

**Report on the Participation of the School of Mauritian and Area Studies
Indentured Labour Route Conference: At the Crossroads – Imagining New Futures for the
Global Diaspora**

13 – 15 May 2026

The School of Mauritian and Area Studies of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute actively participated in the Indentured Labour Route Conference held from 13 to 15 May 2026. This international conference brought together scholars, researchers, policymakers, and cultural practitioners to reflect on the historical legacy of indentured labour while exploring new intellectual directions for understanding diasporic identities, heritage, and futures. The conference provided an enriching platform for academic exchange, interdisciplinary dialogue, and institutional visibility at both regional and global levels.

The participation of the School of Mauritian and Area Studies was marked by significant scholarly engagement across several sessions of the conference. Academics of the School contributed in diverse roles, including chairing sessions, presenting research papers, and serving as rapporteur. These contributions not only reflected the academic strength of the School but also reinforced its commitment to advancing research on Mauritian history, culture, and the broader Indian Ocean world.

- **Dr. Arvind Bissessur, Head of the School of Mauritian and Area Studies**, chaired an important session titled *“Voices of the Indenture: Gender, Memory and Everyday Life.”* This session addressed critical dimensions of indenture studies, focusing on lived experiences, gendered narratives, and the everyday realities of indentured labourers and their descendants. The session maintained a high level of scholarly rigour while fostering constructive dialogue among presenters and participants.

- **Mr Jay Ganesh Dawosing:**

He presented a paper entitled *“Echoes of Indenture: An Analysis of Bhojpuri Folk Songs Reflecting the Lives of Indentured Labourers.”* His paper offered a compelling exploration of Bhojpuri folk traditions as valuable historical and cultural archives. By analysing the themes embedded in these songs, Mr Dawosing demonstrated how oral traditions provide insights into the emotional, social, and economic realities of indentured labourers..

- **Mrs Anisha Badal Caussy:**

She served as rapporteur for the first day of the conference. In this capacity, she was responsible for synthesizing and documenting the proceedings, discussions and key themes that emerged across multiple sessions on the first day of the conference.

- **Dr Zareen Beebeejaun Muslum:**

She presented a paper titled “*Women at the Heart: Gender, Family and Informal Economies in Post-Indenture Mauritius.*” This presentation focused on the often-overlooked roles of women in the history and legacy of indenture. It emphasized women’s contributions as cultural custodians, economic actors, and central figures in sustaining family and community structures. The paper also underscored the relevance of feminist and intersectional approaches in reinterpreting diasporic histories and highlighted the continuing contributions of Mauritian women in contemporary society.

Collectively, the participation of the School of Mauritian and Area Studies contributed significantly to the thematic richness of the conference.

Moreover, the conference enhanced the visibility of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute as a centre of excellence in Mauritian and diaspora studies, positioning it as an active contributor to global debates on heritage, identity and cultural resilience.

In conclusion, the participation of the School of Mauritian and Area Studies in the Indentured Labour Route Conference 2026 was highly productive and impactful. Through active engagement in panel discussions, research presentations and organizational roles, the School reaffirmed its commitment to advancing scholarship on indenture and its legacies, thereby strengthening the School’s academic mission and outreach.