



SUBMISSIONS PART II IN RESPECT OF THE RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY



**By the RODRIGUES GOVERNMENT
EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION**



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Public sector in Rodrigues has come under critical scrutiny in recent times with calls for reforms. The main focus today after some eighteen (18) years of autonomy is how our public sector can be restructured to make it relevant for the present circumstance and thus useful to the majority of people living and working in Rodrigues.

Undoubtedly we have moved a step forward since submissions were made in the context of the last (2016) review of pay and grading structures and conditions of service of the Pay Research Bureau. Some important recommendations have been made, but they still remain to be implemented due to some administrative impediments which needs to be addressed by the PRB in its forthcoming report through the revamping of the Rodrigues Autonomy project through apt pay and grading structures of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

RE-ARMING THE PUBLIC SERVICES TO MAKE THE AUTONOMY WORK IN THE INTEREST OF THE PEOPLE WE SERVE.

Rodrigues has no capitalist structure and it is evident that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has to initiate things, in comparison to Mauritius where the state is an economic facilitator for the private sector. In Rodrigues the R.R.A is a social facilitator for the Rodriguan society, this difference should be clearly understood otherwise the Rodriguan society is doomed to suffer from underdevelopment.

The Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) Act 2001 has attributed to the Regional Assembly all political and administrative powers regarding forty-seven (47) areas of responsibilities for the functioning of the Island. Therefore, defacto, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has to fulfil and undergo the work that are actually being done by Ministries, Departments, Local Authorities, Municipalities, District Council, Parastatal bodies (e.g the Central Water Authority (CWA), Waste Water Management Authority, Beach and Tourism Authorities, National Conservation Parks etc...) on a daily basis.

When referring to the specificities of Rodrigues one should understand that Rodrigues as an island country has to deliver the same quality services to the population even though not of comparable size to Mauritius. The role of all public service is to serve the public and strive at reaching customers satisfaction. It is important to choose and work on the appropriate governing structure and identify which work effective. Fundamental principles of

governance such as openness/disclosure of information, integrity and accountability have also been taken into consideration during the preparation of our submission for the restructuring of the Rodriguan Public Service. Therefore, taking into consideration the specific context in which the Island is operating, it is imperative and in the interest of the population to have an adequate full fledged public service to improve service delivery instead of operating on an ad-hoc basis and apply the fire-fighting strategy in emergency instances.

The key to the proper running of the Rodriguan affairs and its development will be highly dependent on the capacity of the Pay Research Bureau to design a proper organizational structure for the Civil Service in Rodrigues with appropriate and adequate staff and by significantly improve the conditions of employment of public officers falling under the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

BACKGROUND

THE RODRIGUAN PUBLIC SERVICE TODAY

The Rodriguan public services that exist today in most cases are kept afloat by a skeleton staff overworked and undervalued. After some **eighteen (18) years of existence**, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the Executive Council still lack the administrative structures corresponding to its constitutional powers and the Rodriguan citizens suffer from the absence of appropriate executive arm that will deliver the goods and at the same time respecting their human and constitutional rights.

It is in the same context that Mr Dev Manraj in the 2013 PRB errors, omissions and anomalies report makes the following appropriate remark, we quote; ***“Although Section 26 of the Act provides for a lot of delegation of responsibilities to the Local Administration, the real administrative autonomy has never materialised because of certain legal impediments.”***

The autonomy project for the island of Rodrigues has one as its objective the coordination of the internal affairs of the Island with a view to improve service delivery to the Rodriguan population. The objective of decentralisation as in the case of Rodrigues is to improve efficiency, transparency and promote democracy in the delivery of local public service goods by providing services needed by the local community. Research has proved that very often decentralisation may not work properly and give rise in an increased inequality within the community and an increase in the fiscal burden on the poor due to the fact that there is poor mechanism in place at local and regional level to ensure quality public services. Furthermore, the main aim of

decentralisation is to improve service delivery by coming closer to the citizens and reducing all the bureaucratic and red-tapism that do exist. Therefore, the idea behind decentralisation is that local institutions and local administrative offices be empowered to provide better service delivery and bring services closer to the population to improve their quality of life.

The Union strongly believe that for a regional government to discharge its duties properly there must be structures and mechanisms that allow the implementation of policies in line with its constitutional power and in the interest of the local population

It is strongly believed that restoring and improving the public services by providing the financial basis, appropriate structure as well as necessary human resources is one of the key solution to the socio-economic problem the island is facing and will be also fundamental in the building of a culture of service that respond effectively to the need of the Rodriguan people and at the same time set the basis for an equitable, prosperous, democratic and sustainable Rodriguan society

We need high quality Public services that are designed to invest in the future of our society, having social objectives, meeting high ethical standards, involving workers with full workers' rights in the design and delivery decisions, responsive and accessible to the society needs and having the capacity to provide the necessary infrastructure for a healthy economy and are democratically run with open and transparent decision making.

All this in the interest of the people we serve.

METHODOLOGY

Rodrigues has its own political structure and its own civil service to serve the Rodriguan population and to look after its own destiny,

In preparing our submissions we have made wide consultations throughout the public service and taking into consideration the following;

1. The effective pay and grading structures that would empower the Rodrigues Regional Assembly with the necessary manpower to fully achieve its prescribed responsibility;
2. Appropriate and necessary structures to allow the Rodriguan civil service to operate in a regular manner and in conformity with provisions of the RRA Act, the constitution and relevant laws, enactments, regulations and documents.

3. The need to empower the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to achieve the autonomy of Rodrigues, taking into account sections 28 and 32 of the RRA Act.
4. Minimal establishment in respect of particular post for functional purposes.

Our ultimate goal is to ensure that public services in Rodrigues are adequately funded, structured and staffed with well-trained workers capable of delivering quality public service to the Rodriguan population.

SUBMISSIONS

1. ALLOWANCE FOR HIGHER COST OF LIVING

- The island of Mauritius, the island of Agalega and the island of Rodrigues are inhabited islands of the Republic of Mauritius. Despite the decision to grant subsidy on the cost of certain commodities, the price of most products in the Island of Rodrigues is higher than that in the Island of Mauritius and Agalega. This is due to the fact that freight charges and the other costs for shipment, handling, and unloading involved in the exportation of goods to Agalega are subsidized. Transportation of goods from Mauritius to Agalega is subsidized solely for maintaining the same price of goods in the island of Mauritius and Agalega. Denying the same consideration to the inhabitants of the island of Rodrigues is discriminatory.
- Public officers from mainland Mauritius posted to Rodrigues on a tour of service are compensated for the higher prices of goods in Rodrigues. This compensation for higher prices of goods is denied to government employees on the establishment of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. This is double discrimination against employees on the establishment of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.
- The ideal is that government subsidizes the higher cost of goods in Rodrigues Island due to freight charges and the other costs for shipment, handling and unloading. However, until the time this occurs, discrimination against employees of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly can come to an end immediately. And this is in the hands of the Pay Research Bureau.

PROPOSAL:

A cost of living allowance- Rodriguan Cola be granted to all employees of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

2. DELEGATION OF POWER TO THE ISLAND CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ICE)

The purpose of crucial recommendations made in the context of the last review has been defeated due to excessive delay in their implementation. This constitutes a major obstacle that is preventing conclusive progress and it should be overcome.

PROPOSAL:

It is proposed that the ICE be granted delegation of power for the additional following issues:-

- **Award of Incremental credits to Public officers in line with Human Resource Management Manual;**
- **Adjustment of salaries to public officers who have been shortpaid;**
- **Approval to issue advertisement for the filling of vacancies on the Rodrigues establishment;**
- **Establishment clearance to fill unfunded vacancies on the Rodrigues Regional Assembly when funds are available;**
- **Clearance for conditions of service for contract officers,**
- **Award and non-award course dispensed to public officers locally or overseas.**

3. ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS COMMITTEE

Unwarranted over-dependency on the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reforms

- Over-dependence of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly on the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms tends to prolong human resource processes. The staff of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is under the control of Island Chief Executive. However the latter loses this control when matters have to be referred to the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reforms.
- In response to this representation the setting up of an Administrative Reforms Committee (ARC) at the level of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly was recommended by the Pay Research Bureau in its last report in 2016.
- However, things have not changed despite this crucial recommendation in view of reluctance to delegate power to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. The recommendation is being interpreted diversely by different parties and this constitutes a major obstacle that is preventing progress.
- We hold the view that further approval of the authorities in Mauritius is not required in cases where the criteria for the implementation of the conditions of employment or related recommendations are clearly set and the beneficiaries satisfy the eligibility criteria.
- A clear indications of matters/issues pertaining to Rodrigues that are normally referred to the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reforms and its Standing Committees to be dealt with by the Administrative Reforms Committee at the level of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly would be commendable to overcome any diverging interpretation.

PROPOSAL

The Pay Research Bureau is urged to define matters/issues pertaining to Rodrigues that are normally referred to the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reforms and its Standing Committees to be dealt with by the Administrative Reforms Committee at the level of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Some of the issues are listed hereunder but may not be exhaustive:

- **Payment of fees to ad-hoc committees not falling under those stated in the PRB reports;**
- **Payment of Inducement allowance to officers falling in scarcity areas;**
- **Any other allowances as may applied by public officers and not falling in PRB report;**
- **Application of recommendation made to Mauritian Public officers to those working on the Rodrigues Regional Assembly when same situation prevails;**
- **Scheme of Service for posts on the Rodrigues establishment;**
- **Implementation and Monitoring of Reforms in Public Service and recommendations of PRB Reports and any other approved reports;**
- **ARC to be responsible for the implementation of PRB recommendations in the RRA instead of the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reforms.**

4. SCHEME OF SERVICE

Despite provisions of the guidelines for new and streamlined procedures to reduce the timeframe for prescription of scheme of service with a view to enable the filling of vacancies promptly, there is still considerable delay in the prescription of schemes of service for post on the Rodrigues Regional Assembly causing much prejudice to employees and impeding the service. We have in mind the following examples:

FISHERIES DEPARTMENT

Controller, Fisheries	– Last prescribed in 2005
Assistant Controller	– Last prescribed in 1995
Principal Fisheries Protection Officer	– Last prescribed in 2011
Senior Fisheries Protection Officer	– Last prescribed in 2011

Proposed scheme for the above was sent to the union for views on the following dates;

1. 05 October 2016
2. 27 April 2018
3. 14 August 2019
4. 10 June 2020

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE DEPARTMENT

Officer in charge, Fire and rescue service	– Last prescribed in 2000
Divisional Officer	– Not yet prescribed
Senior Station Officer	– Last prescribed in 2014
Station Officer	– Last prescribed in 1997
Sub Officer	– Last prescribed in 1997

Proposed scheme for the above was sent to the union for views on the following dates;

1. 27 June 2016
2. 8 August 2017
3. 8 February 2019
4. 15 May 2019

Considering the above, we are proposing the following;

PROPOSAL:

- a) **New procedure and guideline to reduce the processing time for prescription of the scheme of service.**
- b) **The effective date of grade to grade promotion takes effect from either:**
 - (i) **The date of assumption of duty; or**
 - (ii) **the date the actingship/assignment of duties starts; or**
 - (iii) **the date of vacancy whichever is the latest, provided in case of**
 - (iv) **there has been no gap between the actingship/assignment of duties and the date of offer of appointment.**

5. POST OF ISLAND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- (a) The post of Island Chief Executive is established under Section 66 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act No. 39 of 2001; and the incumbent is a public officer and is responsible for the efficient administration of all the functions of the Executive Council. The Island Chief Executive is at the apex of the hierarchy and is the head of the Administrative Cadre. With these responsibilities, the Island Chief Executive is for the Rodrigues Executive Council and for the Rodrigues Public Service what the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service is for the Cabinet and the Mauritian Public Service.

The latter also performs the duties related to financial secretary and is often required to replace the Magistrate in her/his absence.

Actually the post of Island Chief Executive is graded at the same level as the post of Permanent Secretary. This is most inequitable hence we are making the following proposal;

PROPOSAL:

The post of Island Chief Executive be upgraded to at least the level of Senior Chief Executive.

- (b) Section 66 of the RRA Act 2001 makes provision for the appointment of the Island Chief Executive who shall be a Public Officer for the purposes of section 112 of the constitution. It is stipulated in the abovementioned sections that before giving his concurrence to the appointment of the Island Chief Executive, as supervising officer under section 89 (4) of the constitution, the Prime Minister shall consult the Chief Commissioner.

However, the law is silent on what will happened to the Island Chief Executive in case of non-compatibility between the Chief Commissioner and the appointed Island Chief Executive or where a newly elected Chief Commissioner receive the concurrence of the

Prime Minister for the appointment of another Public Officer as Island Chief Executive.

This situation has in the past led to premature and brutal termination of assignment, reversion and/or dismissal of appointed Island Chief Executive

In light of the above and for the sake of fairness and natural justice, we believe that the Pay Research Bureau should come forward with appropriate recommendation to redress this situation.

PROPOSAL:

The retirement benefits of a Public Officer on the Rodrigues Regional Assembly who have been appointed to act in or has been assigned the duties of Island Chief Executive and retires or is subsequently reverted to his substantive office for the reasons mentioned above be computed on the prevailing pensionable emoluments of the office of Island Chief Executive. Provided that he has been performing the duties for at least four (4) years or an aggregate period of at least four (4) years within a period of six (6) years.

6. Minimal Establishment

It is the practice for the Pay Research Bureau to recommend the creation of a new post. However it refrains to recommend the number of posts that should be established.

This approach is inconsistent for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in particular cases.

Its terms of reference do not debar the Pay Research Bureau from making recommendations pertaining to the size of the establishment in respect of any post. In view of its peculiarities, it is imperative for the Pay Research Bureau to depart from its normal practice whenever warranted and recommend the minimal establishment in respect of particular posts for functional purposes

Moreover, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly still needs to take-off properly. At this initial stage of its growth it is imperative for it to benefit from the service of a reinforced staff. We are of opinion that the Pay Research Bureau should be guided by the following key consideration;

- (i) The organisational structures should enable the effective/efficient delivery of the objectives of the organisation, and should have clear reporting lines and accountability at different levels;
- (ii) the creation of new grades should be based on operational needs;
- (iii) the need to have fit-for-purpose structures to facilitate decision making;
- (iv) the need to ensure adequate career path/earnings; and
- (v) The need to facilitate the materialisation of real administrative autonomy.

PROPOSAL:

For functional purposes, appropriate reporting, better delegation and accountability, for improved service delivery and increased effectiveness, the Pay Research Bureau is urged to make recommendations as to the size of the establishment in respect of particular new posts to be created on the establishment of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

7. LABORATORY TECHNICIAN

The Laboratory technician in post at the water department is called upon to collect samples of water for testing and this incurs field work.

PROPOSAL;

It is being proposed that the incumbent be eligible for appropriate travelling allowance (mileage) to perform this duty.

8. SKIPPER (LAGOON) (NEW GRADE)

At present the grade of Launch Driver and boatman operate in the same environment performing quite similar duties.

For operational needs, there is a dire need to upgrade the competencies of the employees to respond to the specific nature of their duties, it is considered that there is need to ensure better safety when they are at work and ultimately increase operational efficiency and effectiveness.

PROPOSAL

A new grade of Skipper (Lagoon) be created. Appointment to the grade be made by promotion of Launch Driver and boatman possessing the skippers license or a certificate from a recognized institution for skipper

9. PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING

At present, there are three Public Health Nursing Officers on the establishment of the RRA. The fact that incumbents are by virtue of the nature of their duties required to work in the community and the annexed health institutions, it is considered that there is need for a new grade to assist the Head, Nursing and Midwifery, RRA, in:

- planning and coordinating the work of and
- the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Community Health Nursing programmes;

- the organisation of prevention and health promotion programmes; and
- ensuring the timely submission of health statistics and other pertinent reports to relevant authorities, as and when required.

PROPOSAL

The grades of Public Health Nursing Officer be upgraded and merged with the grade of Senior Public Health Nursing Officer for greater efficiency and to avoid growing frustration in the Cadre.

10. WORKMEN'S GROUP

General workers/Handy workers

It is a fact that the majority of General workers are no longer involved in the traditional labourer duties, but are performing duties which are relatively more skilled in nature. The duties are amongst others, terracing and preparing land for cultivation, landscaping work and reforestation work.

PROPOSAL:

To satisfy operational exigencies we propose that the grades of General Workers and Handy Workers be merged or the creation of a new grade to cater for both duties.

11. COMMISSION FOR AGRICULTURE

(a) Insecticide Sprayer Operator to be restyled Chemical Sprayer Operator

The grade of Insecticide Sprayermen was restyled Insecticide Sprayer Operator in the last PRB report in view of giving a new impetus to the grade and attract more candidates to the post.

Unfortunately, this change in name did not result in the expected result and still no one is interested to join this grade.

Presently, with the effect of climate change, crop fields suffers from more pests and diseases and every year, not less than 2 new pests are discovered in Rodrigues. Besides, existing ones become more aggressive causing damages that entails serious economic losses to planters.

The Commission for Agriculture has a team of 5 ISO's attached to the Pest Control Unit. Of these 5 ISOs, 2 suffers from chronic diseases and 1 is above 60 years. No officer is willing to join the grade when advertised and no one is willing to replace ISO when they proceed on leaves as they sees the job as being too high risk for their health.

Proposals

To solve this problem, it is proposed that a risk allowance of Rs 1000 monthly be paid to all officers who have to deal with pesticide frequently in the course of their duty.

(b) Field Assistant (Rodrigues)

We Propose that:

- (I). The grade of Field Assistant (Rodrigues) should be restyled, revised and upgrade to Field Officer (Agriculture).
- (II). Field Officer (formerly Field Assistant) , possessing a diploma in Agriculture or related field be allowed to move beyond the Qualification Bar (QB) inserted in their respective revised salary scale; and
- (III). In future, appointment to the grade of Field Officer (Agriculture) be made by selection from among candidates possessing a Diploma in Agriculture or related field.
- (IV). Newly recruited Field Officer possessing a diploma in Agriculture should join the recommended salary scale at salary point Rs. 19575.
- (V). The duties of the newly restyled grades of Field Officer should be enlarged to include those of Technical Officer (Personal) respectively.