ISLAND OF RODRIGUES

An Analysis of the Health Situation

Rodrigues Island, administratively autonomous, is of volcanic origin, with an area of 104.0 km$^2$, and is located 560 km north-east of Mauritius. In general, the population is scattered over the island, with no dominant towns, except the administrative centre, Port Mathurin.

POPULATION AND VITAL STATISTICS

The estimated mid-year resident population of the Island of Rodrigues was 37,570 in 2008 as compared to 35,303 in 1998. The population density, at the end of 2008 was 363 inhabitants per square kilometer. During the 10-year period (1998-2008) the average annual growth rate was 0.6 %. During these years, there has been a notable positive net increase in the migration of Rodriguans to the main Island of Mauritius, mostly for economic reasons.

The proportion of population aged under 15 years decreased from 31.6 % in 1998 to 30.9 % in 2008, while the proportion of elderly population (aged 60 years and above) increased from 7.3 % to 10.0 %. During that period, the total dependency ratio has increased from 569.9 per 1,000 to 612.8. The young age dependency ratio increased from 495.9 to 499.8 while the old age dependency ratio increased from 73.9 to 113.0.

Life expectancy at birth, 68.5 years for males and 75.6 for females in 1998, was 70.7 years and 76.4 respectively in 2008.

The number of live births registered in 1998 and 2008 was 690 and 782 respectively, corresponding to an increase in the crude birth rate from 19.6 per 1,000 mid-year population to 20.8. The number of deaths registered in 1998 and 2008 was 188 and 206 respectively, corresponding to an increase in the crude death rate from 5.3 per 1,000 mid-year population to 5.5.

The number of infant deaths, that is deaths among children aged under one year, registered in 1998 and 2008 was 12 and 13 respectively, corresponding to a decrease in the infant mortality rate (IMR) from 17.4 per 1,000 livebirths to 16.6. The lowest IMR, which is 12.3, was recorded in 2005 with only 11 infant deaths. However, as shown in the chart that follows, it drastically rose to 27.2 in 2006 then declined to 15.4 in 2007.

The number of still-births registered in 2008 was 6 corresponding to a still-birth rate of 7.6 per 1,000 total births. In 1998, the still-birth rate was 8.6 with the same number of still-births. The lowest rate, that is 2.8, was recorded in 1995 and 1996 equally. As shown in the chart that follows, the still-birth rate drastically increased from 7.3 in 2002 to 17.9 in 2003 and 24.8 in 2004 then fell to 13.2 in 2005. However, it increased from 13.4 in 2006 to 17.5 in 2007.
HEALTH DELIVERY SYSTEM

In the Island of Rodrigues, at the end of 2008, there were one hospital with 120 beds and two health centres with in-patient facilities equipped with 55 beds. This brought the total number of beds in government institutions providing in-patient facilities to 175 as compared to 178 in 1998. Patients in need of tertiary health care are usually referred to Mauritius.

At the end of 2008, there were 14 Community Health Centres, providing basic services including treatment of common diseases and injuries, maternal and child care and family planning. There were three dental clinics, namely at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Mont Lubin Health Centre, and La Ferme Health Centre. There was also a Health Office at Port Mathurin.

HEALTH PERSONNEL

At the end of 2008, there were 18 doctors in the Island of Rodrigues, that is one for 2,094 inhabitants, while in 1998, there were 13 doctors with one for 2,718 inhabitants. There were 2 dentists that is one for 18,850 inhabitants at the end of 2008 while in 1998 it was one for 17,666 inhabitants. Almost all of these health professionals are employees of the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life posted to the island on tour service basis.

The number of qualified nurses and midwives was 155 at the end of 2008, that is one nurse/midwife for 243 inhabitants while in 1998 there were 120 officers in this category, that is one for 294 inhabitants.
IN-PATIENT SERVICE

The number of admissions at Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the two Health Centres (Mont Lubin and La Ferme) providing in-patient services was 10,842 in 2008, while in 1998 it was 8,484. The average annual increase in admissions during the 10-year period was about 2.8% with a maximum number of admissions of 13,695 in 2006.

OUT-PATIENT SERVICE

The total number of attendances at the out-patient departments, that is the Accident & Emergency and the Sorted/Unsorted Unit at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Mont Lubin and La Ferme Health Centres was 177,048 in 2008, while in 1998 it was 115,638, representing an average annual increase of about 5.3%.

In 2008, the number of attendances for the treatment of common diseases and injuries at Community Health Centres was 49,518 as compared to 55,173 in 2007.

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

In 2008, a total of 795 births (9 stillbirths and 786 live births) occurred at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Mont Lubin HC and La Ferme HC. Out of the 786 livebirths attended by trained personnel, 100 were with a low birth weight (less than 2500 grammes) representing 12.7% of live births as compared to 11.4% in 2007; it was 9.1% in 1998.

A total of 795 livebirths were reported by the MCH services in 2008. The number of babies immunized against Tuberculosis (BCG) by MCH staff was 849. 864 babies were immunized against Diphtheria, Haemophilus influenza type B, hepatitis B and oral Polio Vaccine (3rd dose) and 803 against Measles/mumps/rubella (MMR). The number of vaccinations performed in 2008 exceeded that of livebirths registered in the same year probably due to either (a) the return to Rodrigues of babies born in Mauritius or (b) the changes in vaccination schedules.

DENTAL HEALTH

The total number of attendances at the three dental clinics in 2008 was 15,020 while in 1998 it was 10,828. This represented a percentage increase of 38.7% during the 10-year period.

MORBIDITY

The number of discharged patients in 2008 was 10,363 of whom 793 (7.7%) were treated for Complications of pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium (excluding Normal deliveries and Complications following abortions), 747 (7.2%) for Delivery without mention of complications and 653 (6.3%) for Injuries (crushing & superficial injuries, fractures, open wounds, dislocation, sprain and strains).

In 2008, the diseases responsible for the highest number of first attendances at the 14 Community Health Centres for the treatment of common diseases and injuries were Cough, pain in throat, chest pain, wheezing hiccough and sneezing with 2,787 attendances (13.2%) followed by tonsilitis, laryngitis, nasopharyngitis (common cold),
sore throat URTI with 2,781 attendances (13.2%). Fever/pain all over with 1,560 attendances (7.4%) stood in the third position.

Diseases grouped by ICD chapters indicate that Diseases of respiratory system which was 20.3 % of total first attendances in 1998 has increased to 21.0 % in 2008. During the same period, Infectious and parasitic diseases decreased from 10.6 % to 6.6 %. Diseases of the musculoskeletal and connective tissue were 4.8 % of first attendances in 1998 as compared to 9.7% in 2008; in 2006, they represented 14.7% probably due to the outbreak of chikungunya.

**CAUSE OF DEATH**

In 2008, 205 deaths were registered. The distribution of deaths by the chapters of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10), as shown in the pie–chart below, indicates that Heart and other diseases of the circulatory system were responsible for 35.9 % of the deaths. Cancer and Neoplasms with 19.9 % were in the second place followed by Diabetes and other endocrine, nutritional & metabolic disorders with 18.9 %, Accidents and other consequences of external causes (5.3%) and Diseases of the respiratory system (4.4 %).

In 2008, *Diabetes Mellitus* and *Heart diseases* were the two principal causes of death with 18.9 % and 14.0% respectively. In 2007, when there were 175 deaths, they represented 14.9 % and 20.1 % respectively.

No Maternal deaths were registered in the island since 2003. During the period 1993-2002, four Maternal deaths were registered: one in 2000, one in 2001 and 2 in 2002.