



NEWSLETTER

# MENTAL HEALTH

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

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# EDITORIAL



If you pause and observe the people around you, whether in the comfort of your home or in the bustling streets of our country, you might sense their inner struggles. These strangers, kin or friends might be battling with different shades of stress, anxiety or depression. As humans, we are at the entire mercy of our mind. Whether we accept it or not, the state of our mind dictates each of our actions and inactions. Our mental health is as important – if not more important – as our physical wellbeing. In Mauritius though, mental discomforts or ailments belong to our taboo folklore. Put simply, in our country, it is not okay not to be okay.

People suppress their struggles and ignore its disruptive consequences on their overall wellbeing. In turn, this ricochets on familial, professional or other social surroundings. And yet, the negative effects of an unhealthy mind are blatant. We see them in every altercation and whenever crimes are committed – be it in the aggressors or the victims. We have all seen how uncontrolled anxiety or stress can lead to some committing the unforgivable. We are all aware of the long-lasting trauma caused to victims. It is high time we all recognise, stop ignoring and accept that our mind is vulnerable. As Rumi, the celebrated 13<sup>th</sup> century poet, in *The Guest House* wrote:

***The dark thought, the  
shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door  
laughing,  
and invite them in.***

***“Whether we accept  
it or not, the state  
of our mind dictates  
each of our actions  
and inactions.***

In this edition, we ‘invite them’ all in and focus on mental health, its effects on victims and aggressors but also its consequences in the workplace. In this year’s last newsletter, we partnered with psychologists Micki Pistorius (a prominent South African Profiler) and Virginie Bissessur (Director of Pedostop) as well as academics Emilie Carosin and Joe-Ann Chavry to ensure that the lesser-known facets of mental health are covered. Our fellow editor, Sharfa Paurobally, in her most insightful article yet, reflects on victims and the laches in our system. Our colleague, Ronish Bangaroo writes a brilliant article on workplace stress and bullying. This edition also highlights this year’s main events as well as a few words from various colleagues and the DPP's end of year message.

As 2024 ends, I would like to congratulate the entire editing team for their stellar work throughout the year. Each and every one of them has a stressful workload and yet still find time and energy to craft and improve our newsletters. This is no easy task and their effort should be applauded.

Finally, I have to thank all of you for not just reading our newsletters but for your kind words of support throughout the year. On behalf of the editing team and the Office of the DPP, I wish you all happy celebrations and may you all find peace and balance in the new year.

**Nataraj J Muneesamy**, Assistant DPP  
*Editor-in-Chief*



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# **DPP'S END OF YEAR MESSAGE**

**RASHID AHMINE**



# RASHID AHMINE

## Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)

It is almost two years now since I was appointed DPP. These first 2 years have been quite challenging because we were faced with an unprecedented situation. Some of my decisions were challenged by the former commissioner of police and former government through its Attorney General's Office. Instead of being focused on serving the public, I had to divert my attention to defending my decisions in Court.

When I took office, I wanted to bring a few urgent reforms to the current system to remediate to abuses of fundamental human rights relating to bail matters, prohibition orders, delays in investigation and prosecution, comprehensively review our criminal law and procedure and improve victim's and witness' experience of the criminal justice system. All the changes I wanted to bring could have been made possible only with the cooperation of the then commissioner of police and the government of the day but for reasons best known to them, they had decided to frontally and openly oppose my office. Much precious time was wasted to the prejudice of the public good but it was all about defending the rule of law and preventing the country from being transformed into a police state.

Against all odds, I managed to bring some major changes at the level of my office to address one of the most, if not the most, serious problem facing the criminal justice system in our country today which is delay and backlog of cases. A new system was put in place to handle cases referred to us in a timely and effective manner. Although there are more improvements to be made but overall, it brought very positive results. The statistics speak for themselves. Cases lodged before the Supreme Court are now even scheduled until the end of 2025. The ODPP successfully maintained a high conviction rates in all our courts. All this was made possible not without difficulty. A considerable number of my officers was transferred to the judiciary without replacement. We felt an acute shortage of staff which rendered our task extremely difficult and added workload pressures. I must congratulate all my officers who have stayed with



us for their unsparing hard work, professionalism and dedication in the face of so many challenges.

Members of the public write and seek our assistance on a daily basis. For the year 2024, we received 740 requests. We provided immediate assistance wherever we could in different ways which fall under our mandate. We also organised several round table discussions to address major issues (Drug Trafficking, Environmental Crimes, Human Trafficking, Public Confidence in the Criminal Justice System) facing the country whilst at the same time educating the public. These events were quite a success and we will continue in this endeavour for the forthcoming year.

We are engaging with the government and the Honourable Attorney General for strengthening the independence of the DPP and making the office, in no unambiguous term, the National Prosecution Authority in Mauritius. Our priority, therefore, next year will be our continuous campaign to strengthen the independence of the office, to give us back our financial/administrative autonomy and to be provided additional power with regard to investigations carried by all law enforcement authorities. A prosecution-led investigation is an essential requirement for a successful prosecution in highly complex cases. This will require constitutional amendments and the enactment of a specific legislation (The ODPP Act). We are also expecting that the FCC Act will be repealed and that major reforms will be brought to our existing

criminal and procedural laws. With regard to the FCC, it will be for the government to decide which model that would best suit our needs but I very much hope that there will not be a mere change in appellation and I strongly recommend a new agency altogether which would fight only the biggest cases of corruption and money laundering focusing exclusively on investigation. The prosecutorial aspect should be left solely to the ODPP. It is a golden opportunity, to revisit, by carrying an in depth study, the structure that was put in place under the Prevention of Corruption Act in 2002 and recently the FCC which, in my view, have not brought the expected outcome despite the exorbitant amount of public funds put at their disposal.

Alongside, we will continue to improve on victim-witness experience of the criminal justice system giving particular attention to the vulnerable including women and children. The current legal system does not protect adequately women from domestic violence and in my view urgent reforms are needed. If we do not act promptly, we will leave victims at serious risk. I believe that the Children's Act has not been fully implemented and the problem of juvenile delinquency is not being considered seriously. We are not doing enough to turn our young delinquents into responsible and law abiding citizens. If we do not act urgently coupled with the proliferation of drug trafficking in the country, the situation could be catastrophic in the years to come. Speaking of drug trafficking, we are still running after the small fish (with a few exceptions)- 24 years after the Dangerous Drugs Act was enacted giving very wide powers of investigation to the police precisely to target drug barons. I wonder why in a small country like ours it is so difficult to lay hands on them when our neighbour, Reunion Island, is far more successful than us in this venture. With such an approach, I wonder how we will be able to combat such a scourge which is destroying families for many years now.

Another area of priority will be to bring improvement to existing structures to make the office an even more modern prosecuting authority. It entails having a new electronic case management system with new digital tools. We should work towards greater digitisation of casework information and making sure that our system remains fit for purpose but I am equally aware that human input, at the level of the office, remains a big challenge. The well-being of our officers is also a top priority because without them, we cannot function. It is important to manage prosecutor wellness and vicarious trauma. I am looking at possibilities to provide them with specialist support especially for those who handle

the most distressing cases including atrocious murder, rape/serious sexual offences and generally for those suffering from burn out. This is a common practice in many other jurisdictions who value their officers. Last but not least, the security of our officers have been clearly neglected over the years and it is time to provide them with all the protection they deserve when they are prosecuting the most heinous criminals in this country. I will also make recommendations to the government in due course in this area as well.

It needs to be reiterated that the ODPP prosecutes without fear or favour. The office will always remain faithful to its constitutional mandate and will always apply the evidential test in deciding whom to prosecute. We will continue to be engaged on building confidence in the ODPP. Fighting crimes is not the responsibility of the ODPP only but all other partners within the criminal justice system. Without an investigation, there can be no prosecution and if there is no prosecution, the investigation serves no purpose. We are interdependent and mutual confidence should remain high. I therefore look forward to a fruitful cooperation with all our partners so that we all continue to improve and deliver better outcomes for the public we serve.

In the new year, my Office also wants to do more to make the system better. We are therefore reaching out to all NGOs working with our criminal justice system. We want to regroup everyone and hear what issues they have detected and discuss viable solutions. Those who want to help us, they will find details on how to contact us in this Newsletter.

In closing, I express my appreciation, once again, to my team of lawyers and other staff of my office for their unflinching commitment and service to the people of Mauritius. I am aware of the stress and pressure you all go through to ensure that the job is done.

I would also like to express a special appreciation to our Newsletter Team. I know they have a stressful workload but yet they sacrifice their precious time and energy to come up with our Newsletters for the benefit of our readers. The Team has modernised the layout of the Newsletters and focuses on trending topics. Their work is line with my vision for the Office – a modern and state of the art prosecution service.

On behalf of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, I wish all our readers a happy and prosperous New Year 2025.



### Statistics for 01<sup>st</sup> of January 2024 to 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2024

<b>N° of cases lodged at Intermediate Court</b>	<b>348</b>
<i>Intermediate Court Criminal</i>	<i>261</i>
<i>Children Court</i>	<i>71</i>
<i>Financial Crimes Division</i>	<i>16</i>
<b>N° of cases referred to Supreme Court</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>Bail</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>N° of Correspondences files received</b>	<b>740</b>

**Source:** Criminal Registry (eRegistry system)  
**November 2024**



# HIDDEN WOUNDS

The Role of Mental Health Support  
for Victims of crimes



The mind, with its intricate web of functions and connections, is both a source of human potential and a domain of vulnerability. From the most simple crimes to the most heinous crimes, the trauma of being a crime victim often results in enduring mental health consequences and the journey towards healing is often long and arduous. Consider a child who has endured years of sexual abuse, often at the hands of someone within their family or inner circle—how does one recover from such a profound breach of trust? Or a woman assaulted on her way home, or a person who is a victim of larceny with violence in their own home—how do they navigate the emotional scars left on their mental health by such invasions of safety and security? In this article, we aim to cover the importance of mental health support to victims of crimes and we will explore the support currently provided by our system, its gaps as well as the victim support systems in other countries.

## **What is Mental Health?**

The World Health Organisation (“WHO”) categorises mental health as an integral component of health. It further defines mental health as “a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community”. Mental health, a subject which used to be a taboo decades ago, is now considered to be a basic human right. According to the WHO, “Everyone, whoever and wherever they are, has a deserving and inherent right to the highest attainable standard of mental health”.

## **The relevance of mental health to victims of crimes**

The repercussions of experiencing a crime resonate deeply within individuals and can leave a lasting effect on mental health. The whole process, which starts with reporting a police case up to testifying in court, can be a complex and daunting experience. For many victims, deposing in court means reliving the whole incident. However, this is only the first step towards healing as recovery is not always speedy and is often a silent battle which can last for years.

Experiencing a crime may trigger several mental health issues. Indeed, as stipulated in an article by McCart, Smith and Sawyer, victims of crime are at risk of experiencing a range of psychological problems including post traumatic stress disorder, depression, and substance abuse.

## **A comparative analysis**

In Mauritius, the Child Development Unit provides psycho-social support for children. Furthermore, child victims can also undergo a psychological assessment which takes place pre-trial through the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development, and Family Welfare upon a request made by this Office through the Children’s Court. Moreover, the Family Support Bureau which falls under the aegis of this Ministry, provides legal and psychological support to women who are victims of domestic violence. However, while victims of equally heinous crimes can seek support through Non-Governmental Organisations, our institutions do not have any victim support in the aftermath of a crime for adult victims. It is evident that our system, as it currently stands, provides limited, and in a few cases, no support for victims of serious crimes. It is apposite to explore the victim support systems in other countries to identify the gaps in the Mauritian victim support system.

The United States of America has a comprehensive support system in place to assist victims of crime, which unlike Mauritius, is not restricted to only certain types of crimes. The Office for Victim of Crime (OVC), a part of the US Department of Justice, oversees programs and provides victim support services. Furthermore, the OVC has a Victim Compensation Program where victims of violent crime can seek mental health counselling that is related to their victimisation and they are reimbursed. It also provides specialised training in the mental health assistance needs of crime victims for both victim advocates and licensed mental health providers. Moreover, the Victim Services Division (VSD) of the Federal Bureau of Investigation helps victims of various forms of crime in a humane manner. There is also a free service called the Victim Notification System



which provides information to victims such as the status of the enquiry, the criminal charges filed, the outcome of those charges and even when court proceedings will be held. This system is a partnership between the FBI, the U.S Attorneys' Offices and the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

In the United Kingdom, victims have a right under the Victims' Code to a referral to services that support them. There are also several support services across England and Wales which are funded by the local police and crime commissioners that help victims cope and recover after a crime- for instance, the London Victim and Witness Service in London. Quite interestingly, the United Kingdom also has a Victim Contact Scheme which provides support to victims of violent or sexual crimes including cases where the offender has been sentenced to 12 months or more. The government also provides a restorative justice scheme where the victim can meet the offender, talk about how his/her life has been affected, get answers to his/her questions, and, in certain cases, even get an apology.

Pursuing this comparative exploration further, we now turn to a country which is often compared to our small island. Singapore has a Victim Care Cadre Programme where Victim care Officers work with the Police to support victims of crime, including victims of sexual crimes and other serious offences throughout the investigation process or victims going through court proceedings. These officers are trained to provide a listening ear and to look out for victims who may be struggling to cope in the aftermath of a trauma. This may include emotional support to victims. Furthermore, courts provide support for vulnerable witnesses in the form of programmes which aim at helping them throughout the court hearing process if they are anxious, afraid or emotionally traumatised when giving evidence.

## **A better system for our victims**

Coming back to Mauritius, it is evident that Mauritius must establish a more comprehensive and effective victim support system, including support services to help victims with their mental health. Indeed, a more comprehensive, accessible, and trauma-sensitive support system is much needed to support victims in their healing and quest for justice. Going through a police enquiry and attending court can be emotionally

taxing when facing the looming presence of the accused person, reliving the gruesome details of the incident, and being cross-examined on same. In cases where a victim's testimony is central to the prosecution's case, it would be unjust to penalise the victim for their inability to testify effectively due to the trauma they have endured. Such circumstances can severely undermine the pursuit of justice, especially when the victim's emotional and psychological state affects their ability to speak or participate in the proceedings. This concern highlights the importance of offering appropriate support and accommodations to trauma survivors within the legal system, ensuring that justice is not hindered by the psychological scars of the victim.

We may draw inspiration from the other systems above. We may, for instance, decentralise the CDU and make it more accessible in all districts. Our law enforcement agencies and justice system need to provide support, including psychological support, to victims of crime as soon as a crime has been reported. For example, there can be the implementation of a government-funded programme where trained officers can liaise closely with the police and provide support to victims of serious crimes during the investigative process. Once the formal charge has been lodged, there needs to be officers helping these victims to navigate the court process.

While reforming the system requires thoughtful and sustained efforts and is a complex and ongoing process. Victims of crimes may seek help by reaching out to trained therapists, close family or friends or Non-governmental organisations - because let's not forget it, mental health is your basic human right. Sometimes help is nearer than you think.

## Conclusion

The mental health of victims is a crucial aspect and a moral imperative that demands immediate and sustained attention and support. This can be achieved through the implementation of an improved support system to victims of crimes as soon as a case is reported. The implementation of a comprehensive support system for victims is of paramount importance, especially when considering that mental health is not only a critical aspect of individual well-being but also a fundamental human right. The invisible wound needs as much attention and support as the physical wound and we have to ensure that those who endure trauma from serious crimes are given the opportunity to heal, testify, have trust in our legal system, and, ultimately, reclaim their lives and mental health.

# SHARFA PAUROBALLY

*State Counsel*



## CARING FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Seek professional help

Seek help through family and friends

Resume your routine prior to the trauma

Stay in touch with the progress of the case so you are not caught off guard when called to testify in court

Stay positive and have trust in our judicial system





# CALLING ALL **STAKEHOLDERS** IN THE **CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

Are you an **NGO** that works **with victims** or is concerned with the **criminal justice process**?

The Office of the **Director of Public Prosecutions** will value your input.  
Get in touch with us via email: **dpp@govmu.org**

# WORKPLACE

Place to work and not to get worked up





The Latin expression “*Mens Sana in Corpore Sano*”, credited to Roman poet June Juvenal, is widely considered to mean that to have a healthy mind one has to have a healthy body. It is equally true and undeniable that a healthy mind is a recipe to be hale and hearty.

Statistically, many of us spend most of our time at our workplace, usually 8 hours a day, 22 days a month. The reality is that even after normal working hours and on our normal rest days or weekends, many of us are still working. We are receiving emails, SMS, WhatsApp messages, phone calls etc....

It is also a fact that many employees wake up late in the night or at dawn with a first thought about work. There are many instances of work-related insomnia and nightmares. Work can and has turned for many into an obsession as if it is the main goal in life. Many employees feel like a hamster on a wheel and their state of mind depends on the speed of that wheel. It is thus an inconvenient truth that work is not often empowering thought of and has become a silent killer. It is a recurrent source of tension, frustration, stress, anxiety and depression. In some exceptional cases, it is noted with high concern that suicidal thoughts are work related.

As a not too young and not too old law practitioner, I am not immune to mental health work-related issues. I must admit that in my early days as a practitioner, a bad day in court was a source of frustration. Though one is wiser after an event, I did feel at times that I was not being good enough and doubted my legal abilities. Similarly, I felt I was on the highest mountain when things went my way. Especially, there was such a sense of elation after a knock-out cross-examination, a favourable judgment or being commended by the Court. All this meant that my mood depended on my performance at work and not vice-versa.

In my humble 12 years of public service, I have also witnessed various instances of people working around me, emotionally and physically suffering because of work over time. In some cases, work was such a source of tension in private life leading to divorce and break ups. Some people would easily confide whilst others prefer to suffer in silence. It would thus be inappropriate for me to comment on the causes of their mental ill-being. The walls of my office building are for sure a privileged witness of these sufferings.

The theme for this year's World Mental Health Day on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024 was Mental Health at Work. Burnouts and mental breakdowns are now familiar expressions and are closely associated with work. Clinical psychologists are obviously best placed to dissert on the genesis of these “*mal-être*s”. However, in terms of Employment laws, the Workers Right Act

2019 has under section 114 prohibited an armada of behaviour negatively impacting on the mental well-being of employees.

Section 114 has been assigned its own part under the Workers Right Act 2019, namely Part XI dealing with violence at work. It is to be considered that this section applies equally to the public and private sectors and para-statal bodies.<sup>1</sup> It englobes various offences already catered for under the general criminal law such as assault, insult, threat and sexual harassment. New offences were introduced namely bullying, humiliation, expression of an intention to cause harm, harassment in the general, use of aggressive gesture and hindering, in the course of or as a result of work.

Bullying has been widely defined as including “*a pattern of offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating behaviour or an abuse or misuse of power or authority which attempts to undermine an individual or group of individuals, gradually eroding their confidence and capacity which may cause them to suffer stress*”.<sup>2</sup>

Given the wide definition, it can thus be advanced that bullying concerns acts which includes fat/skinny-shaming, character assassination, gossiping or spreading rumours, dumping of work with an intention to gun down an employee, discriminatively boosting the career development of particular employee, unfair attribution of training/overseas mission, management through fear, imposing internal rules to deter a worker from enjoying an acquired right, refusing deserving requests for leaves on the excuse of exigencies of service, asking for medical certificate for sick leaves of less than 3 day etc...

It is also of particular relevance that the language used in Section 114, “*as a result of work*” is clearly indicative that the bullying need not be specifically at the workplace itself but can be as well on social media or other communication platforms as far as it is linked with work. It is also particularly interesting that some acts that might not qualify as an offence of threat or insult under general criminal law may well amount to violence at work. Examples can be found in acts of (i) expressing the intention to cause harm (ii) verbal abuse and (iii) humiliation in any manner whatsoever.

Harassment has also been broadly defined as including “*any unwanted conduct towards the worker, whether verbal, non-verbal, visual, psychological or physical, based on age, impairment, HIV status, domestic circumstances, sex, sexual orientation, gender, race, colour, language, religion, political, trade union or other opinion or belief, national or social origin, association with a minority, birth or other status, which occurs in circumstances where*

*a reasonable person would consider the conduct as harassment of the worker”.*<sup>3</sup>

It thus follows that making fun of a worker because of his or her sexual orientation amounts to an act of harassment. The mockery can be verbal, that is by way of sarcastic comment or exaggerated mimicry, and non-verbal that is by signs or gestures. However, such conduct must be judged accordingly to an objective standard so that not every joke becomes an act of harassment.

Section 114 has also replicated the offence of sexual harassment which was already defined under Section 25 of the Equal Opportunities Act 2008.<sup>4</sup> Sexual harassment is also based on an objective standard that the victim be humiliated, offended or intimidated because of (i) unwelcome sexual advance or (ii) unwelcome request for sexual favour or (iii) unwelcome conduct of sexual nature.

There are several ways in which sexual harassment can be committed. Classic ways include the use of quid pro quos, for instance a supervisor would recommend the promotion of an employee in return of sexual favours. Commenting on various physical traits such as the buttocks, the breasts and the lips, repeatedly making sexual remarks or dirty jokes, questioning one's sexual life, showing or sending sexually explicit content and sensually uncrossing legs, are also forms of sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment can also be committed in a subtle manner for instance by making excessive interaction and using innuendos, pressuring for romantic encounters with a clear sexual objective. It is advocated that sexual harassment should be given a broad interpretation so that some people, irrespective of their gender, are not tempted to consider the workplace as a crush place or a hunting ground.

Once a complaint is made for any of the various acts that constitute violence at work, the employer cannot simply turn a deaf ear or put aside the complaint. There is a duty to enquire into the complaint and to take appropriate action to protect the rights of the worker not later than 15 days after the complaint is reported or made aware of.<sup>5</sup> Failing to do so renders the employer, on conviction, to a fine not exceeding Rs100,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years.<sup>6</sup>

Any person convicted for violence at work under Section 114 of the Worker's Right Act is also liable to a fine not exceeding Rs100,000 rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years.<sup>7</sup> It is nevertheless of some concern that Section 114 does not expressly cater for false and malicious complaints of violence at work. This is also a form of violence at

# RONISH BANGAROO

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work. It is beyond dispute that those falsely accused are emotionally affected and suffer stress or anxiety which inevitably impact on their mental well-being.

The law can provide for an armada of measures to promote mental well-being in the work-place but it is equally important to destigmatise mental health. Workers should be encouraged to speak up on their mental health issues without any fear of retribution or of being negatively judged. A culture change is necessary, and workers should be told that it is a misconception to believe that those with mental health conditions are the weak ones.

It goes without saying that any professional life has its share of gratification, passion, pleasure, pain, pressure and stress. As a matter of fact, there are more often hard days than happy ones. This is fair game as the workplace is certainly not a safe haven. But at the same time it should not be a boxing ring where workers are emotionally drained, discouraged, depressed or distressed. It is after all a place to work and not to get worked up. Not everyone is thick-skinned and the promotion of mental health in the workplace not only ensures the welfare of workers but serves the cause of their empowerment.

<sup>1</sup>Section 3 of the Workers Right Act 2019

<sup>2</sup>Section 114(7) of the Workers Right Act 2019

<sup>3</sup>Section 114(7) of the Workers Right Act 2019

<sup>4</sup>Section 25 Equal Opportunities Act 2008: Sexual harassment

(1) A person sexually harasses another person where, in circumstances in which a reasonable person would have foreseen that the other person would be humiliated, offended or intimidated, he –

(a) makes an unwelcome sexual advance, or an unwelcome request for a sexual favour, to another person; or

(b) engages in any other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature towards another person.

<sup>5</sup>Section 114(4) of the Worker's Right Act

<sup>6</sup>Section 114(5) of the Worker's Right Act

<sup>7</sup>Section 114(5) of the Worker's Right Act





# Dr. MICKI PISTORIUS

*Dr Micki Pistorius is psychologist, criminal profiler and an author. She was the founder and commander of the Investigative Psychology Unit of the South African Police Service. She is now a resident in Mauritius and registered at the Allied Health Professions Council of Mauritius as a psychologist and practices at Care Clinic Domaine De Labourdonnais. She has vast experience and lectured on international podia such as the Centre International de Sciences Criminelles et Penales in France, Bramshill Training College in the United Kingdom, Middlesex University, Open University of Mauritius and to the ODPP and Institute for Judiciary and Legal Studies in Mauritius.*

**1. You are a forensic and investigative psychologist by profession and play a key role in the criminal justice system. What does your job entail and how have you contributed to the fight against crimes so far?**

I served in the South African Police Service as the founder of the Investigative Psychology Unit with the rank of Deputy Director from 1994 to 2000, profiling mainly serial killers and other serious crimes, ranging from serial rapes, threatening letters to dignitaries and the president, white collar crime, stalking, child molestation and complicated murders. This included interrogation of suspects and assisting state prosecutors as well as defence council in court to devise interrogation strategies. I also testified in many cases as an expert witness. A psychological profile of a suspect is not direct evidence, but it does present to the judge a comprehensive portrait of the offender, including the motivation and testimony on the remorse or rehabilitation probabilities of the offender. Forensic psychologists are trained in recognising personality disorders, mental illnesses but also malingering, pathological and non-pathological incapacity, and detecting deceptive behaviour.



Since my retirement from the SAPS, I lectured and trained law enforcement officials, including detectives, crime scene analysts, members of the judiciary and criminologists globally, including in England, Namibia and France. I have also been requested to assist in the analysis of complicated murders in other countries. I have lectured at several educational facilities such as University of Pretoria, University of Rhodes, Liverpool, Bramshill Institute (UK) and at Open University of Mauritius and Middlesex University and I have been a public speaker at many events. I have authored several books on the subject of which my autobiography, *Catch me a Killer* has been turned into a tv series with the same title. I designed many courses on the investigation and interrogation of serious sexual crimes, identifying white collar criminals – including psychopaths, narcissists and Machiavellian personality disorders, and competitive intelligence. I collaborate with an accredited training institution in Mauritius when providing courses to corporate facilities.

Currently I also have several social media accounts, such as Patreon, available for those who are interested in reading about the subject but not in formal training. I hope and believe in Mauritius we can accomplish much in our fight against crime by training law-enforcement and judiciary members in the workings of the minds of criminals, designing interrogation and cross-examination strategies, implementing forensic psychology in the court process and standardizing psychometric tests on the prison population. I hope psychology students from universities in Mauritius can implement a joint venture to assist with standardizing these tests with the Mauritius Prison Services. Afterall, animals do not commit crime, people commit crime and psychology is about people, and forensic psychology is about criminals.

## **2. You are also the first woman serial profiler in South Africa since 1994. What has been your inspiration and guiding force in your journey?**

Yes, I was the first profiler in the SAPS and I happen to be a woman. I am also advocating against the release of serial killers on parole. Knowing that I make a difference to humankind by helping to put criminals behind bars and to protect innocent victims inspires me. I am inspired by so many

people all over the world, whom I have never met but who leave messages on my social media and I am humbled that my work has inspired so many other people to fight justice. Together we can all make a difference. We need to create a legacy and leave the world in a better state for future generations.

## **3. It is a myth that serial killers are mentally ill but in your memoir, you contend that they are “not monsters; they are human beings with tortured souls. I will never condone what they do, but I can understand them.” Your thoughts on this myth.**

I have been involved in the investigation of and interrogated about 35 serial killers. So I have met them on a one-on-one, face-to-face level. They are not comic book superheroes, as often depicted in the movies! I abhor the synthetic sensationalism spun around the myth of a serial killer. Believe me, they are ordinary people – it can be your neighbour or even your brother, or boyfriend.

In the Odysseo oceanarium in Port Louis I observed how sharks swim graciously among the other fish. Fish do not recognise the sharks swimming among them as dangerous for a shark is just another fish. Likewise serial killers blend in with their communities – they can be teachers, ministers, policemen, car salesmen, fisher men – they buy groceries, they go to church and temples– they live very ordinary lives and hide their secret urge to murder, until we discover the bodies. Remember a small percentage are women. Some serial killers even helped the police search for bodies, so much are they unrecognizable.

When I say that I understand them, it does not mean I condone them, or that there is an excuse for their behaviour. There is no excuse, but there is an explanation for their behaviour, which is often not that obvious, and therefore it may be interpreted by the public that they are monsters or they are mad. This myth needs to be addressed. If people do not realise that these criminals are not raving mad monsters, then the public will never be able to help the investigators to identify possible suspects. As a forensic psychologist it is my job to understand criminal behaviour in order to assist investigators, to interrogate and to explain their behaviour to a judge in court. A

maths teacher cannot teach maths if she does not understand it, in the same manner I need to understand the psychological depths and hidden motivations of these criminals in order to inform the general public, but also to be of assistance to a judge in court to bring them to justice. At no point do I feel sorry for them, they need to be prosecuted and convicted and never paroled.

## **4. What is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and how is it diagnosed?**

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a mental health diagnoses when a person has either been the victim of or witnessed one or more experiences where their lives, or someone else's lives were endangered or exposed to extreme violence. They experience intense, disturbing thoughts and feelings related to their experience that last long after the traumatic event has ended and this interferes with their daily functioning. When this happens their brain and body feel and experience the trauma as a current, not as a past event. They may relive the event through flashbacks or nightmares. At that moment the logical pre-frontal cortex is disabled and the amygdala or emotional centre of the brain is overstimulated, which can erupt in impulsive destructive behaviour. A flashback can be triggered by some idiosyncratic association that the brain formed during the incident. For example for a long time I could not stand a newspaper being crumpled for to me it sounded like maggots eating at the flesh of a victim.

People with PTSD may erupt in unprovoked anger and often feel detached or estranged from other people. Besides PTSD they can also suffer from depression and anxiety. They struggle to experience any joy in life. PTSD is a very serious condition but the good news is that it can be treated. I recovered from PTSD a long time ago and enjoy my life, especially here in Mauritius.

## **5. There is an increasing recognition that police officers and prosecutors are exposed to sensitive and traumatic incidents as part of their jobs. How does secondary trauma manifest itself? How can the criminal justice system be enhanced to alleviate the impact of trauma among these key players?**

The secondary trauma can present in many ways, one being burnout. Burnout is not the same as depression. It related specifically to the workplace. I offer courses on recognizing burnout and how to take action against it. They often feel overwhelmed and feel their hard work makes no contribution at all. They feel worthless. They struggle to sleep, mulling over problems in their minds, their bodies remain tense and they become extremely irritable. They have short-term memory lapses.

I think one of the most important steps is to recognise that burnout and secondary trauma exists. If left untreated the long-term effect can cause serious health problems for it releases cortisol in the body, continuously. During my neuropsychologically based course I instruct exactly what burnout is, but I also provide easy tips on how to alleviate stress and activate the parasympathetic nervous system during the day. So your body and mind takes mini-vacations of a few seconds to relieve the pressure. Once your mind and body are more relaxed, your pre-frontal cortex comes online again and you can focus and concentrate. This skill is essential if you are about to cross-examine someone in court.

## **6. As a forensic psychologist, tell us more about your experience with victims of sexual abuse?**

I often evaluated persons accused of sexual abuse for court purposes, especially when a motive needs to be established and to determine remorse. Psychopaths or anti-social personality disorders and narcissists do not experience remorse, though they might fake it. There are also several different types of child molesters.

I treat adult victims of sexual abuse in my private practice as a psychologist. They often suffer from PTSD – these are men and women. Even many years after the abuse, the scars are still there. I do not work with children, or evaluate children who have been molested as this is a very specialised field. There are trained psychologists and psychiatrists in Mauritius who can do this.

## **7 ■ Which safeguards may a victim support unit adopt to assist victims to overcome this trauma?**

I participated in a recent workshop organized by PedoStop Mauritius and I was fortunate to meet representatives of many ministries, including gender, health, ombudsman and prosecutors as well as private psychologists and psychiatrists and health care providers and lawyers. What emerged during these discussions is that protocols are not always practically implemented on ground level and open communication will eventually benefit the victims. Centralising points for reporting and evaluating children or victims at a one-stop facility will streamline the process and reduce secondary trauma. PedoStop urgently needs funding especially for ‘Teddy-bear’ packs for victims. Educating parents, teachers and children about the topic and what to expect will help much.

Victim support need not only apply to victims of sexual abuse, but also those witnessing domestic abuse or experiencing bullying at school. If a child has been bullied, fMRI-scans have shown that the cingulate cortex in the brain can be damaged – this is the part of the brain where we develop compassion for other people – so children who are being bullied in school, may one day become killers, who have no compassion for others. That is quite a sobering thought!

## **8 ■ You have also been involved in coaching on emotional intelligence in different organisations. Which 5 recommendations may employers consider to promote emotional safety at work?**

Yes, I have a course on emotional intelligence in the workplace. Besides the obvious that programmes for the prevention of sexual harassment and any form of discrimination should be in place and enforced, and the physical safety of employees are addressed, management often ignore psychological problems such as bullying, ghosting and gaslighting at work. Again open communication is essential where employees can be heard. People differ – the needs of introverts differ greatly from the needs of extraverts.

Five recommendations would be:

In the USA some states have Workplace Safety courses as compulsory for corporate and State institutions. In my experience it is often the companies with multiple human resource problems and high turnover, whose CEO's and managers need courses on emotional intelligence the most.

Provide a safe place where employees can speak up without fear of retribution or ridicule;

Managers should be aware of the effect of their behaviour and modes of speech on employees; Managers should be in touch with their own emotions, including their facial expressions, which can trigger fear or withdrawal in employees.

A mentorship programme is often very successful, for instance the current one in government where junior ministers are appointed to learn from ministers.

People react and interpret events differently and their behaviour should be explored before it is criticized or condemned, eg introverts may not volunteer, but may have very valuable input if they are approached.

Words of appreciation accomplish much more than criticism and blaming. No-one can push a rock up a mountain if someone is continuously throwing spears at them. The neuropsychological effects of isolation and humiliation are far-reaching and devastating and can lead to massacres at workplace, which fortunately is very rare in Mauritius, but unmotivated employees have a high turnover, high absenteeism and low productivity.





# VIRGINIE BISSESSUR

*Virginie Bissessur holds a Masters Degree in Clinical and Intercultural Psychology and has been working closely with organisations such as MCB, the CDU in Rodrigues, ENL Foundation, Lovebridge, KPFM, NSIF and Pedostop since 2010. Her work has been geared towards the alleviation of poverty and the specific background support that this entails. Today, she focuses on the fight against sexual violence perpetrated against children in Mauritius and Rodrigues.*

**1. You are the President of the NGO Ki Fer Pa Mwa and in parallel you are the Director of the NGO Pedostop. Can you please tell us about your background and your role within these two NGOs?**

I grew up on a Sugar Estate in the 80's and I think witnessing so much discrimination sparked the desire to help others. I have chosen to study to become a clinical psychologist and came back to Mauritius in 2010. Since then, I've worked for many organisations, but one of the first ones was Ki Fer Pa Mwa in Batterie Cassée. I fell in love with the "rouleman cité".

I have learned so much of my work on the field there and I stayed 8 years as a psychologist. But last year, the Director, Mrs Véronique Mars, suggested that I be on the managing committee and I was elected President. The NGO offers remedial and creative classes to vulnerable children in the neighbourhood in order to keep them out of the streets.

Two years ago, I was appointed Director of Pedostop. It has been a challenge to tackle such a taboo cause. But we are a very motivated and dedicated team. It is a pleasure to work and achieve goals with them. We firmly believe in the improvement of child protection in Mauritius and Rodrigues, no matter the obstacles. We support vulnerable victims (household income less than

30k) in terms of psychological or legal support. We also deliver training on child development and trauma, as well as prevention sessions from 3 years old children to parents.

## **2. You deal with child victims from all corners of the island and regarding all kinds of cases that they may be subject to. Can you tell us about the sources and types of trauma they struggle with?**

More than 70% of victims will develop a chronic disease such as gastrological problems, endometriosis and all the other diseases connected to the genital body parts, such as cancers, etc. More than 96% of the victims suffer from PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder), which is a complex form of trauma. They will face symptoms such as being in a state of constant alert, which is exhausting for them, difficulties to concentrate and memorise, constant flashbacks when triggered, nightmares and many more symptoms. Victims can 'forget' their abuse for many years sometimes. This is the brain protecting the victim from the trauma. It will eventually come back to consciousness when the victim is ready to face it.

Nobody can fake a trauma very long, false reports represent only 2% of the complaints. So it leaves us with 98% of people saying the truth but 97% of cases end up with the benefit of the doubt. So what is our Mauritian society saying to the victims? It is urgent that the shame changes sides.

## **3. Any criminal case involving a child obviously has some sensitive aspect to it. According to you, what would be the best way to approach a child victim in cases where contact has to be initiated by the police or by prosecutors?**

Considering only 2% of reports are false, the first thing we should do is believe the child who masters the courage to speak out. It is crucial to comfort this child and create a safe environment for him to tell his story. As institutions our role is to protect the child, but here in Mauritius it is sad to see that most of the time the children's stories are systematically questioned : "He must

behavior . He doesn't understand, he is coerced by his mother because the parents are divorcing, etc."

When a child is greeted by doubt, he doesn't want to speak out, he feels what the adults around him think of him. Children are very smart, but in Mauritius we consider children to be empty vessels that must be filled. We are absolutely ignorant of how rich the inner world of a child can be, how many things he perfectly understands and feels. At international level, 4. 5. 6. there are many child friendly protocols, developed with the guidance of psychologists, to initiate children interviewing. The french one is even available in pdf on google. We should reverse our point of view and embrace the children's perspective, only then will we understand the complexity of what the child is going through. Only then will we be able to give a 100% fair judgement of the cases.

## **4. You are well versed with the criminal justice system in Mauritius and have surely observed how victims are treated both at investigation stage and at court level. What is your assessment of the treatment victims are met with, especially child victims?**

What we are actually doing in Mauritius is against the best interest of the child. The reporting procedure is convenient to the institutions, but devastating for the children. In fact, this process traumatises the children even more, because they have to repeat their story so many times to adults who address them with questions that are not appropriate to their developmental milestones, such as asking a 5 year old when precisely did the incident happen. A 5 year old often has not finished integrating the concept of time, so his answer will not be precise and then the child will be deemed as not reliable in Court... Our favorite question is : "ki kouler kilote to ti mete?" That question is still systematically asked in 2024! I will not mention the state of the interview rooms or the lack of confidentiality. Training in child development and in trauma is an urgent necessity, from the police officers to the judges in Court. It is easier to rebuild a traumatised child than a broken adult. The absence of a child friendly approach and professionalism has a huge cost on victims and on our society as a whole.

## **5. The Children's Court was created to deal, amongst other matters, with cases involving child victims due to the inherent sensitive nature of such cases. Can you think of any way in which prosecutors could act to improve interactions with child victims?**

It is of prime importance that the state counsels are granted contact with the victims they are defending. It is crucial for the victims and their families to feel that someone has their back and actually believes them. They don't trust the system, because the system is too far from them and nobody gives them any explanation of how it works. This uncertainty raises the level of anxiety of the victims. Given the traumatising reporting process they went through, they do not trust anyone anymore and need to feel secured. We still have a long way to go in terms of victim support. Another important step would be to have appropriate trauma assessments of the children. There are many internationally standardised psychological tests that could give the Magistrates a better view on the children's state of mind and the psychological damages they have endured. Proof of the abuse is not only material. It is because we base our decision solely on material proofs that we fail so many children. Sexual abuse cases are not black or white, they are very complex. Again, we can only strike the importance of training at all levels of the procedure.

## **6. There has been a number of measures put in place at the level of the Children's Court including access to a psychologist, a children's corner and visit of the premises prior to a case being heard for the child victim to familiarise himself/herself to his/her surroundings. Is there anything that you believe should be implemented over and above as a matter of urgency?**

The Children's Court could improve its child friendly setting, meaning the playground and the waiting rooms. The Courts psychologist should be in attendance every time the children are summoned to testify and not only for a brief visit of the Court. They need to have met several times with the child prior, establishing a trustful relationship with him. Magistrate should explain

to the children in appropriate words what is happening in Court: the steps, the objective. Children are perfectly able to understand anything we explain to them, given we make an effort to match their developmental milestones. We need to think about and design this procedure from the child's perspective and not from our adult and institutionalised point of view. Thus the importance of training at all levels, again.



# A PEEK INTO MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH ONLINE HARASSMENT

A gendered and intersectional approach.



In as much as social media is increasingly becoming a space for Mauritians to express their opinions on diverse topics, it is also a place where online bullying, particularly against women, is on the rise. Between the increasing instances of sextortion through end-to-end encrypted messaging platforms like Telegram, the daily sexualisation of women and girls on TikTok or Instagram, and the regular belittling of women in politics on Facebook, Mauritian women are often the target of misogynistic attacks in and through social media.

While online misogyny is a global phenomenon, it is clear that Mauritius is no exception. Despite positives steps to criminalise online harassment and encourage the reporting of such crimes (e.g. the Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act (2021), [maucors.gov.mu](http://maucors.gov.mu)), existing frameworks largely understand cyberbullying through a narrow lens, i.e. as a 'problem of the youth'. In doing so, such frameworks fundamentally dismiss the gendered and intersectional nature of online harassment while also insufficiently engaging its effect on mental health. This paper therefore complicates our understanding of online harassment. It is done, first, by looking at its gendered nature and by contextualising it in Mauritius. Secondly, it discusses online misogyny alongside its potential effects on women and girls' mental health. Together, it proposes a nuanced conceptual approach that can bring existing legal frameworks closer to the empirical reality of online harassment in Mauritius.

Broadly defined, online misogyny encompasses all types of negative experiences women face online predominantly because of their gender. These can take different forms, including but not limited to, sexualising 'jokes', slurs, rape/death threats, slut-shaming, doxxing, degrading comments, revenge porn, cyber-stalking, deep fakes and so on. With that, online misogyny has been approached through different perspectives (e.g. cultural, economic, socio-technological etc.), and the body of literature suggests online hate against women often parallels offline misogyny (e.g. catcalling, stalking, exhibitionism etc.), but with added layers of anonymity and the algorithmic amplification of hate speech on social media. But this is not to say that gendered online harassment causes less harm to those who are targeted. In fact, these oft-overlapping mechanisms produce the public intimidation, shaming and discreditation of the women targeted, alongside

a silencing effect by discouraging women at large to express their views online.

Importantly, online misogyny cannot be understood as a monolithic experience. Conceptualising online misogyny alongside mental health would be incomplete without looking at how Mauritius' complex ideological system of patriarchy intertwines with our modern history, including colonial legacies, which still inform how we make sense of the social interactions. A number of studies propose to conceptualise online harassment alongside intersectionality. This term was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the unique type of discrimination faced by black American women, a group facing barriers due to sexism and racism combined. Put another way, intersectionality understands how different identity categories intersect to create specific lived experiences, including how people (women) experience social media. With that, research in places like the US, Canada, India, the UK, and Brazil suggest that different women experience online misogyny with varying intensities according to all the identities they carry including their race, ethnicity, caste, sexualities, class, disabilities and so on. In the local context, it has, for example, been reported that creole Mauritian women face disproportionate levels of disdain, contempt and mockery online, thereby perpetuating certain discriminating attitudes likely to further marginalise their voices in public debates online.

Such behaviours, not only expose tacit patriarchal and racist values under the garb of freedom of speech, but also constitute forms of emotional abuse affecting women and girls' mental health disproportionately. Reports on online misogyny around the world show that experiencing online abuse paves the way for mental distress, anxiety, lack of confidence and so on. For example, a 2018 poll by Amnesty International among Australian women suggest that 62% of the women who said they reported online harassment also experienced low self-esteem, while 59% had experienced stress, anxiety and/or panic attacks following online abuse, with those possibly resulting in self-harm and suicidal behaviours. Likewise, my own research on online misogyny in Mauritius reveals the toll navigating hostile online spaces can take on women's mental health. And to this day, little is done to fully acknowledge women's emotional labour as they spend time and effort to circumvent the misogynistic attitudes proliferating online.

Online misogyny and mental health are undoubtedly two sides of the same coin. And although there is a consensus on the need to curb this phenomenon, the existing legal framework seems to remain tethered to narrow understanding of online harassment, while proposing solutions laced with paternalism. Taking a gendered and intersectional approach to online harassment and mental health can therefore open new avenues to think about comprehensive frameworks aligned with users' reality – especially with that of those who are more at risk of facing online harassment. With this, and together with the support of social media platforms, it would be possible to imagine online spaces designed to foster inclusivity, self-expression and innovation, with a fairer chance for everyone to engage in conversations as global digital citizens.

# JOE-ANN CHAVRY



*Joe-Ann Chavry is a PhD researcher at LSE, where she studies how black Mauritian (creole) femininity is constituted online. Through this research project, she seeks to understand how black feminine subjects are constituted in contemporary Mauritius, given the country's unique colonial legacy and history of enslavement, both tethered to Indian Ocean geopolitics.*

*Before starting her PhD, she worked in the Media and Communications industry.*





# EMILIE CAROSIN

*Emilie Carosin is a Mauritian researcher based in Belgium. She works at the University of Mons where she develops educational tools, conducts educational programme assessments and trains teacher trainers.*

## 1. Can you please tell us about your work background so far and what is it exactly that you do?

I am a researcher in psychology and educational sciences and for about a decade now, I have had the chance of working on a number of projects in Europe and in Mauritius (TIPA, NIVO, etc.). One of my latest research concerns lifelong guidance and learning, particularly how we can learn strategies and skills that can help us pursue life projects and build a sense of fulfilment. Historically, research in psychology has focused on how to help individuals give meaning to their lifepath and engage in dialogue to design their lives.<sup>1</sup> However, in a world characterised by Bennett and Lemoine<sup>2</sup> as volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA), life paths cannot be designed on an individual level, they must take into account the various repercussions they can have on other individuals and beings, as well as the earth.<sup>3</sup> This is why we have developed a collective model of lifelong guidance addressing the interplay between humanness, humanity and the world.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Can you tell us more about this model and how it relates to well-being?

Lifelong guidance is closely linked to well-being and can shed light on the stakes at hold when we envision that self-fulfilment cannot be seen as an individual responsibility. Researchers now agree that we need coordinated collective responses that are implemented at policy, organisational, and at the school level that can be guided by principles of social justice, decent work and sustainable

development. In line with the collective model we developed, we suggest three main ways to do so. Firstly, by recognising the rights and dignity of each human being. Secondly, by questioning human activity and its impact on decent work. And, thirdly, through sustainable development. These are further discussed below.

### **3. How is well-being linked to recognising the rights and dignity of each human being?**

In order to be self-fulfilled, a person needs to feel accomplished in his/her life and to feel and be recognised in different life spheres (school, work, family, friendship, etc.). This recognition is at the heart of the principle of social justice. Indeed social justice insists on recognising each individual as a human being full of potential and to fight against all forms of oppression and discrimination. In terms of well-being, this would mean that collective well-being cannot be achieved without questioning the privileges enjoyed by some and the economic mechanisms at work, which represent barriers to the individual and, above all, collective development (Duffy et al. al., 2016; Haslam et al., 2005, 2012; Masdonati et al, 2021; Vergès, 2019). As such, our duty as humans is to recognise each other, especially those that are more distant from our beliefs, our socio-economic background, socio-economic condition, or cultural origins. In the work sphere this can be done at work by being attentive and fighting against privileges. This can also be done at home by addressing our own privileges, how it can affect people that help us maintain them (such as house helpers)<sup>5</sup> and who have limited opportunities to develop their full potential. In other words, a critical reflection on the privileges we can recognize and the opportunities we can make available to other groups can contribute to recognizing each human being's potential.

### **4. How can we question human activity and its impact on decent work and well-being nowadays ?**

If raising awareness of certain privileges can put some people in an uncomfortable position, this discomfort can be used to encourage a greater understanding of the different positions held in the workplace and how this impacts access to decent work conditions. For example, if we

want to ensure well-being for all, we need to question certain parts of our national history (see for example the Truth and Justice Commission Reports<sup>6</sup>), and their influence on decent work (Diemer et al., 2016; Duffy et al, 2016).

Decent work conditions are promoted by the International Labour Organisation<sup>7</sup> at a macro level based on four interrelated attributes : ensure working opportunities by creating jobs, guarantee the right of workers, ensuring social dialogue between workers, employees and government, and ensure safe working conditions. In line with these attributes, Duffy and colleagues<sup>8</sup> have developed a psychological model that also addresses “how people construct meaning from their experiences at work<sup>9</sup>”. They define decent work as the combination of “(a) physical and interpersonally safe working conditions (e.g., absent of physical, mental, or emotional abuse), (b) hours that allow for free time and adequate rest, (c) organizational values that complement family and social values, (d) adequate compensation, and (e) access to adequate health care”. Visibility and awareness on our history and its consequences on working conditions nowadays can be questioned to ensure decent work. In order to do so, the general public can be more informed by legal cases that address these issues and help ensure decent work. Knowledge about decent work is essential in order to ensure it. This knowledge can be taught in schools and universities. It can also be used as lenses to assess how these conditions are guaranteed in our country and therefore contribute to collective well-being.

### **5. Are there any links between well-being and sustainable development ?**

Part of the difficulties in ensuring decent work can be related to the acceleration of our societies. As Rosa puts it “While we feel the constant pressure of having to do more in less time, there also seems to be a shared feeling of a loss of control over our own life and the world, and therefore of losing contact with it<sup>10</sup>”. This is why, collective well-being also needs to be thought in terms of reconciling not only family and work but also ecological and ethical spheres.

Recommendations in the field of career guidance insist on the fact that we cannot solely focus on self-exploration and exploration of professional opportunities to ensure well-being, we also need

to address the elephant in the room : globalization and the pursuit of economic growth as an end<sup>11</sup>. How can the support and measures provided to foster well-being instil social and economic change, a trojan horse in a society that reveres globalization and capitalism ? How can we pay more attention to the human desire to explore, control and rule the world in order to invite other ways to relate to the world and to foster fair and sustainable relationships ? All these questions are deeply linked to the questions of social justice and decent work raised before.

## 6. ■ How can research in general be used to develop a better understanding of how we can flourish as individuals and as a nation ?

I personally consider research as a means to open horizons and develop landmarks that can guide individual and collective actions (such as policies). However, these landmarks have to be put to the test, we need to ask ourselves how relevant they are for our context and how they can contribute to a collective agenda where each human being is recognised but also question their impact on other beings and the earth. I have attempted here to transpose landmarks used in the field of lifelong guidance to the question of well-being. I think this conception can be enriched by research in the field of positive psychology and organizational psychology, and also practice on the field. This newsletter is a good medium to start engaging the conversation on the subject and I hope it develops common grounds to advocate for social justice, decent work and sustainable development in Mauritius.

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<sup>2</sup>Bennett, N., & Lemoine, G. J. (2014). What a difference a word makes : Understanding threats to performance in a VUCA world. *Business Horizons*, 57(3), 311-317. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2014.01.001>

<sup>3</sup>Canzittu, D. (2020). A framework to think school and career guidance in a VUCA world. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2020.1825619>

<sup>4</sup>Carosin, E., Canzittu, D., Loisy, C., Pouyaud, J., & Rossier, J. (2021). Developing lifelong guidance and counselling prospective by addressing the interplay between humanness, humanity and the world. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10775-021-09512-0>

<sup>5</sup>Vergès, F. (2019). *Un féminisme décolonial*. La fabrique éditions.

<sup>6</sup>Truth and Justice Commission. (2011). Volume I, II, III : Report of the Truth and Justice Commission. Mauritius : Government of Mauritius.

<sup>7</sup>International Labor Organization. (2012). Decent work indicators: Concepts and definitions. Retrieved from [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---integration/documents/publication/wcms\\_229374.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---integration/documents/publication/wcms_229374.pdf)

<sup>8</sup>Duffy, R. D., Blustein, D. L., Diemer, M. A., & Autin, K. L. (2016). The psychology of working theory. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 63(2), 127-148. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000140>

<sup>9</sup>Duffy, R. D., Allan, B. A., England, J. W., Blustein, D. L., Autin, K. L., Douglass, R. P., Ferreira, J., & Santos, E. J. R. (2017). The development and initial validation of the Decent Work Scale. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 64(2), p. 207. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000191>

<sup>10</sup>Lijster, T., & Celikates, R. (2019). Beyond the Echo-chamber: an interview with Hartmut rosa on resonance and alienation. *Krisis*, 2019(1), p.64.

<sup>11</sup>Plant, 2005, p. xiv, as cited in Guichard, J. (2018). What career and life design interventions may contribute to global, humane, equitable and sustainable development? *Journal of Counselling*, 7, p. 318.



# PUPIL CORNER



## SHIKSHA RAMLUGON

Mini Pupil (Oct 2024 - Nov 2024)

**BA(Hons) Law with Management**  
at University of Mauritius

### Mental Health Act 1998 in Mauritius

The Lunacy Act of 1906 was repealed and replaced by the Mental Health Act 1998 in Mauritius, which introduced voluntary care for psychiatric patients. It deals mainly with involuntary in-patients, although it did make provision for voluntary admission for patients with mental illness. The Act is being amended at present to involve all mental healthcare users and to make provision for community care. Mauritius is a small developing country with 1.27 million inhabitants of diverse cultural backgrounds. As in many countries, mental health is heavily stigmatised in Mauritian society, which is a substantial barrier that prevents people from seeking appropriate treatment. According to a WHO report in 2016, 1 in 28.4 of every 1000 Mauritians have severe mental or substance abuse disorders, and severe psychiatric conditions have high prevalences; 2.6 of every 1000 people have schizophrenia and 7.9 of every 1000 have severe depressive disorders. Psychiatric treatment in Mauritius is mostly based in five general hospitals (in Flacq, Pamplemousses, Port Louis, Rose-Belle, and Candos) for mild-to-moderate conditions and one major mental health centre (in Beau-Bassin) that can accommodate up to 700 admissions for severe cases. Several community health centres can also provide psychiatric follow up.

### Revamping policies related to Mental Health

Mauritius needs strong anti-discrimination laws that prevent bias in employment, housing, and education against those with mental health conditions. Policies could provide incentives for workplaces and educational institutions to support mental health programs and integrate mental health awareness into their practices. Mauritius could benefit from modernised mental health laws aligned with international standards, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). These laws should specifically protect the rights of those with mental health issues to ensure they are treated with dignity, have the right to informed consent and are protected from involuntary commitment and abuse.

### Mental Health Awareness

Legal reforms should be supported by government-led public awareness campaigns to reduce stigma associated with mental illness. This could help encourage individuals to seek help without fear of discrimination, while educating the public on the importance of mental health. Often, because of misconceptions about mental health and mental fitness, World Mental Health Day is marked every year on October 10 to raise awareness about mental health around the world and to mobilise efforts to support those experiencing mental health issues. 2024's theme is "It's Time to Prioritise Mental Health in the Workplace". WHO is uniting with partners to highlight the vital connection between mental health and work. Safe, healthy working environments can act as a protective factor for mental health. Unhealthy conditions including stigma, discrimination, and exposure to risks like harassment and other poor working conditions, can pose significant risks, affecting mental health, overall quality of life and consequently participation or productivity at work. With 60% of the global population in work, urgent action is needed to ensure work prevents risks to mental health and protects and supports mental health at work.

Combining these legal reforms with a collaborative approach among healthcare, legal, and educational institutions can ensure a more holistic and humane approach focused on protecting rights, improving access to care, and reducing stigma. Modernising legislation in alignment with international standards can secure basic rights, while mandated accessibility measures and training programs for professionals can ensure those with mental health issues receive quality support. Establishing anti-discrimination laws, crisis intervention services, and continuous data collection are crucial steps to foster a more inclusive and responsive mental health system. Through these reforms, Mauritius can create a compassionate, well-supported environment that prioritises mental well-being and integrates mental health into the broader healthcare landscape.

# IAP BAKU 2024

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROSECUTORS





# ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROSECUTORS



It has been both my honour and pleasure to have attended together with the DPP the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the International Association of Prosecutors from 29<sup>th</sup> September to 02<sup>nd</sup> October 2024 in Baku, Azerbaijan. The theme of the conference was “The Role of the Prosecutor in upholding the Rule of Law”.

The conference was an opportunity for prosecutors and actors in the criminal justice system to meet, network and discuss key issues affecting the discharge of our duties. In fact, speakers from around the world shared their experiences and upcoming challenges. Topics included the role of the prosecutor in ensuring a fair trial, the rights of victims and witnesses, improving transparency and accountability, the impact of digital evidence and the role of artificial intelligence in the criminal justice system. In particular, there were several specialist network sessions in areas such as cryptocurrency, artificial intelligence, environmental crimes, domestic violence and the role of prosecutor associations to improve the rights and work conditions of prosecutors.

The DPP participated in a workshop entitled “The role of the prosecutor in ensuring procedural equality between prosecution and defence” during which he emphasised on the relevance of the principle of Equality of Arms applying to

the prosecution as well and the key safeguards at investigation stage to protect the rights of an accused party. His focus also was geared towards the legal and ethical duties of a prosecutor in the decision to prosecute and at sentencing stage. I participated in the cybercrime specialist network session in a panel discussion on how to protect child victims of sexual abuse committed online. The discussion was on the difficulties faced by prosecutors in tackling the scourge of online sexual violence committed on vulnerable persons. I further shared the Mauritian experience and also spoke about efforts to fast track cases involving child victims and perpetrators.

The conference was a great success and was a fruitful opportunity to learn from prosecutors who, despite geographical distances, share the same ethical and legal challenges. The conference also highlighted efforts made by different jurisdictions to improve the experience of victims in the criminal process and increase confidence in the justice system.

*Reported by Bhavna Bhagwan, State Counsel*



The 29th Annual Conference and General Meeting  
of the International Association of Prosecutors  
29 September - 02 October 2024







**END OF YEAR**  
**WISHES**  
**FROM THE ODPP**



## VIJAYLAXMI GOBURDHONE

*Assistant manager human resources*

"The HR Section plays a crucial role in the success of ODPP, from recruiting, retirement, and change in posting, as well as managing employee benefits and resolving conflicts. The efforts of HR often go unnoticed, but without our hard work, it would be impossible to create a conducive work environment and promote team building. As a result, it is important to express our thanks and gratitude to the staff of HR for tireless efforts, dedication and how much their work are valued. The year 2024 was quite challenging with unforeseen circumstances and high mobility of staff. We seized this opportunity to wish the management and staff of ODPP a Merry Christmas 2024 and a prosperous New Year 2025".



## TEKESHWAREE UMROWSING BURGUS

*Office management assistant*

*Officer in charge open/confidential registry*

"This year has been very busy for everyone and we have been working as a team. This year is coming to the end and we will reach year 2025. In this context, we wish you Merry Xmas and Happy New Year to you and your family."



## THARUNDUTH KISSENSING (ASHLEY)

*Principal legal support officer – officer in charge criminal registry*

"When I joined this office, I was told that the registry of the ODPP is the heart of this institution. Over time, I realised the veracity of this statement. Indeed, the criminal registry plays a salient role in promoting and strengthening the integrity of our justice system. We also have the important task of providing vital assistance to law enforcement agencies in the processing of applications and case files. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the dedicated staff of the registry and this office in general whose steadfast commitment and hard work have been crucial. As we approach 2025, I wish everyone a year filled with ongoing success, collaboration and breakthroughs in our shared mission to uphold justice and security for all."



## RADHA BOODHOO

*Office Auxiliary*

"Warmest New Year wishes and looking forward to another year of progress together."





## SHARMILA LOCHUN

*Procurement dept – principal procurement and supply officer*

“The Procurement section plays a vital role in ensuring the smooth functioning of the ODPP by sourcing the best quality goods and services at optimal costs. Our focus extends beyond purchasing. We aim at building lasting partnerships and maintain transparency in all transactions. These include adopting digital tools and promoting sustainable procurement practices.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to continuous improvement, supporting the ODPP's goals and objectives and contributing to its overall success. We thank all legal and non legal staff for their contribution and look forward to further strengthening our collective impact.”



## KOUSHALEE AWOTORSING PANDOHEE

*OME SECTION*

“Along with all of the hope and promises the new year brings, it also brings us plenty of exiting opportunities to work together. On behalf of OME section, we wish you all a very happy and prosperous year ahead.”



## RADHA DEVI HARRAH

*Receptionist*

“As everyone knows the DPP's Office has gone through lot of difficulties this year, let hope for a good change for the coming year.”



## SEETA CHADEE (BRINDA)

*Confidential secretary*

“Having worked for nearly 10 years at the ODPP, I must say I have acquired a lot in terms of experience. I would like to thank everyone at the ODPP for their help and I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2025. A new year, a new start and new challenges, so let's face it together as a team.”





## PARMESHIVEN GOINDAH

*Driver*

“As we welcome the year 2025, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the DPP and the dedicated team for their unwavering support and commitment. Together, we may continue to strive for justice and excellence in the coming year.”



## VIDUSHI GOBIN

*Disclosure unit - management support officer*

“Having recently joined the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions few months ago seemed to me like it has been through years with a solemn spirit of cordial hospitality amongst all staff members catering unwavering enriching experience of collaboration, mutual respect and togetherness.

Being recognised and appreciated for my hardwork and my contribution to the office is a key source of motivation for me.

I am delighted that I have been entrusted with responsibility of this nature and I must say I am enjoying my new position as I get to share my knowledge and learn from them simultaneously.”



## MANDITA DOBEE

*Finance section – management support officer*

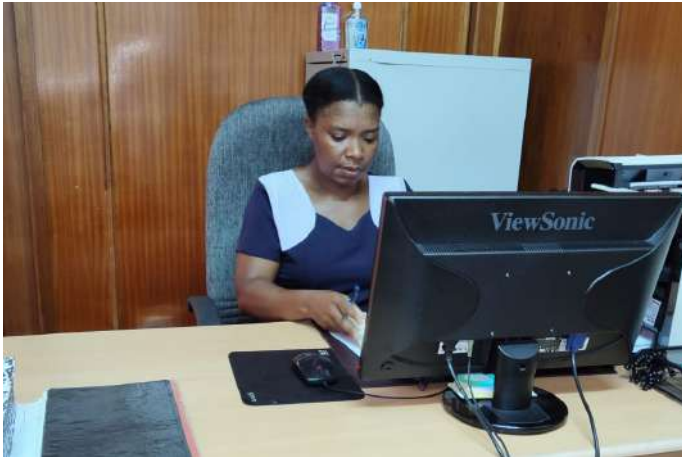
“Behind every successful prosecution is a dedicated team working tirelessly to ensure every cent is accounted for. In the Finance Section, our role goes beyond numbers; we provide the financial backbone that enables justice to be served.”



## KARISHMA BUNDHOO JUGHDUR

*WPO / Ag. CS*

“I am grateful for being part of the ODPP’s team for 9 years, where my contributions are noticed and valued. Working as a team at the Office has been enjoyable where I have learnt and grown a lot. The only way to do great work is to love what you do. I wish you all a joyous Christmas fill with warmth and laughter and may the New Year bring you health, happiness and prosperity.”



## **MS. BLAIDINA**

***ODPP Rodrigues***

"It is a very welcoming and positive experience to work with many counselors of different levels of knowledge and skills. I have learnt a lot from all of them who are constantly under pressure with heavy load of work. I have noticed that behind all these serious professionals, they have beautiful souls."



## **MR. CASIMIR**

***ODPP Rodrigues***

"It was a great pleasure to work with different kind of characters."





A full-page background image showing a sunset over a vast ocean. The sun is a bright, glowing orb on the horizon, casting a shimmering, golden path of light across the dark blue water. The sky is a deep, clear blue, with a few wispy, light-colored clouds scattered near the horizon. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

# HIGHLIGHTS

## OF THE YEAR





## Panel discussion on 'Combating Human Trafficking-the way forward'

To commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) had the privilege of hosting a panel discussion on 'Combating Human Trafficking-the way forward', on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July 2024. The event proved to be a valuable platform for sharing ideas and strategies regarding the detection of human trafficking cases. It brought together representatives from various governmental organisations, allowing them to discuss and compare the methods they employ to identify and address trafficking. By highlighting successful approaches and identifying areas for improvement, the event fostered collaboration and innovation in combating this pressing issue.



## Our effectiveness in the fight against drug trafficking and ill-acquired gains

A panel discussion focusing on the theme 'Our effectiveness in the fight against drug trafficking and ill-acquired gains' was organised by the Office of the DPP on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2024. Various stakeholders were invited and the current situation prevailing in Mauritius, the endeavours and the recommendations were topics of the discussion.



## Environmental Crime Challenges and Solutions

The Office of the DPP had hosted a workshop on the theme 'Environmental Crime-Challenges and Solutions'. The event had gathered leading experts, representatives from Rodrigues and Non – Governmental Organisations to discuss environmental issues. The aim was to foster collaboration and enhance strategies for environmental protection.

A vibrant, painterly illustration of a sunset. The sun is a bright white circle on the horizon, surrounded by large, dark, silhouetted clouds. The sky is a mix of deep blue and orange. The water in the foreground is dark blue with some lighter, yellowish-green patches, reflecting the light from the sun. The overall style is expressive and artistic.

“

**EVEN THE DARKEST NIGHT  
WILL END AND THE SUN  
WILL RISE.**

— *Victor Hugo*





# CONTACT US

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## Feedback

We are extremely grateful for the feedback received and encourage all of you to continue providing us with constructive comments and suggestions.

**Survey Link:** [Click here](#)