



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

# MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, TERTIARY EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

21 DECEMBER 2020



MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

YEAR 2020



## **MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS-Year 2020**

### **1. Early Childhood Development**

- With a view to providing adapted learning and a conducive environment to early learners, 122 private pre-primary schools in poverty areas have been provided with pedagogical tools and materials to upgrade their infrastructure at a cost of around Rs 6 M.
- A new pedagogical inspection tool, **Supervision Tool**, has been introduced to ensure that quality education is being dispensed in all registered pre-primary schools.
- In line with Government Programme 2020-2024, a new National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for Pre-primary is being developed so as to ensure better readiness of children to join the primary level.
- New Norms and Standards in respect of Early Childhood Care and Education services have been introduced to better monitor the facilities and services being offered in public and private pre-primary schools.

### **2. Free Textbook Scheme**

- In line with the Government Programme 2020-2024, action was initiated for the provision of free textbooks to students of lower secondary schools.
- The Free Textbook Scheme has been smoothly implemented as from January 2020 for the benefit of students of Grades 7, 8 and 9 for both Mainstream and Extended Programme of State Secondary Schools (SSS) and for grant-aided Private Secondary Schools (PSS).
- Around 754,000 books, costing approximately Rs 57 M, have been distributed for these Grades so far. These include around 246 textbooks with enlarged print for students with impaired vision in Grades 7, 8 and 9.

### **3. Early Digital Learning Programme**

- The Early Digital Learning Programme (EDLP) project is being implemented as a key component of the wider educational reform and digital transformation, and constitutes an innovative approach to improving the teaching and learning environment. This project is being carried out in collaboration with the Government of India.
- The EDLP aims at aligning the integration of ICT into teaching and learning of pupils in the primary education subsector through the use of adapted tablets. Phase I and II were implemented for Grades 1 and 2 in 2018, followed by Grade 3 in 2019.
- Phase III of the project, which is an extension of the previous phases, with upgraded features and the introduction of a more technologically advanced tool, namely the Classroom Management System, is being implemented for Grade 4 students in 2020 to the tune of some Rs 232 M.



#### **4. Primary School Supplementary Feeding Project**

- An enhanced meal is being provided to pupils of ZEP schools.
- As enunciated in the Government Programme 2020-2024, to alleviate financial burden, improve education attainment and child health, pupils of the Bois des Amourettes Government School are being provided with hot meals (in line with the recommendations of the Ministry of Health and Wellness) since January 2020.
- This project will be extended to all ZEP schools.

#### **5. Secondary Education**

- In pursuit of the ongoing educational reforms, a new curriculum for Grade 9 is being implemented in the State and Private grant-aided Secondary Schools. New textbooks have been prepared and are being used for all subjects.
- Launched in 2018 for Grade 7 students, the Online Student Support Programme, which is a digital platform for accessing educational contents at secondary level, was extended to Grade 8 students in 2019 and to Grade 9 in 2020.

#### **6. Special Education Needs (SEN)**

- The Special Education Needs Authority (SENA) has been set up to provide the appropriate regulatory framework for learners with special education needs and facilitate the implementation of Government policies on special education needs.
- With a view to attaining an inclusive and equitable and effective education system, the Norms and Standards for Special Education Needs Institutions are being finalised.
- The SENA (Registration of Special Education Needs Institutions) Regulations have been updated and are being finalised.
- The process and procedures for the application of registration of all SEN institutions and one-off grant have been worked out.
- The infrastructure of **47** Secondary Schools have been upgraded to make them more adapted/accessible to physically challenged students through the installation of ramps and handrails, provision of adapted toilets, construction of covered links between building blocks and construction of alighting bay.
- The Mauritius Institute of Education is carrying out the adaptation and production of books in Braille for visually impaired students. Priority has been given to those Grades where there are visually impaired students.



## 7. Technical Education

### **Institute of Technical and Technology Education**

- In order to provide technical education opportunities and pathways to students with a view to improving employment prospects, the Ministry has taken over six Technical Education Centres from the MITD to provide Technical and Technology Education. In this context, the Ministry will shortly introduce a new legislation for the setting up of an Institute of Technical and Technology Education.

### **Polytechnics Education**

- In the same vein, the Polytechnics Mauritius Ltd (PML) is spearheading the modernization and rebranding of the upper TVET sector, and has come a long way in its three years of operation with over 2,190 students, including 17 from Rodrigues and six Africa-to-Mauritius Scholars.
- It offers 23 academic programmes ranging from short industry-certified upskilling courses to Diplomas in emerging fields such as Internet of Things, Big Data, Cyber Security, Digital Media and Addiction Studies.
- It also offered one Bachelor Top Up from La Trobe University. PML will graduate its first batch of students in 2020 and **prior to graduation and COVID-19, 85% of students already had job offers in industry.**
- At the core, PML is broadening its learning orientation to shift from job-specific to career-wide training while focusing on transversal skills such as employability, entrepreneurship, technology and languages.

### **Quality Audits (MQA)**

- With a view to promoting quality training in Mauritius, the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) has carried out 74 Quality Audits to ensure compliance with the Quality Assurance Framework.
- MQA has charted out its Strategic Plan 2021-2025 that acts as an enabling framework for the Authority to reimagining its processes and to redefining a new sense of purpose in a changing education and training landscape. In this process, four key strategic milestones have been defined, namely digital transformation, major review of the National Qualifications Framework, promoting the notion of learning anytime and anywhere, and advocating for more impactful policy development that resonates with international practices.
- The MQA has embraced digital transformation and an Integrated Information System to facilitate its processes and ease of doing business. Moreover, MQA is one of the first regulators in the



educational and training sector to go on the National Electronic Licensing System platform managed by the Economic Development Board (EDB) for e-registration of training institutions.

- A new Recognition and Equivalence policy was developed to promote a fairer and more effective evaluation of qualifications along the principles enshrined in the Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States 2014 and the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education 2019. The new Policy will be effective as from January 2021.

## **8. Tertiary Education**

### **Free Tertiary Education Scheme**

- The Free Tertiary Education Scheme came into operation in 2019 and applies for students, both on full time and part time studies, enrolling for a first certificate, first diploma or a first degree.
- The Scheme has led to increased access to tertiary education resulting in an additional enrolment of around 3,000 students for a first certificate, first diploma and undergraduate programme in 2019 as compared to 2018.
- In respect of Financial Year 2019/2020, 20,252 students have benefited from the Free Tertiary Education up to the level of undergraduate degrees and an amount of Rs 482 M has been disbursed by the Higher Education Commission.

### **Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Quality Assurance Authority (QAA)**

- The Higher Education Act, which provides for a reformed, modern and appropriate legal framework for the higher education sector, was proclaimed in January 2020. Subsequently, two new statutory bodies, namely the Higher Education Commission and the Quality Assurance Authority, have been set up and are operational as from 16 January 2020.
- The Higher Education Commission is, on the one hand, mandated to oversee the higher education sector and accredit programmes of both public and private higher education institutions.
- The Quality Assurance Authority is, on the other hand, an independent body engaged in monitoring and maintaining quality in the higher education sector.

### **Implementation of the Research Fund**

- For the FY 2019/2020, the HEC has funded a total of 75 research projects and a total of Rs 61.8 M was disbursed and some Rs 22.5 M is committed for future years for the projects.



### **Implementation of the Programme Masters in Artificial Intelligence and Robotics**

- Further to the announcement made in the Budget 2019-20, the Ministry, in collaboration with the Université Des Mascareignes, has successfully implemented the programme Masters in Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, which is serviced by a consortium of universities and awarded jointly by the UDM and University of Limoges (France).
- 22 students, including one from Madagascar, have enrolled for the course in Artificial Intelligence and Robotics.

### **Launching of the 1st phase of AgriTech Park by the University of Mauritius**

- The project AgriTech Park by the UOM is an example of the very rationale of a Higher Education Institution, that is, producing graduates who are readily employable on the market. Around Rs 22 M has been disbursed for the implementation of the project.
- The University has been working closely with the Industry in order to promote modern and precision Agriculture in areas such as Biotechnology and Smart and Digital Agriculture. It is geared towards fostering innovative projects and entrepreneurship.
- Students undergoing training under such conditions would already acquire work skills which would reduce skills mismatch.

### **Setting up of a Réseau des études françaises (REFM)**

- Aligned with the ambition of transforming Mauritius into an Education Hub, an MoU was signed on the setting up of a Réseau des études françaises (REFM), on 20 February 2020, between this Ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Europe of the Republic of France.
- The MoU aims, *inter alia*, at creating a network comprising public and private educational institutions in Mauritius providing French degrees.

### **Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)**

- Development of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) by the Open University of Mauritius, in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), on the introduction to Sustainable Development in Business.

### **Launching of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Mauritius**

- As stipulated in the Government Programme 2020-2024, the UOM launched, in November 2020, a Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences which aims primarily to contribute to boosting teaching in the fields of medical and health sciences and research. New programmes, namely the Master in Primary Health Care, MSc in Geriatric Care Management, BSc (Hons) Biomedical sciences and Diploma in Medical Imaging Technology, are being developed.



- In addition, other upcoming programmes are *Programmes de Specialisation pour les medecins* to be implemented in collaboration with the Mauritius Institute of Health and Ministry of Health and Wellness as well as University of Bordeaux. Areas in which programmes are currently being developed are Neurology and Neurosurgery. Future programmes envisaged are in the field of Rheumatology, Endocrinology, Internal Medicine and Rehabilitation Medicine as per the needs of the country.

## **9. Education Resilience Strategy: COVID-19 induced scenario**

- With a view to ensuring continuity of learning, a host of educational programmes were broadcast on the national TV channels to students and provided online during the COVID-19 confinement period.
- These programmes were prepared by Educators in collaboration with the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division (QAID) of the Ministry, the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) and Open University of Mauritius (OUM).
- Almost 5,000 videos on subjects taught at Primary and Lower Secondary Schools, including Kreol Morisien, Arabic and Asian Languages, were produced and broadcast. In addition, Educators conducted online classes for secondary students as per their school timetables using online platforms. Additional video lessons were developed for the Student Support Portal (SSP) in the different subjects taught.
- With a view to ensuring continuity in learning, 8,500 Educators were provided logins for Office 365.
- 50,000 students were connected to the Office 365 to pursue education online.
- The Ministry also renewed and upgraded Microsoft licenses to provide more features and value by moving to Cloud with some 100,000 full licenses that can be installed in student devices both in schools and their personal machines.
- The educational programmes have also been broadcast in **Rodrigues** on the existing TV channels. Educators in **Agalega** have adopted measures to ensure continuity of learning for the primary and secondary school students of the island.
- The Technical Education Centres operating under the aegis of the Ministry also delivered online educational programmes for their students.
- This online teaching mode will be sustained in the future to ensure continuity of education especially during calamities, and will complement face-to-face teaching.
- The Education Act 1957 has been amended through the Covid-19 (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 to provide, *inter alia*, for the dispensing of distance education and online learning programmes during the temporary closure of educational institutions.





## **10. Resumption of Schools post-confinement**

- The overall health, safety and well-being of our learners remained at the centre of all the decisions taken for the resumption of schools.
- A School Preparedness Plan and a Protocol spelling out the guidelines for health and sanitary measures were disseminated in Primary and Secondary Schools in Mauritius, Rodrigues and Agalega.

## **11. School Calendar and New Timing for Assessments/ Examinations**

- Following the Government decision for schools to resume on a full-fledged basis on 01 July 2020, a new School Calendar was devised to cover the loss of school days.
- In order not to impose stressful conditions for examinations as already scheduled, the academic year was extended to 26 March 2021 and this implied the review of the timing for the holding of the main national and international assessments/examinations, namely PSAC, NCE, SC and HSC.

## **12. Promotion of Science**

- In the context of the promotion of Science, a website and a more active Facebook page were launched to communicate science programme to students. Two webinars entitled '**Meet the Scientist**' whereby scientists are invited to share their research and science journey to students reached out to more than 1,000 students. A series of guidelines for Educators and parents to perform simple science experiments with children (Science Explained) as well as science videos have been developed and circulated online by the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre (RGSC). Through the Facebook page activities more than 25,000 visitors were reached.
- A photography contest entitled, '**Healthy Plants and Unhealthy Plants**' was launched to encourage engaged passionate artists in science subjects to commemorate the '**International Year of Plant Health**' 2020 declared by the United Nations. Other online events include the AfriCAN Code Challenge, an initiative whereby youngsters aged 8-16 years participate in a coding competition. The three best projects have been submitted to the global coordinator of Africa Code Week spearheaded by SAP, for an African-wide competition.
- The RGSC in collaboration with this Ministry organised the National Science week 2020 from 30 November to 04 December 2020, intending to increase awareness and understanding among the public in general on the importance of the role of Science and Technology in our daily life.
- A series of Continuous Professional Development Workshops for about 400 educators were held in March 2020 by eminent Professor Michael Reiss from University College London. In addition, RGSC has conducted career guidance talks in five secondary schools reaching out to some 400





students. The travelling exhibition, ‘**the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements**’ has toured eight secondary schools and a shopping mall reaching out to more than 10,000 visitors.

- Scientists from RGSC conducted STEM career guidance talks in four secondary schools since 10 September 2020 reaching a total of 325 students. The feedback received from the students showed that they were impressed with the up-to-date information on higher education possibilities and training programmes through the STEM careers presentations.

### **13. Continuous Professional Development**

- 672 Primary Educators and School Inspectors, as well as 3,895 Teaching and Non-Teaching Secondary staff, have undergone continuous professional development.
- As at date, 422 Primary School Educators for the Holistic Education Programme have been recruited.
- Three Workshops were organised for Headmasters in the context of Continuous Professional Development and to promote school leadership.
- 360 Educators and other staff have already enrolled for Bachelor in Education (primary) being conducted by MIE.
- Various webinars have been held with international and regional organisations including UNESCO, African Union Commission and SADC among others, on the educational aspect of the COVID-19 pandemic with a view to sharing experiences and country responses to school closure, ensuring continuity in education, safe re-opening of schools and other challenges stemming from the global health crisis.

### **14. Health and Wellness**

- With the education reform, there has been an increasing commitment to enhance the emotional, social, physical and moral well-being in our school communities. Several programmes have been implemented within the primary school sector to achieve the holistic development of our learners.
- The **Healthy Kids Programme** has been extended to all primary schools in 2019 and is currently being implemented in Grades 2 to 5 with the aim of promoting healthy eating habits and physical activity in pupils since a young age.
- To further ascertain that our pupils adopt and maintain a certain level of physical activity, several projects such as the **Kid’s Athletics**, the “**Natation Scolaire**” and the “**After School Sports and Fitness Programme**” are being implemented. 4,100 pupils in 100 Primary Schools participated in the “**Natation Scolaire**” programme and 35,000 pupils in Mauritius and Rodrigues benefitted from the **After School Sports and Fitness Programme**.
- Moreover, an average of 5,000 Grades 4 to 6 pupils participate in **Grassroots Inter-Primary Football** competition yearly.



- **“Les Amis de Zippy” Programme** has also contributed in the emotional well-being of our pupils by promoting acceptance and awareness of their feelings while the introduction of the performing arts within the holistic education led to a stimulation of the mental activities by appreciating the creativeness of our pupils.
- A **‘No to Violence’** campaign was launched in October 2019 as part of the strategy against school violence and bullying.
- In line with the National Educational Counselling Programme, a **“Service D’Ecoute”** has been set up in 48 State Secondary Schools.
- The **“Get Connected”** Drug Use Prevention Programme for 12-14 year old school children started in January 2019 and has been rolled out in 47 schools in Mauritius and eight Schools in Rodrigues. Capacity building for the delivery of this programme has already been initiated and training of Educators has been carried out accordingly.
- In collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the World Health Organisation, a project to promote and sustain our **School Health Clubs** has been embarked upon to, *inter alia*, sensitise students on adopting a healthy lifestyle, and the benefits of exercising regularly and following a proper diet. 102 Educators have been trained to act as mentors/facilitators for School Health Clubs.
- Training sessions started in 2017 for the integration of sexuality education within the social and emotional well-being program for Grades 7-9 and classes were introduced in Grade 7 in January 2018. Training for a new batch of Grade 7 Educators was carried out in November 2019 in the four Zones.

## The Way Forward

The Transformation Agenda is directly contributory to the attainment of Government’s vision 2030 that lays the groundwork for a model of economic transformation for Mauritius from middle to high-income status. This model is underpinned by the fact that productivity gains and innovation cannot be achieved on the basis of low skilled positions. Again, the advent of technology and digitalization is most likely to result in an economy that is knowledge-driven and skills-intensive.

2020 has been a year that stood out from previous one not least, on the one hand, because it allows the Education sector to sustain activities in parallel. On the other hand, we did not allow the impact of COVID – 19 to cause us to deviate from the consolidation of the reforms we have well embarked upon. And, this year saw us drawing up resilience strategies to ensure no learning loss. This strategy will be systemic, structural as well as process-related and quality-driven. Moving forward, we aim now to implement new approaches that will serve to reinforce our system as a whole.

*21 December 2020*

