

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Human Rights Division)

Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

1. Introduction

1.1 The State of Mauritius is regarded as a peaceful country. According to the Global Peace Index 2021, Mauritius is ranked 28th in the Global State of Peace and 1st in Sub-Saharan Africa, (Source: [GPI-2021-web.pdf \(economicsandpeace.org\)](#)). Based on statistics, the rate of femicide in the State of Mauritius is relatively low.

1.2 However, despite the low rate of femicide in Mauritius, cases of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) have been increasing, especially during the curfew period related to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to data published by Statistics Mauritius, 520 cases of domestic violence were reported during the period of 20 March to 30 May 2020, out of which 481 cases were perpetrated against women.

(Source: https://statsmauritius.govmu.org/Documents/Homepage/Covid19/Covid_doc_domestic_violence.pdf#search=domestic%20violence).

2. On additional steps taken to create a national femicide watch and/or femicide observatory and/or observatory on violence against women with a femicide watch role; observatories at Ombudsperson's office or Equality Bodies; academic institutions and/or NGOs, or any plans to create one, as applicable.

2.1 GBV is considered a serious crime in Mauritius. Hence, the fight against same has always been a priority in the agenda of the Government of Mauritius. To that end, funds have been earmarked by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, to run the Observatory on GBV in Mauritius. The setting up of this Observatory is seen as a much-needed progression to strengthen the data capture on gender-based violence in Mauritius.

2.2 Moreover, the setting up of such an Observatory will lead to harmonised data collection for informed policy making and monitoring and evaluation of initiatives on GBV. This platform will enable the setting up of a holistic and transparent mechanism to strengthen collaboration and understanding of the actions carried out in matters related to care for victims; evolution of gender-based violence in Mauritius and subsequently, elaboration of future public policies to eradicate this serious social problem which constitutes the worst example of the inequality suffered by women.

2.3 Furthermore, the National Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2024 of the High-Level Committee on the Elimination of Gender Based Violence was launched on 25 November 2020 on the occasion of the International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women. Same is mainly geared towards the elimination of GBV wherein a strategic and a multi-sectoral approach has been adopted therein.

2.4 The National Strategy Document and its accompanying Action Plan present the new strategic direction of the Government of Mauritius to eliminate GBV in Mauritius. It reflects stakeholder engagement and has been drafted in a participatory manner to capture the current specificities of the Republic of Mauritius.

2.5 It is further informed by international best practices and frameworks to address the root cause of gender inequality and is survivor-focused. The key elements of the National Strategy revolve around having a shared understanding of the nature and extent of GBV in Mauritius, the commitment of multiple stakeholders, the need to strengthen existing legislative and policy framework, capacity building of stakeholders; and a strong monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

2.6 In order to ensure the successful implementation of the National Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan, Government has set up the following Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms:

- (a) A High Level Committee under the chair of the Hon. Prime Minister to monitor and evaluate the progress made on the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan on a half yearly basis;
- (b) A National Steering Committee on GBV chaired by the Hon Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare meet on a quarterly basis. The first meeting was held in January 2021.
- (c) Four Technical Working Groups to ensure the implementation of the activities falling under each of the following sub strategies:
 - i. Change societal norms and beliefs that are against principles of gender equality and equity;
 - ii. Priority support services for survivors while holding perpetrators accountable;
 - iii. Identify and redress discriminatory practices that perpetuate gender-based violence; and
 - iv. Coordinated Monitoring and Evaluation.

Each Technical Working Group meet on a monthly basis and report to the National Steering Committee.

2.7 The commitment of all stakeholders, including Government, civil society, development partners and the private sector and adequate financing is crucial to ensure that GVB remains as a priority issue on the national agenda.

2.8 To this end, the key recommendations supporting the National Strategy that are responsive to the present country context are as follows:

- a) the adoption of a systems-thinking approach in responding to matters of GBV and domestic violence to ensure implementation of the National Strategy through a collaborative effort and shared understanding of GBV;
- b) a stronger commitment of all stakeholders to data collection, analysis, monitoring and evaluation; and
- c) a paradigm shift towards capacity building of the Lead Agency to provide strategic direction to all stakeholders to effectively implement the National Strategy and Action Plan.

2.9 The Action Plan of the Technical Working Group on Monitoring and Evaluation in relation to the Observatory on GBV and femicide can be found at **Annex A**.

2.10 On 1st December 2021, the Australian Consultant, Mr Jason Mayer, met the Hon. Prime Minister, Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, to, among others, provide the latter with updates regarding the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan on the elimination of Gender-based Violence. The aim of the meeting was also to find solutions to bottlenecks preventing the proper implementation of the strategies therein.

The Consultant highlighted that he was in Mauritius to meet with the four Technical Working Groups, which were each looking at an element of the National Strategy and Action Plan on Elimination of Gender-based Violence in Mauritius.

It was also highlighted that the Prime Minister was provided with an update on the progress being made, and the way various Ministries were working together and achieving the targets set by Cabinet. It was also noted that the challenges of moving forward were likely to be consistent with any other social change.

Furthermore, it was also highlighted that following the meeting with the Prime Minister, the Consultant would continue to meet with the Technical Working Groups so as to identify and address some of the issues they might currently be experiencing. Additionally, it was noted that like anywhere else, the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on any particular form of gender-based violence as the perpetrators, or the survivors, were not able to leave their homes and the stakeholders were doing their best, through different initiatives, to support survivors of gender-based violence.

2.11 Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, all stakeholders engaged in the fight against GBV have ensured, that 69.8% of the output indicators are in progress and 28.9% have been completed out of the total target of 149 output indicators.

2.12 Concurrently, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare will be signing a memorandum of understanding for the operationalization of the Observatory on Gender Based Violence with the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council by December 2021.

3. On new measures taken including research and studies undertaken to analyse femicide or gender related killings of women and girls, or homicide of women by intimate partners or family members and other femicides. If available, please share a copy of such studies.

3.1 The State of Mauritius has set up a Parliamentary Gender Caucus (PGC) in March 2017. The PGC provides a platform for members of the National Assembly from all political parties to discuss on issues and policies relating to women in the society and to come up with concrete solutions. It helps the promotion of women's descriptive and substantive representation.

3.2 The Caucus also serves to ensure that gender equality issues are mainstreamed into legislative and policy processes and within parliamentary processes, as well as to facilitate dialogue within and across parties. It has commissioned a study on "*The Sociological Profiling of Perpetrators of Domestic Violence in Mauritius*" which can be assessed on the following website: <https://mauritiusassembly.govmu.org/Documents/Publications/GenderCaucus/GC01.pdf>

3.3 Moreover, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is currently carrying out a Study on the prevalence of GBV in Mauritius with the following objectives:

- a) to carry out a desk review of existing materials/ literature/ including research/ assessments of international and national experiences and identify available statistics; and
- b) to review the status and occurrence of GBV at national level.

As per Sub Strategy 4, Output 7 of the National Strategy and Action Plan of the High Level Committee on the Elimination of Gender-Based Violence, a National Homicide Review Committee will be set up by the

Mauritius Police Force in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness to effectively ensure zero tolerance against femicide. This Action Plan also revolves around having a shared understanding of the nature and extent of GBV in Mauritius, the commitment of multiple stakeholders, strengthening of the existing legislative and policy framework, capacity building of stakeholders and a strong monitoring and evaluation mechanism. The National Strategy and Action Plan can be accessed on the following link: <https://pmo.govmu.org/Communique/PMO%20-%20National%20Strategy%20TP%20FINAL%20WEB.pdf>.

4. On recent development related to good practices and challenges in implementing an evidence-based response to the prevention of femicide.

4.1 The Government of Mauritius has an active participation in providing support to victims of violence. As part of the good practices, the Family Welfare and Protection Unit (FWPU) was set up under the aegis of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare to implement policies and programmes in favour of families and to address the problem of GBV. The FWPU adopts well-defined strategies to address GBV and these include: intervention, prevention, rehabilitation, harmonisation and data collection. The FWPU also offers its services to victims and perpetrators of GBV through an institutional mechanism known as the Family Support Bureaux (FSBx). Currently, there are six FSBx scattered around the island.

4.2 Prior to 1997, violence against women was treated as any other case of assault. The Protection from Domestic Violence Act (PDVA) was enacted in 1977 to protect spouses from domestic violence. Apart from sanctions against perpetrators of domestic violence, the Act also provides for issues such as: Protection Order, Occupation Order, and Tenancy Order. Subsequent amendments were brought to the PDVA in 2004, 2007, 2011 and 2016 so as to provide for protection to all family members living under the same roof, harsher penalties for non-compliance of orders and for the rehabilitation of perpetrators through counselling amongst others.

4.3 The Government of Mauritius also organizes several sensitisation campaigns on a regular basis across the island. In a bid to raise awareness on the issue of femicide and GBV, the National Women's Council organises ongoing sessions on topics such as domestic violence against women's rights.

4.4 In line with the objective of Government to place citizen at the centre of public service delivery, the Citizen Support Unit (CSU) of the Prime Minister's Office has been set up on 28 April 2017 to manage an internet-based complaints management platform, the Citizen Support Portal (CSP). This pioneering platform, which is accessible round-the-clock on the web address www.csu.mu, has been developed and put in place to facilitate the registration of complaints/general inquiries and suggestion online. The CSU has recently taken further steps to ensuring that the vulnerable groups of the society are given the due attention they deserve and that their voice is heard. In this context, the CSU has embarked on an initiative to address in a holistic manner the scourge of domestic violence where women are too often victims of a male dominated society.

4.5 In 2018 and 2019, the National Women's Council implemented the '*Shefighter Programme*', a self defence training programme, to empower women and young girls to take a stand and defend themselves against violence.

4.6 With a view to facilitate harmonization and data collection, the **Domestic Violence Information System (DOVIS)**, which is a computerized system for the registration of reported cases of domestic violence was implemented and is used as a tool to monitor, assess, record and generate

specific reports on such cases dealt at FSBx under the aegis of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare.

4.7 In order to encourage reporting of cases of domestic violence, the Hotline **139** is operational on a 24-hour basis and is free of charge. A Hotline **119** is also operational to cater for family related problems. Additionally, the Integrated Support Centre was launched on 8th March 2019 by the Hon. Prime Minister in the context of the International Women's Day to ensure prompt intervention in cases of domestic violence. Through the use of technology, the Hotline **139** for domestic violence is now being attended to through four parallel digital phone lines. Moreover, the system has been connected to the DOVIS for monitoring cases of domestic violence.

4.8 The GBV Mobile App, Lespwar, launched on 25th November 2020, enables a victim of GBV to alert the authorities concerned at the press of a button, known as the 'panic button' in the app. The moment the panic button is pressed, the Main Police Command and Control Centre and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare alerted simultaneously and the exact location of the victim is displayed through a geolocalisation feature. Assistance is subsequently provided to the victim in line with a protocol for intervention signed between the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare and the Mauritius Police Force. The app is easily downloadable on any smartphone, free of charge and is accessible to all age groups of women and men victims/survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

4.9 The Economic Empowerment Programme of Survivors of Domestic Violence was implemented to help survivors of GBV establish the financial stability and independence they need for their empowerment and future lives' sustenance. The programme was funded by the UNDP in 2020 and was implemented with 29 survivors of GBV identified at the shelters, FSBx and Police Family Protection Unit. The 29 Survivors were empowered through 3 non-award courses offered by MITD in the fields of Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy and Nail techniques; Household Operations and Floral Arrangement. After the completion of the courses in September 2021, a handing over of hamper of support materials ceremony to those beneficiaries was held for the commemoration of International Day on the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25 November 2021 by the Hon Prime Minister. These beneficiaries were thus, encouraged to take employment or start micro self-help project/enterprise to sustain their living.

4.10 The Domestic Violence Perpetrator's Rehabilitation Programme was also implemented with the aim of:

- a) bringing a change in mind-set that would help perpetrators to abstain from committing acts of violence;
- b) enabling them to manage their anger which often lead to domestic violence;
- c) empowering them to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner; and
- d) Educating them to become responsible partners in their relationship.

4.11 As far as Rodrigues is concerned, the following measures have been undertaken, namely:

- a) sensitization campaign under PLUVIF programme;
- b) training of healthcare personnel so that they better respond to victims of Domestic violence while attending hospital;
- c) training on Men Empowerment with the collaboration of *Groupe zom* in views of the Perpetrator Rehabilitation Programme to promote healthy relationship in families so as to prevent GBV;
- d) Groupe de Parole for victims of domestic violence;

- e) conducting mass sensitization campaign to the broader population on GBV;
- f) use of mass media to sensitize the population on GBV namely: *RODTALK* (TV Programme) and *Le Mag* (Radio Programme);
- g) a day against violence whereby a relay march touching the overall population is organized so as to raise public awareness on GBV in Rodrigues;
- h) making youths becoming Ambassadors in the fight against GBV;
- i) training on the causes and consequences of GBV in schools on dating violence by the Police Family Protection Unit;
- j) the setting up of a High Powered Committee, where there is a networking among all stakeholders working with Domestic Violence;
- k) setting up of the Emergency Shelter for victims of domestic violence;
- l) the '*Service de soutien et de Conseil aux Familles*' situated at the Integrated Family Centre of Malabar which is a one stop shop comprising of the Family Welfare and Protection Unit, the Police Family Protection Unit, the Psychologist, Family Counselors, the Child Development Unit, the Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs and the Women Unit; and
- m) sensitization campaign on the Protection from Domestic Violence Act.

4.12 However, the biggest challenges that the State of Mauritius encounters are that many cases of gender-based violence including of domestic violence are not reported.

4.13 Also, in many cases, the victims have a tendency to return to live with their perpetrators, for such reasons that they are not financially independent, they do not have a place to live or for fear of separation from their children.

4.14 Furthermore, following acts of violence, most perpetrators regret their abusive behaviours and ask for forgiveness. The victim often feels relieved and aspires for hopeful change in their future relationship. This stage often prevents the victim from initiating legal proceedings against perpetrator and also report acts of violence to the authorities.

4.15 As far as Rodrigues is concerned, it is noted that cases of femicide are being tackled promptly and Police enquiries are completed within 3 months. However, the hearings of cases of femicide delay because it takes time to obtain the reports from DNA, Forensic Science Laboratory and other agencies which are situated in Mauritius. Moreover, there is a lack of human resources at the level of the Commission for Child Development and Others and an integrated database so as to enable better coordinated actions.

5. On data, if available, on:

- a) **Intimate-partner femicides/ homicides of women**
- b) **Family- related femicides/ homicides of women**
- c) **Other femicides/ gender- related homicides of women**

A breakdown of cases of femicide for the State of Mauritius during the period 2018 to 2020 is as follows:

Table 1: Femicide or gender-related killings of women, 2019-2020

Item	2018			2019			2020		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Total number of homicides	77	32	109	82	23	105	64	17	81
Number of intimate partner homicides/femicides (i.e based on relationship between the victim and perpetrator, number of women and men killed by their spouse)	0	7	7	2	7	9	2	4	6
Number of family related homicide/femicide of men and of women (i.e based on relationship between the victim and perpetrator, number of women and men killed by their family members and not by intimate partners)	5	7	12	7	6	13	7	2	9
Other femicides or killing of women by unrelated perpetrator/s but gender-related or with a sexual motive									
Intentional homicide (women) ¹	Napp	5	5	Napp	0	0	Napp	0	0

¹ Data by gender for unrelated perpetrators are not captured

Napp: Not applicable

Source: Statistics Mauritius

With regards to Rodrigues, statistics for the last 3 years as reported at the Police Family Protection Unit and Family Welfare and Protection Unit are as follows:

STATISTICS : Cases reported at the Police Family Protection Unit

SUBJECT	2018	2019	2020
Domestic Violence	220	210	180
Family Conflicts	350	97	109
Protection Order	52	96	99
Occupation Order	5	5	09
Application for order set aside	11	22	32
TOTAL	570	307	289

STATISTICS : Cases reported at the Family Welfare and Protection Unit

SUBJECTS	2017	2018	2019
Domestic Violence	75	54	62
Family Conflicts	120	81	53
Murder	1	0	1
Protection Order	19	16	21
Occupation Order	0	0	0
Application for order set aside	0	1	2

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EXPECTED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT INDICATORS	ACTIVITIES	YEAR TARGETS				Lead Agency	Collaboration
			20	21	22	23		
		Conduct Impact Evaluation Study of the Recovery Programme by the Police Family Protection Unit		X			Police Department	
		Conduct Impact Analysis of the Mediation Programme by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare				X	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare	
	6.2 Number of participants referred to and completing criminogenic programmes	Criminogenic needs programmes are delivered by state authorities.		X			Police Department Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare	
Output 7: Zero Tolerance for femicide	7.1 Number of independent reviews selected.	Set up a Homicide Review Committee		X			Police Department Ministry of Health and Wellness	Prime Minister's Office Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare

EXPECTED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT INDICATORS	ACTIVITIES	YEAR TARGETS					Lead Agency	Collaboration
			20	21	22	23	24		
	7.2 No. of female deaths that occurred due to GBV causes	Establish protocols for investigating and identifying deaths due to GBV		X				Police Department Ministry of Health and Wellness	
Output 8: Institutionalised gender disaggregated statistics	8.1 Gender Equality Bill includes the explicit requirement to produce and/or dissemination of gender disaggregated statistics	Provision inserted in the Gender Equality Bill on the explicit production and/or dissemination of gender disaggregated statistics		X				Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare Attorney General's Office	Statistics Mauritius
Output 9: Improved Access to decentralised social welfare services	9.1 Number of women and men accessing support services available at the level of the community regarding GBV matters	Establish data collection agreements		X				Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare	All Ministries with a community-level presence
Output 10: A functional M&E Mechanism	10.1 Number of meetings as per Terms of Reference of National Steering Committee and	Review progress on the implementation of the action plan		X				Prime Minister's Office	

EXPECTED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT INDICATORS	ACTIVITIES	YEAR TARGETS					Lead Agency	Collaboration
			20	21	22	23	24		
	technical working groups.								
	10.2 Meetings held per year	Meetings of the HLC Committee held on a twice yearly basis	X	X	X	X	Prime Minister's Office		
	10.3 All cases of GBV recorded	Establish an operational GBV Observatory as an autonomous entity	X				Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare Rodrigues Regional Assembly / Commission for Women Police Department Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare		
	10.4 Percentage of GBV cases recorded and disseminated to appropriate stakeholders	Connect DOVIS to the GBV Observatory to enable evidence-	X						