

COPY

REPORT ON THE SURVEY ON THE CONDITIONS
OF LIVING OF THE ILOIS COMMUNITY DISPLACED
FROM THE CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO.

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I.1 On the 5th January 1981, I was seconded from the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs to the Ministry of Social Security to carry out a Survey on the conditions of living of the persons displaced from the Chagos Archipelago. These people are commonly known as "Ilois".

I.2 [Having worked as a teacher with the Ilois for the last ten years, I am familiar with their traditions and ways of life. During my house-to-house survey I was accompanied by Ilois representatives. All talked and discussed openly about their various problems. All their suggestions and requests have been recorded and they hope that these will be taken into consideration.

I.3 Only persons born in Chagos who are actually living in Mauritius have been registered on production of their birth certificates or other legal documents (ref. table 1)

I.4 Some late entries coming from Ilois who have just arrived from Agalega or St Brandon have recorded separately.

/been

II

General Observations

his stance? II.1 [Elder members of the Ilois Community related that well before the Chagos Archipelago was excised from Mauritius they and their children were proud of their attachment with the Mauritian Community. ?

II.2 [It was quite an event for a family to come to Mauritius after several years of work on the Coconut plantation. The Ilois were happy when they returned to their islands with their bags full of colourful clothes, fruits, fresh vegetables, toys etc..... Everyone dreamed to make the trip to Mauritius for relaxation.

II.3 [Since their displacement they have been experiencing another trend of life which is very tiring for the majority of them. They have to buy everything whereas on the islands they worked for money and rations of rice, flour, grains, salt and oil. They still have the nostalgia of their homeland. 76.6% have expressed the wish to return to the Chagos Archipelago (Ref. Table 2) ?

II.4 [Each family has made three or four requests. Table 3 shows an analysis of these requests in order of priority.

III

Housing Conditions

/the III 1 [The Ilois who arrived in 1960's sought accommodation mainly in Roche Bois and Cassis as shown in table 1. Others stayed with parents and friends in different localities. Those who arrived in 1973 are found mainly at the Dockers' Flat, Tombeau Bay where most of them are not paying rent.

III. 2

A certain number of Ilois live in quarters on the coast of Pointe-aux-Sables and Tombeau Bay as watchmen. They are mostly fishermen and do not draw any remuneration except that they are given the right to stay freely in the quarters by the bungalow owners. Those of Pointe-aux-Sables reported that most of them live in poor houses. Their new landlords who have asked them to vacate have no intention of repairing the old and leaky houses. In other regions, the Ilois have fixed plastic curtains or sheets as an inner roof just over their bed to provide protection from the rain. how

III.3

A few among the Ilois who have already obtained their compensation have bought a plot of land in remote areas to build a house. The head of a family reported that he had placed much hope on getting Rs 10,000 as compensation to buy a house on a plot of land of about 50 toises at Pailles. He has not fully settled the account and he is paying interest amounting to Rs 400/- monthly on the remaining Rs 25,000. 12 Ilois are now living in this house.

III.4

Housing is the most pressing problem that must be tackled for the proper resettlement of Ilois in Mauritius. }

III.5

In some C.H.A. E.D.C. or longtill types of houses especially at Cite La Cure, kitchens are converted into bed rooms. The housing problems is such that in one case at Roche Bois, 31 people have been found to occupy three rooms, 21 in two rooms at Dockers' Flat, 14 in one room (including a lame man) at Cite La Cure.

III.6

It is obvious that these conditions give rise to family squabbles and very often lead to elopement. Neighbours and landlords, not knowing their basic problems, look down upon them and pressed them to move to other places. Ilois are now found scattered all over Mauritius and some of them are living in ramshackle houses and in dire conditions. The family who is still living in a goat-shed like shelter at Pointe-aux-Sables is an example. At the time the survey was made, 8 families were living in refugee camps. (22)

III.7

Table 3 shows that, 434 families out of 765 have applied for houses. how 177 of them indicated this need as a first priority. The 434 families, in addition to 41 singles have proposed various localities where new houses should be built for Ilois (Table 3 bis)

III.8

In their statement, some have made it clear that they would wish to become owner of a house and a plot of land on which the house is built not on the basis of C.H.A. house where land remains the property of the Government.

III.9

If the project of rehousing the Ilois is implemented, special provision must be made so that an Ilois will have no right to sell his property before 10 years of ownership. This will be a way of guaranteeing them and their children a house.

/to

IV

Work and Financial Circumstances

IV. 1

64 families are owners of land and a house (Table 4) and have satisfactorily remunerated jobs (ref. tables 5-6-7) Some have started small business such as tobacco seller, leather work, gardening, dressmaking, cake seller etc..... Most of these persons are mixed couples (i.e married with a 'Mauritian' who came to Mauritius before 1960. These people are making their way in our Mauritian society. how work

mixed??

(Table 5). Others are engaged in a variety of occupations e.g. fisherman, Sailor etc. but very few have a permanent job. (3)

- IV.3 Unemployment among men (Ref. table 5 bis) is another factor causing distress. It gives way to idleness and leads to sluggishness, drunkenness, gambling and finally larceny. In many cases the men lose their rights as husbands and women are the ones who wear trousers to feed the family by any means (Table 6 and 7 bis). But very often they found no job (6 bis) and they run into debt. *every*
- IV.4 511 families out of 765 have asked for compensation in cash as one of the suggestions for resettlement (Table 3). 249 have made it their first priority.
- IV.5 It is a fact that many Ilois are badly in need of money. But sharing money among them as complete compensation will never solve the problems of resettlement of Ilois in Mauritius.
- IV.6 The first compensation has been spent blindly by more than one. Some have bought brand new pieces of furniture, others electric gadgets etc..... As reported above very few have purchased land. Fortunately some have saved their money in banks and are awaiting the balance in order to realise their projects. *copy*
- IV.7 Only 74 persons have put in a request for a job and 29 have mentioned it as their first priority need (Table 3).
- IV.8 A list of 27 persons who have never received compensation has also been noted.]

V

Children's Integration and Socio-Cultural Organisations

- V.1 Almost all the children of Primary school age attend school. Some youngsters pursue secondary studies. Two children at Dockers' Flat have not yet got their birth certificates and cannot therefore go to school.
- V.2 Table 8 shows that 31 Ilois children and 54 "Mauritians" of Ilois descent are affiliated to Sporting Clubs or Socio-Cultural organisations.
- V.3 It has been noted that many youngsters play cards with adults (gambling) and prefer loitering than joining youth clubs or Social activities with Mauritian children. Leaders of Scout groups and Social Clubs of Roche Bois and Dockers' Flat have been approached to look into the matter.
- V.4 Most of the adults of Cite La Cure, Roche Bois and Cassis are members of Organisation Fraternelle. For the time being they are living in expectation and do not seem to be interested in any other Socio-Cultural projects.

Civil Status and Arrival in Mauritius

VI

- VI.1 Table 9 is an illustration of the status of Ilois and shows how they are getting mixed with Mauritians. Most of the marriages have been celebrated in Mauritius.
- VI.2 Table 10 gives details of the different period of displacement of the Ilois as declared by them. Many have given vague information

VII

Looking Forward

(p2 L1)

- VII.1 The Ilois Community would appreciate if the Government, through the Ad Hoc Committee on the resettlement of Ilois, could appoint a field social worker for a period of three years exclusively for the welfare of Ilois.
- VII.2 The field Social Worker would act as an adviser to them and give them all necessary information and guidance. Furthermore he would assist children and adults in the integration process by offering advice on how best to organise social activities,
 /to to fill their leisure time/arouse and sustain their interest for hobbies and small self-help projects, coordinate help from various sources (including women's organisations) and ensure that in the long run the Ilois do not become dependent on others and remains a closed community.
- VII.3 An effort should be made by all those who sympathise and support the cause of Ilois of Chagos Archipelago in Mauritius to help them not only in the action in pursuit of their claims but also to their complete integration in Mauritian Society during and after their resettlement.
- VII.4 The Ilois have much to add to our ever enriching Mauritian Culture by their culinary art, song, dance, tales, crafts etc..... that we have interest to meet and include them in our society.

Acknowledgements

VIII

- VIII.1 I am very thankful to: .
- Mr. Bhined Bacha, President of the Ad Hoc Committee and Mr. K. Ponnusamy, the Secretary for the assistance they have given me to carry out my assignment.
- Mr. G. Cathan and Mrs Ruhee of the Ministry of Social Security for personnel and transport facilities.
- Mr. Elie Michel, Mrs Charlesie Alexis, Mrs Lilette Naik and other regional Ilois delegates for their collaborations in identifying the Ilois and in arranging group meetings.
- Mr. A. Jeonun, Social Welfare Officer, for the efficient way in which he has discharged his various duties.
- All members of the Ad Hoc Committee for their information and support they have given me.
- VIII.2 I hope that this survey will help all parties concerned for the resettlement of the displaced persons from the Chagos Archipelago..

22nd April, 1981

(Herve Sylva)