

International Consultant

Leaving No One Behind:

“Socio-economic Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Informal Sector, Migrants and Persons on Social Register of Mauritius”

BENEFICIARY	: Republic of Mauritius
COUNTRY	: Republic of Mauritius
FOCAL AREA	: Crisis Prevention and Recovery
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES	: Government of Mauritius
DURATION	: 30 Days
DUTY STATION	: On-Duty Station or remotely
STARTING DATE	: 21 September 2020
End Date	: 31 October 2020
PROJECT TITLE	: “Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Informal Sector, Migrants and Persons on Social Register of Mauritius”

A. Background

As of 25 August 2020, worldwide, there has been 23,311,719 reported cases of COVID-19 with 806,410 deaths. The World Health Organization recognizes that the pandemic has multidimensional impacts with a domino effect, not only on human health, but also with differentiated socio-economic impacts at all levels of society and within different sectors¹.

The World Economic Forum foresees that 50 million people are at risk of unemployment worldwide, including within SMEs, part-time occupation, and the informal sector, with the repercussions felt on the most vulnerable segments of society, including women. Concurrently, the human cost of the pandemic with psychological stress, fear, loss of productivity, self-isolation, gender-based violence, malnourishment, food security and access to food, exacerbate disparities².

Labor mobility represents a major driver for many economies as well as a fundamental component of contemporary supply chains for manufactured and value-added goods. As governments around

¹ World Health Organization, 25 August 2020, “COVID-19 Dashboard”, available online at <https://covid19.who.int>, Last Accessed 18 June 2020

² World Economic Forum, 27 March 2020, “This is the human impact of COVID-19 – and how business can help”, Available Online at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/this-is-the-human-impact-of-covid-19-and-how-business-can-help/>, Last Accessed 15 April

the world continue to try to contain the spread of COVID-19, the number of mobility restrictions, both internationally and domestically, has risen sharply. Besides the sanitary crisis, there is a high risk for existing vulnerabilities in some specific segments of the population to be exacerbated. Migrants face similar health threats from COVID-19 as their host populations. However, inadequate access to essential services, inadequate information and exclusion may make early detection, testing, diagnosis, contact tracing and seeking care for COVID-19 difficult for migrants thus increasing the risk of outbreaks in these population and presenting an additional threat to public health.

B. Introduction- The Context of Mauritius

As of 23 August 2020,, Mauritius had registered 346 confirmed cases of COVID-19, 335 discharged patients and 1 active cases³.

On 25 March 2020, shortly after the start of the lockdown and curfew order in force due to the Covid-19 outbreak, the Government of Mauritius announced the eligibility of some 35 000 households registered on the Social Register Mechanism (SRM)⁴ of Mauritius (in addition to persons with disabilities, those receiving the Carers' Allowance and residents of Homes) to receive food packs². This measure enabled vulnerable groups to access basic necessities in the light of closure of grocery outlets during strict lock-down measures until 31 March 2020. A COVID-19 Solidarity Fund was also established at the level of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, with donor allocation from different quarters, including development partners. Guidelines of Operation of the Solidarity Fund are in process of being drafted.

As an additional measure to ensure food equity and access, the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection appealed to distributors, supermarkets and Non-Governmental Organizations, amongst others, to join in the efforts of Government so that basic commodities are made easily available to vulnerable families and at reasonable costs⁵. In terms of the first felt economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the necessary restrictions on the movement of people in the republic of Mauritius have led to a high number of businesses that have had to close their operations and at best retain minimal staff. In recognition of the severe impact on the informal sector, more so, those families who live on daily wages for their subsistence. In response, on 31 March 2020, Government listed out measures to help those people by providing a financial support of 50% of the Minimum Wage, that is, Rs 5, 100 to every self-earned person. Informal workers were called upon to register online on the MRA website or to call on their hotline in a view to being considered as recipients. With an extension of the lock-down period, on 17 April 2020, Government announced an extension of the Wage Assistance Scheme to cover the month of April 2020, and an additional sum of Rs 2,550 for the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme to cover the period 16 April to 30 April 2020⁶.

³ Ministry of Health and Wellness, 23 August 2020, Communique, Available Online at <https://www.govmu.org/EN/communique/Documents/270420%20MEDIA%20BRIEF%20COVID%2019%20LUNDI%2027%20AVRIL%202020.pdf>, Last Accessed 28 April 2020

⁴ The SRM has been developed with the support of the UNDP

⁵ See

<http://www.govmu.org/English/News/Pages/Covid-19-35-000-needy-households-to-receive-food-packs-as-from-tomorrow.aspx>
<http://www.govmu.org/English/News/Pages/Covid-19-Government-proposes-set-of-measures-to-support-households-and-communities.aspx>

⁶ For a full list of the schemes, see Economic Development Board, COVID-19 Communiqué- April 2020, Available Online at <https://www.edbmauritius.org/covid-19-communications-announcements/>, Last Accessed 28 April 2020

In the meantime, to bridge the gap between those who are supported by the SRM and those who are left behind, and conscious of the necessity to contain any societal unrest, an informal solidarity network has been set-up comprising the business community, Non-Governmental Organizations, and individuals, in order to deliver food and other essentials to those in need.

C. Impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Groups, the Informal Sector and migrant labour

The international literature shows that while women and girls face differentiated impacts from crises, they are also already on the forefronts of the preparedness and response efforts and offer capacities, strengths and leadership that are crucial to effective response⁷. The Centre for Global Development⁴ reports that experience from the Ebola and Zika outbreaks shows that epidemics exacerbate existing inequalities, including those based on economic status, ability, age and gender⁸.

Another category of vulnerable groups includes Migrant Workers, representing 4.7% of the global labor pool, with 164 million workers, nearly half being women⁹. The present pandemic has raised concerns about discriminatory responses and fear towards different nationalities of migrants, as reported in the media in China and in the United States¹⁰, with a sentiment of “othering”. Given the potential negative impacts on Migrant Workers, the ILO has issued a Policy Brief for the protection of Migrant Workers in responses to address COVID-19¹¹. The brief further looks at the gendered dimension of the pandemic on migrant workers. Three key areas of action identified by ILO include the inclusion of migrant workers in national responses; bilateral cooperation between countries of origin and destination; and social dialogue and full involvement of employers’ and workers’ organizations in the development of COVID-19 responses.

The Context of Mauritius

Mauritius has had a long history of social protection to assist the poor and vulnerable¹². The ‘non-contributory’ assistance comes in the form of transfers awarded due to belonging to a specific category (universal pensions) or because of a low-income status combined with a specific hardship (such as social aid). Universal pensions comprise payments to all citizens either; (1) over 60 years old; or (2) widowed, disabled or orphaned. These transfers do not depend on a person’s income. The second form of support, ‘social aid’, is a targeted scheme to reduce hardship and vulnerabilities associated with specific events in life (e.g. abandoned women, carer’s allowance, bad weather

⁷ UNWomen, April 2020, “In Focus: Gender Equality Matters in COVID-19”, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response>, Last Accessed 28 April 2020

⁸ See also Harman S., 2015, Ebola Gender and Conspicuous Invisible Women in Global Health Governance”, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1108827>, Last Accessed 28 April 2020

⁹ See ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers, Available Online at https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_652001/lang--en/index.htm, Last Accessed 11 May 2020

¹⁰ Devakumar D. *et al*, 01 April 2020, “Racism and Discrimination in COVID-19 Responses” in The Lancet Correspondence, Vol. 395, Issue 10231, P 1194, Available Online at [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30792-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30792-3/fulltext), Last Accessed 11 May 2020.

¹¹ ILO Policy Brief, April 2020, “Protecting Migrant Workers During Covid-19 Pandemic- Recommendations for Policy Makers and Constituents”, Available Online at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_743268.pdf, Last Accessed 11 May 2020.

¹² Marshall Plan to fight against Poverty report, https://www.un-page.org/files/public/marshall_plan_against_poverty_volume_1.pdf, last accessed 26 April 2020

allowance for fishermen, etc.). Alternatively, various income supports in the form of Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) are being paid to households living in absolute poverty and who have signed a Marshall Plan Social Contract. The various CCTs comprise payments of a monthly subsistence allowance to ensure that the basic needs of households are met, a monthly child allowance to encourage them to send their children to school to complete the educational cycle, a Free Examination Fee Scheme to provide a second chance to students to improve their educational performance, a school premium to encourage children to pursue their educational achievements successfully and in-kind support such as distribution of School Materials, namely school bags, uniforms, shoes, socks, notebooks and stationery. The Marshall Plan Social Contract also provides for a range of empowerment support services in terms of Vocational Training, Employment and Livelihoods, Healthcare and Family Empowerment Programmes. Furthermore, the government subsidizes a number of goods and services such as rice, flour, cooking gas and free transport for older persons and students. In addition, a number of labour market policies and programmes enhance ‘employability’ of the poor.

The social protection system of Mauritius comprises a plethora of programmes operated across government units and by non-state actors (NGOs, CSR). It has been reported that their sheer magnitude, potential fragmentation and limited coordination and coherence had been key reasons behind their inherent inefficiencies, such as overlaps, inclusion and exclusion errors, diseconomies of scale and considerable leakages to non-poor¹³. Programmes for vulnerable groups are now housed under one Ministry, the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity in a bid to aim towards better coordination in the implementation of social protection programmes. Concurrently, these efforts should be well integrated into the government strategy to provide social protection; and ensure clarity on how they fit into the overall poverty reduction agenda of the Country. It is worthwhile to note that SRM has been a key tool at informing policymakers on the effective demand for pro-poor policies. It is a crucial element of Government’s anti-poverty policy. While the SRM remains an effective mechanism, which allows the poorer section of the community to be supported in a targeted manner, the extension of the restrictions of movement may lead to a sudden impoverishment of a new segment of the population, given the sudden increase in unemployment. It, therefore remains crucial to understand whether the social protection measures such as the SRM, wage assistance scheme and the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme are not leaving anyone behind, especially vulnerable groups..

Similarly, in terms of women’s participation in the informal sector, amongst the few research studies conducted, in 2014 it was highlighted that the informal sector remains a necessity “survival mode” , or self-employment outlet for a number of retrenched/unemployed women who use income generated there-from to improve their standard of living through informal entrepreneurial activities¹³. The informal sector therefore remains an important social net mechanism, especially given the lower participation of women in the paid labour force. Concurrently, a study examining the effects of the financial crisis on women in the informal sector revealed that global financial crisis impacted on women essentially in two ways, in terms of decrease in revenue due to a fall in demand, and increase in cost factors associated due to increase in cost of production¹⁴. It is expected that the lock-down situation during the COVID-19 pandemic would exacerbate existing disparities in the informal sector, particularly women informal workers, who already sit close to the bottom of the economic pyramid in Mauritius¹⁵.

¹³ Kasseeah H., Tandrayen-Ragoobur, 2014 (November), “Women in the Informal Sector in Mauritius: A Survival Mode” in *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, Vol. 33, NO. 8, pg. 75-763

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280158729_Women_in_the_informal_sector_in_Mauritius_A_survival_mode

¹⁴ Kasseeah H et al., 2014 (January), “Financial Crisis and Informal Sector Women Entrepreneurs in Mauritius” in *International Journal of Economics and Business Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276900097_Financial_crisis_and_informal_sector_women_entrepreneurs_in_Mauritius

¹⁵ World Bank, 2019, “Addressing Gender Inequalities in the Labour Market, Available Online at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29034?show=full>, Last Accessed 18 April 2020

See Statistics Mauritius, Labour force, Employment and Unemployment – Year 2018, Available Online at http://statsmauritius.govmu.org/English/Publications/Pages/LF_Emp_Unemp_Yr18.aspx, Last Accessed 26 April 2020.

D: Adding Migrant Labour¹⁶

Mauritius is home to approximately 1.27 million people and is both a country of origin and destination for international migrants, with foreign workers playing an important role in the shaping of the country's economy. Migrants work in sectors and industries that are likely to face the greatest economic impact from Covid-19 and where incomes are fragile – the hospitality and manufacturing as well as retail. With these businesses facing unprecedented challenges, small and medium enterprises, the self-employed, daily wage earners and migrant workers are hit the hardest.

With approximately 45,000 migrant workers currently fuelling Mauritius' economy (around 8% of the active population), it is important to ensure that migrant's socioeconomic and gendered status does not impact their ability to take precautionary measures for their health and that they are guaranteed access to information and essential services. The current business slowdown will also negatively impact migrant workers' earnings and, consequently, remittances sent home to family members. Families and communities dependent on remittances will see a knock-on effect of lower spending and lower consumption, creating economic challenges in communities of origin. While remittances can be counter-cyclical and provide support to countries when in economic need, this is likely not the case for countries during a global economic downturn and where large portions of the emigrant population are themselves negatively impacted by the downturn.

E. Rationale for Study

The coronavirus pandemic has already influenced the short and medium-term economic outlook and could potentially have a very significant socio-economic impact in Mauritius, especially amongst vulnerable groups. With a pandemic that has multi-dimensional effects, there needs to be a whole-of-government approach to addressing its different aspects. Therefore, stakeholders, including, Government and Development Partners need to evaluate, rethink and act within the specificities of the local context.

It is against this backdrop that UNDP Mauritius now seeks to provide for technical effective and appropriate assistance by enlisting the services of an International and National Consultant to conduct a Study on the “Socio-economic Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Informal Sector, Migrants and Persons on Social Register of Mauritius”.

The International Consultant will advise, guide and oversee the work of the National Consultant with key inputs in the formulation of the conceptual framework and timeline of the Study. The International Consultant will provide a breakdown of tasks to be performed and ensure timely submission of deliverables.

The National Consultant will act as the local counterpart for the International Consultant. All information pertaining to the different sectors will be collected by the National Consultant. First hand analysis will be undertaken and submitted to the International Consultant for other actions to be taken with a view to submitting a comprehensive document in line with the deliverables mentioned.

¹⁶ International Organisation for Migration (Mauritius Country Office), May 2020

The overall outcome of the Study is to conduct a rapid assessment of the social protection and assistance schemes put in place during the COVID 19 Pandemic for the above-mentioned cohorts of individuals, including women. It is expected that the Study will provide a bird's-eye view insight into the viability of the type of support which could be implemented in situations of pandemic outbreak or state health emergencies.

F. Scope of the Study and Institutional Arrangements

Leaving no one behind remains a political promise and aspiration of Member States in achieving the SDGs. A human rights-based approach centered around building a strong social capital for a resilient economy remains key in COVID-19 response plans for the United Nations per its Global Offer to protect the poor and vulnerable and bolster economic recovery.

In Mauritius, the UNDP, in collaboration with IOM, and other stakeholders are seeking to extend an immediate country-focused response in terms of extending evidence-based policy advice/ technical assistance to assist the country in its foresight to cope with the social and economic impacts of the pandemic.

The COVID-19 outbreak should not be seen as a public health issue thereby focusing only on the humanitarian dimension- Its developmental orientation needs a cursory assessment. However, at this stage, it is difficult to undertake a comprehensive gender-sensitive socio-economic impact assessment of COVID-19 in Mauritius given the intensity and complexity of the actual outbreak and its future implications. A rapid assessment at this stage will provide some insights into the various dimensions and complexity of the impact.

The study will delve into the effect on beneficiaries of the Social Register of Mauritius, those who are likely to be eligible under the SRM due to COVID 19, and the informal sector.

G. Objectives of the Study

The Objective of the Consultancy is to carry out a rapid scan of the current short-terms socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups of women and men and households; the informal sector, casual workers and migrants and in the broader context; in addition to analyzing the medium- and long-term impacts of Government's response measures.

The specific objectives of the Study are to:

- (i) Carry out a rapid gender sensitive socio-economic impact assessment of the present situation following COVID-19 regarding (i) registered beneficiaries of Social Register Mechanism (SRM), (ii) migrant workers and (iii) those operating in the informal sector¹⁷.
- (ii) Identify the magnitude and dimensions of COVID-19 restrictions on the informal sector operations and casual employment.
- (iii) Evaluate current policy measures including fiscal stimulus, wage assistance and their contribution to socio-economic recovery amongst vulnerable groups
- (iv) Highlight critical vulnerabilities at the household level for those under the SRM, in casual employment and the informal sector, particularly as exacerbated by extended lockdown restrictions.

¹⁷ The socio-economic impact assessment (SEIA) will be guided by the UNDP SEIA Checklist which will be shared with the Consultant.

- (v) Identify risks associated with areas of Mauritius having the lowest development based on Relative Development Index of poverty
- (vi) Explore how to expand social safety nets to cover more of the poorest, who may potentially be affected by an economic slowdown.
- (vii) Recommend how to prevent the crisis from derailing our sustainable development efforts and turn this crisis into an impetus to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals especially Goal 1 (End Poverty in all its Forms Everywhere), Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 5 (Gender Equality), Goal 6 (Water and Sanitation), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 10 (Reduce Inequalities) and Goal 17 (Partnerships).
- (viii) Provide recommendations on social assistance schemes on the immediate, short-medium terms and long-term to alleviate the socio-economic impacts identified in the Study.

G. Key deliverables

1. Inception report detailing the workplan of both the International and National Consultant with timelines, outline of the report and the succinct methodology to be used;
2. A comprehensive draft report with a desk review (including inputs of the National Consultant) covering the various objectives enumerated above;
3. A final report with recommendations on the way forward
4. A user-friendly succinct Policy Brief covering key issues (immediate/short-medium/long term)

All deliverables will be endorsed by the UNDP Resident Representative

H. Duration

The study will be conducted for a period of 30 days starting from the date the contract is being awarded.

I. Reporting

The work will be coordinated by UNDP Mauritius. The Consultant shall report to the Head of Socio-Economic Unit of UNDP Country Office. The final report will be validated by the Government of Mauritius.

J. Competencies: Corporate Competencies

- Demonstrated commitment to UN's mission, vision and values including working in a culturally diverse environment.
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability.
- Demonstrates ability to function in a team environment and shares knowledge and experience.

K. Functional Competencies

- Relevant experience in social and economic development issues with particular focus on Mauritius.
- Experience and good understanding of migration issues
- Excellent knowledge of the SDGs and their interlinkages
- Excellent oral and writing skills with strong academic and policy experience.
- Capacity to interact with Senior Officials of Government, Donor partners, CSOs and other stakeholders
- Outstanding analytical and drafting skills. Ability to present coherent and convincing positions both in writing and orally. There must be evidence of similar works done in the past on issues of economics analysis, gender, and inequality.
- Strong organizational skills

- Knowledge of gender mainstreaming in developmental interventions would be an advantage
- The Consultant must also possess ability to work under pressure and to amenable to change

International Consultant's Profile

Education

- Advanced University Degree/ Master's in applied economics, development studies, migration, social sciences and Public Policy, or related fields relevant to the Consultancy

A Phd in any of these fields is desirable

Experience

- Minimum of fifteen years of work experience in the areas of development (economics, public policy, migration, and social issues) in developing countries or countries of similar human development index as Mauritius

Knowledge and Skills

- Substantial experience in development policy analysis and with field surveys in similar countries as Mauritius or similar developing contexts.
- Strong qualitative and quantitative skills and demonstrated capacity to perform outstanding original research including statistical analysis and data management.
- Strong working knowledge of the UNDP
- Familiarity with statistical software
- Knowledge of the Mauritius economy and development plans is highly desirable
-

Language and IT Skills:

- Excellent written and oral English. Knowledge of French would be an advantage.
- Fully IT Literate, including use of teleconferencing

Scope of Price Proposal and Schedule Payments

A. Price Proposal

- The financial offer should be quoted as a lump sum amount, "All-inclusive". The term "All inclusive" implies that all costs (professional fees, travel costs, living allowances, communications, consumables, etc.) that could possibly be incurred by the Contractor are already factored into the final amount submitted in the proposal.
- The contract price is fixed regardless of changes in the cost components. Payments will be effected based on deliverables.

Payment Schedule

S/N	Time Frame	Fee (%)
1. Inception report detailing the workplan of both the International and National Consultant with timelines, outline of the report and the succinct methodology to be used;	23 September 2020	25%
2. A comprehensive draft report with a desk review covering the various objectives enumerated above;	23 October 2020	40%
3. A final report with recommendations on the way forward	30 October 2020	25%

4. A user-friendly succinct Policy Brief covering key issues (immediate/short-medium/long term)	31 October 2020	10%
---	-----------------	-----

B. Proposed Work Plan and Indicative Time

It is planned that the consultancy starts by 21 September 2020 and ends on or before 31 October 2020.

C. Recommended Presentation of Offer

Individual Consultants/Resource Persons are invited to submit the following applications and requirements:

- Duly accomplished **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability** using the template provided by UNDP.
- Personal CV, indicating all experience from similar projects, and the contact details (email and telephone number) of the Candidate.
- Brief description of why the individual considers him/herself as the most suitable for the assignment, and a methodology on how they will approach and complete the assignment.
- Financial Proposal that indicates the all-inclusive fixed total contract price, supported by a breakdown of costs, as per template provided. If an Offeror is employed by an organization/company/institution, and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the Offeror must indicate at this point, and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP.

D. Criteria for Selection of Best Offer

Only candidates obtaining a minimum of 70 marks out of 100 in the Technical Evaluation would be considered for the Financial Evaluation. The technical criteria and weightage are as follows:

Educational Qualifications	Experience	Knowledge and Skills	Language and IT Proficiency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced University Degree/ master's in applied economics, development studies, migration, social sciences and Public Policy, or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of fifteen years of work experience in the areas of development (economics, public policy, migration, and social issues) in developing countries or countries of similar human development index as Mauritius 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial experience in development policy analysis and with field surveys in similar countries as Mauritius or similar developing contexts. • Strong qualitative and quantitative skills and demonstrated capacity to perform outstanding original research including statistical analysis and data management. • Strong working knowledge of the UNDP • Familiarity with statistical software • Knowledge of the Mauritius economy and development plans is highly desirable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent written and oral English. Knowledge of French would be an advantage. • Fully IT Literate, including use of teleconferencing

related fields relevant to the Consultancy • A Phd in any of these fields is desirable			
30 MARKS	40 MARKS	20 MARKS	10 MARKS

Important Note:

- Qualified women are encouraged to apply
- Interested offerors above the age of 62: UNDP regulations require, at their own cost, to undergo a full medical examination including x-rays. Medical evaluation documentation does not need to be submitted with the other requested documents listed above but will be requested should the candidate be chosen.

Approved by:

Name:	Ms. Amanda Serumaga
Position:	UNDP Resident Representative
Signature:	
Date:	