



***Embassy of the United States of America***  
*Port Louis, Mauritius*  
**PRESS RELEASE**

---

**“Tanya so zistwar” or how to know where to turn for help**

**Port Louis, March 21, 2013:** “*Tanya so zistwar*”, a collaboration between the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and the U.S. Embassy, was launched today. This important educational booklet’s aim is to help children and their families know where to turn for help and thus lead to making our world a little safer for children. “*Tanya so zistwar*” tells the story of Tanya, an eight year old little girl who is abused. The booklet, using simple words, all in creole, and cartoons, describes how Tanya is courageous enough to tell her mom about the abuse. Together, they will go through all the procedures : the filing of the complaint at the police station, the role of the Child Development Unit (CDU), the examination by a doctor, all the stages in the police investigation and the trial of the abuser. The U.S. Embassy worked with the Office of the DPP on the text of the booklet and funded the hire of the cartoonist and printer. The funds were part of a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, which also paid for two workshops.

During the launch of “*Tanya so zistwar*”, State Counsels Bhamini Rajcoomar, Vidya Jugurnauth and Vignesh Ellayah did a presentation on legislations relating to children. Among other things, Vidya Jugurnauth explained how to identify the signs of abuse, be it physical or behavioral signs. Vignesh Ellayah talked about the different offences under the Criminal Code pertaining children, assault, children prostitution and child pornography, among other things. Bhamini Rajcoomar talked about the role of the Office of the DPP. The DPP, Satyajit Boolell, said that his office keeps child abuse and exploitation very high on its agenda. “*It is not done overnight. It is a fight that involves everyone. We are not yet there but we are making progress.*”

In 2010, the DPP approached the U.S. Embassy to discuss the problems of child witnesses and victims in the Mauritian court system. The DPP found that children were often handled roughly in court, an environment that is already not very child-friendly. He told the U.S. Embassy that as many as 90% of the cases involving children as victims and witnesses were simply abandoned. The U.S. Ambassador explained that “*the United States government unfortunately experienced similar problems with children as*

***PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE***

U.S. Embassy | 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Rogers House, John Kennedy St, Port Louis | Mauritius  
Tel: (230) 202 4442 | Fax: (230) 212 2808 | Website: <http://mauritius.usembassy.gov>  
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/usembassy.portlouis>

*victims and witnesses some years ago, and some of our best lawyers, judges, and administrators had set to work on problems like : how to protect children from adults who harm them; how to increase the success of prosecutions against adults who hurt children; and how to assure the criminal justice system does not do further to traumatize the children.”*

The U.S. State Department and the U.S. Department of Justice recognized the importance of this issue, and together with the DPP and other agencies in Mauritius, the U.S. Embassy held two intensive workshops in June and August 2012 to train over 300 persons. The first one was a three day workshop for lawyers, police, social workers, probation officers and some judges on how to protect children in the criminal justice system when they are victims or witnesses and the second workshop was a two day training for court administrators and judges on making courts and court processes more child-friendly.

The U.S. Government had provided three resource persons for this workshop: Assistant U.S. Attorney Tara C. Neda from the Department of Justice, and from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) – Stacey Smiedala, FBI Special Agent and Stephanie Knapp, FBI Investigator. All three experts had extensive experience working with children in the court system. *“We think these were successful workshops, and there have been some important and tangible results, including changed court procedures and the implementation of multi-agency collaboration in child abuse cases”*, Ambassador Villarosa pointed out.

This booklet is the next step of that collaboration to protect children. *“In the letter I wrote to children in the front of the booklet, I said that we hope these young people will live long and happy lives. But, if bad things happen to them, we want children and their families to know where to turn for help”*, said Ambassador Villarosa. This booklet is illustrated by an Mauritian cartoonist, Abdool Kalla, and written in a way that is understandable to Mauritian children. The U.S. Ambassador, Shari Villarosa, thanked the Director of Public Prosecutions Satyajit Boolell for his personal and professional commitments to helping children and their families in difficult situations.

#### **PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**

U.S. Embassy | 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Rogers House, John Kennedy St, Port Louis | Mauritius  
Tel: (230) 202 4442 | Fax: (230) 212 2808 | Website: <http://mauritius.usembassy.gov>  
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/usembassy.portlouis>