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# Workshop on Advancing Gender Equality in Customs Administrations

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), in collaboration with the World Customs Organisation (WCO), hosted a five-day Gender Equality in Customs Administrations workshop at the MRA Custom House from Monday 06 to Friday 10 May, 2019. The workshop aimed at enhancing the skills of participants of the East and Southern Africa region on how Gender Equality could be included in the overall training curriculum of countries. Developed by the WCO Secretariat under the framework of the Finland ESA Project, the workshop saw the participation of delegates from Eswatini, Malawi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Seychelles and Mauritius.



Honourable Fazila Jeewa-Daareewoo, G.C.S.K., Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare was the chief guest of the opening ceremony. She was welcomed by the Director General of the MRA, Mr. Sudhamo Lal, for the Opening Ceremony of the workshop in the presence of Ms. Riitta Passi, Project Manager, Finland East and Southern Africa (ESA) and members of the MRA Management Team.

The Vice-Prime Minister, in her keynote address, praised the MRA and the WCO for their effort to host the Workshop on Gender Equality in Customs Administrations and extended her full support to this initiative. The Vice-Prime Minister underscored that the MRA's formulation of the Equal Opportunity Policy and the inclusion of the Gender Statement in its forthcoming Annual Report clearly illustrate MRA's will to be an equal opportunity employer. Honourable Jeewa-Daareewoo concluded that there are potential avenues of collaboration that should be explored by the MRA and the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare for the advancement of gender equality.



The Project Manager for the Finland ESA, Ms. Riitta Passi, observed, in her address to the audience, that Finland was one of the leading countries of the world in fostering gender equality and the country keeps on taking actions to promote it.

On his part, Mr. Sudhamo Lal underlined that, since its inception in 2006, the MRA has been living up to its commitment of being an equal opportunity employer. This is boldly stated in the MRA HR Management Manual, he said. Mr. Lal further added that, in line with the Equal Opportunity Act 2008, the MRA is engaged to minimise discrimination and promote recruitment, training, selection and employment on the basis of merit.

## MRA welcomes MEXA

The Director-General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), Mr. Sudhamo Lal, welcomed the Chairman of the Mauritius Export Association (MEXA), Mr. P. Robert, on Thursday 23 May, 2019 at the MRA Head Office. Following his nomination, the new Chairman of MEXA paid a courtesy call on Mr. Sudhamo Lal and, during the meeting, they explored further avenues of collaboration between both institutions.

The Director-General of the MRA congratulated Mr. P. Robert upon his nomination and reiterated MRA's commitment to collaborate with its stakeholders.

Mr. Robert was accompanied by Mrs. L. Rajmun-Joosery, Director of MEXA.



## Benchmark Visit of Uganda Revenue Authority

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) welcomed a delegation comprising officials from the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) for a benchmarking exercise, from Wednesday 08 to Friday 10 May, 2019. The aim of the visit was to have an overview of the customer services, e-services platform, call centre, record management system and feedback mechanisms in place at the MRA.



The URA delegates had working sessions with the concerned MRA Directors over the three days at the MRA Head Office, and the visit ended with a de-briefing session, whereby the members of the delegation thanked the MRA for facilitating the visit and for the valuable insights.

# Taxpayer Education

Following a request from the Central Water Authority (CWA), a sensitization session was organised by the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) at the seat of the organisation in St Paul on Thursday 16 May, 2019. Mr. M. Oozeer, Section Head Operational Services Department (OSD), enlightened the audience on the operation of the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) and, during the Question and Answer segment, he replied to the queries of the CWA staff.

The MRA regularly attends to similar requests from its stakeholders, as part of its strategic objective of 'Promoting Taxpayers' Education, Communication and Facilitation'.

In the same vein, the Taxpayer Education and Communication Department (TECD) of the MRA is hosting a series of educational sessions in secondary schools across the island to promote a tax culture.



During May, 24 secondary schools were targeted and resource persons from the TECD conducted the educational sessions. The response from the students was positive and they actively engaged with the resource persons by raising questions on how to be compliant taxpayers.



An estimated 1,500 students were sensitized during May and the sensitization campaign will be rolled-out to more colleges in the coming months.

## Presentation to Bel Air SSS students

Fifty students of Bel Air SSS were present at the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) Head Office on Tuesday 07 May, 2019 for a presentation by Mr. D. Maunikum, Assistant Director, Human Resources and Training Department (HRTD). The aim of the presentation was to enhance the awareness of the students on the working environment and the skills/attitudes expected from organisations.

Every year the MRA organises an interactive session with University/ College students, as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility. The purpose of the session is to help bridge the gap between the academic environment and the workplace environment.

The students responded positively to the presentation and they thanked the MRA for the laudable effort.

## Capacity Building: Initiation to iSpring

A half-day training on iSpring was organised by the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) on Thursday 23 May, 2019. In addition to MRA officers, Police Officers (National Coast Guard and Special Mobile Force) also attended the training, which initiated the participants to the usage of the software.

The iSpring software is a PowerPoint based application which enables users to render slides more interactive.



The training was delivered by Mr. N. Vencatatchellum and Mrs. S. Hossen, Team Leader and Customs Officer respectively at the Customs Department.



# Drug Seizures

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) made five seizures during May, which amount to nearly Rs. 10 million.



21 ecstasy tablets were intercepted and secured on Friday 03 May, 2019, at the Parcel Post Office (PPO). The drugs, sent from Netherlands, were addressed to a resident of Tombeau Bay and one arrest was made.

On the same date, a hairdresser of South Africa was intercepted at the SSR Airport on the basis of her evasive replies and thereafter she purged 51 pellets of heroin, which is of an estimated value of Rs. 8.9 million.



Eleven days later, a Mauritian passenger was intercepted at the SSR Airport with 100 cartridges of cigarettes, 49 packets of smoking tobacco, 298 pods of e-liquid and 21 e-cigarette starter kits in her luggage. The passenger was informed that she had committed an offence and she was agreeable to having the case compounded.



53.8 grams of Crystal Meth worth Rs. 800,000 was detected at the PPO on Tuesday 21 May, 2019, as the recipient did not turn up to collect the parcel.



Similarly, an unclaimed parcel was tagged for examination at the PPO on Thursday 30 May, 2019 and 9.3 grams of Crystal Meth was secured. The drugs, valued at Rs. 139,500, were secured.

# Training on Maintenance of Boats

To ensure proper maintenance and running conditions of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) boats, a training course on 'Engine and Electrical Maintenance' was organised with the assistance of the National Coast Guards. MRA staffs were initiated to the training and they will be part of the navigating crew on MRA boats.

Through the acquired training, the officers will be able to initiate emergency repairs and maintenance on the MRA boats. The MRA recently acquired two additional boats in line with MRA's strategic objective of reinforcing border protection.