**CALL FOR INPUTS: REPORT ON HOW CLIMATE CHANGE CAN HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE REALIZATION OF THE EQUAL ENJOYMENT OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION BY EVERY GIRL**

1. **Potential impacts of climate change - as barriers for girls to their equal enjoyment to education**

1.1 Mauritius as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) is highly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. The frequency of extreme weather events (high intense tropical cyclones), rising sea-levels, floods, heat waves, droughts, water shortages, and the spread of tropical and vector-borne diseases have increased significantly over the last decades as a result of climate change. These phenomena directly and indirectly threaten the full and effective enjoyment of a range of human rights by people throughout the world. However, the most vulnerable social groups are also the most sensitive to the effects of climate change. Among them are children.

1.2 The number of days that schools had to close due to heavy and torrential rain events and risk of flooding increased. From January to March 2023, primary, secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions were closed for 12 days. With the recent tropical cyclone Belal with torrential rain and flooding in January 2024, educational institutions were closed for 7 days.

**2.0 The following are in response to concrete measures being taken to respond to the barriers faced by girls:**

2.1 Mauritius is determined to demonstrate its commitment to contribute effectively to the global effort to curb down climate change, while strengthening its adaptive capacity. Education is a cross-cutting sector in the Nationally Determined Contributions, and National Climate Change Adaptation Policy Framework.

2.2 The Climate Change Act, which has the goal to make for a low-emission and climate resilient island, provides for institutional arrangement namely Inter-Ministerial Council on Climate Change (IMCCC) and Climate Change Committee (CCC) to enhance governance. The IMCCC has been set up under the chair of the Prime Minister to set national objectives, goals and targets and a CCC has also been established to monitor and mitigate adverse effects of climate change. Both these statutory bodies are represented by the Minister of Education and representative of the Education Sector respectively.

2.3 Capacity building of all public and private stakeholders *(including Ministry of Education, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare and Ombudsman for Children)* is also being undertaken as a key enabler for accelerating climate actions.

2.4 Government is investing massively every year to support adaptation measures mostly for the vulnerable communities, including girls with respect to disaster or flood risks. Key adaptation measures are being implemented which include Disaster Risk Reduction and Infrastructure and which address flooding caused during extreme weather events.

2.5 In the Education sector, the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology has reviewed the duration of the school holidays for the year 2023 to cater for the missing days due to bad weather such as torrential rain.

2.6 With a view to eliminate any proliferation of vector borne diseases namely dengue due to recent floodings, on-going sensitisation programme are effected by the Ministry of Health through the educational institutions during school assembly as well as different media (radio/TV). Fumigation is also carried out by the Ministry of Health in proned or suspected regions. Additionally, regular health check-ups for students are undertaken in pre-primary, primary and secondary institutions.

1. **The most important existing gaps and challenges in education to empower all girls to contribute to the climate change agenda**

3.1 In the Education Sector, components of human rights and environment/climate change are incorporated in the curriculum at both primary and secondary levels.

3.2 With regards to climate change education, pedagogical resources for training of teachers, youth and women have been developed and are used by Ministry of Education, namely:

1. activity books for pre-primary and lower primary students on “This is the way – Adventures of Bulbul and Picpic” developed in 2003;
2. “Climate Change Education Kit for Primary” developed under the Africa Adaptation Programme in 2012; and
3. “Toolkits for Youth and Women on Climate Change” developed in 2019.

**4.0 Concrete measures taken to empower all girls through education to contribute to addressing climate change:**

4.1 The National Women’s Council, a parastatal body under the aegis of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare organizes sensitisation campaigns to raise awareness on the issue of climate change as follows:

* Awareness session on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 5);
* Demonstration on kitchen gardening and compost making out of kitchen waste;
* Sensitisation on Sustainable Development;
* Raising awareness on benefits and distribution of medicinal and decorative plants; and
* Women coping with Climate Change.

4.2 Massive campaign on the importance of STEM subjects and the importance of gender neutral toys for all infants.

* The Council carries out awareness campaigns in primary and secondary schools; both private and state owned, women centres and NGOs to sensitize on the Articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, laying emphasis on the Articles 28 (Right to Education).
* Information Education and Communication (IEC) Campaigns are also carried out on climate change and natural calamities with particular reference to Article 3 of the CRC (Best interest of the Child- *all actions concerning the child take full account of his/her best interests*) such as flash floods, high waves and heavy rainfall; especially those in coastal regions whereby both girls and boys are sensitized on their safety and security.

**5.0** The impact of climate change on the realisation of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl is not applicable to Mauritius. Education is mandatory up to the age of 16 to all children irrespective of gender, race and ethnicity. There is no disparity in education provided in urban and rural areas. Both boys and girls are offered same facilities including the subject taught at primary, secondary and tertiary level. A common curriculum is taught which encourages not only the cognitive but also the holistic development of all learners. The curriculum makes provision for a value-based education. A conducive environment is provided to ALL learners, which ensures equal access to relevant and quality education and training.

**6.0** Gender parity has been achieved at all education subsectors, namely at pre-primary (1.01), primary (1.02), secondary (1.07) and tertiary levels (1.24). In fact, the success rate for Girls is higher than for Boys at all levels of education.

**7.0** It is worth noting that girls' education can also contribute to addressing climate change. The government of Mauritius provides education to all irrespective of gender with a view to granting them the ability to make well-informed decisions regarding their life, including matters related to their reproductive health and rights. Topics related to climate change are infused in the curriculum both at primary and secondary levels. Hence, allocating resources towards the education of all is not alone a matter of human entitlement, but also a means to address climate-related challenges in a gender neutral manner while focusing on the citizens of the country.

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