

# PRIMARY & SECONDARY

## GENERAL ISSUES

### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

#### TEENAGE PREGNANCY - REPORTED CASES – 2019 TO 2022

(06/06/2023)

(No. B/708) Mrs K. Foo Kune-Bacha (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare whether, in regard to teenage pregnancy, she will state the number of reported cases thereof for the years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively, indicating the –

(a) number of the teenagers having dropped out of school and the support given thereto, if any, to continue their schooling during and post pregnancy, and (b) maternal mortality rate thereof.

**Mrs Koonjoo-Shah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Child Development Unit of my Ministry that the number of reported cases of teenage pregnancy for the years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 stands at 309, 244, 238, and 172, respectively.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology that school drop outs among teenage pregnant girls for the years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 stand at 6, 11, 11, and 12, respectively.

I am also informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that as per the policy of the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, leave of absence is granted to these girls during their pregnancy and post-delivery period. This allows them to take care of their health, prepare for the delivery and take care of their babies during the first months postpartum. Their right to education is also safeguarded by allowing the students to resume school after they have delivered.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that the National Education Counselling Service has been providing support to teenage mothers and their families through the interventions of Educational Social Workers and Educational Psychologists so that we can ensure the students' well-being and their continuous education. The National Education Counselling Service also collaborates with other stakeholders and Non-Governmental Organisations such as *Mouvement*

*D'Aide à la Maternité* to empower and guide teenage mothers and their families regarding issues surrounding pregnancy and to ensure their smooth integration back in school.

Psychosocial support through counselling sessions with the Educational Psychologist and regular home visits from the Educational Social Worker are also provided to these students.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry further assists these teenage mothers through psychological support whenever required. Officers, together with the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association conduct sensitisation and awareness programmes at regular basis.

In respect to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Ministry of Health and Wellness that the maternal mortality rate per 1,000 livebirths among teenagers in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 stands at 1.0, 4.1, 0 and 0 respectively. Thank you.

**Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha:** Vu le nombre alarmant du grossesse précoce, est-ce que l'honorable ministre a l'intention d'appliquer les recommandations de la rapporteuse spéciale des Nations Unies qu'une éducation sexuelle obligatoire face partie du cursus scolaire ou si elle a l'intention de conseiller à la ministre de L'Education de le faire ?

**Mrs Koonjoo-Shah :** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would agree with the hon. Member that it is a matter of concern that our society faces, like so many other societies across the world by the way, of this scourge but it is not totally correct to say that it is as alarming as being portrayed by the hon. Member because we have been experiencing a decreasing trend in the reported cases of teenage pregnancy and also of maternal mortality rate as I have just said earlier in my main response but I also agree that education remains the core solution to this problem and I can reassure the House and the population that among all the stakeholders I have mentioned in my main reply, we do work closely with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health to sensitise, to bring solutions, to educate and there is a module as far as I understand on sexual education which happens, most likely, to have room for improvement and we shall be working on that Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha:** Vu la vulnérabilité de la santé des adolescentes enceintes, est-ce que l'honorable ministre peut nous dire quel soutien prénataux leur sont offertes afin de réduire les taux de mortalité maternelle ?

**Mrs Koonjoo-Shah :** Mr Speaker, Sir, once again I refer to the hon. Member to the maternal mortality rate that I have just provided to the House and we have had a zero teenage maternal

mortality rate for the past two years. So, that is already a good job being done but as to what preventive measures are undertaken there is a panoply of support, therapeutical services which is provided free of charge, sensitisation programmes across the whole island through our social welfare centres, our community centers, drop-in centers. *C'est fait en long et en large.*