REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

MINISTRY OF TECHNOLOGY, COMMUNICATION AND INNOVATION

"Fourth Consultation on the application of the 2003 Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace"

Comments from the Ministry as follows:

3.1 (a) recognizing and enacting the right of universal online access to public and government held records

Government Online Centre

In line with the UN e-GOV criteria, the Government Portal of the Republic of Mauritius is designed to provide information to all its stakeholders in relation to public and government held records, while at the same time, enabling e-participation and interaction with the Government.

Open Data Initiative

In 2015, Government embarked on the Open Data Initiative, by developing the National Open Data Policy, and carrying out the Open Data Readiness Assessment (ODRA) with the assistance of the World Bank. Subsequently, Government approved the National Open Data Policy in April 2016 and the Open Data Readiness Assessment Report in July 2017. The main objective of the National Open Data Policy is to create economic value out of the releases of Government datasets as Open Data. The release of Open Government Datasets allow for transparency and accountability and also provide access to free information to the citizens and businesses. A national Open Data Portal has been developed and is continuously being updated with relevant publishing of datasets. As at date more than 185 datasets cutting across various socio-economic sectors have been published.

Following recommendations of the National Open Data Policy a Central Open Data Team (CODT) has been setup at the level of the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation (MTCI) along with Open Data Teams (ODTs) in each Ministry, Department and parastatal bodies.

The CODT has been mandated to steer the Open Data Initiative across Ministries and Departments and includes establishing and reviewing standards for Open Data and setting up and administering the National Open Data Portal. The CODT is supported by ODTs at the level of each Ministry and

Departments. The ODTs have as responsibilities to identify datasets, perform data wrangling on approved datasets and publish them on the portal.

The National Computer Board (NCB), a parastatal body operating under the aegis on the MTCI has also been mandated to assist the Ministry in implementing the Open Data Initiatives. As such the NCB has organised various workshops and capacity building programmes to both inculcate a culture of Open Data at national level and to empower the ODTs. In this connection the NCB organised:

- A workshop on Institutional Support on Open Data - This workshop targeted mainly the Deputy Permanent Secretaries from each Ministry, department directors and senior government stakeholders with direct authority over data release.
- A workshop on Open Data for Journalism- This workshop targeted journalists and other stakeholders wishing to incorporate data into stories and research.
- A Technical Training on Open Data - This training targeted ODTs with the main goal of empowering them with the core open data concepts and skills required for data preparation for analysis, presentation and release.

With the objective of creating a significant momentum for open data, the NCB shall, in the near future organise an Open Data Competition to galvanize software developers and academia to build apps from the Open Data.

3.1 (b) identifying and promoting repositories of information and knowledge in the public domain and making them accessible by all, in particular persons with disabilities, linguistic minorities, women and girls

The Government Portal is the gateway for citizens of Mauritius to interact and transact with the Government of Mauritius. In addition, disability features have been integrated therein to allow for those with disabilities to interact with the portal. Same can be found at:- http://www.govmu.org/English/Accessibility/Pages/default.aspx

3.1 (c) promoting and facilitating ICT literacy, as well as information and media literacy, including popularizing and building trust in ICT implementation and use.

ICT Culture Promotion

In its endeavour to e-powering people, the ICT Culture Promotion (ICTCP) Department at the National Computer Board has embarked on different projects geared towards promoting ICT literacy and training for the public, democratising access to ICT for community empowerment and social development.

1. Universal ICT Education Programme (UIEP) [since 2006]

One of the priorities of the programme was the introduction of the internationally acknowledged Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC3) course with a view of making it the benchmark for digital literacy/proficiency in Mauritius.

The UIEP programme aims at training a maximum number of persons comprising students, employees (including Public Officers & Private Sector workers), housewives, Women & Girls, unemployed, senior citizens and the public at large on the IC3 course in line with Government's vision of accelerating the transformation of Mauritius into an ICT hub and in developing ICT into a major pillar of the economy.

The IC3 course is of 45-hour duration and is delivered across the island in the computer labs of some 55 State Secondary Schools after school hours on week-days and during weekends. Normally each of these computer labs is equipped with some 20 PCs and internet access.

The IC3 course comprises three core modules:

- **Computing Fundamentals** *(Hardware, Software, Operating Systems)*
- **Key Applications** *(Word Processing, Spreadsheet, Presentation)*
- **Living Online** *(Internet & Email, Impact of Networking on society)*

The implementation model of the UIEP is particularly interesting. IT equipment found in computer labs of the State Secondary Schools which remain idle after school hours, during weekend and schools vacations are being put to efficient use in those dedicated time slots to provide the IC3 training to the public at large.

With the 55 State Secondary Schools around the island, participants can follow the training very close to their place of residence. This model has enabled the National Computer Board to offer the training at a very affordable cost of Rs 750 (USD 21) only.

In a view to reach a larger audience and, the IC3 course content has also been integrated in the computer studies syllabus for students of Forms I to Form III in both State (SSS) and Private Secondary Schools since January 2007 in Mauritius & Rodrigues.

An Attendance Certificate (certificate of Course Completion) is awarded by the NCB to all those participants who complete at least 41 hours of the IC3 course.

The IC3 Exams Certification (internationally recognised) was introduced by the NCB in collaboration with the University of Mauritius since August 2007. The Certification exam is conducted online and meant for those IC3 trainees who are interested in obtaining an exam-based certificate after the IC3 training. Cost of online certification is Rs 3,300 (USD 95) for the three modules.

The UIEP Project has also been implemented in Rodrigues in collaboration with the Commission of Education and Others since 2007.

Till date, some 250,000 trainees for the IC3 course have completed the training, including secondary students having followed the IC3 contents up to Form III (within education system) in Mauritius & Rodrigues. Ratio of women being trained is about 50%.

The IC3 trainers are recruited on a free-lance basis and most of them have a first degree in ICT/ICT-related fields. Besides they are all IC3 Certified. The trainers are remunerated at the rate of Rs 7,500 (USD 215) for each batch of training (i.e. 45 hours).

The NCB produced in collaboration with the former Mauritius College of the Air (now known as the Open University of Mauritius) a series of 12 educational video clips based on the internationally acknowledged IC3 course syllabus. The clips were broadcast on the MBC Channels in a bid to bridge the digital divide.

The Ministries listed below, among others, were mainly involved in the IC3 training of their staff:

- Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
- Ministry of Health and Quality of Life
- Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
- Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training

Other Government Bodies includes Departments and Parastatal Organisations were also on board to get their different staff trained on the IC3 course.

The UIEP/IC3 Project is headed by the Manager of the ICTCP Department with a team of four Project Supervisors and two Support Staff.

2. Cyber Caravan Project [since 2000]

The NCB operates two Cyber Caravans which are used to provide basic ICT trainings to various segments of the community in both rural and urban areas.

The two NCB Cyber Caravans is equipped with 24 laptops each. Latest tablets are also utilised for the purpose of training.

The Cyber Caravans are provided with broadband Internet, and training is delivered by MQA registered IT Support Officers as per the specific needs of people regardless of age, educational background or profession.

The Trainers in the Cyber Caravan are full-time NCB Officers.

The Cyber Caravan project aims at making IT facilities available in all regions around Mauritius targeting children, students, unemployed, women, staff of public and private organisations, planters, farmers and senior citizens who do not have access to a computer. The ICT trainings are conducted on the premises of social welfare centres, community centres and civic associations.

The main objectives of the project are:

- To raise the level of knowledge about ICT and the level of competence in using a computer and common computer applications.
- To promote and encourage ICT literacy.
- To ensure that all computer users understand the benefits of using a computer.
- To enhance the employability of all people and also to enable them to be part of the global Information Society.

As at date, the Cyber Caravan Project has enabled 202,939 participants to be trained in ICT Awareness (ICTA), 2,995 in Internet Core Computing Certification (IC3), 126 in Microsoft Office Package (MOP) and 298 in ICT Literacy Programme (ICTLP), 5,123 youngsters on Coding.

Those people having no access to ICTs and knowledge in ICT tools welcomed positively this unique opportunity to enhance their ICT skills, self-development and employability.

3. Community Empowerment Programme

The objective of the Community Empowerment Programme (CEP) is to facilitate the process of enabling the community to make use of ICT facilities with a view to fully participate in the socio-economic development of Mauritius. The CEP consists of the following projects:

i)   Wi-Fi Mauritius Project

350 locations in Mauritius had already been equipped with free Wi-Fi hotspots (as per Budget 2015/16). Previously, under the Community Empowerment Programme, the NCB had set up Computer Clubs on a regional basis to provide free access to ICT tools and Internet in collaboration Mauritius Telecom. The Wi-Fi locations were chosen on the existing sites of Computer Clubs, Public Internet Access Points (PIAPs), ZEP schools, etc and their existing lines have been used to provide Wi-Fi.

The Government Budget for 2016/17 made provision for an additional 250 locations to be identified on the basis of promoting connected communities in major public areas. The locations include hospitals, community hospitals, medical clinics, local area health centers, community health centers, major public/tourist attractions, public beaches, cultural heritage spots, markets, traffic centers, municipal complexes, stadiums, gymnasiums, and museums. Rodrigues Island shall be provided with 30 Wi-Fi hotspots within the same project.

Thus to reduce the digital divide and promote connected communities, a total of 630 free Wi-Fi hotspots (including Rodrigues) with 10 MB Internet connection through Optical Fibre, would thus be set up in public places across Mauritius and Rodrigues. The Wi-Fi access is being promoted by the 'bringing of one's own device' philosophy.

ii)   Public Internet Access Points (PIAPs)

The Community Empowerment Programme (CEP) includes the Public Internet Access Points (PIAPs) project, an initiative of the Government and Information Communication and Technology Authority (ICTA) to equip all Post Offices with computer facilities and broadband Internet for access by the community at large around Mauritius and Rodrigues. The project has as aim to reduce the digital divide within the country and democratise access to ICTs.

The objective of the project is to provide needy citizens with computer facilities and access to Internet. The PIAPs provide access to people not being able to afford a PC and/or Internet access. Users are therein assisted by IT Assistants. At least one IT Assistant is present at each PIAP to offer guidance and support to the users. Facilities like e-services are also promoted.

PIAPs promote ICT literacy, access to ICT facilities and access to online services among a vast majority of people around the island who can use both a computer and Internet.

In addition, access to ICT infrastructure and Internet has been accelerated by the setting up of Public Internet Access Points (PIAPs) in the 95 post offices around the island. 5 PIAPs are also available in Rodrigues. This initiative has resulted in a further increase in ICT and Internet penetration of Mauritian citizens. More than 315,000 registrations are being noted in the PIAPs till date.

4. Digital Youth Engagement Programme Project

As announced in the Budget Speech 2017-2018, the National Computer Board (NCB), a parastatal body operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation, is implementing the **'Digital Youth Engagement Programme (DYEP)'** which comprise the provision of introductory courses on Coding to youngsters. NCB therefore reviewed its trainings in its Cyber Caravans into coding sessions which are being dispensed to students and the community.

The National Computer Board will act as a training service provider to the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research for the introduction of Coding in primary schools starting as early as Grade 4 and Grade 5. The learners are be provided with a 15-hour training delivered in the Cyber Caravans which proceed to various primary schools around the island following a joint collaboration and an agreed timetable with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research.

The objectives of introducing Coding at an early age are to:

- Spark the interest of our young learners for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects.

- Contribute to increase the number of students opting for Science and Computer Subjects at Secondary and Tertiary Levels.

A number of coding skills will be imparted to the students via course materials accessible online from an Open Source coding platform (Code.org). The skills to be taught include:-

- Reinforcement of Pre-requisites (mouse skills)
- Sequence
- Debugging codes
- Understanding and Devising of Algorithms
- Use of loops
- Online Safety

A Certificate of Attendance is awarded to all participants who complete the 12-hour training.

It is expected that this initiative will, in the long run, contribute towards creating an adequate and diversified talent pool to fill the increasing number of technology jobs that shall be available in the future and hence drive the growth of the ICT Sector.

NCB will make use of a mix of IT equipment (in the Cyber Caravans) including PCs, Laptops, Raspberry Pi and Tablets for the delivery of the trainings on Coding. It will be seamless for the learner accessing online course materials from whatever device he/she is using and at the same time this will also be an opportunity to showcase the latest IT technologies available to the students and community.

It is estimated that some 2,000 primary school students of Grade 4/5 would be trained on a yearly basis on the DYEP programme.

Till date, some 1805 participants have been trained on Digital Youth Engagement (DYEP).

5. ICT Awareness Training for Senior Citizens

(based on social media Facebook, YouTube and online communication tools i.e. Skype, WhatsApp & others)

This ICT Awareness Course comprises of 2-hr of training being implemented by the NCB in its Cyber Caravans at the premises of three recreational centres, Social Welfare Centres and Community Centres across the island in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Security and National Solidarity and the Senior Citizens Council.

It is an undeniable fact that our senior citizens are still able to acquire and develop a wide range of knowledge and skills with regard to ICT that would make them feel confident and adequately prepared in the current digital era. The empowerment of required ICT skills on the latest technologies by the senior citizens has thus become fundamental in this modern age since it will enable them to become full-fledged ICT literate citizens.

The main objective of this initiative is to reduce the risks of exclusion from social, economic and cultural life, and support them in their daily welfare through the frequent uses of ICTs.

The immediate result will be in the interest of the Senior Citizens who will be able to access by themselves the numerous digital services and facilities easily available nowadays, without the assistance of their family members. They will become and remain independent while being active participants in the knowledge-based society extensively controlled by the latest technologies.

This dedicated ICT training programme geared towards the Senior Citizens will undoubtedly help them develop their digital capabilities.

Having access to a computer and the internet allows older adults to keep up-to-date on news and current events, play brain-stimulating games, and research the latest information on topics from medical conditions to travel to healthy recipes.

Email and social media sites like Facebook help seniors stay in touch with each other as well as with their family.

Online communication Tools like Skype, WhatsApp, Viber and Apple's Face Time allow seniors to actually see friends and loved ones who may live far away.

In fact, the training programme has been mounted so that senior citizens will derive maximum digital benefits and they will eventually be able to survive in a knowledge-based society without any fear or hesitation. The programme will lay emphasis on the use of Social Media like Facebook for social networking and other communicational tools like WhatsApp and Viber. Senior Citizens will also be taught the necessary precautions to take when making online shopping on the net; and how to take advantage of online and mobile banking among others.

After this training programme, the Senior Citizens are given the extra opportunity to enrol themselves, at no cost, in the normal 45-hour IC3 course in their localities by contacting the National Computer Board.

Some 2,182 Senior citizens have been trained on the IT Awareness training programme.

6. Africa Code Week Initiative

Africa Code Week (ACW) which is an initiative of SAP* (*Entreprise Applications Software Solutions Provider) under its corporate social responsibility and is currently in its fourth edition. UNESCO Youth Mobile, Cape Town Science Centre and CAMDEN Education Trust are also partners of the event. ACW aims to educate five millions young Africans within the next ten years.

The Africa Code Week 2017 was officially launched in Mauritius in June 2017.

Africa Code Week (ACW) was organised for the second time in Mauritius from 27 August to 02 September 2018. NCB has been collaborating on the ACW initiative since 2017 and the other local collaborators are the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre, Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) and Ceridian Group (Mauritius).

In 2017, ACW initiated 1.3 million youth across 35 countries to Coding across Africa largely surpassing the initial target of 500,000.

In Mauritius 19,550 youth were trained / initiated to Coding during the one week live event in 2018. Mauritius was ranked second in terms of number of people 1,565 youth trained per 100K population behind Cameroun in 2017.

This year, the ACW Committee has decided to extend the ACW initiative to Rodrigues Island as well.

NCB Cyber Caravans and trainers have been put into contribution to reach out a maximum number of students and youth around Mauritius.

The above initiative is also in line with the new strategic direction for the NCB as announced in the Budget Speech 2017- 2018 as follows:- *"Digital Youth Engagement Programme will be set up by the NCB to provide introductory courses on coding to youngsters."*

Additional info on the event is available at http://africacodeweek.org/en/

2003 Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace

With a view to promoting our ancestral languages and our cultural diversity which constitute our national heritage, the following Speaking Unions / Cultural Centres have been established by way of legislation:

1. Marathi Cultural Centre

2. Tamil Cultural Centre

3. Telugu Cultural Centre

4. Islamic Cultural Centre

5. Hindi Speaking Union

6. English Speaking Union

7. Urdu Speaking Union

8. Marathi Speaking Union

9. Telugu Speaking Union

10. Tamil Speaking Union

11. Chinese Speaking Union

12. Bhojpuri Speaking Union

13. Creole Speaking Union

14. Sanskrit Speaking Union

15. Arabic Speaking Union

The functions of the above institutions are as follows:

a) promote the respective languages in their spoken and written forms;

b) promote friendship and understanding between the peoples of the world and engage in any educational, academic, cultural and artistic work to further that objective;

c) provide facilities for the exchange of views affecting the interest, well-being, development, relationships and common problems of the linguistic groups of the world;

d) promote and encourage the linguistic development among all people having an interest in the different languages with special emphasis on their cultural, artistic, economic and social perspectives;

e) provide facilities for exchange programmes, scholarships and social intercourse between the Unions and other organisations at international level;

f) promote, organise and encourage correspondence, conferences, seminars, workshops, debates, elocution exercises, training, competitions, artistic performances and demonstrations for persons interested in the different languages;

g) promote, organise and encourage literary activities and the interchange of books, pamphlets, periodicals and other information in the relevant languages among local universities, colleges, schools and other institutions, and with overseas educational institutions;

h) promote and encourage the publication, exhibition, distribution and sale of books, magazines, newspapers and other literary works in the respective languages;

i) promote intercultural and interlinguistic understanding and harmony through exchange and participation in joint projects;

The Cultural Centres and Speaking Unions also organise various activities in the context of the International Mother Language Day in February each year.

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