

Major events of Statistics Mauritius in 2021

A. Retirement of the Director of Statistics

The first woman to ever assume the mantle of Director of SM, Ms Li Fa CHEUNG KAI SUET has undoubtedly played a key role in breaking the glass ceiling for not only female public officers but also Mauritian girls aspiring to a career in a STEM subject. An inspiring woman, her directorship at SM started in May 2010 until her retirement in August 2021.

Holder of a Graduate Diploma in Statistics from the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) of the UK, equivalent to a UK Honours Degree in Statistics and a fellow member of the Royal Statistical Society (UK), Ms Cheung Kai Suet joined SM, then known as the Central Statistics Office (CSO), as Statistical Assistant in July 1977. She became Director of Statistics in May 2010 until her retirement in August 2021. She gained international expertise from 2015 to 2017 when she worked as Senior Economist in the Real Sector Statistics Division of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) before resuming her post as Director of SM in November 2017.

One of the most notable feat during her decade-long tenure as Director, was the subscription of Mauritius to the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) of the IMF in February 2012 thus, bringing the national statistical system up to par with accepted international standards on the compilation and dissemination of statistics. This subscription has also paved the way for Mauritius to move towards the SDDS Plus, an advanced standard for compilation and dissemination of official statistics.

She was the IMF SDDS National Coordinator (alternate) as well as the Chairperson of the SDDS Technical Committee. As Chairperson, she ensured that Mauritius met the criteria to accede to the SDDS. Her mastery and extensive experience in the SDDS subject was highlighted as she was called upon to assist the Seychelles' authorities in their SDDS initiatives.

Under her tenure, SM strengthened its flagship position within the national statistical system by signing several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with local and international institutions such as the Bank of Mauritius, the Financial Services Commission, the Competition Commission of Mauritius, the Mauritius Police Force, the University of Mauritius and the US Census Bureau, amongst others.

Collaboration with regional and international organisations such as the SADC, UN, IMF, ILO, the World Bank, etc was always encouraged by Ms Cheung Kai Suet. The partnership forged with these organisations resulted in enhanced studies of the Mauritian economic and social life.

In conjunction with growing a network of working relationships with producers of statistics, visibility for the Central Statistics Office of Mauritius was further broadened by a rebranding into 'Statistics Mauritius' in 2011. The logo of SM, the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and an interactive data portal were launched during a workshop held in 2013 to celebrate the International Year of Statistics.

Prior to her retirement, she completed the design of two important and contemporary strategies: the National Strategy for Official Statistics, 2020 – 2025; and E-business Plan of SM, 2021 – 2024.

Known among her staff as 'Ms Aimée', she is remembered as a disciplined, sharp and meticulous leader, who was much detail-oriented.

In this era of data economy, she emboldened Statistics Mauritius with a culture of professionalism which aims at delivering statistics of quality.

The entire staff of SM bids to Ms Li Fa CHEUNG KAI SUET a Happy Retirement and a well-deserved rest.

B. E-Business Plan

It is no matter of surprise today to say that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused an upheaval in almost every aspect of our lives. As time stilled, the weaknesses of institutions emerged as a reminder that unless they transformed their ways of doing business, resilience and survival would be difficult, even in the short-term. To keep up with the digital acceleration pace, global trends and standards, new demands and to align with Government of Mauritius Digital Transformation Strategy, 2019-2022. SM had to rethink its e-business plan 2021-2024 objectives and approach towards modernizing its business operations.

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), was recruited to prepare the new E-Business Plan for SM with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Japan. A Project Steering Committee consisting of representatives of the UNDP, the Central Information Systems Division (CISD), Central Informatics Bureau (CIB), IT Security Unit (ITSU), Government Online Centre (GOC), Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (MOFEPD), and the Top Management of SM was set up to manage the project. PwC launched the project by interviewing the staff of SM and other collaborating stakeholders to understand the working mechanism of SM and the glitches it faces in its operations. It also studied the national offices of Poland, UK, Estonia and Rwanda to obtain a yardstick to strive to.

In June 2021, PwC completed its assignment and submitted the E-Business plan to SM whereby much emphasis was laid on the modernisation of the business operations of SM. The implementation will start shortly financed jointly by SM and UNDP.

C. The Housing and Population Census 2022

For the first time, SM is adopting digital technology, the CSPro software for data collection at the forthcoming Housing and Population Census (HPC) planned to be conducted in 2022. An MOU was entered in 2020 between the US Census Bureau and Statistics Mauritius to build SM's capacity in developing the CAPI application for collecting census data on tablets and census data processing, tabulation and dissemination. Activities under the MOU ended in October 2020.

SM benefitted from Technical Assistance from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for the design, development, testing and piloting of the CAPI application for the Census. The Government of the Republic of Kenya, through the KNBS loaned SM with some 8000 tablets and accessories for the fieldworkers to gather information without any technical hindrance. Much preparation is underway at SM to finalise all logistics and resources to carry out the 2022 HPC effectively.

The Housing Census is tentatively scheduled for April- May 2022 and Population Census will be carried out during June and July 2022.