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* 1. **Residential Care Institutions and Shelters**

At paragraph 16.2.2 of the Audit Report for the 18-month period 1 January 2015 to
30 June 2016, I reported that the Ministry ensured the placement of children in distress in 20 Residential Care Institutions or Shelters that were still operational as at 30 June 2016. Six of the Shelters were Government Owned while the other 14 were run by
Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

Four of the Government Owned Shelters were operated under fixed annual sum Management Services Contract, renewable on a month to month basis with a private Service Provider. Two other Shelters were run by the National Children Council (NCC) and were financed by way of Fixed Annual Grants. 13 of the 14 shelters run by NGOs were financed by Capitation Grants of Rs 378.27 per child per day, while one shelter was financed by way of Fixed Annual Grant.

During 2016-17, the Ministry disbursed some Rs 82.5 million for the running of Shelters for children and women in distress. In August 2017, one of the Government Owned Shelters under Management Services Contract, namely La Dauphinelle, was closed.

Compliance with terms and conditions of Contract/Memorandum of Understanding was reviewed as of November 2017. The following were observed during site visits at two Shelters under Management Services Contract and those run by the NCC.

* + 1. ***Shelters run under Management Services Contract***

*Shelter L’Oiseau du Paradis for Boys at Cap Malheureux - Number of Residents*

As per the Contract, which was being renewed on a month to month basis, the shelter was to accommodate a maximum of 30 residents and the annual contract amount of
Rs 5,430,500 was payable to the Service Provider in 12 equal instalments of Rs 452,542.

The number of Residents has been decreasing steadily over the past 12 months from 27 in November 2016 to 20 in March 2017, to 19 in June 2017 and to 8 in November 2017. The monthly amount of Rs 452,542 was, however, paid in full until the month of June 2017.

*La Marguerite Shelter for Girls at Belle Rose -Compliance with Terms and Conditions of Contract with the Service Provider*

With reference to paragraph 16.2.3 of the Audit Report for the period 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2016, the following shortcomings were still noted during a site visit on
16 November 2017:

* Monthly reports on Residents, giving details, amongst others, of their health conditions, and behaviour were not submitted by the Shelter for 2016-17;
* The ‘Commodities Book’ was not updated for the past two months;
* Only five staff members out of 12, including management, held a Certificate of Character;
* No specialised training programme was developed for the staff of the Institution, particularly for the Caregivers who were directly involved with the children in distress;
* As per the Roster for the month of November 2017, only three to four Child Caregivers were to be on duty during the day and two to three during the night, against five and six respectively as per the MOU. During the site visit, only two Child Caregivers were on duty to cater for the 25 residents;
* The MOU provided that there were to be at least two Cooks and at least two Cleaners and one Handyman. There was, however, only one Cook and no Cleaners/Handymen on the establishment of the institution. During the site visit, the Cook was on leave and a Child Caregiver was preparing the food for the day.

***Ministry’s Reply***

1. The contract with the Service Provider for Shelter L’Oiseau du Paradis has been terminated on 31 December 2017 and the minors have been transferred to other shelters;
2. Procedures for each staff to have a Certificate of Character have already been initiated and close follow up is being carried out by the Ministry;

1. Directors of RCIs/Shelters have been informed to arrange for training programme for their staff;
2. The Shelter Managers have been requested to abide with provisions of the MOU.

***16.1.2 Shelters run by the National Children Council (NCC)***

The NCC, a Statutory Body operating under the aegis of the Ministry, runs two Government Shelters, namely La Colombe at Pointe aux Sables and L’Oasis for Girls at Grand River North West. Funds disbursed by the Ministry to the NCC for the running of these two shelters amounted to some Rs 8 million in 2016-17.

The observations made at paragraph 16.2.4 of the Audit Report for the 18-month period
1 January 2015 to 30 June 2016 were reviewed and the following were noted:

* *Memorandum of Understanding for Shelter L’Oasis*

The shelter is in operation since May 2016. A MOU for the management of the shelter has yet to be signed by the Ministry and the NCC.

* *Books and Records of the Shelters*

A few books and records as required under the MOU were not produced to my Officers. The Commodities Books of the two Shelters were not properly maintained. A comprehensive record of all assets given by Ministries and Government Departments, purchased by the Council or obtained through sponsorship was not available at the Shelters.

Also, the ‘Sponsors/Donation’ Book of La Colombe Shelter was not complete. Valuable items of equipment received as donations, and kept in the Stores, were not taken on charge.

* *Residents at the Shelter La Colombe*

As of mid November 2017, 62 residents comprising 11 babies, 27 teenage girls/mothers and 24 teenage boys were accommodated at the Shelter. These three categories of residents were housed in the same building.

* *Staffing of the Shelters*

The number of Caregivers available to cater for a 24 hour service at the two Shelters was insufficient and was much less than the prescribed ratio.

The roster of La Colombe Shelter for the period 1 to 26 November 2017 showed that on average, only two Caregivers were to be on duty at any given time in the Boys, Girls and Baby Section of the Shelter. On 16 November 2017, the number of Care Givers in attendance at the La Colombe Shelter was seven, when 12 Caregivers were supposed to be on duty as per the prescribed ratio.

At Shelter L’Oasis, there were only two Caregivers to cater for 26 residents, including two infants.

* + 1. ***L’Oasis Shelter as a ‘Place of Safety’***

L’Oasis Shelter was declared as a place of safety as per criteria set by the Ministry under the Child Protection Act. During the site visit carried out at the shelter on 16 November 2017, the following non compliance with ‘Place of Safety’ criteria were noted:

* *Cleanliness, Safety and Sanitation*

There were water leakages near the washbasin, rendering the floor slippery. The bins in the yard were insufficient in number, such that there was spillage of garbage. The rooms were messy, with clothes hanging all around. Also, the cook did not possess a Food Handling Certificate.

* *Expertise of Caregivers*

Caregivers were not provided adequate training. The last training programme, which was run in January 2016, was attended by only three Caregivers. The fact that the Caregivers did not possess the required expertise in childcare had led to numerous complaints of their displaying hostile behaviour and using foul language.

* *Activities Proposed for the Children*

No indoor activities were proposed during the site visit. The residents were left idle and were watching television. An Extra Curricular / Developmental Activities Book was not maintained.

* *Management of Shelter*
* There were 19 beds and two cradles for the 26 residents. Three of the beds were broken whilst being moved out in the sun, due to the presence of bedbugs. The three occupants have been sleeping on the mattress on the floor since the beginning of November 2017;
* The menu was prepared by the Acting Officer in Charge, rather than under the guidance of a Nutritionist / the Home Economics Section of the Ministry;
* The ‘Commodities Book’ kept for the recording of stock of food and consumables was not properly maintained. The last entry therein was made on 8 November 2017.

***Ministry’s Reply***

1. A Technical Committee set up at the level of the Ministry has recommended that separate structures are to be set up to cater for the different needs of the children in accordance with their age, gender and impairments;
2. Due to the limited number of shelters for children, different categories of children are being housed in the same building at La Colombe Shelter;
3. The two Shelters have a shortage of Caregivers and the ratios of Caregivers to children are not being satisfied. The National Children Council (NCC) is in the process of recruiting the necessary staff;
4. The Shelter Manager of La Colombe has been requested to comply with the provisions of the MOU and to have all books and records updated. Also, instruction has been issued for the Donation Book to be up to date;

As for Shelter L’Oasis, follow up is being ensured with Management of the Shelter to meet the predefined criteria;

1. Other indoor games and activities are also proposed to the children. Sports and other activities are being planned for year 2018;
2. Training sessions were carried out in September 2017 and NCC has earmarked funds for training of caregivers at the Mauritius Institute of Education in 2018;
3. NCC will seek the services of a qualified nutritionist for the preparation of the menu sheet.
	1. **The Special Collaborative Programme for support to Women and Children in Distress**

The Special Collaborative Programme (SCP) aims at providing financial support to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Non-State Actors including Local Authorities, Rodrigues Regional Assembly and Statutory Bodies working for the social empowerment of women and children in distress. The grant ceiling was set at Rs 2 million and each project was to be implemented within a maximum period of two years.

As of June 2017, some Rs 159 million had been disbursed by the Ministry in respect of 177 projects approved since July 2009.

***16.2.1 Review of the Special Collaborative Programme***

The services of a Consultancy Firm were retained in October 2015 for Rs 810,000, to conduct an evaluation of the above programme in terms of, amongst others, the efficiency of implementation mechanism of the SCP and the effectiveness of the Programme through an assessment and analysis of projects implemented and their impact on beneficiaries.

The Consultant selected a sample of 63 completed projects and three ongoing projects, covering period 2009 to 2014, of which 55 were being implemented in Mauritius and
11 in Rodrigues. In the Final Report submitted by the Consultant and approved by the Ministry in October 2016, the Consultant identified serious flaws and weaknesses at all levels in the Programme implementation and management. These included:

*Segregation of Duties*

* The duties of the Project Coordinator in Mauritius were not well defined. He was involved in project write-ups and preliminary assessment of projects for approval, recommending projects for approval and funds for disbursements, and project monitoring;
* According to NGOs, the Project Coordinator in Rodrigues was charging amounts ranging from Rs 10,000 to Rs 60,000 for assistance in project write ups.

*Projects Impact*

* Projects did not necessarily address the needs of beneficiaries. A number of projects, particularly in Rodrigues, were written by a third party, with the applicants (NGOs/Associations) having minimal knowledge about the content thereof. Some projects were considered as ‘dubious’ by the Consultant;
* Some 45 per cent of assessed completed projects in Mauritius were found to be unsustainable in delivering adequate or positive impact to the intended population over time;
* For some projects, beneficiaries comprised members of the NGOs, while the target group of the SCP was women and children in distress.

*Projects Selection*

‘Calls for Proposals’ contained no deadline for submission, such that applications were received throughout the whole year, rendering administrative work in terms of preliminary assessment of proposals for eligibility and/or project write-ups advice cumbersome.

The time frame for follow-up on missing documents during screening of applications or in responding to queries ranged from one to three years for certain projects; and was found to be lengthy.

According to the Consultant, project approval appeared to have been based on project title, activities and proposed budget. The Consultant was of view that no prior assessment of technical requirements, capability and competence of NGOs seemed to have been done. More than 50 and 70 percent of NGOs in Mauritius and Rodrigues respectively had no prior knowledge and any basic competence on projects they have embarked upon.

*Projects Implementation*

Disbursements were effected based on the beneficiaries’ cost analysis. Costs of items procured were not justified in terms of value for money.

*Projects Monitoring*

Members of Technical and Steering Committees, as well as Assessors conducting site visits were not always knowledgeable about specific projects being assessed (for example projects involving purchase of items for construction).

Project monitoring was not done systematically. Site visits were not always done prior to disbursements. Project progress was only assessed, based on documents received from fund recipients. Moreover, Monitoring Reports by SCP Assessors were not always specific and explicit.

There was no evidence of any verification done by the SCP Unit of stated contribution/ contribution in kind from the NGO or other donors into the project.

*Project Completion Review*

* Completion reports were sought from the fund recipients only. No internal evaluation report was produced by the SCP Unit on the overall status or implementation of each project. There were no guidelines in place to determine when a project should be considered as a failure;
* Though projects might be successful activity wise, no proper follow up has been done by fund recipients to assess the outcome/impact of same on beneficiaries. Post completion follow-up of projects to ensure sustainability of same was not carried out at all by the SCP Unit;
* Around 12 per cent of NGOs had unused money from disbursements which were not returned to SCP and/or reused for further approved reallocations

*Other Issues*

The proper safeguarding of expensive specialised tools and equipment purchased against theft or otherwise has not been given due consideration. There were cases of loss of documents submitted by applicants.

Overall, lack of pragmatic and performance-based prerequisite activities prior to approving projects and lack of stringent monitoring of same have given way to possible misuse and wastage of funds.

Based on the loopholes identified in the operative framework of the SCP Unit, the Consultant has strongly recommended halting the processing of applications and the disbursement of funds until the whole process and mechanism are reviewed.

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED) has informed the Ministry in May 2017 that no new applications should be entertained as from 2017-18 and that funds will be allocated only to already approved ongoing projects.

***Ministry’s Reply***

1. The Consultant submitted his report in August 2016. The recommendations of the Consultant were being implemented by the Ministry. However, on 31 May 2017, the MOFED informed of the phasing out of the Programme by 2018. No new project has been entertained since 1 July 2017;
2. The Programme Coordinator in Mauritius performed tasks and duties as specified in his contract and as assigned by the Technical and Steering Committee. As for the project Coordinator in Rodrigues, he was paid based on mutual arrangements with NGOs. The Ministry does not have control on such practices;
3. Only NGOs in Rodrigues, due to absence of capacity, have assigned project write ups to a third party. Also, most of beneficiaries in Rodrigues comprised members of NGO from poor, distressed and vulnerable backgrounds, which are specificities of Rodrigues;
4. Assessment of NGOs was done through past track records, financial reports of the NGOs preceding years and pre-evaluation reports;
5. Due to shortage of staff to manage 75 ongoing projects in one financial year, verifications were done during site visits;
6. Legal and administrative procedures have been initiated to recover the amount due. 80 per cent thereof have already been recovered.

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