



OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN



ANNUAL REPORT 2025 - 2026

Ref: OCO/RPT/118/10

30 September 2026

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

Your Excellency,

Pursuant to Section 11(1) of the Ombudsperson for Children Act 2003, I have the honour to submit to you the Annual Report for the period September 2025 to August 2026 to be laid before the National Assembly.

Yours sincerely,

**Mrs Aneeta Ghoorah
Ombudsperson for Children**

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FOREWORD

This year the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children celebrates 23 years since its establishment. From the very beginning, housed in Port Louis for a few months, the Office then moved to NPF Building in Beau Bassin. Since April 2026, we have been occupying the ‘State of the Art’ Office in Ebène Heights.

As outlined in the OCA (Annex A) the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children has a clear mandate. It is obvious that over the years many things have changed. Societal evolution and the rapid advancements of technology and the challenges faced in this modern era are ever changing at an exponential pace. Hence, we are confronted with new challenges and we have to deal with issues, unthought of two decades ago.

Together we grow, we learn and we do our best to provide satisfaction to the services delivered. Our area of responsibility has enlarged due to emerging problems, but the Office’s commitment to fairness and a sense of justice is unwavering. This is obvious in our work of responding to people’s complaints, providing guidance and sensitising the public on child-related issues as well as inspecting places of alternative care and detention.

The first part of this report (Down Memory Lane) contains a timeline of events which has shaped the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children over our 23 years of service to the Community.

As in the past years a specific topic is developed each year and this time, we have tried to address THE RIGHTS OF BABIES AND TODDLERS. Being a lengthy subject, part has been addressed and it will be continued in the next Annual Report.

The next chapter deals with a subject “A LA UNE” regarding Children with Serious Behavioural Concern.

Chapter 3 deals with the main workshops carried out by the OOC and All of them deal with pertinent issues.

“Breaking Barriers: Autism and Inclusive Learning” provided a platform for all stakeholders ranging from medical and para medical experts to NGOs and parents to share their knowledge and experience with one another. The discussions and networking which take place during these sessions help our office to interconnect parents of children with Autism to the various NGOS and professionals.

Another first-time workshop was the one on the Rights of Intersex children. This workshop was conceived as a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue, bringing together medical professionals, legal experts, and civil society to address the invisibility of intersex variations in Mauritius. Comparative Legal Developments from a few countries were discussed and this is a starting point for further development in the subject. which am afraid is still a taboo and not well understood by many people.

Les Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits de L’Enfant (JADES) is very much anchored at the OOC and has its own merit in a section dedicated to them “The Voice of the Youth by the Youth”.

The two missions carried out in Rodrigues are described in a dedicated chapter.

Our annual activities have been described in Chapter 6. The highlight in 2025 has been the participation of the OOC in the various activities held during the “16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE”.

Participation in national, Regional and overseas missions add to the capacity building and sharing of good practices and experience. Networking during these meetings enriches our knowledge and scope for collaboration.

We have included a section on the tedious steps the officers have to take to follow up on cases to make things happen!!

To conclude I wish to highlight that Year in year out this Office makes Recommendations on various issues regarding child safeguarding procedures

And my Greatest wish would be to see Ministries, Institutions and Collaborators concerned move from words to Actions!!

Aneeta GHORAH
Ombudsperson for Children





OFFICE OF THE
OMBUDSPERSON
FOR CHILDREN

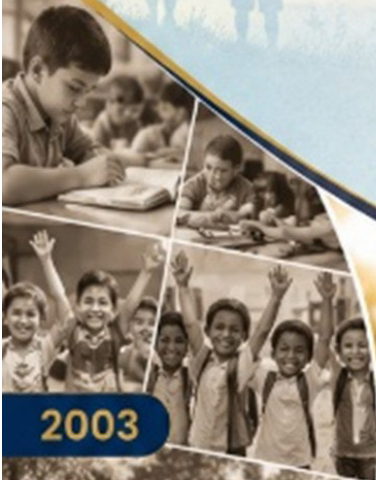
Promoting • Protecting • Upholding
Children's Rights

— *Down Memory Lane* —

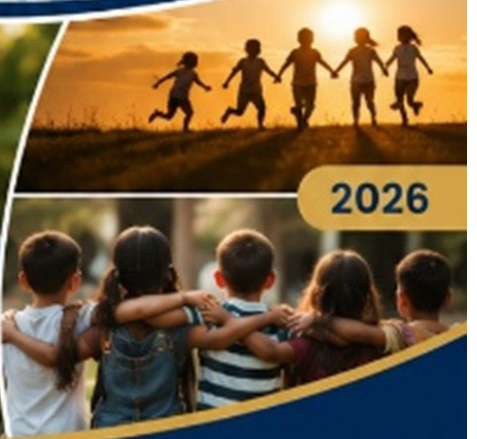
2003–2026

23

YEARS IN PROTECTING
THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN



2003



2026



Our Journey. Our Commitment. Their Future.

DIGNITY • EQUALITY • PARTICIPATION • PROTECTION • JUSTICE

DOWN MEMORY LANE

20 November 2003

Adoption of the Ombudsperson for Children's Act by the National Assembly

10 December 2003

Ms Shirin Aumeeruddy Cziffra appointed as First Ombudsperson for Children

7 January 2004

- Mr Premchand Teeloku, Assistant Secretary, in charge of administration of the Office.
- The Office was temporarily located at level 3, CSR Building, Port Louis, next to the CDU.

2 February 2004

Posting of Mrs Michele Thomas and Mr Ismail Bawamia on secondment from the Mauritius Police Force and the Ministry of Education as Investigators.

2 April 2004

The Office of the Ombudsperson for children moved to 1st Floor, NPF Building, Beau Bassin.

June 2004

- First edition of the 16 Days- 16 Rights Campaign on the Rights of the Child in the context of the Day of the African Child celebrated on 16 June every year.
- The OOC placed on the same footing as all other independent institutions in the budget 2004-2005. in that financial year, the OOC was allocated its own budget.

30 September 2004

The first Annual Report of the Ombudsperson for Children was submitted to the President of the Republic.

19 November 2004

Launching of the National Campaign on the Prevention of Violence against Children. Campaign materials were produced and distributed.

December 2004

Setting up of the Budi's Friends, a Children's Network, under the aegis of the OOC, aiming at promoting the Participation Rights of Children.

January 2005

Visit of a distinguished guest to the OOC, Late Mrs Nane Annan, spouse of the former UN Secretary General, Late Mr Kofi Annan. Both visited Mauritius in the context of the SIDS International Conference.

1 - 16 June 2005

2nd Edition of the 16 Days 16 Rights Campaign on the Rights of the Child. Children made beautiful drawing and submitted to OOC. A 'vernissage' was organised and the drawings were exhibited at Galerie Max Boullé in Rose Hill.

July 2005

With the OC sitting on the Executive Editorial Board of the UN Global Study on Violence Against Children, the OOC played an active part in the Sub-regional consultation on VAC held in Antananarivo and in the Eastern and Southern African Regional Consultation held in Johannesburg from 8 to 21 July 2005.

August 2005

- The OCA 2003 was amended to add Section 11 A on 'Offences'. Hence anyone who in the course of an investigation refuses to attend to a summons from the OC or to provide false information shall commit an offence punishable by law.
- The OC submitted an Alternate Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child prior to the deposition of the State.



22 April 2006

Carnival on non-violence organised from Plaza to SGD Stadium in Rose Hill. **Some 2000 children participated by fabricating their costumes and marching in the street.** the children also expressed themselves through songs, music and dance at the stadium.

September 2006

- Exhibition of Children's artwork from 165 institutions at Centre Charles Baudelaire in Rose Hill.
- Launching of a 13 minute documentary on the rights of children produced in collaboration with the MFDC and Caméléon Productions.

16 June 2007

Concert des enfants at Sir Gaetan Duval Stadium in Rose Hill in the context of the Day of African Child 2007 and the launching of the 2007-2008 Campaign on PVAC.

July 23-24 2007

- National Workshop on Violence against Children in collaboration with the UNDP at the University of Mauritius.
- Children's Workshop on Violence against Children ran simultaneously with the adult workshop.
- A resolution reflecting the views of both workshop was adopted.

September 2007

Launching of a Kit on Prevention of Violence at School by the Minister of Education and Human Resources. The kit was distributed in all schools of Mauritius and Rodrigues as from January 2008.

December 2008

Visit of Mr Per Engebak, UNICEF Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa and Mr Bruno Maes, Director of UNICEF Madagascar to discuss about closer relations between the OOC and the Eastern and Southern Africa Region.

10 December 2008

Symposium for Adolescents on the theme "Sexual abuse of Children" organised in the context of the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the 5th Anniversary of the appointment of an Ombudsperson for Children.

19 November 2009

Launching of a comic book "Les droits des enfants à travers les aventures de Tico, Fifi et Rajoo" published with the support of IBL Foundation. The book was distributed to all students of Form 1 in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

5 and 6 December 2009

Children's Show at Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

April 2010

A DVD on Child Rights "les aventures de Tico, Fifi et Rajoo" was launched and distributed in all schools of Mauritius and Rodrigues.

14 June 2011

- A book entitled "Adieu Violence" targetting NGOs, Social Workers and Government departments was launched at IFM, Rose Hill.
- Mr I. Bawamia, who joined the OOC in 2004 on secondment from the MEHR as Investigator being offered the post on a PPE basis and the recruitment of Mrs Yecha Rhungapen Veeramootoo as Investigator, the OOC was manned with two investigators on its Permanent and Pensionable establishment.

October 2011

Visit of Ms Najat Maalla M'jid, UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography in the context of her country visit effected in the course of the preparation of the Country Report on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography in Mauritius.

20 November 2011

Launching of a DVD and a leaflet on Positive Parenting entitled Paran Zordi Zour.

9 December 2011

- Concert of the children of Grup Abaim at Jardin Bijoux, Beau Bassin (now metro station, to bid farewell to the Ombudsperson for Children on the expiry of her second and final term of her mandate as OC. Several personalities were present.
- Ms Rookmeenee Narainnamah Narayen swore as the new Ombudsperson for Children.

8 August 2012

Two additional investigators, Ms Sharona Pillay Mauree and Ms Sandhya Purushotam joined the OOC.

27-28 August 2012

Mr Ismail Bawamia and Mrs Yecha Rhungapen Veeramootoo participated in the 2nd Regional Africa-Indian International Association of Prosecutors Conference.

7 June 2013

Visit of Ms Susan Jacobs, US Ambassador and Special Advisor on Children's Issues to the OOC

24 - 25 June 2013

Official mission of Mr Y. Munbodh, Deputy Permanent Secretary and Acting Secretary, OCO, to Agalega. This is the first official visit of an Officer of the OOC to Agalega.

October 2013

Mr I.A.Bawamia participated in a Roundtable Discussion on the Establishment of an Ombudsperson for Children for South Africa. The event was organised by NGO Molo Songololo in collaboration with UNICEF, South African Human Rights Commission and was held in Cape Town.

10 December 2013

A Child Advocacy Platform was organised On 10 December 2013 at Philippe Rivalland RCA School in the context of the 10th Anniversary of the Ombudsperson for Children's Office.

5 February 2014

The OOC admitted as Associate Member of the Association des Ombudsman et Médiateurs de la Francophonie (AOMF). However Financial Clearance from Ministry of Finance to become an AOMF member was obtained only on 17 July 2014.

28 May 2014

Launching of a First Day Cover on Anniversaries and Events- Emancipation/Education-Mobile Communication- Child Protection. A 14 Rupee Postal Stamp was issued on that First Day Cover to mark the 10th Anniversary of the OOC.



16 June 2014

Launching of a Special Commemorative Cover by the Mauritius Posts to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. the newly issued stamp and The Cachet on 3Rs"Rights, Respect, Responsibility" was printed on the Cover Enveloppe.

November 2014

At the invitation of AOMF, the OOC participated in an international project "Atelier d'expression artistique" on the rights of the child. Paintings made by children were sent digitally to AOMF to be exhibited on the occasion of the Annual Congress of the "Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie", (OIF) in October 2015.

April 2015

Publication of a poster "Halte au bullying!" which was distributed in all schools.

9 December 2015

Mrs Rita Venkatasawmy O.S.K took oath as the 3rd Ombudsperson for Children for the Republic of Mauritius.

15 March 2016

Setting up of a new children's network- The Young Ambassadors of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children.

12 May 2016

Visit of a delegation of Human Rights Defenders from Rwanda to the OOC.

27 to 30 June 2016

Mrs Rita Venkatasawmy and Mrs Yecha Rhungapen Veeramootoo went on a Study Tour at the Office of the Défenseure des Droits des Enfants of France in Paris, France.

12 October 2016

Launching of a Braille Version of the 2015-2016 Annual Report of the OC.

18-19 November 2016

Art Exhibition on the theme "The Right to Education of Children with Disabilities'. Drawings made by students from five secondary schools and one Special Needs Education Institution were displayed at the Salle Malcom de Chazal at Curepipe Municipal Council.

14 March 2017

Launching of a Sensitisation Campaign via WhatsApp on Reporting Cases of Violations of the Rights of Children.

14-16 September 2016

Mr I.A.Bawamia participated in the SADC Parliamentary Forum Capacity Development Session on Sexual Reproductive Health Rights and HIV/AIDS.

14-16 November 2016

Visit of the OC to the Délégué du Défenseur des Droits in Réunion Island.

13-21 March 2017

Mr I.A.Bawamia, Mrs Yecha Rhungapen Veeramootoo and Mrs Anjanee Swamber participated in the International Visitor Leadership Programme on "Combatting Child Trafficking" financed by the US Department of State.

25-30 June 2017

The OC participated as Resource Person in the Summer course on the Rights of Children organised by the University of Moncton, New Brunswick. She spoke on “Le droit des enfants d’origine Chagossienne de préserver leur culture ancestrale”.



27 July 2017

Launching of a Coffee Table Book: Advocating for the Rights of Children with Disabilities to Education.

25 - 29 September 2017

Visit of Mrs Geneviève Avenard, Défenseure des enfants de France and President of the Comité Enfants of the AOMF.

13 March 2018

Mrs L. Jhugroo appointed as the first Secretary, Ombudsperson for Children's Office on a permanent basis.

14-17 May 2018

The OOC hosted the International AOMF Training workshop on Child Right to Express him/herself, Gold Crest Hotel, Quatre Bornes.

September 2018

Ms Bhavnah Jogarah, Investigator, joined the OOC.

6-9 November 2018

The Ombudsperson participated in the 10eme Congrès de l'AOMF in Némur, Belgium on the theme: "1998-2018: 20 ans au service des Médiateurs et Ombudsman et de l'État de droit.

19 November 2018

Launching of the Children's Story Book entitled "L'amour de Nani Coco pour son pays".

27-30 November 2018

The Ombudsperson for Children attended the 6th General Assembly of the AOMA in Kigali Rwanda on the theme *"Role of Ombudsman and Mediators in Promoting Transparency and Accountable Governance in Africa"*.

27 January - 03 February 2019

Visit of Mrs Ingrid Olga Issacks, Children's Advocate at the Office of the Ombudsman of Namibia.

April 2019 - December 2019

Sensitisation Campaign on: "NO to Parental Alienation: Children deserve the love of both Parents".

15 June 2019

Campaign on the Rights of the Child organised jointly with the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms on public buses. The campaign was entitled: Violans detrir lavenir zanfana.

24-25 July 2019

Visit of Her Excellency Mrs Moumina Houmed Hassan, Minister of Women and Family Affairs of the Republic of Djibouti.

11-15 April 2022

Study visit of Ms Christina Marion Nomdo, Commissioner for Children of Western Cape and of Mr Cameron Cyster, Deputy Director of Investigations and Advice to the OOC to get an insight of the work carried out by the Office.

29 June 2022

Visit of Ms Mama Fatima Singhathe, UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children.

17-22 October 2022

All Investigators proceeded on Study Tour to Oslo, Norway to take cognizance of the safeguarding of the rights of children in one of the most child friendly country. Note that the OOC was established following the Norwegian Model.

21-26 May 2023

Visit of 2 Australian Experts in the field of Inclusive Education, Mr Stuart Percival , Assistant Executive Director, Professional Capacity Development of Education Statewide Services and Dr Ann Kapitayn, Principal Advisor. Leadership Institute Statewide Services. Mission funded by the EU.

22 August 2023

Visit of a delegation from the Parliament of the Republic of Zambia and High Officials from the Zambian Public Administration.

5-6 September 2023

International Workshop on “The Role of Ombudsman and Mediators in the Monitoring of the Situation of Children in Conflict with the Law and Deprived of their Liberty” co-funded by the International Ombudsman Institute. The workshop was held at the Gold Crest Hotel in Quatre Bornes, Mauritius.

19 February 2024

Mrs Aneeta Ghoorah is appointed as the 4th Ombudsperson for Children.

6-7 July 2024

Investigator Bhavnah Jogarah participated in the International Colloquium on the “Les défis de la parentalité” organised by the “Observatoire de la Parentalité de l’Océan Indien” in Centre de Flacq, Mauritius. Delegates from several countries like South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, Seychelles, Comoros, Madagascar, France, Mayotte and Reunion Islands and Mauritius attended the Colloquium.

29 July - 2 August 2024

Second International Ombud Expo in Gaborone, Botswana. Mauritius was represented by the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children.

28 September 2024

Setting up of the Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits des Enfants which would operate under the aegis of the OOC. Mr Nakul Dussoye was elected as the first JADE President.

October 2024

Mrs Aneeta Ghoorah, Ombudsperson for Children attended the XIIe Congrès of the AOMF in Quebec, Canada on the theme “Regards sur la prochaine décennie: Les défis de l’Ombudsman dans la défense de l’État de droit”.

13 December 2024

Santa’s Merry Celebration of Children’s Rights- first activity wholly organised by the JADEs, at Dr Maurice Curé State College.

10 May 2025

- Induction Ceremony of the JADEs at Caudan Arts Centre. Mrs Shirin Aumeeruddy-Cziffra, Speaker of the National Assembly and First Ombudsperson for Children graced the function as Chief Guest.
- Launch of the first edition of the Voice of Youth prepare by JADE.

3 June 2025

Setting up of JADE Rodrigues. Ms Tatiana Chinien elected as President for a two year mandate.

June 2025

Launch of a Special Report on the Rights of Child Artists and Child Athletes.

1 April 2026

Relocation of the Ombudsperson for Children's Office to Ebene Heights in Ebene.

16 May 2026

2nd Induction Ceremony for the JADE Executive Committee and Award of certificates to the outgoing executive committee members.





WHO WE ARE

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

WHAT WE DO

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

HOW TO CONTACT US

Address : Office of the Ombudsperson for Children
Level 5, Ébène Heights, Ébène

Phone: 490-3010

Fax: 467-7665

Email: ombudsreg@govmu.org
ombudschild@govmu.org

Complaints received in person

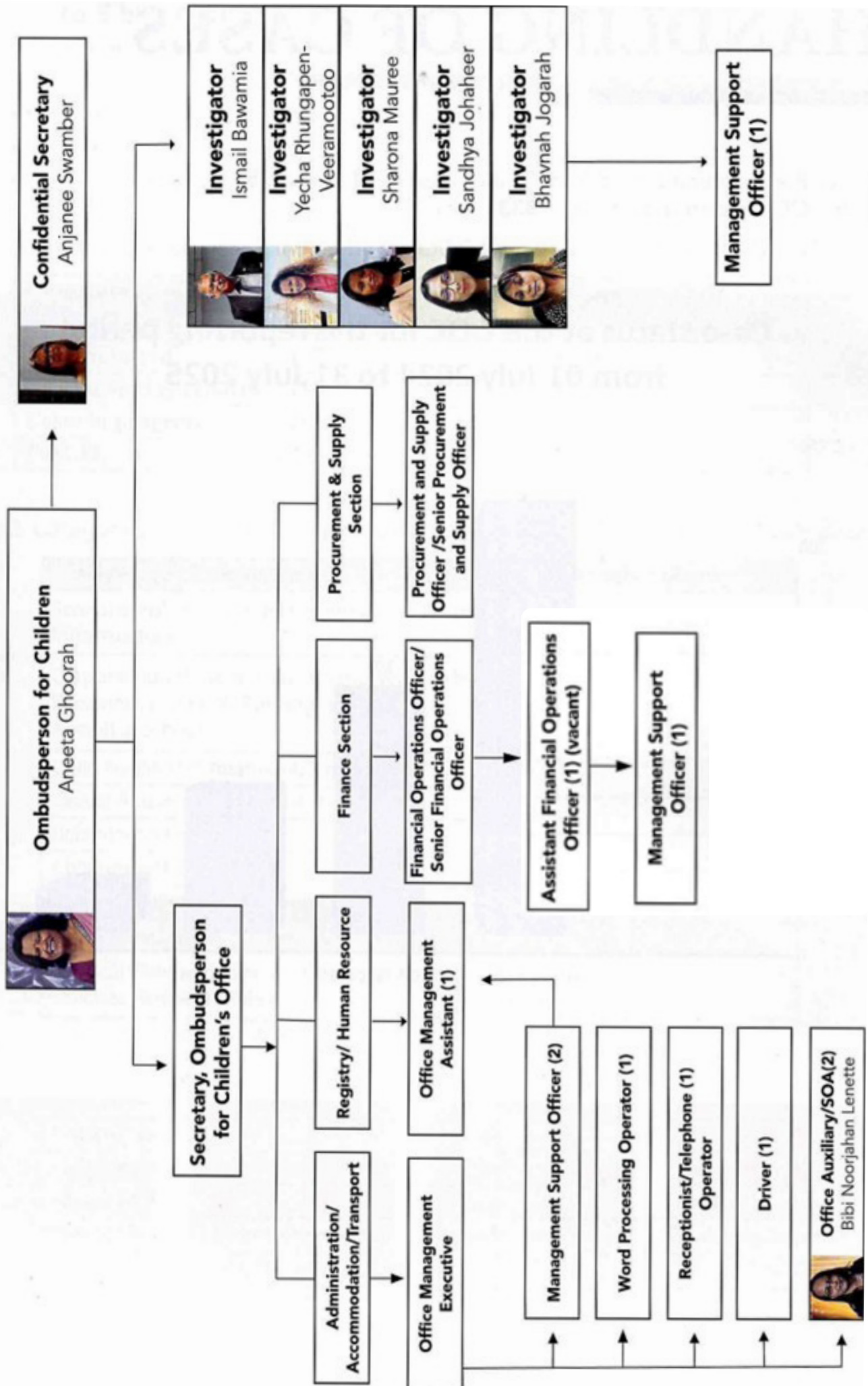
By Email

By post

Through a phone call

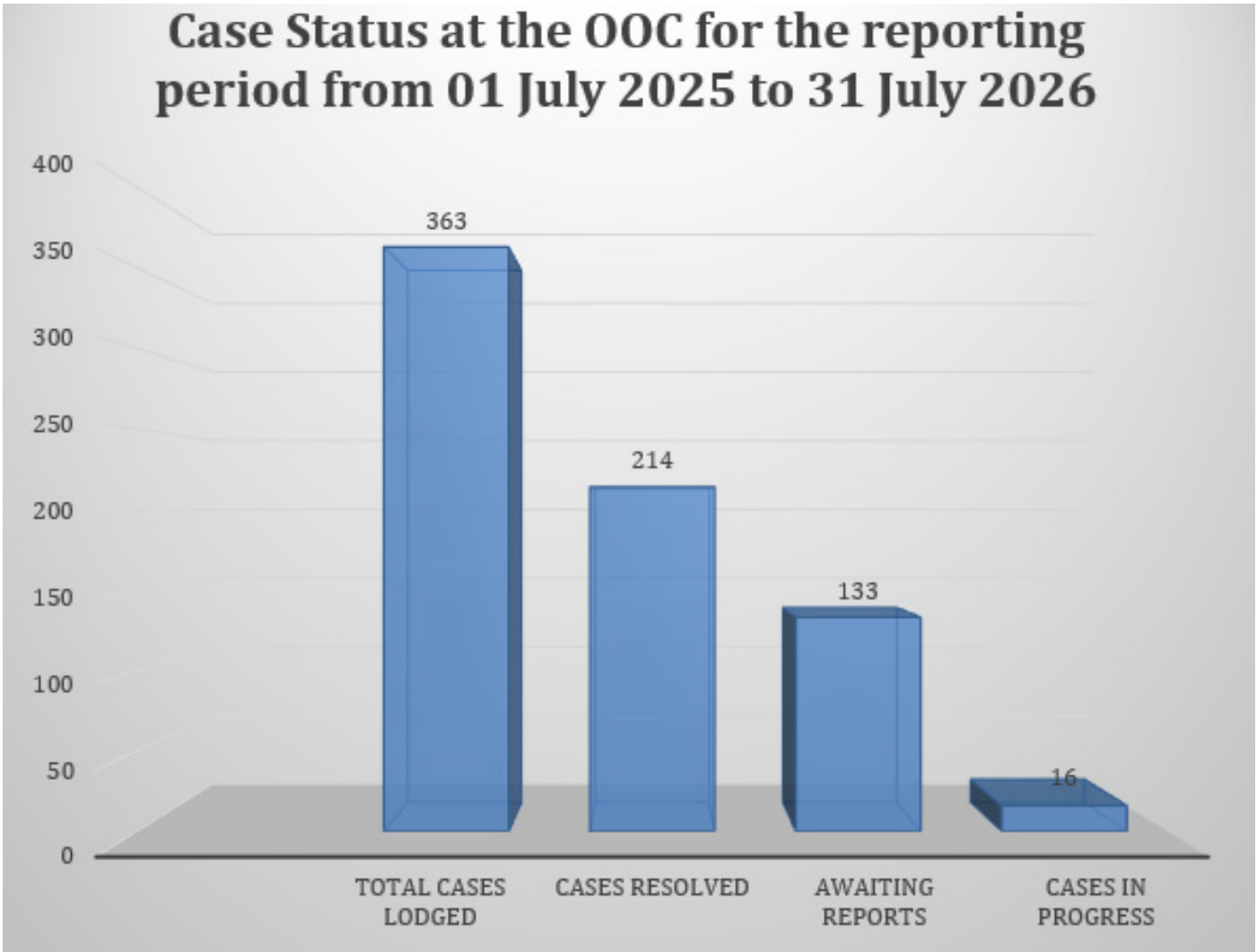
Complaint sheet available on website

Organisational Structure



Handling of Cases

For the reporting period from 01 July 2025 to 31 July 2026, the OOC registered a total of 363 cases.



167

Number of cases regarding school

63

Number of cases regarding family

20

Field Visits

11

Cases involving children with disabilities

Tables 1 to 5 below provide an overview of:

- the status of complaints registered for the period from 01 July 2025 to 31 July 2026;
- the different categories of complaints received;
- the profile of complainants;
- mode of complaints received and;
- cases involving Rodrigues and foreign countries.

Table 1. Number of cases handled by the OOC from 01 July 2025 to 31 July 2026.

Case status	Number of cases	Percentage (%)
Cases resolved	214	58.95
Cases awaiting reports	133	36.64
Cases in progress	16	4.41
TOTAL	363	100

Table 2. Categories of complaints registered at the OOC from 01 July 2025 to 31 July 2026.

Categories of Complaints	Number of cases
• School problem – Transfer/ Admission/ Transport/ Infrastructure	97
• Corporal punishment/Harassment/Verbal Abuse by Personnel at School/Bullying/Violence/Assault at school	70
• Child Neglect/Ill-treatment/Child at risk/ Abandoned	37
• Family Conflict/Custody/Right of Access	20
• Institutional Abuse/ Police brutality	11
• Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment	12
• Behavioural Problems	13
• Poverty- Lack of means/social aid/lack of school materials	2
• Physical violence in family/domestic violence/intimate partner violence	6
• Children with Disabilities	11
• School absenteeism/Drop Out	3
• Suicidal tendencies/Self harm	9
• Child Abduction/Child Missing	3
• Drug abuse	4
• Exploitation	2

• Issues/Violation of rights of children of migrant workers	1
• Neurodevelopment disorders/ medical conditions	3
• Child Pregnancy	3
• Others	56
TOTAL	363

***It is to be highlighted that during the reporting period, the OOC received a total of 11 cases involving children with special needs.**

Table 3. Profile of complainants at the OOC recorded from 01 July 2025 to 31 July 2026.

Complainant	Number
• Mothers	95
• Fathers	81
• Group of parents	18
• Anonymous	38
• Grandparents	4
• Education professionals	62
• Ministries/Department	5
• Relatives/ Friends	4
• Child	2
• Medical Social Workers/ Social Workers	10
• NGOs	10
• Neighbours	3
• Own Motion	13
• Foster Parent	1
• Others	17
TOTAL	363

Table 4. Mode of Complaints received as from 01 July 2025 to 31 July 2026

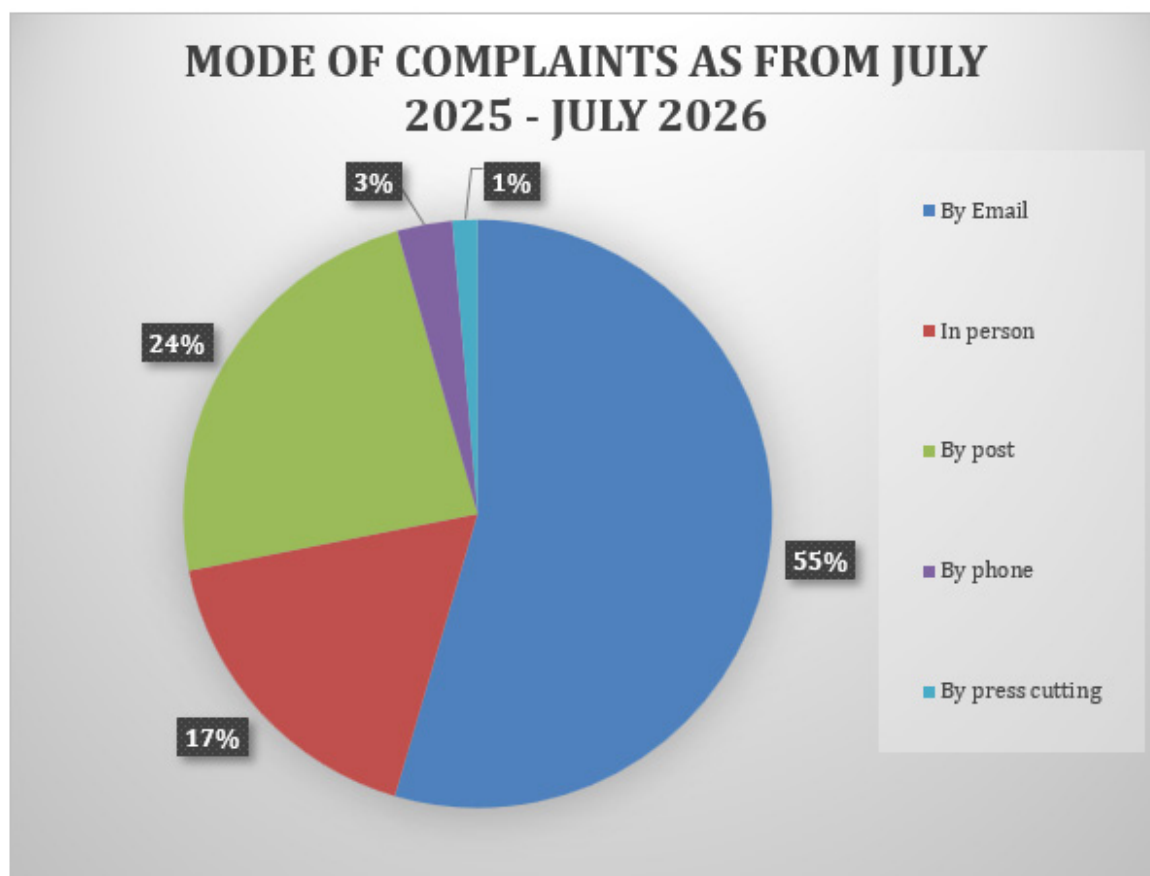


Table 5. Cases involving Rodrigues and foreign countries from 01 July 2025 to 31 July 2026

Countries	Cases
Rodrigues	6
Foreign Countries	1
<u>Agalega</u>	0

Chapter 1:

Rights of Babies and Toddlers

The child is the father of man

The idea that **“the child is the father of man,”** first expressed by William Wordsworth, reminds us that the future of a nation begins in the earliest years of life. The babies and toddlers of today will, in twenty years, become the young citizens who will shape the social, economic, and democratic life of Mauritius. Their well-being, protection, and development during these formative years will influence the society they build tomorrow.

Investing in early childhood—ensuring that every infant and toddler grows in a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment—is therefore not only a moral responsibility but also a commitment to the nation’s future.

As this Annual Report of the Ombudsperson for Children reflects on our collective efforts, it reminds us that the care we give our youngest children today will define the Mauritius they will lead in the decades to come.

Shaping Child Health Today for the Mauritius of Tomorrow

Children represent nearly a quarter of the population of Mauritius and embody the nation’s future social, economic, and democratic strength. Their health and wellbeing are not only matters of individual concern but fundamental human rights protected under the Constitution of Mauritius and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), to which Mauritius is a State Party.

Mauritius has made significant progress over past decades in improving maternal and child health outcomes. High immunisation coverage, declining infant mortality, and accessible primary healthcare services reflect strong public health foundations. However, new and complex challenges are emerging that require urgent, coordinated, and forward-looking responses.

The health profile of children in Mauritius is evolving. While communicable diseases remain largely controlled, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are rising at alarming rates among children and adolescents. Childhood obesity, sedentary lifestyles, and poor nutritional habits are placing many young Mauritians at risk of diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease later in life. Preventive health strategies must therefore begin in early childhood, including strengthened school nutrition policies and promotion of physical activity.

Equally pressing is the growing concern surrounding children’s mental health. Academic pressure, family instability, exposure to violence, cyberbullying, and digital overexposure are contributing to anxiety, depression, and behavioural disorders among children and adolescents. Access to child and adolescent mental health services remains limited, and early detection mechanisms require strengthening. Mental health must be treated with the same priority as physical health within national planning frameworks.

Health inequities also persist. Children living in poverty, those with disabilities, children

in institutional care, and those residing in Rodrigues and Agalega face additional barriers in accessing specialised services.

Environmental factors are increasingly shaping child health outcomes. Climate change, extreme weather events, pollution, and unsafe environments disproportionately affect children's physical and psychological wellbeing. Child-sensitive climate adaptation and environmental policies are therefore essential components of any forward-looking child health strategy (these issues have been lengthily dealt with in the Annual Report 2023-2024).

The topic Shaping Child Health Today for the Mauritius of Tomorrow is a vast one, hence for ease of reading will be divided in subsections:

- 1 Babies and Toddlers as Rights holders
- 2 The Right to health
- 3 The Right to Identity and Legal recognition
- 4 The Right to Family care and Early Bonding

1. Babies and Toddlers as Rights holders

Yes, Babies have rights! And the OOC has the mandate to promote and protect the rights of all children under 18 years of age.

The fundamental rights as enshrined in the UNCRC concern

Child Health as a Fundamental Right

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The right of children to health is recognized in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), especially under **Article 24**.

2. Right to Health - Article 24

The UNCRC states that every child has the right to:

- Enjoy the highest attainable standard of health.
- Access healthcare services and medical treatment.
- Receive nutritious food and clean drinking water.
- Live in a safe and healthy environment.
- Obtain information on health and nutrition.
- Benefit from preventive healthcare and health education.

Governments that ratify the Convention must work to:

- Reduce infant and child mortality.
- Ensure medical assistance for all children.
- Combat disease and malnutrition.
- Provide prenatal and postnatal care for mothers.
- Develop preventive healthcare and family guidance services.

Other Related UNCRC Articles

Several other articles support children's health rights:

- Article 6 – Right to life, survival, and development.
- Article 23 – Rights of children with disabilities to special healthcare and support.
- Article 27 – Right to an adequate standard of living, including nutrition and housing.
- Article 19 – Protection from abuse and neglect, which affects physical and mental health.

Key Principles

The UNCRC emphasizes that:

1. Health services should be available to all children without discrimination.
2. The best interests of the child must guide all decisions.
3. Children should be protected from harmful practices and exploitation.
4. Mental health is as important as physical health.

Importance

The right to health ensures children can:

- Grow and develop properly
- Attend school and participate in society
- Be protected from preventable diseases
- Receive care regardless of background or income

Constitutional and national legal protections:

- Government obligations to ensure survival, development, and wellbeing
- Equity and non-discrimination (children with disabilities, migrant children, children in poverty, Rodrigues & outer islands)

Introduction

The health and development of a child are influenced long before the child takes their first breath. The mother's health before and during pregnancy, the quality of antenatal care, the circumstances in which childbirth takes place, and the care provided during the first days and weeks after birth all have a bearing on the child's survival and future development.

Prenatal, intrapartum (labour and delivery) and postnatal care must therefore be viewed as a continuous chain of protection. A weakness at any point in that chain may expose the mother and child to preventable illness, disability or death. The World Health Organization (WHO) recognised that every child should be able to survive and thrive from conception through early childhood. It emphasised that quality antenatal, intrapartum and postnatal care is essential to reduce maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality. WHO also identified the monitoring of vaginal births, caesarean sections, stillbirths and neonatal, infant and under-five mortality as an important means of assessing the quality of maternal and child health services.

International child-rights framework

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) places prenatal and postnatal health within the legal framework of children's rights. Article 6 recognises every child's inherent right to life and requires States to ensure, to the maximum extent possible, the child's survival and development.

Article 24 recognises the child's right to the highest attainable standard of health and access to healthcare services. It specifically requires States to take measures to:

- diminish infant and child mortality;
- ensure necessary medical assistance and healthcare for all children;
- combat disease and malnutrition;
- ensure appropriate prenatal and postnatal healthcare for mothers;
- develop preventive healthcare and parental guidance; and
- ensure that parents and children have access to information on child health, nutrition, breastfeeding, hygiene and accident prevention.

Article 2 requires these rights to be secured without discrimination. Accordingly, quality care should be available irrespective of geographical location, disability, family income, nationality, migration status, age of the mother or whether services are received in the public or private sector.

Article 3 further requires the best interests of the child to be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children. Decisions taken during childbirth must therefore consider both the health, dignity and autonomy of the mother and the survival and health interests of the baby.

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Article 5 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) protects the child's right to survival and development.

Article 14 recognises the right of every child to the best attainable state of physical, mental and spiritual health. It requires States to:

- reduce infant and child mortality;
- provide necessary medical assistance;
- develop primary healthcare;
- ensure adequate nutrition;
- provide appropriate healthcare for expectant and nursing mothers;
- develop preventive healthcare; and
- educate families about child health and breastfeeding.

Article 4 provides that the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration in all actions concerning the child.

Taken together, the UNCRC and ACRWC require more than the formal availability of hospitals and clinics. They require services that are accessible, timely, evidence-based, respectful, properly staffed and capable of preventing avoidable harm.

Prenatal care

Importance of prenatal care

Prenatal care is the first stage of protection for the unborn child. It enables the early detection of high-risk pregnancies, maternal anaemia, gestational diabetes, hypertension, infections, nutritional deficiencies, foetal growth concerns and other conditions which may affect the survival and development of the baby.

WHO recommends that antenatal care should not be limited to clinical checks, but should also include health promotion, counselling, nutrition advice, birth preparedness, mental-health support and referral where risk factors are identified. WHO further recommends that mothers should receive support to initiate breastfeeding as soon as possible after delivery and within the first hour of birth.

Mauritius-specific findings

The Ministry of Health and Wellness records the gestational age at which women first attend antenatal services in public hospitals. The Health Statistics Report 2024 shows that, in the Island of Mauritius, only 29.2% of first antenatal attendances in government services occurred when the gestational age was three months or less. This represents a slight improvement from 28.1% in 2023, but remains lower than the level recorded in earlier years.

The main concern is not simply whether antenatal services exist, but whether they are accessed early enough and whether vulnerable mothers receive adequate support. The figures suggest the need to examine why many women begin antenatal care after the first trimester.

Possible issues include lack of awareness, delayed pregnancy recognition, adolescent pregnancy, stigma, transport difficulties, employment constraints, movement between private and public care, and fear or uncertainty about seeking assistance.

The national data should therefore be analysed by gestational age, maternal age, geographical area, public or private facility, multiple birth, maternal medical condition and socio-economic circumstances.

Natural birth, instrumental delivery and caesarean section

Childbirth is a decisive stage in the continuum of prenatal, intrapartum and postnatal care. The mode of delivery may have important implications for the health and wellbeing of both the mother and the baby, including maternal recovery, early bonding, breastfeeding initiation and neonatal outcomes.

The table below illustrates figures on deliveries in the Island of Mauritius which have been gathered from the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

Year	Normal births	Caesarean deliveries	Instrumental/ Breech	Total deliveries
2020	5,021	7,080	462	12,563
2021	4,904	6,753	435	12,092
2022	4,213	6,578	376	11,167
2023	4,379	7,346	272	11,997
2024	4,275	7,393	372	12,040

These figures show that caesarean deliveries outnumbered normal births in every year from 2020 to 2024.

Natural birth and Caesarean section

A natural or normal birth generally refers to vaginal delivery without major operative intervention. Where there is no medical complication, vaginal birth may be associated with faster maternal recovery, lower surgical risk, earlier mobility and easier early contact with the baby.

Caesarean section is a life-saving intervention when medically indicated. It may prevent the death or serious injury of the mother, the baby or both. However, WHO has consistently expressed concern about unnecessary caesarean sections. WHO states that caesarean section can effectively prevent maternal and newborn mortality when medically indicated, but that rising caesarean rates have not necessarily been accompanied by additional maternal or perinatal benefits and may be associated with short- and long-term risks.

While natural or vaginal birth is generally appropriate where there are no complications, instrumental delivery and caesarean section remain important medical interventions when clinically indicated.

From a child-rights perspective, the issue is not to favour one mode of delivery in all

circumstances, but to ensure that every birth takes place in conditions that are safe, respectful, evidence-based and guided by medical necessity. The best interests of the child, together with the health, dignity and informed consent of the mother, must remain central to all decisions taken during childbirth. WHO recommends that caesarean section should be performed on the basis of medical need, not solely on maternal request or convenience.

Postnatal care

Importance of postnatal care

The postnatal period is a critical period for the survival and wellbeing of both mother and baby. Complications such as infection, jaundice, feeding difficulties, dehydration, maternal haemorrhage, hypertension and postnatal depression may arise shortly after birth.

WHO recommends early and uninterrupted skin-to-skin contact between mother and infant as soon as possible after birth. WHO also recommends that all mothers be supported to initiate breastfeeding within the first hour after delivery and receive practical help to establish breastfeeding and manage common difficulties.

WHO Mauritius also advised that postnatal services should include postnatal medical examinations, growth monitoring, immunisation, breastfeeding counselling, family-planning counselling, nutrition support and screening for maternal mental-health concerns.

Recommendations

The Ombudsperson for Children recommends that:

- The national data should therefore be analysed by gestational age, maternal age, geographical area, public or private facility, multiple birth, maternal medical condition and socio-economic circumstances.
- The increasing rate of caesarean deliveries in Mauritius requires careful monitoring, transparent data collection and regular clinical review to ensure that caesarean sections are performed when necessary, while avoiding unnecessary surgical intervention.

Vaccination

**Vaccines are a small step for a child,
but a giant step towards a healthier future**



Vaccination for babies and toddlers

Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to protect babies and toddlers from preventable diseases and to promote their healthy growth and development. The early years of a child's life are a critical period when their immune system is still developing. Timely vaccination helps strengthen their protection against diseases and contributes to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to grow in good health.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that all children receive routine immunisation according to the national immunisation schedule to protect against vaccine-preventable diseases. Access to vaccination is also an important aspect of children's rights, as it supports the child's right to survival, health and development.

THE INTERNATIONAL RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

UNCRC Article 24: Every child has the right to the highest attainable standard of health, including preventive healthcare and immunisation, to ensure children's health and well-being.

ACRWC Article 14: Every child has the right to best attainable health, including access to preventive healthcare such as vaccination.

CRC General Comment No. 7 (2005): Highlights the importance of preventive healthcare, including timely immunisation, for babies and young children during early childhood.

CRC General Comment No. 15 (2013): Emphasises that States should ensure universal access to childhood immunisation as a core component of children's right to health.

Global Childhood Immunisation: A Continuing Challenge

WHO and UNICEF (2024) reported that global childhood immunisation coverage stalled in 2023, leaving an estimated 2.7 million more children unvaccinated or under-vaccinated than before the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing the risk of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles.

These global trends highlight the importance of ensuring that every child enjoys the right to the highest attainable standard of health. Governments and relevant stakeholders should strengthen routine immunisation programmes, address barriers to vaccination, and promote public awareness to ensure that no child is left behind.

Vaccination in Mauritius

In Mauritius, the national immunisation programme provides children with essential vaccines from an early age to protect them against serious diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis B, poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, and rubella and reduce the spread of infectious diseases within the community. Childhood immunisation is provided through the public and private health systems as part of efforts to protect children's health and promote their rights.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness provided information (see below) on the types of vaccination offered to children aged 0-5 years.

Vaccination for Children aged 0-5 years

Vaccine		Age
BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guerin) Vaccine		0-3 months
Rotavirus Vaccine	1 st dose	6 weeks
	2 nd dose	10 weeks
Hexavalent	1 st dose	6 weeks
	2 nd dose	10 weeks
	3 rd dose	14 weeks
	Booster	18 weeks
Pneumococcal Vaccine	1 st dose	6 weeks
	2 nd dose	14 weeks
	3 rd dose	10 months
Measles, Mumps and Rubella	1 st dose	9 months
	2 nd dose	17 months
Booster Tetanus, Diphtheriae and acellular pertussis (Tdap)/Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV)		5 years

Some Statistics

1. Statistics relating to the expanded programme on immunisation by main vaccinations performed in 2024¹

Immunisations performed in 2024	
BABIES: B.C.G.	10,607
M.M.R.: 1st dose	11,138
2nd dose	11,050
HEXAVALENT (D.P.T. & H.I.B, HEP. B & IPV):	
1st dose	10,825
2nd dose	10,695
3rd dose	10,468
Booster dose	9,275
ROTAVIRUS:	
1st dose	11,217
2nd dose	10,367
PNEUMOCOCCAL*:	
1st dose	11,033
2nd dose	10,558
3rd dose	10,582
TOTAL ATTENDANCES FOR IMMUNIZATION AT CLINIC	135,812

2. Statistics in Rodrigues²

In 2024, a total of 742 births (including 4 stillbirths) were reported by the Maternity Section of Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Mont Lubin Health Centre and La Ferme Health Centre. With regards to immunization, 688 babies were immunized against Tuberculosis (BCG), 717 against Diphtheria, Haemophilus influenza type B, hepatitis B and oral Polio Vaccine (Hexavalent 3rd dose) and a total of 1,372(1st dose 702, 2nd dose 670) shots against Measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) were performed. A total of 1,190 (1st dose 606, 2nd dose 584) shots of Rotavirus vaccine and 2,133 (1st dose 739, 2nd dose 728 and 3rd dose 666) shots of Pneumococcal vaccine were performed.

3. Summary on Pre-primary School Health Programme for the Republic of Mauritius

DISTRICT /ACTIVITY AND RESULT	No. of schools visited	No. of children on roll	No. of children screened	No. of children referred to P.H.C clinics for immunization
PORT LOUIS	56	1699	1398	323
PAMPLEMOUSSE	58	2287	1917	98
RIV. DU REMPART	56	1564	1411	110
FLACQ	75	2352	2013	0
GRAND PORT	42	1368	1067	52
SAVANNE	33	1076	930	55
PLAINE WILHEMS	128	4188	3530	516
MOKA	40	1162	964	26
BLACK RIVER	32	1170	1002	93
ISLAND OF MTIUS	520	16,866	14,232	1273
RODRIGUES	5	284	152	0
REP. OF MTIUS	525	17,050	14,384	1273

¹ <https://health.govmu.org/health/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Health-statistics-report-2024.pdf>

² <https://health.govmu.org/health/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Health-statistics-report-2024.pdf>

Challenges with regard to vaccination

1. Tardy Declaration

Timely birth registration is fundamental to ensuring that every child acquires a legal identity and is promptly integrated into essential health services, including routine immunisation. Delayed birth registration may hinder continuity of healthcare and administrative follow-up. Consequently, children may miss or experience delays in receiving scheduled vaccinations, making them ‘invisible’ to essential services.

In addition, the absence of timely birth registration may make it more difficult for health authorities to identify and follow up with children who have defaulted on their immunisation schedule. Children with tardy birth declarations, particularly those from socially or economically vulnerable families, may therefore be at greater risk of missing essential preventive healthcare services, including vaccination. Delayed registration may also reflect broader vulnerabilities, including limited parental awareness of the importance of adhering to the national immunisation schedule.

The **Civil Status Act 1982** provides that parents have **60 days** from the birth of their child to register the birth with the Civil Status Office. Prior to the recent amendment, the prescribed period was 45 days. Birth registration is a legal obligation. Where a birth is not registered within 60 days, the prior authorisation of the Registrar of Civil Status is required before the registration can be completed. If the birth remains unregistered after three months, an application must be made before a Magistrate for an order authorising the late registration.

In Mauritius, the **Family Support Services** of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare facilitate the late registration of births under court orders for children whose births have not been declared by their parents, in collaboration with the Judiciary and the Civil Status Office. According to statistics received from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare on tardy declaration, there were **11 cases in 2021, 14 cases in 2022, 25 cases in 2023, 23 cases in 2024, and 20 cases in 2025**. A representative of the Tardy Declaration Unit of the Ministry explained that the recorded cases concern only children placed in Residential Care Institutions or in foster care. Many of these cases involve parents experiencing drug dependency, who may be uncooperative, difficult to trace, or unable to consistently fulfil their parental responsibilities. As a result, the registration of the child’s birth and attendance for routine vaccination are often not prioritised by the parents. This Office was further informed that, in some cases, even where the Court has ordered the late registration of a child’s birth, the process cannot be completed if one parent does not possess a valid national identity card, as required by the Civil Status Office. This information was confirmed by a Civil Status Officer who stated that the possession of an ID card of parents is mandatory. In addition, practical challenges arise when parents cannot be located to complete the necessary administrative procedures, resulting in further delays in the child’s birth registration and access to essential services

2. Parental Responsibility

Parents and caregivers have the primary responsibility to ensure that their children receive vaccinations in accordance with the national immunisation schedule. However, in some cases, parental capacity may be compromised by factors such as substance dependency, neglect, or other social vulnerabilities, which can affect their ability to make informed

³<https://health.govmu.org/health/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Health-statistics-report-2024.pdf>

decisions and fulfil their responsibilities towards their children.

As per the World Health Organization, where parents decline vaccination, health authorities should provide evidence-based information, counselling, and risk communication to support informed decision-making while respecting national legislation and child protection principles.

Analysis of the OOC

From a child rights perspective, no child should be disadvantaged in accessing vaccination because of delayed birth registration. Although the Ministry has recorded cases involving children in alternative care whose births were declared late, these figures may represent only a portion of the problem. There may be other children whose births have not yet been declared and who remain outside official records, rendering them effectively invisible to public services. This raises concerns that such children may not be identified for routine healthcare, including timely immunisation, and may therefore be at greater risk of exclusion from essential health and social services.

The OOC also notes that, although children subject to tardy birth declaration who are placed in Residential Care Institutions or foster care generally receive the necessary care and support, including access to health and education services, delayed birth registration remains a significant administrative challenge. Prompt action is therefore required to regularise their civil status and ensure the full enjoyment of their rights and access to all services and legal entitlements.

Recommendations of the Ombudsperson for Children with regard to vaccination

1 Strengthen inter-agency coordination

Effective collaboration among the Civil Status Office, healthcare providers, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, and child protection services should be strengthened to ensure that all children are identified early, their births are registered without unnecessary delay, and they receive timely immunisation, in accordance with their right to the highest attainable standard of health.

2 Promote responsible parenting

Parents and caregivers should be provided with continuous education, counselling and awareness programmes on the importance of birth registration, routine childhood immunisation, and their responsibilities in safeguarding their children's health and development.

3 Strengthen risk communication on vaccination

In line with guidance from the World Health Organization, where parents decline vaccination, health authorities should provide evidence-based information, counselling, and risk communication to support informed decision-making while respecting national legislation and child protection principles.

4 Support vulnerable families

Early identification of vulnerable families and the provision of appropriate support can help address barriers to vaccination while promoting responsible parenting and ensuring that no child is left behind.

5 A child-centred, equity-focused approach is required to ensure that no child is left behind. Disaggregated data collection must be strengthened to better identify and respond to disparities.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is the first investment in a child's

Breastfeeding is nature's first act of nurturing that supports a child's health, growth, and emotional security. It nourishes the child's body and mind, providing ideal nutrition, strengthening immunity, and protecting against illnesses. At the same time, breastfeeding benefits mothers by promoting recovery after childbirth, reducing the risk of certain diseases, and fostering a strong bond between mother and child.



The World Health Organisation recommends:

- Early initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth.
- Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life.
- Continued breastfeeding up to two years of age or beyond, together with appropriate complementary feeding.

Benefits of Breastfeeding

The Ministry of Health and Wellness and the World Health Organisation published a handbook on Maternal and Child Health Handbook in 2021. See below the benefits of breastfeeding for baby and the mother.

Baby	Mother
• Colostrum: essential nutrition along with antibodies from mom to baby • Builds baby's immune system and few episodes of illness • Increased IQ • Breastfed babies: lower risk of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome) • Decreased risks of food allergies • Decreased risks of developing asthma • Lower risk for ear, throat and nose infections • Lower risk for childhood leukaemia and other cancers • Reduced risk of hypertension, obesity, diabetes, asthma	• Early skin to skin contact with your baby immediately after birth helps in early initiation to breastfeeding and helps to stimulate milk flow. It also ensures emotional bonding of mother-baby Emotional support and bonding • promotes postpartum emotional health and postpartum weight loss • costs less to breastfed • reduces risk of breast cancer, type 2 diabetes and osteoporosis • reduces the risk of uterine and ovarian cancer

⁴<https://www.afro.who.int/sites/default/files/2021-03/Mauritius%20MNCH%20handbook.pdf>

Breastfeeding in Mauritius: Progress and National Commitment

A report published by the World Bank in 2002 indicated that Mauritius ranked **117th out of 142 countries** with respect to exclusive breastfeeding, with an exclusive breastfeeding rate of **21%**. More than a decade later, the study “*An Assessment of the Breastfeeding Practices and Infant Feeding Pattern among Mothers in Mauritius*”, conducted in 2013, found that only **17.9%** of the 500 mothers surveyed exclusively breastfed their infants for the first six months of life. These findings demonstrated that exclusive breastfeeding rates had remained persistently low and were significantly below the global target established by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF of achieving at least **50%** exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life by 2025. They underscored the need for strengthened policies and sustained measures to promote, protect, and support breastfeeding in Mauritius.

In June 2019, Mauritius ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), affirming its commitment to ensuring maternity protection, safeguarding the health of mothers and children, preventing discrimination in employment, and supporting breastfeeding in the workplace.

In 2022, Mauritius launched the **National Action Plan on Breastfeeding (2022–2027)**, highlighting its obligation to improving breastfeeding practices and ensuring that every child has the best possible start in life. During the launch of the Action Plan as part of **World Breastfeeding Week 2022**, the WHO Representative in Mauritius observed that Mauritius was “*probably one of the first countries in the African region to have a dedicated National Action Plan on Breastfeeding.*”

The National Action Plan on Breastfeeding (2022-2027) implemented by the Ministry of Health and Wellness in collaboration with key stakeholders, seeks to strengthen infant and young child feeding policies and programmes, build the capacity of healthcare professionals to provide evidence-based breastfeeding support, and create a supportive environment that enables mothers and families to initiate and continue breastfeeding. Through these coordinated efforts, the Action Plan aims to improve breastfeeding practices nationwide and contribute to better health, nutrition, and developmental outcomes for children.

Study on “Prevalence, Perceptions and Contributing Factors of Breastfeeding Cessation in Mauritius” in 2025

The Mauritius Institute of Health (MIH), in collaboration with the Association Groupe Enfants et Mères (GEM), conducted a study in 2025 entitled “*Prevalence, Perceptions and Contributing Factors of Breastfeeding Cessation in Mauritius.*” The study provides a timely and comprehensive assessment of the realities faced by mothers across the country. Based on a nationally representative sample of 504 mothers, the study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing breastfeeding initiation, continuation, and cessation across the country.

The findings reveal that although breastfeeding initiation is consistently high, exclusive and continued breastfeeding remain significantly below both national and global expectation. While many mothers demonstrate good knowledge of breastfeeding and express a strong intention to breastfeed, they frequently encounter barriers that limit successful breastfeeding. These include delayed initiation following caesarean deliveries, inadequate postnatal support, inconsistent breastfeeding counselling, difficulties associated with returning to work, physical and emotional fatigue, misconceptions such as perceived insufficient milk supply, and social and cultural influences.

The study also demonstrates that breastfeeding practices are influenced not only by

individual choice but also by the effectiveness of the health system, workplace policies, family support, community attitudes, and the broader policy environment.

Some Statistics

The table below presents the number of Women who were sensitised on breastfeeding practices by the Ministry of Health and Wellness during a specified period over the past four years.

	Year	Number of Women Sensitised
1.	April 2023 - Dec 2023	14,675
2.	Jan 2024 - May 2024	6654
3.	June 2024 - June 2025	18, 790
4.	July 2025 - May 2026	12, 587

Source: Ministry of Health and Wellness

Budget 2026-2027

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children welcomes the measures announced in the 2026–2027 National Budget to strengthen parental leave provisions. The extension of maternity leave to 12 months, comprising six months at full pay and an optional six months at half pay, together with the extension of paternity leave from four weeks to six weeks, represents a positive step towards supporting children’s early development, strengthening family bonds, and promoting the wellbeing of both mothers and fathers. These measures will undoubtedly facilitate exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life and encourage greater parental involvement in the care and nurturing of young children.

Analysis of the OOC

The Ombudsperson for Children recognises that breastfeeding is not merely a maternal health practice but an important child rights issue. Every child has the right to the highest attainable standard of health, adequate nutrition, survival, and optimal development. While the decision regarding infant feeding ultimately rests with the mother, the State has a responsibility to create an enabling environment that supports, protects, and promotes breastfeeding through quality healthcare services, family-friendly workplace policies, community support, and access to accurate, evidence-based information. Promoting and supporting breastfeeding is therefore an investment in the well-being, dignity, and future of every child.

The findings of the study “*Prevalence, Perceptions and Contributing Factors of Breastfeeding Cessation in Mauritius*” confirm that breastfeeding practices are influenced not only by individual choices but also by broader factors, including healthcare support, workplace conditions, social norms, and the availability of appropriate guidance and assistance.

The OOC appreciates the continued efforts of the Ministry of Health and Wellness in promoting breastfeeding through regular sensitisation sessions conducted across the country for pregnant women, mothers, families, and the wider community. These awareness initiatives play an important role in improving knowledge, encouraging positive breastfeeding practices, and supporting informed decision-making. The OOC also welcomes the Budget

⁵[breastfeeding-cessation-in-mauritius-h1xY6wNBruKtcVZz \(1\).pdf](#)

2026–2027 measure extending maternity leave to twelve months, comprising six months at full pay followed by an optional six months at half pay. This progressive measure provides mothers with greater opportunity to exclusively breastfeed during the first six months of life, in line with international recommendations, while strengthening the balance between family responsibilities and employment.

The OOC is of the view that improving breastfeeding outcomes requires strategic and coordinated system-wide reforms that place mothers, infants, and families at the centre of national health and child development policies. Strengthening breastfeeding support mechanisms, addressing existing barriers, ensuring effective implementation of relevant policies, and sustaining public awareness initiatives will contribute significantly to improving child survival, health, nutrition, and overall well-being in Mauritius.

Recommendations of the Ombudsperson for Children with regard to Breastfeeding

1. Evaluation of the National Action Plan on Breastfeeding

Upon the completion of the National Action Plan on Breastfeeding in 2027, the Ministry of Health and Wellness must undertake a comprehensive evaluation to assess its implementation, effectiveness, and impact on breastfeeding practices in Mauritius. The evaluation should measure progress against the objectives and targets of the Action Plan, identify achievements, challenges, and gaps in implementation, and incorporate the experiences of mothers, healthcare professionals, employers, and other relevant stakeholders. The findings should inform the development of a successor national strategy with clear performance indicators, strengthened monitoring and accountability mechanisms, and targeted interventions to further promote, protect, and support breastfeeding, thereby advancing every child's right to adequate nutrition, health, survival, and optimal development.

2. Promote flexible working arrangements for breastfeeding mothers

The public and private sectors must promote flexible working arrangements to enable mothers to continue breastfeeding their children at home, while balancing their professional responsibilities and caregiving needs.

3. Expand community-based breastfeeding support

The Ministry of Health and Wellness should work in collaboration with community health workers, NGOs, and civil society organisations to ensure that mothers continue to receive breastfeeding counselling, practical assistance, and emotional support after discharge from hospital, thereby promoting the continuation of breastfeeding and the well-being of both mother and child.

4. Strengthen public awareness campaigns

The Ministry of Health and Wellness should conduct nationwide awareness campaigns to address misconceptions surrounding breastfeeding, promote evidence-based information on breastfeeding practice, encourage the active involvement of families, and foster a supportive environment for breastfeeding mothers in homes, workplaces, and public spaces.

5. Provide targeted support to vulnerable mothers,

The Ministry of Health and Wellness, in collaboration with NGOs, should provide targeted support to vulnerable mothers, including adolescent mothers, mothers of premature or low birth weight infants, mothers of children with disabilities, mothers returning to work, and families experiencing socio-economic hardship, to enable them to initiate and continue breastfeeding successfully.

Early Nutrition and Lifelong Health

1.1. Healthy Starts: Protecting toddlers from unhealthy food environments

The first five years of life are a critical period of growth and development, during which good nutrition lays the foundation for lifelong health and wellbeing. In Mauritius, the increasing availability and marketing of ultra-processed foods and sugar-sweetened products are exposing young children to unhealthy food environments from an early age.

The consequences are already becoming evident. Rising rates of childhood overweight and obesity, together with increasing cases of early childhood dental caries, pose significant threats to children's health, wellbeing and development. Protecting children from unhealthy food environments and supporting families to make nutritious choices are therefore essential to upholding every child's right to health and ensuring that every child has the opportunity to grow, develop and thrive.

1.2. What Children are eating and why it matters

The foods most accessible, most affordable, and most aggressively marketed to families with young children are ultra-processed foods (UPFs): factory-made products high in sugar, salt, and saturated fat, loaded with additives, and devoid of the nutrients growing children need.

Common ultra-processed foods marketed to young children



Packaged biscuits



Flavoured crisps



Sugary cereals



Instant noodles



Sweetened yoghurts



Fizzy drinks

“For the first time in recorded global history, obesity in children and adolescents has overtaken underweight as the more prevalent form of malnutrition. This is not a coincidence. It is the result of a systematic failure of the food environments in which children live.”- UNICEF, Child Nutrition Report 2025

The global picture in numbers - what the data means for children's rights

188M children
aged 5–19 living
with obesity
globally

WHY THIS MATTERS

A child living with obesity faces lifelong harm to their physical health, mental wellbeing, and life chances. When systemic food environments drive these health outcomes, it should not be viewed as an individual or family failure. Rather, it highlights a gap in the State's protective framework, where stronger regulations are needed to safeguard children from influential commercial food markets.

UNCRC Article 24: the right to the highest attainable standard of health

391M
children aged
5–19 are
overweight

WHY THIS MATTERS

Being overweight in childhood extends far beyond physical health; it is frequently linked to social exclusion, psychological distress, and early risks for chronic diseases. When states allow unregulated marketing of ultra-processed foods to continue without protective boundaries, it conflicts with their duty to actively shield young consumers from environments that compromise their well-being.

UNCRC Article 3: the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions

25.5 million
children UNDER
5 are already
overweight before
they reach school
age

WHY THIS MATTERS

This is the most critical statistic in this section. It concerns babies and toddlers very young children who cannot choose their own food, read nutritional labels, or protect their own health. They are entirely dependent on the food environments and systems that adults provide around them. When public frameworks permit the commercial infant food market to be saturated with high-sugar products, and allow aggressive marketing targeted at parents and caregivers, it signals a clear gap in the State's duty to protect early childhood development.

UNCRC Articles 24 & 6: the right to health and to life and development a child's development cannot be safeguarded if its earliest food environment is harmful

⁶United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Feeding Profit: How food environments are failing children. Child Nutrition Report 2025, UNICEF, New York, September 2025, Chapter 2. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/feeding-profit-child-nutrition-report-2025> (Accessed 19 June 2026).

⁷UNICEF, Child Nutrition Report 2025.

81% of global childhood overweight burden falls on low- and middle-income countries

WHY THIS MATTERS

This is not a crisis of wealthy countries. It is concentrated in countries like Mauritius, where regulatory frameworks are often weaker and families have fewer alternatives to cheap, ultra-processed foods. As a result, children in these regions experience the most significant health impacts due to these systemic factors.

ACRWC Article 14: State Parties shall ensure adequate nutrition an obligation that requires active regulation, not passive permission

4×
childhood obesity has quadrupled in 30 years

WHY THIS MATTERS

This is not a natural trend. It is the direct result of changes in food environments the spread of ultra-processed foods, deregulated marketing, and inadequate policy response. Children did not change; their food environments did. States have a legal duty to reverse this.

CRC General Comment No. 15: States must protect children from harmful commercial food practices as a core component of the right to health

1.3. The situation in Mauritius

Between 2019 and 2024, the prevalence of overweight among children under five in Mauritius experienced a measurable increase, rising from 3.7% to 4.8%. While a baseline of 3.7% represented a lower recorded level for the country, the subsequent climb to 4.8% over a five-year period signals an upward trajectory in early childhood weight gain. This trend aligns closely with findings from the *Mauritius National Nutrition Survey 2022* (published by the Ministry of Health and Wellness in 2024), which highlighted a massive rise in the consumption of cheap, highly processed, and sugary foods among young children, particularly across urban areas.⁹ Under Article 24(2)(e) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which Mauritius has signed and ratified as a legally binding treaty, the State has an obligation to ensure that parents, caregivers, and all segments of society are properly informed, educated, and supported regarding child health and nutrition to counteract these harmful commercial food environments.¹⁰

From 3.7% to 4.8%
Rise in overweight prevalence among Mauritian children under five over a five-year period (2019–2024).

WHY THIS MATTERS

This upward shift over a relatively short period indicates a clear trend that warrants close policy attention. The 2022 Mauritius Nutrition Survey documented growing consumption of processed and sugary foods, particularly in urban areas. Every child has a right to grow up in a food environment that supports, rather than undermines, their health and development. Mauritius has ratified the UNCRC, meaning this commitment to protecting early childhood development is a binding legal obligation.

UNCRC Article 24(2)(e): States shall ensure that all segments of society, in particular children, are informed and have access to education on child health and nutrition

2009

Mauritius National Nutrition Plan

Targeted a 3% reduction in adult obesity rates. First coordinated national attempt to address the growing obesity burden through nutritional policy reform.

2025–2030

Obesity Roadmap Mauritius

Targets a 5% reduction in obesity rates **across all age groups**, including children. This signals a shift towards whole-population, life-course approaches to obesity prevention.

Rights Lens: Both plans mirror the global trend identified by UNICEF (Child Nutrition Report 2025): policy response exists, but its scope and pace must be evaluated against children’s rights obligations under UNCRC Article 24 and CRC General Comment No. 15, which require States to regulate commercial food environments not merely set reduction targets.

1.4. Oral Health in Mauritius

Tooth decay is one of the most common health problems affecting young children, yet it is largely preventable. Early childhood caries (ECC), which affects children under the age of six, is mainly caused by frequent consumption of foods and drinks high in added sugar. Many ultra-processed snacks, sweetened beverages and products marketed for young children contain excessive amounts of sugar, increasing the risk of tooth decay from an early age.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), dental caries affect 60 to 90 per cent of children worldwide, despite the fact that most cases can be prevented through healthy diets, access to fluoride and regular dental care.

What We Know

- The Mauritius Nutrition Survey 2022 documented high consumption of sugary beverages and processed snacks among young children. Sweets, processed snacks, and fast foods are regularly consumed by the majority of the tracked childhood population, shifting dietary habits towards energy-dense, nutrient-poor baseline choices.

⁸Data tracking the 2019–2024 country-level trends for Mauritius is derived from the UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates (JME), Modeled Estimates Country Dataset (Indicator: “Prevalence of Overweight: Weight for Height: % of Children Under 5”). Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.OWGH.ME.ZS?locations=MU> (Accessed 21 June 2026).

⁹Ministry of Health and Wellness, Mauritius Nutrition Survey 2022, Ministry of Health and Wellness, Port Louis, Government of Mauritius, 2024.

¹⁰United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Article 24(2)(e).

- Mauritius's NCD profile shows a high-sugar dietary pattern across the population that originates in early childhood. The survey demonstrates that high intakes of added sugars and refined carbohydrates are established during initial formative years, directly corresponding with the country's severe long-term non-communicable disease (NCD) and metabolic burdens later in life.
- The WHO's 2022 Global Oral Health Status Report identified data gaps for Mauritius in the under-five age group.

Why it is a rights issue



Pain & infection

Chronic or acute pain, disturbed sleep, risk of systemic infection



Nutrition

Children may refuse food, compounding developmental risk



Education

Poor oral health linked to lower school performance and withdrawal

1.5. The OOC's Recommendations

Every child in Mauritius has the right to good health. This right is set out in Article 24 of the UNCRC and in Article 14 of the ACRWC. Governments must act to protect it. These recommendations say what that means for young children in Mauritius, aged 0 to 5.

Young children cannot choose what food is available to them. They cannot read labels or question adverts. Adults must make these choices safe for them. The UNICEF Child Nutrition Report 2025 looked at food environments around the world and set out actions governments can take. Mauritius has already taken some steps. The OOC believes more must be done.

Food and Nutrition

1

Stop unhealthy food being marketed to children

Sugary drinks and processed snacks are advertised everywhere children look on TV, on phones, and at their eye level in shops. Most young people see these adverts every week. The OOC recommends that Mauritius bring in a law stopping ultra-processed food and sugary drinks being marketed to young children, across all media, including online.

***Basis:** UNCRC Article 24; General Comment No. 15: the State must protect children from harmful marketing.*

¹¹Ministry of Health and Wellness, Mauritius Nutrition Survey 2022 Report, Ministry of Health and Wellness

¹²Ministry of Health and Wellness, Mauritius Nutrition Survey 2022 Report, Section 2 (Situational Analysis: Non-Communicable Diseases)

¹³World Health Organization, Global Oral Health Status Report: Towards universal health coverage for oral health by 2030, World Health Organization, Geneva, 2022. Country Profile Data Index (Mauritius: Early Childhood Caries / Deciduous Teeth Missing-Filled Indices under Age 5)

Make food labels clear and protect school food

2

Parents need to know what is in the food they buy. The OOC recommends clear warning labels on food that is high in sugar, salt or fat labels anyone can understand, without needing expert knowledge. The OOC also recommends that all pre-primary and primary schools follow food rules that keep ultra-processed food out of canteens and tuck shops. Around the world, a quarter of school meals include processed meat, and some include sugary drinks. Schools should be a place where children eat well.

Basis: UNCRC Articles 24 & 3; ACRWC Article 14: children have a right to good nutrition and safe surroundings.

Tax unhealthy food and make healthy food cheaper

3

Mauritius already taxes sugary drinks. The OOC recommends extending this tax to include certain ultra-processed foods that are heavily marketed to young children, with the revenue used to support early childhood nutrition programmes. However, taxation alone will not improve children's diets. The Government should also take steps to make healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, more affordable, particularly for low-income families, through targeted subsidies and other support measures.

Basis: UNCRC Article 24(2)(e); ACRWC Article 14: all children, not just those with more money, must be able to get nutritious food.

Track children's nutrition and report on progress

4

Between 2019 and 2024, the number of children under five who are overweight in Mauritius went up, from 3.7% to 4.8%. The Mauritius Obesity Roadmap wants this to fall by 5% by 2030. But without proper tracking, no one can tell if this is working. The OOC recommends that the Ministry of Health and Wellness set up a system to track diet and weight in children aged 0 to 5, and publish the results regularly.

Basis: UNCRC Article 4: the State must take real, active steps to protect children's rights, and must be able to show its progress.

Support families with practical advice, alongside stronger measures

5

Many parents want to give their children healthy food, but unhealthy food is often cheaper and easier to find than fresh food. Families should receive clear and practical advice through health workers, routine check-ups and pre-primary schools. However, advice alone is not enough. Parents also need a healthier food environment, with less misleading advertising and clearer food labels, so that making healthy choices is easier.

Basis: UNCRC Article 24(2)(e): the State must make sure families have access to health and nutrition education.

Oral Health

Tooth decay in young children is closely linked to the same unhealthy food. It is largely preventable, but it can cause real harm to a child's health, learning and development.

Pain and infection Ongoing pain, poor sleep, and risk of serious infection.	Nutrition Pain can stop children eating properly, making poor nutrition worse.	Learning Linked to children missing more school and starting school less ready to learn.
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A

Strengthen early childhood oral health services

The OOC recommends that oral health be integrated into routine child health services from an early age, including regular dental screening and timely referral for treatment where necessary. Healthcare professionals should receive appropriate training to identify early signs of dental disease and provide consistent oral health guidance as part of preventive child healthcare. The Ministry of Health should also strengthen public awareness initiatives and ensure that preventive oral health services are accessible to all young children.

Basis: UNCRC Articles 24 & 6; ACRWC Article 14: the right to health, survival and development, and to healthcare.

B

Set sugar limits on food and drink marketed to young children

Many products marketed for babies and toddlers' yoghurts, juices, cereals, flavoured milk contain far more sugar than health guidance allows. Parents should not have to calculate sugar levels themselves to protect their child's teeth. The OOC recommends that the government set legal sugar limits for these products and check that companies follow them.

Basis: UNCRC Article 24; General Comment No. 15: the State must regulate the food environment in the best interests of the child.

A response that brings everyone together

No single ministry can solve this alone. Protecting children's right to health means the following systems working towards the same goal: making sure every child in Mauritius has a fair chance to grow up healthy.

Diabetes and the Right to Health of Babies and Toddlers in Mauritius

(Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)

Introduction

Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognizes the right of every child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and requires States Parties to take appropriate measures to reduce infant and child mortality, ensure access to healthcare services, combat disease and malnutrition, and provide appropriate pre-natal and post-natal healthcare for mothers.

In Mauritius, the growing burden of diabetes and other non-communicable diseases raises concerns regarding the realization of children's right to health. While diabetes is more commonly associated with adults, increasing evidence demonstrates that health risks may begin before birth and during early childhood, making the issue relevant to babies and toddlers.

Situation in Mauritius

Mauritius continues to experience a high prevalence of diabetes among its population. This public health challenge has implications not only for adults but also for children, particularly through intergenerational health risks associated with maternal diabetes, obesity, and unhealthy lifestyles.

Although Type 1 diabetes remains relatively uncommon among babies and toddlers, it can occur in early childhood and requires prompt diagnosis and access to specialised treatment. Delayed diagnosis may result in severe complications, including diabetic ketoacidosis, which can be life-threatening.

The Office observes that comprehensive and publicly available data on the prevalence of diabetes among young children in Mauritius remains limited. ***The absence of disaggregated data on children, including babies and toddlers,*** may hinder evidence-based policy development and targeted interventions.

Type 1 Diabetes and Children's Rights

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune condition in which the body is unable to produce insulin. It is not caused by lifestyle factors and cannot currently be prevented.

From a child rights perspective, children living with Type 1 diabetes have the right to:

- Early diagnosis and timely medical intervention;
- Continuous access to insulin and essential medical supplies;
- Specialised paediatric healthcare services;
- Appropriate support within childcare and educational settings;
- Protection from discrimination and stigma.

The State has an obligation to ensure that children with chronic illnesses are able to enjoy their rights on an equal basis with other children and receive the healthcare necessary for their survival and development.

Maternal Diabetes and the Rights of Babies

The Office notes that maternal health and child health are closely interconnected. Babies born to mothers with pre-existing diabetes or gestational diabetes may face increased

health risks from birth, including complications during delivery, abnormal birth weight, neonatal hypoglycaemia, and a higher likelihood of developing obesity and Type 2 diabetes later in life.

These risks highlight the importance of quality antenatal and postnatal healthcare services. Ensuring access to diabetes screening, monitoring, counselling, and treatment during pregnancy is essential to protecting the rights of both mothers and children.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has repeatedly emphasized that children's right to health begins before birth and is closely linked to maternal health and well-being.

Type 2 Diabetes, Obesity and Prevention

Although Type 2 diabetes is rare among babies and toddlers, risk factors may emerge during the earliest stages of life. Poor nutrition, exposure to unhealthy food environments, childhood overweight and obesity, and insufficient opportunities for physical activity can increase the likelihood of developing non-communicable diseases later in life.

The Office is concerned that children may be exposed from an early age to dietary patterns characterised by excessive consumption of sugary drinks, highly processed foods, and foods with high salt, sugar and fat content.

The right to health requires a preventive approach. This includes ensuring that children grow up in environments that support healthy development and informed nutritional choices.

Observations

The Office observes that:

- The high prevalence of diabetes in Mauritius constitutes a significant public health concern with implications for present and future generations of children.
- Maternal diabetes and gestational diabetes may adversely affect children's health from birth and increase vulnerability to future health complications.
- Limited child-specific data on diabetes and pre-diabetes may impede effective monitoring of the situation of babies and toddlers.
- Greater attention should be paid to preventive measures addressing nutrition, obesity, and healthy lifestyles from early childhood.
- Children living with diabetes require continuous access to healthcare services, medication, and appropriate support systems to fully enjoy their rights.

Recommendations

The Office recommends that relevant authorities:

1. Strengthen surveillance and data collection on diabetes, pre-diabetes, obesity, and other non-communicable diseases among children, including babies and toddlers.
2. Enhance screening and management of diabetes during pregnancy to reduce adverse health outcomes for mothers and children.
3. Promote breastfeeding, healthy infant feeding practices, and nutrition education for parents and caregivers.
4. Develop child-centred public health strategies aimed at preventing obesity and future non-communicable diseases.
5. Ensure equitable access to specialised healthcare, insulin, and support services for children living with diabetes.
6. Raise public awareness regarding the links between maternal health, early childhood

nutrition, and lifelong health outcomes.

Concluding Observation

The right to health extends beyond access to medical treatment and encompasses the conditions necessary for healthy growth and development. Addressing diabetes from a rights-based perspective requires a life-course approach that begins before birth, supports healthy early childhood development, and ensures that all children have an equal opportunity to attain the highest possible standard of health.

From my discussion with Lydia Dorasamy, social worker from TiDiams:

- **Insufficient availability of qualified school nurses on school premises.**
 - There is a shortage of staff trained to support children with medical conditions, including the administration of emergency care.
 - The lack of trained nurses in educational settings compromises children's health, safety, and timely access to medical assistance during school hours.
 - The lack of school nurses requires mothers to attend school to administer insulin injections to their children, often preventing them from engaging in full-time employment and placing affected families under financial strain. Lack of trained personnel in schools and care settings.
- **Absence of adequate first aid capacity.**

Schools do not have personnel trained in first aid or emergency response to manage medical incidents involving children.
- **Limited social protection for affected families.**

Children who do not meet the criteria established by the Medical Board are often ineligible for social assistance or disability pensions, despite facing significant health-related needs and the financial strain associated with ongoing care.

Case Study – Child S, a Type 1 Diabetes Patient

Non-Implementation of Budget measure announced at paragraphs 291 to 294 in the Budget Speech 2023-2024 for Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (T1D) Patients

The case of child S was reported to this office on 19 August 2024. The child suffers from Type 1 Diabetes which according to her parent is an incurable and debilitating condition with a reduced life expectancy. The complainant opined that standard care for such condition in the Public Health System is outdated and has not kept pace with development particularly in the adoption of medical devices and technologies.

The complainant further highlighted that the non-implementation of Budget measures announced at paragraphs 291 to 294 in the Budget Speech 2023-2024 for Type 1 Diabetes patient had caused untold prejudice to his child.

Paragraphs 291 to 294 in the Budget Speech 2023-2024 read as follows:

291. Patients suffering from Type 1 diabetes have to test their blood sugar level and inject insulin at least four times a day.
292. To facilitate the lives of some 1000 Type-1 diabetes patients, we will provide for a continuous glucose monitor.
293. Amongst them, some 450 high risk diabetic patients will also be provided with an insulin pump.
294. These innovative digital devices will improve the lives of patients.

Extract from Budget Speech 2023-2024

The Continuous Glucose Monitor (CGM) is a wearable technology that tracks glucose levels in real time. A sensor just under the skin measures the glucose level and a transmitter sends results to a wearable smart device so that glucose level can be tracked.

The sensor is inserted under the skin and it typically lasts for 15 days. CGMs require the user to have a smart phone and internet connection all the time. The CGM costs approximately Rs 10, 000 and a user would require two per month. On the contrary, the insulin pump is an invasive technology. It releases insulin as and when required. However, if there is a malfunction, it may cause hypoglycaemia and dizziness.

The Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children carried out a joint investigation in order to find out the root cause of the non-implementation of the budgetary measures announced in Budget Speech 2023-2024. It was worth noting that the announcement of the budget measures gave rise to legitimate expectations for diabetes patients to benefit from more appropriate medical services.

A meeting held on 24 January 2025 with all the stakeholders concerned, concluded that the Ministry of Health and Wellness would initiate action for the implementation of the CGM project. As regards to Insulin Pump the Ministry will re-consider its implementation after addressing all the obstacles identified.

Information from the Ministry of Finance

The Ministry allocated budgetary resources for the implementation of the budget measures proposed by the Ministry of Health and Wellness based on their technical advice on the implementation mode including the measure for the provision of CGM and Insulin Pumps to some 1000 and 450 patients respectively. Following discussions held with the Ministry of Health and Wellness in October 2024, the latter informed of the following points that were delaying the implementation of the budget measure:

- I. the implementation of the budget measure announced at paragraphs 291 to 294 in the Budget Speech 2023-2024 has been delayed as the staff of the Ministry of Health and Wellness are not trained, at this stage for the handling and dispensing of CGM and Insulin pumps;
- II. No trainer is currently available in Mauritius to train personnel of the Ministry of Health and Wellness;

III. No proper training /guidance is currently available to educate the patients/parents for using CGM and Insulin pumps.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness has informed that the Mauritius Institute of Health (training arm of the Ministry of Health and Wellness) is currently mounting appropriate training course for the handling, manipulating and use of CGM and Insulin Pumps for medical/paramedical staff, parents and patients.

The Ministry also reassured that all patients diagnosed with Type-1 Diabetes Mellitus (T1D) are duly taken care of in the public health institutions around the island and are provided with appropriate medication and care.

Information from the Ministry of Health and Wellness and Follow-up of decisions taken at the meeting of 24 January 2025

Ministry of Health and Wellness

(i) At present, Continuous Glucose Monitors (CGM) machines and Insulin Pumps are not provided in the health institutions.

(ii) There are various models of Insulin Pumps and CGM machines and these devices as well as their associated consumables are costly. Even in high-income countries, Insulin Pumps and CGM are provided through medical insurance and not through the public system.

(iii) In addition, the proper and safe use of CGM and Insulin Pumps would require a system with trained Endocrinologists, diabetes nurses and appropriate clinical environment to download the glucose data from Insulin Pumps and CGM machines and the staff of the Ministry have not yet been trained for this measure.

(iv) As regards Diabetic patients, personalized training would have to be conducted by considering their lifestyles factors, age, comorbidities and personal preferences and in case of misuse, the automatic administration of insulin by the pump may lead to uneasiness, hypoglycaemia and potentially to critical conditions, including death.

(v) Given the high-cost associated with the project and the fact that comprehensive education programs would have to be conducted for patients, healthcare officers and dieticians in diabetes technology, consideration is being given for the project to be implemented in a phase-wise approach and in a professional manner.

Following consultations with the medical specialists in the field, the Ministry has been advised that:

1. the Ministry of Health and Wellness is already providing the required treatment to Type 1 diabetes patients as per international standards;
2. There are significant limitations for the safe and successful implementation of the CGM and Insulin Pumps, namely:
 - (a) lack of human resources;
 - (b) lack of trained personnel to support CGM and Insulin Pumps;
 - (c) lack of support to cater for emergencies arising from faulty Insulin Pumps.
3. Insulin Pumps provide modest reduction for Hb1AC and its long-term prognostics

benefits, such as reduced microvascular and microvascular complications or mortality remains unproven.

Therefore, the Ministry was of view that the introduction of the CGM and Insulin Pumps were found to be impracticable in the public health services and consequently the Ministry **will not implement the CGM and Insulin Pumps in the public institutions for the time being.**

Further complaints received at OOC from:

A medical practitioner working at an NGO, who referred the issues related to adverse physical effects observed in children being administered “**Insufast**”, a newly introduced rapid-acting insulin.

Quote “**Insufast** is a rapid-acting insulin analog that is prescribed to manage blood glucose levels in individuals with diabetes mellitus. However, being a relatively unknown insulin, concerns are being raised among parents that its safety profile may not be fully understood or communicated in paediatric contexts.

Also, the Ministry’s advice is that patients should simply “adjust their insulin dose” when brands are switched has proven ineffective in practice, as testified by many Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus patients. Children and families cannot reasonably be expected to recalibrate life-saving treatment on their own every time the insulin brand changes.

Multiple families have reported similar physical side effects following Insufast administration in their children.

In some cases, these side effects have necessitated emergency medical intervention, disrupted school attendance, and impacted the child’s quality of life.

Parents and guardians of affected children have submitted formal incident reports documenting these side effects. At the time of this report, several incident forms have been compiled

These reports have been consistent across various care settings and are not isolated to any single healthcare provider or region.

The physical and emotional toll on families has been significant. In addition to the direct health impacts on the children:

1. Parents report high levels of stress and uncertainty in managing their child’s condition.
2. Children have missed school days and social activities due to recovery or medical appointments.
3. Some families have reported financial burdens due to unplanned consultations and buying insulin from private pharmacies.

Many parents feel their concerns have not been adequately addressed by prescribing physicians or pharmaceutical representatives.

Given the vulnerability of children, it is essential that medications prescribed for paediatric use meet the highest safety standards. The repeated reporting of adverse effects suggests that further post-market surveillance and clinical review may be necessary. **Unquote**

Upon query from the Ministry of Health and Wellness this office has been informed that the Ministry will introduce the Rapid Acting Insulin for diabetes patients known to be an innovator product for the procurement exercise for Financial year 2026-2027.

A criticality status of four asterisks (****) will be associated with the medication to ascertain that product is an original and not a generic one Number of Children and Adults with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (T1D) who are being followed by NGO TI- DIAMS as at November 2024:

Hopefully above is implemented.

Follow up will be sustained.

3. The Right to Identity and Legal recognition

Within 40 days after birth the baby has the right to a name, birth registration and de facto nationality.

However as of now, a few cases have been reported to the OOC in relation to tardy declarations.

Case of Tardy Declarations:

Cases have been reported wherein this office has had to intervene for a few children to be registered when they have already reached a few years of existence, creating problems for schooling, vaccination, health care etc

The current situation regarding delayed birth registrations in Mauritius highlights a critical gap: Whilst the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare intervenes for children in Residential Care Institutions (RCIs) or registered foster care, children remaining unregistered outside these specific arrangements are directed to the District Court

The current, limited scope of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare's responsibility in handling delayed birth registrations creates a significant vulnerability for a number of children in Mauritius, effectively pushing them outside a crucial safety net.

Recommendations:

- Policy Reform for Inclusive Declaration Support

Advocate for expanding the mandate of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare to include all cases of tardy declarations, not just those in RCIs or foster care.

4. The Right to Family care and Early Bonding

The State of Mauritius has passed the Children's Act 2020 which is intended to implement the Articles stipulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). As a Welfare State, the Government allocates a considerable sum in the annual budget to children who are in need, e.g. the Child Allowance, the Invalidity pension for children with over 60 % disability, Carers Allowance for students who have a certain degree of disability.

However, despite all the efforts made by the State, shortcomings are noted in several areas.

These shortcomings have been noted by the staff of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OOC) while dealing with complaints and cases reported to the OOC throughout the years, as well as field visits and observations.

Below we are highlighting some areas in which we feel that actions could be taken in the short term in the best interests of the children concerned:

The Family Environment

In the Preamble of the UNCRC, the family is considered as the “fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community.” The right of the child to family life is also protected under the Convention (Art. 16). The family unit holds paramount importance in the development and well-being of children, both from a human rights and social perspective.

However, the family is facing several challenges these days:

- Marriage rate is declining, The marriage rate, i.e., the number of persons married per 1,000 mid-year population, fell from 17.8 in 2003 to 13.7 in 2023.
- Divorce rate is on the rise. The number of divorced persons per 1,000 mid-year population increased from 2.0 in 2003 to 4.3 in 2023. Just for the period 2022 to 2023, the number of divorce increased from 2462 to 2696.
- Out of the 2696 divorces pronounced by the Supreme court, 1617 had a duration of marriage between 1 and 15 months, this is the period in which the couples have dependent children.
- According to official statistics, some 33.1% of couples who divorced in 2023 did not have any children, 56% of them had 1 to 2 children. There were 61 couples with 4 or more children.
- With the decrease in marriage rate, there are children born from free unions. In case of union break ups, these children usually live with their mother or their grandparents. At the OOC we have dealt with many such cases over the years.
- Parental Alienation is also a common problem following divorce or separation of the parents. Children lose contact with one biological parent. This situation has a negative impact on the personality, development and psychological well-being of the child.
- Violence in the family is alarming. Violence against women remains a major concern, with a staggering 5,729 cases reported in 2023
- Alcohol and/or drug consumption by family members, including children, have become a major destabilizing factor creating chaos in the home.

So with the above family environment, many children are disoriented. The safeguarding role of parents is eroding. Many parents find it difficult to keep parental authority. There is

an urgent need to equip parents with adequate positive parenting skills so that they may hold the helm of their families firmly.

Child abuse and neglect

The total number of cases of child abuse reported at the Child Development Unit went up to 5,729 in 2023 from 5,448 in 2022 (we do not have the disaggregated data for babies and toddlers) resulting mainly from the dysfunctionality of the family system, lack of parental skills and the exigencies of the materialistic society. Violence against children in the home setting is a matter of great concern. The home is supposed to be a safe haven for children where they feel protected and cared for.

Sexual Abuse of children is a matter of great concern. The number of cases reported to the police increased from 434 in 2022 to 535 in 2023, which represent increase in cases related to Rape from 10 to 21, Sodomy 9 to 18 and causing child to be sexually abused and engaging in Prostitution from 145 to 234.

It should be noted that these are reported cases, most remain undisclosed.

Many children, including babies end up in alternative care institutions, deprived of their liberty and family ties with other relatives.

Children in Alternative Care

Alternative care systems provide a safe and nurturing environment for children who cannot stay with their biological families due to abuse, neglect, or other issues. These systems include both formal arrangements, like foster care and residential care, and informal care, such as living with extended family. The aim is to ensure children's safety, rights, and development, though challenges in effectiveness remain. Alternative care in Mauritius includes:

1. Foster Care

Foster care is a family-based alternative care system where children are placed with trained foster families. This model is preferred over institutional care because it offers a more personalised and family-like environment. The number of children placed in foster care from 2022 as at 19 July is 98.

2. Informal Care Settings

Informal care involves family or community-based caregiving without official oversight, offering familiarity but lacking the support and monitoring of formal care systems.

3. Residential Care Institutions (RCIs)

Residential care institutions are formal facilities where children live in a group setting, supervised by trained staff. In Mauritius, approximately **350 children** are living in RCIs across 21 facilities.

Key Challenges which affect children placed in Alternative Care

- 1. Institutional Atmosphere:** Large-scale RCIs can feel impersonal, making it difficult for children to form meaningful relationships with caregivers.
- 2. Inadequate Resources:** Many RCIs lack the necessary funding and infrastructure to provide a high-quality, child-centred environment.
- 3. Limited Individualised Attention:** High child-to-staff ratios in RCIs prevent caregivers from meeting the specific needs of each child.
- 4. Inadequate Infrastructure:** Some RCIs lack essential facilities like play areas, educational materials, and space for privacy.

- 5. Limited Caregiver Training:** Caregivers may not have specialised training to handle the complex psychological and emotional needs of children in care.
- 6. Emotional and Psychological Impact:** Children in care may experience feelings of abandonment, leading to behavioral problems, depression, or anxiety.
- 7. Ineffective Oversight:** Inconsistent application of regulations across RCIs can result in poor care and expose children to risks.

Removing a child from his/her family should be a last resort

- In case it is in the best interests of the child to be removed from his/her family, kinship care, i.e, placing the child with a relative should be the first option.

However, this is not presently the case.

- The second-best option being foster care, which is also a family based setting care, should be preferred to placing the child in a RCI

Efforts should be made to reunite children with their biological families, the earliest possible. Support services, such as parenting programs or financial assistance, can help strengthen family ties and reduce the need for alternative care placements.

The institutionalisation of babies affects their **life long** development. As a principle, children under 3 should be cared for in family-based settings wherever possible, and institutional placement should be exceptional and for the shortest appropriate period. Children under the age of 3 years who are living in RCIs should be transferred to family-based alternatives such as kinship care and foster care, within the shortest possible delay and based on the best interests of the child. Where placement in RCIs is unavoidable, small residential units for young children could be created that provide high-quality, individualised and family-like care through trained and experienced caregivers, with a clearly defined objective to move the child to a family-based alternative as soon as possible, where this is in his/her best interests.

Babies/Infants have rights that must be respected and protected. They should not be left in cribs for extended periods or exposed to passive activities such as prolonged television viewing. Early childhood development requires responsive caregiving, physical interaction, stimulation, and emotional bonding to ensure their healthy growth and well-being.

More trained caregivers must be employed by these RCIs to increase possibilities for consistent and individualised care, ideally one caregiver for two babies and young children. A personalised activity plan for each baby or young child must be designed and implemented in RCIs that flexibly adapts to changing needs and rhythms of the child, and not to the needs and convenience of the RCI.

Strategies to prevent need for alternative care

Deinstitutionalisation should be progressively implemented, as institutions are not appropriate environments for children to grow and thrive. Every child deserves to grow up in a family setting. There must be a policy in place that actively supports families and communities, strengthening their capacity to care for and protect children. This includes providing targeted interventions, social services, and community-based support systems to prevent separation and ensure the well-being of every child within a family environment.

The UN Guidelines for Alternative Care of Children prioritises family strengthening and prevention of separations, and family and community-based care when children are without parental care.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

To shape a healthier Mauritius for tomorrow, the following strategic priorities are recommended:

- 1. Strengthen preventive health systems**, including national strategies on childhood obesity, nutrition, and physical activity.
- 2. Develop and implement a National Child and Adolescent Mental Health Strategy**, integrating services into primary healthcare and schools.
- 3. Expand specialised paediatric and developmental services**, particularly for children with disabilities and those in Rodrigues.
- 4. Address social determinants of health**, including poverty reduction, food security, and safe community environments.
- 5. Enhance data collection and monitoring systems**, ensuring evidence-based policymaking.
- 6. Increase budgetary allocation and cross-sector coordination**, recognising child health as a national development priority.

The wellbeing of children today will determine the resilience, productivity, and social cohesion of Mauritius tomorrow. Early investment in health yields lifelong dividends: reduced healthcare costs, stronger educational outcomes, higher workforce participation, and a more equitable society.

Shaping child health today is not simply a policy choice; it is a moral, legal, and developmental imperative. Mauritius stands at a pivotal moment. By adopting a holistic, rights-based, and future-oriented approach to child health, the nation can ensure that every child grows, learns, and thrives — and that the Mauritius of tomorrow is healthier, stronger, and more inclusive for all.

Chapter 2:

Children with Serious Behavioural Problems

A Child Rights-Based Approach to address the issue of Children with Serious Behavioural Concerns (CSBC)

Introduction

The issue of children with serious behavioural concerns has become an increasing challenge for parents, educators, child protection professionals, and policymakers. Today's children are exposed to violence and aggression from an early age through digital media, in their communities, and sometimes within their own families. Their behaviour is shaped by multiple influences, including parents, teachers, peers, and the wider social environment. However, the traditional protective network surrounding children has become increasingly fragile.

Parents often struggle to cope with the rapid social, technological, and economic changes affecting family life. Schools are also adapting to a fast-changing world while attempting to meet increasingly diverse learning needs. Although many children succeed within the education system, a significant number experience academic difficulties, social exclusion, and feelings of failure. Opportunities to develop talents in sports, music, arts, and vocational activities remain limited for many children. At the same time, consumerism and materialistic values create expectations and aspirations that many families are unable to meet, contributing to frustration, low self-esteem, and behavioural difficulties.

Children who exhibit serious behavioural concerns should not be viewed simply as “problem children.” Their behaviour often reflects underlying distress, trauma, unmet developmental needs, or adverse life experiences. Addressing these concerns therefore requires a comprehensive, child-centred, and rights-based response rather than a purely disciplinary approach.

Factors Contributing to Serious Behavioural Problems

Behavioural problems rarely arise from a single cause. They usually result from the interaction of biological, psychological, family, educational, and social factors.

A child's history may include several risk factors associated with behavioural difficulties, including:

- complications during pregnancy or birth;
- chronic medical conditions or prolonged medical treatment;
- exposure to environmental toxins such as lead, mercury, or pesticides;
- financial hardship or psychosocial stress within the family; and
- persistent academic difficulties or school failure.

Family relationships also play a critical role in shaping children's behaviour. Factors that may contribute to serious behavioural concerns include:

- Unrealistic parental expectations, such as excessive pressure regarding academic performance, subject choices, or sporting activities.
- Poor parent-child relationships, characterised by limited communication, emotional neglect, or inconsistent parenting.
- Over-indulgent parenting, where excessive permissiveness, material rewards, or

overprotection prevent children from developing responsibility, resilience, and self-regulation.

- Negative behavioural cycles, where inappropriate responses from adults reinforce children's behavioural difficulties. For example, repeated shouting, humiliation, or physical punishment may escalate rather than reduce aggressive behaviour.

Similar patterns may develop within the school environment. Poor teacher-pupil relationships, unrealistic expectations, inconsistent discipline, humiliation, or violent punishment may intensify behavioural problems and increase school disengagement.

Every child responds differently to adversity. Consequently, children displaying similar behaviours may have entirely different underlying needs. Effective intervention therefore requires careful assessment of each child's individual circumstances.

A Child Rights-Based Approach

A child rights-based approach places the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) at the centre of all decisions affecting children. It recognises children as rights-holders entitled to dignity, participation, protection, development, and non-discrimination.

Behaviour should therefore be understood within the broader context of the child's rights and overall well-being rather than solely as a disciplinary issue.

A multidisciplinary child rights-based approach requires collaboration between professionals from education, health, social work, child protection, justice, and community organisations to ensure that every intervention promotes the child's best interests.

Core Principles

A child rights-based approach is founded upon the following principles:

- **Respect for dignity:** Every child should be treated with compassion and respect, regardless of behaviour or personal circumstances.
- **Best interests of the child:** The child's welfare must be the primary consideration in every decision.
- **Participation:** Children have the right to express their views freely and to participate meaningfully in decisions affecting them.
- **Non-discrimination:** All children should enjoy equal protection regardless of disability, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, or other status.
- **Right to development:** Every child has the right to education, health care, recreation, family life, and opportunities to realise their full potential.

Child Rights-Based Interventions

Children with serious behavioural concerns require interventions that are preventive, therapeutic, restorative, and rehabilitative rather than punitive.

The child should remain at the centre of every intervention plan, with his or her best interests serving as the primary consideration throughout the process.

Meaningful participation of both the child and the family should be encouraged at every stage of assessment, planning, implementation, and review.

Whenever appropriate, restorative justice approaches such as Family Group Conferencing and Restorative Circles should be preferred to punitive responses, helping repair relationships while promoting accountability.

Given that each child's circumstances are unique, individualised care plans should be developed following multidisciplinary assessment. Each child should have access to a designated mentor or case manager responsible for coordinating services and supporting both the child and family.

Placement in a Residential Care Facility should remain a measure of last resort and should only be considered after community-based interventions have been exhausted.

Prevention: The Most Effective Intervention

The most effective response to serious behavioural concerns is prevention, beginning even before birth.

Prenatal Prevention

Prenatal care lays the foundation for healthy neurological and emotional development. Preventive measures include:

- regular maternal healthcare and management of medical conditions;
- adequate nutrition, including folic acid, iron, and omega-3 supplementation;
- avoidance of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and environmental toxins; and
- maternal mental health support to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression.

Early Childhood and Family Interventions

Families remain children's primary protective environment. Effective interventions include:

- promoting positive parenting based on consistent guidance rather than harsh punishment;
- encouraging open communication and emotional support;
- creating safe, stable, and structured home environments;
- reducing excessive screen time;
- providing parenting education and support programmes.

School-Based Prevention

Schools play a central role in early identification and prevention.

Recommended measures include:

- inclusive teaching practices that recognise different learning needs;
- early identification of behavioural difficulties through teacher observation;
- timely referral to Pastoral Care Teams, Educational Social Workers, and School Psychologists;
- social and emotional learning programmes promoting empathy, emotional regulation, conflict resolution, and resilience;
- comprehensive anti-bullying policies; and
- ongoing teacher training on trauma-informed and child rights-based practices.

Holistic Education programmes should promote the values of the **4Rs: Rights, Respect, Responsibility, and Resilience**, through drama, music, role play, sports, and creative arts.

Community-Based Prevention

Communities also have a vital role in supporting children's healthy development.

Priority initiatives include:

- public awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and promote positive parenting;
- investment in safe recreational facilities for sports, arts, and youth development;
- establishment of Municipal and District Youth Councils to encourage children's participation in local decision-making;
- stronger collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, schools, police, health services, and religious organisations; and
- expansion of counselling, helplines, and community support services through Youth Centres, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Social Integration and Lifelong Welfare Facilities, and other community-based institutions.

Children with Serious Behavioural Concerns under the Children's Act 2020

Section 41 of the Children's Act 2020 defines a child with serious behavioural concerns (CSBC) as a child who:

- (a) exhibits a pattern of serious hostile, aggressive, or disruptive behaviour to such an extent that the behaviour seriously interferes with the child's care and development; and
- (b) exhibits one or more of the following:
 - anti-social behaviour;
 - repeated absconding from the family home without parental permission; or
 - frequent or prolonged unjustified absence from school.

While this provision provides a legal framework for intervention, several concerns arise.

First, concepts such as hostile, aggressive, disruptive, and anti-social behaviour are not defined in the Act. Their interpretation is therefore highly subjective and may vary significantly between professionals, leading to inconsistent application.

Secondly, behaviours such as truancy or repeated absconding should not automatically be regarded as behavioural disorders. They may instead be symptoms of deeper problems such as abuse, neglect, family conflict, bullying, trauma, mental illness, or social exclusion.

Finally, it is important to distinguish children with behavioural concerns from children living with neurodevelopmental or mental health conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), anxiety disorders, depression, or other psychological conditions. Such children require appropriate health and therapeutic interventions rather than being classified as children with serious behavioural concerns.

Children with serious behavioural concerns are not offenders. They should never be criminalised, stigmatised, or labelled as "pre-delinquent."

Current Intervention under Section 41

Section 41(2) of the Children's Act provides that the child's parent or the Police may apply to the Mauritius Probation and Aftercare Service for a Parenting Support Intervention.

Upon receiving the application, the Probation Service is required to:

- conduct an initial psychosocial assessment of both the child and the parents;
- prepare a Parenting Support Intervention Plan, including at least two home visits by a Parenting Aide; and
- conduct a follow-up assessment within twenty-one days.

At the end of this process, the probation officer issues a certificate indicating whether the intervention has been completed successfully or not. Where the parenting support intervention has not been successful, the Magistrate of the Protection Division of the Children's Court shall hear the parties concerned and determine whether there are serious behavioural concerns which need to be addressed. The Magistrate may then issue a preventive intervention order requiring the child:

- (a) to be placed, in accordance with the Probation of Offenders Act, in an institution;
- (b) to attend school or a specified place on specified days;
- (c) not to leave the place where he has to reside outside permitted hours and without the permission of his parent or the person in charge of that place, as the case may be;
- (d) to follow, where applicable, such drug or alcohol treatment or mental health counselling plan as may be specified;
- (e) to refrain from associating with such persons as may be specified;
- (f) to refrain from engaging in such behaviour as may be specified;
- (g) to participate in such group activities, including counselling, as may be specified

Although parental support is an important component of intervention, the statutory framework focuses primarily on improving parental capacity rather than understanding the child's own needs, experiences, and rights.

Furthermore, the statutory period of twenty-one days appears insufficient to undertake a comprehensive assessment of children presenting complex behavioural difficulties. Many of these children may have experienced prolonged trauma, abuse, neglect, mental health difficulties, learning disabilities, or adverse childhood experiences that require careful multidisciplinary assessment over a longer period. Moreover, the measures prescribed in the Preventive Intervention Order would just restrict the child from engaging in such misbehaviour without addressing the underlying factors leading to such behaviour.

A child-centred intervention should therefore prioritise understanding the underlying causes of behaviour rather than simply managing its outward manifestations.

Cabinet Decision of Friday 3 July 2026

Following a decision taken by Cabinet on Friday 3 July 2026 published in the Cabinet Highlights, which reads:

Cabinet has taken note of the outcome of the committee co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, and the Attorney-General, set up to identify solutions with regard to the challenges arising when dealing with children with serious behavioural concerns.

After consultations with relevant stakeholders, the Committee has identified key structural gaps in terms of the absence of a dedicated facility, the absence of a mandated agency and a lack of consensus between existing institutions regarding the responsibility for children with serious behavioural concerns and consensus has been reached, inter alia, on the following –

- a) a dedicated institution for children with serious behavioural concerns being urgently established;
- b) the new dedicated institution will have a dual function in terms of providing residential care and education;
- c) the new institution will be staffed with appropriate trained professionals; and
- d) the institution will be fully autonomous and its governance will not fall under any single existing ministry without structural reform.

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare will come up with an appropriate legislative framework for the setting up of such a facility.

A meeting was convened by the MGEFW to discuss the proposed structure. From the start, the Ombudsperson for Children, through her representative on the Committee, stressed that emphasis should be put on preventive measures such as group counselling for parents, therapy for children and other therapeutic activities could be organised in Government buildings in the community like Youth Centres. In other words bringing the services at the doorstep of the children and parents concerned. Any placement in a specialised RCI should be a measure of last resort and in the best interests of the child. A draft proposal for the Statutory Body is being prepared by the MGEFW to be submitted to the Attorney General's Office for the drafting of the legislation.

At the request of the Attorney General's Office, the OC also sent her proposals for the setting up of a statutory body under the MGEFW which will be responsible to managing institutions or centres catering for the protection of Children with Serious Behavioural Concerns and to devise programmes for CSBCs. Her proposals are as below:

Inputs from Office of Ombudsperson for Children with reference to the setting up of a Statutory Body to cater for CSBC

Children with Serious Behavioural Concerns (CSBC)

The definition of CSBC in the Children's Act is too vague. In order to be focused, the terms hostile, aggressive, disruptive and anti-social need to be objectively defined. This would help the body to provide quality services to children.

Children with SBCs are not offenders. They must not be criminalised or labelled as "pre-delinquent".

Children with mental health problems exhibiting challenging behaviours should be treated by health specialists and should not be considered as CSBC.

Key Principles

- The best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration;
- Non-discrimination;
- Participation of the child according to age and maturity;
- Fairness and dignity.

Child-rights based approach

The proposed statutory body should be founded on the principles of the United Nations CRC and the Mauritian child protection framework.

The Child-rights based Approach requires coordination between schools, families, and child protection agencies to develop integrated care plans, share responsibilities across education, health, and social services and monitor progress with accountability to the child.

Objects

Accordingly, the objects of the statutory body should expressly provide that:

- Intervention is preventive, therapeutic and rehabilitative;
- Placement or supervision is not punitive in nature;
- Restorative justice measures like Family Group Conferencing and Restorative Circles are preferred
- Best interests of the child should prevail at all time

The statutory body should therefore ensure :

- Safeguarding the welfare, dignity and development of children;
- Working out of individualized care plans;
- Active children's participation in decisions affecting them
- The holistic development of the children

Multi-disciplinary intervention is a sine qua non.

- Provision of psychological, psychiatric, educational and social work support;
- Family counselling and reintegration services;
- Behavioural assessment by qualified professionals;
- Coordination with schools, health services, probation services, NGOs and child protection authorities.

Protection against institutional abuse

- Establishment of independent monitoring and inspection mechanisms;
- Complaints procedures accessible to children;
- Safeguards against physical, degrading or humiliating punishment;

Rehabilitation and reintegration

The body's objects should prioritize:

- Social reintegration;
- Educational continuity;
- Life-skills development; and
- Therapeutic programmes
- Rehabilitation, resilience and inclusion

Round Table on Intervention Strategies for Children Showing Serious Behavioural Concerns

The Ombudsperson for Children convened a round table with representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) actively engaged in supporting children exhibiting serious behavioural concerns. The organisations represented were Safire, Konekte, ANFEN, CEDEM RCI and Terre de Paix. The meeting provided an opportunity to exchange views on existing intervention strategies and to formulate recommendations aimed at strengthening the national response to the needs of these children and their families.

The participating NGOs unanimously expressed the view that the definition of Children Showing Behavioural Concerns (CSBC) under the Children's Act 2020 is inadequate, as it focuses predominantly on the manifestations of children's behaviour rather than on its underlying causes. They submitted that, from a psychological perspective, the definition does not accurately reflect the complexity of serious behavioural concerns. Aggressive, oppositional, impulsive or self-destructive behaviours should be understood as possible manifestations of complex trauma, attachment disorders or cumulative psychological distress, rather than being regarded solely as deliberate acts of misconduct or non-compliance.

The participants further observed that the current framework tends to adopt an exclusionary approach towards children with serious behavioural concerns. They emphasised the need for a paradigm shift towards a more inclusive, child-centred and trauma-informed approach

that seeks to understand the underlying causes of children's behaviour, strengthens support within families and communities, and enables children to remain within mainstream services wherever possible. They stressed that exclusion and institutional responses should only be contemplated where all less restrictive alternatives have been exhausted and where such measures are demonstrably in the best interests of the child.

The NGO representatives underscored the importance of prevention, emphasising that effective intervention must commence before birth. They noted that the development of secure attachment is founded upon a stable, peaceful and nurturing family environment from the earliest stages of a child's life. They therefore stressed the importance of strengthening parenting education and ensuring that teachers, caregivers and other professionals working with children receive specialised training to enable them to rebuild secure attachment and repair disrupted emotional bonds with vulnerable children.

The participants strongly advocated for the establishment of a comprehensive outreach mechanism to facilitate the early identification and support of children and families at risk before difficulties escalate. They recommended that antenatal services and community health centres be adequately equipped to identify vulnerable mothers and to ensure their timely referral to appropriate multidisciplinary support services.

Against the backdrop of the increasing feminisation of substance abuse, including the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco, the NGO representatives expressed particular concern regarding mothers with substance dependency who give birth in public hospitals but do not subsequently benefit from structured follow-up by medical social workers. They observed that, in the absence of sustained intervention, such children are likely to remain in environments where their parents are unable to discharge their caregiving responsibilities effectively. The participants therefore recommended that the Ministry of Health adopt a proactive and coordinated approach to the identification, follow-up and support of vulnerable mothers, particularly those affected by substance dependency.

The participants further observed that the education system does not consistently respond to the individual needs of vulnerable children, thereby contributing to behavioural difficulties and increasing the risk of exclusion from mainstream education. They recommended that schools adopt comprehensive safeguarding and anti-bullying policies and address behavioural issues through pedagogical approaches that promote positive discipline, restorative practices and social-emotional learning rather than punitive measures. They further emphasised that inclusive education, in which every child is supported to participate fully and meaningfully within the education system, constitutes an important protective factor against violence, exclusion and subsequent behavioural difficulties.

The NGO representatives cautioned against an overreliance on institutional placement as a response to children displaying serious behavioural concerns. Referring to the extensive body of international research on deinstitutionalisation, they highlighted the adverse consequences of institutional care on children's physical, cognitive, emotional and psychological development, noting that the likelihood of harm increases with the duration of institutional placement. They therefore reiterated that institutional placement should remain an exceptional measure of last resort and should only be considered where it is necessary and demonstrably in the best interests of the child, following a comprehensive assessment of all available alternatives.

Finally, the NGO representatives expressed concern that they had not been involved in the consultations organised by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare concerning the development of strategies to address the needs of children with serious behavioural concerns. They noted that many of these children are already receiving services from their

respective organisations and that they possess considerable field experience and specialised expertise in this area. They emphasised that effective policy development requires genuine consultation and sustained collaboration between public authorities and civil society organisations, whose practical knowledge and experience constitute an invaluable resource in designing interventions that are evidence-based, child-centred and responsive to the realities faced by vulnerable children and their families.

Listening to the voice of children

The investigators of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children carried out a focus group discussion with a few children, some of whom were considered as having serious behavioural problems.

In addition to identifying the challenges they and their peers experience, the children put forward several constructive recommendations aimed at preventing or addressing these difficulties.

4.1. Promotion of Sports as a Positive Outlet

Encourage greater participation in sports and structured physical activities as healthy outlets for energy, while fostering discipline, self-confidence, teamwork, and resilience.

4.2. A More Active Role for Municipal and District Councils

Strengthen the role of Municipal and District Councils in creating vibrant, child-friendly communities by organising regular recreational, cultural, and social activities for children and young people, rather than focusing solely on infrastructure and municipal services.

4.3. Expanded Recreational and Creative Opportunities

Increase access to recreational, artistic, and creative activities, including sketching, sports, and other leisure programmes, to provide children with meaningful and enjoyable ways to spend their free time.

4.4. Greater Adult Availability and Support

Encourage parents, caregivers, teachers, and other trusted adults to be more available, approachable, and attentive to children, ensuring that they feel heard, understood, and supported.

Overall Message from the Children

Invest in safe, engaging, and supportive environments where children have opportunities to participate in sports, creative and recreational activities, and where caring adults and local communities actively listen to and support them.

Focus Group Discussion with Non-Formal Educators

An investigator carried out a focus group discussion with a group of non-formal educators working everyday with children with serious behavioural problems. Taking into consideration the reality at grassroot level which they observe everyday, they identified a range of interconnected factors contributing to serious behavioural concerns among children. They emphasised that children's behaviour is significantly influenced by their family environment, the wider community and their social interactions.

The family was identified as the primary determinant of a child's emotional and behavioural development. Factors such as parental separation, exposure to family conflict and domestic violence, lack of parental love, care and supervision, and the absence of positive parental role models were highlighted as major contributors to behavioural difficulties.

Participants also identified parental substance abuse, including the misuse of drugs and alcohol, as a significant risk factor that undermines parents' caregiving capacity and places children in vulnerable situations.

In addition, the negative influence of peers and siblings was recognised as an important factor that may reinforce antisocial behaviour and other forms of risk-taking. Early sexual activity was also identified as an indicator of vulnerability and a factor that may exacerbate behavioural and psychosocial difficulties.

They identified the intergenerational cycle of teenage pregnancy as a significant factor contributing to children's vulnerability and the risk of serious behavioural concerns. They observed that children born to teenage mothers are more likely to experience social and economic disadvantage, disrupted family environments and inadequate parental support. These circumstances may adversely affect children's emotional and behavioural development and increase their exposure to multiple risk factors.

The educators emphasised that feelings of marginalisation and rejection within the school environment significantly contribute to children's behavioural difficulties. They observed that children with learning difficulties or special educational needs are often exposed to stigma, stereotyping and discrimination, which may lead to social exclusion, low self-esteem and disengagement from education. These experiences can manifest in behavioural concerns and increase the risk of conflict with peers and authority figures.

The participants argued that these factors rarely occur in isolation but often interact to create cumulative adversity, increasing children's vulnerability to serious behavioural concerns. They therefore stressed the importance of early identification, family-based interventions and coordinated multi-agency support to address these underlying causes before behavioural difficulties become entrenched.

With regards to teenage pregnancy, the educators stressed the need for targeted prevention and early intervention measures to break this cycle, including comprehensive sexuality education, parenting support, continued access to education for adolescent mothers, and coordinated family support services.

They highlighted the important role that midwives can play in supporting teenage mothers as well as young mothers from pregnancy through the postnatal period. They recommended strengthening the role of midwives in providing early guidance on maternal and child health, positive parenting, infant attachment and child development, while facilitating referrals to social, psychological and community support services where necessary. They considered that sustained support by midwives, particularly during the child's early years, can enhance parenting capacity, promote secure parent-child attachment and contribute to breaking the intergenerational cycle of vulnerability associated with teenage pregnancy.

The educators emphasised the importance of inclusive education, early identification of learning needs, and supportive school environments that promote acceptance, belonging and positive behavioural development.

Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Mauritius - 2023

In its Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Mauritius, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed its serious concerns that "According to section 42(4) of The Children's Act 2020, the District Magistrate

dealing with criminal matters has the discretion, upon an application made by the police or parents, to remove children considered to have serious behavioural concerns from their home and place them in an institution”.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Mauritius “Amend the Children’s Act 2020, which allows a District magistrate to deprive children of liberty for behavioural reasons, and instead strengthen the social support provided to children and their families and, where appropriate, referral to the care and protection system”.

Cabinet Decision of 31 July 2026

Cabinet has agreed to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare conveying instructions to the Attorney-General’s Office for the drafting of an appropriate legislation for the effective handling of cases of Children with Serious Behavioural Concerns and amendments to be brought to relevant legislation. The proposed legislation will establish a statutory framework for, inter alia, -

- a) early and structured intervention in cases of Children with Serious Behavioural concerns;
- b) application for Parenting Support Interventions
- c) judicial determination and oversight by the Children’s Court;
- d) community-based intervention where appropriate;
- e) placement in a specialised institution where necessary;
- f) provision of residential care and education;
- g) submission of periodic reporting and review; and
- h) reintegration within the family setting/society and aftercare.

In addition, the legislative framework will also provide for the establishment of an autonomous statutory body which will, inter alia, manage and administer the specialised institution. The framework will consider amendments to the Children’s Act 2020 and consequential amendments to other related legislation. It will also cater for regulations to be made for governing the dedicated institution and other operational issues.

Recommendations

Overarching Recommendations

A comprehensive child rights-based, trauma-informed and multidisciplinary framework should be adopted to address Children with Serious Behavioural Concerns (CSBC), ensuring that the best interests of the child remain the primary consideration in all decisions and interventions.

The Children’s Act 2020 should be reviewed to provide a clearer and more objective definition of CSBC, distinguish behavioural concerns from mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions, and strengthen child-centred responses.

A dedicated statutory body should be established to coordinate prevention, intervention, rehabilitation and oversight through an integrated multi-agency approach.

The legislative and policy framework should ensure that children with behavioural concerns are neither criminalised nor stigmatised, while prioritising preventive, therapeutic, restorative and rehabilitative responses over punitive measures.

Prevention

Priority should be given to prevention by strengthening support from the prenatal period through adolescence. This should include improved maternal healthcare, parenting

education, early childhood interventions, and targeted assistance for vulnerable families.

Schools should be equipped to identify behavioural concerns at an early stage through inclusive education, trauma-informed practices, social-emotional learning, anti-bullying strategies and specialised teacher training.

Communities should play a proactive role by expanding access to sports, recreational and creative activities, youth engagement initiatives, counselling services and public awareness programmes, while strengthening collaboration between government agencies, schools, health services, NGOs and local authorities.

Particular attention should also be given to preventing teenage pregnancy, addressing maternal substance abuse and supporting vulnerable mothers through coordinated health and social services.

Intervention

Children with serious behavioural concerns should receive comprehensive multidisciplinary assessments to identify the underlying causes of their behaviour and inform individualised care plans.

Intervention should focus on coordinated psychological, psychiatric, educational and social work services, supported by effective case management and meaningful participation of both the child and family throughout the process.

Restorative and family-centred approaches should be prioritised, with community-based therapeutic interventions being exhausted before residential placement is considered.

Strong collaboration between education, health, child protection, probation services, NGOs and families should underpin all intervention strategies to ensure integrated and consistent support.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation should focus on therapeutic recovery, resilience and the holistic development of the child. Programmes should promote emotional and behavioural rehabilitation, educational continuity, life skills development, social inclusion and restorative practices that enable children to reintegrate successfully into their families and communities.

Residential services, where required should be a measure of last resort and should operate within a child rights-based framework supported by independent monitoring, effective complaints mechanisms and safeguards against all forms of degrading treatment or punishment. To be effective any residential facility should be small-scale, child-centred and designed to provide care that promotes the child's safety, development, dignity and relationships.

Aftercare

Sustained aftercare should be provided through coordinated case management, family reintegration and community-based support to promote long-term recovery and prevent relapse.

Ongoing collaboration between families, schools, health services, child protection authorities and community organisations should ensure continuity of care, educational participation and social inclusion, enabling children to achieve their full potential as resilient and productive members of society.

Conclusion

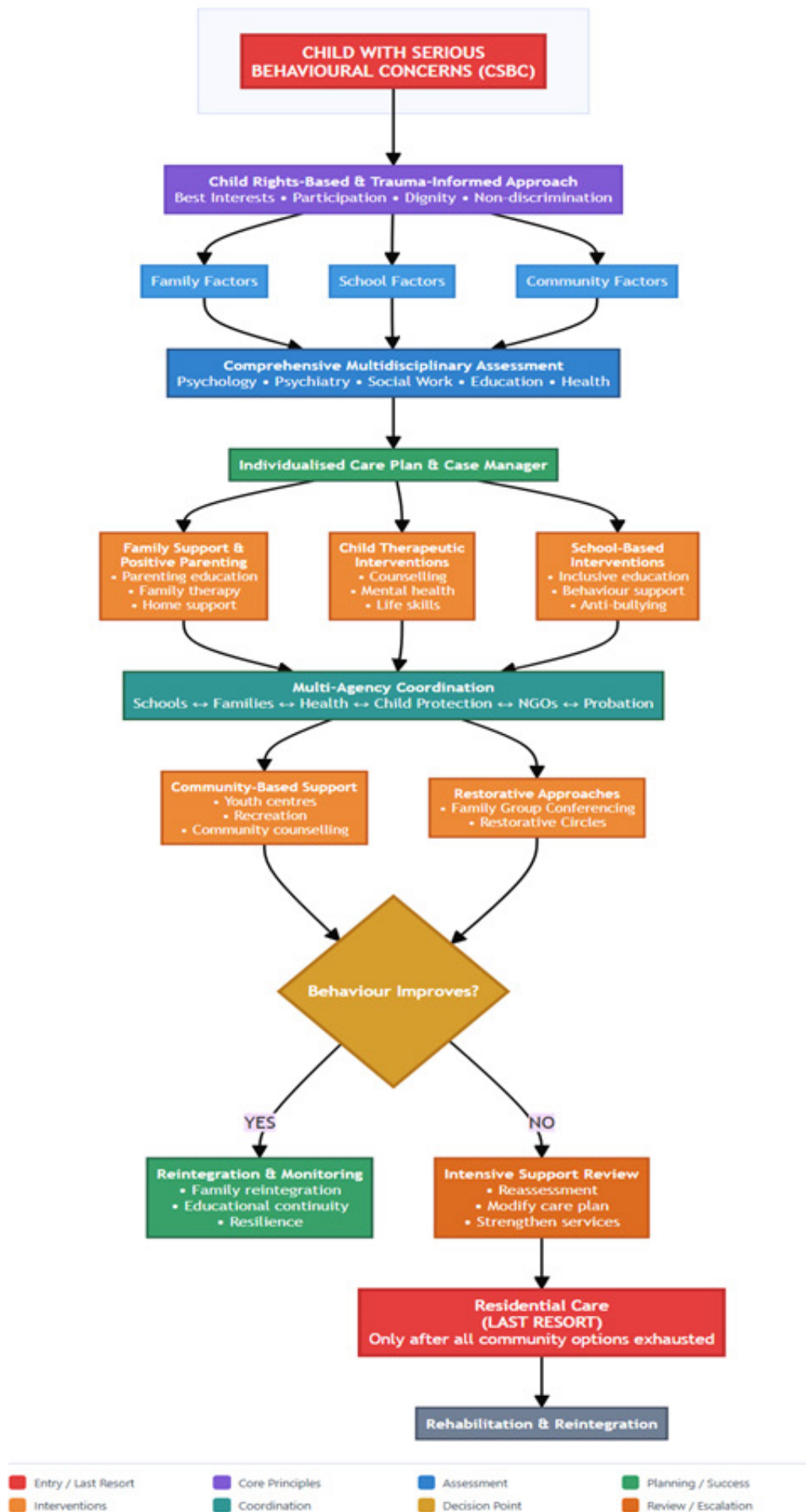
Children with serious behavioural concerns should not be viewed as problems to be controlled but as children whose rights, development, and well-being require protection and support. Their behaviour often reflects unmet needs rather than deliberate misconduct.

While the Children's Act 2020 provides an important legal framework, greater emphasis should be placed on comprehensive multidisciplinary assessment, child participation, therapeutic intervention, and long-term prevention. A child rights-based approach shifts the focus from punishment to protection, from control to empowerment, and from managing behaviour to understanding the child.

Investing in prevention, strengthening families, creating inclusive schools, and building supportive communities are not only consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child but also represent the most effective means of enabling every child to realise his or her full potential and become a responsible, resilient, and productive member of society

Child With Serious Behavioural Concerns (CSBC)

Integrated Intervention Framework Flowchart



Chapter 3:

Workshops organised by OOC

Breaking Barriers: Autism and Inclusive Learning

PART ONE

1. Introduction and Background

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children organised a one-day workshop under the theme “Breaking Barriers: Autism and Inclusive Learning” on 12 November 2025, with the objective of taking stock of the current situation of children on the autism spectrum within the education system in Mauritius. This initiative was prompted by a growing number of complaints and cases received by the Office highlighting persistent challenges faced by autistic children in accessing quality, appropriate, and inclusive education.

Evidence gathered through the Office’s casework indicates that many children on the autism spectrum struggle to adapt within mainstream educational settings. Parents frequently report that these challenges stem from limited understanding of autism, inadequate classroom accommodations, insufficient resources, and a lack of adequately trained personnel to respond to the diverse and individual learning needs of autistic learners.

In this context, the workshop was conceived as a consultative and reflective platform aimed at fostering dialogue among key stakeholders and identifying pathways towards a more inclusive education system that respects the rights and needs of children on the autism spectrum.

2. Objectives of the Workshop

The primary objectives of the workshop were to:

- Provide a platform for open and constructive dialogue among professionals, policymakers, educators, and parents;
- Gain a deeper understanding of how children on the autism spectrum cope and manage their learning experiences within existing educational structures;
- Highlight the lived experiences of parents raising autistic children within the Mauritian context;
- Take stock of the current challenges, gaps, and good practices in relation to inclusive education for autistic children; and
- Identify actionable and rights-based recommendations to strengthen inclusive learning environments.

This initiative falls within the mandate of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children to promote, protect, and advocate for the rights of all children, particularly those who are vulnerable or marginalised, in line with Mauritius’ obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

3. Structure of the Workshop

The workshop began with a panel discussion entitled “Understanding Autism: Building Foundations for Inclusion”, designed to establish a shared understanding of autism, its diverse presentations, and its implications for inclusive learning.

The panel discussion was moderated by Dr V. Moonsamy, Acting Director – Health and

Wellness, and brought together expert perspectives through the following panellists:

- Dr (Mrs) N. Golamnobee Foondun, Consultant – BSMHH
- Mrs Keshini Shoodihal, Occupational Therapist and Director – Early Start Diagnosis and Therapy Centre
- Mr Roshan Ally Butonkee, Parent Representative

Each panellist addressed the theme from a distinct yet complementary standpoint, contributing to a holistic understanding of autism and inclusion.

4. Key Inputs from the Panel Discussion

4.1 Understanding Autism Spectrum Characteristics

Dr (Mrs) N. Golamnobee Foondun highlighted the significant increase in the number of children diagnosed with autism over the past five years. It was noted that this rise does not necessarily reflect a true increase in prevalence alone, but is also attributable to improved screening tools, heightened public awareness, and the availability of better-trained professionals capable of identifying autism at an early stage.

Early detection was discussed as being possible from around 18 months of age, allowing for timely interventions that can significantly improve developmental outcomes. The panellist further emphasised that autism exists on a spectrum, meaning that children present with varying levels of support needs and functional abilities.

Attention was also drawn to the issue of comorbidities, with many autistic children experiencing associated conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, epilepsy, feeding difficulties, and sensory processing challenges. These co-occurring conditions further underscore the need for individualised and multidisciplinary approaches within educational settings.

Importantly, autism was framed not as a deficit, but as a form of neurodivergence — a different way of seeing, feeling, processing, and interacting with the world. Autistic children were described as often being highly intelligent, perceptive, and possessing unique strengths, which must be recognised and nurtured rather than suppressed.

4.2 Sensory Processing and the Learning Environment

Mrs Keshini Shoodihal focused on sensory processing difficulties in children with autism, explaining how heightened or reduced sensitivity to sensory stimuli can significantly affect a child's ability to learn and regulate emotions within a classroom environment.

Practical strategies to support autistic learners were discussed, including:

- The use of visual supports and structured visual schedules;
- Minimising sensory distractions such as noise, lighting, and overcrowding;
- The creation of sensory corners or calm spaces equipped with tools such as weighted blankets;
- Allowing “time-out” or regulation breaks to help children self-soothe; and
- Establishing consistent routines to provide predictability and security.

The importance of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices was also

highlighted as a critical tool for children with communication challenges, enabling them to express needs, preferences, and emotions more effectively.

Mrs Shoodihal stressed that inclusive education requires schools to intentionally design classrooms and learning environments that take into account the sensory and developmental needs of autistic children, rather than expecting children to adapt to rigid systems.

4.3 Lived Experience of Parents

Mr Roshan Ally Butonkee provided a powerful account of the lived experience of raising an autistic child, shedding light on the emotional, practical, and systemic challenges faced by families. His intervention underscored the daily struggles parents encounter when navigating the education system, advocating for reasonable accommodations, and seeking understanding and acceptance for their children.

This parental perspective reinforced the importance of listening to families as key partners in the design and implementation of inclusive education policies and practices.

5. Cross-Cutting Themes and Observations

Several cross-cutting themes emerged from the panel discussion, including:

- The urgent need for non-discriminatory policies and practices within educational institutions;
- The importance of trained and sensitised educators capable of supporting neurodivergent learners;
- The necessity of adapting educational environments to children's needs, rather than expecting children to conform to inflexible systems; and
- The recognition that inclusion is not solely a pedagogical issue, but a child rights obligation grounded in national and international legal frameworks.

The panel discussion laid a strong conceptual and experiential foundation for the workshop. Building on these insights, participants subsequently engaged in breakout group discussions aimed at responding to targeted questions, identifying challenges, and proposing concrete recommendations for improving inclusive education for autistic children.

PART TWO

SYNTHESIS OF BREAKOUT GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the panel discussion, participants were divided into three breakout groups to engage in focused discussions around key thematic questions. The objective of these group discussions was to identify concrete barriers, good practices, and actionable recommendations to improve inclusive education for children on the autism spectrum in Mauritius. The discussions addressed inclusive education frameworks, educator empowerment, and parental support and engagement.

1. Inclusive Education for Autistic Learners (Group 1)

1.1 Barriers to Inclusive Education

Group 1 identified multiple systemic and structural barriers that continue to impede access to quality education for autistic learners across pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Participants stressed that inclusion must go beyond physical placement in mainstream schools and encompass curriculum adaptation, timetabling, staffing, teaching materials, and parental involvement.

A major concern raised was the absence of a robust and updated legislative and policy framework governing inclusive education for children with disabilities, including autism. While reference was made to the Ministry of Education's 2005 Policy and Strategy Paper on Special Education Needs and Inclusive Education, participants highlighted the need for a comprehensive review and alignment with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), followed by the development of updated strategies and implementation mechanisms.

Discrimination and segregation were identified as persistent challenges, often reinforced by negative societal attitudes and misconceptions about autism. Participants emphasised the need for sustained awareness-raising and sensitisation efforts targeting school communities and parents alike.

Inadequate infrastructure and human resources were also highlighted, including the lack of sensory-friendly environments, insufficient teaching aids, and an inadequate staff-to-student ratio. The absence of trained personnel capable of managing sensory overstimulation and behavioural regulation were also identified as challenges.

1.2 Classroom Adaptations and Supports

Group 1 stressed that Individualised Education Plans should be systematically implemented in mainstream schools, developed and reviewed by a multidisciplinary team comprising parents, educators, teaching assistants, carers, school administrators, occupational therapists, speech therapists, psychologists, and other relevant professionals.

Priority classroom adaptations identified included:

- Sensory corners or calm spaces tailored to individual sensory profiles (hypo- or hyper-stimulation);
- Visual schedules and communication tools such as PECS, with appropriate training for both educators and peers;
- Introduction and effective use of **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices**;
- Consistent classroom routines to enhance predictability and reduce anxiety; and
- Adjustments to classroom organisation, including minimising student movement by having teachers rotate between classes where feasible.

Participants reiterated that reducing sensory overload in classrooms is essential, particularly given the natural levels of movement and noise among younger learners.

1.3 Monitoring and Evaluation of Inclusion

The group emphasised that inclusion must be measured not only by school attendance but by active participation and meaningful engagement of autistic learners. Proposed monitoring mechanisms included:

- Regular feedback and observation reports from educators and teaching assistants;
- Structured feedback from parents, particularly in cases of absenteeism, to identify and address underlying challenges;
- Periodic review of IEPs by multidisciplinary teams; and
- External evaluations conducted by officers trained in autism and inclusive education.

Special attention was also drawn to assessment and examination accommodations, including the provision of readers or writers, familiar support persons, adapted environments, advance preparation of learners, and permission to use sensory regulation tools during assessments

2. Empowering Educators for Inclusion (Group 2)

2.1 Training and Professional Development

Group 2 highlighted significant gaps in educator training across all levels of the education system. Participants noted that current training on Special Educational Needs (SEN) is often limited to brief theoretical modules, with insufficient practical exposure to autistic learners.

Key recommendations included:

- Strengthening pre-service training, including mandatory placements in SEN schools;
- Establishing standardised training frameworks across teacher training institutions;
- Providing continuous and mandatory in-service professional development focused on autism and inclusive practices; and
- Ensuring adequate funding for classroom support staff, particularly carers at pre-primary level.

The group also underscored the importance of fostering empathy, positive attitudes, and ethical professionalism among educators and school leaders. The identification and management of autistic learners must be handled confidentially and sensitively to prevent stigma and discrimination.

2.2 Support Mechanisms for Educators

Participants stressed the necessity of multidisciplinary support systems within schools, including access to therapists, carers, and teaching assistants. Regular coordination meetings involving parents, educators, and specialists were viewed as essential for consistent and effective support.

Other key support mechanisms included:

- Granting educators sufficient pedagogical flexibility to implement reasonable accommodations;
- Establishing communities of practice to encourage peer learning and experience-sharing;
- Developing a clear framework for inclusive education at secondary level;
- Strengthening inter-ministerial collaboration among education, social security, health, and sports authorities; and
- Ensuring structured transition support for learners moving between educational levels.

2.3 Building an Inclusive School Culture

Group 2 emphasised that inclusion must be embedded in school culture, not treated as an isolated intervention. Recommended strategies included:

- Inclusive extracurricular activities and school-wide practices;
- Integration of inclusive values into daily routines such as assemblies and recess;
- Adaptation of the national curriculum to accommodate diverse learning needs;
- National-level parental education initiatives; and
- Empowerment of school leaders through training and greater decision-making autonomy.

Innovative practices such as reverse inclusion, adapted teaching materials, and increased access to communication tools were also highlighted as effective means of promoting acceptance and understanding of neurodiversity.

3. Parental Support and Empowerment (Group 3)

3.1 Strengthening School–Parent Partnerships

Group 3 emphasised that meaningful inclusion cannot be achieved without active parental involvement. Participants recommended regular school-based workshops, improved communication tools such as liaison notebooks and IEPs, and termly IEP review meetings involving parents.

The need for parent counselling desks within schools was highlighted to support families dealing with denial, emotional distress, or uncertainty following diagnosis.

Awareness campaigns through social media and other platforms were also proposed to normalise autism and promote acceptance.

3.2 Access to Support Services

Parents continue to face significant challenges in accessing psychological, therapeutic, and financial support services. Participants noted the scarcity of specialised professionals and the financial burden placed on families seeking private therapy.

Concerns were raised regarding administrative barriers within social security systems, particularly the requirement for repeated diagnostic assessments to access benefits. Participants stressed that autism is a lifelong condition and that support mechanisms should reflect this reality.

3.3 Empowering Parents as Advocates

To empower parents as advocates for inclusion, Group 3 proposed the establishment of:

- Parent support groups facilitated by multidisciplinary teams;
- Sensory rooms within institutions and community spaces;
- Holistic pastoral care models involving trained educators; and
- Inclusive extracurricular activities such as swimming and sports.

The group also raised the need to review early childhood provisions, including the potential expansion of services for children aged 3–5 years within existing support frameworks.

4. Diagnosis, Therapy and Care Pathways (Group 4)

4.1 Current Practices in Autism Diagnosis: Progress and Challenges

Group 4 examined the effectiveness of existing autism diagnosis processes in Mauritius, with a particular focus on early detection, referral mechanisms, and access to specialists.

Participants acknowledged that significant progress has been made in recent years, notably through the existence of both public and private diagnostic centres and the emerging collaboration between these two sectors. This dual system has contributed to increased diagnostic capacity and improved identification of children on the autism spectrum.

However, several challenges persist. While referral protocols to autism centres exist, participants noted gaps in implementation, including limited awareness of these pathways among professionals and parents. Insufficient communication and sensitisation were identified as key barriers, particularly at the social, medical, and psychoeducational levels.

Challenges were also highlighted in relation to:

- Limited access to specialists in the public sector, including speech therapists,

- psychologists, and neuropsychiatrists;
- Long waiting lists and delays in assessment and intervention due to resource and funding constraints;
- Workforce shortages exacerbated by inadequate remuneration, leading many specialists to favour private practice; and
- Ongoing difficulties in diagnosing milder forms of autism, which may be overlooked or identified at a later stage.

Participants further stressed the need for greater involvement and responsiveness from social security mechanisms, particularly in relation to assessment boards and eligibility processes for financial support.

4.2 Strengthening Coordination of Therapy and Intervention Pathways

Group 4 emphasised that effective support for autistic children requires continuity of care across health, education, and community services. Participants highlighted the current fragmentation between sectors as a major obstacle to holistic and sustained intervention.

Key recommendations included:

- Establishment of an inter-ministerial coordination committee involving all relevant stakeholders, including health, education, social security, child protection authorities, and community organisations;
- Development of structured public–private partnerships to optimise service delivery and resource sharing;
- Creation of a centralised coordination platform or steering mechanism to facilitate referrals, information-sharing, and follow-up;
- Clear legal and policy safeguards to protect children and families from stigma and discriminatory public attitudes; and
- Greater investment in parent engagement, recognising parents as active partners in intervention and care pathways.

Participants further highlighted the importance of capacity-building across sectors, including targeted training for early childhood educators, carers, teachers, social workers, and NGO personnel. The need to clearly distinguish roles and responsibilities—particularly between carers and teaching assistants—was also underscored.

Encouraging parental participation in workshops and awareness sessions was identified as a critical lever for strengthening continuity and effectiveness of care.

4.3 Policy and Resource Commitments for Equitable Access

Group 4 underscored that equitable access to diagnosis and ongoing support remains a significant concern, particularly for families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or those living in underserved areas.

Participants recommended the development and implementation of a national action plan on autism, or the revival and strengthening of existing frameworks.

Key policy and resource commitments identified included:

- Financial support mechanisms enabling ministries and social security institutions to cover diagnostic and assessment costs, adjusted according to household income;
- Recognition that many parents are unable to bear the high cost of diagnosis and therapy, particularly in the private sector;
- Increased investment in training, recruitment, and retention of specialised professionals, including improved remuneration and professional recognition;

- Strengthening data collection, reporting, and analysis to inform evidence-based policymaking;
- Development of structured career guidance and professional pathways in autism-related fields to build a sustainable workforce; and
- Enhanced coordination between ministries to reduce duplication, delays, and administrative burdens on families.

Concluding Observations

The breakout group discussions reinforced the message that inclusive education for autistic children requires systemic, coordinated, and rights-based interventions. These discussions will inform the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children's ongoing advocacy, policy recommendations, and engagement with relevant authorities to ensure that autistic children are not merely present in schools, but are supported to participate, learn, and thrive in accordance with their rights under the CRC and CRPD.

In spite of All the deliberations and Recommendations of the workshop there have been cases reported to the OOC which reflect the lack of structured mechanism to support children with extreme autism and their parents. Below is described one such case.



CASE STUDY - Child with Severe Autism & Systemic Care Gaps

Background

On 11 April 2026, the OOC received a complaint from a father regarding his 13-year-old son Child E, who has been diagnosed with severe autism. Child E is non-verbal and displays serious self-harming behaviour, including banging his head against walls. He has been hospitalised on multiple occasions as a result of escalating episodes of distress and aggression. Despite repeated approaches to various institutions, the father had been continuously redirected between departments without any concrete or rights-compliant solution being offered.

The father is the sole caregiver with no alternative support system in place. He reported severe physical and emotional exhaustion, chronic sleep deprivation, and an inability to sustain his professional responsibilities alongside the demands of caregiving. He expressed deep concern about what would happen to his son should he no longer be in a position to provide care. He also highlighted the absence of any clear legal or institutional framework in Mauritius to address cases of this nature, noting that he had been informally advised to explore the possibility of permanent placement at a hospital. Child E had been attending SEN Holden School, where similar behavioural challenges have been observed.

Chronology of interventions

**11 April
2026**

Complaint received by email from the father requesting urgent intervention regarding the absence of appropriate care and support for his son.

**Prior to
22 April
2026**

The OOC contacted two NGOs to explore whether appropriate support could be provided to Child E. One NGO indicated that it was unable to provide the level of care required, while the other referred to the absence of specialised staff, lack of available placement, the child's need for one-to-one support, and the potential risk he may pose to other children in a shared setting. The OOC also formally requested a report from Brown-Séguard Mental Health Care Centre (BSH) on Child E's condition, treatment, and recommendations for ongoing care and management.

**22 April
2026**

The father attended the Office and reiterated his concerns regarding the absence of specialised support structures. He was informed that the OOC is following up the matter with BSH. A neurologist was expected to be in Mauritius in mid-May and that Child E would be reviewed by the specialist.

**June
2026**

Child E remains admitted at BSH. The visiting neurologist confirmed that he is at the high end of the autism spectrum. His medication (Depakine) was reduced due to associated agitation. In view of ongoing self-harming behaviours, including head-banging, the neurologist recommended the use of a rugby headguard as a protective measure. The child is currently undergoing therapy at the Autism Day Care Centre at the BSH.

Systemic gaps identified

No specialised residential care

The lack of appropriate specialised residential care options for children with severe autism and high support needs has resulted in hospitalisation being relied upon out of necessity rather than as the most appropriate setting for the child's best interests.

Lack of respite care for caregivers

The absence of respite care services for families of children with severe autism and high-support needs places a significant and sustained burden on primary caregivers, with limited support mechanisms available.

Gap in specialised support services

There is a gap in the provision of specialised support services for children with complex, high-support needs and aggressive behaviours, including services requiring intensive one-to-one care.

No legal or policy framework

There is no clear legal framework governing long-term care, placement, and support for children with severe disabilities, leaving families without a structured pathway.

Key observation

Child E's prolonged hospitalisation reflects a systemic gap in the existing care framework. This case powerfully reiterates the failure of existing structures to uphold the rights of children with severe autism to appropriate care, inclusive support, and an environment conducive to their development and wellbeing. It equally exposes the urgent need for dedicated respite provision for sole caregivers.

Report on Workshop on the Rights of Intersex Children

Background and Purpose of the Workshop

On 24 November 2025, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children organised a Workshop on the Rights of Intersex Children at the Caudan Arts Centre, Port Louis. The workshop was conceived as a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue, bringing together medical professionals, legal experts, and civil society to address the invisibility of intersex variations in Mauritius. It included expert presentations, a video of a lived-experience testimony by an intersex person, and interactive discussions. The objective was to move beyond a purely medicalized understanding of intersex traits toward a rights-based framework that emphasizes bodily autonomy, physical integrity, and the right to self-determination.

Key sessions included:

- Introduction of the subject by Maître Sandy Christ Bhaganooa (Avocat à la Cour, Barreau de Paris, France; Barrister-at-Law, Mauritian Bar; Member of Avocats sans Frontières France)
- Intersex: Medical Aspects by Dr Gunness Tavisha (Sexual and Reproductive Health Coordinator, Ministry of Health and Wellness)
- Video of a lived-experience testimony by an intersex person
- Best practices in other countries
- International Human Rights Framework by Maître Isabelle Schoenacker Rossi (Avocate associée du cabinet ACTION AVOCATS à Toulouse, Albi, Montauban ; Member of Avocats Sans Frontières France)

Key Issues Discussed

Understanding Intersex Variations

The workshop highlighted that intersex children are born with innate variations in sex characteristics that do not fit typical binary definitions of male or female. Evidence presented showed that intersex children worldwide face significant human rights violations, including stigma, discrimination, violence, and medically unnecessary “sex-normalising” interventions performed without their free, full and informed consent. The term “intersex” serves as an umbrella category for natural variations in biological sex characteristics—including chromosomes, hormones, and internal or external anatomy—that do not align with traditional binary definitions of male or female bodies.

The Biological Spectrum

Intersex variations are recognised by the World Health Organization and the United Nations as part of normal human biological diversity, not as disorders. They occur in approximately 1 in 1,500 to 2,000 births. These characteristics may be apparent at birth through atypical genitalia, emerge during puberty through unexpected hormonal patterns, or remain undetected until adulthood during investigations for fertility. Medical terminology often uses “Differences of Sex Development” (DSD) or “Variations of Sex Development” (VSD) to describe these congenital conditions, though international human rights bodies emphasize that these are natural variations of human diversity and not pathologies.

Distinguishing Intersex from Transgender Identities

The workshop underscored the importance of distinguishing between biological sex characteristics and gender identity. While “intersex” refers to innate physical variations, “transgender” describes an individual’s internal sense of gender when it does not correspond with the sex assigned at birth. Intersex persons may identify as male, female, or non-binary, and their sexual orientation (as straight, gay, lesbian, or bisexual) is independent of their sex characteristics.

International and Regional Human Rights Frameworks

United Nations Human Rights System

The UN Human Rights Council adopted Resolution 55/14 in April 2024, titled “Combating discrimination, violence and harmful practices against intersex persons”. This resolution defines intersex persons as individuals born with sex characteristics that do not fit typical binary definitions. It expressed grave concern about “medically unnecessary or deferrable interventions” performed without informed consent, identifying them as a harmful practice.

The subsequent 2025 report from the High Commissioner for Human Rights expanded on these themes, identifying pathologization as a root cause of rights violations. The UN explicitly calls on states to:

- Prohibit medically unnecessary interventions on sex characteristics without full, free, and informed consent.
- Ensure that intersex persons have access to their medical records, which are often withheld or destroyed.
- Provide reparations and redress for those subjected to past harmful practices.
- Collect disaggregated data to address the invisibility and marginalization of intersex communities.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) applies fully to intersex children. Particular emphasis was placed on:

- **Article 3** (best interests of the child);
- **Article 12** (right of the child to be heard);
- **Article 19** (protection from all forms of violence);
- **Article 24** (right to health and bodily integrity).

African Human Rights System

At the regional level, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was recognised as providing strong protection for intersex children, particularly through:

- the right to dignity and integrity;
- protection against harmful social and cultural practices;
- the obligation to ensure survival, development and non-discrimination.

Reference was made to Resolution 552 (2023) of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, which explicitly condemns non-consensual medical interventions on intersex children and urges African States to adopt legislative, administrative and medical safeguards.

Comparative Legal Developments

The workshop examined comparative best practices from other jurisdictions.

- **Malta: Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act (2015)**
Malta was the first country to outlaw non-urgent medical interventions on the sex characteristics of minors. Doctors who violate this ban face up to five years of imprisonment or substantial fines. The law acknowledges the right to bodily autonomy and recognizes that sex markers on official records can be modified without a medical certificate of surgery.

- **Kenya: Children Act of 2022**

Kenya’s Children Act 2022 defines an “intersex child” based on their atypical hormonal, chromosomal, or anatomical patterns. Section 21 guarantees the right to dignity, while Section 23 prohibits harmful cultural or religious practices, specifically forbidding the “removal or change of organs” unless there is medical advice based on health necessity. The law protects intersex children from harmful practices, and ensures their inclusion in child protection systems. It requires intersex children in detention to be placed in separate

spaces, recognizing their unique vulnerability in the justice system.

- **South Africa**

South Africa's approach is rooted in its constitutional ban on sex discrimination, which the judiciary and legislature have interpreted to include intersex status. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (2000) defines intersex status and protects against hate speech and harassment. The Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act (2003) allows for changes in sex description in the population register, although it still currently requires a professional medical report.

These models were identified as valuable sources of inspiration for Mauritius.

Situation in Mauritius

In Mauritius, Section 13(1B) of the Civil Status (Amendment) Act 2021 allows the sex of a newborn to be registered as “undetermined” when congenital anomalies at the time of birth make it impossible to categorize the child as male or female. This provision alleviates the immediate pressure on parents and doctors to choose a binary sex marker within the standard registration period, potentially reducing the rush toward surgical “correction”. However, during the discussions, participants noted that in Mauritius there is a discrepancy between the state's human rights commitments and the reality on the ground. The following issues were raised:

- There is no official data on intersex birth.
- There is no formalized national clinical guideline or standardized protocol for managing DSD/VSD in Mauritian hospitals nor clear guidelines regulating medical interventions or ensuring informed consent.
- Mauritius lacks dedicated multidisciplinary teams that include endocrinologists, surgeons, urologists, neonatologists, and psychologists. This may lead to a surgical-first approach rather than a holistic care model.
- Parents often report receiving partial or misleading information about their child's condition, and they may be pressured to consent to surgeries they do not fully understand.
- While the Equal Opportunities Act 2008 prohibits discrimination on the basis of “sex” and “sexual orientation”, it is silent on “sex characteristics”. This gap leaves intersex individuals without explicit protection in areas such as employment, housing, and access to services. Furthermore, while the Supreme Court decriminalized consensual same-sex relations in 2023—a landmark for the broader LGBTQ+ community—specific legal protections for intersex-related bodily integrity have yet to be codified.
- During the discussions mention was made of medical staff having witnessed the dramatic consequences of unnecessary “corrective” surgeries and treatments on intersex kids. Those kids had health issues afterwards and sought help at a later stage in life. Unfortunately, the wrongdoings could not be reversed.

Conclusion

The workshop underscored that intersex children are first and foremost children, entitled to the full protection of national, regional and international human rights law. The absence of a clear framework in Mauritius creates vulnerabilities that may expose intersex children to irreversible harm.

The discussions highlighted the urgent need to:

- prioritise the best interests and bodily integrity of intersex children;
- prevent medically unnecessary and non-consensual interventions;
- combat discrimination, stigma and harmful practices;
- recognise intersex in the law;
- ensure access to information, support and effective remedies.

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children took note of the issues raised and the

comparative experiences shared. The workshop constitutes an important step towards informed advocacy, policy dialogue and potential law reform aimed at strengthening the protection of intersex children in Mauritius, in accordance with international and African human rights standards.



“Safeguarding the Rights of Child Victims of Sexual Abuse: Strengthening the Chain of Protection”

Day & Date: Wednesday, 18 March 2026

Venue: Palms Hotel

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children organised a panel discussion on the theme **“Safeguarding the Rights of Child Victims of Sexual Abuse: Strengthening the Chain of Protection”** in Quatre-Bornes with the objective of reinforcing inter-institutional collaboration and promoting a coordinated response for the protection and support of child victims of sexual abuse.

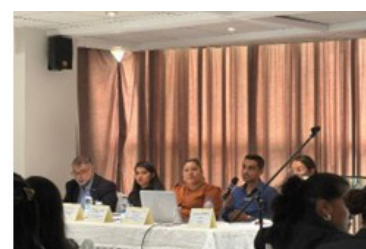
The event brought together representatives from various institutions, professionals, psychologists, law enforcement officers, legal practitioners, child protection stakeholders, and representatives from Rodrigues to discuss challenges, responsibilities, and strategies aimed at strengthening the protection framework for child victims.

The programme commenced with a welcome address by Ms Bhavnah Jogarah, Investigator at the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, followed by welcoming remarks by the Ombudsperson for Children, Aneeta Ghoorah.

In her address, Mrs Ghoorah emphasised that every child has the right to grow in dignity and within a safe environment free from violence, abuse, and exploitation. She highlighted that child sexual abuse constitutes one of the severe violations of children’s rights and dignity, often leaving profound and long-lasting physical, emotional, and psychological consequences.

She stressed the collective responsibility of institutions and professionals involved in child protection to ensure that victims are protected, supported, and empowered to speak out in safe and supportive environments. She further underlined the importance of establishing and maintaining a strong “chain of protection” to ensure that child victims receive appropriate assistance and support throughout the justice and rehabilitation process.

Mrs Ghoorah also highlighted the need for improved coordination, communication, trust, child-sensitive procedures, specialised training, and effective support mechanisms among institutions dealing with child sexual abuse cases. She described the panel discussion as an important platform for stakeholders to exchange experiences, identify existing challenges, and explore avenues for a more coordinated and effective response.



The first presentation, entitled **“Overview of Child Sexual Abuse”**, was delivered by Mélanie Vigier de Latour-Bérenger, who provided participants with an overview of the nature, impact, and psychosocial consequences of child sexual abuse.

The first panel session focused on **“The Chain of Protection for Child Victims of Sexual Abuse – Roles of Key Institutions.”** The session brought together resource persons from various institutions involved in child protection and criminal justice, namely:

- Mrs K. Ah Nien-Kotadoo, Coordinator from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare;
- Mrs S. Goorbin, Woman Police Officer from the Brigade pour la Protection de la Famille;
- Ms U. F. Khodabocus, State Counsel from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions; and
- Dr P. K. Seewooruttun, Police Medical Officer, Prime Minister’s Office.

The session was moderated by B. Leste, Head Probation Service (Rodrigues), and focused on the institutional roles, legal procedures, investigative processes, medical interventions, and protection measures available for child victims of sexual abuse.

The second session focused on **“Services and Support Mechanisms for Child Victims of Sexual Abuse.”** Presentations were delivered by:

- Mrs V. Bissessur, Psychologist and Director of PEDOSTOP;
- Mr K. Bhagan, Psychologist from the Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association;
- Mrs A. Allas-Zameer, Family Welfare and Protection Officer, Child Development Unit, Rodrigues; and
- Mrs A. Arnat, Officer-in-Charge of Rehabilitation from OASIS RCI.

The session was moderated by I. Bawamia, Senior Investigator, OOC, and addressed psychological support services, rehabilitation, counselling, family support mechanisms, and institutional interventions available to child victims.

The participation of representatives from Rodrigues added valuable perspectives to the discussions and ensured that challenges and realities specific to Rodrigues were also considered within the broader national child protection framework.

The panel discussion further provided an important opportunity for all stakeholders present to openly highlight the challenges encountered within their respective institutions when dealing with cases of child sexual abuse. Participants discussed issues relating to inter-agency coordination, communication barriers, procedural delays, resource limitations, victim support services, and the need for specialised training and child-sensitive approaches.

The exchanges enabled institutions to share practical experiences, best practices, and recommendations aimed at improving collaboration and strengthening institutional responses to child sexual abuse cases. The discussions also contributed to a better understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of institutions involved in the protection, investigation, prosecution, rehabilitation, and support of child victims.

An audience interaction and open-floor discussion further enabled participants to exchange views, raise concerns, and discuss practical challenges encountered in the protection and rehabilitation of child victims.

The panel discussion concluded with closing remarks by Mrs Aneeta Ghoorah, who reiterated the importance of collective action, institutional collaboration, and sustained commitment towards strengthening the protection of children from sexual abuse.

Overall, the event provided an important platform for dialogue, awareness-raising, knowledge-sharing, and institutional collaboration among stakeholders committed to safeguarding the rights and welfare of children in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

Workshop on the 4Rs: Rights, Respect, Responsibility and Resilience

Theme: Protecting and Empowering Children

Date: 10 April 2026

Venue: Gold Crest Hotel

Target Group: Non-Formal Educators

Introduction

As part of its mandate to promote and protect the rights and welfare of children in Mauritius, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children organised a workshop entitled **“4Rs: Rights, Respect, Responsibility and Resilience”** on 10 April 2026 at Gold Crest Hotel.

The workshop brought together non-formal educators from various institutions with the objective of strengthening their understanding of children’s rights and enhancing their capacity to foster respect, responsibility and resilience among children under their care. The activity forms part of the Office’s ongoing efforts to create child-friendly environments where children can develop safely, participate meaningfully and reach their full potential.

Opening Session

The workshop began by the opening remarks delivered by the Ombudsperson for Children, Mrs Anita Ghoorah. In her address, she highlighted the importance of empowering children and emphasised the crucial role played by educators in promoting children’s rights and nurturing values such as respect, responsibility and resilience.

A welcome address was also delivered, during which participants were encouraged to actively engage in discussions and share their experiences from the field of non-formal education. The contribution of educators in supporting children’s development, self-confidence and well-being was particularly acknowledged.

Workshop Objectives

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Increase awareness of children’s rights as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Introduce participants to the 4Rs framework;
- Encourage educators to integrate child-rights principles into their educational practices;
- Promote positive values of respect, responsibility and resilience among children;
- Facilitate the exchange of experiences and good practices among non-formal educators.

Workshop Proceedings

The programme was presented by an investigator of the Office, who provided an overview of the objectives and expected outcomes of the workshop. Participants viewed a presentation on the work of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children and received an introduction to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 4Rs framework.

The project was explained as an initiative aimed at sensitising children to their rights, encouraging respect for others, promoting responsible behaviour and strengthening resilience to face challenges.

An educational video on children’s rights was screened, followed by an ice-breaker activity which encouraged interaction among participants and prepared them for the subsequent sessions.

Interactive Session on Children's Rights

An interactive session facilitated by investigators of the Office focused on understanding children's rights. Through a question-and-answer exercise and group discussions, participants explored:

- Fundamental rights of children;
- The right to education;
- The right to protection;
- The right to participation;
- The right to equality and non-discrimination;
- The right to play and leisure;
- Existing mechanisms for the protection of children.

Participants engaged in discussions and shared examples from their professional experiences in non-formal educational settings.

Group Work on the 4Rs

Participants were divided into four groups, each focusing on one of the pillars of the 4Rs framework:

Group 1 – Rights

The group discussed strategies for teaching children about their rights through age-appropriate and participatory methods.

Group 2 – Respect

Participants highlighted the importance of modelling respectful behaviour and encouraging positive interactions among children.

Group 3 – Responsibility

The group explored ways of helping children understand their responsibilities at home, within educational settings and in the wider community.

Group 4 – Resilience

Participants examined approaches to support children in overcoming challenges, managing emotions and developing coping skills. The importance of creating safe and supportive environments was highlighted.

Each group identified practical pedagogical activities.

Plenary and Open Discussion

During the plenary session, each group presented the outcomes of its discussions. The open discussion session provided participants with an opportunity to discuss challenges encountered in non-formal education settings, including issues relating to children's behaviour, vulnerability, family environments and access to support services.

Outcomes

The workshop encouraged reflection on practical ways to integrate the 4Rs into educational activities and strengthened networking.

Participants expressed appreciation for the interactive nature of the workshop and the opportunity to exchange experiences and practical approaches.



Chapter 4:

Voice of the youth by the youth

JADE– Activities Report (2025–2026 Overview)

Introduction of JADE in Rodrigues – June 2025

JADE was officially introduced in Rodrigues in June 2025. A workshop was organised to help members understand their roles, responsibilities, and the identity of JADE as a group. This session also focused on building awareness among members and strengthening connections between participants. It marked the beginning of a structured journey for JADE in the region.

Community Activity – Patate Théophile (21 November 2025)

A community activity was carried out at Patate Théophile with children from the region. The day began with introductions, allowing both JADE members and children to get to know each other in a warm and friendly atmosphere.

Several activities and games were organised, including “spoon and lemon” challenges, a treasure hunt, and other interactive group games. Snacks such as cakes and juice were shared with the children to make the day more enjoyable.

Although the original plan was adjusted during the day, the team successfully adapted to the situation and ensured that the children had a positive and memorable experience. At the end of the activity, each child received a small gift box with sweets, and the winners of games were rewarded with teddy bears. The children left the activity happy and more confident, reflecting the success of the event.



**International Women’s Day Activity –
Rodrigues College (St Louis)**

An activity was organised at Rodrigues College (St Louis) in celebration of International Women’s Day (8 March 2026). The session focused on empowerment and awareness, particularly under the theme “Girls Can Too”.

Participants listened to speeches and shared their personal experiences and perspectives. A creative workshop followed, where young participants designed posters and drawings representing their dreams, ambitions, and ideas for the future. This activity encouraged expression, confidence, and creativity among the youth. JADE Workshops 7 & 8 May 2026



Day 1 – 7 May

The workshop began at 9:00 a.m. and ended at 2:00 p.m. It started with the introduction of new JADE members, helping to create a friendly and inclusive environment. Participants learned about children’s rights, the importance of defending these rights, and the role of the Ombudsperson in protecting children. Interactive group activities were carried out to strengthen teamwork and communication. Members also contributed ideas for future JADE activities and the activity calendar.

Day 2 – 8 May

The second day ran from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The session focused on deeper learning about children’s rights and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Participants worked in groups on problem-based activities, identifying violations of rights and classifying them according to the correct frameworks. The session ended with group presentations and the distribution of educational books about children’s rights and the role of Ombudspersons.

Overall, the two-day workshop was interactive, educational, and highly engaging, strengthening members’ knowledge and teamwork skills.

JADE Induction Ceremony – 11 June 2026 (Cotton Bay)

The JADE Induction Ceremony was held at Cotton Bay on 11 June 2026 in a respectful and well-organised atmosphere.

The ceremony was hosted by Mr Samuel Vantard, who welcomed all guests and participants. The JADE President, Ms Tatiana Chinien, delivered a speech highlighting the group’s journey and presenting a video showcasing past activities.

Key speeches were then delivered by Mrs Aneeta Ghoorah, Ombudsperson for Children,

Mrs Marie Christiane Agathe, Commissioner for Women Affairs and Children, and Mr Franceau Aubret Grandcourt, G.O.S.K, Chief Commissioner of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.



Following the speeches, executive members of JADE took their oath individually and received their official pins. Group photos were taken with dignitaries, and gifts were offered to invited commissioners. The remaining members also took their oath together and received their pins.

The ceremony concluded with refreshments and group photos. Overall, it was a memorable event marking commitment, unity, and the official strengthening of JADE members



Conclusion:

Throughout this period, JADE demonstrated strong commitment to community engagement, youth empowerment, and education on children's rights. The activities organised successfully promoted teamwork, creativity, leadership, and awareness, while also strengthening the bond between members and the community.

JADES MAURITIUS

Event Report: Celebration of **International Women's Day**

Prepared by: Oumair DEDAUR, Liaison and Report Officer

Date of Event: Sunday 8 March 2026

Location: Quatre-Bornes State Secondary School, Quatre-Bornes

Event overview

Jade, under the aegis of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, organised the International Women's Day to promote women empowerment, gender equality, to highlight women's leadership and to encourage youth volunteering. The event was held from 9:00 AM to 11:45 AM at Quatre Bornes State Secondary School. Around 50 children were present.



Key activities

Guest speakers

The guests of honour were Shazia Lallmahomed from the organisation 'Sov Lanatir' and Carol Lamport, a well-known Mauritian singer and vocal coach. They delivered inspiring speeches, encouraging young people to believe that girls can also achieve success and contribute to making the world a better place.



Painting Workshop

Several interactive activities were organised by JADE members. A painting workshop and a letter writing activity allowed children to express their love and appreciation for an important woman in their lives. In addition, a small sketch was presented. To raise awareness about discrimination against women and to show children how they can stand up against such behaviour.

The event concluded on a positive note with refreshments served to all participants.



Induction ceremony of JADES Cohort 2

Sat 16th May 2026 Induction Ceremony 2nd Edition **Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits des Enfants**

Event Report: Induction Ceremony

Prepared by: Oumair DEDAUR, Liaison and Reports

Date: Saturday 16 May 2026

Report Date: Friday 5 June 2026

Time: 15:30 – 17:30

Venue: Gold Crest Business Hotel, Quatre-Bornes

Hosts: Mrs. Aneeta Ghoorah (Ombudsperson for Children)

Liyana Maïra Dedaur (Incoming President of JADE)

Guests of honour: His excellency Mr. Jean Yvan Robert Hungley, G.O.S.K ,
Dr The Honorable Mahend Gungapersad

Participants: JADE members

Event Review

The Induction Ceremony of the Executive Committee of the Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits de l'Enfant took place on Saturday 16 May at Gold Crest, Quatre-Bornes. Scheduled from 15:30 to 17:30, this formal event served as the official inauguration of the new ambassadors dedicated to advocate for Children's rights.

The Welcome Address was delivered by the incoming president of JADE, Ms. Liyana Dedaur, who settled the vision of the upcoming tenure.

The outgoing President, Mr. Nakul Dusoye, shared reflections and parting words regarding his time leading the organisation.

Ms. Anshi Buluck, the outgoing Events Coordinator, and Dimitri Maripa, outgoing Reports and Coordination Focal Point, highlighted the milestones reached by JADE over the previous two years.

The Ombudsperson for Children, Mrs. Aneeta Ghoorah, addressed the assembly on the importance of leadership and youth participation. Brilliant discourses on child's advocacy were delivered by the guests of honour.

In his address, the Guest of Honour, Dr. The Honourable Mahend Gungapersad, Minister of Education and Human Resources, focused heavily on the power of youth advocacy in shaping educational and social landscapes.

During the ceremony, the assembly was addressed by the Guest of Honour, His Excellency Mr. Jean Yvan Robert Hungley, G.O.S.K., Vice-President of the Republic of Mauritius. In his formal discourse, the Vice-President commended the outgoing executive committee for their achievements over the 2024–2026 mandate.

Ms. Liyana Dedaur led JADE members to take their official pledge, alongside pinning of the incoming President and Executive Committee Members. Certificates were presented to the outgoing Executive Members to honour their dedication to promoting children's rights. The ceremony was structured around a formal agenda executing institutional transitions, addresses from dignity figures and recognition of member achievements. The event concluded with refreshments served to all attendees.



Les droits, ce n'est pas du cinéma

Alors que les vacances touchent à leur fin, les étudiants de tout âge ont grandement apprécié ce repos bien mérité. C'était l'occasion de se retrouver en famille ou entre amis afin de s'amuser, de se divertir et de profiter pleinement de ces moments de détente. Hélas, cette réalité n'est pas la même pour tous. Des millions d'enfants à travers le monde ne peuvent pas partager ces moments de joie et se retrouvent privés d'un droit pourtant fondamental: **le droit aux loisirs**. Au-delà du simple divertissement, celui-ci permet à chaque enfant de développer sa créativité, de tisser des liens et de créer les souvenirs qui façonnent une enfance heureuse et équilibrée.

C'est dans cette optique que les Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits de l'Enfant (JADE) ont organisé une séance de cinéma, en collaboration avec plusieurs centres de jeunesse à travers l'île. Le temps d'un après-midi, petits et grands se sont réunis pour apprécier un film ensemble, sachets de pop-corn caramélisé à la main. Chaque enfant présent a également pu savourer un chocolat chaud ou un jus, généreusement offert par le club Interact de West Coast International Secondary School, montrant ainsi que la solidarité entre jeunes peut faire toute la différence.

27 enfants de 'Residential Care Institutions' accompagnés par 4 adultes ont assisté à la séance.

Le film choisi, *Wonder*, promeut la gentillesse, l'empathie et l'acceptation de la différence à travers l'histoire touchante d'Auggie Pullman. Nous retiendrons notamment ce beau message: « Quand on a le choix entre avoir raison et être gentil, choisissons la gentillesse. »

Une fois la projection achevée, les enfants sont repartis le sourire aux lèvres, reconnaissants d'avoir pu profiter de cet agréable moment hors de leur routine. Cet après-midi leur a permis de se divertir, de s'évader de leur quotidien parfois morose, mais aussi de créer de précieux souvenirs. Ce fut également un merveilleux moment d'échange et de partage, propice à la création de nouveaux liens et, peut-être, de belles amitiés.

Pour les JADE, cet événement est une façon concrète de rappeler que chaque droit compte dans notre engagement en faveur d'un monde où chaque enfant peut s'épanouir, se divertir et grandir heureux.



Extracts from Speech of outgoing President: Mr Nakul Dussoye

“Today is a very emotional moment for me. Because standing here means I am closing a chapter that has defined the last two years of my life. I feel a mix of Happiness, Nostalgia and Sadness. Happy, because 2 years of work was a lot, and we’ve been able to accomplish so much in regards to the rights of Children in Mauritius

Sad, because today the first mandate of JADE takes and end And Nostalgic, because of all the memories that I can’t help but look back to. Two years ago, JADE was only an idea. A belief that young people could become advocates for children who too often do not have a voice.

I had the immense honour of becoming the very first President of this organisation. What was meant to be a one-year mandate became almost two years, because building something from the ground up takes time. It takes patience. It takes resilience. And above all, it takes people who believe in the same mission. And tonight, I look at this room and I realise: we built something real.

I still remember our very first event at Queen Elizabeth College, hosted by the Ombudsperson for Children’s Office. That day, JADE stopped being an idea and became a movement. Soon after, on the 15th of October, our formal election took place. That was the day my Secretary and I began a journey we never imagined would shape us so deeply. At the start of our mandate, there was barely a single day we did not call each other. We spoke almost every day. Planning. Brainstorming. Stressing. Dreaming. Somewhere between the endless calls and the countless plans, we stopped being just colleagues — we became friends.

Together, with our incredible executive team and members, we organised dozens and dozens of events. From awareness campaigns and workshops, to Easter and Christmas fun days for vulnerable children, to outreach programmes that brought smiles where they were most needed. One of the moments that will stay with me forever was our MCine projection of Zootopia. For many of those children, it was the first time they had ever stepped inside a cinema. To us, it was a screening. To them, it was magic. You could see it in their eyes — pride, excitement, wonder. Moments like that remind you why JADE exists. I still remember the end of one of our fun days. The children were in their buses, waving through the windows, shouting thank you, asking when we would meet again. Some were crying. Some did not want to leave. Those moments stay in your heart forever.

This journey also taught me humility. I remember carrying a little child who was not feeling well, I think during our Christmas Fun Day at DMC and he threw up on my shirt. And in that moment, none of it mattered. Because love and compassion were always at the centre of everything we did. But this road was not always easy. Someone once told me they seconded for me as President because I am someone who is, allow me to say it, “la geule” who listens and stands up when needed. That meant a lot to me. Because leadership is not always applause. Sometimes it is difficult conversations. Sometimes it is standing your ground. Sometimes it is fighting, respectfully, but firmly, for your team and for your mission.

There were many discussions and debates. Many moments where I had to stand up for JADE and for our members. And I am grateful for them, because they shaped the leader I became. Behind every achievement of JADE stands a team. My Secretary, Saniyya — the encyclopedia of JADE. The one who knew everything, remembered everything, and often worked even more than I did. There was not a single day we did not speak at the start of this journey. We built this together. My Vice President, Siya — who constantly asked me for more work, more responsibility, more ways to help; that she even held a second mandate.

The one who stepped in during stressful moments and gave emotional support when we needed it most. I am so proud to see her renewing her mandate.

To my executives and members: you did not just join JADE. You gave a part of yourselves to it. I would also like to thank three mentors who shaped my journey. The first, a former Vice President of the Republic who sadly passed away this year. The second, Philip Ah Chuen, who taught me what leadership truly means and believed in me even as my mandate was ending. And the third, none other than Aneeta Ghoorah, the Ombudsperson for Children. Working alongside her for two years taught me lessons I will carry for life. Their guidance shaped the leader standing here today.

But my commitment to JADE was also shaped by tragedy. Very early in my mandate, two heart breaking cases shook our country. Little Catalea — a toddler whose life ended before it truly began. Two months after my nomination as President of JADE, this was one of the most striking cases. Just after the New Year's celebration, her own uncle, who was drugged, took her life in a disgusting way.

Little Adam — a young boy who went to play and never returned home. He accompanied his grandma to pray and due to the lack of maintenance, a metal structure fell on the little boy and his soul left immediately. Their stories were painful reminders that the work we do is not symbolic. It is necessary. And they made me realise something I will never forget. Somewhere in the world, there is another teenager just like me. With the same dreams. The same abilities. The same potential. But that teenager has no voice. They may be in an orphanage. They may be in a refugee camp. They may be wondering what they will eat tomorrow. They may be wondering whether they are safe tonight. While we sit here, they are still waiting.

So please, do not sit here tonight thinking the work is done. The fight has only just begun. Our country still has children who need us. Our communities still have children who need us. JADE still needs you. Support this movement. Stand with these young ambassadors. Help them continue this mission. Because protecting children is not the responsibility of a few. It is the responsibility of all of us.

To the incoming President and executive team: it is not a club that you are inheriting. You are inheriting a promise. Dream bigger. Reach further. Fight harder. Because JADE is not ending tonight. JADE is only beginning once again. Thank you.

Extracts of address by Incoming President

I am Liyana Maïra Dedaur, the incoming president of JADE and it is with great pride and gratitude that I welcome you to our Induction Ceremony 2026

Today, we gather to officially welcome and pin our new — and not-so-new — members into the JADE family, while also celebrating the dedication and achievements of our outgoing Executive Committee, who will receive a token of appreciation for their outstanding hard work and devotion over the past year.

It fills my heart with immense joy to see all of you gathered here today, ready to embrace your roles as ambassadors and advocates of our motto, which, I remind you, is to promote Children's Rights, equality, and non-discrimination.

Jade was built upon the dedication and sacrifices of our dear president Nakul who deserves a warm round of applause and his secretary Saniyyah who sadly couldn't join us today due to her HSC Exams.

Their unwavering commitment have paved the way for Jade's growth and success. As the new board takes over, we recognise the responsibility entrusted to us.

Together with my team, I will strive not only to uphold the values and spirit of JADE, but also to take this organisation even further.

True leadership is not about a title. It requires responsibility, empathy, and, above all, communication. As the Head girl of the Queen Elizabeth College, I have seen how fruitful decisions only emerge from constructive dialogue and mutual respect. As the President of JADE I hope to strengthen that sense of unity—encouraging kindness, respect, and collaboration in everything we do.

As I take on this role, I do so with determination and humility. I am ready to lead, to learn, and to grow alongside each one of you.

Together, let us continue to inspire, advocate, and create a better future for the children and youth of our country. I have complete faith that, united, we can take JADE to even greater heights.

Thank you once again for being here with us today. I would also like to extend our deepest gratitude to our Guests of Honour for gracing this occasion with their presence.

A sincere thank you to Gold Crest Hotel for hosting us in this prestigious venue and contributing to the success of this ceremony.

Finally, I would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to the Ombudsperson for Children's Office for organising this event and for their constant guidance and support. Without their dedication and commitment, JADE simply would not exist. Thank you for your trust, your encouragement, and the invaluable advice you continue to provide throughout all our endeavours.

I wish you all a memorable and enjoyable Induction Ceremony 2026.

Thank you.

Day of the African Child 16 June 2026

The OOC held a forum at Dayforce , Ebene,to mark the Day of the African Child ,observed on 16 June

The theme this year was « **Ensuring Universal Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for every Child in Africa**»

The Guest of Honour was the Permanent delegate of Mauritius to UNESCO ,Ms Marie Jasmine Toulouse-Olivier and our appreciation to Mr Deva Goinden of Dayforce for hosting us and for his presence

The article as reported in a newspaper describes the essence as below :

«Aucun enfant n'est libre tant que tous les enfants ne sont pas libres»

LA Journée de l'enfant africain, célébrée chaque année le 16 juin, a été marquée par un forum organisé par le Bureau de l'Ombudsperson for Children sur le thème 2026 : *Assurer l'accès universel à l'eau, à l'assainissement et à l'hygiène pour chaque enfant en Afrique*. L'événement a également été l'occasion de récompenser les participants à la campagne de sensibilisation *Promoting Child Rights through Mural Painting* et de donner la parole à de jeunes ambassadeurs des droits de l'enfant. Les intervenants ont rappelé que cette journée commémore le courage des enfants de Soweto, en Afrique du Sud, qui se sont soulevés en 1976 pour défendre leur droit à une éducation digne. *«Chaque enfant mérite des opportunités, de la dignité, de l'éducation, de la sécurité et un avenir rempli d'espoir.»*

La présidente des Jeunes ambassadeurs des droits pour les enfants et l'égalité (JADE), Liyana Dedaur, a retracé l'histoire de cette journée symbolique en rappelant le sacrifice des milliers d'élèves sud-africains qui avaient manifesté contre l'imposition de l'afrikaans comme langue d'enseignement sous le régime de l'apartheid.



«Cette lutte ne se terminera jamais tant que chaque enfant n'aura pas tous ses droits», a-t-elle déclaré. Cette journée, dit-elle, permet non seulement de commémorer ce combat historique, mais aussi d'offrir aux jeunes une plateforme pour s'exprimer sur les défis qui les concernent aujourd'hui, dont l'accès à l'eau potable, thème central de l'édition 2026.

Nakul Dusoye, élève au collège Royal de Port-Louis et ancien président de JADE, a dressé un constat préoccupant. Citant des données internationales, il a indiqué qu'un enfant sur quatre dans le monde subit une forme de violence et un milliard d'enfants sont exposés à des risques extrêmes liés aux changements climatiques. Les enfants vivant dans des zones de conflit en Afrique sont 20 fois plus susceptibles de mourir de maladies liées à l'eau insalubre et au manque d'assainissement que des violences elles-mêmes. *«Il y a une crise, mais il ne faut pas paniquer»,* invitant les jeunes

à croire en leur capacité à transformer le monde. *«Aucun enfant n'est libre tant que tous les enfants ne sont pas libres»,* a-t-il ajouté, sous les applaudissements nourris de l'assistance.

L'Ombudsperson for Children, Aneeta Ghoorah, a pour sa part rappelé que l'accès à l'eau, l'assainissement et l'hygiène constitue un droit fondamental de l'enfant. *«Pour un enfant, l'accès à l'eau propre est bien plus qu'une question d'infrastructure. C'est une question de santé, de dignité, d'éducation, de sécurité et de droits humains.»* Elle a exhorté les jeunes à devenir des ambassadeurs de la protection des ressources en eau en adoptant des gestes simples, mais essentiels, pour la réduction du gaspillage ou la préservation de la propreté des rivières et des plages.

Invitée d'honneur de la cérémonie, Jasmine Toulouse-Olivier, déléguée permanente de Maurice auprès de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et

la culture (UNESCO), a insisté sur l'importance de conjuguer droits et responsabilités. Elle a rappelé que Maurice bénéficie d'une position particulière au sein de l'UNESCO en tant que pays africain et petit État insulaire en développement. *«Les quatre R – Rights, Responsibilities, Respect and Resilience – doivent guider les jeunes»,* appelant les élèves à cultiver la tolérance, l'inclusion et le respect mutuel afin de préserver l'harmonie sociale qui caractérise Maurice.

L'émotion était également au rendez-vous lors de la remise des prix du concours de fresques murales sur les droits de l'enfant. Environ 80 élèves de 12 établissements scolaires, dont une école spécialisée, ont reçu médailles, certificats et trophées en reconnaissance de leur créativité et de leur engagement. Les applaudissements et les sourires de fierté visibles sur les visages des lauréats ont illustré le succès de cette initiative. À travers leurs œuvres colorées, les jeunes ont mis en lumière les droits essentiels à l'éducation, à la parole, à la protection, aux loisirs et à un environnement sain.

Dhanishta TANIA

We seized this opportunity to reward All schools which had participated in the mural competition

On the Rights of Children, organised by the Office last November in the context of the Universal Childrens day



Chapter 5:

Rodrigues

Visit to Rodrigues

From 06 to 08 May 2026, a delegation of three investigators carried out an official visit to Rodrigues. The objectives of the visit were to:

- receive complaints from members of the public;
- conduct a follow-up meeting with Headmasters of Primary Schools on the implementation of the Rights, Respect, Responsibility and Resilience (4Rs) project;
- hold an information session with Fortified Learning Environment (FLE) team;
- visit a Residential Care Institution (RCI);
- participate in a radio programme on MBC;
- carry out a workshop with JADE Rodrigues.

Meeting with Headmasters

During the last 2 visits of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, investigators carried out workshops with Headmasters, Educators and School Inspectors of the Primary Education Sector in Rodrigues on the Rights Respect Responsibility Resilience (4Rs) project. A follow-up meeting was held with around 20 Headmasters to assess the implementation of the 4Rs project, identify good practices, and highlight challenges encountered.

Strategies

Schools have adopted a range of approaches to integrate the 4Rs principles into the school environment.

a) Whole-School Activities

- Morning assemblies are used to promote core values through activities such as storytelling, songs, poems, and role plays, often following an annual schedule involving different classes.
- Display of students' work (posters, drawings) on school notice boards.
- Sensitisation of parents on 4Rs during PTA meetings.
- Promotion of a positive school climate through teachers modelling respectful behaviour.
- Establishment of initiatives such as "4Rs Wall of Fame" to recognise exemplary student behaviour.
- Training of selected upper-grade students as peer mediators to help resolve minor conflicts.
- Introduction of child-friendly complaint mechanisms in some schools.

b) Classroom-based activities

- Display of classroom rules and 4Rs-related materials.
- Use of storytelling, role play, debates, and group work to encourage discussion and reflection.
- Integration of educational videos, songs, and interdisciplinary lessons focusing on values and citizenship.
- Development of tools such as rights and responsibilities charts.
- Weekly discussions to reflect on behaviour and reinforce concepts.
- Use of art (drawing, posters) to enhance understanding.

- Introduction of anonymous question boxes for students.
- Rotational leadership roles (e.g., class captain) to promote responsibility and participation.

Challenges identified

- Limited time due to a heavy academic syllabus.
- Insufficient teaching and learning resources.
- Difficulty among some pupils in understanding and internalising 4Rs concepts, particularly the link between rights and responsibilities.
- Reluctance of some pupils to participate in interactive activities.
- Need for continuous reinforcement to sustain behavioural change.
- Limited financial and material support for broader awareness initiatives.

Suggestions for further support

- Allocation of a dedicated time slot for 4Rs activities in the school timetable.
- Provision of additional teaching materials, including visual and multimedia resources.
- Organisation of continuous professional development and refresher training for educators.
- Development of age-appropriate resources.
- Encouragement of small group activities to enhance participation.
- Increased parental involvement in value-based initiatives.

Progress and Impact

Headmasters reported several positive outcomes following the implementation of the 4Rs project:

- Reduction in cases of indiscipline and conflict among pupils.
- Improved peer relationships, cooperation, and empathy.
- Creation of a more inclusive, respectful, and supportive school environment.
- Increased student confidence, participation, and sense of responsibility.
- Greater openness among pupils in expressing their views.
- Enhanced parental engagement in school activities.
- Improved teamwork, motivation, and resilience among students.

Information Session with the Fortified Learning Environment (FLE) Team

An information session was held with members of the Fortified Learning Environment (FLE) team to enhance their understanding of child rights and the mandate of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. During the session, the investigators outlined the role and mission of the Office, emphasising its responsibility to promote and protect the rights and best interests of all children, in line with national legislation and international standards, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Particular emphasis was placed on the fundamental rights of the child, including the right to protection from harm, the right to education, participation, and development. The investigators also highlighted the critical role of FLE educators as frontline actors in safeguarding these rights. They were encouraged to adopt child-centred and rights-based approaches in their daily practice, to identify and respond to signs of vulnerability, and to create safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments. The session further provided an opportunity for discussion on practical challenges faced by educators and ways to

strengthen collaboration with relevant stakeholders to ensure the effective protection of children.

Two-day workshop with JADE Rodrigues

As part of its outreach activities during the mission to Rodrigues, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children conducted a two-day training workshop with members of JADE Rodrigues (Jeunes Ambassadeurs des Droits de l'Enfant). The workshop aimed to strengthen participants' understanding of children's rights, enhance their role as child rights ambassadors, and support the development of a structured action plan for future activities.

Objectives of the Workshop

The workshop's objective was to:

- Promote awareness of children's rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC);
- Explain the role and mandate of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children;
- Strengthen participants' capacity to advocate for and defend children's rights;
- Encourage teamwork, communication, and peer engagement;
- Support JADE Rodrigues in evaluating its past activities and planning future initiatives.

Day 1 – 07 May 2026

The workshop commenced with an introductory session, including the presentation of new members, which contributed to creating a friendly and inclusive environment among participants. The investigators conducted interactive sessions on children's rights, focusing on the importance of understanding and defending these rights, as well as the role of the Ombudsperson in addressing situations where children's rights are violated.

Participants engaged in group activities aimed at building teamwork and communication skills. These included ice-breaker exercises and small group discussions. In addition, participants were divided into groups to propose ideas for future JADE activities. Each group presented its suggestions, promoting active participation and exchange of views.

Day 2 – 08 May 2026

The second day focused on deepening participants' knowledge of children's rights, with particular emphasis on participation rights under the UNCRC and the ACRWC. Sessions were also delivered on the mission and objectives of JADE, as well as on the role of young ambassadors in promoting child rights.

Participants reviewed the activities carried out by JADE Rodrigues for the period 2025–2026 and engaged in group reflections on achievements and challenges. They also worked on practical case scenarios to identify situations where children's rights may be violated and discussed appropriate responses.

Further sessions were dedicated to strategic planning, including identifying ways to achieve JADE's mission and developing a calendar of activities for 2026–2027. Information was also provided on the induction ceremony and the expectations from members moving forward.

Conclusion

The workshop was interactive, informative, and well-received by participants. It successfully reinforced the capacity of JADE members to act as advocates for children's rights within their communities. The combination of theoretical input and practical group work contributed to a better understanding of rights-based approaches and encouraged active youth participation in child protection initiatives.

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children notes the importance of continued engagement with JADE Rodrigues to sustain momentum and support the effective implementation of planned activities.



Visit to Rodrigues (II)

From 10 to 12 June 2026, Mrs. A. Ghoorah, Ombudsperson for Children; Mrs. L. Jhugroo, Secretary, Ombudsperson for Children's Office and Mrs. S. Johaheer, Investigator, carried out an official visit to Rodrigues.

The objectives of the visit were to:

- Present the Annual Report 2024-2025 of the Ombudsperson for Children, regarding key concerns and recommendations relevant to Rodrigues;
- Conduct a roundtable discussion with stakeholders working with children;
- Conduct the induction ceremony of JADE members;
- Visit the Centre de Formation Agricole Frère Rémy, Camp du Roi;
- Receive complaints from members of the public; and
- Participate in a radio programme on MBC.

Day 1

1. Presentation of Annual Report 2024-2025

On 10 June 2026, the Ombudsperson for Children (OC) presented her Annual Report 2024-2025 highlighting key concerns affecting children in Rodrigues and recommendations made by the Office.

The OC highlighted the increasing concerns relating to serious behavioural issues among children, which remain a challenge in both Mauritius and Rodrigues. She also raised concerns regarding the erosion of values among children and the need for stronger collaboration between all stakeholders working in child protection.

The OC welcomed the establishment of the Children's Court in Rodrigues, which represents an important step towards strengthening child justice mechanisms.

A copy of the Annual Report was handed over to Mrs. Marie Christiane Agathe, Commissioner for Women Affairs and Others family welfare as well as other stakeholders present.

Roundtable with Stakeholders working with Children

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children organised a three-hour roundtable discussion with stakeholders working with children at Cotton Bay Hotel, Pointe Cotton.

The guest speaker was Mrs. Marie Christiane Agathe, Commissioner for Women Affairs and Others.

Key Issues Raised by the Commissioner for Women Affairs and Others

The Commissioner highlighted the increasing challenges affecting children in Rodrigues, including:

- Serious behavioural concerns among children;
- Alcohol consumption among children even at primary school level;
- Sexualised behaviours among young children;
- Excessive use of mobile phones and technology;
- The need for parents to assume greater responsibility in the upbringing of their children.

She stressed that parents and schools should not ignore warning signs and that schools have a responsibility to report concerns affecting children.

She also highlighted that Rodrigues, being a small community, has traditionally been

characterised by mutual support and solidarity, and encouraged stakeholders to maintain compassion and collective responsibility towards children.

Other matters raised included:

- The need for the establishment of a Jardin d'Enfants;
- The organisation of a large Christmas tree/decorative event for children in Rodrigues;
- The construction of a new shelter at Pointe Venus;
- The development of a Probation Home and Hostel.

The Ombudsperson for Children, on her part, addressed the issues of Parental responsibility and positive parenting; the Impact of social media on children and young people; the “4 Rs” approach (Rights, Respect, Responsibility, Resilience) and the Importance of collaboration between stakeholders. The OC indicated that JADE members in Rodrigues could be involved in supporting and providing ideas for activities benefiting children.

Three main themes were introduced for group discussions:

1. Children with serious behavioural concerns;
2. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN);
3. Parental responsibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

A. Children with Serious Behavioural Concerns

1. Request for BPF Officers to Work in Civilian Clothes

The Brigade pour la protection de la famille (BPF) highlighted that the Police uniform may sometimes discourage children from sharing information due to fear or apprehension.

They proposed that BPF officers be allowed to work in civilian clothing when engaging with children, to facilitate communication and build trust.

2. Education on the Risks of Technology

Stakeholders highlighted the need to educate children from an early age on the risks associated with technology and social media at school level.

3. Organisation of Boot Camps

Stakeholders recommended the organisation of structured boot camps to help children manage anger, develop discipline and channel their energy positively.

4. Establishment of Children Clubs

It was recommended that children clubs be established in different areas of Rodrigues to promote children's rights and responsibilities, develop leadership skills and encourage positive engagement among children.

5. Development of Probation Home/Hostel

Stakeholders stressed the need for the Probation Home/Hostel structure to be operationalised as soon as possible.

B. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

- Stakeholders highlighted several challenges affecting children with SEN, including:
- Lack of specialised training;
- Insufficient human resources;
- Lack of equipment and appropriate facilities;

- Need for proper identification of children's specific needs and development of individual support plans.

The need for stronger involvement and support from SEN services was highlighted.

Recommendations

1. Short-Term Measures

- Identify at least one classroom and one or two resource persons in each school to support children with SEN;
- Develop training programmes for existing staff focusing on:
 - Behaviour management;
 - Sensory needs;
 - Speech and language difficulties;
 - Academic support;
- Include teaching assistants and carers in the establishment structure;
- Strengthen training of support teachers.

2. Long-Term Measures

- Establish day treatment facilities and alternative educational settings for children with severe behavioural needs before resorting to justice mechanisms;
- Develop services for learners with disabilities at secondary and vocational levels;
- Ensure continuity of support into adulthood.

The OC highlighted the need for proper data collection on the number of children requiring support, their needs and the resources required.

C. Parental Responsibility

Stakeholders raised concerns regarding declining parental involvement and shifting responsibilities towards institutions.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen parental authority and encourage parents to act as positive role models;
2. Introduce parenting education programmes before school enrolment;
3. Promote civic education and psychoeducation at school level;
4. Encourage greater parental involvement in schools;
5. Increase the number of Psychologist posted to Rodrigues (presently only one to service whole Rodrigues)

Day 2

1. Induction Ceremony of JADE Rodrigues Members

On 11 June 2026, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OOC) conducted the induction ceremony of JADE Rodrigues members at Cotton Bay Hotel. The JADE Rodrigues team comprises a total of 36 members, including 10 members forming the Executive Committee.

The ceremony was graced by Mr. Franceau Grandcourt, Chief Commissioner of Rodrigues; Mrs. Marie Christiane Agathe, Commissioner for Women Affairs and Others family Welfare; and Mr. Shezaad Auchoybur, Manager – Sustainability & Data Protection, Emtel Ltd.

During the ceremony, the Chief Commissioner encouraged JADE members to become future leaders and highlighted the importance of personal development through the concept of

“Ikigai”. He expressed his appreciation and welcomed JADE’s presence and contribution within the Rodrigues community.

The pledging ceremony was conducted in a joyful and meaningful atmosphere, reflecting the pride and commitment of the children as they embraced their role as young ambassadors of the Ombudsperson for Children. Tatiana Chinien, President of JADE Rodrigues, and Samuel Vantard, Vice-President of JADE Rodrigues, delivered impactful speeches during the ceremony, reaffirming their dedication and commitment towards promoting the rights and well-being of children. They also presented a video highlighting the activities undertaken throughout the past year, which was warmly appreciated by all those present.

2. Complaints from Members of the Public

On the same day, the OOC received members of the public at the Commission for Environment, Port Mathurin, to listen to their concerns and complaints. Action has already been initiated with respect to these two cases.

Day 3

1. Visit to Centre de Formation Agricole Frère Rémi, Camp du Roi

On 12 June 2026, the delegation visited the Centre de Formation Agricole Frère Rémi at Camp du Roi and met with a representative of the institution. The Centre de Formation Agricole Frère Rémi is a training institution dedicated to young people aged between 13 and 21 years, offering training in agriculture, livestock farming, beekeeping and horticulture.

The Centre welcomes approximately forty students annually and provides support to young people, including those experiencing learning difficulties. The Centre has received funding at different levels to strengthen its programmes and assist children in need.

The Centre de Formation Agricole Frère Rémi operates under the auspices of the Apostolic Vicariate of Rodrigues. The institution commenced its theoretical and practical training activities in 1988 with five young boys and girls who had not successfully completed the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE).

The visit provided an opportunity for the delegation to learn more about the work carried out by the Centre in promoting skills development, inclusion and empowerment of young people in Rodrigues.

2. Blood donation at Grande Montagne organised by EMTEL:

On our way to Camp du Roi we stopped at La Grande Montagne where there was a blood donation organised by EMTEL

We had the opportunity to chat with a few students, reps from EMTEL and a few members of the staff, while Inv Mrs Johaheer donated blood

3. Participation in MBC Rodrigues Radio Programme

In the radio programme, the Ombudsperson for Children shared the highlights of her mission in Rodrigues and emphasised the importance of strengthening family ties and promoting a supportive environment for children.

Mrs. S. Johaheer spoke about the short clip competition entitled “Our Life Matters: Nou Lavi Pli Importan ki Ladrog” and encouraged more schools in Rodrigues to participate in this initiative, which aims to raise awareness among children and young people on the importance of making positive choices and protecting their well-being.



Celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children marked the International Day of the Girl Child on Friday, 10 October 2025 at the MITD Mont Roches Training Centre, Beau Bassin, starting at 12:30 hrs. The activity aimed to raise awareness on girls' rights, promote gender equality, and encourage young people to reflect on inclusion and respect.

The program began with a welcome and opening address, followed by an inspiring address by Mrs A. Ghoorah, Ombudsperson for Children, who highlighted the importance of standing up for girls' rights and empowering girls to pursue their ambitions without discrimination.

A key highlight of the session was a role play titled "The Only Girl in the Class", which depicted the experience of a girl entering a male-dominated plumbing course. Through this activity, participants explored issues of gender bias, exclusion, and the importance of allyship. The discussion that followed allowed participants to share their thoughts on fairness, inclusion, and real-life experiences.



Participants then viewed a short film segment from Girl Rising, showcasing powerful stories of girls overcoming barriers to claim their right to education. This was followed by small group discussions, facilitated by Investigators, where participants reflected on the challenges faced by girls, the importance of courage and resilience, and how both boys and girls can support gender equality in Mauritius.

During the group sharing and reflection session, participants presented their ideas and insights. The activity concluded with key messages emphasising respect, support, and equal potential for all, reinforcing the importance of creating inclusive environments for girls.

The session ended with closing remarks and a vote of thanks, marking a meaningful and engaging celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child.

Sensitisation Activities Conducted with Children Aged 5–12 Years of NGO Ti Rayon Soleil

On 25 November 2025, Investigators Mrs. Y. Rhungapen-Veeramootoo and Mrs. S. Johaheer conducted a series of sensitisation activities, delivered in a pedagogically adapted manner, with approximately 30 children aged 5 to 12 years of Ti Rayon Soleil at their premises in Vacoas. The session, was organised at the request of the NGO and, formed part of broader efforts to promote child rights and strengthen protective behaviours among young children.

Objectives of the Session

The activities aimed to:

- Introduce the children to the role and functions of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children.
- Increase awareness of their fundamental rights, including their rights to protection, health, identity, non-discrimination, education and participation.
- Educate children on the four forms of violence and identify trusted persons to report to when in danger.
- Foster reflection, participation, and self-expression through interactive and child-friendly exercises.

Summary of Activities

Introduction to Child Rights

Investigators explained key child rights in simple and accessible ways. Using everyday examples and friendly language, children were guided to understand what each right means in their lives and why these rights matter.

Brief overview of the forms of violence and whom to contact in case of danger

The four forms of violence—physical, emotional, sexual (good touch/bad touch), and neglect—were explained in a child-sensitive manner. Children were encouraged to identify trusted adults (parents, teachers, police officers, social workers) and to speak up whenever they feel unsafe.

Video Clip on the Convention on the Rights of the Child

The children viewed a short educational clip on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Following the video, the investigators facilitated a brief discussion that encouraged the children to reflect on challenges faced by children around the world, including famine, the plight of child soldiers, and child labour.

Interactive and Pedagogical Activities

• “Yes/No Rights Circle”

Children formed a circle and listened to statements read out by the Investigators.

- If the statement represented a **right**, they raised their hands.
- If it did **not**, they said “No.”

Examples used:

- “Children have the right to go to school.” — Yes
- “Children must buy toys every week.” — No
- “Children have the right to be protected from harm.” — Yes
- “Children must do adult work.” — No

This exercise effectively strengthened the children’s awareness and understanding of their rights.

• “Rights Circle Pass”

Children sat in a circle and passed a soft ball while music played.

When the music stopped, the child holding the ball completed the sentence:

“I have the right to...”. The activity encouraged confidence, spontaneous expression, and understanding of individual rights.

• “Rights Freeze Game”

Children walked around the room in a circle. Upon hearing the investigator call “FREEZE!”, they struck a pose representing a specific right.

Examples:

- Education — children pretended to write.
- Protection — children hugged themselves like a shield.

Children were invited to explain why they chose their pose, reinforcing comprehension.

- Drawing Activity

Children received Bristol sheets, coloured crayons and markers.

They were invited to draw their favourite rights, and in the spirit of the festive season, some incorporated Christmas trees and holiday imagery into their art.

This activity allowed creativity, emotional expression, and consolidation of lessons learned.

Outcomes

- The children demonstrated active participation, curiosity, and understanding throughout the activities.
- They were able to identify key rights and articulate how these rights apply to their daily lives.
- The exercises enhanced their ability to recognise unsafe situations and identify trusted adults for support.
- Feedback and observation indicated that the children were happy, engaged, and enthusiastic, contributing to a positive and empowering learning environment.

Conclusion

The sensitisation session at Ti Rayon Soleil was successful in strengthening children's awareness of their rights and equipping them with foundational knowledge to protect themselves. The combination of visual, verbal, and movement-based activities proved effective for children aged 5–12 and fostered a safe, joyful, and educational atmosphere.



Glimpse of the activities

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Initiative of the National Assembly

The National Assembly of Mauritius organised activities related to the “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence”, a global initiative led by the United Nations.

The campaign aimed to sensitise the public on the prevention of all forms of violence, with particular emphasis on gender-based violence. A national competition opened to the public was held during the month of May 2025. Members of the public were invited to submit artistic creations reflecting the theme. Selected creative works were exhibited in the Sir Harilal Vaghjee Memorial Hall and within the precincts of the National Assembly.

The exhibition was officially opened on 25 November 2025 and ran until 10 December 2025.

The selected artworks formed part of a public awareness initiative, providing artists and citizens with a meaningful platform to use creativity as a tool for advocacy and social change and for the first time, the public could visit the exhibits in the National Assembly.

“UNiTE to End Digital Violence against All Women and Girls.”

To mark the 16 Days of Activism 2025, the Ministry of ICT, the MEHR, the MGEFW and the OOC joined the global UNiTE 2025 Campaign under the theme: “UNiTE to End Digital Violence against All Women and Girls.” The 2025 campaign commemorated the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, highlighting digital violence as a rapidly growing and serious human rights concern that undermines gender equality.

Digital violence includes online harassment, cyberbullying, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, AI-generated deep fakes, hate speech, doxing, online stalking, grooming, and misogynistic online networks. Such abuse frequently extends beyond digital platforms, leading to real-life harm including physical violence and, in extreme cases, femicide. Women and girls — particularly those with public visibility and those facing intersecting forms of discrimination — are disproportionately affected.

Digital abuse is difficult to address due to weak laws, limited accountability of tech platforms, anonymity of perpetrators, cross-border crimes, and emerging risks linked to artificial intelligence. Despite these challenges, recent global and regional actions—such as the Global Digital Compact, the UN Cybercrime Convention, and new UN and regional policies—show growing momentum to tackle the issue.

The UNiTE 2025 campaign called on governments, tech companies, donors, and individuals to take concrete action: strengthen laws and enforcement, improve platform safety and accountability, fund feminist and digital rights organizations, support survivors, and challenge harmful online norms.

The campaign promotes collective responsibility to ensure digital spaces are safe, inclusive, and free from violence for all women and girls.

Press conference to launch UNiTE 2025 campaign – 24 December 2025

During the press conference launching the UNiTE 2025 Campaign – ‘Fam kon to droit online’, the Ombudsperson for Children, Mrs. A. Ghoorah, expressed strong support for the 2025 National Campaign on Digital Safety and Empowerment of Women and Girls. She underscored the increasing online risks faced by children — particularly girls — including cyberbullying and sexual exploitation. With alarming global data indicating that one in five girls experiences online sexual violence before the age of 18, digital safety must be recognised as a fundamental child rights issue.

The OC emphasised on the responsibility of parents, educators, communities, and

institutions to educate children on responsible digital use, protect their privacy, and create safe online environments. She also spoke on the heightened vulnerability of girls in digital spaces and the need to encourage boys to act as allies in promoting respect and equality online. Stronger awareness, reporting tools, collaboration, and stricter digital protection laws are essential to ensure every child, particularly every girl, is safe, respected, and heard online.

Launch of Boite a Lettres LA COLOMBE at the National Assembly - 1 December 2025

The launch of Boîte à Lettres La Colombe was held on 1 December 2025 at the Sir Harilal Vaghjee Memorial Hall, Port Louis.

La Colombe forms part of the national campaign “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence”, organised by the National Assembly of Mauritius in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) offices in Mauritius and Seychelles. The campaign seeks to raise awareness and prevent all forms of violence, with a particular focus on gender-based violence.

The above named project La Colombe, aims to provide children with a safe, confidential, and accessible means of seeking help. Specially designed letterboxes will be installed in schools across the country, enabling children experiencing difficulties, distress, or abuse to share their concerns in writing.

This initiative was officially launched by the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Dr Mahend Gungapersad, and the Speaker of the National Assembly, Mrs Shirin Aumeeruddy-Cziffra, in the presence of Junior Ministers, Members of Parliament, and representatives of the Parliamentary Gender Equality Caucus and others, including a group of children from Rodrigues.

The letters will be handled with strict confidentiality and reviewed by responsible adults guided by strong ethical standards to ensure appropriate follow-up and support.

Closing Ceremony of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence- 10 Dec 2025

The closing ceremony of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence was held on 10 December 2025, marking the conclusion of the 16-day national campaign aimed at raising awareness and strengthening collective action to eliminate violence against women and girls.

The ceremony was attended by Senior Investigator, Mr. I. Bawamia. The event featured children who had participated in the artwork activities organised by the National Assembly as part of the campaign. The children were presented with certificates in recognition of their meaningful contributions and engagement in promoting messages against gender-based violence. The event also featured sessions with the youths, namely the ‘Jeunes Parlementaires de l’Océan Indien’, members of the National Youth Parliament and a few JADE members from the OOC. They had the opportunity to have their voices heard through a model parliamentary session.

Human Rights Day 2025 – 10 December 2025

The OC also attended the official commemoration of the Human Rights Day 2025 on the theme ‘Human Rights – Our Everyday Essentials’ at the Henessy Park Hotel, Ebene. It is a platform to reaffirm the shared commitments of all stakeholders to human dignity, equality and universal rights. The function was graced by His Excellency, the President of

the Republic. All speakers highlighted that human rights are universal and international. The theme of 2025 carries a profound message: human rights are fundamental to our dignity and vital in our daily lives, be it at home, workplace, school, the community and the way in which we treat one another. Everyday essentials are sine qua non and human rights form part of these essentials.

Launch of Videos DIVA – 10 December 2025



Launch of Digital Safety Campaign

A Digital Safety campaign was launched at Voilà Bagatelle as part of the national commemoration of International Human Rights Day and it also marked the closing of the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, observed under the theme “UNiTE to End Digital Violence Against All Women and Girls.” The ceremony was attended by the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, Mrs Marie Arianne Navarre-Marie; the Minister of Education and Human Resource, Dr Mahend Gungapersad; the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation (ICT), Dr Avinash Ramtohl; the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Mauritius and Seychelles, Mrs Lisa Simrique Singh; and the Ombudsperson for Children, Mrs Aneeta Ghoorah; along with several other personalities.

The address of the OC during the press conference on digital violence, focused on children’s rights in the digital space, their safety and the responsibility of adults. While the digital world offers many opportunities for learning and communication, it also exposes children to serious risks such as cyberbullying, sextortion, grooming, doxing, data misuse, and harmful content.

The OC emphasised that children’s rights online are the same as offline—including the right to protection, privacy, participation, information, and a safe environment. However, the virtual space often lacks clear boundaries between rights and responsibilities.

The OC called for shared responsibility among governments, technology companies, schools, parents, and caregivers. Parents play a critical role not through excessive surveillance, but by guidance, dialogue, trust, and setting age-appropriate rules, especially in the context of changing family structures.

The speech also highlighted four key values: Rights, Responsibilities, Respect, and Resilience. Digital violence goes beyond insults and includes harassment, identity theft, humiliation, and discrimination, with severe psychological consequences for children.

Resilience must be built by equipping children with the skills to understand their rights, recognize abuse, seek help, and safely navigate digital spaces—while reaffirming that adults bear primary responsibility for protection.

The OC urged digital platforms to strengthen child-safe designs and reporting mechanisms, schools to reinforce digital education and empathy, and public authorities to adopt stronger protective measures. A direct message was also addressed to children, encouraging vigilance, reporting abuse, and mutual respect.

The speech concluded with a commendation of the United Nations’ initiative and a reaffirmation of the commitment of the OOC to continued collaboration in promoting a safe, inclusive, and protective digital environment for every child.

INAUGURATION OF THE NEW OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN

On 04 December 2025, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children hosted an inauguration ceremony for its new office premises located on the 5th floor of Ebene Heights. The event also provided an opportunity to hold the Prize-Giving Ceremony of the Artwork Competition 2025. The ceremony was graced by Mrs. Shirin Aumeeruddy-Cziffra, former Ombudsperson for Children and current Speaker of the National Assembly, who officiated as Chief Guest and formally inaugurated the new office. A few Young Ambassadors of the Ombudsperson for Children (JADE) of Rodrigues and Mauritius were also present at the ceremony.

During her keynote address, Mrs. Aumeeruddy-Cziffra highlighted the vital role of the Ombudsperson for Children in safeguarding and promoting the rights and well-being of all children in the Republic of Mauritius.

She underscored that:

- The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children plays an essential role as an independent institution for safeguarding children’s rights.
- The Ombudsperson for Children must remain steadfast, fearless, and uncompromising in defending children’s rights.
- The institution should continue to make strong, evidence-based recommendations to uphold the best interests of the child at all times.

In her address, the Ombudsperson for Children, Mrs. Aneeta Ghoorah, emphasised that the inauguration of the new Office is not merely the opening of a modern space, but a reaffirmation of a deep commitment to the rights, dignity, and protection of every child. She expressed her hope that the new Office will serve as a beacon of justice, courage, and hope for all children in Mauritius. She further reaffirmed the ongoing commitment to WORK in the BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD.

PRIZE-GIVING CEREMONY OF THE ARTWORK COMPETITION 2025

To advance the children’s agenda, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children organised an Artwork Competition on the theme “My Right for a Childhood Free from Violence” to mark the celebration of Universal Children’s Day 2025. This initiative was also aligned with the National Assembly’s “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence” campaign, linking children’s rights with broader efforts to raise awareness about violence and abuse.

The competition encouraged children to express their views creatively while highlighting their right to live free from all forms of violence, abuse, and neglect.

The competition was extended to two categories:

- Primary school pupils (5–12 years)
- Secondary school students (12–18 years)

A total of 160 children participated in the competition; 78 entries in the primary category and 82 for secondary category.

The artworks were reviewed by a panel comprising Dr. Nirmala Luckeenarain, Artist and Lecturer at the MGI, Mrs. Ramloll, Art Teacher at Queen Elizabeth College and Mr. I. Bawamia, Investigator at the OOC. The Artworks were assessed based on the following criteria: Relevance, Creativity, A3 size format, New or existing creations in any artistic medium, and Expression of both emotions (such as grief or sadness) and positive values (such as empathy, love, respect, and kindness).

Winners of the Artwork Competition

Category: 5–11 years

- 2nd Runner-up: Mokshad Mulloo
- 1st Runner-up: Reyanna Sonea
- Grand Winner: Kritin Bondha

Category: 12–18 years

- 2nd Runner-up: Darisha Payendee
- 1st Runner-up: Arshi Munbodh
- Grand Winner: Ourvashi Narainen

The winners of the Artwork Competition received shields, certificates of participation, and hampers of goodies.

The Artwork Competition 2025 not only showcased the remarkable creativity and talent of children across Mauritius but also highlighted their deep understanding of the importance of a safe and nurturing childhood. Through their powerful artistic expressions, participants reaffirmed the urgent need to protect every child from violence, abuse, and neglect. The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children extends its warmest congratulations to all winners and participants for their meaningful contributions. Their artworks serve as a reminder that when children are given a voice, they inspire positive change and help build a more compassionate and protective society for all.



Validation Workshop on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill

Investigator Mrs. S. Johaheer attended a two-day validation workshop on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill, organised by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (MGEFW) in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), held on 26 and 27 January 2026 at the Caudan Arts Centre.

The workshop served as a consultative platform bringing together key stakeholders to review, discuss, and validate the provisions of the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill. The objective was to examine the proposed legislative framework, gather feedback, and formulate recommendations aimed at strengthening the prevention of domestic abuse and enhancing protection mechanisms for victims, in line with national priorities and international standards.

Key Observations and Innovations in the Draft Bill

The Draft Domestic Abuse Bill introduces several innovative and expanded provisions compared to the former Act. Notably, it broadens the scope of protection and incorporates new concepts and definitions, including:

- Introduction of the concept of “adult interdependent relationship”, inclusive of same-sex relationships.
- Inclusion of a clear definition of physical violence.
- Introduction of the offence of “aggravated assault”.
- Expansion of the definition of “aggrieved person” to include a child.
- Provision for Exclusion Orders.
- Introduction of ‘rehabilitation programmes’ designed for persons who have committed acts of domestic abuse.
- Recognition of economic violence, including matters related to property.
- Clarification that the Act shall apply in addition to and not in derogation from the Children’s Act 2020.
- General consensus that feminicide should not be included in the Domestic Abuse Bill but addressed under the Criminal Code.
- Inclusion of self-harm as a form of emotional or psychological abuse.
- Expansion of emotional and psychological abuse to include situations where an adult repeatedly insults or denigrates an elderly parent.
- Incorporation of the Best Interests Principle.
- Introduction of provisions for mandatory and general reporting.
- Provision for applications for Interim Orders through electronic mail.
- Introduction of audio and visual recording mechanisms.
- Specification of timeframes for hearings.
- Power of the Court to make ancillary orders in respect of furniture and other household effects.
- Requirement for reports on compliance.

Protection Notice

The MGEFW proposed the introduction of a Protection Notice, whereby a police officer, having reasonable grounds to believe that an act of domestic violence has been committed, may issue such a notice prior to lodging an application for a Protection Order, with the aim of ensuring immediate protection for the aggrieved person.

However, the Police Force expressed reservations, indicating that such measures are already being undertaken in practice. The MGEFW indicated that further consultations would be held with the Police Force and the Attorney General’s Office on this matter.

One-Stop Shop

The concept of a One-Stop Shop was raised during discussions; however, the MGEFW clarified that it would not be included in the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill.

Conclusion

The validation workshop does not mark the finalisation of the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill. The MGEFW indicated that further validation workshops would be organised to continue consultations and refine the Bill before its final submission.

Sensitisation Session at Absa Bank

Upon the request of Absa Bank, two Investigators, Mrs S. Johaheer and Mrs B. Jogarah, were delegated as resource persons to conduct an awareness session entitled “Empowering Parents to Protect Children from Violence” for the staff of the bank. The CEO of the Absa Bank, Mr. Dajee and the Ombudsperson for Children, Mrs. A. Ghoorah were present at the session.

Objectives of the Session

- Enhance awareness of the role and mandate of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children.
- Increase parents’ understanding of the forms of violence affecting children (physical, emotional, and digital).
- Build parental capacity to prevent and respond to violence through a rights-based approach.
- Promote open, respectful and trusting communication between parents and children.

Key Areas Covered:

i. Understanding the Role of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children and Its Investigation Process

Participants received an overview of the Office’s mandate, its investigation procedures, and examples of pertinent cases handled.

ii. Parenting in the Contemporary Context

Today’s children are growing up amid rapid technological change, shifting social expectations and a web of complex realities—including climate change, pandemics, heightened academic pressures, evolving family structures and the demands of digital life—all of which call for parents to continually adapt their approaches.

iii. How to Support Children with Disabilities

The session highlighted the importance of seeing the child as an individual first—someone with talents, emotions and aspirations—rather than through the narrow lens of disability. Parents were encouraged to embrace nurturing, empowering and inclusive practices that support each child’s full potential.

iv. Understanding Violence Against Children

This segment addressed:

- The forms and impact of violence, with reference to Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 16 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.
- How children build internal schemas through repeated experiences of trust and care. Two scenarios on “spilling the juice” were enacted to illustrate how parental reactions influence brain development, emotional regulation and the child’s sense of self and safety.
- The “traffic lights of the brain” model—red (survival), yellow (emotional) and green

(thinking)—to help parents understand children’s emotional states.

- The five forms of violence: physical, sexual, emotional, neglect and digital. All forms of violence harm children’s development and sense of safety. Protection is a fundamental right, rooted in the inherent vulnerability of childhood.
- The shared responsibility of all adults—within families, schools, communities, police, judiciary, child protection services, and the private sector— to safeguard children.
- The impact of smartphones on childhood and emerging concerns regarding mental health and digital exposure.
- Legal frameworks

v. Practical Parenting Wisdom

The session concluded with reflections on empathy, patience and acceptance as essential ingredients for nurturing self-esteem and independence. Parents were encouraged to set aside unhelpful guilt: parenting is not the pursuit of perfection, but the steady guidance of growing children.

Intervention by the Ombudsperson for Children

The Ombudsperson for Children, Mrs Aneeta Ghoorah, spoke on the “4 Rs”—Rights, Respect, Responsibility and Resilience—and highlighted the importance of cultivating resilience in children. She shared examples illustrating how children adapt, recover and thrive when given appropriate support.

Closing

The CEO of Absa Bank expressed appreciation to the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children for conducting the session. Staff members also shared what they had learned and how the session had benefitted them, noting the practical insights gained for their families.



International Autism Awareness Day 2026

On 2 April 2026, representatives of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children attended an Autism Awareness Workshop held at Vivea Business Park at 9.30 a.m. to mark International Autism Awareness Day.

The Office was invited by Ms Nadjah Abbasakoor, representing the Sunflower Foundation in Mauritius. The Sunflower Foundation works towards the inclusion of persons living with hidden disabilities and promotes greater awareness and understanding of neurodiversity within society. The workshop was guided by the Foundation's core principle that "Understanding leads to acceptance, and acceptance builds inclusion."

The event aimed at raising awareness on autism spectrum disorder, demystifying misconceptions surrounding the condition, and promoting more inclusive environments for autistic individuals. The workshop brought together professionals, parents, advocates, and stakeholders committed to improving understanding and support for persons on the autism spectrum.

One of the key presentations was delivered by Dr Véronique Lam, Paediatrician, on the topic "Autism Disorders – Understanding, Detecting and Supporting." Her presentation highlighted the importance of early detection, appropriate accompaniment, and the need for increased awareness among parents, educators, and healthcare professionals.

The workshop also included a moving testimony entitled "My Journey with Autism as a Neurodivergent Woman," shared by a woman and mother who was diagnosed with autism in adulthood. Her personal account provided valuable insight into the realities, challenges, and resilience of autistic women whose condition often remains undetected for many years.

Another emotional and impactful intervention came from a father who shared his lived experience raising his autistic son. His testimony illustrated both the daily challenges faced by families and the importance of acceptance, support systems, and inclusive attitudes within society.

In addition, Heypumpkin presented the importance of sensory products and adapted tools designed to support both children and adults on the autism spectrum. The presentation demonstrated how sensory-friendly equipment and adapted resources can significantly contribute to the well-being, comfort, learning, and inclusion of neurodivergent persons.

Overall, the workshop was highly engaging and informative. It contributed to building greater understanding of autism and reinforced the importance of fostering inclusive, compassionate, and supportive spaces for individuals with hidden disabilities. The event also highlighted the crucial role of awareness, education, and lived experiences in breaking stigma and promoting inclusion within Mauritian society.

Sensitisation Session at Ramnath Jeetah College (Boys)

On 11 May 2026, Investigators Mrs. S. Johaheer and Mrs. B. Jogarah conducted a sensitisation session on "Online Child Sexual Abuse" and the 4 "Rs" — Rights, Respect, Responsibility and Resilience — for 80 Grade 9 students of Ramnath Jeetah College (Boys).

The session started with the screening of a video on the role and functions of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. Students were introduced to the mandate of the Office.

The sensitisation session on Online Child Sexual Abuse focused on enabling students understand what constitutes online child sexual abuse, recognise risky online behaviour and grooming tactics, learn how boys can act responsibly online, and understand consent, respect, and digital accountability. Emphasis was laid on the fact that online child sexual abuse affects both girls and boys, and not just girls. Furthermore, different scenarios of online child sexual abuse were also presented to the students, followed by questions and discussions to encourage participation and critical thinking.

During the second part of the session, the investigators elaborated on the 4 “Rs” — Rights, Respect, Responsibility and Resilience — through concrete and relatable examples.

Three students also enacted a role play on bullying, which served to reinforce and demonstrate the lessons learnt during the session. The students showed great interest throughout the session and participated actively in the discussions and activities. The Educators present also demonstrated keen interest in the theme and expressed their appreciation at the end of the session.



Talk by the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OOC) during a 3-Day Sphere Standards and Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) Workshop

On 25 June 2026, Mrs. S. Johaheer, Investigator at the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OOC), delivered a 30-minute presentation during a 3-Day Sphere Standards and Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) workshop held at Workshop17, Telfair, Moka. The session was attended by 18 participants from various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

The presentation focused on the mandate and role of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, as well as on a survey report published by the Office in 2021.

The Investigator highlighted that the OOC is not a service provider but an independent oversight institution responsible for promoting and protecting the rights and best interests of children. She explained that the work of the Office is guided by the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Participants were sensitised on the four guiding principles of the UNCRC, namely:

1. Non-discrimination
2. The best interests of the child
3. The right to life, survival and development
4. Respect for the views of the child

The Investigator emphasised that these principles should be integrated when designing and implementing interventions, particularly when providing assistance to children and vulnerable communities. Taking into consideration these principles enable stakeholders to ensure that support provided is child-centred, inclusive and respectful of children's rights.

The Investigator also presented the 2021 survey report conducted at Résidence Anoska, highlighting its relevance as a tool to better understand the realities of the community. She explained that the objective of the survey was to enable residents of Résidence Anoska, NGOs and government institutions to identify the history, strengths and challenges of the community, thereby facilitating more effective interventions for children based on qualitative and quantitative data.

She further stressed that understanding the situation of children in a holistic manner is essential to effectively protect and promote their rights. Reliable qualitative and quantitative information is necessary to design appropriate programmes, allocate resources efficiently and provide quality assistance to children and families.

The relevance of using evidence-based data remains particularly significant in 2026, as coordinated interventions among communities, NGOs and government bodies require accurate information to address children's needs effectively and ensure that no child is left behind.

Training Session – TIPA “Facilit’Art: Sharing of Good Practices” Initiative

On 22 April 2026, Ms B. Jogarah, Investigator, acted as resource person at a training session organised by TIPA, located at Lot No. 4, Les Kocottes, St Pierre, Moka, under its annual “Facilit’Art – Sharing of Good Practices” initiative, held for staff members of the Fortified Learning Environment (FLE) Programme.

The session was designed to deepen participants’ understanding of children’s rights and the institutional frameworks in place for the protection of children. Presentations and discussions covered the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the mandate and role of the Ombudsperson for Children, and the responsibilities of citizens, parents, educators, and institutions in upholding and safeguarding children’s rights.

Particular emphasis was placed on key provisions of the Children’s Act 2020 pertaining to child protection, with specific focus on the obligation of mandatory reporting. Participants were reminded of the legal duty to report where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is in need of protection or has been subjected to abuse, neglect, or harm.

The session was participatory in nature and offered practical guidance to attendees on how to promote and protect children’s rights within their professional engagements with children.

A total of 18 participants were sensitised during the training session.

Roll out Programme on Comprehensive Sexuality Education

The Ministry of Health and Wellness, in collaboration with United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) organised a 5-days roll-out training of “Age-Appropriate Evidence-Based Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for out-of-school adolescents and youth in Mauritius.” Investigators, Mrs. S. Johaheer and Mrs. S.P. Mauree were delegated to attend the training.

Why focus on out of school young people?

Out of school young people by default cannot benefit from in-school comprehensive sexuality education that is provided in schools and are excluded from other school based social and health interventions that are systematically delivered within the formal education system. Out of school youth may be more likely to start having sexual intercourse, get pregnant or get someone pregnant, and get married early. Out of school young people are also more likely to take drugs or alcohol, which in turn impair judgement and increase sexual risk-taking.

AIM of the training

The aim of the training was to:

- (i) strengthen the national capacity to improve and expand comprehensive adolescent sexual and reproductive health services including HIV prevention; and
- (ii) provide guidance on how to work effectively with out of school young people in a gender and rights focused manner towards their optimal health and well-being.

Introduction on Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Comprehensive Sexuality Education is designed to help young people make decision about their sexual health, and to prepare them for the future.

Young people today face many challenges:

- Growing number of teenage pregnancies
- Dropping out of school
- Drinking alcohol and using drugs
- Getting raped
- Become infected with Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) or HIV (human immunodeficiency virus)
- Living with HIV

Adolescence is a time filled with excitement, new feeling and many unanswered questions, changes and difficult choices. Through the comprehensive sexuality education, adolescents can know the facts about their own sexuality, learn how to deal with their own sexuality and become responsible for their sexual behaviour and make responsible decisions about reproduction and parenthood.

Group work

Themes covered over the 5 days:

- Understanding self, values and rights
- Gender roles and equality
- Healthy relationship and communication
- Pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and HIV Prevention
- Consent, Safety and Gender-based Violence

Intersex children

Dr. Guness briefly highlighted the situation of intersex children, noting that some children are born with variations of sex characteristics. She explained that medical professionals generally advise parents to wait until the child reaches the age of 18 so that they can make their own informed decision regarding any surgical intervention. However, she pointed out that many parents still request the removal of one set of sex characteristics despite this medical guidance, and in some cases, certain doctors may proceed with such operations. At present, there is no established protocol to prevent parents from authorising these procedures, and decisions are often made on the basis of parental consent forms.

Takeaways from training:

- Your values should guide your behaviour, so that they plan an important role in the choices that you make. Being clear about your values will help you know what to do in different situations. Sometimes we act in ways that are not consistent with our values – this can be due to peer pressure or because we have adopted others' values that are not truly our own.
- Knowing what our human rights are can give us a sense of our dignity and worth as human beings. For everyone to enjoy their rights, we must all respect the rights of others.
- To know our bodies and the changes they go through helps us to value and respect our bodies more and to want to protect them. In addition to the physical changes boys



and girls go through in adolescence, there are also emotional and social changes that prepare us for adulthood. Just as the caterpillar goes into a cocoon and comes out a butterfly, adolescence is a process of growing into something beautiful and unique. It brings with it new and exciting challenges and experience.

- Human sexuality is an important part of who we are. Knowing about sexuality can help us understand the different feelings that we experience and how to manage them.
- Sexuality is much more than sex – it is an important part of who a person is and of life. Sexuality is shaped by the messages and values that a person learns from their family, from society and by other influences. Being attracted to someone is part of building friendships and relationships, but attraction does not have to lead to sexual intercourse. Young people, both males and females, need to be comfortable talking about sexuality and learn to be honest with each other about how they feel and what they want in a relationship.
- We have the potential to start to change what society and others expect of us in terms of our gender and to do more of what we feel is right for us. To build a society that respects the human rights of all people and to end the harmful effects of gender roles on both men and women, we need to challenge those roles and stereotypes. Both our society and our personal relationships will become stronger when men and women are equal.
- Communication is key to every aspect of our life and plays an especially important role in building and strengthening our relationships.
- An unintended pregnancy is one of the consequences of unprotected sexual intercourse. It brings a number of problems and difficulties for both teenagers and their families. Being engaged in sexual intercourse, young people need to think about the possible consequences and know how they can protect themselves. Abstinence, outercourse and male and female condoms are the most suitable methods because they protect against both pregnancy and STIs, including HIV.
- Traditional practices like child marriage, violate basic human rights of girls and women and can have serious physical, psychological, and social consequences.

The training included several engaging activities and exercises that helped explain the concept of comprehensive sexuality education.



2-day Workshop: Child Forensic Evaluations & Psychological Assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents a comprehensive account of the two-day workshop and training on Forensic Evaluations and Psychological Assessment conducted by Professor Dr Micki Pistorius, an internationally recognised forensic psychologist and expert in criminal and child protection matters. The training was organised by PedoSTop Mauritius with the objective of strengthening professional capacity in the assessment, investigation, and forensic interviewing of victims in cases of abuse, particularly child sexual abuse.

The training was highly technical and evidence-based, combining psychometric assessment, forensic psychology, legal principles, and interviewing methodologies relevant to child protection systems.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE TRAINING

The main objectives of the workshop were to:

- Enhance participants' understanding of forensic evaluations versus clinical assessments;
- Introduce and explain the application of psychometric and personality assessment tools;
- Strengthen skills in forensic interviewing of children;
- Improve understanding of trauma, memory, and disclosure in child sexual abuse cases;
- Emphasise the importance of evidence-based investigations and factual substantiation of allegations; and
- Link forensic practice with legal principles, especially the Best Interests of the Child.

3. PSYCHOMETRIC & PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT TOOLS COVERED

Professor Dr Pistorius provided in-depth explanations on the theoretical foundations, applications, and limitations of the following assessment tools:

3.1 Adult Wechsler Test

This test is widely used for assessing cognitive functioning and intelligence in adults, particularly in forensic settings where cognitive capacity, judgment, and reasoning are in question.

3.2 Psychometric Tests

Participants were introduced to the general principles of psychometrics, including reliability, validity, standardisation, and objectivity in assessment. Emphasis was placed on using psychometric tools strictly within professional competence and ensuring proper interpretation supported by empirical data.

3.3 Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory – 2 (MMPI-2)

The MMPI-2 was presented as one of the most reliable and widely used forensic personality inventories. It assists in detecting psychopathology, assessing personality structure, and identifying possible manipulation, malingering, or defensiveness. Its forensic relevance in criminal investigations, custody evaluations, and abuse cases was discussed extensively.

3.4 Garos Sexual Behaviour Inventory

This inventory is utilised for assessing sexual behaviour patterns, identifying deviant sexual interests, and supporting risk assessment in sexual offence cases. Dr Pistorius highlighted the necessity for careful interpretation and strict ethical safeguards when using this tool.

3.5 Jung Personality Questionnaire

This questionnaire assists in identifying personality types, cognitive styles, and behavioural tendencies. While not determinative on its own in forensic matters, it may support a broader psychological profile when combined with other assessments.

4. SUBSTANTIATION OF ALLEGATIONS WITH FACTS AND PROOF

A core principle emphasised throughout the training was that all allegations must be substantiated by facts, corroborative evidence, and objective findings. Dr Pistorius stressed that assumptions, speculation, or emotionally driven conclusions weaken investigations. Evidence must be objective, verifiable, and properly documented. Forensic professionals must be prepared for cross-examination in court. Inaccurate or poorly substantiated reports may compromise justice, harm victims, and result in wrongful accusations.

5. FORENSIC REPORT WRITING: PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATION

During the training, Dr Pistorius walked participants through one of her own forensic reports, providing practical insight into the structure of a forensic report, the use of language in court-admissible documents, and the separation of facts, observations, test results, and professional opinions. The importance of neutrality, objectivity, and professional accountability was strongly emphasised.

6. LEGAL FRAMEWORK: McCall vs McCall SA 201 – BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD

The landmark South African case of McCall vs McCall SA 201 was discussed with a specific focus on the Best Interests of the Child Principle. The case highlighted key considerations including the emotional, psychological, and physical well-being of the child, stability and security, and parental capacity. Participants were made to appreciate how forensic evaluations directly inform judicial decision-making in matters affecting children.

7. ALLEGATIONS, DISCLOSURE & REPORTING OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Dr Pistorius stated that more than one-third of suspected child sexual abuse victims never disclose, and that many victims disclose only once in their lifetime. Barriers to disclosure include fear, shame, loyalty to the abuser, threats, and trauma-related memory suppression. This underscores the critical importance of getting the first interaction right, creating safe and neutral environments for disclosure, and avoiding repeated, poorly conducted interviews which may retraumatise the child.

8. TRAUMA AND MEMORY

Trauma impacts the encoding, storage, and recall of memory. Source monitoring was explained as the differentiation between memories that are experienced versus those that are suggested or imagined. The distinction between script memory (generalised recollections of repeated events) and episodic memory (specific and detailed recollections of a particular incident) was emphasised. Forensic interviewers should aim to trigger episodic memory, as it provides richer detail and greater evidentiary value.

9. FORENSIC INTERVIEWING: PRINCIPLES AND PROTOCOL

A structured forensic interviewing protocol must be followed to obtain reliable and legally defensible information. A forensic interview is investigative in nature, focused on fact-finding, and evidence-oriented. It is not therapeutic and not clinical. There must be no play, no drawing, and no suggestive prompts. The interviewer must avoid leading questions, remain neutral and objective, allow the child to narrate freely, and be comfortable with silence, as silence often facilitates recall. There is both an art and

a science behind proper forensic interviewing sys Dr Pistorius.

Dr Pistorius clearly distinguished between a forensic interview, conducted for investigation and court purposes, and a clinical interview, which forms part of a therapeutic or treatment plan.

10. FORENSIC EVALUATION VS CLINICAL EVALUATION

A forensic evaluation is investigation-oriented, prepared for court use, strictly objective and evidence-based, and conducted in a neutral stance since the client is usually a litigant. Its findings may directly impact judicial outcomes.

A clinical evaluation is treatment-oriented, supportive in nature, part of a helping relationship, and aimed at diagnosis and treatment planning. The client seeks help voluntarily and findings guide therapy rather than legal decision-making.

11. KEY TAKEAWAYS

The training has significant implications for the work of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, particularly in ensuring that all child abuse allegations are investigated using forensic best practices. It highlights the need for proper forensic interview rooms, trained forensic interviewers, and strong multidisciplinary collaboration. It also reinforces the importance of strengthening the quality and credibility of psychosocial and court-related child protection reports, while avoiding “retraumatisation” of children, improper interviewing techniques, and weak evidentiary documentation.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Regular forensic interview and assessment training for all professionals working with children.
2. Adoption of national standardised forensic interview protocols aligned with international best practices.
3. Strengthening of multidisciplinary collaboration between psychologists, social workers, police, medical practitioners, and legal professionals.
4. Establishment of dedicated forensic interview units and forensically sound child-appropriate interview rooms.
5. Mandatory peer review and quality control of forensic psychological reports submitted to court.

13. CONCLUSION

The workshop highlighted the crucial role of sound forensic methodology in safeguarding the best interests of the child, ensuring justice for victims, and preventing miscarriages of justice. It represents a significant contribution to national capacity-building in the area of child protection and forensic practice.

The Best Interest of the Child

A session for officers of Municipal and District Councils

DATE	VENUE	ATTENDEES	FACILITATOR
19 May 2026	OOO Conference Room	20 Officers, Municipal & District Councils	Me. Rishi Nirsimulu

The idea for a presentation on the Best Interest of the Child to officers from the Municipalities and District Councils arose after Me. Rishi Nirsimulu encountered officers who had never heard of the principle, and observed how its absence had at times wrongly influenced their decisions.

A meeting was accordingly held in the Conference Room of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children to explain the concept and illustrate it through real-life examples. Me. Nirsimulu grounded the session in two recent Supreme Court cases before turning to the underlying legal framework.

Two Cases, One Principle

Case 1 - MCIB & Anor v Ministry of Education (2024 SCJ 149)

A student who had completed Grade 8 in a private secondary school sought admission to a state school at Grade 9 level. Relying on the National Equivalence Committee (NEC), the Ministry of Education instead required the student to repeat Grade 8.

The Supreme Court quashed the decision: there had been no assessment of the child's best interests, the decision leaned excessively on an internal technical committee, and key factors academic progress, wellbeing were never considered. The Ministry had, in the Court's words, "utterly failed to determine, assess and take as a primary consideration" the child's best interests.

The Court also underlined the proactive duty of the Ombudsperson for Children in matters of children's rights noting, pointedly, that the post had stood vacant from November 2023 to 19 February 2024.

Case 2 - Radha Lilowtee & Ors v Oakdale Primary School (2026 SCJ 68)

Residents sought to close or relocate a private school for want of a valid Building and Land Use Permit (BLUP), and on grounds of nuisance. The District Council had rejected the BLUP application; the Environment and Land Use Appeal Tribunal (ELAT) had dismissed the school's appeal.

Even so, the Supreme Court declined to order the school's closure. Such an order, the Court held, would have an immediate and significant impact on the enrolled children disrupting their education, stability and routine and it noted that steps were already under way to regularise the BLUP position.

The UNCRC and the ACRWC

The OOC flagged a distinction between the two international instruments underpinning the principle a distinction with direct consequences for how much weight a decision-maker must give a child's interests.

UNCRC : Article 3(1)

"A" primary consideration

The child's best interests must be weighed and given real weight, alongside other legitimate considerations. It is one of several factors in the balance.

ACRWC : Article 4(1)

"THE" primary consideration

A stronger formulation: the child's interest is elevated above, not merely alongside, competing considerations when a decision concerns a child.

Seen Through the Child's Lens

The participants were sensitised that the principle cannot be applied from the standpoint of institutional convenience; it must be approached from the child's own vantage point what a decision will mean for that child's daily life, stability, development and sense of security. This is precisely why the Court in Case 2 refused an injunction it was otherwise legally entitled to grant: closing the school immediately, however procedurally justified, would have ruptured the routine and stability of the children enrolled there. The child's perspective is not a sentimental add-on to the legal test. It is the test.

General Comment No. 14 (2013)

In General Comment No. 14, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child the treaty body established under the UNCRC to monitor compliance explains that the child's best interests is a threefold concept:

1

A Substantive Right

The right to have best interests assessed and taken as a primary consideration whenever competing interests are weighed. Directly invocable before a court.

2

An Interpretative Principle

Where a legal provision is open to more than one interpretation, the reading which most effectively serves the child's best interests should be chosen.

3

A Rule of Procedure

Decision-making must include an evaluation of the decision's impact on the child, and the reasoning must show this was explicitly considered.

Me. Nirsimulu highlighted three further requirements the Committee attaches to the principle:

1. An individualised assessment: best interests cannot be determined generically for a category of children; each child's specific circumstances, characteristics and needs must be assessed on their own facts.
2. Due weight to the child's own views (in line with Article 12 of the UNCRC) the child's perspective should, age and maturity permitting, be sought directly rather than simply inferred by adults acting on the child's behalf.
3. Visible reasoning: decision-makers must show, on the face of the decision, how the child's interests were identified and weighed. A bare assertion that interests were "considered" is not enough.

It was this last requirement: visible, documented reasoning, that the Ministry of Education failed to meet in Case 1, and it is precisely the standard that Municipal and District Council officers were reminded to apply in their own decisions concerning children.

OVERSEAS MISSION

AOMF Training on the Universal Periodic Review

The Institution of the Ombudsman of the Kingdom of Morocco hosted, from **21 to 23 October 2025 in Rabat**, the training organized by the **Association of Ombudsmen and Mediators of the Francophonie (AOMF)** on the theme:

“Towards an Institutional Contribution of the Ombudsman to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)”.

This meeting, bringing together Ombudsmen, Mediators, and representatives of **National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)** from across the French-speaking world, aimed to strengthen their role in the monitoring mechanism of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

An opening speech focused on cooperation and democratic accountability

The opening ceremony, chaired by **Mr. Hassan Tariq**, Ombudsman of the Kingdom and First Vice-President of the AOMF, was marked by a message from the President of the AOMF, **Mr. Nicolas Lagasse**, Ombudsman of Wallonia and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

He praised the ongoing commitment of the Moroccan Institution, describing it as an “illustration of the cooperation and solidarity that give strength to our network.” He recalled that Ombudsmen and Mediators, as “forces of balance and justice at the heart of the rule of law,” play an essential role in defending fundamental rights and fostering closeness between administrations and citizens.

The President also highlighted the initiative of the Ombudsman of the Kingdom within the framework of mobilizing the **Gen Z 212 movement**, through the **Public Services Governance Forums**, whose first edition, dedicated to health, embodies “modern, participatory mediation that delivers solutions.”

Hon Dannevoye, representative of the President of the AOMF stated as follows:

A training rich in exchanges

Structured around **five modules**, the training covered the entire **Universal Periodic Review** process, from its origins to the follow-up of recommendations.

Experts from the **Danish Institute for Human Rights** presented the foundations and key stages of the mechanism, after which participants exchanged views on monitoring strategies and best practices from various French-speaking countries, including **Morocco, Belgium, Mauritius, Madagascar, Greece, Albania, and Togo.**

Contributions from representatives of the **International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF)**, National Human Rights Councils, and several Ombudsmen highlighted the essential role of these institutions in promoting and implementing human rights.

Dannevoye & H. Tariq (Ombudsman of the Kingdom of Morocco)

A renewed commitment

This initiative, welcomed by the participants, illustrates the determination of Ombudsmen who are members of the AOMF to strengthen dialogue between the State and citizens, relying on Francophone cooperation to promote governance based on **human rights, transparency, and dignity**.

In her address the OC (Mauritius) highlighted

The role of the Ombudsperson for children in the preparation of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and in monitoring the implementation of its recommendations, with a focus on the Republic of Mauritius.

The Ombudsperson for Children plays a crucial and independent role in promoting and protecting children's rights in line with the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**. Mauritius is currently the only African country with a specialized Children's Ombudsperson office, established under the **2003 Child Protection Act**, operating in accordance with the **Paris and Venice Principles** and UN General Assembly standards.

Although independent, the Office works closely with government ministries, civil societies, NGOs, and international networks (AOMF, AOMA, IOI). It contributes directly to the national UPR process through participation in a multi-stakeholder coordination cell led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Role in UPR Preparation

The Ombudsperson contributes by:

- Submitting independent and alternative ("shadow") reports to the UN Human Rights Council, particularly on child-specific issues such as sexual exploitation, child labor, digital technology impacts, and gaps in child protection systems.
- Providing factual assessments of government compliance with international obligations.
- Highlighting legal and policy gaps, including cases involving migrant workers' children, lack of school access, and insufficient services for children with special needs aged 3–5.
- Participating in national consultations and advocating for the inclusion of children's voices, notably through the JADES youth initiative (ages 14–17).
- Collaborating with NGOs and civil society to identify priority and emerging issues such as school violence, cyber risks, and climate change impacts on children.

Role in Follow-up of UPR Recommendations

After the UPR, the Ombudsperson:

- Monitors and reports on the implementation of child-related recommendations.
- Supports the development of implementation roadmaps and conducts independent follow-up assessments.
- Advocates for government accountability and ensures children's rights remain a political priority.
- Educates children and young people about the UPR and facilitates their participation in monitoring processes, including child-friendly versions of recommendations.

Challenges

Key challenges include:

- Limited coordination among multiple stakeholders
- Lengthy legislative reform processes
- Differing institutional priorities
- Administrative constraints

Participation in the Observatoire de la Parentalité de l'Océan Indien (OPOI)

26 -27 November 2025, Saint Denis, REUNION Island

OPOI is a non-profit association established in 2015. It brings together individuals from civil society, research organizations, and international institutions engaged in the development of family policies in South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, Seychelles, Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, and France, in its territories of Mayotte and Reunion island

As a genuine unifying tool, OPOI serves as a platform for the exchange of good practices and the transfer of experience in the field of family support, in service of the populations of the Indian Ocean basin and Southern Africa.

In 2025, OPOI celebrated its 10th anniversary, and on this occasion an international conference will be organized in Réunion island. Stakeholders in parenting support networks, researchers working on this theme, teachers and heads of educational institutions, social workers, and all parents from the countries and territories of the Indian Ocean were invited to participate, both individually and through associations in their respective countries. The conference was held in person and in virtual mode

It should be noted that the first regional OPOI conference was held in Saint-Denis in 2015, and that the then Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare and the Minister of Social Inclusion participated in the conference, during which a decision was taken for Mauritius to host the second edition.

Ultimately, the Fondation pour l'Enfance Terre de Paix honoured this international commitment and hosted the conference in May 2024 in Flacq, Mauritius.

With the aim of sharing perspectives and strengthening our tools and methods in addressing parenting-related challenges, local, national, and international bodies will be invited to contribute their resources and analyses. Ten themes have been selected, namely:

- What world for our children? When climate change challenges parenting
- Post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and depression
- The challenges of parenting and the digital revolution
- Work and parenting: new challenges of the 21st century
- Parenting, alcohol, and drugs: a multidisciplinary challenge
- When parenting confronts poverty
- Positive parenting and the fulfilment of the parent-child relationship
- Family education today
- Parenting and culture
- Community representations and parenting practices

The conference took place in the hemicycle of the Regional Council of La Réunion, the highest decision-making body of the territory.

Official opening of the Observatoire de Parentalité de l'Océan Indien (OPOI) workshop held in Saint-Denis on 26 November 2025.

The Ombudsperson for Children expressed gratitude to the organizers, partners, and regional and international stakeholders for their commitment to child and family well-being.

She emphasized that parenting is a fundamental pillar of social cohesion and the primary environment where children's values, protection, and future are shaped. Supporting and

strengthening parenting practices is therefore essential for sustainable and human-centred development.

The OC highlighted the close link between the mandate of the Ombudsperson for Children in Mauritius—guided by national legislation and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child—and parental responsibility. Parents and legal guardians are identified as the first guarantors of children’s development, especially in the context of evolving family structures such as single-parent and blended families. The Ombudsperson’s role includes protection, mediation, monitoring, awareness-raising, promotion of positive parenting, and addressing neglect, abuse, or violations of children’s rights, in collaboration with public institutions, schools, social services, and NGOs.

OPOI is presented as a strategic regional initiative aimed at better understanding family realities across the Indian Ocean islands. Shared challenges include changing family models, economic pressures, social vulnerabilities, the impact of technology, climate change, and the ongoing need to protect children’s fundamental rights. The Observatory seeks to produce reliable data, foster institutional dialogue, and propose coordinated and context-sensitive actions.

Finally, the speaker reaffirmed Mauritius’ commitment to placing children at the centre of public policy and calls for strengthened regional cooperation.

The speech concluded by urging participants to develop innovative, inclusive, and hopeful perspectives to support parents and ensure that the best interests of the child remain the guiding principle of all actions.

Participation in the AORC Relaunch & Training Programme

Durban, South Africa | 23–27 March 2026

1. Introduction

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, Mauritius, was represented by the Ombudsperson for Children, Aneeta Ghoorah, and Investigator Bhavnah Jogarah at the African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC) Relaunch and Training Programme held from 23 to 27 March 2026 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Westville Campus, Durban, South Africa.

The programme was held under the theme:

“Using Ombudsman Powers to Strengthen Governance and Advance the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa.”

This high-level event brought together Ombudsmen, Public Protectors, Mediators, legal practitioners, academics, and governance stakeholders from across the African continent to strengthen collaboration, share experiences, and reflect on the evolving role of Ombudsman institutions in promoting accountability, democratic governance, human rights, and sustainable development.

2. Objectives of the Programme

The principal objectives of the programme were to:

- strengthen the capacity of Ombudsman institutions across Africa;
- promote collaboration and knowledge-sharing amongst African Ombudsman bodies;
- explore the role of Ombudsman institutions in advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Africa Agenda 2063;
- enhance investigative, oversight, and governance mechanisms; and

- relaunch and revitalise the African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC) as a continental research and training hub.

3. Overview of the African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC)

The AORC serves as the research and training arm of the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA), established in partnership with the University of KwaZulu-Natal. It focuses on research, capacity-building, training, and institutional development for Ombudsman institutions across the continent.

During the relaunch, emphasis was placed on strengthening governance systems, accountability, transparency, and effective oversight mechanisms. The Public Protector of South Africa and Chairperson of the AORC Board, Kholeka Gcaleka, highlighted the strategic importance of the AORC in equipping institutions to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals and Africa Agenda 2063.

She further noted that the AORC remains the only institute of its kind globally dedicated specifically to Ombudsman and Public Protector institutions.



4. Key Addresses, Training Sessions and Thematic Discussions

The programme featured high-level addresses, strategic reflections, and interactive training sessions aimed at strengthening institutional effectiveness.

The Deputy Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development of South Africa, Andries Nel, underscored the importance of constitutional democracy, accountability, and strong oversight institutions in strengthening governance across Africa.

Professor Anil Chuturgoon highlighted the importance of research-driven institutional development and the role of AORC in supporting practical, problem-oriented governance solutions.

Members of the South African Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Justice and Constitutional Development also emphasised the constitutional role of oversight institutions within democratic governance frameworks.

A key training session on “**Strengthening Ombudsman Impact in Complex Governance Contexts**”, facilitated by Dr Youssoupha Niang and Arlene Brock, used a case study on an Emergency Social Protection Programme (ESPP) to explore systemic governance challenges.

Participants were encouraged to move beyond individual complaint handling and focus on systemic analysis, including identifying governance failures, ethical breakdowns, and strategic institutional responses.

Across the programme, discussions focused on:

- investigative powers of Ombudsman institutions;

- complaint handling and investigative best practices;
- institutional independence and integrity;
- human rights protection and access to justice;
- monitoring public service delivery;
- achievement of the SDGs; and
- regional and continental cooperation.

5. Strategic Reflections on Ombudsman Institutions

A key presentation by the Ombudsman of Seychelles and President of the IOI Africa Region, George Robert, highlighted the widening gap between rising public expectations and declining trust in public institutions.

He emphasised that Ombudsman institutions must function not only as complaint-handling bodies but also as strategic actors in service delivery oversight, accountability, and anti-corruption efforts.

He further stressed the importance of balancing technical competence with foundational democratic values such as transparency, human rights, accountability, and the rule of law, and positioning AORC as a hub for strategic foresight and institutional collaboration.

Adv Arlene Brock also reflected on the evolution of Ombudsman models globally and highlighted how African institutions have adapted the model to local realities. She referred to this adaptation as the “African difference”, noting expanded mandates such as environmental oversight, compliance monitoring, and even peace-building functions in certain jurisdictions.

She further emphasised the importance of regional training, peer learning, and institutional knowledge-sharing, noting that such approaches strengthen both efficiency and impact.

6. Participation and Learning Outcomes

Participation in the programme provided the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children with a valuable opportunity to engage with counterparts from across Africa and to exchange experiences, challenges, and good practices.

Key learning outcomes included enhanced understanding of:

- systemic investigative and analytical approaches;
- governance and accountability frameworks;
- institutional strengthening strategies;
- child rights-related monitoring and oversight; and
- regional cooperation mechanisms among Ombudsman institutions.

The programme reinforced the importance of independent oversight bodies in safeguarding human rights, promoting transparency, and improving public service delivery



7. Relevance to the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children

The insights gained are directly relevant to the

CULTURAL AND HERITAGE EXPERIENCE

mandate of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children in Mauritius. The programme highlighted the importance of:

- strengthening child rights governance systems;
- enhancing investigative and monitoring capacity;
- promoting accountability in institutions impacting children;
- developing evidence-based recommendations; and
- strengthening regional and international collaboration.

Participation in this programme further supports the Office's ongoing commitment to promoting and protecting the rights and welfare of children in line with international standards and sustainable development objectives.



8. Conclusion

The AORC Relaunch and Training Programme constituted a significant continental platform for reflection, collaboration, and institutional strengthening among Ombudsman institutions in Africa.

The event reaffirmed the essential role of Ombudsman institutions in advancing democratic governance, transparency, social justice, and sustainable development across the African continent.

INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME – LAHORE, PAKISTAN

27 April to 01 May 2026

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children was invited by the Office of the Ombudsman of Punjab, Pakistan, through the Internal Ombudsman Institute (IOI), to participate in the International Internship Programme. This initiative was designed to provide professionals from IOI member institutions with meaningful, practice-oriented exposure to the functioning of an Ombudsman Institution, with particular emphasis on the operations of the Ombudsman Punjab.

Objectives of the Programme

The programme aimed to:

- **Expose participants** to the ISO 9001:2015 certified Complaint Management Information System (CMIS).
- **Experience outreach** through mobile redressal units in South Punjab.
- **Observe hearings** and expert sessions.
- **Share best practices** among participating institutions.
- **Discover culture** and heritage of Lower Punjab.

The Ombudsperson for Children nominated Mr. Ismail Areff Bawamia, Investigator, to participate in this study tour. Other participating institutions included the Office of the City Ombudsman of Cape Town (South Africa), the Ombudsman Institution of Türkiye, and the Provincial Ombudsman of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan).

Institutional and Legal Framework

At the outset, participants were briefed on the institutional and legal framework governing the Punjab Ombudsman's Office. The institution operates under the **Ombudsman Act of 1997** and the **Ombudsman Regulations of 2005**, which stipulate that all complaints must be resolved within 90 days.

Complaint Management Information System (CMIS)

Delegates were introduced to the ISO 9001:2015 certified CMIS, both theoretically and practically, during a visit to the IT Infrastructure and Development Wing at the Head Office. The system ensures:

- Uploading of complaints and all relevant documents submitted to sustain the complaint in real time.
- Immediate transfer of complaints from regional stations to the Head Office.
- Complaints are sent electronically to the Agencies concerned for immediate action to redress the situation.
- Complainants are informed by SMS about the maintenance of the complaint and the reference number.
- A seven-day response window for agencies.
- Real-time monitoring by the Ombudsman.
- Resolution of cases within 90 days, with signed orders uploaded promptly.



Case Management and Field Outreach

Participants visited regional offices in **Kasur** and **Sheikhupura**, observing hearings conducted by Advisors who are experienced former public officers with expertise in law and administration recruited on contract by the Ombudsman Punjab. During these hearings, the different parties are summoned. the Agencies concerned are questioned on their reports in presence of the complainant.

The latter may be asked to clarify matters whenever there are conflicting reports.



A highlight was the **Mobile Redressal Van** under the Awami Khidmat Program. This outreach mechanism enables officers to record complaints in remote areas, scan and upload documents to the CMIS, and issue immediate acknowledgements to complainants. Agencies are required to respond within seven days, followed by hearings and recommendations, culminating in a final ruling within 90 days.

A notable case in **Faisalabad** illustrated the system's efficiency: residents lodged a complaint of police brutality, which was referred via the Mobile Van. Within one hour, the District Collector arrived on-site to investigate.

Media Strategy and Public Awareness

The programme also addressed media strategy and public awareness campaigns. The Ombudsman Punjab leverages platforms such as **Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and TikTok** to:

- Raise awareness of its mandate and services.
- Improve accessibility to complaint mechanisms.
- Strengthen public trust through transparency.
- Promote citizen engagement.
- Support efficient service delivery via digital platforms.

The flagship campaign, **“Aap ki Sunwai”**, focuses on educating citizens about grievance

redressal, simplifying complaint registration, and promoting Helpline 1050 as a primary access point

CULTURAL AND HERITAGE EXPERIENCE



Visits to:

- Hiran Mahal
- Old City and fort
- Wagha Border
- Lahore Museum
- And we tasted the exquisite cuisine of Lahore and Punjab

SHARING BEST PRACTICES

On the last day, the Ombudsman Punjab chaired a session whereby all participating institutions were requested to share the successes and best practices of their Office so that we may learn from each other. Mr Bawamia explained the specificity of an Office of the Ombudsperson dedicated to Children's Rights, the types of complaints and how children are involved in the work of the office. He talked about JADE, how its functions and how children are encouraged to be involved in activities concerning them at all levels. The participants showed great interests in the way the OOC functions.



Group photo at the closing of the programme

International Ombudsman Conference

Rome 27 to 29 May 2026

Civic protection, Rights and Democratic Innovation

The OC participated in the above conference. This conference aimed to strengthen international cooperation and promote the adoption of the Rome declaration 2026 as a common framework for the future work of Ombudsman institutions

An intense exchange between institutions, experts, and human rights guardians. Focus on democracy, innovation, artificial intelligence, and the protection of citizens.

The International Ombudsman Conference Rome 2026, promoted by the National Coordination of Italian Ombudsmen and the Ombudsman of the Lazio Region, concluded with strong participation and significant results. The event brought together in the Italian capital representatives of ombudsman institutions from numerous countries, along with members of public administrations, academia, and organizations engaged in the protection of fundamental rights.

The Conference represented an important opportunity for discussion on the challenges that oversight institutions are called to face in a constantly evolving society, fostering dialogue between national and international experiences united by the shared goal of making public administration increasingly transparent, accessible, efficient, and close to citizens.

Particularly significant was the presence of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), represented by Mrs. Caroline Sokoni, Ombudsman of Zambia and Treasurer of the IOI, whose contribution enriched the debate with a global perspective on the challenges of contemporary ombudsmanship. The IOI's participation demonstrated the attention and support of the international ombudsman community for the initiative, strengthening the value of global cooperation among oversight institutions.

Alongside the IOI, IOI Europe also took part in the proceedings, represented by Maria Stylianou Lottides, Commissioner for Administration and Protection of Human Rights of Cyprus, Ombudsman, Director of IOI Europe, and First Vice President of AOM. Her presence further enhanced the European dialogue on the prospects of ombudsmanship, with particular reference to the protection of human rights and the strengthening of institutional networks.

The proceedings opened with a significant institutional event hosted at the Campidoglio (Capitoline Hill), dedicated to the relationship between ombudsmanship and local authorities. The initiative, carried out in cooperation with ANCI Lazio thanks to the availability of its President and Mayor of Rieti, Daniele Sinibaldi, allowed for an in-depth analysis of the strategic role of local authorities in protecting citizens' rights and highlighted best practices developed at the local level, confirming the importance of institutional cooperation for modern, effective, and participatory governance.

Particularly intense and meaningful was the meeting with His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, who received the Conference participants in audience. In his message, the Pontiff emphasized the value of listening, human dignity, and the responsibility of institutions in promoting justice, solidarity, and inclusion. This moment conferred a high moral and human profile to the entire event, reaffirming the centrality of the person as the foundation of public action.

The conference activities then continued on 28 and 29 May at the Chamber of Deputies, where ombudsmen, institutional representatives, scholars, and experts from various countries discussed the most relevant issues of our time: the protection of fundamental

rights, the relationship between citizens and public administrations, access to public services, the protection of the most vulnerable individuals, the impact of new technologies and artificial intelligence on rights, and new forms of democratic participation.

The working sessions fostered an intense exchange of experiences and best practices, contributing to the development of a shared vision on the future of ombudsmanship and on strengthening the role of ombudsmen as guarantors of proximity, administrative fairness, and effective protection of rights.

The Conference confirmed that oversight institutions today represent a fundamental pillar of democracy, legality, and social cohesion, capable of strengthening citizens' trust in institutions and promoting an administrative culture increasingly oriented toward serving the individual.

The broad international participation, the high level of scientific and institutional contributions, and the spirit of cooperation that characterized all working days constitute a valuable legacy destined to produce positive effects well beyond the conclusion of the event.

Rome 2026 leaves behind not only an important moment of international exchange, but also an even stronger network of relationships, expertise, and shared commitments for the protection of rights, the proper functioning of public administrations, and the promotion of active and informed citizenship.

“The Rome Conference has demonstrated that ombudsmanship is today an increasingly global and strategic reality. Ombudsmen from different cultures, legal systems, and traditions shared a common principle: placing the person at the center of public action. From Rome, a clear message emerges of international cooperation, dialogue, and rights protection that strengthens the role of oversight institutions in the contemporary world,” said Marino Fardelli, Ombudsman of the Lazio Region and President of the National Coordination of Italian Ombudsmen.

“The Regional Council of Lazio and the Conference of Italian Legislative Assemblies welcomed this moment of international dialogue with great interest. The protection of rights, the quality of public administration, and closeness to citizens are essential elements for the stability of our democracies. The Conference highlighted how important it is to invest in institutional dialogue and in building cooperation networks capable of addressing the challenges of the present and the future,” said Antonello Aurigemma, President of the Regional Council of Lazio.

The Ombudsman of the Lazio Region continues to represent the human face of institutions: a bridge between citizens and administrations, between rights and responsibilities, between listening and justice. A mission that the International Ombudsman Conference Rome 2026 has helped to strengthen, projecting it into an increasingly European and global dimension.

A copy of the Rome declaration is at Annex C.

Chapter 8:

A Selection of Cases

Selected Cases where the OOC had to intervene and continuously follow up

Case 1 - Violation of children's rights at a Juvenile Detention Centre

Background

Following a complaint lodged by a Police Sergeant on 24 July 2025 regarding the deplorable living conditions of minors detained at a Juvenile Detention Centre, Investigators Mrs. S. Johaheer and Mrs. B. Jogarah conducted a field visit to the institution. At the time of the visit, only one minor, N.T., was detained at the centre. The Investigators assessed the living conditions and interviewed the detained minor as well as two Police Constables present at the facility.

First Letter to the Commissioner of Police

On 05 August 2025, the Ombudsperson for Children (OC) wrote to the Commissioner of Police (CP) outlining the concerns observed during the visit and making recommendations to improve the living conditions and welfare of detained minors.

The Commissioner of Police replied on 16 December 2025, providing an update on the measures undertaken following the recommendations of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children on 16 December 2025.

Comparison of Recommendations Made by the OOC and Actions Taken by the Police

Areas of Concern	Recommendations by OOC	Actions Taken by Police
1. Access to Clean Water The facility has no running water. Minors collect water from toilet 'douchettes' in plastic bottles, which are used for both drinking and bathing. This is highly unsanitary and poses serious health risks.	Restore running water and ensure minors have access to safe and hygienic water facilities for drinking and bathing.	A washbasin was installed in the corridor and a tap at the kitchen sink was made available for drinking water.
2. Clothing and Personal Hygiene Only two sets of clothes are provided to minors, which are reused without proper washing. This violates basic standards of hygiene and personal dignity.	Provide adequate clean clothing and personal hygiene items to preserve the dignity and well-being of minors.	Police informed that clothing is not supplied by the institution but by relatives of inmates.
3. Living Conditions and Sanitation An overpowering stench of urine was noted in the cell area, creating conditions unsuitable for both minors and officers working on site	Improve sanitation conditions and ensure the detention area is maintained in a hygienic condition.	Toilets were repaired, pipes were replaced and the overpowering smell of urine was no longer noted. Urinals were also replaced.

4. Nutrition (feedings) The meals provided are nutritionally inadequate, consisting mostly of bread-with minimal accompaniments. No milk, tea, fruits, or balanced meals are served.	Improve nutritional standards by providing balanced meals, including fruits and dairy products.	Daily meals are now provided as follows: morning tea (bread with butter/jam or cheese and juice), lunch (two breads with varied accompaniments and juice), afternoon tea (juice), and dinner (two breads with varied accompaniments). However, fruits and milk are still not provided.
5. Sleeping Conditions Mattresses are dirty, have never been cleaned, and are infested with bed bugs—especially during warmer periods—posing clear health hazards.	Clean or replace mattresses and implement urgent pest control measures.	Mattresses were replaced with new and clean ones. Regular pest control (debugging) is carried out and no further complaints have been received.
6. Educational and Recreational Activities Minors are kept in prolonged confinement without access to TV, radio, magazines, or any structured engagement. This amounts to psychological neglect and violates their right to development.	Provide educational, recreational and rehabilitative activities to support the mental and emotional well-being of minors.	A request has been submitted for TV and radio facilities. Minors are allowed out of their cells twice daily for 30 minutes each session. Examination candidates are provided with study facilities borrowed from nearby schools/colleges.
7. Access to Medical Care The current protocol requires that the arresting officer, not the detaining officer, escort minors to medical facilities, resulting in delays. Although police officers reported that minors are taken to the local health centre in emergency cases, the procedure should stipulate that it is <u>always</u> the detaining officers who are responsible for escorting minors to hospitals, irrespective of the circumstances.	Establish clear procedures to ensure timely access to healthcare and assign responsibility for medical escort to ensure no delays occur.	Immediate medical attention is provided when minors report illness. Minors are escorted to the nearest Area Health Centre by Police Officers. Where further treatment is required, the relevant Police Station/Unit takes over without delay.

8. Health and Safety Compliance Despite recommendations made by the Department of Health and Safety under the Ministry of Health and Wellness, no corrective actions have been taken. Although the building has a fire safety Certificate, it lacks an emergency exit—posing a critical safety risk.	Ensure compliance with health and safety requirements, including installation of an emergency exit.	No emergency exit has yet been installed; however, a request has been made for its provision. Occupational Health and Safety Officers continue to conduct inspections.
9. Administrative Follow-up These deplorable conditions have been repeatedly reported over the years by the Officer in Charge, Mr. Madhoo, and others. Numerous letters have been sent to the Technical Unit of the SSU, with no tangible improvement	Ensure previous concerns raised regarding the facility are addressed and corrective measures implemented.	Police confirmed that several requests have been addressed. Some measures could not be implemented due to security concerns. Police Officers of different ranks visit inmates daily and monitor their welfare.

Second Letter to the Commissioner of Police – Additional Recommendations and Follow-up Actions

Following the improvements noted at the Juvenile Detention Centre, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, by letter dated 13 March 2026, thanked the Commissioner of Police for addressing certain concerns regarding the living conditions of minors at the facility. In the same correspondence, the Office made additional recommendations aimed at further enhancing the safety, well-being, rehabilitation and development of minors detained at the centre.

The Police provided a further update to the Office on 17 June 2026.

Comparison of Additional Recommendations Made by OOC and Actions Taken by Police

Areas for Improvement	Recommendations by OOC	Actions Taken / Status Reported by Police
1. Installation of Emergency Exit There is presently no emergency exit available in the detention centre where minors are detained. The absence of such a facility poses a critical safety risk in the event of fire or other emergencies.	Install an emergency exit as a matter of priority to ensure the safety and protection of minors in case of emergency.	The Police informed that a staircase is being implemented to provide access downstairs and will be connected to an existing backdoor within the Detention Centre, which will serve as the emergency exit.

2. Installation of Suspended Air Fan for Adequate Ventilation Currently, the windows in both cells are partly obstructed by a transparent board, which significantly restricts air circulation.	Install a suspended air fan in the corridor outside the cells to improve ventilation and aeration within the detention area.	Surveys have already been conducted for the installation of a suspended air fan in the corridor. The installation is expected to be implemented shortly to improve ventilation.
3. Establishment of a TV/Library Corner It was observed that there is a room available within the premises where a small TV corner and a reading/library space could be set up for the minors.	Establish a TV/Library corner to provide constructive recreational, educational and rehabilitative activities for minors during their period of detention.	An empty room/space near the sentry cell table has been identified to be used as a TV/Library corner.

Conclusion

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children welcomes the measures undertaken and those currently under consideration by the Commissioner of Police to improve the conditions at the Juvenile Detention Centre following the intervention of the Office.

It is satisfactory to note that significant improvements have been achieved, contributing towards a safer, more hygienic and supportive environment for minors detained at the facility.

Case 2 – Institutional Abuse at a Police Station

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OOC) was copied in a correspondence addressed to the Commissioner of Police regarding serious concerns over the violation of children's rights during an identification exercise involving minors X and Y. The correspondence highlighted significant procedural deficiencies in the child protection chain during such exercises, which are contrary to the rights and best interests of the children.

As per information provided, during the screen identification process at a Police Station, the alleged perpetrator, who is the father of the minors, reportedly engaged in inappropriate behaviour during the identification process, including blowing kisses and making eye contact with the children, despite the presence of a screen intended to separate them and which was supposed to be opaque. Additionally, the exercise was reportedly conducted in a chaotic manner by Police Officers who allegedly lacked adequate training in child-friendly interviewing and identification techniques. The children were very traumatised.

As there was a case in Court and further to that, a ruling of the Hon Judge was issued, the OOC did not intervene into the cases of the children. The OOC intervened only in the system of child protection, i.e. the screen identification exercise.

Field Visit

The Ombudsperson for Children (OC) delegated two Investigators, Mrs. S.Johaheer and Mrs. Y. Rhungapen-Veeramootoo to conduct an investigation at the Police Station in order to take cognizance of the conditions under which identification screenings involving minors were being carried out. Accordingly, the two Investigators carried out a field visit to the Police Station on 25 November 2025.

During the visit, this Office confirmed that the screen being used for the identification exercise was not entirely opaque and that, when external light was present, the silhouette

of a child could become visible from certain angles.

Letter of recommendations to Commissioner of Police

The OOC sent a letter of recommendations to the Commissioner of Police on 10 December 2025. In the letter, the OC recommends that all identification exercises involving child victims at Police facilities adhere to the principles, in line with the Children's Act and international child protection standards:

- Ensuring full visual and physical privacy from the alleged offender during identification exercise;
- Providing a child-friendly environment that minimizes fear and anxiety;
- Involving trained child protection officers during such procedures; and
- Using transparent and secure facilities designed to protect the dignity and emotional safety of child victims.

Reply from Commissioner of Police

A letter from the Commissioner of Police dated 24 February 2026 stated that the identification room where the children attended was equipped with a translucent screen allowing minors to see the suspect without being seen in return. However, arrangements have been made for Screen Identification Exercise to be conducted at another Police Station until further instructions.

Second field visit at the Police Station

A second field visit was conducted by the two investigators at the Police Station on 03 March 2026. It was noted that the issue previously raised has been addressed. The identification screen is now configured in such a manner that the victim can see the perpetrator while the perpetrator cannot see the victim, thereby ensuring the victim's protection during the identification process.

Conclusion

The intervention of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children contributed towards reinforcing child protection safeguards during identification procedures involving child victims.

The Office acknowledges and appreciates the cooperation of the Commissioner of Police and the measures undertaken to address the concerns raised and to ensure that identification exercises are conducted in a manner that respects the dignity, privacy, safety and best interests of children.

Case 3 – Urgent School Transfer Following Bullying and Administrative Delay

Complaint

A mother contacted the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children regarding the situation of her 12-year-old daughter who had allegedly been subjected to bullying at school for several months. According to the complainant, little to no effective action had been taken by the school management despite the seriousness and persistence of the situation.

The child's health was described as fragile, and the ongoing distress had reportedly led to severe exhaustion after school hours, to the extent that she was frequently unable to complete her homework. For this child, attending school had become synonymous with fear, anxiety, and daily emotional suffering. School was no longer perceived as a safe environment, but rather as a battlefield.

Faced with the deterioration of her daughter's well-being, the mother applied to the Ministry of Education and Human Resources for a transfer to a State school. However,

despite the urgency of the situation, no response had been obtained for several weeks. The complainant repeatedly contacted the Ministry and was merely informed that the file was “being looked into.” Meanwhile, the child remained out of school, with no certainty regarding the continuation of her education.

Action Taken

Given the gravity of the matter and the apparent inertia surrounding the case, the Ombudsperson for Children directly contacted the officer in charge of the file and highlighted the immediate risks posed to the child’s educational continuity, mental well-being, and best interests.

Following the intervention of the Office, the child obtained admission within 48 hours.

Recommendation / Observation

This case raises serious concerns regarding delays, lack of responsiveness, and insufficient urgency in the handling of matters directly affecting children’s welfare and right to education.

It is deeply troubling that a vulnerable child had to remain in distress and outside the school system for weeks, only for the matter to be resolved almost immediately once the Office of the Ombudsperson intervened. This demonstrates that the delay was not necessarily due to impossibility, but rather a lack of prioritisation and diligence.

The Office wishes to firmly remind all officers and stakeholders within the educational sector that a file is not merely an administrative document. Behind every file stands a child, a life, a future, and, at times, a child in profound distress.

Cases involving children must be handled with urgency, humanity, and accountability. Administrative passivity in matters affecting a child’s safety, mental health, and access to education may have serious and lasting consequences on the child’s development and well-being.

The Ministry and all responsible officers are urged to ensure that cases involving vulnerable children are treated with the promptness, sensitivity, and seriousness they require, so that no child is left waiting in suffering while procedures remain pending.

Case 4 – Foreign Detainees, Maternal Detention, and the Best Interests of the Child

Complaint

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OOC) receives cases involving foreign female detainees who gave birth in Mauritius and are currently detained at the Women’s Prison. The women were already pregnant at the time of their arrest and subsequently gave birth while in detention.

Under existing procedures, the children of these detainees are eventually transferred to family members or guardians in their countries of origin before the children turn five. While awaiting transfer, the children remain on Mauritian territory, attend school where applicable, and receive healthcare through public medical institutions.

However, detainees have raised serious concerns regarding the adequacy of food and healthcare for both themselves and their children, the suitability of a prison environment for the upbringing of young children, and the lack of clear, timely, and accessible information from authorities concerning the procedures and progress relating to the transfer of their

children abroad.

Several detainees also expressed profound emotional distress linked to prolonged uncertainty, separation risks, and insufficient communication regarding decisions affecting their children's future.

The cases are generally handled by the Secretary for Home Affairs under the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, which liaise with relevant authorities in the detainees' respective countries.

Actions Taken

The OOC reiterates that its mandate extends to the protection and safeguarding of both Mauritian children and foreign children present on Mauritian soil.

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children acts as an intermediary between detainees and the relevant authorities. The Office regularly requests information from the Secretary for Home Affairs and other concerned institutions and relays that information to detainees who often remain without updates for extended periods.

Through repeated visits and interactions, detainees develop trust in the institution and rely on the Office to obtain clarity regarding their children's situation, possible reunification, transfer procedures, and communication rights.

The Office consistently explains the scope and limits of its mandate. Nevertheless, whenever detainees request to speak to investigators or seek assistance, the Office endeavours to facilitate communication and obtain information on their behalf. Access to information is a fundamental right, particularly for persons who have been detained for prolonged periods and whose children's future remains uncertain.

International Human Rights Perspective

The detention of mothers, particularly mothers of infants and young children, raises significant human rights concerns under international law.

Mauritius is a State Party to the (ICCPR), which provides under Article 9 that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary detention and that any deprivation of liberty must remain lawful, necessary, and proportionate.

Where a detained person is the primary caregiver of a young child, the State has an obligation to assess whether continued incarceration remains strictly necessary and proportionate in light of the profound consequences on the child's development, attachment, emotional well-being, and future.

The question therefore arises as to whether the continued detention of mothers of very young children, particularly foreign detainees with no family support network in Mauritius, fully satisfies the principles of necessity and proportionality under international human rights standards.

The cases further engage the principles enshrined in the, particularly the obligation to ensure that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.

Under Section 4 of the Mauritian Children's Act, the "best interests of the child" principle requires that every decision affecting a child prioritises the child's physical, emotional, psychological, educational, and developmental well-being. This principle cannot be

interpreted narrowly or administratively. It requires a holistic assessment of the child's environment, emotional attachment to the mother, developmental needs, stability, identity, and right to family life.

and emotional needs of a young child. While prison authorities may make efforts to accommodate children residing with detained mothers, the institutional limitations remain evident. The longer a child remains exposed to a carceral environment, the greater the potential impact on the child's psychosocial development.

At the same time, abrupt separation from the mother without adequate preparation may also cause significant emotional trauma. Any transfer of the child abroad therefore requires careful preparation, psychological support, family assessments, and gradual familiarisation with caregivers.

The issue also raises the broader question of whether foreign detainees who are mothers could, in appropriate cases, serve their remaining sentence in their country of origin through transfer agreements or compassionate arrangements, particularly where this would better preserve family unity and the welfare of the child.

Recommendations / Observations

The Office is of the view that these cases require a more humane, child-centred, and rights-based approach from the Mauritian authorities. A Human Rights-based approach would require the State to move beyond purely punitive considerations and genuinely assess the real and lasting consequences of detention on children who are entirely innocent yet bear the emotional and developmental burden of incarceration.

The Office recommends that:

- The State systematically assess whether the continued detention of mothers of young children remains necessary and proportionate in each case;
- Children affected by these situations receive continuous psychological, educational, and social support;
- Authorities improve transparency and communication with detainees concerning decisions affecting their children;
- Safe family reunification is achieved and monitoring continues after relocation.

The best interests of the child must translate into concrete, timely, and compassionate decision-making by all State authorities. A State governed by the rule of law and human rights principles is measured by how it protects human dignity, and children caught in situations beyond their control.

Case 5 Felling of trees at GPL: Rodrigues

Removal of Trees growing adjacent to the Gonzagues Pierre Louis (GPL) Centre, Rodrigues
On 04 June 2025, during her mission to Rodrigues from 01 to 04 June 2025, the Ombudsperson for Children visited the Gonzagues Pierre Louis (GPL) Special Learning Centre, at Camp du Roi. She was informed of a request submitted in 2022 for the removal of trees growing adjacent to the GPL premises. It was observed that the filao trees have become a significant hazard to the premises of the GPL Centre as concluded in a report dated 06 October 2023, from the Officer in Charge, of the Police de L'Environnement. In addition, one tree stood in close proximity to an electrical wire and its branches near the connection, creating a serious risk to both infrastructure and the safety of children with disabilities and staff.

The Ombudsperson for Children emphasised that it is a collective duty to ensure a safe

environment for children, particularly those with disabilities, and recommended that urgent corrective measures be taken to mitigate the risk.

Continuous follow up was ensured at the level of OOC to ensure that action was taken as the trees represented a potential danger to the building and the students and staff therein.

On 13 May 2026, Mr Paul W. Draper MBE, Member of the Trevor Huddleston House for the Disabled, Rodrigues notified this office that the required works had been carried out and expressed gratitude, stating “on behalf of us all, staff and children, I would like personally to thank you and your staff for all the help and representations to appropriate authorities that has brought about this happy outcome”.

A follow up visit by the Ombudsperson for Children on 11 June 2026 confirmed that all the trees growing adjacent to the GPL Centre has been removed.

Case 6: The Rights of a Child with Disabilities to Access to Court Justice

Background

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OOC) received concerns from an NGO supporting a group of children with disabilities attending a special needs school in relation to a case of alleged sexual abuse which has been ongoing since 2022.

On 14 January 2026, the NGO informed the OOC that the last child victim, who was scheduled to give evidence before the Children’s Court on Friday 9 January 2026, was unable to depone due to the absence of a Sign Language Interpreter at the Court. The NGO stated that it had contacted the relevant authorities on Thursday 8 January 2026 and was informed that the child would proceed with giving evidence as scheduled. However, on the day of the hearing, the child’s mother was informed that the deposition could not take place as no Sign Language Interpreter was available.

The NGO expressed concern regarding the barriers faced by children with disabilities in accessing justice and requested the assistance of the OOC in proposing measures to prevent the recurrence of such situations.

Actions Taken

On 6 February 2026, the OC wrote to the Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court, highlighting that children with disabilities have the right to effective access to justice without discrimination. The OOC referred to the principles contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly:

- **Article 23**, which recognises the right of children with disabilities to enjoy a full and decent life in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate active participation in the community; and
- **Article 12**, which recognises the child’s right to express views freely in all matters affecting them, with due weight being given to those views.

The OOC further highlighted that under **Article 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**, States have an obligation to ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities through appropriate procedural and age-appropriate accommodations, including communication support such as Sign Language Interpreters.

The OOC expressed concern that the absence of such reasonable accommodation may result in further emotional distress for the child victim, who may be required to repeatedly

prepare for and relive traumatic experiences. Such circumstances may be inconsistent with the principle of the best interests of the child, which must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.

The OOC requested information on the measures being implemented, or envisaged, to ensure the regular availability of Sign Language Interpreters at the Children's Court.

The OOC was apprised that, on 28 January 2026, the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) had written to the Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court, regarding the absence of a Sign Language Interpreter at the Children's Court. The Chairperson of the NHRC highlighted the need to identify practical and sustainable solutions in the best interests of children's rights and access to justice and proposed further discussions with relevant stakeholders, including the NGO and the OOC.

On 10 February 2026, the OC informed the Chairperson of the NHRC through a correspondence of the willingness of her Office to participate in any further discussions with the Master and Registrar and other stakeholders, with a view to contributing towards the identification of appropriate and lasting solutions.

Response from the Judiciary

By letter dated 24 February 2026, the Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court informed the OOC that the Judiciary had taken necessary measures to ensure the availability of Sign Language Interpreters at the Children's Court.

It was stated that two Sign Language Interpreters were currently available. A communiqué inviting applications was issued on 12 January 2026, and communications were also sent to four special needs organisations inviting interested persons to apply. However, no applications had been received at that stage. The application process remained open to any person willing to provide such support.

Further concern raised by the NGO

On 25 June 2026, the NGO wrote to the Honourable Chief Justice, copying the OOC, regarding the same child who appeared before the Children's Court on 22 June 2026.

The NGO reported that the child had been mentally and emotionally prepared to give evidence. However, the child experienced distress, disappointment and exhaustion upon being informed that the hearing could not proceed due to the absence of a Sign Language Interpreter.

Observations from the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children

The OOC acknowledges the efforts undertaken by the Judiciary to address the issue. However, the OOC remains concerned that the repeated postponements of the child's testimony due to the absence of a Sign Language Interpreter may affect the child's effective participation in proceedings concerning him and may undermine his right to access justice.

The OOC further notes that the case has been ongoing for four years! For a child victim of sexual abuse, particularly a child with disabilities, prolonged delays in giving evidence may result in additional emotional distress, anxiety, loss of confidence in the justice process, and may require the child to repeatedly prepare for and revisit traumatic experiences.

Ensuring appropriate and timely accommodations is an essential component of safeguarding the equality, dignity and right to effective access to justice of children with disabilities. The provision of communication support, including Sign Language Interpretation, should

therefore be addressed in a manner that prevents further delays and ensures that the child's best interests remain a primary consideration.

Recommendations of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children

1. Creation of an updated pool of accredited Sign Language Interpreters

A formal database/roster of qualified interpreters should be developed in collaboration with disability organisations, special needs institutions and relevant stakeholders to facilitate timely access to interpretation services at the Children's Court whenever required.

2. Improved coordination prior to scheduled court hearings

A coordination mechanism should be established to confirm, before the hearing date, that all necessary accommodations are available for children with disabilities. Any barriers affecting the child's participation should be addressed in advance.

3. Child-sensitive management of court proceedings

The impact of postponements on child victims should be carefully considered. Proceedings involving children with disabilities should be prioritised, where possible, to avoid repeated preparation, anxiety and emotional distress.

Conclusions

The OOC reiterates that children with disabilities have the same right as all other children to be heard, participate effectively and access justice without discrimination. The provision of appropriate communication support, including Sign Language Interpretation, is essential to uphold the dignity, rights and best interests of every child involved in judicial proceedings.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AOMA	African Ombudsman and Mediators Association
ANFEN	Adolescent Non-Formal Education Network
BNLTH	Bureau National de Lutte contre la Traite des Êtres Humains de Madagascar
CERT-MU	Computer Emergency Response Team of Mauritius
CNIDH	Commission Nationale Indépendante des Droits de l'Homme de Madagascar
COP	Conference of the Parties
COPPA	Children's Online Privacy Protection Act
CP	Commissioner of Police
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
ECCEA	Early Childhood Care and Education Authority
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
ICTA	Information and Communication Technologies Authority
IOI	International Ombudsman Institute
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MAUCORS	Mauritian Cybercrime Online Reporting System
MEHR	Ministry of Education, Human Resources
MGEFW	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NSIF	National Social Inclusion Foundation
PSAC	Primary School Achievement Certificate
SEN	Special Education Needs
SENA	Special Education Needs Authority
SID	Safer Internet Day
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRC	United Nations Resident Coordinator

ANNEX A

OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN ACT

Act 41 of 2003 – 20 November 2003

Am 13/20 (cio 24/1/22);

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

Section

1. Short title
2. Interpretation
3. Establishment of office of Ombudsperson for Children
4. Appointment of Ombudsperson for Children
5. Objects of office of Ombudsperson for Children
6. Functions of Ombudsperson for Children
7. Investigation
8. Protection of witnesses
9. Protection from liability
10. Staff of Ombudsperson for Children
11. Report of Ombudsperson for Children
- 11A. Offences
12. Regulations
13. SCHEDULE

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;
[Inserted 13/20 (cio 24/1/22).]

“child” means a person under the age of 18;

“Convention” means the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989;

“Minister” means the Minister to whom responsibility for the subject of child development is assigned;

“Ombudsperson for Children” means the Ombudsperson for Children whose office is established under section 3;

“public body” means –

- (a) a Ministry or Government Department;
- (b) a local authority;
- (c) a statutory corporation;

(d) any other company, partnership or other entity of which Government is, by the holding of shares or some other financial input, or in any other manner, in a position to influence the policy or decision of such body.

[S. 2 amended by s. 73 of Act 13 of 2020 w.e.f. 24 January 2022.]

3. Establishment of office of Ombudsperson for Children

1. There is established for the purposes of this Act the office of Ombudsperson for Children.
2. The Ombudsperson for Children shall be a person who has a wide knowledge of the issues and the law relating to children in Mauritius.
3. The Ombudsperson for Children shall take before the President the oath specified in the Schedule before assuming the duties of his office.

4. Appointment of Ombudsperson for Children

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.

[Amended 13/20 (cio 24/1/22).]

[S 5 amended by s. 73 of Act 13 of 2020 w.e.f. 24 January 2022.]

6. Functions of Ombudsperson for Children

In carrying out the duties of his office, the Ombudsperson for Children shall –

- (a) make proposals to the Minister on legislation, policies and practices regarding services to, or the rights of, children;
- (b) advise the Minister on public and private residential placement facilities and shelters established for the benefit of children;
- (c) advise public bodies and other institutions responsible for providing care and other services to children on the protection of the rights of children;
- (d) take such steps as he may deem necessary to ensure that children under the care of, or supervision of, a public body are treated fairly, properly and adequately;
- (e) propose measures to ensure that the legal rights of children in care are protected and that the placement facilities promote the safety of children and conform with such norms as the Ombudsperson for Children may, from time to time, recommend;
- (f) initiate an investigation whenever the Ombudsperson for Children considers that there is, has been or is likely to be a violation of the rights of a child;

- (g) investigate cases relating to the situation of children in the family, in schools and in all other institutions, including private or public bodies, as well as cases of abandoned children or street children;
- (h) investigate any suspected or reported case of child labour;
- (i) investigate any case concerning a child who is a citizen of Mauritius and who may be abroad at the time of the investigation, or a child who is not a citizen of Mauritius but who is residing in Mauritius;
- (j) investigate complaints made by a child, or any other person, in relation to the rights of any child;
- (k) advise the Minister on the establishment of mechanisms to afford children the ability to express themselves freely, according to their age and maturity, especially on all matters concerning their individual or collective rights;
- (l) advise the Minister on the creation of partnerships with parents, teachers, non-governmental as well as governmental organisations, local authorities and any other stakeholders committed to the promotion of children's rights.

7. Investigation

1. Where the Ombudsperson for Children considers, either upon complaint made to him or on his own motion, that it is necessary to investigate a matter relating to the rights of a child, the Ombudsperson for Children shall investigate the complaint in such manner as he considers appropriate.
2. For the purposes of an investigation under this Act, the Ombudsperson for Children may –
 - (a) request any person, including any public officer, to provide information 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.
- (d) 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 –

(iv) insults the Ombudsperson for Children; or

(v) wilfully interrupts the proceedings.

2. Any person who commits an offence under this section shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding 10,000 rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months.

[S. 11A inserted by s. 4 of Act 8 of 2005.]

12. Regulations

The Minister may –

(a) make such regulations as he thinks fit for the purposes of this Act;

(b) after consultation with the Ombudsperson for Children, make regulations for the purpose of regulating the procedure to be applied for the investigation of complaints by the Ombudsperson for Children.

13. SCHEDULE

[Section 3]

I having been appointed to be the Ombudsperson for Children under the Ombudsperson for Children Act do swear/solemnly affirm that I shall faithfully, impartially and to the best of my ability discharge the trust and perform the duties devolving upon me by such appointment and that I shall not, without reasonable cause, disclose any information imparted to me in the performance of such duties.

(S).....

Before me,

Date:

(S).....

President of the Republic

ANNEX B - TABLE OF ACTIVITIES

WORKSHOPS/MEETINGS/ACTIVITIES ATTENDED BY STAFF OF THE OOC – Sept 2025 to Aug 2026

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/MEETINGS/ ACTIVITIES	ORGANISER/ VENUE (S)	PARTICIPATION OF OC/OOC'S STAFF
1.	01.09.25	Launching of book '10 ti zistwar pou lir dan aswar'	Institute Cardinal Jean Margeot SeDEC editions Lekoproduction Rose Hill	Mrs A.G, OC
2.	01.09.25	World Humanitarian Day 2025 Blood Donation Programme	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reg. Int. and Inter. Trade H.Rights Div. Mahébourg Social Welfare Centre	Mrs L.J, Sec,
3.	04.09.25	Opening ceremony for awareness campaign	Mauritius Prison Training School Beau Bassin	Mrs A.G, OC
4.	09.09.25	Roundtable discussion – FAM	Municipality of Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC
5.	10.09.25	Tipa Caméleon production – launching of documentary "Enn tipa" film by David Constantin	Mcine Trianon	Mrs A.G, OC
6.	16.09.25	Meeting regarding Probation Institutions with RYC	Probation and Aftercare Probation Headquarters Beau Bassin	Ms B.J, OC
7.	22.09.25	Meeting to discuss potential workshop	Institut Français de Maurice	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs S.P.M, Inv
8.	30.09.25	Meeting with President of the Republic of Mauritius in connection with Annual Report 2024/2025	Office of the President State House Réduit	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.P.M, Inv
9.	05.10.25	Cérémonie de remise des certificats: programme de formation en 'Coaching Parental'	Comité Scientifique de l'Observatoire de la Parentalité de l'Océan Indien Siege du Inner Peace Meditation Centre Vacoas	Mrs A.G, OC
10.	06.10.25	Meeting with Hon Mrs Marie Arianne NAVARRE-MARIE, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare in connection with child protection system	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs S.J, Inv Me. R Ahmine, DPP

11.	08.10.25	Official ceremony in the context of the International Day of Older persons 2025	J&J Auditorium Phoenix	Mrs A.G, OC
12.	09.10.25	Meeting with Hon Mrs Marie Arianne NAVARRE-MARIE, Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare in connection with child protection system	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare Port Louis	Mr I.A.B, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
13.	09.10.25	Working Session on the Role of Ombudsman Institute in Promoting Good Governance, Fairness & Human Rights	Office of the Ombudsman Conference Room, 3 rd Floor City Centre Building Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Mrs Y.R.V, Inv
14.	18.10.25	Journée Internationale pour l'Élimination de la pauvreté	Comite 17-Octobre c/o ATD Quart Monde La Salle de Fête de la Mairie Beau Bassin/Rose Hill	Mrs A.G, OC
15.	22.10.25	Table ronde sur 'Harcèlement en milieu scolaire et cyber'	L'Institut Cardinal Margeot	Mr I.A.B, Inv
16.	22.10.25	Workshop on Neuro Development and bullying on child	Northfield Primary School Mapou	Mrs S.J, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
17.	24.10.25	Certificate award ceremony	Passerelle Women Centre Council Room Municipality Beau Bassin	Mr I.A.B, Inv
18.	27.10.25 to 31.10.25	Five days' training on Age appropriate Evidence Based comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for out-of-school adolescents and Youth in Mauritius	Ministry of Health and wellness in collaboration with UNFPA Conference Room, Jawarhal Nehru Hospital Rose Belle	Mrs S.J, Inv
19.	30.10.25	Presentation of the National Youth Statement of Mauritius for COP30	United Resident Coordinator's Office in collaboration with National Youth Environment	Mrs A.G, OC Ms B.J, Inv
20.	03.11.25	Three Sessions of Sensitisation of children (5-12 years) and (13-18 years) and parents	Ti Rayon Soleil	Mr I.A.B, Inv Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
21.	03.11.25	Un table ronde harcèlement en milieu scolaire et cyber harcèlement	L'Institut Cardinal Margeot	Mrs A.G, OC Mr I.A.B, Inv (Speaker) Resource Person

22.	06.11.25	First Technical Meeting : Digital safety Campaign with DIVA	Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Development	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs S.J, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
23.	06.11.25	Art Expo “Donn Nou Enn Deziem Sans”	Hennesy Park Hotel Ebène	Mrs A.G, OC
24.	11.11.25	Courtesy Call – SOS Village and Delegation from Ethiopia	SOS Village Beau Bassin	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Mrs S.J, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
25.	12.11.25	Workshop in connection with protection of child in RCIs	SOS Village Beau Bassin	Mr I.A.B, Inv
26.	13.11.25	Workshop in connection with UNiTE to end Digital Violence against all Women & Girls	Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Development	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs S.J, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
27.	13.11.25	Celebration of H.M King Charles Birthday	British High Commission	Mrs A.G, OC
28.	14.11.25	Sensitisation of ABSA officers in connection with right of the child	Absa Ebène	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs S.J, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
29.	19.11.25	Celebration of 20 th Anniversary and National Survey of Pédostop	P édostop Caudan Arts Centre, Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC
30.	19.11.25 & 20.11.25	Two Days training - forensic iNvestigations	Pédostop Caudan Arts Centre, Port Louis	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv
31.	26.11.25 to 10 December 2025	16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence	National Assembly In collaboration with Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare And UNDP Sir Harilal Vaghjee Memorial Hall Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC Mr I.A.B, Inv
32.	30.11.25	Christmas celebration	Light of Hope Marie Marot Quatre Bornes	Mrs A.G, OC
33.	1.12.25	Opening ceremony of the multi-sectoral GBV response	UNFPA The Dock Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC
34.	1.12.25	Launching the ‘Boîte à Lettre la Colombe’ during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence 2025	National Assembly Sir Harilal Vaghjee Memorial Hall Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC
35.	02.12.25	Messe à l’occasion du fermeture du Foyer Père Laval	Foyer Père Laval	Mrs A.G, OC
36.	03.12.25	Conference on violence against children	Rotary Club of Curepipe Curepipe	Mrs A.G, OC

37.	03.12.25	Meeting in connection with Digital safety Campaign with DIVA	Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Development	Mrs S.J, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
38.	08.12.25	International Day of Person with Disability, 'Promoting Diversity, Empowerment and Inclusion'	SENA Indira Gandhi Centre Phoenix	Mrs A.G, OC
39.	09.12.25	Commemoration of the International Anti-Corruption Day 2025 – 'Fighting Corruption and otherZ Financial Crimes – Advancing Social Justice	Financial Crimes Commission FCC Headquarters, Réduit Triangle, Moka	Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO
40.	10.12.25	Launching of DIVA	Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Development	Mrs A.G, OC Ms B.J, Inv
41.	10.12.25	Commemoration of Human Rights Day 2025	National Human Rights Henessy Park Ebene	Mrs A.G, OC
42.	10.12.25	Digital Safety Campaign marks International Human Right under the theme "UNiTE to end Digital Violence Against All Women and Girls"	United Nations Resident's Office Voila Bagatelle	Mrs A.G, OC Ms B.J, Inv
43.	11.12.25	National Dissemination workshop on 'Street Harassment: A silent form of Gender based violence in Mauritius'	University of Mauritius Réduit	Mrs S.J, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
44.	11.12.25	Workshop with children on children rights	Institut Français de Maurice	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.P.M, Inv
45.	18.12.25	National consultations around Vision 2050	Paul Octave Wiehe Auditorium University of Mauritius Réduit	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO
46.	19.12.25	Installation of Chancellor	Paul Octave Wiehe Auditorium University of Mauritius Réduit	Mrs A.G, OC
47.	20.12.25	Celebration of Noël au Château/Art Day for Children	Office of the President in collaboration with the Committee for the promotion of National Unity and Root Arts State House, Réduit	Mrs A.G, OC
48.	22.12.25	Validation workshop comprehensive Sexual Education	Ministry of Health and Wellness The Docks Port Louis	Mrs S.P.M, Inv

49.	15.01.26	Working lunch with Board Members of Shelter for Women and Children in Distress Trust	Shelter for Women and Children in Distress Trust Forest Side	Mrs A.G, OC
50.	21.01.26	Courtesy call – Ms J.Toulouse Olivier permanent delegate of Mauritius to UNESCO	Medine Mews, La Chaussée Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO
51.	26.01.26 & 27.01.26	Two days' workshops in connection with validation on the draft Domestic Abuse Bill	Ministry of Gender and Family Welfare Caudan Arts Centre Port Louis	Mrs S.J, Inv
52.	04.02.26	Talk with headmasters on children's rights	Sookadeo Bissoondoyal SSS Rose Belle	Ms B.J, Inv
53.	06.02.26	Workshop on LGBTQIA+	Queer Alliance and Middlesex University	Mrs S.P.M, Inv
54.	06.02.26	Shaping child safeguarding of the rights of babies & toddlers	Mauritius Paediatric Society	Mr I.A.B, Inv
55.	09.02.26	Safer International Day 2026	CERT-MU Octave Wiehe Auditorium Reduit	Mrs A.G, OC
56.	11.02.26	Humanitarian work in action talk	180 degree & the Sphere Focal Point Mauritius Telfair, Moka	Mrs S.J, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
57.	20.02.26	Special meeting of climate change Committee	Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change	Mrs S.J, Inv
58.	26.02.26	Meeting in connection with child protection system	Office of the DPP	Mrs A.G, OC Mr I.A.B, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
59.	26.02.26	Book launch entitled 'Safeguarding democracy in the age of Artificial Intelligence'	Ministry of Information, Technology, Communication and Innovation	Mrs A.G, OC
60.	26.02.26	Parenting in the modern world – Exploring cyberbullying online safety, screen habits and stronger parent-child relationships	Dukesbridge Riddara Garden Allied Motors Co Ltd Reduit	Mrs A.G, OC
61.	02.03.26	Workshop on the Convention of Rights of Children with Disabilities	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare	Mr I.A.B, Inv
62.	05.03.26	Case conference	Vel Govinden Government School	Mrs S.P.M, Inv
63.	06.03.26	Meeting in connection with Heads of fee-paying schools	Dukesbridge	Mrs A.G, OC

64.	06.03.26	Meeting in connection with investigation case	Brown Sequard Hospital	Mrs S.P.M, Inv
65.	09.03.26	Workshop on Advances information security management system in public service (ISMS)	Ministry of Information, Technology and Communication Innovation	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO
66.	11.03.26	Celebration of Independence Day	Reverend Espitalier Noel Government School Cite Mangalkhan, Floreal	Mrs A.G, OC
67.	11.03.26	Celebration of Independence Day	Future Hope NFE school Roche Bois	Mr I.A.B, Inv
68.	14.03.26	Workshop for peer counsellors on sexual reproductive health and rights	Mauritius Family Planning Welfare Association Flying Dodo Restaurant Bagatelle	Mrs A.G, OC
69.	16.03.26	Meeting in connection with investigation Executive AOMA/AORC Committee	Office of the Ombudsman Conference Room, 3 rd Floor City Centre Building Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC
70.	30.03.26	Round table SADC Parliamentary Forum	National Assembly Caudan Arts Centre Port Louis	Mrs S.P.M, Inv
71.	08.04.26	Consultative workshop for the review of the Residential Care Institutions regulations for children (2022)	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare Ocean Creek Beach Hotel, Balaclava	Mrs A.G, OC Mr I.A.B, Inv
72.	14.04.26	Official Opening ceremony of the Zonal model United Nations conference 2026	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Dr Maurice Cure State College	Mrs A.G, OC Chief Guest
73.	22.04.26	Facilit Art Session on Children's rights	Tippa St Pierre	Ms B.J, Inv.
74.	27.04.26	Sensitisation talk with children of NGO Esperance 2000	NGO Esperance 2000 Curepipe	Mrs S.J, Inv Ms B.J, Inv. Intern Ms Jennifer
75.	29.04.26	'Lancement de 'Tizistwar par zanfan Moris'	Institute Cardinal Jean Margeot SeDEC editions Lekoproduction Rose Hill	Mrs A.G, OC
76.	30.04.26	Lancement du projet Lumin'iles	Lumin'iles - Maurice Département Capital Humain Développement Social (CHDS)	Mrs A.G, OC
77.	30.04.26	Meeting in connection with National Mechanism Human Right	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade Caudan Art Centre Port Louis	Mrs S.J, OC

78.	08.05.26	Europe Day	Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Mauritius to the Republic of Seychelles Atrium Telfair, Moka	Mrs A.G, OC
79.	11.05.26	Launch in connection with online child protection	Mauritius Telecom Conference room, Level 15 Telecom Tower Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC
80.	11.05.26	Sensitisation on Online Child Sexual Abuse and '4Rs'	Ramnath Jeetah College (Boys) Flacq	Mrs S.J, Inv. Ms B.J, Inv.
81.	12.05.26	'Lantin Chinese Calligraphy Cultural Salon'	ANFEN Rose Hill	Mrs A.G, OC
82.	13.05.26	Family Abandonment : A call for justice	Fam En Mars – JCI Quatre Bornes Municipality of Port Louis Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC
83.	21.05.26	Meeting in connection with protection of the right of the child	National Human Rights Commission	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv.
84.	25.05.26	Book launch 'Seeds of tomorrow'	Author: Ruqayah B. Khayrattee	Mrs A.G, OC
85.	26.05.26	Commemoration of the Africa Day 2026 on the theme 'Water, climate resilience & human dignity in Africa'	Brahma Kumaris, United Nations Ass. of Mauritius Municipality of Port Louis City Council of Port Louis	Mrs S.J, Inv
86.	01.06.26	Launching of an Awareness session on Early Childhood Wellbeing, Screening and Nutrition	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare Gold Crest Business Hotel Quatre Bornes	Mr I.A B, Inv
87.	02.06.26 to 05.06.26	Four-day workshop on comprehensive sexual education	Ministry of Health and Wellness Victoria Hos.	Mrs S.P.M, Inv
88.	03.06.26	Meeting in connection with Rights of Babies & Toddlers to Health	World Health Organisation Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs Y.R.V, Inv. Mrs S.J, Inv
89.	04.06.26	Bingo Day in support of children with Cancer	Royal College of Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC
90.	09.06.26 & 10.06.26	Awareness talk on child abuse	Ti Rayon Soleil and Pédostop Municipality Vacoas/Phoenix	Mrs S.P.M, Inv

91.	12.06.26	Meeting with reference to improvement of Healthcare Services in Prisons	Ministry of Health and Wellness	Mrs S.P.M, Inv
92.	15.06.26	Commemoration of International Day of African Child	Ministry of Gender and Family Welfare in collaboration with National Children's Council La Marie Treatment Plant	Mrs A.G, OC
93.	16.06.26	Freedom Day Celebration South Africa	High Commission of Republic of South Africa	Mrs A.G, OC
94.	22.06.26	Farewell lunch in honour of H.E Dr Hlamalani Nelly Manzini, High Commissioner of South Africa	The United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC
95.	23.06.26	Launch of 'Tapaz Silans'	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Quatre Bornes SSS	Mrs A.G, OC
96.	24.06.26	SLAM Competition	Ministry of Education and Human Resource MGI Moka	Mrs A.G, OC
97.	24.06.26	Launch on Life Skills	Gold Crest Quatre Bornes	Mrs A.G, OC
98.	25.06.26	Talk on the role of the OOC as well as on a survey report published by the Office in 2021	3-day Sphere Standards and Core Humanitarian Standards Workshop, Telfair, Moka	Mrs S.J, Inv.
99.	26.06.26	Open day Anti-Bullying on the topic child rights, emotional well-being and institutional support mechanisms	SSS Beau Bassin	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv.(Guest speaker)
100.	30.06.26	Remise d'attestation des employés des centres d'éveil Caritas île Maurice	Salle de fête de Plaza Rose Hill	Mrs A.G, OC
101.	06.07.26	Courtesy visit to Emtel – Mr Aleman to discuss further collaboration with Emtel – our strategic partner	Emtel Ebene	Mrs A.G, OC
102.	08.07.26	Meeting on children with serious behavioural concerns	Ministry of Gender and Family Welfare	Mr I.A B, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
103.	09.07.26	Video recording – documentary on child sexual abuse – stolen childhood and lifelong scars	Pedostop DAARKA Studio	Mrs A.G, OC

104.	14.07.26	Reception	Ambassade de France Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC
105.	23.07.26 24.07.26 27.07.26	Fifth National Youth Parliament	National Assembly Port Louis	Mr I.A B, Inv
106.	29.07.26	Official dinner	National Human Rights Commission	Mrs A.G, OC Mr S.Boolell, S.C, Chairman
107.	30.07.26	National Policy Dialogue on the Commemoration of World Population week 2026 on the topic 'Investing in Adolescents and Young People: Shaping the future of Mauritius'	Ministry of Health and Wellness Gold Crest Hotel Quatre Bornes	Mrs S.J, Inv.
108.	31.07.26	10 th Mauritius Internet Governance forum on the topic 'Children safety for digital well-being'	Halley Movement and Mauritius Internet Forum Labourdonnais Waterfront Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC (Speaker)

WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS/MEETINGS ORGANISED BY THE OOC

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS/MEETINGS	VENUE (S)	ATTENDEES
1.	07.10.25	Launching of Annual Report 2024/2025	Gold Crest Hotel Quatre Bornes	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO All Invs OOC staff ● Excellencies and members of the Diplomatic Corps ● CEO Law Reform Commission ● Directors, and Officers from the different Ministries, Institutions and organisations ● Reps of SLO, DPP and LRC ● Representatives of the different NGO(s) ● Members of the press

2.	10.10.25	Celebrating the International Day of the Girl Child	MITD Mont Roches Training Centre Beau Bassin	Mrs A.G, OC All Invs OOC staff MITD Students
3.	16.10.25	Meeting in connection with conference on child safeguarding	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Mr I.A B, Inv Ms B.Darick, MSO Representatives from SOS Children's Village
4.	28.10.25	Consultative meeting on the right of intersex children	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mr I.A Bawamia, Inv <u>Participants:</u> • NGOs • Equal Opportunity Commission • Attorney General • DPP • Law Reform Commission
5.	29.10.25	Meeting in connection with follow up activities under the Safer Internet project	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mr Lobin, Dis Moi
6.	06.11.25	Meeting UNCRC law on Life Safety	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC
7.	12.11.25	Round table discussion – Autism Workshop	Royal Green Wellness Resort	Mrs A.G, OC All Invs Support Staff Participants: • Ministry of Education and Human Resource • SEN Unit • SeDec • APEIM • Heypumpkin • M.I.E • CEDEM • ECCEA

8.	19.11.25	Meeting in connection with 'Atelier sur les droits des enfants intersexes à Maurice'	OOO	Mrs A.G, OC All Invs Officers from: Law Reform Commission
9.	24.11.25	Workshop in connection with Rights of Intersex Children in Mauritius	Caudan Arts Centre, Port Louis	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO All Invs Support staff Participants: Officers from Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare Officers from Ministry of ICT
10.	04.12.25	Inauguration of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children and Prize giving to student for Art Competition	OOO Ebène Heights Ebène	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO All Invs OOO staff <u>Guests</u> ●Mrs Shirin Aumeeruddy-Cziffra, Speaker of the National Assembly ● JADES ● Parents and students
11.	16.12.25	Celebration of Universal Children's Day	Queen Elizabeth College Rose Hill	Mrs A.G, OC Invs OOO staff <u>Guests</u> ● RCIs ● JADES ● Parents and students
12.	18.12.25	Art Exhibition	OOO Ebène Heights Ebène	Mrs A.G, OC Invs OOO staff ● JADE ● Managers of RCIs

13.	16.01.26	Meeting in connection with protection of the rights of children	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mr Y.Panday, Director Zone 4, Ministry of Education and Human Resource
14.	21.01.26	Meeting in connection with prolonged hospitalisation of minors	OOC Ebène Heights Ebène	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.P.M, Inv Ms B.Darick, MSO Medical Superintendent, Ministry of Health and Wellness Representatives from Brown Sequard Hospital Officers from Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare
15.	23.02.26	Meeting in connection with long stay minors at BSH	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs S.P.M, Inv Mr Edler Maurer, Manager Safire
16.	25.02.26	Meeting in connection with Rights of Babies and Toddlers	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC All invs Dr R.Joomye President Paediatric Society
17.	08.03.26	International Women's Day 2026	OOC Quatre Bornes State Secondary School	Mrs A.G, OC Mr I.A Bawamia, Inv Mrs S.P.M, Inv Ms B.Jogarah, Inv Support staff JADES

18.	18.03.26	Panel Discussion: “Safeguarding the Rights of Child Victims of Sexual Abuse: Strengthening the Chain of Protection”	OOO Palm Hotel Quatre Bornes	Mrs A.G, OC All Invs Support staff Participants from: • Prime Minister’s Office • Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare • Brigade pour la Protection de la Famille • Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions • Probation & Aftercare Service - Pedostop • Oasis RCI • Konekte • CDU, Brigade Rodrigues
19.	31.03.26	Meeting in connection with investigation	OOO	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Mr I.A Bawamia, Inv Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs Janine from European Union
20.	03.04.26	Meeting in connection with advancing the rights of Intersex	OOO	Mrs A.G, OC Ms B.Jogarah, Inv Maitre Bhaganooa Young Queer Alliance Ms Najeebah and Ms Abby
21.	08.04.26	Meeting in connection with organisation of IOI conference	OOO	Mrs A.G, OC Mr H. Ganoo, Ombudsman Mr A.Ramtahal, Senior Investigator

22.	10.04.26	Workshop: 4Rs – Rights, Respect, Responsibility, Resilience Theme: Protecting and Empowering Children	OOC Gold Crest	Mrs A.G, OC All Invs Support staff Participants from: Non-Formal Educators JADES
23.	15.04.26	Meeting in connection with rights of the child	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Participants: Representative from SOS Village
24.	16.04.26	JADE training session	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mr I.A Bawamia, Inv JADES
25.	22.04.26	Preparatory meeting on Short clip competition on drug awareness	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs S.J, Inv <u>Participants from:</u> Mauritius Film Development
26.	28.04.26	Preparatory meeting on Short clip competition on drug awareness	OOC	<u>Participants from:</u> Ministry of Education and Human Resource Private Secondary Education Authority (PSEA) National Agency for Drug Control (NADC), Brigade pour la protection de la famille (BPF) Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency (MDPA) Special Education Needs Authority (SENA), Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU) and the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC)

27.	14.05.26	Press conference in connection with Short Clip Competition “Your Life matters: Nou Lavi Pli Importan Ki Ladrog”	OOC Mrs A.G, OC All Invs Support staff <u>Participants from:</u> Mauritius Film Development Corporation (MFDC) Ministry of Education and Human Resource (MEHR) National Agency for Drug Control (NADC) Private Secondary Education Authority (PSEA) Brigade pour la protection de la famille (BPF) Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency (MDPA) Special Education Needs Authority (SENA) Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU)
28.	16.05.26	Induction Ceremony JADE Members - - 2 nd Edition	OOC Gold Crest Hotel Quatre Bornes Mrs A.G, OC All Invs Mr I.A.B, Inv Mrs S.P.M, Inv Support Staff Chief Guests

				The Vice-President of the Republic of Mauritius H.E Mr Jean Yvan Robert Hungley, G.O.S.K The Minister of Education and Human Resource Dr The Hon. Mahend GUNGAPERSAD <u>Participants from:</u> MKids Future Hope JADE Members
29.	19.05.26	Meeting in connection with collaboration with OOC	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC All invs. Participants from Mauritius Telecom
30.	19.05.26	Meeting in connection with safeguarding the best interest of the child	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Support staff Officers of Municipal Councils of Port Louis, Rose Hill, Curepipe, Quatre Bornes, Vacoas, District Councils of Savanne, Black River, Riviere du Rempart, Grand Port, Pamplemousses, Moka and Flacq
31.	16.06.26	Celebration of the Day of the African Child on the theme 'Water, Sanitation, Hygiene for every child in Africa' and award ceremony Mural Painting	OOC Dayforce	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Support staff <u>Participants:</u> H.E Ms M.J Toulouse-Olivier, Permanent Delegate of Mauritius to

				UNESCO Mr Devarajen Goinden, Senior Director of Services, Dayforce Mr Shezaad Auchoybur Manager of Quality and CSR Emtel Students and Teachers participated in Mural Painting including JADEs
32.	18.06.26	Workshop with students of Special Needs in connection with Short Clip Competition “Your Life matters: Nou Lavi Pli Importan Ki Ladrog”	Ranger Foundation Centre Pinewood (a.m) Queen Elizabeth (p.m)	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs S.J, Inv. Support staff Mr M.Botebol Mrs T.Soonndrum from National Agency for Drug Control (NADC) Mrs Perianen from SENA Mrs Timol, Mauritius Film Development Corporation (MFDC)
33.	01.07.26	Meeting in connection with an investigation	Mr Clanchet Ambassade de France	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.P.M, Inv
34.	16.07.26	Meeting with stakeholders in connection protection of Children’s Right	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Mr I.A.B, Inv Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs B.J, Inv. Representative from Ministry of Gender and Family Welfare SOS Children’s Village

35.	27.07.26	Meeting with stakeholders on children with serious behavioural concern	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Invs. Representatives from NGOs
36.	27.07.26	Courtesy visit	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Mr I.A B, Inv. <u>From National Human Right Commission</u> Mr S.Boolell, S.C, Chairman Ms D.Thakoor Ms C.Radert
37.	28.07.26	National Human Right Induction course	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Invs Representatives from National Human Right Commission
38.	29.07.26	Video on rights of intersex children	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs S.P Mauree <u>From Young Queer Alliance</u> Ms Abby Domun Ms Luvishka Seegun
39.	30.07.26	Meeting in connection with “Guidance concerning City Council Teachers and Schools”	OOC	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs K.Gowrea, School Supervisor City Council of Port Louis

MEDIA
(Sept 2025 to Aug 2026)

SN	DATE	WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS/ MEETINGS	VENUE (S)	ATTENDEES
1.	03.04.26	Radio Emission in connection with safeguarding of Children's Right	TOP FM	Mrs A.G, OC
2.	09.04.26	Radio Emission in connection with safeguarding of Children's Right	Radio Plus, Défi Media	Mrs A.G, OC
3.	23.06.26	Recording in connection with Child Online Safety	MBC	Mrs A.G, OC
4.	08.07.26	'Danger associated to foreign bodies swallowed by toddlers (Marshmallow)	Radio Plus	Mrs A.G, OC
5.	13.07.26	Recording in connection with Intersex	MBC	Mrs A.G, OC

FIELD VISITS
ORGANISED BY THE OFFICE OF THE OC (OOC)
SEP 2025 – AUG 2026

SN	DATE	FIELD VISIT	ATTENDED BY
1.	23.09.25	School for the Deaf	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs Y.R.V, Inv
2.	08.10.25	Loïs Lagesse Trust Fund	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs Y.R.V, Inv
3.	08.10.25	Women Prison	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs Y.R.V, Inv
4.	09.10.25	Rehabilitation Youth Centre	Mrs S.J, Inv
5.	17.11.25	Brown Sequard Hospital	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.P.M, Inv
6.	18.11.25	SOS Village Beau Bassin	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs L.J, Sec, OCO Mrs S.J, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
7.	20.01.26	Elle C Nous Association	Mrs S.P.M, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
8.	23.01.26	Association pour les Handicapés des Malherbes	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
9.	23.01.26	SEN School Malherbes	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv

10.	23.01.26	La Cigogne	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
	27.01.26	Wordlight	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
11.	28.01.26	Elle C Nous Association	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
12.	03.02.26	Gayasingh Ashram	Mrs S.J, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
13.	04.02.26	Oasis Shelter Chebel	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
14.	05.02.26	Pure Mind Haven	Mrs S.J, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
15	11.02.26	Ruth School SEN	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs S.P.M, Inv
16.	12.02.26	Pure Mind Haven	Mrs S.J, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
17.	13.02.26	Etoile du Berger	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.P.M, Inv
18.	20.02.26	Women Prison	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
18.	20.02.26	Crèche Coeur Immaculé de Marie	Mrs S.P.M, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
19.	03.03.26	Curepipe Police Station	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
20.	04.03.26	La Marguerite RCI	Mrs S.P.M, Inv
19.	06.03.26	Notre Dame Relay Centre	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
20.	13.03.26	Oasis RCI	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
21.	06.04.26	SOS Children Bambous	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
22.	11.04.26	Rajcoomar Government School, Flacq	Mrs S.J, Inv Ms B.J, Inv
23.	05.06.26	Ranger Foundation Centre, Wootun	Mrs S.J, Inv
24.	23.07.26	SOS Children Village Beau Bassin	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL MISSION BY STAFF OF THE OOC
(SEP 2025 – AUG 2026)

SN	DATE	THEME	ORGANISER	OC/OOC'S STAFF
1.	21.10.25 to 23.10.25	Session de formation AOMF 'Projet de programme de formation de l'AOMF vers une contribution Institutionnelle du Médiateur a l'EPU'	AOMF, Rabat, Maroc	Mrs A.G, OC
2.	25.11.25 to 29.11.25	Conference l'Observatoire de la Parentalité de l'Océan Indien (OPOI)	OPOI Réunion	Mrs A.G, OC
3.	22.03.26 to 28.03.26	AORC Relaunch and Training programme	AORC, Durban South Africa	Mrs A.G, OC Ms B.J, Inv
4.	27.04.26 to 01.05.26	International Internship programme	Office of the Ombudsman of Punjab, Pakistan Lahore	Mr I.B, Inv.
5.	28.05.26 to 29.05.26	III Italian Edition of the International Conference of Ombudsman	Italian Ombudsman Rome Italy	Mrs A.G, OC
6.	21.07.26 to 23.07.26	Training on "Forensic Investigations and Digital Case Handling: Integrating Technology into Ombudsman Work"	African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC) African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA) Windhoek, Namibia	Mrs A.G, OC Mrs S.P.M, Inv

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL WEBINARS BY STAFF OF THE OOC **(SEP 2025 – AUG 2026)**

SN	DATE	THEME	ORGANISER	OC/OOC'S STAFF
1.	20.01.26	Webinar Strengthening Quality Management and Accountability in Ombudsman	AOMA	Mr I.A.B, Inv Mrs Y.R.V, Inv Mrs S.P.M, Inv Mrs S.J, Inv
2.	22.01.26	Webinar 'Comité droits de l'enfant	AOMF	Mrs Y.R.V, Inv
3.	29.01.26	Webinar in connection with Progress made	AOMF	Mr I.A.B, Inv
4.	11.03.26	Webinar INPH – Quelles stratégies contre les violences basées sur le genre ?	AFCNDH Association Francophone	All invs
5.	02.04.26	Webinar AOMF	AOMF, Quebec	Mrs A.G, OC All invs
6.	08.04.26	Webinaire du Comité enfant de l'AOMF – Validation du compte rendu	AOMF	Mrs A.G, OC All invs

MISSIONS TO RODRIGUES **SEP 2025 – AUG 2026**

DATE	AGENDA	VENUE
Mission to Rodrigues (06 May to 08 May 2026): Mr I.A Bawamia, Inv, Mrs Y.R Veeramootoo, Inv, Mrs S.P Mauree, Inv		
06 May 2026	Meeting with public	Port Mathurin
06 May 2026	Follow-up meeting with DHM and Primary Inspectorate on the implementation of 4Rs programme	Malabar
07 May 2026	Information session with Fortified Learning Environment (FLE) team	Malabar
	Training of JADE	Cotton Bay Hotel
	Visit to RCIs	Roseaux
08 May 2026	Training of JADE	Cotton Bay Hotel
	Talk on MBC radio programme	Citronelle

Mission to Rodrigues (10 to 12 June 2026):

Mrs Aneeta Ghoorah, Ombudsperson for Children, Mrs Lata Jhugroo, Secretary, Ombudsperson for Children's Office, Mrs Sandhya Johaheer, Investigator

10 June 2026	Round Table with stakeholders working with children- Commission for Women's Affairs, SENA, Probation Office, CDU, Psychologist, NGOs	Cotton Bay Hotel Pointe Cotton
11 June 2026	Induction Ceremony —JADE	Cotton Bay Hotel Pointe Cotton
11 June 2026	Receiving Public (Complaints)	Conference Room Commission for Environment Port Mathurin
12 June 2026	Visit to Centre de Formation Agricole Frère Rémy	Camp du Roi
12 June 2026	Recording at MBC Rodrigues	

ROME DECLARATION 2026 for the Protection of Citizens' Rights

We, Ombudsmen, national, regional and local Civic Defenders, independent oversight authorities, representatives of public institutions, scholars, experts and members of civil society, gathered in Rome on 28 and 29 May 2026,

aware of the universal value of human dignity, the effective protection of fundamental rights, respect for the rule of law and the proper functioning of public administrations;

recognising the essential role of civic defence institutions as guardians of democracy, administrative justice, social inclusion and public trust;

convinced that institutions must become increasingly closer to people, accessible, transparent and capable of responding to the challenges of our time;

hereby adopt the following **Rome Declaration 2026**.

1. Centrality of the Person

We recognise that every public policy must place the individual, human dignity, fundamental rights, substantive equality and respect for diversity at its core. Public administrations must act with impartiality, proportionality, transparency and efficiency, ensuring services that are accessible, understandable, inclusive and responsive to the real needs of citizens.

2. Civic Defence as a Pillar of Democracy

We affirm the fundamental role of civic defence institutions in preventing abuses, protecting rights, promoting legality and strengthening dialogue between citizens and public administrations. We commit ourselves to supporting the autonomy, independence, resources, visibility and effective operational capacity of Ombudsman institutions.

3. Access to Administrative Justice

We promote rapid, free, accessible and non-adversarial mechanisms for resolving disputes between citizens and public administrations. We call upon States, Regions and local authorities to strengthen mediation, conciliation and administrative protection mechanisms in order to ensure the effective safeguarding of rights.

4. Transparency, Integrity and Open Government

We reaffirm the principle of administrative transparency as an essential condition for an open, accountable, participatory administration oriented towards the common good. We support policies aimed at preventing corruption, simplifying access to public information and fostering civic oversight and democratic participation.

5. Protection of Vulnerable Persons

We recognise the need to strengthen the protection of children, persons with disabilities, older persons, migrants, victims of discrimination, violence or social exclusion, as well as all individuals in vulnerable situations. Ombudsman institutions must promote inclusive, fair and dignity-based policies.

6. Innovation, Technology and Rights

We promote the ethical, responsible and transparent use of digital technologies, artificial intelligence and public data. The digital transformation of public administrations must always guarantee respect for fundamental rights, privacy, data security and the principle- of nondiscrimination.

7. Education on Rights and the Culture of Legality

We recognize the importance of promoting, in schools, universities and communities, a culture of rights, active citizenship, democratic participation and good governance. We support educational programmes, training initiatives and public awareness campaigns aimed at bringing younger generations closer to institutions of guarantee and democratic values.

8. International Cooperation

We commit ourselves to strengthening cooperation among Ombudsman institutions, public authorities, international organisations and civil society through exchanges of experience, joint training, multilateral projects and strategic partnerships. We recognize the value of dialogue and collaboration among institutions of guarantee across different continents as instruments for peace, the protection of rights and democratic development.

9. Rebuilding Public Trust

We consider it essential to rebuild and strengthen citizens' trust in institutions through transparency, active listening, accountability, proximity and tangible results. Ombudsman institutions must serve as guarantors of administrative fairness and promoters of a renewed pact of trust between citizens and the State.

10. Communication as a Public Good

We recognize the value of ombudsman communication as an essential public good for ensuring access to information, enabling the informed exercise of rights and restoring dignity to individuals, especially the most vulnerable. Institutional communication must be understood as a civic service, a tool for protection, the promotion of democracy and the strengthening of social bonds.

11. Looking Towards the Future

We assume the responsibility of rethinking our institutions — from a legal, functional and cultural perspective — in light of the profound transformations shaping contemporary societies and the new challenges posed by emerging rights, within a context marked by the social, technological and climate changes of today's world.

We are called upon to develop new skills, new tools and new forms of institutional proximity, capable of responding effectively and promptly to the needs of present and future generations.

12. Common Commitment

Through this Declaration, we commit ourselves to promoting, within our respective countries and territories, the principles set forth herein, monitoring their implementation and strengthening permanent dialogue among civic defence institutions. We further affirm our willingness to meet regularly in order to assess progress achieved, share best practices and jointly address new global challenges in the protection of citizens' rights.

Adopted in Rome on 29 May 2026.



INTERNATIONAL
OMBUDSMAN
INSTITUTE

GUIDE TO THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF OMBUDSPERSONS
AND THEIR STAFF MEMBERS - 2026

www.theioi.org

PREAMBLE

The International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) has developed these guidelines to the Ethical Principles of Ombudspersons and their staff members as a reference point for its members. They provide an overview of the core principles that underpin the work of Ombudsman institutions worldwide.

This Guide reflects a common understanding of the ethical principles shared by Ombudsman institutions. It seeks to articulate principles that are common to all Ombudsman institutions, while recognising the diversity of legal systems, mandates, and institutional frameworks in which they operate. Accordingly, the principles may require adaptation to national, local, or institutional contexts.

The principles set out in this Guide are not intended to be exhaustive. They complement existing institutional codes and guidelines developed by individual Ombudsman institutions.

The Guide applies to Ombudspersons (office holders) and their staff members.

Principle 1 – INDEPENDENCE

Ombudspersons and their staff members shall act independently and safeguard the independence of the Ombudsman institution.

Principle 2 – IMPARTIALITY

Ombudspersons and their staff members shall act impartially and without bias or prejudice in the performance of their functions.

Principle 3 – INTEGRITY AND DIGNITY

Ombudspersons and their staff members shall act with integrity and uphold the dignity of the office, thereby maintaining public trust and confidence in the institution.

Principle 4 – NEUTRALITY

Ombudspersons and their staff members shall act with neutrality and maintain an appropriate distance from political party politics.

Principle 5 – TRANSPARENCY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Ombudspersons and their staff members shall ensure transparency in their work while respecting confidentiality, privacy, and data protection obligations.

Principle 6 – RESPECT, LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING

Ombudspersons and their staff members shall engage with all individuals respectfully, ensure that they are heard, and provide services that are accessible and responsive to diverse needs.

Principle 7 – EXPERTISE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Ombudspersons and their staff members shall perform their duties with expertise, professionalism, and a strong sense of responsibility.

GUIDE TO THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF OMBUDSPERSONS AND THEIR STAFF MEMBERS

Preamble

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Acknowledgements

The OOC extends its heartfelt thanks to All those who in a direct or indirect way have contributed to advancing children's rights wellbeing and safety.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to representatives of ministries, the Judiciary, law enforcement agencies, statutory bodies, civil society organisations, international partners, members of the diplomatic corps, educators, and all stakeholders who work tirelessly to safeguard the rights and well-being of children

Our appreciation to the NGOs., who are the ones on the field facing challenges and making a change in spite of hurdles faced

To the media, thank you for your continued support in bringing children's issues to the attention of the nation. Your responsible reporting helps raise awareness, encourages dialogue and strengthens accountability.

We are especially grateful to the dedicated staff of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. Their professionalism, compassion and unwavering commitment throughout the year have made this report possible.

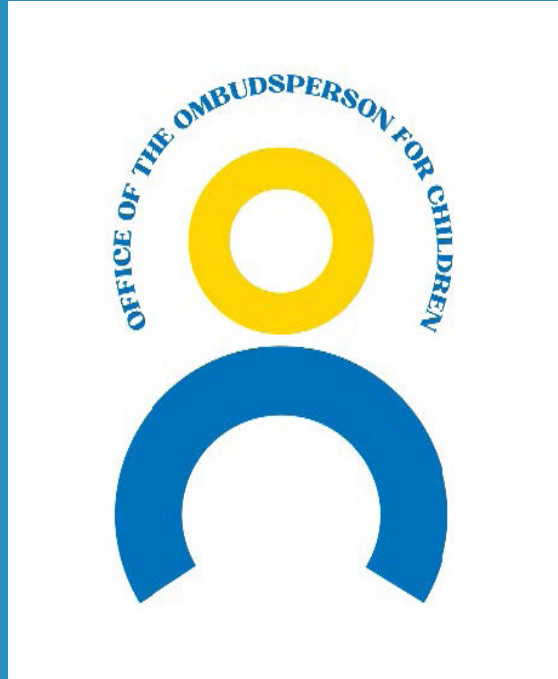
My sincere appreciation also goes to everyone who contributed to the research, data collection, editing, design, printing and organisation of this Annual Report

A special mention to All our sponsors and well-wishers. We are especially grateful to EMTEL and Day Force who are ever ready to help.

This year we are particularly grateful to the World Health Organistaion representatives in Mauritius and the medical officers who contributed to the data and observations in Chapter 1.

Finally, I thank each stakeholder for your shared commitment to building a Mauritius where every child is safe, respected, heard and given the opportunity to reach his or her full potential.

The publication of this Annual Report is not the end of our work—it is a call to action. Let us continue to work together, each within our respective responsibilities, to ensure that the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child become a lived reality for every child in our Republic.



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