

**Address of Hon. (Mrs.) Leela Devi DOOKUN-LUCHOOMUN
Minister of Education & Human Resources, Tertiary Education and
Scientific Research**

**Workshop On Sensitisation Workshop on Drug Use Prevention
(In collaboration with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and
CIM Group)**

Monday 23rd July 2018

Le Voilà Hotel, Bagatelle

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning to you all

It is a great pleasure for me to be in your midst today for this Sensitisation Workshop on the Drug Use Prevention Programme.

For the record, I formally recognize both Dr. Reychad Abdool, Consultant at the UNODC and Mr. Tim Taylor, Director - Cim Financial Services Ltd for their invaluable and unstinted support and “appui” they bring to this Programme.

A special welcome to Mr. Colin, Departmental Head, Commission for Education of Rodrigues for accompanying us on this journey in the best interests of our youth.

This programme, Ladies, and Gentlemen provide a clear indication of how much society impacts upon schools: thus, today, schools are called upon to keep abreast of the changes and transformations that are evidenced in society. There was a time when the issue of Drug Use was never part of the curriculum in our classrooms. That was also true for the other substances like cigarettes and alcohol.

However, drugs have become a modern bane – principally because our adolescents and teenagers are particularly vulnerable to drug abuse and also expressed to medias etc.

So we need to forestall the risks and take action against them. And you, Rectors and Managers, Leaders of secondary schools, have to be engaged in this fight. My Ministry is committed to enforcing a “Zero Tolerance” policy towards Drugs within our Schools. We are duty-bound, all of us, to maintain a safe and supportive environment for our entire school community, especially when a sizeable number of that community is in an age group characterized by curiosity and experimentation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me quickly indicate to you that this sensitization meeting is the second phase of a three-pronged approach that my Ministry has initiated to curtail the Drug bane.

This morning, there had been a Validation Workshop that had been carried out. You would wish to know that, in May this year, we had started with the first phase of the programme that consisted of stakeholders like NGOs, the police, MIE, MES, and Ministries, among others, coming together to chart out and draft a relevant curriculum.

This is what has been validated this morning.

So, now we are in the process of ensuring that you, the frontline drivers in our institutions, get to own the programme and see to it that, once the 3rd phase of piloting starts in our 48 schools, you become “partie prenante” in the whole venture.

So, let me repeat that this second phase starts with enlisting your support for this absolutely important project which aims to forestall the use of drugs and promote the health and well-being of our youth. Let me also add that this second phase comprises a 3-day Training of Trainers workshop that starts as from tomorrow.

Dear Rectors, Head of Schools & Managers,

You are all well aware that our primary concern is for our youngsters to go through a whole person development, for them to enter adult society as persons equipped to face and overcome challenges. And I am not talking exclusively of challenges in an increasingly dynamic workplace.

The challenges are also personal, psychological and socio-emotional.

It suffices that the young feel their concerns are not being addressed or that there is nobody listening to them or again, that they are being left adrift. Inevitably, they start looking for something to fall back upon, for alternative agents for solace.

On the other hand, it is equally agreed today that young people who are disengaged from school are at higher risk of substance misuse. We need, then, to nip such tendencies in the bud— otherwise, the damage becomes irreversible. We know that habits learned from adolescence tend to influence behavior over a lifetime—and that is especially so where addiction is concerned.

I have had the opportunity of saying it in the past, including in the National Assembly: We have not had many drug-related cases in our schools— although I am the first to state that one case is one too many. But the threat is real—you know it as well as I do.

Hence, the importance of such a seminal programme that we are embarking upon. The drug use prevention programme is meant to teach students how to overcome negative peer pressures. We have to help them to develop sound resistance skills as well as to understand the nefarious aspects of the prevalence of substance use in their peer group.

So, ladies and gentlemen, our ultimate aim is not just to increase knowledge and understanding of the issue but to bring about a behavioral change altogether.

We cannot repeat it enough: drugs are destroying the lives of our youth and putting their and the nation's future in great jeopardy. It becomes then incumbent upon us all to raise awareness about the problem and prevent our youth from succumbing to it.

It is our responsibility to counter the chronic obstacle that Substance Abuse represents for the all-round development of the people, society and the country as a whole.

Dear Rectors & Managers,

You can be the role models for our students. Instill confidence in them, help build their self-esteem –but, most importantly, teach our student's **refusal skills**.

Let them know it is fine to say **NO**.

By the very nature of your interactions with the young persons in your schools, you are fully cognisant of the fact that the cornerstones of successful relationships are based on effective communication ... and listening is the "bedrock" of communication.

So, ladies and gentlemen, please listen with your ears, and your eyes and your heart. Let us nurture the idea of schools as a community, a community that cares for its members.

You, as our Grassroots Leaders, are better placed at successfully generating a sense of belonging, of attachment to, and of protection for students.

And, when the need arises, do see to it that you are able to provide a safe place for students to talk.

My Ministry, rest assured will do its fair share.

Among other things, we are ensuring that the Program is delivered by competent facilitators. We all know that a programme's success is gauged by the credibility, the know-how and the know-how-to of the individuals leading the programme. That is also why the programme will be interactively delivered in 12 sessions during the Activity Periods.

Through this programme, my Ministry is proposing a pragmatic and innovative approach towards the prevention of drug abuse. It is an innovative axis in the Teaching-Learning process. Education and information are to be the nucleus of this strategy that fosters reciprocal communication, as much as the integration of feelings and knowledge.

Allow me to also suggest that, apart from encouraging a sound uptake of the programme, do see to it that the good practices taking place in the domain in your schools are profitably shared. Our schools should not be insular in nature—good practices, by being widely disseminated, should help to bring down the walls of insularity – and this for the edification of all.

That is what inter-institutional collaboration is all about.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by expressing my sincere appreciation to this great network of participants who are supporting my Ministry's endeavors and strengthening the collaborative approach on Drug Use Prevention.

Let me as well reiterate my warm gratitude to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime as well as to the CIM Group for standing by my Ministry at this important juncture.

And thank you all, rectors and managers, for readily agreeing to be the agents of change and building school communities harboring positive and stake-in-the-future attitudes.

Thank you all for your kind attention.

