

Message of Hon. Alain WONG, M.S.K, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, in the context of the commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2018

On the 17th of October, Mauritius joins the world to commemorate the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

This year, the theme is *“Coming together with those furthest behind to build an inclusive world of universal respect for human rights and dignity.”*

On this day we are called upon to ensure the fulfillment of our obligations under international human rights laws to assess and evaluate our policies and strategies to eradicate poverty. This day also serves to remind us of the multifaceted causes and consequences of poverty. We need to come forward with improved measures and new initiatives that will not only give hope to the poor but will also make a meaningful difference in their lives.

Government is deeply committed to the eradication of poverty, as demonstrated in its Vision 2030 and the Government Programme 2015-2019. We have already launched a series of empowerment programmes and projects that put the vulnerable families at the centre of development so as to facilitate their inclusion in the mainstream of society.

The Social Integration and Empowerment Act, which was enacted in December 2016, is a landmark measure in the history of poverty alleviation in Mauritius. The Act makes provision for the setting up of Empowerment Schemes to combat absolute poverty and to provide financial support to families, who are eligible under the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM) and have signed the social contract. Since December 2016 to date, an amount of around Rs 652 Million has been disbursed by Government for the benefit of around 11,000 families, including those in Rodrigues.

We also provide empowerment support in the areas of education, training, employment, health, family welfare, sports and leisure, and life skills enhancement as offered by key service providers.

Government firmly believes that a decent shelter is a *sine qua non* condition for a family to win the battle against poverty. Under the Housing Scheme for SRM beneficiaries, Government is subsidizing 75 % of the cost of the housing unit and the beneficiaries have to pay only the remaining 25 % over a period ending at retirement age.

The introduction of a Minimum Wage and the Negative Income Tax is yet another breakthrough measure announced in 2017-2018 Budget to address the issue of absolute poverty and promote economic empowerment.

The National Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Foundation was set up to allocate CSR funds to NGOs to enable them to undertake programmes and projects for the benefit of targeted vulnerable groups in ten priority areas, most of which are directly related to poverty alleviation. In 2017, the National CSR Foundation had approved 231 projects from 173 NGOs for a total amount of RS 203 Million.

My Ministry has also launched Community Working Groups in all districts of Mauritius and in Rodrigues. The purpose of the Community Working Group is basically for private and public partners, NGOs and civil society to collaborate through a holistic manner for the advancement of the community and to support beneficiaries at grass root level for their empowerment.

I take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to all stakeholders, including NGOs, agents of civil society and the public and private sectors. I also extend my thanks to our international collaborating partners without whom our efforts to eradicate poverty would not have materialized.

It is the moral and legal duty of all of us to strengthen our commitment and actions in overcoming the poverty challenges. As rightly said by Nelson Mandela, *“as long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality persist in our world, none of us can truly rest.”*

I therefore call upon each and every citizen to join hands in the fight against poverty as it is for the prosperity and success of the whole nation.

*Hon. Marie Roland Alain Wong Yen Cheong,
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Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment