**Annex XXIII**

**Updated information on the measures taken to support children living in poverty, including measures under the Social Integration and Empowerment Act of 2016 and the Marshall plan against poverty of 2016, and information on funding for all child related social protection programmes**

The objectives of Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity are to –

(i) formulate policies and strategies to combat poverty and social exclusion; to drive and coordinate initiatives for the social integration and sustainable development of vulnerable families; (ii) encourage and assist vulnerable families to undertake income earning activities to become economically independent; (iii) widen the circle of opportunities for the empowerment of the vulnerable families; (iv) eradicate absolute poverty and improve the living conditions of the poor; and (v) lay the foundation for sustainable human development and improve the life chances of children of poor families by providing a package of support programmes and opportunities for learning and development from a very early stage.

The Social Register of Mauritius has been developed since June 2015 and constitutes a national database of vulnerable households in Mauritius. The Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Environment and Sustainable Development is the legal custodian of the Social Register Mauritius database and is responsible as from 15 November 2018 for the registration of potential households.

Intensive sensitisation campaigns have been carried out with the help of the Citizen Advice Bureau of the Prime Minister's Office to reach and register those who may fall in the category of poor to apply for the assistance on the Social Register of Mauritius. The Proxy Means Test is then carried out to determine the eligibility of the households to the various schemes. Among the main Marshall Plan proposals which are being implemented are the Social Contract and the Conditional Cash that are offered to families who are eligible under the Social Register Mauritius upon signing the social contract. The social contract essentially defines the responsibilities and undertakings between Ministry of Social Integration and Econmic Empowerment and the beneficiaries. Its ultimate goal is to promote economic empowerment through employability, training and entrepreneurship of people living in absolute poverty. By signing the social contract, beneficiaries agree to comply with the conditions of the Marshall Plan and are provided with regular visits by Case Management Officers of National Empowerment Foundation to monitor their progress and offer them appropriate counselling and guidance. The purpose of putting in place Conditional Cash Transfers is fundamentally to assist the poor people to empower themselves since empowerment is an essential concept of human rights

The conditions stipulated in the social contract in respect of the cash transfers pertain to education, training and employment, health, family welfare and development. The social contract essentially represents a formal pledge between Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity beneficiaries on the Social Register Mauritius whereby both parties acknowledge their rights and duties in the endeavor to fight poverty. The crux of the social contract lies in the transition from the mere act of distributing social assistance, to cash transfers which are subject to compliance with specified requirements in order to achieve the objective of concretely and sustainably empowering the poor people.

In the Budget 2016/2017 provision was made for a monthly subsistence allowance for a family of two adults and three children with a maximum threshold of 9,520 rupees (approximately USD 225) to eradicate absolute poverty in Mauritus The maximum threshold has been reviewed on the increase from 9,520 rupees (approximately USD 225) to 10,500 rupees (approximately USD 250) as from 1st July 2021

According to the Budget plan of 2019-2020, 11,000 families, who are on the Social Register of Mauritius have been provided totally free access to Broadband Internet over two consecutive years as from 2019.

The poverty alleviation and economic empowerment schemes that have been put in place includes the Subsistence Allowance, Child Allowance, School Materials, School Premium, Free Examinations Fees, Crèche Scheme.

The monthly subsistence allowance is based on income thresholds ranging between 3,000 rupees (approximately USD 70) and of 10,500 rupees (approximately USD 250) to families composed of up to two adults and three children. The objective of the subsistence allowance is to ensure that the basic needs of people living in absolute poverty are met and ultimately they are enabled to move out of the poverty trap.

Beneficiaries are also offered other conditional cash transfers, based on the needs of the household.

**Child Allowance Scheme**

The purpose of the Scheme shall be to provide a child allowance in respect of children of households as an incentive to encourage them to attend school regularly.

The child allowance is an income support payable in favour of children aged not less than 3 years and not more than 23 years, and they must attend a registered school or educational institution. The child allowance is paid to a maximum of 3 children per household. It is a monthly allowance which is payable on a 2-month basis.

A household shall be eligible for a child allowance –

(a) in respect of a child with disability, only where the monthly attendance of that child at the registered school or institution is at least 75 per cent; or

(b) in respect of any other child, only where the monthly attendance of that child at the registered school or institution is at least 90 per cent.

**School Materials Scheme**

The purpose of the Scheme shall be to provide school materials such as bags, uniforms, shoes, copybooks and stationery to children aged not less than 3 years and not more than 23 years, of households, as an incentive to motivate them to attend a registered pre-primary, primary, secondary schools and pre-voc institutions every academic year.

**School Premium Scheme**

The purpose of the Scheme is to provide a school premium in respect of children of households, as an incentive for them to pursue their studies and achieve higher levels of education.

The scheme currently applies to students who have passed the examinations of Grade 9, School Certificate and Higher School Certificate.

Cash award is provided to students as follows:

(a) 15 000 rupees (approximately USD 355) for successfully completing the grade 9 level under the nine-year schooling;

(b) 25 000 rupees (approximately USD 590) for successfully completing the School Certificate or equivalent vocational certificate; and

(c) 35 000 rupees (approximately USD 825) for those successfully completing the Higher School Certificate or equivalent technical qualification.

**Free Examination Fees Scheme**

The purpose of the Scheme is to provide an opportunity to children of households to have a second attempt, free of charge, at the examinations for the School Certificate or its equivalent General Certificate of Education Ordinary, or Higher School Certificate or its equivalent Advanced Level (A Level), as the case may be, irrespective of the outcome of their first attempt.

The Scheme is applicable to a child who –

(a) attends a secondary school registered under the Education Act;

(b) has a percentage attendance rate of at least 90 percent; and

(c) has passed the examinations for the School Certificate or its equivalent General Certificate of Education Ordinary, or Higher School Certificate or its equivalent Advanced Level (A Level), as the case may be, at his first attempt but wishes to undertake the examinations at a second attempt to improve his results; or

(d) has not passed the examinations for the School Certificate or its equivalent General Certificate of Education Ordinary, or Higher School Certificate or its equivalent Advanced Level (A Level), as the case may be, at his first attempt and wishes to make a second attempt at the examinations;

For academic years 2017 and 2018, around 250 students of Mauritius and Rodrigues have benefitted from the Scheme.

**Training and Placement Scheme**

Under this Scheme, provision is made for the training and placement of beneficiaries by Mauritius Institute of Training and Development where participants are receiving a stipend of 5,000 rupees (approximately USD 120) monthly which will also include placement opportunities in parallel with training. A toolkit is also provided to the beneficiaries so that they can start their own practice/business.

Provision has been in the Budget 2021/2022 to: (a) Waive the payment of MITD exam fees for financial year 2021/2022; (b) Provide free sanitary towels from grade 6 to grade 13; and (c) Provide free optical glasses for those aged up to 21 years’ old

**Crèche Scheme**

The purpose of the Scheme shall be to provide a crèche allowance in respect of children aged not less than 3 months nor more than 3 years, of households, as an incentive for their admission into registered institutions and to encourage unemployed mothers to take up employment or to undergo training.

The Scheme is being implemented since February 2017 and a payment up to a maximum of 2,000 rupees (approximately USD 50) is effected to registered day care centres in favour of each child admitted.

**NEW CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK**

A new Framework was announced in the Budget 2016/17 with a view to ensuring greater transparency and better outcomes in the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility programmes. The National Corporate Social Responsibility Foundation was incorporated on 30 December 2016, following the Budget measure for setting up of a New Corporate Social Responsibility Foundation to be managed jointly by the private and public sector. The New Corporate Social Responsibility Foundation was established by Government in December 2016 with the aim of generating better social outcomes and ensuring greater accountability and transparency in the use of Corporate Social Responsibility funds.

Provision was made in the Budget 2019/2020 for the transformation of the National Corporate Social Responsibility Foundation into a National Social Inclusion Foundation to strengthen its role as a key Government agency in the fight against poverty and social exclusion and to further consolidate its support to Non-Governmental Organisations to the benefit of poor and vulnerable groups.

The Foundation devises National Programmes for more impactful actions on poverty alleviation. Special attention is given to education as a means of combating child poverty. The Foundation in the first instances, proposes National Programmes for crèches/nursery and educational support to vulnerable children at primary and secondary level.

In order to better support vulnerable children and improve their educational performance, 50 primary schools in poverty areas were targeted and converted into Fortified Learning Environment Schools and specialised educational support was be provided to students in the Extended Programme. 80,000,000 Rupees (approximately USD 1,900,000) was earmarked for this initiative implemented with the support of Non-Governmental Organisations in the Budget 2019/2020.

The grant-in-aid was increased by 10 percent and the grant paid for the maintenance of buildings of Residential Care Homes eligible under the Social Aid Act was doubled.

The Foundation undertook a classification of Non-Governmental Organisations to improve and better tailor its funding support to different types of Non-Governmental Organisations.

In the Budget 2020/2021 provision is made for the National Social Inclusion Foundation to provide a grant of some 845,000,000 (approximately USD 1,990,000) to Non-Governmental Organisations to support programmes and projects to alleviate poverty and for a more inclusive society measures taken to prevent and address discrimination and to ensure access to social services for children with disabilities.

Every child has the right to benefit from Social Security. The State of Mauritius provides Social Security including financial support and other benefits to families in need of assistance.

The Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity provides financial assistance such as Basic Invalidity Pension and carer’s allowance to support persons with disabilities and their families in catering for their needs.

Financial help is also provided under the Social Aid Scheme to parents having children with disabilities.

Parents in receipt of social aid from the State are entitled to financial assistance for the education of their children including children with disabilities and for the payment of examination fees for a second sitting. There is free transport for students irrespective of the type of disability. Furthermore, families with persons with disabilities are also provided inter-alia the following services:

1. Refunds of the bus fares to accompanying parents of students with disabilities attending Non-Governmental Organisations and mainstream schools;
2. Refunds of the taxi fares to students with severe disabilities attending mainstream schools and universities. Following a budgetary measure announced in 2019/2020, this refund has now been extended to students attending primary and secondary institutions also;
3. Since the year 2018, 100% duty free facilities on adapted and normal cars are being granted to persons with disabilities and to parents having children with severe disabilities compared to 85% duty free which existed prior to the year 2014; and
4. Special loan schemes provided by the Employee Welfare Fund at a very low interest rate.