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## Nuclear and Radiation Safety and Security Related Regulatory Challenges due to the COVID-19 Outbreak

### SHARING THE MAURITIUS EXPERIENCE

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## **Nuclear and Radiation Safety and Security Related Regulatory Challenges due to the COVID-19 Outbreak**

### **SHARING THE MAURITIUS EXPERIENCE**

- Overview of The Covid-19 Situation in Mauritius
- Regulatory Challenges Faced by the RSNSA
- Measures Taken to Overcome the Regulatory Challenges
- Lessons Learned and Opportunities

# MAURITIUS – BASIC FACTS & FIGURES

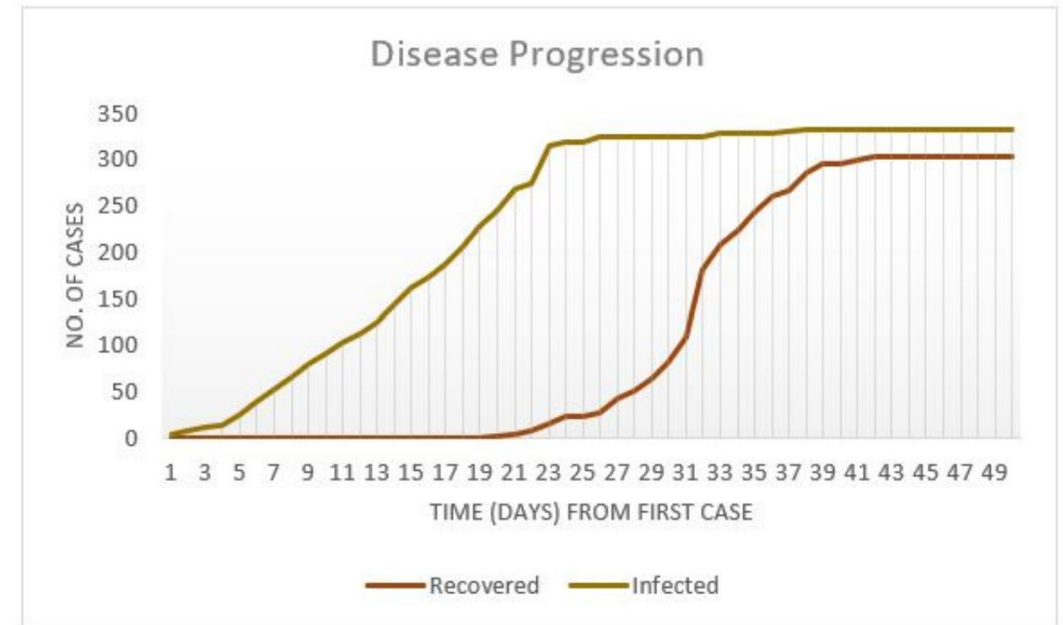
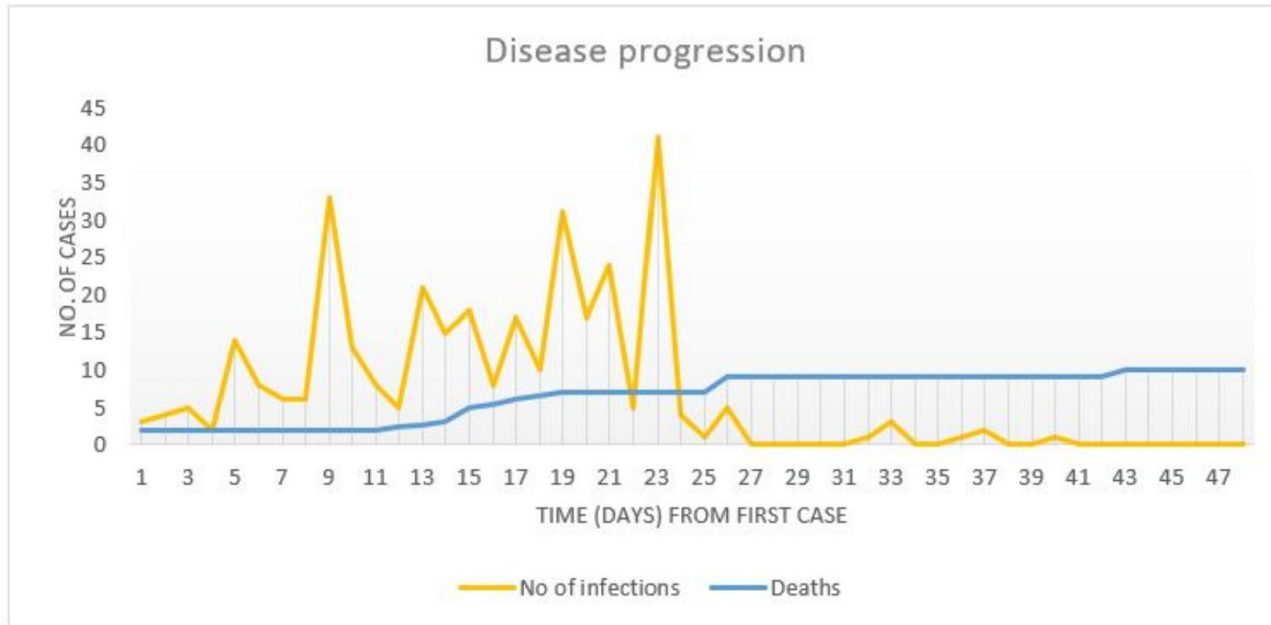
- The Republic of Mauritius is an island country in the Indian Ocean, lies east of Madagascar and the south-east African coast.
- Population: ~ **1.3 million**
- Area: ~ **2000 Km<sup>2</sup>**




# OVERVIEW OF THE COVID-19 SITUATION IN MAURITIUS (1/2)

- The first three cases of COVID-19 in Mauritius were detected on 18 March 2020, all individuals with travel history abroad.
- On **20 March 2020**, following the detection of four further cases, the Government of Mauritius has announced a nationwide lockdown with its first series of stringent measures, closing down schools and allowing only essential services (shops, banks, supermarkets, pharmacies, hospitals, police, and private clinics) to operate.
- The borders were closed to international arrivals, except for repatriation flights for nationals who were stranded abroad.
- The curfew order in Mauritius was lifted on **30 May 2020**.

# OVERVIEW OF THE COVID-19 SITUATION IN MAURITIUS (2/2)



**Cases overview**

 Mauritius

Total cases	Recovered	Deaths
<b>361</b>	-	<b>10</b>

**Statistics as @  
07 September 2020**

## REGULATORY CHALLENGES FACED BY THE RSNSA (1/6)

- On 20 March 2020, with the national lockdown, all the activities of the Radiation Safety and Nuclear Security Authority (RSNSA) were almost suspended.
- The RSNSA was not prepared at all to face such unprecedented emergency situation.
- For the first few days, immediately after the lockdown period, there was practically **no regulatory oversight** being exercised by the RSNSA.
- There was **no established protocol** for the RSNSA to ensure a continued regulatory oversight during the lockdown period.

## REGULATORY CHALLENGES FACED BY THE RSNSA (2/6)

- The RSNSA made all efforts to reinstate regulatory oversight and maintain its regulatory activities during the lockdown period.
- The RSNSA faced many challenges mostly due the strict travel restrictions being imposed. Work Access Permits were only issued to essential services.
- There was no prior arrangement for the RSNSA to be considered as an essential service. Due to duty travel restrictions, the staff of the RSNSA could therefore not travel. The office of the RSNSA remained closed during the initial lockdown period.

## REGULATORY CHALLENGES FACED BY THE RSN SA (3/6)

- Working from home, the staff of the RSN SA we have been able to maintain some of the essential services, such as authorising the importation of radiation sources, more specifically radioactive materials for our nuclear medicine department.
- However, shipments of radiopharmaceuticals have been delayed due to the closure of our borders and lack of air transport options.



## REGULATORY CHALLENGES FACED BY THE RSNSA (4/6)

- Most of the radiation facilities, practically all the non-medical facilities, were closed during the lockdown.
- Only critical facilities, mostly medical facilities, continued their operations. However, most of these facilities operated with limited personnel.
- The RSNSA staff faced much difficulty to reach the key personnel at the licensee facilities as most of these facilities were closed during the lockdown period.

## REGULATORY CHALLENGES FACED BY THE RSNNSA (5/6)

- The RSNNSA has not been able to maintain its inspection programme
- However, working from home, the RSNNSA has been able to, a greater extent, maintain its authorisation programme, with the exception of conducting pre-authorisation inspections.
- The staff of the RSNNSA could not have access to some regulatory information being maintained on the server in our office from home.

## REGULATORY CHALLENGES FACED BY THE RSNSA (6/6)

- The planned international activities were postponed and has disrupted the implementation of the planned activities of the RSNSA.
- The INSSP review mission to Mauritius initially planned for May 2020 has been postponed.
- Expert missions and some planned regional and national workshops and training courses could not be implemented.

## MEASURES TAKEN TO OVERCOME THE REGULATORY CHALLENGES (1/3)

- The RSNSA has taken several measures to overcome the regulatory challenges being faced due to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- In its efforts to reinstate regulatory oversight and its regulatory activities, the RSNSA has had regular virtual meetings with all its staff discuss the regulatory issues and to take appropriate decisions.
- The RSNSA was able to arrange for its staff to have Work Access Permits (WAPs) to travel to the office as may be necessary. Thereafter, we have also been successful to have WAPs for the staff of the RSNSA to travel island wide for the conduct of inspections.

## MEASURES TAKEN TO OVERCOME THE REGULATORY CHALLENGES (2/3)

- The RSN SA has been able to reinstate communication with most of its licensees mainly through its website and emails.
- The validity of licences of the facilities and activities with expiration date during the crisis have been extended.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND OPPORTUNITIES (1/2)

- The regulatory challenges faced by the RSN SA due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation has led many opportunities for the regulatory body to improve its effectiveness and to be better prepared to face such emergency situations.
- The RSN SA is currently working towards the establishment of protocols, at all levels, to ensure continued regulatory oversight and for maintaining its essential regulatory services during such emergency situations in the future.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND OPPORTUNITIES (2/2)

- The RSNSA has recognized the importance of having an effective **information system** for maintaining all its regulatory information.
- The RSNSA is working towards the upgrading of its information system for an effective implementation of the ‘Work from Home’ option where its staff could have access to all required regulatory information and could have virtual meetings through a secure platform.



**THANK YOU**