



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND
OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

**MISSION PERMANENTE DE LA REPUBLIQUE DE MAURICE AUPRES DES NATIONS UNIES
ET DES AUTRES ORGANISATIONS INTERNATIONALES**

No. 12/2012 (MMG/HR/28/1)

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and in reference to the latter's Note GVA-0616 dated 29 September 2011 transmitting a Questionnaire on the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications has the honour to enclose herewith the duly completed questionnaire providing the inputs of the Government of Mauritius.

Furthermore, the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mauritius wishes to inform that the Mauritian authorities have no objection to this information being posted on the OHCHR website.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 18 January 2012

**Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
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OHCHR REGISTRY

18 JAN 2012

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**Questionnaire on the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications –
Comments from the Mauritius Research Council**

1. (a) Fourteen funding schemes are being operated by MRC to cater for the needs of the research community and to promote research, science, technology and innovation. To this effect the Council is spearheading and/or funding 71 projects involving 118 researchers from public/private sectors and Academia.

(b) The Centre for Applied Social Research (CASR) was set up in 2001 as a joint initiative of the Mauritius Research Council (MRC) and the University of Mauritius (UoM) to undertake social research, more particularly attitudinal research on issues of topical relevance to the country. It has been hosted by the UoM until it was transferred wholly under the aegis of the MRC in 2008. It is now the social research arm of the Council and it has, over the years, developed an expertise in carrying out nationwide social surveys as well as social research projects using a variety of relevant research methodologies. The research areas in which CASR has been involved encompass a wide range of social issues including work and employment, crime and safety, gender-based violence, governance, vulnerable groups as well as attitudinal surveys on specific areas such as quality of life, implementation of summertime, etc... CASR undertakes all its research projects and its data collection with high standards of objectivity and academic rigour and the research outcomes of most of its studies are of direct policy relevance to address in a positive manner the problem areas investigated. Please refer to Annex 1 for a list of past and on-going projects of CASR.

(d) The MRC, under the aegis of the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology, has set up five National Research Groups, with a view to creating a national platform through which the research community will address priority issues currently faced by the country. 2. The National Research Groups are designed to operate through a wide consultative process, including the Mauritian Diaspora, and have been established on the basis of key areas identified as requiring critical attention and strategic decision making, in order to ensure the sustainability of the socio-economic development of Mauritius in the short, medium and long terms. Eventually, these National Research Groups could be strengthened in a phased manner, leading to Centres of Excellence in their respective areas. The initial Terms of Reference proposed for each group are as follows:

I National Energy Research Group

- To take cognizance of the existing initiatives/measures on sustainable buildings with emphasis on positive renewable energy buildings in Mauritius
- To identify research gaps, overlapping/ critical research issues on sustainable and positive buildings in Mauritius

- To prioritize research themes in sustainable and positive buildings
- To coordinate and facilitate research activities on sustainable and positive buildings in Mauritius

II Human Resource Research Group

- To act as a think-tank on issues affecting human resources development to meet the country's skills and competence needs
- To brainstorm on the main issues affecting local human resource development, management, and retention for optimal use in the context of current opportunities and challenges
- To identify priority research projects of topical relevance to human resources which are of current and future national significance
- To develop Terms of Reference for prioritized research projects
- To oversee the implementation of research projects
- To inform policies which aim to improve human resource development, management and retention through research findings

III Impact of food quality on human health Research Group

- To evaluate effects of contaminants in commonly consumed Food in both imported and locally produced
- To propose an improved mechanism for food control
- To promote improved nutrition amongst the Mauritian population

IV Water Resources Research Group

- Identifying critical research issues on water resources for Mauritius
- To prioritize research themes in water resources management
- To coordinate and facilitate research activities related to providing sustainable short-medium and long term solutions to the water shortage issue

V Road Traffic Management Research Group

- To take cognisance of past and current Road Traffic Management initiatives and their documented impacts, following a comprehensive desk review on Road Traffic Management in Mauritius
- To find local innovative approaches and solutions
- To engage with, collaborate and share knowledge with appropriate institutions

- To develop a detailed framework defining the focus, scope, human and logistical needs of a study on: "Impact of Road Traffic Management in Mauritius"
 - To provide additional input for transport policies and related initiatives.
 - To sensitize stakeholders on the potential socio-economic and environmental costs of traffic
2. Investment in Research & Development (R&D) programmes is crucial for future development. Public R&D expenditure including the Sugar Sector is 0.36% of the GDP. This represents a relatively low percentage when compared to expenditure of other developed countries which can reach 4%. Moreover a target of at least 1% of GDP, as stated by the AU Commission/NEPAD, in active R&D programmes is an essential investment for the future. This will represent a significant increase in R&D spending, from the current, relatively low, regional average of 0.13 - 0.4% of GDP, to a median investment level between that of other Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and that of developed countries. The key challenges faced in the country in undertaking research include:
- Low public expenditure in R&D
 - Low private sector investment in R&D
 - Weak implementation of some intellectual property laws/institutions
 - Lack of market-driven research
 - Poor links between Researchers and Industry
3. (a) With regard to legal mechanisms to safeguard the human rights of participants in research activities, there is the introduction of the Clinical Trials Bill, which provides the legal framework for the conduct of clinical trials. The Bill provides for the setting up of the Clinical Research Regulatory Council which shall be responsible for the issue, amendment, extension, review, suspension or cancellation of trial licences. The Council shall also exercise control over licensees and on clinical trial sites, prepare and approve guidelines for the safe and ethical operation of clinical trials, keep a record of all published material relating to clinical trials and monitor clinical trials generally.

The Bill also provides for the setting up of:

- (i) the Pharmacovigilance Committee which shall collect, analyse and classify information on adverse events and adverse reactions in relation to subjects involved in clinical trials and shall advise the Clinical Research Regulatory Council and the Ethics Committee;
- (ii) the Ethics Committee which shall give an opinion on any proposal to start a clinical trial and shall advise the Clinical Research Regulatory Council on the health, welfare, safety and protection of subjects in clinical trials.

(b) Policymakers and other stakeholders in Mauritius recognize that intellectual property (IP) is a cross-cutting issue where complementary policies on health, agriculture, environment and competition are equally important in the context of modernizing the national IP regime and implementing international IP treaties, such the TRIPS Agreement and a possible EU-ESA Economic Partnership Agreement. There is also an acknowledgement in Mauritius that implementation of reforms needs to be undertaken comprehensively and coherently with other international arrangements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the FAO treaty on Plant Genetic Resources, relevant World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) conventions and WHO treaties and resolutions as well as regional trade and IP arrangements. (e.g. COMESA, ARIPO, etc). At this stage in its development, Mauritius is getting support from the international community on the use and management of IPRs in combination with well designed government support measures that address domestic development needs such as the promotion and establishment of a domestic creative and innovative industry and the development of its technological base.

In this context, an Intellectual Property Development Plan (IPDP) has been developed, which now forms the basis of discussions between the Government of Mauritius and WIPO. Through this mechanism, the IP legislation is being substantially revised and will take into account the current absence of laws governing the protection of traditional knowledge and folklore. The Government had initiated a study on intangible assets by the National Heritage Fund, whose objective of the ongoing effort is to preserve traditional knowledge and expressions of folklore. In parallel, mechanisms will be developed for protecting the assets and ensuring equitable sharing of benefits.

4. (b) With regard to initiatives being taken to enhance collaboration with colleagues nationally and internationally, the MRC has set up a Technical Committee to develop recommendations to encourage the Mauritian Diaspora to contribute to the development of the country. Recommendations will be developed for both Mauritian students and for professionals/experts of Mauritian origin based overseas. This Technical Committee will thus identify a series of potential mechanisms to sensitise and inform Mauritian talents overseas on the possibilities to contribute to the development of Mauritius with the view of attracting Mauritian talents to the country. In this respect, the following areas are being proposed for consideration by the Technical Committee:
 - (i) To conduct a local situational analysis of activities already being conducted to attract Mauritian talents based overseas.
 - (ii) To develop recommendations for the creation of necessary incentives and national policy mechanisms to effectively engage the Mauritian Diaspora in the socio-economic development of Mauritius, with particular focus on Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology.
 - (iii) To develop mechanisms to identify Mauritian talents based overseas.

- (iv) To explore the possibility of creating a portal to provide information to the Mauritian Diaspora on expertise required by local institutions including Academia, Public and Private Sector.
- (v) To develop a report including recommendations pertaining to the above issues.

6. The MRC ensures dissemination of information about ongoing research and its applications for all projects that have been funded through the Council. Seminars are also organised at the MRC and other locations, involving local and international speakers on topics that are of national importance. In addition, workshops conducted in collaboration with local and overseas institutions are organised, in which stakeholders from a wide range of sectors, including the public, are invited to participate. In the majority of these events, information is covered by the press and other media. In the year 2011, Around 45 events have been organized for the dissemination of research output and promotion of research, science and innovation.

7. Consultations through workshops, focus groups and surveys provide opportunities for meaningful public participation in decision-making about existing and new developments in science and technology.

11. The following sections list the achievements of the MRC in the field of scientific progress and its applications:

- A number of initiatives have been launched to facilitate commercialization of research output and innovation. These include the setting up of a Business Research Incubator Centre and the launching of the Intellectual Property Promotion Scheme to promote filing of applications to grant Patents and register Industrial Designs.
- 10 research projects of commercial importance are being conducted. These include the Development of a seaweed industry in Mauritius and Rodrigues which is in the Government Programme 2010-2015. 12 seaweed-based food products of potential commercial importance have been developed and final tests are being conducted. An experimental farm is being launched in Mauritius and Rodrigues during this month.
- As an initiative of the Ministry of Tertiary Education , Science, Research and Technology, collaboration has been initiated with the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) of the People's Republic of China with a view to provide assistance in the setting up of a Science Park in Mauritius.

- The Best Mauritian Scientist Award was organized in 2010 and awarded for the first time in Mauritius in early 2011 for the promotion of Science, Technology and Innovation and to recognize national excellence in science, as yet another initiative of the Ministry.
- A Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) Week is held for the public on a yearly basis as a means of communication between researchers and the society and to create awareness on the benefits that science, engineering and technology can bring to society.
- Specific training in research fields of commercial importance such as seaweed farming is being addressed to help in setting up new emerging sectors. Institutions and SMEs have benefited from training in Intellectual Property Asset Management. Training has been dispensed to about 220 researchers from about 33 organizations to increase publication output as well as to enhance the skills of local researchers to raise research funds through grant application.
- An MRC Office has been launched in Rodrigues to facilitate research and technology transfer on the island, for the mutual benefit of both Mauritius and Rodrigues.

CENTRE FOR APPLIED SOCIAL RESEARCH
A CENTRE OF THE
MAURITIUS RESEARCH COUNCIL

List of Past and On-going projects

Title of Projects	Commissioning Institutions	Year
Attitudes of the Unemployed towards Taking Jobs in the EPZ in Mauritius	International Labour Office	2001
Work and the Family	International Labour Office	2002
Mauritian Social Attitudes Survey	MRC	2002
Smoking, Drinking & Illicit Drug Use among Secondary School Students in Mauritius	MRC	2003
The Integration of the Elderly in the Family in Mauritius	National Economic and Social Council	2004
A Study on Genetically Modified Organisms in Mauritius	MRC	2005
Working Time in Mauritius	International Labour Office	2005
A KABP Study on Small Scale Sugar Planters in Mauritius	MRC	2004/05
Prevalence of Substance Abuse in the Island of Rodrigues	NATReSA	2005
Worldwide Study on Violence Against Children (Mauritius)	United Nations	2006
Situation Analysis of Discriminatory Practices in the Labour Market in Mauritius	UNDP	2007
Coping with Retrenchment	UNDP	2006/07
Reasons for High Failure Rate at level of Certificate of Primary Education in Rodrigues		2007
The Cultural Industry in Mauritius	UNESCO	2007
Situation Analysis of Street Children in Mauritius		2007
Time Use & Leisure in Mauritius	MRC	2008
Nature extent and economic costs of Domestic Violence in Mauritius	UNDP/MRC	2009
Establishment and implementation of a poverty observatory in the Republic of Mauritius	EU/ Decentralised Cooperation Programme	2009

Re-drafting & Editing of Report of Implementation of African Peer Review Mechanism in Mauritius	NESC	2008/09
Study on the Social Effects of the Implementation of Summertime in Mauritius	Government of Mauritius	2009
A Study of the Secondary Educational Systems in promoting Knowledge and Awareness of Anti-Corruption Values in Mauritius	Independent Commission Against Corruption	2010
Study on Crime and violence in the republic of Mauritius	Government of Mauritius/ PMO	2010
Gender- Based Violence indicators project	Gender Link	2010