**Questionnaire on the provision of support to persons with disabilities**

1. **Please provide information on the following services that are available for persons with disabilities in your country, including data on their coverage, geographic distribution and delivery arrangements, funding and sustainability, challenges and shortcoming in their implementation:**
2. **Personal assistance**

* The Disability Unit of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions **(MSSNSRI)**, provides personal assistance to persons with disabilities with respect to referral procedures and relevant information. For instance, they are provided information on access to loan facilities with preferential interest rates. A hotline is also available to all persons facing disability-related issues.
* The Disability Unit also helps channel children with disabilities into appropriate mainstream schools/NGOs/specialised schools as per their specific needs. The parents of children with disabilities also obtain advice on the various services and facilities which the Ministry offers, which comprise:-

(i) **Refund of bus fares** to accompanying parents to encourage them to send their disabled children to schools;

(ii) **Refund of taxi/fuel fares** to students of tertiary educational institutions with severe disabilities;

(iii) Issue of free bus passes to children or adolescents with disabilities attending specialised schools/NGOs;

(iv) Issue of free parking coupons to allow persons with disabilities to benefit from reserved parking bays nearby buildings such as supermarkets, hospitals and so on, to facilitate their access to important services;

(v) Issue offree parking coupons to NGOs having transport facilities for children with disabilities;

(vi).Provision of a Respite Care Programme to NGOs/specialised schools/associations dealing with disabled persons in different recreation centres across the island. The Respite Care Programme comprises recreational activities for disabled persons and accompanying persons at a concessionary rate.

(vii) Provision of certification document to enable disabled persons to travel abroad at a concessionary rate by Air Mauritius.

(viii) Provision of an Invalid’s Basic Pension to persons and children with disabilities at the monthly rate of Rs 5,250. A Carer’s Allowance is also provided to severe cases of disability; and

(ix) **François Sockalingum Award** (FSA). This scheme which is managed by the National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons, which operates under the aegis of the MSSNSRI, rewards students with disabilities who have passed their Certificate of Primary Education with a monthly stipend of Rs 750 to encourage them to pursue their secondary studies;

1. **In-home, residential and community support;**

* Provision of professional services such as physiotherapy**,** upon request of parents of disabled children or persons with disabilities themselves via the ‘Service de proximité’. Physiotherapists and occupational therapists are also provided upon request from NGOs/Day Care centres or Homes for persons with disabilities. One example of a specialised centre under the aegis of the MSSNSRI which benefits from this service is the Foyer Trochetia.
* The National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons has revamped its Disability Watch network to enhance the protection of the welfare of persons with disabilities in different regions across the island. Currently, it is on a pilot basis in some regions only.

1. **Support in decision-making, including peer support; and**

* NGOs, dealing with different categories of disabilities, allow the participation of persons with disabilities to support decision-making activities. These NGOs then collaborate with the MSSNSRI to devise policies and programmes to improve the quality of life of all persons with disabilities in Mauritius. For example, the Women with Disabilities Forum information sessions on the UNCRPD in order to inform its members about the content of this Convention which Mauritius has signed and ratified.

1. **Communication support, including support for augmentative and alternative communication.**

* To allow persons with hearing impairment to express their opinions during sub-committees, the services of a sign-language interpreter is put at the disposal of hearing impaired persons to help them express themselves and participate in discussions. Disability activists with mobility problem were provided free transport by the MSSNSRI to attend these sub-committees, workshops and seminars as related to disability issues.
* In nearly all disability-related events such as International Day for Persons with Disabilities, persons with disabilities are invited and are provided with necessary means of travel to attend same, upon request. Refund of travelling expenses is carried out for NGOs’ transport of children with disabilities to attend specialized services such as physiotherapy or occupational therapy.

**2. Please explain how persons with disabilities can access information about the existing services referred to in question one, including referral procedures, eligibility criteria and application requirements.**

* A person with disabilities (PWD) can gain access to the above mentioned services by:-

1. applying in person (or allowing a proxy to apply on his/her behalf) to the Disability Unit or to the latter’s nearest Social Security Office in his/her catchment area;
2. acceding to the Disability Unit’s website and apply for the required service(s) online;
3. sending a letter with the required documents requesting the said service(s) by postal means;
4. allowing the nearest Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) nearest to his/her locality (if the applicant is a member of the said NGO) to apply for the service(s) on his/her behalf;

(v) applying to the nearest Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) of the applicant’s region.

**3. Please elaborate on how these services respond to the specific needs of persons with disabilities throughout their life cycle (infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and older age) and how is service delivery ensured in the transition periods between life cycle stages.**

**A. Infancy/Childhood:** As from 3 years old, a child having a disability is eligible to obtain a free bus travel pass. The parents of the child with disabilities can seek help or advice from the Disability Unit on the referral procedures to obtain a pension for the child and on admission to the different specialised schools in their region. Otherwise, the parents can admit their children in a mainstream school and be refunded on the travelling expenses. The range of services and facilities offered to persons with disabilities can be obtained at the Disability Unit. The refund of travelling expenses is also available for children with disabilities attending NGOs/specialised schools. Once the primary cycle of education of the child with disabilities is completed, he/she is offered a scholarship scheme called the FSA (mentioned earlier) to be able to pursue his/her secondary studies. The eligibility to the FSA is based on the socio-economic background, the results of the primary education and the motivation of the child with disabilities. The pre-adolescent with disabilities can apply for this scheme at the Disability Unit itself. Should the student with disabilities be eligible, he/she will receive a stipend of Rs 750 per month until he/she completes his/her secondary studies.

**B. Adolescence:** Even if the student with disabilities is not awarded the FSA, but he/she obtains admission in a college, he/she can apply for refund of travelling expenses by bus/taxi (for severely disabled) upon presentation of an attendance record by the school. With the recent removal of the age barrier for disabled persons to be eligible for an Invalid’s Basic Pension, adolescents/children with disabilities under 15 years old can now obtain a pension of Rs 5,250 per month. Even if the student with disabilities is receiving a scholarship or a Carer’s Allowance (for the severely disabled), the Invalid’s Basic Pension of Rs 5,250 will not be disallowed.

**C. Adulthood:** Some adolescents with disabilities stay in specialised schools until 20 years old at most. They receive a free bus travel pass which is renewed and checked for eligibility after the expiry date. However, as from the age of 16 years old (legal age to work in Mauritius), the students with disabilities can register themselves at the Training and Employment of the Disabled Persons Board **(TEDPB)** to take advantage of training and/or job opportunities. The Training and Employment of the Disabled Persons Act stipulates that “an organisation employing 35 or more employees should include 3% persons with disabilities in their workforce”. Persons with disabilities who are registered at the TEDPB are facilitated for their job interviews and/or receive training in various fields such as IT, Agriculture or Administrative courses. The TEDPB also encourage employers in Mauritius to employ more disabled persons in their company and provide reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities to work or to attend job interviews (provide transport for wheelchair users).

* On the other hand, persons with severe disabilities who cannot work are in receipt of a pension and a Carer’s Allowance. There are day care centres for them where they carry out leisure activities adapted to their degree of disability. There are also three recreational centres which support the Respite Care Programmes and allow them to stay for a weekend.
* The services of free physiotherapists in different regions have been recently made available for severely impaired persons. Moreover, to enable persons with disabilities to travel easily, issue of parking coupons and duty-free vehicles are facilitated by the concerned authorities.
* In case of discrimination or need of a legal service, persons with hearing impairment can request the service of a sign language interpreter in court proceedings. All discrimination on grounds of disability is prohibited and persons with disabilities can file a case in court on this basis.

**D.** **Older age:** As persons with disabilities grow older, sometimes their disabilities increase. Most of them require the services of health care assistants/carers/doctors on a regular basis. All the above-mentioned services and facilities are available for them. They may even be eligible for a Carer’s Allowance. Domiciliary visits by medical practitioners are effected for elders with severe disabilities or if they are bed-ridden.

* Furthermore, assistive devices such as wheelchairs, hearing aids and spectacles are made available to persons with disabilities.

**4. Please provide information on the number of certified sign language interpreters and deafblind interpreters available in your country.**

* **Certified sign language interpreters** are trained by the Society for the Welfare of the Deaf. As at date, there are 6 certified sign language interpreters. Their services are required during important meetings/ seminars/ workshops involving hearing impaired persons/ students/ children. However, there is no deaf-blind interpreter in Mauritius due to the low demand for the same.

**5. Please provide information on the existence of any partnership between State institutions and private service providers (e.g, non-governmental organizations, for-profit service providers) for the provision of support to persons with disabilities.**

* The MSSNSRI has always maintained a close network with NGOs working for the provision of support to persons with disabilities. Currently, there are about 70 associations which are known by the Disability Unit along with some disability-related associations such as Women with Disabilities Forum. The TEDPB also collaborates with the private sector to increase the recruitment rate of persons with disabilities. Sensitisation campaigns are held regularly to change negative attitudes and mindsets towards persons with disabilities. Their integration in all levels of the society is important and to do so, the collaboration of private sector is essential.

**6. Please describe to what extent and how are persons with disabilities and their representative organizations involved in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of support services.**

* For the implementation of the UN Committee on the UNCRPD, several workshops, working sessions and meetings were held. All of them involved persons with disabilities/NGOs. At least, all different categories of disability were represented by either a disability activist or a NGO leader working in the field of the disability.

**7. Please provide any other relevant information and statistics (including surveys, censuses, administrative data, reports, and studies) related to the provision of support to persons with disabilities in your country.**

* Statistics Mauritius carries out a population census on a 10-year interval in the Republic of Mauritius (including Rodrigues Island and Agalega). This census further disaggregates into disability information of the population (if any) and its prevalence rate per region, age, education, income threshold and so on. The MSSNSRI makes use of this disaggregated component of the census along with its own disability database when devising policies and strategies involving persons with disabilities. These statistics reports and data are useful when carrying out sensitisation campaigns on the integration of persons with disabilities. According to the population census carried out by Statistics Mauritius in 2011, there are about 59,000 persons living with different types of disabilities in Mauritius.