

**The Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Mr Charles Gaetan Xavier Luc Duval, GCSK, FCA, MP**

To ask the Honourable Vice Prime-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare-

**Whether, in regard to the five cases of intimate partner violence in mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues which have led to the death of the victims since May of this year, she will state whether –**

- (a) these instances of domestic violence had previously been reported or were known to the authorities;**
- (b) why action to prevent the deaths have not been taken; and**
- (c) the number of cases of physical assault reported to the Police since 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019 and the number of arrests made under Section 11(A)(3)(a) of Domestic Violence Act (as amended)?**

**Draft Reply**

**(Sitting of Tuesday 24 September 2019)**

Madam Speaker,

Allow me at the very outset to extend my deepest sympathies to the bereaved families of those victims who lost their lives in such tragic circumstances in Mauritius and Rodrigues. Domestic violence is a serious issue not only in the Republic of Mauritius but also worldwide. We are not insensitive to this issue. We are all shocked and deeply concerned by what happened over the past months.

It is unfortunate that despite all our efforts to address domestic violence in our society, we are still witnessing such tragic cases. Despite that amendments were brought to the Protection from Domestic Violence Act, including tougher penalties, women are still being victims of domestic violence. It is not only a legal issue. It is a societal problem which needs to be addressed collectively.

Madam Speaker,

In regard to part A of the question, I would like to inform the House that the 5 cases in Mauritius and Rodrigues were not known to my Ministry. I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that these 5 cases were also not reported to the Police.

In so far as part B of the question is concerned, I would like to inform the House that for all cases reported at my Ministry, immediate assistance and support are provided to victims and their children. Through the six Family Support Bureaux, a holistic service is provided to victims of domestic violence and their children. Victims are also assisted in the drafting of their Affidavits prior to making application for Court Orders under the Protection from Domestic Violence Act. Victims are also provided legal advice and legal assistance for Court cases.

This year itself, my Ministry launched the Integrated Support Centre. Through the use of technology, Hotline 139 for domestic violence, is now being attended through 4 parallel digital phone lines. This system enables the Ministry to receive more calls on domestic violence related cases. The system is also connected to the Domestic Violence Information System which is a computerized platform for monitoring of cases of domestic violence.

Ongoing public awareness campaigns are conducted across the island to sensitise the public at large on our services, the Protection from Domestic Violence Act, and the consequences of domestic violence, amongst others. My Ministry also makes use of the Caravanne de Proximité of the National Women's Council so as to reach people in remote areas as well. From 2015 to July 2019, 23,175 people were reached through 535 campaigns by my Ministry.

Concurrently, awareness campaigns are also conducted by the Mauritius Police Force. From 2015 to date, 120,874 people were sensitized through 1867 campaigns. Awareness campaigns are also conducted in schools where 76191 children were targeted.

While addressing domestic violence, it is crucial to work with perpetrators in specific programmes to enable them to end the cycle of violence. Through the UNDP, my Ministry has received the services of a Consultant for the programme. In last November, consultations were made both in Mauritius and Rodrigues. In March this

year, training of 20 and 18 facilitators were conducted in Mauritius and Rodrigues respectively.

Following a study to make “A Quantitative Assessment of Intimate Partner Violence and its Associated Economic Costs in Mauritius”, my Ministry is finalising a National Action Plan to address Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).

The National Action Plan to address IPV is another step in the fight to protect survivors of IPV. The action plan will act as a roadmap in the fight against intimate partner violence for the next three years. The main axes of the Action Plan are Legislation, Primary Prevention, Capacity Building and Service Delivery and Monitoring and Evaluation.

In view of enhancing service delivery, through a holistic approach, discussions are under way for the collaboration with the Police Family Protection Unit and the Ministry. This initiative will ensure prompt intervention in cases of domestic violence by Police Officers and Family Welfare and Protection Officers who will be responsible for providing psychosocial support to victims of domestic violence and will also be engaged in the rehabilitation of perpetrators of domestic violence.

A Domestic Violence Review Committee will be set up to identify any shortcomings from stakeholders while addressing cases of domestic violence. Stakeholders will be called upon to attend the Committees following serious cases of domestic violence including homicide to address the lacunas and propose immediate actions.

With regard to part C of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31 August 2019, 1790 cases of physical assault were reported and 996 persons were arrested.