.: 5878	Case status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>A mother complained that, during a visit to supposedly meet with families, her husband abandoned her and their two under-aged children of British Nationality in Mauritius. She alleged that her husband took away all their passports and returned to the United Kingdom (UK). A few weeks later, the mother received a divorce notice which mentioned that her husband had no objection that the custody of the minor children be granted to the mother. According to the mother, the children had been deprived of their rights to travel back to their country of origin and benefit from all their other rights in the UK.</p> <p><u>Action(s) taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>The case was referred to the British High Commission and the Commissioner of Police.</p> <p><u>Outcome/Follow-up:</u></p> <p>The mother and her children eventually managed to get new passports and were able to fly to their homeland. However, in the UK, the father did not allow them to enter the house and threw the children's belongings in a plastic bag outside. In the cold and without support, the mother and her children were left to themselves. The OCO wrote to the Mauritius High Commission in London and the Children's Commissioner for England for necessary help/assistance at their end. The OCO was apprised that the Homeless</p>		

Intervention Team of the Local Authority is assisting the family in the UK. The case was filed.

Case No.: 81

File No.: OCO/Pro/SCH/42/305

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A Manager of a college complained that three students had uploaded a video of themselves on a social media platform wearing the college uniform and engaging in inappropriate actions within the college premises. The Manager had contacted the minors' parents, requested the help of the School Psychologist to provide psychological assistance to the children, and solicited the intervention of the OC to carry out a sensitisation talk with the students.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The OC carried out a sensitisation talk on the dangers of social media with the entire school.

Outcome/Follow-up:

An Investigator spoke to the Rector of the college. She stated that the students had recognised their mistake and promised to behave responsibly. The case was filed.

Case No.: 82

File No.: OCO/Pro/SCH/42/235/2

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

Members of the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) complained about the issue of deplorable toilets in a public primary school which was impacting on student's health. They reported that they knew about many children, especially girls, who did not go to the school's toilet the whole day, only to rush to their home toilet as soon as they returned. The children holding up their urine were at risk of urinary tract infections and other health problems. The PTA also requested for additional toilet facilities to be made available at the school.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator spoke to the Headmaster of the school. The case was referred to the METEST.

Outcome/Follow-up:

A report from the METEST stated that necessary works were carried out at the level of the school. These related to repairs to toilet tanks, replacement of rusted water pipes, plumbing and painting works. New water tanks were installed and faulty taps were replaced. Maintenance works were carried out in all toilet cubicles and arrangement was made for the posting of an additional cleaner at the school. Moreover, actions have already been initiated for the construction of an additional toilet block accommodating 10 toilet cubicles. The case was filed.

Case No.: 83**File No.: 5862****Case status: In progress****Nature of complaint:**

A Social Worker complained that six children are allegedly at risk in their family. According to the information obtained from the Social Worker, the children's mother is known to be a drug addict and a prostitute who brings men in the house every night. It was also alleged that the two eldest girls engaged in sexual relationships with minor boys of their locality at night. She also said that the children were neglected and did not attend school. One of the children, a boy, reportedly stated to the Social Worker that he wished to commit suicide.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator sent a correspondence to the MGEFW and the Commissioner of Police.

Outcome/Follow-up:

A report from the MGEFW stated that the CDU and the Police had proceeded for the issue of an Emergency Protection Order (EPO), but the children were not found. A declaration was made to that effect at the Police Station to trace out the minors. The report of the Commissioner of Police is awaited. Follow-up on the case is being ensured.

Case No.: 84**File No.: OCO/Pro/SCH/42/308****Case status: Resolved****Nature of complaint:**

A lady complained that a high percentage of children from primary schools as from Grade 1 across Mauritius wait for their school vans each afternoon on street pavements, without the supervision of any adult, irrespective of the weather conditions, and very often not

in front of the school gate. Despite the heavy afternoon rainfall on 04 April 2023, some children in several schools were drenched while waiting for their transport on the sidewalk, even though much time already elapsed after school hours.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator wrote a letter to the Law Reform Commission and the METEST.

Outcome/Follow-up:

An extract of the report from the Law Reform Commission stated the following:

According to Part VI of the Road Traffic Act 1962, every school van shall have the required licence issued to transport school children or students. As such, the Road Traffic (Control of Contract Car and Contract Bus Operations) Regulations 2016 was enacted to further regulate the activities of the school vans. Section 4 of the Road Traffic (Control of Contract Car and Contract Bus Operations) Regulations 2016 requires that every school van should employ a driver and an additional person to attend to the safety of the children or students. This section also requires the additional person, who will attend to the safety of the children or students, shall possess an attendant identification card.

There is a School Management Manual (SMM) 2009 published by the School Management Division of the then Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources which establishes the policies, procedures and guidelines on school management issues. In accordance to the SMM, in case there is early dismissal of schools/colleges, the Rector along with the help of other staff should ensure that all students have safely left school premises after dismissal. Necessary arrangements should be made in respect of school buses.

Same applies when there are torrential rains, the school shall not release its school population unless and until it has ensured that appropriate transport and safe conduct home is available. If appropriate transport or safe conduct home is not available, the school population shall be ensured a place of temporary shelter. This place of temporary shelter shall be equipped with communication facilities

at which Responsible Parties may contact or reach their wards. In view, thereof, the SMM obligate that schools should not be closed until all students have left the school premises as well as in case the children/students are not in a position to leave school premises for home, the Rector and Educators should remain in school until all students have left in company of their Responsible Party.

The SMM provides that every Rector should set up a Monitoring Cell at the school to closely monitor the school bus services and also look into issues such as punctuality of the school buses, quality and reliability of the service, attitude of bus conductors as well as discipline of students on school buses. In the manual, it is required for the school buses to be parked in an appropriate space near the school where they would not constitute the movements of students while they are boarding the school buses.

In conclusion, the Law Reform Commission stated that there are no specific laws which oblige or restrict that the school vans/buses should pick up children/students in school premises, it is rather a matter of school policy or contractual obligations. However, in view of the above, the school vans/buses have the responsibility/obligation to ensure the safety and security of the children/students during the conveyance.

A report received from the METEST stated the following:

- 1. For Secondary Schools, provision is made for school buses in the School Management Manual (SMM) which is still relevant;*
- 2. There is no official School Management Manual for Primary Schools. However, there is a guideline document dated 2009 which is in process of being updated. Transportation of pupils to and from schools is under the responsibility of the parents. Consequently, arrangements are made between the parents and the owners of the van for same; and*

3. For the security of pupils inside the school compound, the vans are not allowed to enter the school premises to pick up and drop pupils. Lay-by(s) are used for that purpose.

The case was filed.

Case No.: 85	File No.: 5659	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A mother complained to the OC against the Management of a Private School. She reported that she was asked to keep her son at home for three days without any valid reason. The child is a Grade 4 pupil at the said school and is diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The parents had queried the school on the reasons leading to that decision because they were not informed of any incident. They were told that there was an incident, but no one was hurt. The father requested to meet the Manager, but the latter was taken up with another work commitment.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

A letter was sent to the Manager of the school requesting a report on the incident and the measures taken by the school to support the child. The OC mediated with the Manager to reintegrate the child in the best conditions possible. The Manager proposed an Individual Behaviour Plan, but parental consent was needed.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The complainant said that she preferred to send the child to a public school affiliated to a Special Education Needs Resource and Development Centre (SENDC), because the private school was asking for additional money to provide the child with specialised support. The case was filed.

Case No.: 86	File No.: 5679	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

Three minors declared to the press that they had been victim of assault perpetrated by a group of adults, following a prank they played to a neighbour. They moved his motorbike and parked it a bit further on the same road. The next day, a group of young

adults, armed with sticks and batons came to them on the bus stop. They tied the hands of the minors and started beating them. One of them fainted. The children were badly hurt.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The OC contacted the Commissioner of Police. A high official in the Police Force informed her that the BPF is recording the minors' statements. The OC met the parents of the children and reassured them that the Police would do the needful and they could contact the OCO if they have any further complaints. A letter was sent to the Commissioner of Police for an update on the case.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The Police submitted its report to the OCO. Three persons were arrested and released on bail. The matter was referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). The parents filed a civil case in Court against the perpetrators. As the case was now in Court, as per section 7(4) of the OCA 2003, the OC cannot pursue the investigation further. The case was filed.

Case No.: 87

File No.: 5686

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A mother complained that her 7-year-old daughter was being allegedly neglected by her husband, who had custody of the child, and her paternal grandparents. She reported that the Family Court had granted her the Immediate Care and Control of her daughter and the father was granted the right of visit on alternate weekends as well as for religious festivals. A few months after the Court's judgement, the father was arrested and bailed out as he had failed to return their child to her in time. Two months later, following a religious festival, the father kept the child for 13 days. The CDU was alerted and the child was removed from her parents and placed in an RCI. The father went to the Family Court and was granted custody of the child. The complainant was granted a right of visit on alternate weekends from 10 00 to 18 00 hours.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

A letter was sent to the Permanent Secretary of the MGEFW requesting for a report on the action taken by the CDU and the outcome of their intervention.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The CDU submitted its report in which it was stated that a Psychologist was seeing the child. The latter told the Psychologist that she was happy at her father's place and that she was well taken care of by her paternal relatives. The CDU carried out a visit to the father's place and concluded that the house was conducive. The child was attending school. No child protection issues were detected. The case was filed.

Case No.: 88	File No.: Pro/Sch/42/303	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A group of parents whose children are in Grades 10 and 12 in a State Secondary School wrote to the OC to complain against a Business Studies teacher. They reported that the teacher was absent for a long time during the second school term, and when she was present, she did not attend to her classes or came late on several occasions. They said that her lessons were repetitive and not well planned. They alleged that she granted marks to pupils without assessing them. She spent a lot of time playing games on her mobile phone during working hours.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

A letter was sent to the METEST for inquiry and appropriate action.

Outcome/Follow-up:

A team of Quality Assurance Officers of the METEST carried out an inquiry. The following actions to be carried out by the Rector were agreed at school level:

1. To visit the class of the teacher regularly to ensure that she is present and on time;
2. To have meetings with the Department of Business Studies to address the shortcomings noted; and

3. To submit regular reports to the Zone Director and the Quality Assurance Division regarding the situation.

The OC was satisfied with the measures taken by the METEST. The case was filed.

Case No.: 89	File No.: 5842	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A father complained that his son is being harassed by the bus conductor every day in the school bus. On one occasion, he alleged that the bus conductor even slapped the child. The father wrote a letter to the Traffic Manager of the bus company. He also reported the problem to the Police station of his region. The bus conductor was transferred to another route. However, after three weeks, he was back in the same school bus.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator spoke with a Responsible Officer of the Traffic Management Section of this bus company. A letter was sent to the bus company requesting them to take appropriate action to protect the child in the school bus.

Outcome/Follow-up:

A report from the bus company was received. Corrective measures were taken by the bus company. The conductor was called to give a statement on these allegations. Consequently, he was removed permanently from that route. He was also instructed to avoid conflicts with passengers. The case was filed.

Case No.: 90	File No.: 5818	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A mother complained to the OC that she is having problems with the METEST to transfer her son to a school near her place of residence. The child was living with his father after the separation of the parents. The father was the responsible party of the child in a school in his locality. Given that the father was convicted and sent to jail, the mother took the responsibility of the child. She applied for a transfer of school at the Zonal Directorate, but they asked for the signature of the father.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator verified the information and sent a referral letter to the METEST requesting them to facilitate the transfer of the child to a school in the locality of the mother.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The child was transferred to a school not far from the mother’s place of residence. The case was filed.

Case No.: 91

File No.: 5814

Case status: In progress

Nature of complaint:

A foster mother contacted the OCO on a matter involving one of her foster children. She explained that two brothers had been placed with her family by the Foster Care Unit of the MGEFW. The elder brother, aged 9 years old, acted violently and even harmed her physically, which left her with no choice than to return him to the Foster Care Unit of the MGEFW.

The complainant explained that the biological mother of these two siblings was dependent on alcohol and kept drinking during her pregnancy. She was told that the child had developed mental health problems following this negligence. She added that the child was also highly affected last year when his foster father, the complainant’s husband, passed away, to whom the child was very attached. Since then, she had problems to deal with the 9-year-old who at times became uncontrollable. The child was admitted to the BSMHCC and was treated by the Child Psychiatrist. After his treatment, the child was discharged, but was not removed from hospital by the CDU. The mother could not take him back as she needed some respite before deciding if she could take the child back.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator contacted the Coordinator responsible for Foster Care at the MGEFW for an update on the situation of the child. The CDU was looking for an appropriate RCI to place him.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The case is still being followed.

Case No.: 92	File No.: Pro/Sch/42/188	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

The OC received a copy of a letter addressed to the METEST in which it was alleged that the Rector and the Deputy Rector of a State Secondary School have decided that only white or black training shoes would be allowed at school. The pupils complained that their parents have bought new shoes at the start of the school year and that it would be very difficult for them to buy new pairs of shoes.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator sent a letter to the METEST. In that letter she highlighted that school discipline is important, but it should be administered with due respect to the child’s dignity.

Outcome/Follow-up:

According to the report received from the METEST, an investigation was being carried out by the Director of the Zone and by the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division. It was reported that the allegations made were unfounded. The case was filed.

Case No.: 93	File No.: 5771	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A mother complained to the OC that her daughter is uncontrollable. She ran away from the house on several occasions since she was 13 years old. She would stay at her friends’ places for long periods of time. The mother reported that her child was at risk of being sexually abused. According to some photos she saw on a social media platform, her child was found drunk. The matter was reported to the CDU before the proclamation of the Children’s Act 2020. Every time, the child was found and returned to her parents, a couple of days later she would run away again. After the proclamation of the Children’s Act 2020, the matter was referred again to the Police after another absconding episode of the girl. This time, the mother was referred to the Probation Officer who was supposed to initiate a Parenting Support Intervention (PSI) as per section 41(2)(a) of the Children’s

Act 2020. However, this exercise could only be carried out if the child was living with her parents. A statement of outcome was even issued informing the Court that the PSI had not been carried out as the child went missing again and was still untraceable one month later.

At the time of the complaint to the OCO, the Police found the child and the latter was sent to the BSMHCC for medical evaluation. The hospital wanted to hand the girl over to her mother after her discharge, but the latter was not agreeable to this proposal fearing that the child would abscond and put herself at risk again.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

- The OC organised a case conference at the OCO with the participation of the Probation and Aftercare Service, the Child Psychiatrist of the BSMHCC, Officers of the *Brigade pour la protection de la famille* and the mother.
- A letter was sent to the CDU to report to the OC on the outcome of their intervention.
- The OC, accompanied by an Investigator, visited the child at the BSMHCC. The child was informed about the consequences if she absconded again. She was made aware of the provisions of the Children’s Act 2020 regarding children with serious behavioural concerns.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The child promised that she would behave correctly and attend an educational institution if her mother took her back, which the mother agreed to do when the child was discharged. An Investigator called the mother for a follow-up and the latter stated that the child was faring well. A report received from the CDU stated that no child protection issues were identified. However, as the child was assessed to have behavioural problems, she was enlisted to be assisted by a child mentor. The case was filed.

Case No.: 94

File No.: 5811

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The OC received a copy of an email addressed to the CDU by a Rector of a Girls’ College. The latter reported that a pupil of Grade 9 told her teacher that she did a pregnancy test

which was revealed to be positive. The school contacted the parents for an urgent meeting.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

A letter was sent to the MGEFW requesting the CDU to apprise the OC on action taken in this case.

Outcome/Follow-up:

A report received from the CDU stated that the mother and child were convened at the CDU. The child admitted that she had sexual intercourse with a boy. Her mother told the CDU Officer that her pregnancy test done at home was negative. She declined for her child to be seen by the MGEFW's Psychologist stating that the latter was already followed by a Psychologist in a public hospital. The case was filed.

Case No.: 95

File No.: 5837

Case status: In progress

Nature of complaint:

A mother complained that her son, aged 16 years old, was assaulted in a town centre after school. She reported that the child was hit with a helmet several times on his head and neck by a young adult who is the cousin of a classmate. She said that the perpetrator was accompanied by a group of around 15 young bikers of whom many of them were the child's schoolmates.

The child victim phoned his father who took him to the Police station where the assault occurred. A Form 58 was issued and the child was brought to hospital. He stayed there for five days. He was diagnosed as having suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury. While he was still in hospital, the Police recorded his statement. It should be noted that, at the time of the complaint at the OCO, the child was still suffering from regular bleeding from his nose and ears. He also had problems to hear on the right side.

The statements of witnesses were also recorded by the Police. However, the parents deplored that the Police was taking too much time to record the perpetrator's version and to lodge a provisional charge against him. Meanwhile, the perpetrator was allegedly trying to contact the child through other persons to ask him to drop the case.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

- An Investigator met the child to record his version of the incident.
- A letter was sent to the Rector of the school to request her to ensure that the child is protected at school and that counselling be provided to the child by the School Counsellor.
- An Investigator called the Police Officer in charge of the case to get an update. The latter informed the Investigator that the perpetrator admitted his offence. However, he needed an additional statement from the child before sending the case to the DPP for advice.
- A letter was sent to the Commissioner of Police requesting for a report and relevant documents.

Outcome/Follow-up:

This OCO was informed that the school has arranged for the child to be followed by the School Counsellor. Follow-up on this case is ongoing.

Case No.: 96	File No.: Pro/Sch/42/93/2	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A Rector reported that one morning a group of Grade 10 pupils brought a classmate to the reception desk as he was bleeding profusely. First Aid was provided and the child was taken to hospital by the staff members. The SAMU met them midway and took the child to the Emergency Unit. Meanwhile, after a small inquiry, it was found that the child was stabbed by another classmate with a knife. The Police was contacted as well as the responsible parties of the two concerned pupils. The Police took the child perpetrator and his responsible party to the Police station. The Rector and her collaborators gathered the pupils who witnessed the scene and talked to them. Meetings with the School Counsellor were scheduled for these children.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The OC accompanied by an Investigator called at the school and met the Rector to try to find a way forward in this matter. She told her that she intends to meet both children accompanied by their parents in her presence. The meeting was arranged and the OC

met the child victim and her mother in the presence of the Rector. She also met the child perpetrator and her mother in presence of the Rector.

The child perpetrator alleged that he was threatened by the child victim. He also added that he used a knife to defend himself. When asked why he had a knife with him at school, he replied that he used it for the Arts class. The mother of the child perpetrator stated that she wanted to transfer her son to another school. Furthermore, the OC visited the school again and talked to the pupils about the reintegration of the child perpetrator. The children were not agreeable for his return at school.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The child perpetrator was transferred to another school where, according to the mother, he is studying well without any harassment from the staff or his classmates. The case was filed.

Case No.: 97	File No.: 5880	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A Grade 8 pupil of a State Secondary School complained that she was victim of bullying and harassment perpetrated by other girls at her school. She said that they even tried to assault her physically and she had to seek protection at the administrative block. She told the OC that she was afraid of going back to that school, fearing that she would be harmed by four bullies. It should be noted that a precautionary measure was already recorded at the Police station regarding this case. The paternal uncle of the girl student also called at the OCO to complain that letters were sent to the Rector and the METEST on this matter. However, according to him, the letters remained unanswered. Meanwhile, the child was at home and not going to school.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

A letter was sent to the METEST requesting them to inquire into the matter and take appropriate action. A request was also made to consider the transfer of the child to another State Secondary School in the area so that she may resume her schooling without fear.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The METEST reported to the OCO that the minor was being followed by an Educational Psychologist and she was feeling comfortable and safe at school. Follow-up would be maintained by the Educational Psychologist. The case was filed.

Case No.: 98	File No.: 5844	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A father complained to the OC that her daughter was at risk of being sexually and/or physically abused at the mother’s place. Both parents were separated. Two children, a boy and a girl, were living with the father whilst one girl, Child W, aged 5 years old, was living with the mother. The latter was staying with a partner, who was accused of having sexually abused Child W’s elder sister. He was arrested and released on bail. The mother also was arrested as accomplice and released on bail. The father reported the case to the CDU. A CDU Officer told him that Child W would be entrusted to him, but two months had passed and no action had yet been taken.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

A letter was sent to the MGEFW to request for urgent action.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The Investigator followed up with the complainant. He confirmed that Child W was entrusted to him. He was provided with the necessary documents to transfer the child to a school in his locality. The case was filed.

Case No.: 99	File No.: 5827	Case status: Resolved
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Nature of complaint:

A father complained that his son was arrested and remanded to the Youth Detention Centre for more than a week. He said that the child was arrested under 14 charges of larceny committed with an adult. According to him, his son was handcuffed and chained on a chair at the Central Crime Investigation Department where his statement was recorded. The father alleged that, on one night at the Youth Detention Centre, the child was beaten by the Officers on night duty.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

A letter was sent to the Commissioner of Police requesting him to inquire and report on this case as per section 7(2)(c) of the Ombudsperson for Children Act 2003.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The Commissioner of Police submitted a report to the OC. He informed that, in the year 2022, the child was arrested and, after inquiry, he was released on parole. However, the Police stated that, despite being released on parole, the child continued to commit larcenies. In March 2023, the child was again arrested, following his involvement in several cases of larceny and insult. He was interrogated and, according to the Police, at no time the child was handcuffed or chained. The case was referred to the DPP. The child appeared before the Magistrate and was granted bail. The Police had also discussed the complaint of police brutality reported at the OCO, but the father denied having made such complaint.

The father was made aware of the report on the phone by an Investigator at the OCO. He stated that he has appointed a lawyer to defend the legal rights of his child in Court. As per section 7(4) of the OCA 2003, the OC cannot intervene in a case lodged in Court. The case was filed.

Case No.: 100

File No.: 5776

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A mother sent a copy of a letter sent to the METEST requesting for a transfer of her son, a Grade 10 student, to another State Secondary School nearer to her place of residence on the following grounds:

1. The child had to travel for one and a half hours by bus in the morning and in the afternoon which was tiring and time-consuming for the child;
2. The child’s performance was being negatively affected at school; and
3. The child had developed sinus and frequent headaches.

In her request to the METEST, the mother suggested two schools: one State Secondary School and one Academy.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

A letter was sent to the Senior Chief Executive (SCE) of the METEST requesting him to consider the transfer of the child to a school nearer to his place of residence. Follow-up was made with the METEST through reminders. Regular contacts were maintained with the mother.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The Acting SCE of the METEST submitted a report in which he explained that the request for transfer could not be entertained as there were no vacant seats in the State Secondary School requested. As for the Academy, admission is only made based on the results obtained at the National Certificate of Education. The mother was informed by phone. The case was filed.

Case No.: 101

File No.: 5860

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A Headmaster reported that a child with visual impairment, attending the SEN Integrated Unit of a mainstream school, was not attending school as his spectacles were broken. Recently, the child attended school without glasses. The Headmaster had informed the Educational Social Workers and the METEST for urgent appropriate actions. Article 24(2)(d) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD; UN, 2006)⁷⁵ states that States Parties shall ensure that “[p]ersons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education”.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

A letter was sent to the METEST and copied to the Director of SENA for urgent actions in the best interests of the child.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The METEST submitted a report in which it was stated that the Zone’s Directorate under which the school falls would purchase the spectacles for the child. Follow-up was carried

⁷⁵ United Nations (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Geneva: Author. Retrieved 20 August 2023 from www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf

out with the Headmaster. The money had been disbursed. The child went to an optometrist for an eye check-up. The spectacles had to be ordered from abroad and delivery was expected within one month. The case was filed.

Case No.: 102

File No.: 5932

Case status: In progress

Nature of complaint:

The OC received a complaint from the father of a 17-year-old minor who reported that that his son, Child D, was arrested on a charge of ‘causing minor to be sexually abused’, and was sent to the Youth Detention Centre, without being presented before a Magistrate at the Children’s Court. He reported that his child suffered from epilepsy and from other mental health problems, and took medication. The offence he was accused of had allegedly been committed four years ago. He stated that his child was being deprived of his liberty for more than 25 days without being brought to Court and no formal charge was lodged against him during the first 25 days of detention.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator visited the child at the Youth Detention Centre of Petite Rivière. He noticed that the child had a speech problem and was not coherent in his story. He could be easily manipulated. A letter was sent to the Commissioner of Police in which his attention was drawn to article 37(b) of the UNCRC which states that the “*arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time*”.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The follow-up on this case is ongoing.

Case No.: 103

File No.: 5853

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

A Headmistress of a primary school complained to the OC that one of her Grade 3 pupils aged 8 years old was unmanageable. The child was transferred to her school from another school and, since then, he experienced adaptation and behavioural problems, disturbing the whole school. The Headmistress referred him to the School Psychologist who gave him an appointment. The child told the psychologist that he did not like attending school.

The child's mother was also counselled and the psychologist recommended her on how to motivate the child to attend school.

According to the Headmistress, most of the time, the child remained absent from school. On one occasion, after a counselling session, the mother made a request to the Headmistress to let the child stay until 14 00 hours as she had to go to work. However, as soon as the child understood that his mother had left the school premises without him, he went into an extreme state of anger, throwing furniture around, rolling on the floor, kicking, and even biting anyone who was trying to help him. He also started to harm himself by putting his fist in his mouth and banging on the floor.

The mother had to be called back immediately at school. She managed to lock the child in a position where he could not harm himself further. The Police was contacted for assistance. The School Psychologist advised the mother to take the child to see a Psychiatrist as he was in danger of hurting himself and needed to be calmed down. A referral was given to that effect. The Police provided support to take the child to the hospital where he was admitted. The Psychiatrist recommended that the child followed treatment at the BSMHCC before resuming school.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

An Investigator called the school for an update on the child. She was informed that the mother refused that her child be admitted at the BSMHCC. The Investigator called the mother to explain to her that it was in the best interests of the child to see a Child Psychiatrist. She told her that the child could follow treatment as an outpatient. The Headmistress was informed accordingly.

The mother was contacted some weeks later by another Investigator to receive an update on the child's situation. She stated that she applied for a transfer to the child's previous school. She met the Headmistress there who reassured the child that he would be admitted in the same class and with the same teacher as it was before his transfer.

Outcome/Follow-up:

Following the school transfer application by the mother, the child received a seat in his former school and is attending school regularly. The case was filed.

Case No.: 104

File No.: 5865

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The Manager of a Private Secondary School wrote to the OC to inform her that a pupil, aged 14 years old, was being bullied and physically abused by his paternal uncle and other close relatives. A compact disc showing the violent acts perpetrated against the child was enclosed. The child's parents made several complaints at their locality's Police Station, but no action had been taken yet to protect the child. The parents also contacted the CDU of the region. The child was seen by the Psychologist.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The OC called the Police station where the complaints were made and enquired about the case. A Police Constable told her that he was aware of the case, but this was a family matter. The OC replied that this was a serious matter because the child was being regularly bullied and beaten by an adult. A letter was also sent to the CDU of the region for appropriate intervention to support the child. An Investigator contacted the responsible CDU Officer for a brief on the authority's intervention.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The child was seen by the Psychologist of the MGEFW and she attended two sessions. However, she missed the following appointments as her parents were busy. A report from the MGEFW indicated that the minor was faring well with her parents. The case was also referred to the Family Support Bureau. The Police sent a report to the OCO to inform that the alleged case of assault was sent to the DPP who advised for prosecution in the matter. The case was filed.

Case No.: 105

File No.: 5945

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The OC received complaints from a group of parents whose children were in Grade 4 in a public primary school. They reported that the class teacher bullied his pupils in class,

and that he used foul and humiliating language towards them. It was alleged that, despite several warnings by the Headmaster and the Police, he continued to use corporal punishment in class. It was reported that there were several complaints lodged at the Police of the locality against the class teacher. It had also been brought to the attention of the OC that the class teacher was quite aggressive towards his colleagues. The matter had been reported to the Headmaster and to the Zone’s Directorate.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

A letter was sent to the METEST for urgent action to protect the children and safeguard their best interests.

Outcome/Follow-up:

As per the METEST report, an enquiry was carried out at the level of the Zone Directorate. The Educator was severely cautioned. The children were integrated in another Grade 4 class and were being followed by an Educational Psychologist. The case was filed.

Case No: 106

File No: 5940

Case status: Resolved

Nature of complaint:

The OC received complaints from a Union representing teachers of a particular oriental language on the prevailing situation regarding the limited teaching of that language in primary schools, which, according to the complainants, is discriminatory. They reported that the time and number of days allotted for effective teaching and learning of this language were not respected by the METEST. They informed the OC that in the public primary education sector a pupil has the right to 180 days of schooling per year and, as per the timetable provided by the METEST, to 250 minutes of teaching of oriental languages or Kreol Morisien per week. However, in the following schools, pupils of that particular language were being penalised since the start of the year 2023, when the METEST decided that Educators of this language should teach in two different schools during a week. The Union provided a table below showing the number of days and hours of teaching and learning in 12 selected primary schools, including 10 public schools and 2 RCA schools:

SCHOOL	WORKING DAYS/WEEK	MINUTES/WEEK
GS 1	3 days	150 mins
GS 2	2 days	100 mins
RCA 1	3 days	150 mins
GS 3	2 days	100 mins
GS 4	3 days	150 mins
GS 5	2 days	100 mins
GS 6	3 days	150 mins
RCA 2	2 days	100 mins
GS 7	2 days	100 mins
GS 8	3 days	150 mins
GS 9	2 days	100 mins
GS 10	3 days	150 mins

According to the table above, the Union stated that the pupils of that particular oriental language were being disadvantaged. The pupils and educators were being allotted less time and days to complete their syllabus compared to other oriental languages or Kreol Morisien which were allotted 250 minutes per week for each grade.

Action(s) taken by the OCO:

The OC spoke with the complainants to gather further information on the problem. A letter was sent to the METEST requesting a brief on the problems faced by pupils of that particular oriental language.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The METEST sent a report to the OCO indicating that an additional number of Educators for that particular oriental language would be recruited during the coming financial year. The complainant was apprised accordingly. The case was filed.

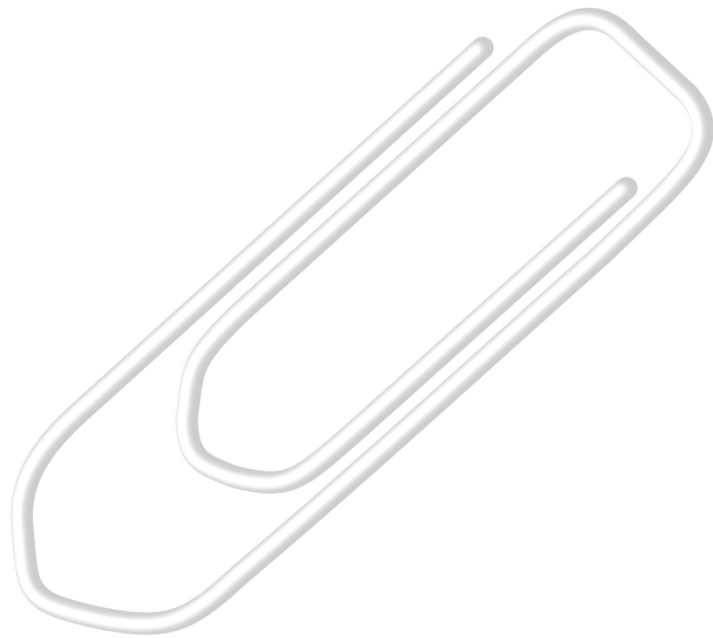
Case: 107	File No. 5944	Status: Resolved
<p><u>Nature of complaint:</u></p> <p>The OC received a complaint from a mother of two children both attending the same private primary school. The mother reported that her elder son, Child B, who was in Grade 2, was victim of bullying perpetrated by pupils of upper grade classes. The incidents were reported to the Headmistress. According to the mother, after a first intervention of the Headmistress, the acts of bullying stopped. However, after some time a bully started to hit Child B again. The latter reported the incidents to the Headmistress. The mother added that the bully was not sanctioned.</p> <p>One day, the child returned home with bruises on his face. When questioned, he informed his mother that he was bullied by a pupil of an upper class, but was asked by the Headmistress to tell his mother that he fell after the bell had rung for departure. Regarding the younger child, child P, she was once hurt at school. The mother alleged that, when child P called at the office for help, she was told that “<i>si ce n’est pas toi, c’est ton frère</i>” [‘if it is not you, it is your brother’] and “<i>ces enfants doivent quitter l’école</i>” [‘these children must leave the school’].</p> <p>The mother also reported that, in the afternoon, the pupils of Grade 2 are released together with pupils of Grade 1. They were asked to wait for their school vans under the shelter without any supervision of the class teacher. The mother contacted the school’s authority and an email was even sent. However, the mother declared that she did not get any reply. The OCO was also informed by some anonymous callers that bullying cases were quite frequent in that school and that the school administration did not take firm actions to remedy the situation. The mother said that her children were aggrieved by the school’s situation, and they were refusing to attend school.</p> <p><u>Actions taken by the OCO:</u></p> <p>A letter was sent to the METEST requesting them to look into the matter in the best interests of the children. An Investigator interviewed the Headmistress on the phone. The latter denied the allegations and stated that the boy fell after dismissal, that is, at 15 30 hours. The Investigator also spoke with a School Inspector of the Zone’s</p>		

Directorate. He informed that the Directorate received several similar complaints from parents of that school. The mother was kept informed on the case's progress.

Outcome/Follow-up:

The mother decided to transfer her children to a public school. The case was filed.

APPENDICES



Appendix A: Ombudsperson for Children Act 2003

OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN ACT

Act 41 of 2003 - 20 November 2003

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

SECTION

1. Short title	7. Investigation
2. Interpretation	8. Protection of witnesses
3. Establishment of office of Ombudsperson for Children	9. Protection from liability
4. Appointment of Ombudsperson for Children	10. Staff of Ombudsperson for Children
5. Objects of office of Ombudsperson for Children	11. Report of Ombudsperson for Children
6. Functions of Ombudsperson for Children	11. Offences
	12. Regulations
	13. —
	SCHEDULE

OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN ACT

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;

“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.

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

- (1) 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.
- (2) 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.
- (4) 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.
- (5) The Ombudsperson for Children shall not engage in any trade, business, profession or political activity.

5. 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.

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, nongovernmental 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 concerning a child whose rights have been, are being or are likely to be violated;
 - (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.

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

Appendix B: Eight strategic goals and key actions of the strategy paper entitled “Inclusive Education for Children and Youth with Special Needs in Mauritius: Concept to Reality” (METEST, 2017, pp.25-31)

Strategy Goal 1: Legal Framework and Human Rights

- Prepare a legal framework based on human rights for inclusive education as a guiding principle.
- Develop a framework which is aligned with the philosophy of inclusion as incorporated in National Curriculum Framework for Nine Year Continuous Basic Education.
- Regulations, norms and standards to be formulated in view of the NYS.
- Ensure effective implementation of the regulations.
- Conduct periodical supervision and monitoring of the practices.
- Ensure effective implementation of the framework as per the SGD Goals.
- Make all early education and care programmes (from 0-5 years) sensitive and responsive to the special needs of children.
- Make all learning institutions inclusive. This will be achieved by:
 - Removing physical barriers.
 - Building the capacity of teachers to function in an inclusive setting.
 - Making the curriculum flexible and appropriate to accommodate the diversity of school children, including those with disability in both cognitive and non-cognitive areas.
 - Making support services available in the form of technology (including ICT), teaching-learning materials and specialists.
 - Involving parents, family, and the community at all stages of education.

Strategy Goal 2: Establish Regulatory, Advisory, Monitoring and Research Bodies

- Establishing an Authority to regulate, monitor and facilitate quality implementation of the policy, support services and empowerment of Children and Youth with Special needs in the Republic of Mauritius.
- Functions of the Advisory, Regulatory, Monitoring and Facilitating Body:
 - *Quality Assurance:*

- Developing quality parameters & indicators for each of the aspects of Service Delivery system to promote and facilitate quality practices.
- *Curriculum Development:*
 - Guiding, supervising, monitoring curriculum adaptation & modification.
 - Promotion and implementation of inclusive practices.
- *Identification & Assessment:*
 - Planning & execution of the process of identification and assessment,
 - Selection and procurement of age and level appropriate assessment tools.
- *Networking, Communication, Collaboration and Coordination:*
 - Establishing Inter-Ministerial Communication, Collaboration and coordination,
 - Networking and collaboration among the stakeholders,
 - Implementation and optimal utilization of collaborative efforts.
- *Finance and Accounts:*
 - Generation, mobilization, disbursement and appropriate utilization of funds,
 - Maintaining financial records, audit of accounts,
 - Capacity Building & Resource Support.
- *Identifying the need and nature of support required by various stakeholders and making provisions as per the need:*
 - Conducting a need assessment exercise to identify the gap areas in teaching-learning, therapeutics, advocacy,
 - Organising/conducting capacity building programs for different professionals, removal of infrastructural barriers in all schools,
 - Conducting need based programs to address the issues of psycho-social and attitudinal barriers.
- *Provision of Technology and Devices including Assistive Devices:*
 - Procure, distribute and encourage the utilization of appropriate technological tools/instruments and devices including assistive devices.
- *Facilitation and Monitoring:*
 - Responsible for initiating awareness drives about inclusion/inclusive education at a larger level,
 - Facilitation and monitoring of educational programmes, clinical/psychological support, therapeutic interventions and all types of services.

- *Setting up of a Research Coordination Committee comprising members from Teacher Education Institution and other Institutions of higher learning, hospitals and the resource centres. The role of the Committee would be to strengthen the Special Needs Education system through research and innovations.*
 - Ensure quality in research, materials, equipment developed for the purpose,
 - Develop and standardize tools for assessment of learning needs.

Strategy Goal 3: Screening, Identification and Assessment of Learning Needs

- Promote Child Referral practices:
 - Child referral from the parents, hospitals, pre-schools and other institutions to be made to the Monitoring body.
 - Arriving at an appropriate criterion for determining the eligibility of students who would be tested for identification.
 - Establishing eligibility for assessment of learning needs through school records.
 - Monitoring and facilitating placement and admission process.
- Conducting assessment in the following two areas:
 - Psychological
 - Psychological assessment will be done by Educational psychologists. If necessary, for further diagnosis, the services of clinical psychologists would be sought.
 - Educational
 - Educational assessment will be done by the class teacher.
- Creating a database of ALL children who are observed to be ‘At Risk’ for Learning difficulties for appropriate placement.
 - Confidentiality of data is imperative.
 - Selection, procurement and utilization of need based appropriate assessment tools. In due course of time, through Research Coordination Committee, age and level appropriate assessment tools will be developed.
 - Conducting Need-based capacity building programs.
 - Setting up a nodal centre for guiding, supervising and monitoring the process of identification and assessment at the MIE.

Strategy Goal 4: Curriculum, Assessment, Evaluation and Placement

- Interconnectivity to be ensured in all curricular practices across the levels and subjects. Differentiation in curriculum and curricular practices to be adopted both in general and special schools.
- Adaptation and modification of curriculum according to the learning needs by making it flexible, elastic and accelerated for learners in Category I & II.
- Profiling learning needs of all learners and adjusting curricular practices.
- Development and implementation of Individualised Education Program (IEP) for learners in Category III & IV.
- Adopting Differentiated Assessment procedures that would entail Assessment AS learning, Assessment FOR learning and Assessment OF learning.
- Ensuring evaluation to reflect progression of ALL learners in all aspects of schooling; interconnectivity in evaluation and consistency in report preparation and presentation across the levels.
- Certification after ascertaining optimum level of achievement in scholastic and vocational areas as per the potential. Develop strengths and abilities of all learners rather than highlighting limitations.
- To recognize diversity among learners, the medium of instruction should include sign language for learners with hearing impairment, and Braille for learners with visual impairment.
- Promote self-reliance and enable learners to acquire coping skills, the emphasis of inclusive education must be on inculcating independent living skills, critical thinking, decision making and problem-solving skills, and articulation of their concerns.
- Make the class/subject teacher responsible for all learners in the class. In case special support is required because of SEN, this should be in the form of assistance to the class/ subject teacher.
- Education must aim at developing a system by which abstract concepts are effectively communicated to learners with varying learning styles, including those using sign language, Braille, etc.
- Develop partnerships with institutions of higher learning, governmental organisations, and NGOs to promote participation of learners with disabilities in all educational activities.

Strategy Goal 5: Capacity Building of Professionals

- Gear all teacher education programmes (both pre-service and in-service) to developing the pedagogical skills required in inclusive classrooms.
- Inculcate respect for diversity and the concept of an inclusive society. The teacher education programmes and the curriculum framework should incorporate a component of human rights education.
- Correlate the style of teaching to the learning styles of all learners.
- Orientation and training in Inclusive Education for All teachers, administrators, managers, inspectors at pre-service and in-service levels from general and special schools as well as the faculty in institutions of higher education.
- Hands-on training in adaptations and modifications in Curriculum, Classroom environment, teaching-learning process, teaching-learning materials including technology and devices, assessment and evaluation.
- Building a community of teachers through collaborations between general and special school teachers, resource support staff and volunteers.
- Empowering special teachers to do the follow-up of therapeutic interventions designed and implemented by various therapists such as Speech, Physio-and Occupational Therapists, with children in her class.
- Training and involving general school teachers in the process of screening, identification and assessment. Providing training in writing reports and profiling of learners in her class in general schools.
- Training of teachers at all levels in specific areas such as preparation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), Behaviour modification, Universal Design of Learning (UDL), differentiated instructions and differentiated assessment.
- Building Home-School Partnership through appropriate training of the parents. Empowering and involving parents in the teaching-learning process and facilitating creation of congenial environment for learning both in school/ college/ institution and at home.
- Capacity building of Para-medical professionals (Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapist and Physio Therapist). Special emphasis may be given to role clarification and assignments.
- Develop perspective and skills in all administrators, including heads of schools, for planning and executing programmes based on the philosophy of inclusion.

Strategy Goal 6: Creation, Provision and Strengthening of Support Services

- Formation and activation of multi-disciplinary teams in SENRDC- to strengthen coordinated efforts. (The size and number of the clusters may vary according to the no. of general schools in a region).
- Empowering existing resource centres and establishing Resource Support groups of professionals for providing well planned resource support to the inclusive schools.
- Setting up multi-disciplinary teams in SENRDC.
- Forming Cluster of neighbouring schools in all regions of the island.
- The Special school teachers working in schools managed by the NGOs should be entrusted with the responsibility of providing resource support to the inclusive schools as and when required.
- Digitization of learning resources by making necessary learning resources available online or through any other medium.
- Resource support to be provided in the areas of assessment, diagnosis and prognosis, counselling, therapeutic interventions, social skills and add-on training as a preparation for vocational education.
- The Resource Centres would be made responsible for preparing and maintaining records for documentation and creation of database of services provided.
- Ensure the suitability, feasibility and quality of resource support provided.
- Ascertain availability of age- and level- appropriate tools, especially the psychological tests, equipment and devices in each Resource Centre.
- Educational support units as ‘Enabling Units’ may be established in secondary and tertiary education institutions to facilitate progression of students with SEN.
- Special Service Units may be set up and operationalized to address severe and profound individual needs including of those who are home bound.
- The quality of resource support would be regulated, monitored and facilitated by the Monitoring Authority. A system for resource generation, mobilization, utilization and quality assurance will be developed and implemented.

Strategy Goal 7: Preparation for Life through Holistic Education

- Providing need, interests and ability based education and skill training as an enabling strategy for life to learners with SEN through the resource centres.
- Involvement of parents and the community in teaching-learning process and skill training.
- Focused education and training to be provided in view of the IEP Goals.
- The education and training to be geared towards addressing the abilities, competencies, skills for future planning and placement of learners with SEN.
- To nurture all aspects of the personality, viz., cognitive, affective, and conative- games, dance, drama, music and art and craft must be given equal importance and value.

Strategy Goal 8: Advocacy, Partnership and Empowerment

- Create awareness about inclusive education for children and youth with SEN in society through various media- print, audio-visual, social media as well as face to face.
- Create a platform to provide and share knowledge about Rights of the children / persons with special needs.
- Prepare and partner with the stakeholders - peers, teachers, parents and professionals for Right Based Advocacy, shared responsibility and removal of attitudinal barriers.
- Prepare children with special needs for self-advocacy from early years of schooling.
- Develop ability in stakeholders to build relationships - personal, public and institutional for advocacy. Reciprocity, responsiveness and responsibility strengthen, build and sustain partnerships.

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