

# Charter on the Mother Tongue in Associations (2009)

LALIT adopted this Charter that was signed by over 20 organizations in Mauritius, including on Rodrigues. The co-ordination for the preparation of the Charter was done by *Ledikasyon pu Travayer*, a workers' education association.

Given that

- The written word is an important means of storing our individual and collective memory;
- Minutes of proceedings of associations are an important part of that collective memory;
- Minutes of proceedings contain what an association wishes to keep as its memory;
- According to the last Government Census 2000, 93% of the population in Mauritius speak Creole and/or Bhojpuri;
- It is a human right to use our mother tongue in written form; and this right holds when we meet as associations, for all aspects of our work as associations;
- Minutes of proceedings constitute a faithful record of what happened in meetings, and when the secretary reads the Minutes at the next meeting, members can then verify whether they reflect accurately what happened in the meeting, propose any amendments, vote on them, before approving the minutes.
- Existing legislation hinders our right to keep our official minutes book in the language in which meetings take place that is in our mother tongue;
- When we are not allowed to use our mother tongue to keep our records, this hinders the day to day life of our associations;
- It is not a "true minutes" when it is translated afterwards for the benefit of the Registrar into some other book, and when it is then read at the next meeting in a foreign language, before being approved and signed, but without anybody understanding anything; such a practice, in turn, even if it respects the law technically, ends up entertaining, in Mauritius, a false idea on what minutes really are.
- Conversely, it is not a "true minutes" for our Association, when our Secretary has to listen to our meetings being conducted in Kreol or Bhojpuri and then has to do all sorts of intellectual acrobatics on the spot to translate into a foreign language and to write in this foreign language at the same time; then at the next meeting, the secretary has to do another impossible task of re-translating that same minutes from English into the mother tongue while reading them, and then getting them approved and signed on the basis of a version which could not be approved because it is in a foreign language.
- Repression against our mother tongue hinders our capacity to make our voice heard in society, thus it limits our participation and perverts democracy;
- As associations we only have the right to communicate with the authorities on the express condition that we already master a foreign language, namely English or French;
- Repression against the use mother tongue in associations is a symbol of a more widespread repression against the mother tongue,

And given that

- In large associations we cannot elect and choose our President, Secretary or Treasury, but only those members who master English or French; and given that this hinder the normal proceedings of our association;

We demand that:

1. GN 230 saying that: *"Every Association shall: 8(a) keep its books, documents or records in English or French or such other language as the Registrar may approve; (b) Where the book, documents or records have been kept in a language other than English and French, cause such book, documents or records as the case may be, to be translated into English or French for the purposes of enabling the Registrar to exercise his functions"* be amended to include Kreol and Bhojpuri, two Mauritian mother tongues as being acceptable to the registrar. So GN 230 will say: *Every Association shall: 8(a) keep its books, documents or records in English, Kreol, French or Bhojpuri (b) Where the book, documents or records have been kept in another language, a translation should be submitted to the Registrar in any of the Four languages mentioned above*

2. Revoke section 25 (b) *Registrar of Associations Act* which says: *In the case of a large association, no person shall be qualified to be a President, Treasurer or Secretary, unless he can read and write English or French.*

List of Associations that adhere to this Charter:

Alain Ah-Vee for **Ledikasyon pu Travayer**  
Ragini Kistnasamy for **Muvman Liberasyon Fam**  
Marie Réla André for **Women's League for Alternative Feminist Action**  
Bertie Beeharry for **Confederation Travailleurs Secteur Prive**  
Rajesh Seewoosaha for **Government Hindi Teachers' Union**  
Lyndsay Aza for **Groupe ELAN**  
Vimala Lutchmee for **Federation of Pre-School Playgroups**  
Vima Bundhoa for **Maudesco**  
Samad Dulloo for **Centre Idriss Goomany**  
Veda Munian for **Les Abeilles Playgroup**  
Michael Lafleur for **Rassemblement pour le Progres de Quartier Pailles**  
Marousia Bouvery for **ABAIM**  
Selven Govinden for **Free Art**  
Alain Munean for **Terre de Paix**