

Human Rights in Mauritius

Statement made on behalf of DIS-MOI , a non-governmental organization in Mauritius .



Human Rights Situation in Mauritius

Issue 1 : Right to Education

Recommendations in last UPR

- Cuba : Continue working to improve education services
- China : Continue to take positive steps to make progress in the field of education
- Trinidad and Tobago : Inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools as far as possible
- Georgia : Step up efforts to ensure full access to education for creole-speaking children

All recommendations were supported by the Mauritian Government

Issue 1 : Developments since last UPR

- Education is now free for all children from primary to tertiary level and will be free for pre-primary level as from January 2004
- However , the Mauritian Education System is highly elitist and there is a “ rat race ” competition right from primary school to the end of secondary education which creates a highly unequal education outcome where students from disadvantaged regions (mostly creole-speaking) find it hard to pass the main exams or to get decent results even if the education structure has been slightly modified to cater for those children who fail the primary school exam .
- Students who get the best results in the final secondary exams are able to get scholarships to study in universities or other tertiary institutions and those who do not get scholarships have to pay for their tertiary education which is quite expensive
- Students who cannot complete secondary education can attend vocational or technical schools but there is no guarantee that they will be able to get a job because there is a mismatch between available jobs and a properly trained labour force
- Bullying is on the increase in primary and secondary schools and there is a lack of respect for teachers .Heads of schools find it hard to take sanctions because of pressure from parents and administrative constraints
- There is insufficient provision of inclusive education for children with disabilities

Issue 1 : Recommendations by DIS-MOI

- DIS-MOI recommends to :
 - Reform the educational system so that every child gets the opportunity to develop fully his/her intellectual and physical abilities and is prepared to become a responsible and active adult in society
 - Abolish the practice of private tuition and to give scholarships on a regional basis instead of a national basis
 - Integrate values and peace concepts in the school curriculum
 - Guarantee sufficient educational psychologists and / or counselors in order to provide help to every school in Mauritius
 - Increase the psychological and pedagogical support for children coming from disadvantaged regions (mostly creole-speaking) right from early childhood and to encourage the parents to motivate their children to take schooling seriously
 - Give children who do not complete secondary education the right guidance to help them to acquire the necessary tools that will allow them to apply for a job they can pretend to

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Issue 2 : Right to health

- **Recommendations in last UPR**

- Venezuela : Guarantee access to free health care for its population
- Cuba : Continue working to improve health – care services

- **Development since last UPR**

- Access to health –care still free in Mauritius and new hospitals built with new facilities
- However there have been cases of medical negligence in some hospitals and patients lost their lives and many Mauritians prefer to have medical treatment in private clinics even if it is very expensive there
- In recent weeks the Audit of Catering Services from the Internal Control Unit of the ministry of health has issued reports about the poor hygienic conditions in some hospital wards and the deplorable state of the environment in those hospitals (smell of cigarettes / dirty bed sheets / bugs and pests on beds)
- The same Unit mentions that vegetables served to patients were not of the required standards and were of poor quality

Issue 2 : Recommendations by DIS-MOI

- DIS-MOI recommends to :
 - Conduct a thorough investigation to find out what is happening in the hospitals mentioned in the report and take the necessary measures to remedy the situation as soon as possible
 - Produce a “ Patients Charter Of Rights ” that should be available to all patients admitted into hospitals or private clinics so that patients know their rights and responsibilities and give patients access to an independent ombudsperson who can quickly and economically resolve their complaints or concerns
 - Find ways to ensure that patients who have to get medical treatment abroad are given enough financial assistance
 - Develop a policy which will allow people suffering from diabetes or other complicated diseases to buy their medicine or essential foodstuff at reduced prices

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Issue 3 : Right to a clean and safe environment

- **Recommendations in previous UPR**

- Senegal : Reinforce human and financial resources for the national Disaster Risk Reduction to better adapt to climate change
- Seychelles , Lesotho and Fiji : Develop policies to mitigate the impact of climate change and other disaster related challenges while taking into consideration the full enjoyment of human rights of the vulnerable and the needs of women , children and disabled people

- **Development since last UPR :**

- Ten years after the heavy floods which caused the deaths of 11 people in Port-Louis (the capital of Mauritius) and caused a lot of damage to the environment , Mauritius is still at risk of feeling the effects of floods because the government has adopted an economic growth policy which was not based on sustainable development objectives
- On November 8 , 2023 , flash floods caused a lot of damage in many regions of Mauritius and some people had to be rescued from their homes
- The Land Drainage Authority has still not been able to come up with appropriate ways to deal with the issue even if a lot of money has been spent to improve the drainage system in the regions under high risk of floods
- In the region of Tranquebar Manna (near Port-Louis) squatters from Rodrigues (an island which belongs to Mauritius) have been living in horrible conditions (dirty environment where water accumulates in a pond filled with mosquitoes) and are under constant risk of being affected by floods

Issue 3 : Recommendations by DIS-MOI

- DIS – MOI recommends to :
 - Sets up a proper policy to mitigate the impact of floods and cyclones with the help of relevant authorities and foreign experts if need be and make sure that people who are at risk of being affected by floods are consulted
 - Build more canals in towns and villages so that water can be diverted to places where it can be safely stored
 - Plant trees at appropriate places to prevent land slides
 - Issue building permits only if the construction of a new building or road will not increase the risk of people being affected in cases of floods
 - Implement a proper plan to alleviate the problems encountered by the squatters of Tranquebar Manna so that they can enjoy the right to a safe and clean environment

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Issue 4 : Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

. Recommendations in the previous UPR

- Djibouti : Mauritius to consider ratifying the international documents to which it is not yet a party (action to be considered by the Mauritian government)
- Portugal : Ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic , Social and Cultural Rights (which was noted by the Mauritian Government)

. Development since the last UPR

- Fifty years after its accession to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Mauritius has still not included any economic or social or cultural right in domestic law or in the constitution and has not ratified the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic , Social and Cultural Rights .

This means that no person can go to court to claim compensation if his/her socio-economic or cultural right is violated and cannot make any complaint to the International Committee on Economic , Social and Cultural Rights

- The Mauritian government has been very slow to satisfy the essential requirement of the International Covenant on Economic , Social and Cultural Rights which is the progressive realization of the rights mentioned in the Covenant like the right to work for every one or the right to a safe and clean environment for every one

Issue 4 : Recommendations by DIS-MOI

- **DIS-MOI recommends to:**

- Start the process of including economic , social and cultural rights in domestic law and eventually in the constitution of Mauritius and give training to judges so that they can deal with cases of economic or social or cultural rights efficiently
- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic , Social and Cultural Rights as soon as possible
- Define priorities and secure ways to prevent unnecessary waste of resources so as to make sure that economic , social and cultural rights are properly taken care of and in so doing satisfy the realization of these rights as recommended in the International Covenant on Economic , Social and Cultural rights

Thank you for your attention
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