

**Private Notice Question**

***To ask the Honourable Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare-***

**Whether, in regard to Domestic Violence, she will for the benefit of the House obtain information for the period 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016 to date -**

- (a) the number of cases reported to the Police and the Family Support Bureau, stating the different categories and the number of convictions;**
- (b) the number of arrests made under S11A(3) of the Protection from Domestic Violence Act;**
- (c) the number of Occupation and Tenancy Orders issued; and**
- (d) state if the remaining measures identified in the Domingue and National Coalition Reports will be implemented?**

**Madam, Speaker,**

I would like to thank the Hon Leader of the Opposition for addressing this Private Notice Question on the issue of domestic violence. This gives me an opportunity to highlight the measures being taken by my Ministry.

We cannot deny that domestic violence continues to be a serious problem in the Mauritian society. There are a number of causes for this, ranging from conflicts between partners and spouses, financial issues, or even substance abuse.

While the cases reported to my Ministry receive the full support of our officers, it remains a fact that it is necessary to break the taboo around the issue of domestic violence and first encourage victims to come forward and speak up about their problems.

There is a legal framework in place; the Protection from Domestic Violence Act which has infact been reinforced in 2016, and which makes provision for greater support and assistance to victims.

But any law can only be fully successful if supported by a number of other measures, such as the full collaboration of all parties concerned, raising

awareness on the issue of domestic violence, educating our young people, and bringing about a change in mind-set at all levels.

In order to address the problem, we must first take stock of the existing situation.

According to the report of a study carried out by the University of Mauritius on Intimate Partner Violence which was validated in May 2017, the findings revealed that:

- a) the incidence for women who experience intimate partner violence in the extreme case is 43 times on average for a victim, approximating one episode every 7 to 8 days;
- b) women who are victims of intimate partner violence suffer silently without any supporting network such as parents, friends, colleagues and others;
- c) for women victims in the occasional group, an intimate partner violence episode spills over three days of work while for women in the extreme group, the number of unproductive days is four on average; and
- d) the study has estimated the monetary value of the burden of intimate partner violence in the form of physical, psychological and sexual abuse on the economy at Rs 2 billion.

Given the seriousness of this issue, my Ministry is currently finalising an Action Plan on Intimate Partner Violence whereby a series of measures focusing on four main pillars will be implemented. These are strengthening of the existing legislations, prevention, capacity building of stakeholders among others

**Madam, Speaker,**

Regarding part (a)(i) of the question, I am informed that for period 01 December 2016 to date 3250 cases have been reported to the Police and 1616 cases have been reported to the six Family Support Bureaux operating under the aegis of my Ministry. The cases relate to offences under the Protection from the Domestic Violence Act including breach of Protection and Occupation Orders. For the same period I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that 382 persons have been convicted. However, I wish to inform the House that for period January 2015 to December 2015, 1626 cases of domestic violence were reported to the Ministry and from January 2016 to December 2016, 2709 cases were reported

As regards part (a)(ii) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that under S11 A (3) of the Protection from Domestic Violence Act 60 persons have been arrested.

As regards part (a)(iii) of the question for period December 2016 to date I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there has been no application for occupation and tenancy orders. During the same period only 4 occupation orders were issued following applications made by my Ministry.

Madam, Speaker,

As regards part (b) (i) of the question, I wish to inform the House that most of the measures mentioned in the Report of the Advisory Committee on Reinforcement of Framework for Protection against Domestic Violence have been implemented. These are:

(i) In May 2017 additional temporary emergency shelters to cater for victims of domestic violence and their children are operational and a capitation grant of Rs 400 and Rs 341 is being paid daily to the NGOs accommodating women victims of domestic violence and their children;

(ii) My Ministry has also reinforced its capacity building programme and as at date 450 police officers and 45 magistrates have been trained to enable them to better deal with victims of domestic violence;

(iii) In June 2017 a capacity building programme on strengthening multi agency response to address domestic violence was organised by my Ministry in collaboration with the US Embassy for all stakeholders dealing with domestic violence cases including Rodrigues.

(iv) The Police Department has issued a circular letter for the streamlining of actions to be taken and procedures to be followed by the Police to handle cases of domestic violence.

As regards part (b) (ii) of the question regarding remaining measures of the Report of the National Coalition against Domestic Violence Committee, I am informed that the following are being implemented:

(i) An Integrated Support Services Centre ( Command Centre) will be shortly set up at the level of my Ministry This Centre will operate through a hotline and will provide immediate care and counselling to victims. In addition, mobile technology will be used to locate victims. Specifications for this Centre are currently being finalised by my Ministry in collaboration with the Central Informatics Bureau;

(ii) Consultations are ongoing with all stakeholders for the setting up of the Observatory on Gender Based Violence. This Observatory will have as objectives to understand the reality and the evolution of Gender Based Violence in Mauritius and make recommendations to improve the services and facilities offered by public institutions to victims of gender based violence.

Madam, Speaker,

In addition to the measures enunciated in these two Reports, my Ministry is implementing a number of other measures all aimed at eliminating domestic violence and supporting victims of domestic violence. These are :

(i) An action plan on Intimate Partner Violence is being finalised by my Ministry with a view to have better coordination among stakeholders dealing with victims of domestic violence;

(ii) A protocol to promote interagency collaboration for the better handling of cases of domestic violence is being prepared'

(iii) An aggressive media campaign with billboards, posters, TV and radio spots is being finalised and will be launched shortly;

(iv) Consultations are ongoing with the Commissioner of Police to strengthen our intervention strategies and collaboration with the Police Family Protection Unit; and

(v) A rehabilitation of perpetrators of domestic violence programme is being set up with a view to making perpetrators accountable for their actions and changing their behaviour for the safety of victims of domestic violence