

CENTRE FOR



Prof. M Joynathsing
Project Manager

INTRODUCTION

The Centre for Applied Social Research (CASR) is a joint initiative of the Mauritius Research Council and the University of Mauritius. The Centre became operational in February 2000. In keeping with its mandate the Centre undertakes both academic and contract research. In its endeavour to grow into a front-rank organisation of national repute the Centre's hallmarks are academic rigour, openness about both its research methods and any shortcomings in its data and independence in its design and reporting. The Centre has so far avoided convenient methodologies such as quota sampling and restricted itself to informing rather than trying to influence public policy. After having completed two projects on *The Attitudes of the Unemployed Towards Accepting Employment in the EPZ Sector* and *Work and The Family*, the Centre handled the following

Mauritian Social Attitudes Survey 2002

As recommended by Professor R Jowell of the National Centre for Social Research (UK) the Centre carried out a Social Attitudes Survey. This was the first time that such a study was undertaken in Mauritius. The survey aimed at finding what people thought about a range of issues important to all citizens. This first social attitudes study tapped issues pertaining to the family, inequality, law and order, employment, health, education, social security and local environment. The aim of the study was to chart, describe, explain and interpret changes in people's attitudes, beliefs and values over the years. The survey also captured data pertaining to behaviour patterns, household circumstances and employment.

The report was completed in December 2002. The publication of this report helped to fill a gap in social measurement. It helped to record and interpret long term climate shifts in public opinion while dispelling numerous popular misconceptions about Mauritius.

Survey of Smoking, Drinking and Illicit Drug Use Among Secondary School Students in Mauritius

Initially approached by the National Agency for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Substance Abuses (NATRESA) to carry out the above project the Centre submitted a research proposal which was approved for funding by MRC to the tune of Rs237,500. The main objective of this study was to identify the consumption patterns and trends of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs use among a nationally representative sample of secondary school children. The study was designed to investigate the causes of these behaviours among this social group. Certain other adjacent areas which would be useful to policy makers and parents were also to be investigated.

The survey covered all types of secondary schools (public and private, single sex and mixed, large and small) and all pupils of Form III to Form VI. The sample of respondents was selected in two stages. At the first stage 20 schools were selected from the list of all schools provided by the Ministry of Education. At the second stage 44 pupils were selected in each school, allowing for a non-response rate of 10%.

The pupils taking part in the survey were asked to complete a questionnaire. All precautions were taken to ensure the complete confidentiality of the answers given.

Field work for the survey was completed. Data would be processed and analysed and a report submitted in November 2003.

Poverty and Social Exclusion in Mauritius

This project, originally approved by MRC as Demography of Vulnerable Groups to be undertaken under the aegis of CASR was re-designed. The study would be undertaken in stages comprising two surveys.

The objective of the first survey would be to establish a list of ordinary household goods and services which were perceived as necessary by the majority of the population. As a means of determining deprivation, in the second survey, a representative sample of households would be asked which of the items identified in the first stage they could not afford. Such a study should provide interesting details on poverty and deprivation.

The MRC approved an amount of Rs405,000 for the project.

STAFFING

During the year under review Professor M. Joynathsing's contract was extended up to 30 September 2003. Mr N Richards and Mr A Peedoly were appointed Assistant Research Fellow and Research Assistant on a one-year full-time contract with effect from May 2003 and April 2003 respectively.

Additional staff were attached to the Centre to contribute to particular projects. To avoid having to recruit interviewers and clerical staff, the Centre has established a close working relationship with the Central Statistics Office which has access to a highly-valued panel of free-lance, part-time interviewers.

COLLABORATION WITH THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH, UK

Professor R Jowell received a copy of the Mauritian Social Attitudes Survey and was interested to be updated about CASR. According to Professor Jowell the Mauritian Social Attitudes Survey should be the Centre's regular flagship project and one of several projects in the Centre's portfolio. Others would need to be commissioned or grant-aided.

Professor Jowell also expressed a keen interest to visit the Centre early in 2004 to make an assessment of its needs in terms of manpower and staff development. He volunteered to send over staff from the National Centre (UK) for short-term assignments aimed at providing training in research methods.