

Ref: RMCE/ANNUAL REPORT



2020 ANNUAL REPORT



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Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Regional Multidisciplinary Centre of Excellence (RMCE), I am pleased to present the annual report for the year ended 31 December, 2020.

The past year has been an important one as a new Board has been set in place marking a new departure and turning point in the affairs of the Centre. The new Board, at its second meeting held in March 2020, adopted a strategic policy direction which laid a solid foundation for the regional relevance of the Centre.

While 2020 was a very challenging year, the RMCE has illustrated its capacity to contribute to face the unprecedented crisis posed by COVID 19. The RMCE acted swiftly at the outbreak of the pandemic - primarily a health crisis with far reaching socio-economic ramifications. The New Normal has disrupted our lives and made us think out of the box.

In order to recover from the pandemic, the RMCE has engaged with development partners so that new opportunities are created in the region.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my fellow Board members for their advice and support in guiding the Centre.

I would also like to express my gratitude to our stakeholders and development partners who believe in the RMCE as well as the RMCE team for their contribution in helping to deliver the 2020 objectives.

Ali Mansoor

Chairman

1. Strategies and policy actions proposed to be implemented over the next five years

With increasing uncertainties in the global economy and adverse shocks such as COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential that the RMCE finds new projects to fuel economic growth. Consequently, the Board has come up with a series of new programs in order to not only enhance peer-to-peer learning but also to bring fundamental and structural reforms in Africa.

The strategy is driven by the Board's decision to implement the objectives of the Center as provided in its Constitution to serve as a regional integration hub with a focus on addressing regional deficiencies, accelerating economic reform and growth and capacity building capacity through peer learning and peer pressure.

The agreed principles for the work plan are:

- A. Principle of Good Practice and Variable Geometry, based on areas that can be fast tracked for the implementation of regional cooperation;
- B. Principle of acceleration, by removing existent obstacles in terms of Business Facilitation and Trade Facilitation;
- C. Principle of Organizing Concrete Programs for movement of Professionals across the Region to tap into their expertise and knowledge, such as the APEI Coordination.
- D. Sustainable Development Goals and Regional Cooperation: bridging the gap between the Gross Domestic Product and Sustainable Development Goals and infusing this element in all programmes of the RMCE.

The programmatic pillars of the work plan are:

- (1) Enabling the business environment for enhanced trade and services with a focus on WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement;
- (2) Addressing challenges for the creation of the appropriate policy and regulatory environment for socio economic development proposed in the Lighthouse of Good Governance Initiative;

(3) Promoting food security in the Indian Ocean Commission Countries starting with chicken feed production:

(4) Crosscutting issues, with focus on gender, youth, and the environment;

(5) APEI Programmed coordination and management; and

(6) Topical Conferences.

1.1 Lighthouses of Good Economic Governance

The RMCE is well-placed to serve as a knowledge bridge to adapt good practices of Lighthouses of Good Governance in targeted countries in Africa where policy reforms, services, technology, soft infrastructure and innovation, among others, can be perfected under local conditions.

Over the next five years the RMCE would host annual gatherings for African officials to discuss their reform agenda and refine this based on peer exchanges and advice from experts. The partnership with donor organisations would promote ownership of reforms to attract private investment through peer learning and support along the lines of work done in partnership with the World Bank under the APEI.

1.2 Promoting food security in the Indian Ocean Countries

The Indian Ocean Commission developed a pre-feasibility study to help rural development in Madagascar that could integrate a large number of small farmers into the global value chain for chicken feed production. The RMCE would offer its facilities and good offices to organize some of the peer learning and capacity building as required.

1.3 Improving the business environment for enhanced trade and services with a focus on WTO (World Trade Organisation) Trade Facilitation Agreement

- (i) Trade facilitation: Create a platform for public-private sector dialogue for implementing the WTO Facilitation Agreement, starting with APEI countries with Mauritius being host as regards implementation of the Agreement.
- (ii) Improving the business environment of selected countries to attract investment, foster diversification and value-chain development that help to strengthen small-

and medium-size enterprises to improve performance on standard indicators such as the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index.

1.4 Partnership for a program to improve Gender inequality in Africa

UNWomen and the RMCE would develop a project proposal which we would submit for financing to the African Development Bank, EU and World Bank. We would also invite the IMF and World Bank to join this partnership in the form which best suits them.

1.5 APEI Programme coordination and management

This involves:

- Support to facilitation of the movement of business persons and professionals among the APEI countries.
- Enhance cooperation in trade in services and sharing of information
- Enhance the business climate for increased investment and trade
- A matrix of offers and requests for capacity building in APEI Members.
- Participation of the Officer in Charge in the Knowledge Sharing on Trade and Investment workshop in Brussels from 4-5 February, 2020 under the aegis of the ACP Trade Com which had funded the technical assistance programme for enhanced business climate for increased investment and trade among APEI countries in 2019.

1.6 Partnership with World Bank for Programme on Governance.

The approach will be modelled on the Accelerated Program for Economic Integration where interested countries that are committed to formulate reforms join to promote public governance. Reform of governance is challenging but the experiences of countries that have moved up in the income ladder share political economy features that are instructive.

1.7 The Interim Economic Partnership Agreement (iEPA)

The Eastern and Southern Africa-5 Group of countries (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zimbabwe) are presently involved in negotiations with the EU to deepen the interim Economic Partnership Agreement to conclude a comprehensive EPA that goes beyond

an agreement to liberalise trade in goods only. RMCE continues to host the coordinating mechanism office.

1.8 Sugar Project in Rufiji, Tanzania

RMCE has facilitated negotiations with stakeholders for the establishment of a domestic company which will partner with a Tanzanian Company to produce sugar in Rufiji, Tanzania. Funds have been approved to undertake a feasibility study for the production of sugar in Rufiji, Tanzania. There is also the prospect of establishing a Special Economic Zone with manufacturing, distribution and hospitality projects.

1.9 Enhance visibility of RMCE's activities through conferences on crosscutting issues

High-level forums are needed to build political capital on reforms and capacity building actions in order to engage decision-makers concerning the issues at RMCE's own high-level.

1.10 Capacity building Project in Djibouti

This Project Proposal lays out the possibility of establishing a formal partnership between the Government of Djibouti, the World Bank, and the RMCE with the ultimate goal to accelerate Djibouti's economic development.

In line with what the statement of the President of the Republic at paragraph 11 of the Government Programme 2020-2024: "On the international front, we shall assert our role as a key actor in the region and the world, connecting Africa and Asia," the RMCE with support from the Government of Mauritius would like to partner with other countries and donor organisations to help implement the Vision of our Government and contribute in making Mauritius a key player in economic reforms and unlocking economic growth in Africa.

The RMCE can contribute to the Africa strategy of the Government of Mauritius by building its address book in Africa with key officials, many of whom may become more important over time. It can formulate triangular cooperation programs with development partners that would unlock concessional financing for Africa that can be accessed by Mauritius' economic agents with minimum contribution from the budget. This will allow leveraging the Africa Fund and other direct interventions.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the RMCE has still heart the following programs to be implemented during 2021-2022:

RMCE PROGRAMS 2021-2022	
1. Lighthouses of Good Economic Governance	SEEKING FUNDING FROM DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
2. Promoting food security in the Indian Ocean Countries	AWAITING MALAGASY AUTHORITIES' APPROVAL
3. Improving the business environment for enhanced trade and services with a focus on WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement	IN PROGRESS
4. Partnership for a program to improve Gender inequality in Africa	PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO UN WOMEN
5. APEI Program coordination and management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to facilitation of the movement of business persons and professionals among the APEI countries. • Enhance cooperation in trade in services and sharing of information • To enhance the business climate for increased investment and trade • A matrix of offers and requests for capacity building in APEI Members 	IN PROGRESS
6. Partnership with World Bank for Program on Governance.	AWAITING FUNDING
7. Partnership iEPA Coordinating Mechanism-RMCE	IN PROGRESS
8. Enhance visibility of RMCE's activities through conferences on crosscutting issues	IN PROGRESS
9. COVID 19	IN PROGRESS

10.	Capacity building Project in Djibouti	IN PROGRESS
11.	RUFIJI PROJECT IN TANZANIA	IN PROGRESS

2. Covid19

Currently, all countries in Africa are being impacted by the COVID 19. The COVID-19 pandemic is primarily a health crisis and a human tragedy, but it also has far-reaching economic ramifications. In Africa, it is already disrupting millions of people’s livelihoods, with disproportionate impact on poor households and small and informal businesses—and the pace of this disruption is likely to accelerate in the weeks ahead.

At the outbreak of the pandemic, RMCE produced a paper which was presented to the authorities for the recovery of the tourism sector as shown at Annex I.

RMCE partnered with the University of Mauritius to initiate peer to peer exchanges on experiences adopted by countries to safely opening their borders. Common set of Protocols which would provide elements for a safe opening of borders were also developed

In 2020, RMCE collaborated with the World Bank in addressing the pandemic which enabled APEI and IOC countries move quickly to contain the epidemic and strengthen their health care systems to support their populations and in particular the most vulnerable, while supporting economic activity in the region. In addition, the RMCE collaborated with some Small States regarding the COVID-19 Vaccination Plans.

2.1 Regional Initiatives to Promote Trade in Covid-19 related medical suppliers

Initiated by the Regional Multidisciplinary Centre of Excellence (RMCE), and funded by the World Bank, the project **COVID-19 Recovery through Trade** is aimed at providing targeted support for economic recovery and guaranteeing supplies of critical medical equipment in APEI

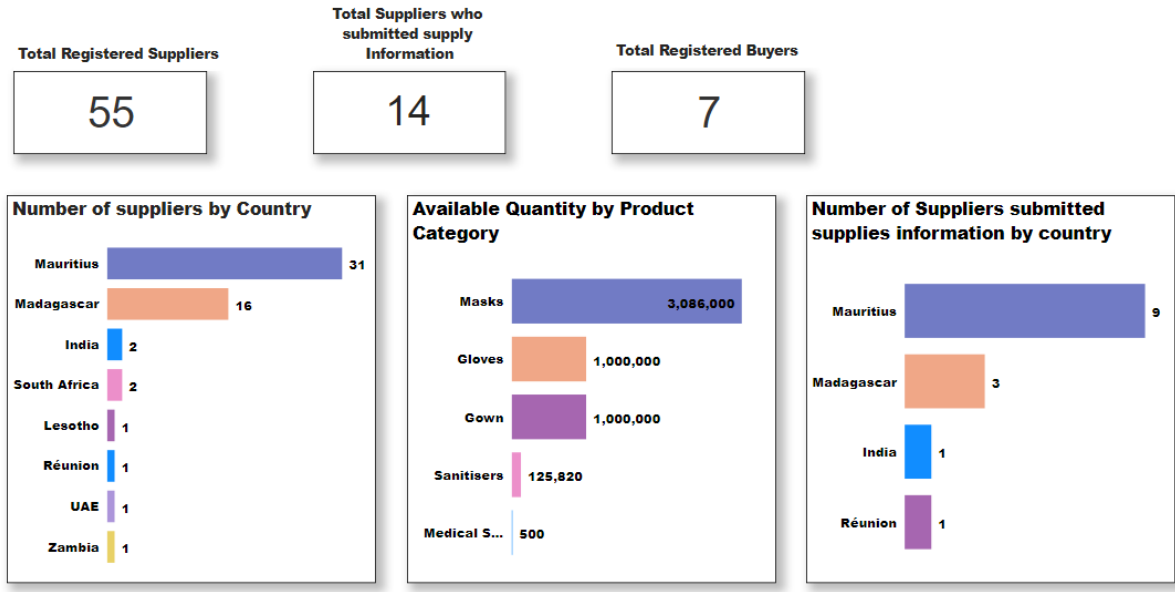
and IOC countries. The project was implemented by the International Economics Consulting Ltd. (IEC).

The project was implemented under the purview of the RMCE. The RMCE was responsible for disseminating the project details among its members. They had a pivotal role in reaching out to IOC and APEI focal points. IEC worked in collaboration of the RMCE to gather information to have a better understanding on the requirements of the project. RMCE also took all critical decisions on the project, and helped animate with IEC the B2B and P2P sessions.

The project started in mid-May 2020 and ended at the end of June, an implementation phase of just 6 weeks. It was implemented, as a pilot, among 8 countries - Comoros, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Reunion, Seychelles and Zambia. The aim is to extend the reach of the project to other countries in the region.

An on-line database of supplier and buyers has been setup. The database also contains a list of COVID-19 related supplies and is continuously evolving, with new supplies being added regularly. Moreover, a B2B session was carried out on 30 June for companies in the region to connect to buyers and logistics companies and share experience. A Peer learning session was held on 2 July to discuss policy experiences and private sector experiences to switching to PPE production and trade. A summary of project results is given in Figure 1.

[Figure 1: Summary of project results](#)



Source: International Economics

The project made excellent progress in terms of results over such a short time frame. There is a market for PPE in Africa and Figure 2 provides an overview of the demand from the public sector for PPE. The B2B webinar revealed the difficulties faced by companies in knowing how to access markets and get information on where to sell.

Figure 2: Selected demand for PPE in Africa

PPE Equipment & Medical Supplies demand in Africa

Country	Bags	Face Shield	Gloves	Goggles	Masks	Respirators	Ventilators
Djibouti	1,500	500	9,000	0	130,000	0	0
Iraq	0	0	0	0	230,000	198,000	454
Lebanon	34,000	20,000	2,956,820	891,900	2,178,250	607,440	0
Total	35,500	20,500	2,965,820	891,900	2,538,250	805,440	454
Angola	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
Benin	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Burundi	120	2,700	512,200	6,300	1,003,300	256,056	48
Chad	6,000	100,000	500,000	25,000	450,000	100,000	50
Comoros	0	0	191,145	1,000	185,108	46,781	20
Eswatini	0	20,000	0	20,000	20,000	18,000	0
Ethiopia	784,500	140,100	572,158	70,050	0	0	0
Guinea-Bissau	0	1,000	6,000	1,000	431,000	1,000	20
Kenya	0	250,000	250,000	250,000	500,000	250,000	250
Lesotho	50,000	3,360	13,000	10,000	1,081,160	10,000	20
Madagascar	0	0	0	2,600	850,000	0	230
Malawi	32,015	35,100	0	35,100	305,640	79,579	12
Mali	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
Mauritania	0	10,680	522,600	22,685	4,000,000	30,500	194
Mozambique	1,000	50,000	5,000,000	12,000	2,000,000	500,000	72
Niger	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
Sao Tome and Principe	34,600	10,000	225,000	1,404	89,235	70,000	15
Senegal	100,000	26,000	90,600	26,000	1,358,606	187,320	30
Sierra Leone	219,700	100,000	800,000	20,000	200,000	200,000	0
Togo	7,280	500,000	162,400	13,200	78,400	44,000	45
Total	1,235,215	1,248,940	8,845,103	516,339	12,552,449	1,793,236	1,150

Source: World Bank as at 26 June 2020

The project outputs and the deliverables produced by the project are summarised in the Table below.

Table 1 Project Outputs and achievements

Purpose 1:
To contribute to learning on best practices for COVID-19 Recovery among the APEI and IOC

member countries	
Activities	Achievements
B2B Webinar	A better understanding of PPE manufacturing and processes, and the challenges for companies to, including knowledge on markets and procurement platforms, adopting norms and standards, retooling their production processes
P2P Webinar	A better understanding of policy responses from countries, and what has worked and not worked. An appreciation of the challenges facing companies and how programmes have dealt with these challenges
Discussion with WB Health Procurement Teams	Strong understanding of the World Bank framework contracts for PPE and ability to disseminate the opportunities to the business community in the APEI/IOC region
Purpose 2: To develop a database of suppliers of essential COVID-19 recovery medical supplies among the APEI and IOC member countries	
Activities	Achievements
Supplier registrations	In the space of 6 weeks, 55 registrations of buyers and full product details for 14 suppliers. Outreach via chambers and communication in the papers of the region, promote knowledge on the project
Purpose 3: To develop a B2B platform for suppliers and buyers of essential COVID-19 recovery medical supplies among the APEI and IOC member countries	
Activities	Achievements
Buyer Registrations	A total of seven buyers were registered on the platform over the 6 weeks period. The public sector did not participate, despite being requested to, which lowered the results. The results on the demand side were slightly disappointing. On the demand side, some countries did not have immediate demand needs. For example, we did learn that Mauritius for example, had secured PPE supplies until end of 2020. We had high demand requirement from buyers through the World Bank PPE databases for Mozambique and Zambia.

The following challenges can be observed:

- Private sector engagement was strong in Mauritius and Madagascar but weak in other countries.
- Public sector engagement with the programme was weak in all countries, but somewhat better with Mauritius and Seychelles.
- Logistics/Transport costs challenges, as well as frequency and connectivity of routes
- Dealing with currency depreciations affecting the supply of inputs used in PPE production.
- Reaching quality standards, identifying laboratories for testing etc.
- Market information
- Achieving product differentiation, scale economies and brand/marketing recognition.
- Achieving volume and scale for demand, especially in large procurement platforms.

2.2 COVID19 Brainstorming Workshop on Balancing Safety and Economic Trade-offs

Mauritius and several regional countries (Seychelles, La Reunion, Kenya, Tanzania, and Maldives) which are heavily dependent on tourism which make a sizable portion of their GDP, were severely impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic.

Governments have adopted responses which include strict lockdowns and travel restrictions to counter the pandemic and are very cautious to opening borders, even in a phased manner.

RMCE, in collaboration with the University of Mauritius initiated a peer to peer exchange on experiences adopted by these countries to safely opening borders on 8th October 2020 at the University of Mauritius.

Since RMCE is involved in the COVID 19 and revamping of the tourism sector, it has also been in the process of developing a regional project involving countries to promote peer exchange on experiences on safely opening borders with a poverty alleviation dimension.

In addition, RMCE in collaboration with the University of Mauritius, again organised a virtual meeting with some countries (Gambia, Cabo Verde, Sao Tome, Seychelles, and Madagascar) on 18th November 2020.

3. Other Activities

3.1 Internship

Following decision of the Board, the RMCE sought applications from talented young professionals or university graduates who have the potential to serve its APEI and capacity building programmes at no cost to the Centre. Graduates from the Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and the Kennedy School responded positively to the offer of the RMCE.

3.2 Talk On Inequality and Gender by IMF

A talk on inequality and gender was organized by the RMCE in association with the University of Mauritius and the Africa Training Institute at the R. Burrenchobay Hall of the UoM on Thursday 20th February 2020.

The talk was led by Ms. Stefania Fabrizio, IMF Deputy Chief and Daniel Gurara, Economist.

The presentation made during the talk provided an overview of the IMF's work in these areas and the main findings of the recent IMF work on the role of fiscal policies for women's economic empowerment.

The talk was attended by students of the University of Mauritius and senior civil servants and development partners in Mauritius (EU, World Bank and UNDP). Discussants came from the media, Institute of Directors, Statistics Mauritius and Ministry of Gender and Equality.

The IMF released the IMF Staff Discussion Note on Women in the Labor Force: The role of Fiscal Policies after the talk.

The University of Mauritius provided excellent support in the organization of the event.

3.3 41st COMESA Meeting of Council of Ministers

The Officer in Charge participated in the 41st Session of the COMESA Council of Ministers held virtually in November 2020, in Lusaka, Zambia.

3.4 APEI Committee of Professional Accountants and Auditors

RMCE is an official member of the Committee and participated in the proceedings of the Committee held virtually in November, 2020.

4. Organisation and Administration of RMCE

4.1. Contribution of the Government of Mauritius

The Government of Mauritius (GoM) continued to provide financial support for the administration of the RMCE as per the Host Agreement between RMCE and the Government of Mauritius.

4.2. Africa Training Institute

The RMCE is an observer in the Steering Committee of the Africa Training Institute and has expressed the wish to consolidate the collaboration regarding capacity building.

4.3. Faculty of Law and Management of the University of Mauritius

Mr Ali Mansoor, Chairman, RMCE is a member of the advisory committee of the Faculty of Law and Management at the University of Mauritius.

5. Financial Statements

The 2019 accounts have been audited by BIT Associates and filed with the Mauritius Registrar of Companies after approval by the majority of Members.

6. Certificate of Company Secretary

The certificate of Company Secretary is attached at Annex II.

7. Staff

Mr. Prakash Hurry is acting as the Officer in Charge of the Centre. Mr Yoven Veerasamy is the Analyst/Senior Analyst and Mrs. Minakshi Bahadoor is the Administrative and Operations Officer. The Centre is also supported by one attendant and one driver cum messenger.

8. Corporate Information

STATUS

Private Company Limited by Guarantee

established under the Mauritius Companies Act

FOUNDING MEMBERS

Government of Mauritius

Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa

Indian Ocean Commission

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ali Michael Mansoor

Independent Director

Chileshe Mpundu
Africa

Secretary General Common Market for Eastern and Southern

Narainduth Boodhoo
International Trade

Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration &

Dhanjay Jhurry

Vice- Chancellor, University of Mauritius

Nirmala Jeetah

Head of Department, Ag. CEO Office Economic Development Board, Mauritius

Mahess Rawoteea

Director, Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

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Quatre Bornes

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Sir William Newton Street

Port-Louis

BANKER

Mauritius Commercial Bank (MCB)

9-15, Sir William Newton Street,

Port Louis, Mauritius

BUSINESS REGISTRATION NUMBER

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