

BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION

A Comprehensive Nation Level Review and Appraisal

**Mauritius
Progress
Report
(2014-2019)**

Ministry of Gender
Equality, Child
Development and
Family Welfare

August 2019

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------|---|
| BPfA | Beijing Platform for Action |
| CDU | Child Development Unit |
| CEDAW | Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| CESCR | United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights |
| CHC | Community Health Centres |
| COMESA | Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa |
| CPA | Commonwealth Parliamentary Association |
| CSR | Corporate Social Responsibility |
| ESTP | Economic and Social Transformation Plan |
| FAO | Food and Agricultural Organization |
| FAREI | Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute |
| FEMCOM | Federation of National Associations of Women in Business in Eastern and Southern Africa |
| FWPU | Family Welfare and Protection Unit |
| HRDC | Human Resource Development Council |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IOC | Indian Ocean Commission |
| IORA | Indian Ocean Rim Association |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| MDWCP | Mauritius Decent Work Country Programme |
| MGECDWF | Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare |
| MITD | Mauritius Institute of Training and Development |
| MPF | Mauritius Police Force |
| NCC | National Children's Council |
| NEF | National Empowerment Foundation |
| NGPF | National Gender Policy Framework |
| NHRC | National Human Rights Commission |
| NPCC | National Productivity and Competitiveness Council |
| NWC | National Women's Council |
| NWCC | National Wage Consultative Council |
| NWEC | National Women Entrepreneur Council |
| OC | Ombudsperson for Children |
| SADC | Southern African Development Community |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SIDS | Small Island Developing States |
| SILWF | Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund |
| SM | Statistics Mauritius |
| SME | Small and Medium Enterprise |
| UNAIDS | United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNGA | United Nations General Assembly |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| ZEP | Zone d'Education Prioritaire |

BACKGROUND

The **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** adopted by the international community in 1995, is a blueprint that has revolutionised the notion of women development and empowerment and has introduced gender mainstreaming strategies as the most effective pathways for the promotion of equality between the sexes and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. The international community was called upon to implement policies around 12 key areas of concern, namely:

1. Women and Poverty;
2. Education and Training of Women;
3. Women and Health;
4. Violence against Women;
5. Women and Armed Conflict;
6. Women and the Economy;
7. Women in Power and Decision-making;
8. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women;
9. Human Rights of Women;
10. Women and the Media;
11. Women and the Environment; and
12. The Girl-Child.

Twenty-five (25) years after the Beijing Conference, appreciative results have been realised, though unevenly and at times sporadic in certain countries and regions. Mauritius is one of the countries that has successfully achieved many of the targets of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), especially in health and education. It, however, has its own challenges, as evidence points to existing disparities and discriminations against women in some areas and sectors.

This report is a response to a call made by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) of the United Nations to Member States to conduct national reviews and appraisals of the progress and achievements made and the challenges encountered in the implementation of the BPfA. It presents an analysis of the accomplishments of the 12 areas of concern agreed in Beijing, in terms of women health, development and the process of empowerment, undertaken in Mauritius between 2014 and 2019. The report will eventually be integrated into a Regional Review Report by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, which will in turn be fed into the CSW's 2020 Review Report to be discussed in the context of the celebration of the 25th anniversary of BPfA at a special session of the UN General Assembly in September 2020. Reports on the same issues for the period prior to 2014 are already available.

2020 also coincides with the 5th anniversary of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While the SDGs have one special goal on "Gender Equality and Women and Girls Empowerment", gender issues and concerns cut across all the other 16 SDGs and they share commonalities substantively with the BPfA. The targets of the SDGs are all intrinsically related to the BPfA's 12 areas of concern as both are built on the same foundation and principles, and both their respective objectives are in harmony.

Accordingly, as guided by UN Women, the 12 critical areas of concern of Beijing have been clustered into 6 themes to harmonise with the SDGs.

The 6 Thematic Clusters are:

- 1. Inclusive Development, Shared Prosperity and Decent Work;**
- 2. Poverty Eradication, Social Protection and Social Services;**
- 3. Freedom from Violence, Stigma and Stereotypes;**
- 4. Participation, Accountability and Gender-Responsive Institutions;**
- 5. Peaceful and Inclusive Societies; and**
- 6. Environmental Conservation, Protection and Rehabilitation.**

Section I of the report relates to the general accomplishment that Mauritius made in implementing the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and discusses the challenges and action areas.

Section II is a detailed description and an analysis of the programmes conducted and the measures taken by Government between 2014 and 2019 in the context of implementing the BPfA and reaching the SDGs. The thematic clusters have been used to reflect both of these international commitments.

Section III covers the national process and mechanisms that are in place to ensure effective implementation of the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Section IV highlights the progress on data collection and gender statistics.

The process in this exercise has been very participatory and inclusive, using as recommended, an “all-of-society” and an “all-of-Government” approach. All Ministries, Local Government (District Councils and Municipalities), together with representatives of the Civil Society, including religious organizations and trade unions, the media and the academia participated in a brainstorming session on the six thematic clusters, at which participants discussed the achievements and shortfalls of programmes and made recommendations. A questionnaire based on the guidelines of UN Women was administered to collect more information (Appendix 1). Desk Research on existing reports and documents produced by stakeholders, and interviews with all heads of departments and key stakeholders were conducted to gather information on key issues and concerns pertaining to programmes on gender mainstreaming, women’s empowerment, family protection, child development and welfare. An Inter-Ministerial Committee, chaired by the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare met on two occasions to oversee and coordinate the exercise. A list of contributors to this report is annexed at Appendix 3.

SECTION I: GENERAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CHALLENGES (2014-2019)

I.A.1. INTRODUCTION

2020 commemorates the 25 years of the 1995 BPfA and also marks the 5 years of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). 25 years back, world leaders pioneered and endorsed one of the greatest landmark blueprints destined to transform the lives of all women around the world. Never before had the world community been so united and forceful in their commitment to promote gender equality and women empowerment. The 12 areas of concern of BPfA articulate strategies and programmes for the advancement of equality, development and peace for all women while reaffirming the need to safeguard the rights of women and girls as fundamental to the achievement of universal human rights. Impressive advancements have been made since 1995. The status of women has improved tremendously with the increased enrolment of girls in schools, accelerated improvement in maternal health, the doubling of the world female parliamentarians together with increased participation of women in paid employment. Legislative reforms in many parts of the world have enabled women and girls to enjoy equal rights at work and be protected from gender-based violence. However, the global agenda still remains unfinished. Much still needs to be done to achieve empowerment for women. Development has also been uneven and sporadic in some countries. Though the objectives and targets of the BPfA still remain valid, relevant and necessary, these have been reinforced by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which have focused on the gender equality and women's empowerment nexus and subsequently, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which insist on gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting issue on all spheres of development, still upholding the emphasis on women's right as a human's right.

In Mauritius, the impact of accelerated effort towards women development and empowerment has been impressive and could be a showcase for the region. The process started two decades before BPfA, in 1975, when Government created a Ministry of Women's Rights and Family Affairs. In 1976, education became free to all primary to secondary students and is, today, mandatory for students up to the age of 16. Additionally, the 'economic miracle' of the 1980s transformed the socio-economic landscape suddenly by throwing the passive female population away from home to the world of work, and ushering a new work-culture among the traditional household women. The BPfA of 1995 gave another impetus to the already transforming society, and enabled a more targeted and human-based approach to women development and empowerment. Women's participation in the labour force and in higher education has risen. The gender pay gap has improved and women's representation in decision-making bodies has gone up, especially, in the public sector. The modern Mauritian women are indeed more educated, more entrepreneurial, healthier and more secured than many in the rest of the world, and this is due to the commitment and farsightedness of political leaders and an accommodative and instructed population.

I.A.2. ACHIEVEMENTS

The BPfA affirms that equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice, and a fundamental prerequisite for peace and development. In Mauritius, the portfolio for Human Rights which was previously under the purview of the Home Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Office, has, since September 2017 been entrusted to the newly set up Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms.

Following a Cabinet decision of December 2017, a full-fledged Secretariat and a National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow Up (NMRF) has been set up at the level of the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms. The NMRF is chaired by the Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms. It has the mandate to coordinate, prepare reports and engage with International, Regional and Human Rights bodies and to monitor national follow up and implementation of the treaty obligations and recommendations. It ensures that an all of Government and all civil society approach is adopted in the preparation of State Party Reports to be submitted to Treaty Bodies. The objective of the NMRF is to ensure timely reporting and reviews to international bodies. The meeting helps create better coordination between different stakeholders and enhance the sharing of information. The NMRF helps to coordinate and prepare reports covering international and regional human rights mechanisms including Treaty Bodies, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and Special Procedures. It also ascertains that the Human Rights obligations and recommendations by international human rights organizations are being appropriately implemented.

Furthermore, institutions like the Human Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission safeguard the rights of all and ensure that discrimination does not happen. A Gender Equality Bill, a Children's Bill and a Disability Bill are intended to be passed in Parliament to provide a more concerted effort to safeguard the interest of women, children and the disabled. The Protection from Domestic Violence Act has been amended in 2016 to further protect women and girls who are victims of domestic abuse and to inflict severe punishments to perpetrators. Harmony and peaceful coexistence of people of different creed, religion and culture prevail. According to a World Bank Report¹, Mauritius is one of the six top reforming economies in terms of addressing discriminatory laws and regulations that limit women's equality of opportunity.

Acknowledging the intrinsic linkage of education, housing, decent work, health, climate change with women development and empowerment, Government Programme 2015-2019 adopted an integrated and holistic approach to ensure women's centric role in its development agenda. Akin to the SDGs, gender mainstreaming strategy cuts across all Government programmes, translating political commitment and determination to harmonise the BPfA and the SDGs targets for the attainment of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Recognising that education of girls and women is the driving force for the elimination of inequality between men and women and for ensuring their equal and equitable participation in the process of socioeconomic development, Government has left no stone unturned in its new educational reform of 2017, in accelerating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as Africa's Agenda 2063, especially SDG 5, namely "*Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*" and SDG 4, namely "*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and*

¹ World Bank Women, Business and the Law 2019 Report

promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Mauritius has now reached gender parity in school enrolment rate and maintains a very strong girl population in the tertiary education. Appreciatively, girls' performance surpasses boys' at all levels in the educational sector. While Total Literacy Rate in Mauritius is 89.8, Female Literacy Rate is 87.3², and while the SDG Target 4.1(*By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcome*) has already been attained, some gender disparities in education still exist. This puzzling relationship between good educational performance and female unemployment or low occupation is often attributed to the wrong choice of studies at secondary and tertiary levels. Mauritian women are more likely to obtain a degree in traditional fields of study rather than in subjects like Information Technology, and Science and Engineering, limiting their scope for employment, more so as Mauritius is moving fast towards high tech and greater sophistication. The emergence of Artificial Intelligence as a field of study and its connected employment opportunities would pose another challenge in the future. This mismatch between supply and demand for labour speaks to the detriment of female employment.

Health care is available to all and is free. Malaria, schistosomiasis, measles, whooping cough, diphtheria, smallpox, and polio are now diseases of the past. Effective maternal and child health care has substantially reduced maternal mortality and infant mortality rates and improved female living conditions. In fact, life expectancy is higher for females. Maternity leaves have increased by 16.7 % and facilities are provided to all pregnant women for lighter and safe work. Mauritius has one of the highest prevalence of contraceptive use and the lowest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Africa. Total Fertility Rate has fallen below replacement level to 1.37 children per woman.

Women in decision making positions have increased substantially in the public sector, at managerial level and in the Judiciary. Empirical data point to an increase in the number of women holding leadership positions in the public sector from 20% in 1997 to 37% in 2018. Indeed, Mauritius has the highest percentage of female Permanent Secretaries in Africa. With the amendment of the Local Government Act in 2011, the participation of women in politics increased substantially in the villages, districts and municipal councils and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. In 2015, Mauritius had its first ever appointed female President of the Republic and female Speaker of the National Assembly, and in 2017, a female Vice-Prime Minister. A historic decision was announced in the Budget Speech 2019/2020 (June 2019) in furthering gender equality and addressing the underrepresentation of women on corporate boards of directors in Mauritius, at which Public Companies and Statutory Bodies are now required to have at least one woman in their Board of Directors.

The successful implementation of the Decent Work Country Programme in Mauritius tremendously improved the conditions of work, especially for women in low paid jobs. Incentives provided by Government helped to build a new class of women entrepreneurs, promote economic empowerment and give greater status to working women. The introduction of the national minimum wage and of negative income tax in 2018 relieved thousands of women working in dire conditions and with low paid jobs who were on the brink of poverty.

It is true that over the last decade, steady economic growth has placed Mauritius solidly in the upper middle-income group and has contributed to further reducing poverty. The average annual per capita growth of about 3.6 percent over the past five years, and a per capita Gross Domestic

² 18th Census 2011 for the Republic of Mauritius, Statistics Mauritius

Product (GDP) of \$22,309 position Mauritius solidly in the upper middle-income category. However, a World Bank Report³ published in 2019 cautioned that inequality in wages between men and women still exists. Despite well intentioned measures taken by Government, the Report states that *“economic growth has been accompanied by an increase in income inequality. The high achievements of girls and young women in school are not carrying over to employment opportunities...”*⁴. The labour force participation rate of women in the first quarter of 2019 was 45.7 % compared with 73 % for men⁵.

Women are disproportionately employed in traditional sectors and low-skilled occupations. Both low participation of women in the labour force and wage gaps are attributable to a combined array of factors like sociocultural norms and values that very often reduce women to home carers and to nonmarket, household activities; the persistent patriarchal attitude of relegating women to an inferior class of citizens; and the choice of studies girls pursue in school.

Hence, while the BPfA envisioned gender equality in all dimensions of life, the agenda remains unfinished as in other parts of the world. The challenges below have been clustered into the 6 thematic areas, which harmonise the targets of the BPfA and the SDGs.

I.A.3. CHALLENGES

I.A.3.1. INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, SHARED PROSPERITY AND DECENT WORK

Positive policy decisions and the announcement of the upcoming Gender Equality Bill, Children’s Bill, Disability Bill and the new National Gender Policy are welcomed. There are areas where added attention is needed. The growing disparity in wages exists mostly in the private sector. The introduction of the national minimum wage addresses the imbalance of wages of workers in low-paid jobs, whether employed in different occupations or same occupation. Similarly, minimum wages that are prescribed under the various Remuneration Regulations, and which are set above the national minimum wage, are determined on the basis of occupation and nature of work irrespective of gender. Section 20 of the Employment Rights Act further provides for the payment of equal remuneration for work of equal value. However, difference in wages still persists as pointed out by a recent World Bank Report, which stated that *“progress over time is promising, but the rising gap in earnings between high- and low-skilled workers remains a concern.”*⁶

Fixing the minimum threshold for wages, though welcoming, does not lead invariably to equal wages and an equitable treatment to men and women at work. In the 1980s, women were mostly in low paid jobs working in the manufacturing sector as they lacked appropriate educational qualifications. Today young girls, in search of employment, are more educated and qualified than boys, and yet are more unemployed. This mismatch in qualification of women with the demand for employment has been hallowed by the deep-rooted sociocultural stereotypes on the nature of work that women should and are able to do; and exacerbated by an absence of career guidance for students in a system that has fostered the promotion of at least one graduate per family. Rapid

³ Mauritius Earnings Mobility and Inequality of Opportunity in the Labour Market, World Bank, 2019

⁴ More educated, less paid: what’s behind the gender gap in Mauritius? World Bank Consultants Marco Ranzani, Kathleen Beegle, World Bank Blog, published in Africa Can End Poverty, 4th April 2019

⁵ Statistics Mauritius: Labour Force, Employment and Unemployment, Social and Economic Indicators, May 2019

⁶ Mauritius: Earnings Mobility and Inequality of Opportunity in the Labour Market, April 2019

technological change creates increasing pressures in the job market, worsened by critical skills and educational qualifications mismatch with the requirements of jobs available on the market. Further, young and educationally-qualified women, in search of employment, are being increasingly required to continuously review their academic qualifications with soft skills training and attributes, or to acquire multiple qualifications in order to be multi-employable lifelong. There is, therefore, an imperative need to adopt a rights-based approach to lifelong learning that gives everyone the possibility of training at any point of their working life. A tripartite dialogue would be able to establish the effective contributions of all parties for the overall development of a quality labour force.

The absence of women in decision making positions in the private sector, as against the public sector, testifies that amending labour legislations, setting up institutions for safeguarding rights and providing equal opportunities to all individuals, indistinctive of gender, do not guarantee effective impact, unless there is a profound change in mentality and attitude towards gender mainstreaming, which itself depends on socio-cultural mutations and educational orientation. Modules on gender have been introduced in one or two tertiary educational institutions, and textbooks for primary and secondary schools have been revised to reflect gender neutrality. However, knowledge and understanding of gender concepts and gender mainstreaming strategies in general and particularly in the private sector is low. The haunting spirit behind patriarchy persists, inhibiting effective women's participation in the development process. It is hoped that the decision taken by Government in June 2019 to amend the law to ensure that Public Companies and Statutory Bodies have at least one woman in their Board of Directors, as stated above, be translated into reality and that concrete actions be taken in the coming years.

Women, if given the chance and provided with adequate facilities, will participate effectively in politics. The 2011 amendment to the Local Government Act has positively enhanced participation and representation of women in politics and at regional elections from a negligible rate to more than 25% in 2017. A profound national electoral reform is awaited and is expected to substantially increase women's participation in politics at the national level.

The growing nuclear family, as a result of increased participation of women in employment, imposes strains on the family. The introduction of flexi conditions, provision of affordable and quality child day caring at worksite and a strong social support assistance targeting workers of different needs are desired. A one-size-fits-all approach as it exists, does not meet the specific gender needs. An adequate support system is necessary to enable women reconcile their work with family and other responsibilities. An inclusive society has its foundation in the quality of family that the society produces. Growing pressures of "modernity" very often undermine the quality of family a country aspires to have. The National Policy Paper on Family dates back to 2006 and is outdated. A New Family Policy needs to be developed to review the existing structure and redefine the whole concept of parenthood in the light of the changing socioeconomic and demographic set up of Mauritius.

I.A.3.2. POVERTY ERADICATION, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The 2015/2016 Marshall Plan against Poverty is a welcoming initiative in specially addressing absolute poverty. Numerous initiatives and programmes have been undertaken which have important positive implications on the life of the poor. The programmes aimed at the “poor household” with the assumption that all members of the household have the same level of deprivation, and relieving them from poverty would automatically improve the lives of women. Unfortunately, these assumptions fail to address the root causes of the problem of feminization of poverty. Providing better housing facilities to the poor, though most desirable, does not substantively address the gender dimensions of poverty and may in fact, reinforce the already existing subordinate position of women and widen the gender gap and stereotypes in the family. Marriage, divorce, separation and widowhood for example, affect poverty of men and women differently.

Despite the high prevalence of contraceptive use, and low total fertility rate at the national level in Mauritius, many women, especially those living in pockets of poverty, experience high fertility rate of 5 to 6 children per woman. This continues to inhibit advancements towards better living standards and is likely to worsen poverty, including child poverty. While there is a growing contention that a pro-natalist policy needs to be adopted in Mauritius to address the issue of the below replacement-level fertility rate, caution is warranted because the issues and implications of fertility regulations are more complex than meet the eye. A new gender sensitive population policy needs to be developed to address the complexities and the specific issues related to sexual and reproductive health, changing demographic landscape and the ageing population.

Women in poverty also suffer because of their almost total dependence on men for their survival. There is more unemployment among women; and those who work are mostly in low paid jobs and on part time to meet family obligations. While initiatives have been taken since the past five years to promote economic empowerment, women entrepreneurship has been mainly in artisanal businesses and has not adequately taken-off. Despite the marked presence of women in the agricultural sector, most landowners are males who control all resources. It is noted with appreciation that the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives has embarked on a vast and intensive training campaign in 2019 for more than 500 women entrepreneurs in various businesses, including high tech services.

Women in poverty situations face additional burden particularly in the areas of personal security and hence, pay additional ‘*poverty penalty*’. Policy should be reinforced to specifically target the risks of poverty faced disproportionately by women; the most vulnerable young women who at risk of early pregnancy and violence, and the disabled.

Hence the approach to poverty alleviation should take into consideration the specific needs of women and children within the household, and ensure that all efforts to end poverty do not effectively leave anyone behind.

1.A.3.3. FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, STIGMA AND STEREOTYPES

Violence against women and girls is a serious violation of human rights and has long-lasting effects. It undermines all attempts to achieving the objectives of the BPfA and the SDGs. Several laws against all forms of violence do exist in Mauritius. In 2016, the Protection from Domestic Violence Act was amended to provide, *inter alia*, for severe penalties to perpetrators of domestic violence. However, the implementation of these laws remains a challenge. Rising incidence of violence, including sexual violence on children, has been noted in Mauritius. The victims and perpetrators are mostly women and men respectively. Many women suffer in silence and do not report domestic violence or intimate partner violence because of fear, shame and intimidation from perpetrators and their close allies and at times even from authorities and individuals who are supposedly protectors, and also to avoid stigmatization from society. The financial dependency of these victims on their perpetrators for their livelihood and that of their children reinforces the perpetrators' trap. Causes are numerous, ranging from low level of education, excessive alcohol and drug consumption, low level of access of women to paid employment, especially those at the lowest rank of the ladder and male chauvinistic attitude that condone violence on women, among others⁷. Intervention strategies on domestic violence should be focused, cause-related, and multi-sectoral to enlist the support of all stakeholders. Responses to survivors' needs have to be comprehensive to cover safety, shelter, health, justice and other essential services. It is noted with appreciation that the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare has taken positive steps and reinforced its intervention strategies, in line with recommendations of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

As these issues are closely intertwined, a holistic approach is needed. A more coordinated effort among the different actors involved in domestic violence is desirable to ensure synergy of prevention and rehabilitation interventions. Shelters, for example, offer temporary accommodation to women victims of domestic violence and their children. They offer treatment, care and rehabilitation on a case to case basis to victims of domestic violence. A concerted effort that takes on board the rehabilitation and prevention programmes for both victims and perpetrators together with a structured follow-up mechanism are necessary to control and prevent recurrence. If the existing laws are not respected, advocacy and counselling interventions could be effective, as evidenced from interventions in high-income countries. Partnership with men is essential.

The Men as Caring Partners project of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare is a well-intentioned initiative, and enlists effectively, among its several objectives, the support of men and boys in the campaign against domestic violence, but has unfortunately limited reach. This project, because of its intrinsic worth, has to be replicated nationally in order to have a wider coverage in terms of target beneficiaries. Stigmatization against HIV/AIDS patients and people with diverse sexual orientations is also a matter of concern. A strong and bold policy decision on the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people is awaited.

⁷ Study on Intimate Partner Sexual Violence in Mauritius; Association for Population and Development, 2016

I.A.3.4. PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS

The gender policy landscape is complex and intricately linked to all the 17 SDGs, and impacts on girls and women all throughout their life cycles. Policy makers face daily decisions in all areas of policy - whether health, education, social security, justice or public finance - that have direct implications on the rights and opportunities of girls and women and that require effective coordination across all Ministries. Hence, the need for all policy makers to be substantially conversant with gender concepts and active actors in the promotion of gender equality, child development and women's empowerment, and be fully accountable as well. Unfortunately, accountability for gender mainstreaming programmes is perceived to be the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. There is a fundamental problem of substantive ownership of such programmes by individual organization. It is that of an absence of, or a deficit or an inadequacy in such ownership. A transformative strategy is needed to ensure that all institutions are driven by and imbued with gender-conscious and gender-responsive culture and interventions. The stakes are critically high and strategic for this small and vulnerable ocean island state with a declared ambition to become a high-income country by 2030.

While women constitute of 52% of the population, their effective participation in the process of economic transformation is negligible. Women are mostly present in low paid jobs. At the decision-making instances, women are fairly represented in the public sector and the Judiciary. However, women's participation at decision making instances in the private sector is low at 7%. Women's representation at the National Assembly is low at 11%. While mechanisms for monitoring gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment activities do exist at various levels, including at the Prime Minister's Office, an Integrated Support System has been set up to feed the Domestic Violence Information System (DOVIS), to effectively track down and follow up with victims of domestic violence. Most of the collection of data are sex- disaggregated but not gender-disaggregated, which makes gender analysis difficult. The Statistics Mauritius releases 'gender statistics' periodically which is, in fact, a collection of data on male and female attributes, without any indication of the levels of gendered relationship and interactions. There is a paucity of data on issues that are particularly relevant to women, such as property ownership, economic empowerment, and on social determinants of health, wellbeing, and empowerment. The basic impediment is the lack of knowledge and expertise on gender concepts and gender mainstreaming strategy, including gender-responsive budgeting and analysis tools at all levels. Research on gender issues is scanty. Promoting effective participation and accountability on gender issues depend heavily on the level of understanding and expertise of different constituents on gender concepts and issues, and also on the availability of empirical evidence on the impact of gender mainstreaming programmes, which are unfortunately inadequate at almost all levels.

I.A.3.5. PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

Mauritius is known as a peaceful and harmonious country. It has taken measures to ensure the security of its population and its visitors through the Safe City Infrastructure initiative. The country is not involved in armed conflict but nonetheless, is networking with countries of the region to safeguard its territorial integrity. However, given the fragility of its social fabric, complacency is unwarranted, especially with the proliferation of drug trafficking. There is a need to strengthen vigilance and surveillance at the entry ports and utilise sophisticated technologies to track down all illicit activities that are likely to endanger internal peace and harmony.

I.A.3.6. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION

Mauritius as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) ranks 16th in the world with highest disaster risk and 10th as the most exposed country to natural hazards⁸. Cyclones, droughts and floods are now recurring and endangering the lives of the population, particularly women and children. In an attempt to limit greenhouse gas emissions, Mauritius has taken bold steps to move towards renewable energy sources at the household, business, community and Government levels. Public and private enterprises are also integrating climate-related policies into their business plans and taking decisions to mitigate the risks and maximize the benefits that climate change will bring. Government has invested heavily in reliable climate prediction information. There is a growing interest from various quarters to undertake green-business development programmes for which Government provides additional incentives, like the **Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Rebate Scheme**.

However, the population is rather slow to wake up to the gravity of the challenges to a secure future, imposed by climate change. This calls for increasing public outreach to help foster a greater sense of urgency in promoting environment protection programmes. Government has already taken initiatives to network with countries of the region for sharing of information and experiences. At the national level, a greater synergy needs to be built around various issues connected with environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation. Unfortunately, with a growing individualistic approach to development, the “*Tragedy of the Commons*” looms on as many citizens deplete natural resources in self-interest, compromising the future generations. Strict Government’s regulations on environmental conservation are deemed imperative.

I.A.4. ACTION AREAS

I.A.4.1 Reinforce Institutional Framework

There is a need to set up an effective institutional framework to promote pro-active leadership and forceful commitments from several quarters to gender mainstreaming programmes with clear-cut monitoring and evaluation indicators that clearly capture gender relations. A new strategic policy on the family and child development needs to be developed to capture the impact of socio-demographic and economic changes and realign programmes with the latter for a more synergised effort at promoting gender equality, family welfare and child protection. A national policy framework needs to be further developed to address in a holistic and integrated manner all forms of sexual abuse on children and women, including Sexual Harassment, Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Intimate Partner Sexual Violence.

I.A.4.2. Promote Research and Knowledge Management

The need to promote intra-sectoral knowledge sharing on, and understanding of gender concept, equality and mainstreaming strategies and their linkages with all the pillars of economic development; to systematically collect information and best practices and to promote a centralised information system on policies, practices and data related to gender equality, is crucial. Promotion of individual and institutional capacity building, new researches on gender, women’s

⁸ World Risk Report, 2018

empowerment and child welfare need to be undertaken to provide skills and empirical evidence for strategic interventions.

I.A.4.3. Strengthen Women's Participation in Decision Making

There is a need to promote equal opportunity to women to engage in productive employment taking into consideration their specificity, provide incentives for their retention at work and facilities for effective career path that would lead them to leadership positions, especially in the private sector. Electoral reforms are necessary to increase female participation in politics and ensure their greater representation in the Parliament and the Cabinet of Ministers.

I.A.4.4. Reduce Feminisation of Poverty

Given the increasing feminization of poverty, and that women in situation of poverty are affected differently, it is imperative that policy aiming at poverty alleviation and reduction addresses the specific needs of women living in poverty. Poverty reduction strategies should address specific strategic and practical gender needs of women, in particular.

I.A.4.5. Increase Resources for Gender Mainstreaming Strategies

Gender sensitive budget initiatives aiming at strengthening human and financial resources for the effective integration of a gender perspective in all policies and programmes are recommended. A stable and core financial commitment from both the public and private sectors are desirable.

I.A.4.6. Strengthen Human Development Approach to Development

The human development approach to development needs to be strengthened to recognise the importance and value of women's contribution to the general welfare of the population, at the national, local and individual levels and to enable women to enjoy the dignity, security and recognition that they deserve, and to own on equal terms with men the progress of nation building, economic growth and development. Women at the lowest level of poverty and unemployed, together with those with disability need special attention.

I.A.4.7. Promote Regional Cooperation for Women's Empowerment

Despite shortfalls, the achievements and experience of Mauritius in the areas of poverty alleviation, legal reforms, education of girls, including technical, vocational and soft skills training for enhancing employability, and in the containment of HIV/AIDS and the promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health as drivers for women's empowerment are lessons learnt. These can be shared in the region and Mauritius can serve as a platform for comparative studies and South- South Cooperation in the field of women development. Mauritius has the capacity to serve as a knowledge hub and a centre of learning in the region for gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. Also, the social fabric, consisting of diverse population with different backgrounds and cultures, each with its own specificity, constitutes an important and a unique platform for cross-cultural research on gender, women health and development. Mauritius could build such capacity through the SADC, COMESA, IOC and IORA frameworks.

SECTION II: PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

II-A: INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, SHARED PROSPERITY AND DECENT WORK

II.A.1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive growth and development warrant that no member of the society should be left behind in the process of building the economic, social and environmental architecture of a country, and that everybody should reap on equal and equitable terms, the proceeds and benefits of growth. Given that in many parts of the world the benefits of development are not equitably distributed among the various sections of the population and that opportunities for growth have for long been provided to men to the disadvantage of women, the international community felt the compelling need to develop policies that would ensure that gender concerns get integrated in all aspects of individual lives and that women participate in land, labour and resource development on equal terms with men. A large number of countries, therefore, met in Beijing, China in 1995 to deliberate on the issues. It was, thus, that the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)** was incepted to globally serve as a beacon for countries to promote inclusive development, gender equality and shared prosperity.

The Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, formerly known as the “*Ministry of Women's Rights and Family Affairs*”, was set up in 1975. In July 1984 with the merging of the Social Welfare Division of the Ministry of Social Security, its appellation changed to “*Ministry for Women's Rights and Family Welfare*”. In October 1991, the Ministry was given additional responsibilities relating to the development of children and was re-styled “*Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare*”. As from that date the Ministry is mandated to cater for children 0-18 years with a view to bringing into focus, issues concerning children which are not taken care of by other Ministries and to develop a coherent and coordinated action programme for the overall development of children.

In December 1995, the appellation changed to “*Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development*”. In July 1997, the Social Welfare Division and the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund were removed from the Ministry and merged with the Ministry of Social Security and National Solidarity. In September 2000, the Ministry was re-named as “*Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare*”. In 2005, the Consumer Protection Unit was attached to the Ministry and the appellation changed again to the “*Ministry of Women`s Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare and Consumer Protection*”. In 2009, Consumer Protection was removed from the name of the Ministry. In 2010, it became the “*Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare*”.

Since 1975 to date, Mauritius has achieved significant progress in the process of women’s empowerment and lately, in the field of gender equality, changing its approach from *women in development* to *gender in development*. Strong political commitment brought changes in legislation protecting women and children and enabled the setting up of vigorous institutional and organisational frameworks and mechanisms to address the issue of gender equality, child development and family welfare in a more concerted and integrated manner. Over the years Mauritius has indeed sustained its actions towards promoting the socio-economic and political empowerment of women in order to attain gender equality.

The pathway has been tedious and imbued with periodic volatility but impregnated with perseverance and relentless dedication from authorities, in acknowledgement that the road to achieving gender equality is a long and complex one. The ever-changing and evolving socio-economic and environmental landscape imposed ongoing periodical stock-taking exercises together with SWOT analyses and reviews. These have enabled the formulation and implementation of new, forward-looking strategies to promote gender inclusiveness, in line with Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the Millennium Development Goals (2000) and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015), as well as with other ratified regional and international human rights instruments.

II.A.2. WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Mauritius, has been signatory to a number of international and regional human rights instruments to strengthen the promotion and protection of women's rights and gender equality for sustainable development, prosperity and peace for all women and girls. The international and regional instruments Mauritius adopted, are, *inter alia*, the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1984), The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the Millennium Development Goals (2000), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Gender Policy (2002), the African Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality (2004), the African Union Gender Policy (2009), the various Outcome documents of the Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meetings, the Sustainable Development Goals (2015), and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) (2003).

In 2016, Mauritius adopted the COMESA Social Charter which is a set of principles outlining the necessary enabling conditions for gender equality in the COMESA region and contains provisions and pledges of the COMESA. It is intended to be a building block in the COMESA's efforts to follow its gender policy and promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The strategic pillars of the COMESA Social Charter are Education, Health, Peace and Security, Environment, Culture, Economic Opportunities, Public Awareness and Social Justice and Rights. To date, Mauritius in 2015, Malawi and Madagascar in 2016 signed the Charter which will be in force upon signature by the eleven (11) Member States. A Charter on Women in Science, Engineering and Technology (WISET), which was approved by the SADC Council in August 2017, aiming at increasing the participation of women and youth in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is yet to be signed by Mauritius.

At the national level, legal frameworks do exist to protect the rights of the individual and to ensure that discrimination at all levels are eliminated. The Constitution of Mauritius itself guarantees the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual and recognises and declares that "*in Mauritius there have existed and shall continue to exist without discrimination by reason of race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex, but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest, each and all of the following human rights and fundamental freedoms—*

- (a) *the right of the individual to life, liberty, security of the person and the protection of the law;*
- (b) *freedom of conscience, of expression, of assembly and association and freedom to establish schools; and*
- (c) *the right of the individual to protection for the privacy of his home and other property and from deprivation of property without compensation."*

The Protection of Human Rights Act, adopted in 1998, was amended in 2001 to establish a **National Human Rights Commission**. Within the Commission are the following divisions:

- The Human Rights Division, and
- The National Preventive Mechanism Division.

An Independent Police Complaints Commission Act was passed in Parliament on 19 July 2016 to strengthen the role of the National Human Rights Commission, followed by the setting up of an Independent Police Complaints Commission on 9 April 2018, which is chaired by a woman former judge of the Supreme Court, to replace the Police Complaints Division for a more expeditious processing of matters related to police complaints.

The **Equal Opportunities Act** came into force in 2012, establishing the **Equal Opportunities Commission** and the **Equal Opportunities Tribunal**, and protects women's right, and ensures equal opportunities in terms of employment, training, education, accommodation and also against any form of sexual harassment. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) is mandated to enquire complaints alleging discrimination on the basis of one or more of 12 protected grounds under law, namely, age, caste, colour, creed, ethnic origin, impairment, marital status, place of origin, political opinion, race, sex or sexual orientation. The Equal Opportunities Commission is also mandated to conduct educational and other programmes for the purpose of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between persons (women as well as men) of different status. Accordingly, the EOC conducted the following sensitisation campaigns:

- at 17 centres/organisations/Ministries in 2017, with a total number of 384 attendees of both sexes;
- at 31 places in 2018, including, secondary schools and the MITD with a total number of 3170 attendees of both sexes; and
- at 8 places for the period 1 January 2019 to 8 May 2019, with 490 attendees of both sexes.

With a view to increasing the visibility of the EOC, information was displayed daily on the electronic LED panel at the Municipal Council of Port Louis, over a period of two weeks during the month of April 2019 and same has been planned for the months of June and July 2019

In line with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the international community in June 1993, Government, in consultation, with public authorities, National Human Rights Institutions, NGOs and the civil society, developed a **National Human Rights Action Plan (2012-2020)** to reinforce International Co-operation on Human Rights, strengthen the National Human Rights Framework and protect and safeguard civil and political rights, especially women's rights in Mauritius.

In order to build a better Mauritius and "*create the next wave of prosperity*", Government, in November 2013, announced a series of bold actions for the construction of "*a modern, inclusive and caring society*". The objective was to transform Mauritius into a hub for the region as a "*gateway to Africa*" through the consolidation of emerging sectors like the ocean economy and financial services and in enhancing the quality of health care, education and social support, with special emphasis on women's development and growth.

In April 2014, in the context of the International Day of Families 2014, and to mark the 20th anniversary of the International Year of the Family, Government regrouped stakeholders,

including policymakers, representatives of the civil society, NGOs, and experts, and organised a National Workshop on “**Assises de la Famille**” to enable the creation of a platform to reflect and analyse the situation of the family and children in Mauritius, to examine the various issues, vulnerabilities and challenges as well as opportunities impacting on the family, and eventually, to create a roadmap for the development of policy measures and programmes for the betterment of the Mauritian families. The Workshop Report stressed, amongst others, on the development of appropriate policies and taking of evidenced-based decisions to reflect universality, sustainability and the principle of holistic approach. Taking into consideration the vulnerability of women and girls, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare elaborated a National Action Plan on Intimate Partner Violence in 2016 and is currently working on the review of the National Policy Paper on the Family.

In the same year 2014, Government introduced the semi-low floor buses to facilitate transportation for the elderly and persons with disabilities. An **Income Support Programme** to the tune of Rs 100 M was implemented to reach 8000 vulnerable families living below the poverty line of Rs 6,200. The Programme which was intended to run for a minimum of two years was based on a *Social Contract* to ensure that all beneficiaries participate in a Socio-Economic Empowerment Programme designed to assist them find work and integrate the society, and allow their children to attend schools. In addition, care allowance for children below the age of 18 with disabilities was increased.

The establishment of the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms in September 2017 and of a National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow Up on Human Rights in December 2017 are clear-cut indications of Government’s commitment to ensure that justice and human rights are seen to be safeguarded and that effective reporting on international commitments made by Mauritius, including, those on women and human rights, are conducted.

II.A.3. NEW GOVERNMENT POLICY

In December 2014, a new Government came to power with a new **Government Programme (2015-2019)** fostering “**Meaningful Change**” with the objective “to transform Mauritius into a truly forward looking, environmentally sustainable, economically vibrant and innovative country with modern infrastructure, global connectivity, high skills and technology”. Adhering to the philosophy of ‘*développement à visage humain et chances égales pour tous*’ and acknowledging that sustainable economic growth cannot be achieved without the integration and participation of the entire population, a series of measures was announced to protect the most vulnerable section of the population. Government announced, *inter alia*, the introduction of the national minimum wage to protect those at the lowest level; the development of a Marshall Plan to combat poverty and social exclusion; the introduction of new legislation to provide more protection and security to the elderly, women (especially those victims of domestic violence), children and the physically handicapped; the amendment of the sections 3 and 16 of the Constitution to prohibit discrimination; the introduction of a Disability Bill to provide further protection to persons with disabilities; and the introduction of a new Children’s Bill. Immediately after assuming office, the new Government increased the old age pension from Rs 3,623 to Rs 5,000 with an incremental of 38-63% up to the age of 100 years and above.

In August 2015, Government launched its very ambitious strategy, the **Vision 2030**, to address unemployment, poverty and sustainable development, with special attention to women living in

vulnerable situations. The Vision 2030 Development Model aimed to jumpstart a new phase of high growth with shared prosperity and enhanced quality of life, and to transform Mauritius into an inclusive high-income country by 2030. In 2017, Government elaborated a **Three-Year Strategic Plan** (2018-2021) with a separate chapter dedicated to Gender Issues aiming specifically to safeguard the rights of women and children, the increased female labour participation rate from 43.6% to 50% and the increased women representation in Parliament by at least 30% by 2030. A “Study on the introduction of gender-based budgeting” is already in the pipeline.

The then Head of Government welcomed the Sustainable Development Goal 5 relating to Gender Equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment during the General Debate of the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly (2 October 2015), and stated that Mauritius “continues to put in place appropriate policies to further promote gender equality in all spheres of development. The then Prime Minister added that “there can be no democracy without human rights and no human rights without development”.

II.A.4. GENDER STRATEGY FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

By 2018, all the Ministries, including those newly formed following the coming to power of the new Government in 2014, have developed their respective Gender Strategy delineating clearly the specific gender gaps in each ministry and proposing policy, institutional, organisational and programmatic decisions to ensure that gender is effectively mainstreamed at all levels, in line with the Beijing Declaration, the Vision 2030 of Government, and the SDGs. Based on these, each Ministry developed an Annual Action Plan to implement the Gender Strategy in 2018, which is coordinated by its Gender Cell and a Gender Focal Point with clear-cut terms of reference. Each Ministry/Department and Institutions are now required to publish a Gender Policy Statement in their respective Annual Reports within 3 months after the end of the financial year. A **National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming** is in place and provides a platform for active engagement with gender focal points of all Ministries. In May 2018, a joint monitoring framework agreement on the gender mainstreaming programme was signed with the European Union to address issues such as freedom from all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, elimination of all forms of trafficking of girls and women, and the promotion and protection of rights to sexuality and sexual and reproductive health.

The Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare lobbied with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to provide seed money to each ministry to enable them to kick start their activities. In response to this Gender Responsive Budgeting Initiative, the Ministry of Finance Economic Development in 2017, released an allocation of approximately USD 6000 to each ministry to enable them to initiate activities in line with their Strategic Plan, in 2017. Besides, educational and training sessions organised for staff by Ministries, some Ministries sought additional funds from the UNDP, the European Union, and other donors to organise activities in 2018.

In Mauritius, despite an increase in understanding of gender mainstreaming, there are still gender misconceptions and stereotypes that persist not only among the common men, but among cadres and professionals, mostly in the private sector. There is also an inadequate understanding on the linkages between gender concerns and development perspectives and on the identification of gender perspectives in areas like environment, climate change and agriculture.

Between 2014 and 2019, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, therefore, consolidated its capacity building programmes to reach different target audiences in Ministries, NGOs, the civil society and other stakeholders. In July 2015, a **High Standard Capacity Building** for members of Gender Cells was organised. The objective, thereof, was to provide participants with knowledge and skills to plan, develop, mainstream and implement gender responsive policies and programmes within their sectors. It also provided them with knowledge to move from policy to strategy and action from a gender perspective.

Another Capacity Building Programme on Gender Mainstreaming was held during the month of April 2018 for public officers and was facilitated by a consultant from the European Union. The capacity building programme comprised two components namely:

- (i) an awareness raising session for Gender Focal Points to empower them on the basic gender concepts as well as identifying possible entry points in mainstreaming gender within their respective gender policies; and
- (ii) a Training programme for Senior Officials of all Ministries, to build their capacity to address and attend to all gender issues at their respective Ministries.

II.A.5. INNOVATIVE PROGRAMME TO EMPOWER YOUNG GIRLS AND WOMEN IN DEPRIVED AREAS

Two innovative strategies, namely **The Goal Programme and the 3 E's Project** with user-friendly tools, such as snake and ladders; picture chat; story book: 'Beyond pink and blue'; Gender Equality Domino; and short video clips, were conceived to empower young girls and women in deprived areas.

The **Goal Programme** and the **3 E's Project**, thus, targeted school drop outs, young girls and women living in pockets of poverty and aimed at promoting empowerment for greater integration into the mainstream development. These two projects are described below:

The **Goal Programme** is one of the innovative initiatives of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare and was initially powered by the Standard Chartered Bank. It aims at empowering adolescent girls on gender mainstreaming concepts and strategies using sport and life skills education so that they can make informed life choices. The programme had first been conceived and launched in 2006 in New Delhi, India and reached 70 girls. It was thereafter implemented in other countries - China, Jordan, Nigeria, Zambia, and in Mauritius as well. In 2015, the programme reached around 71, 205 girls in 25 countries. The objective is to empower girls aged 13 to 18 years old, who are school drop outs or still attending school, through the modules of the Goal Programme for a period of 9 weeks on Gender Mainstreaming. The programme was successfully replicated in Mauritius. The modules/themes of the Goal Programme were: Be yourself; Be Healthy; Be Empowered and Be Money Savvy. Following a Training of Trainers (ToT) programme organised in May 2015, the Goal Programme was launched in July 2017 and as at 2018, 450 adolescent girls have benefitted from the life skill programme. A "Graduation Ceremony" for these young women was held on 28 November 2018 at Octave Wiehe Auditorium in the presence of the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. The "Graduation Ceremony" provided these beneficiaries, who were mainly "school drop outs" from deprived regions, a sense of pride, dignity, honour and the feeling of successful self-realisation.

The **3 E's Project** entitled "Empowerment through Education and Entertainment" targeted girls and young women (aged between 13 – 29 years) in deprived regions where the knowledge of gender is limited and where gender stereotypes still persist. In fact, one of the constraining factors to gender mainstreaming in deprived areas is the cultural barrier that inhibits equal participation and fair treatment to girls and women, as revealed by a Participatory Needs Assessment that was conducted in 18 deprived areas where the project was implemented. The project aimed to empower young girls and women and comprised mainly education sessions, leisure and sports activities and visits/exchange programmes. Issues relating to Sexual and Reproductive Health, Values, Personal Development, Leadership, Road Safety and Crime Prevention and Drug and Substance Abuse were addressed. The project was implemented during school holidays between 2017-2019 and was very well received with positive feedbacks.

II.A.6. DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW NATIONAL GENDER POLICY (2019-2029)

In light of Government's Vision 2030 and the imperatives of the Sustainable Development Goals that have reframed the gender mainstreaming process as a cross-cutting issue and taking into consideration the intergenerational, demographic, economic and cultural changes that have occurred in Mauritius over the last 10 years, the National Gender Policy Framework of 2008 (NGPF 2008) needed to be reframed to better achieve peace, prosperity and sustainability in more effective ways. The Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, accordingly, spearheaded in 2018, the process of developing a new National Gender Policy (2019-2029) aiming at integrating to the greatest extent possible the principles of participation, accountability and transparency in the development of the national policy.

With financial support from the UNDP, an international Consultant was recruited for the formulation of the National Gender Policy (2019-2029). Using a very extensive participatory approach involving all stakeholders, a Draft National Gender Policy (2019-2029) has been developed, shared and discussed among stakeholders and is at the final stage of publication.

II.A.7. GENDER EQUALITY BILL

The challenge of mainstreaming gender equality, identified, recognised and experienced by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, is that *de-jure* equality may have been achieved but it is still a long road ahead to achieving *de-facto* equality.

Statistical data show low participation and involvement of women in social, economic and political spheres. However, measures are being taken to address gender issues in a strategic manner with regards to domestic violence, unequal access to property and resources, discrimination in employment and access to health services, especially, sexual reproductive health and rights.

In an attempt to enshrine a high-level strategy to address gender inequality, and provide for well-defined structures to implement gender mainstreaming and eventually, to strengthen ministerial responsibility and accountability in promoting gender equality across the board and simultaneously, to be in line with the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals, Government initiated, in 2018, the development of an appropriate legislation to give an added impetus to the process of gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting issue. The Ministry of Gender

Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, with the technical support from the European Union, spearheaded the process of drafting a Gender Equality Bill in 2018. Public and private sectors, academia, NGOs and Civil Society Organisations, participated in a nationwide consultation on the draft Gender Bill.

II.A.8. NATIONAL COSTED ACTION PLAN ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

During the last decades and in light of the philosophy of the NGPF of 2008, several attempts have been made to sensitize stakeholders and engage them to play a greater role in ensuring that gender is mainstreamed at all levels. There was, however, a need for a more proactive and enhanced participation of all relevant stakeholders, a better understanding of gender issues by one and all, and a mainstreaming mechanism to enable the elaboration of effective programmes with ‘gender lenses’, including a gender-based budgeting process for the advancement towards a fairer and just society. An effective and costed Action Plan on gender mainstreaming was thus required.

Hence, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, with the financial and technical support from the European Union, has taken the initiative in 2018 to formulate a **Costed Action Plan on Gender Mainstreaming for the Public Sector (CAPGM)**. The objectives have been to identify prevailing gender gaps in line Ministries or public sector policies which are likely to impede the realisation of the Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, and to propose strategies and gender-based budgeting programmes over the short and medium -terms for effective gender mainstreaming. The CAPGM is also expected to be the basis for mobilization of resources to implement gender mainstreaming strategies.

II.A.9. SETTING UP OF GENDER TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

In view to leveraging the influence of key socio-economic players and sharpening the promotion programme for the new gender equality agenda, there is a need to establish functional gender technical working groups constituted of various agencies clustered along their core business. The private sector, left on its own, does eventually ascribe to social goals, most especially on gender mainstreaming.

To reinforce their commitment and also to ensure that effective actions are undertaken to address gender gaps and that gender-sensitive culture and ethics are enshrined at the place of work in the private sector, four **Gender Technical Working Groups** for the Private Sector, Media, Academia and Civil Society Organisations are planned to be set up in 2019. A set of guidelines has already been worked out for the technical working groups. The setting up of these Technical Working Groups emanates from recommendations of stakeholders during the consultations for the preparation of the Gender Equality Bill.

II.A.10. WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING

While Mauritius has made impressive strides in putting in place the institutional and legal framework for substantive gender equality, important gaps remain, particularly, in terms of the political representation of women. Mauritius had the first-ever female President who held office

from 2015 to March 2018, the appointment of women as the Speaker of the National Assembly in 2014 and the Vice Prime Minister in November 2017.

The Local Government Act stipulates that every group presenting more than 2 candidates at an election of a Municipal City Council, Municipal Town Council or Village Council shall ensure that not more than two thirds of the group's candidates for election to that Council are of the same sex. Following the amendments made to Act and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Regulations, there has been an increase in women participation of 25.4% in the 2012 Village Council Elections and 23.5% in the 2017 Rodrigues Regional Assembly Elections.

However, the progress remained confined to local levels of governance. In terms of women participation in the National Assembly, women only hold 11.8% of the seats and only two women are Ministers, representing 8% of cabinet members. Mauritius has achieved parity in terms of women's representation as high court judges, with more than 47% of puisne judges being women. Mauritius has additionally the highest percentage of female permanent secretaries in Africa at 37%. Among legislators, senior officials and managers in the public sector, 40% are women as shown in Table 1 below.

TABLE1: EMPLOYMENT IN GOVERNMENT SERVICES BY OCCUPATION & SEX, 2014 – 2018

| Occupation | 2014 | | | 2015 | | | 2016 | | | 2017 | | | 2018 | | |
|--|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes | Male | Female | Both sexes |
| Total Government Services | 40,167 | 20,999 | 61,166 | 39,428 | 21,927 | 61,355 | 40,217 | 21,972 | 62,189 | 42,672 | 23,717 | 66,389 | 42,171 | 24,838 | 67,009 |
| Legislators, Senior Officials & Managers of whom as: | 1,558 | 1,115 | 2,673 | 1,593 | 1,050 | 2,643 | 1,724 | 1,203 | 2,927 | 1,644 | 1,062 | 2,706 | 1,646 | 1,071 | 2,717 |
| Senior Chief Executive | 6 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 11 | 3 | 14 | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| Permanent Secretary | 26 | 29 | 55 | 20 | 13 | 33 | 23 | 9 | 32 | 15 | 12 | 27 | 16 | 14 | 30 |
| Deputy Permanent Secretary | 37 | 34 | 71 | 37 | 25 | 62 | 36 | 34 | 70 | 40 | 37 | 77 | 41 | 38 | 79 |
| Director / Manager | 239 | 179 | 418 | 273 | 149 | 422 | 261 | 152 | 413 | 309 | 139 | 448 | 308 | 139 | 447 |

Source: Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

However, the participation of women at top management level in the private sector is low. Women make up 52 % of the population, but the level of their representation and meaningful participation in administration, governance, and Parliament remains generally low and inadequate.

Government Programme 2015-2019 makes provision for an electoral reform: “*Our electoral system will be reformed to introduce a dose of proportional representation in the National Assembly and guarantee better women representation.*” (paragraph 264). Accordingly, the Constitutional (Electoral Reform) (Amendment) Bill was presented in the National Assembly on 4 December 2018. The object of the Bill is, *inter-alia*, precisely to seek better gender representation in the National Assembly by providing that:

- (i) every party or party alliance shall present not more than two thirds of constituency candidates of the same sex; and

- (ii) every proportional representation list (PR list) submitted by a party or party alliance shall comprise not more than two thirds of persons of the same sex.

The bill has already been debated in parliament. At the end of the second reading on 11 December 2018, the Honourable Prime Minister moved that the Bill be taken at a later sitting.

II.A.11. WOMEN IN EDUCATION

Education is available to all children across Mauritius. As of 2015, the gender parity between the sexes was 1.03, an indication that there were actually more boys left out of the current curriculum than girls. This is a big difference from the 1970s where the disparity was between 0.93 and 0.95. Enrolment of girls in education ranged from 48% to 50% between 2014 and 2018. In addition, girls outperform boys at all education levels, from primary, secondary to tertiary levels. However, their access to job opportunities is reduced as there is a growing mismatch between qualifications and labour demand. Mauritian women are more likely to obtain a degree in education and the humanities which are the traditional areas rather than moving to the non-traditional spheres of science and engineering. There is a lack of women with STEM-related degrees (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

In 2017, Government undertook a major reform in the educational system and introduced the compulsory Nine- Year Schooling. The Nine-Year Schooling concept is an innovative learning strategy for Mauritius where it englobes both primary and secondary education up to fifteen years of age. The reform project is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education which is to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. The innovation here is that it blends both primary and secondary education. Government is also promoting STEM-related areas for girls and providing additional training and learning facilities to girls to increase their employability and promote greater inclusiveness. In January 2019, Government extended free education to all public universities to enable those at the poverty level gain additional tertiary qualifications. Pregnant adolescent girls are able to re-join school after the delivery.

II.A.12. WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

Mauritius has successfully made strides to transform itself from the agricultural, textile and tourism-based economy of the 1980s and 1990s to become more open and services-oriented. It has positioned itself as a strategic trade hub and a major financial centre between Europe, Africa and Asia. Bold economic reforms, strict adherence to democratic principles, openness to international trade and investment and a strategic utilization of trade preferences in major markets have been instrumental in the impressive development of the Mauritian economy since its independence.

However, despite its economic success and social progress, growth rates are below potential and the Mauritian economy is facing several headwinds including unemployment, especially amongst women and the youth. There is a feminisation of unemployment. Between 2014 and 2017, female unemployment rate stood at 11%, much higher than the rate of 5 % for male. The disparity between male and female unemployment rate was highest in the lower age-groups: the difference was nearly 12 percentage points among the unemployed below 25 years and around 0.3 percentage point among those aged 50 years and above. In 2018, the labour force participation rate for men was 73.1%, against 45.5% for women, as shown in the Table 2 below.

Table 2: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE, GENDER WISE (2014-2018)

| LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| YEAR | | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
| Labour Force (Including Foreigners) | -Both Sex | 575.7 | 612.9 | 610 | 615 | 613 |
| | -Male | 352.8 | 60.7 | 61.2 | 61.2 | 61 |
| | -Female | 222.9 | 39.3 | 38.8 | 38.8 | 39 |
| Activity Rate | - Total | 59.9 | 60.4 | 59.6 | 59.6 | 58.8 |
| | - Male | 75.2 | 74.8 | 74.3 | 74.3 | 73.1 |
| | -Female | 45.3 | 46.6 | 45.5 | 45.7 | 45.5 |
| Unemployment Rate | -Total | 7.8 | 7.9 | 7.3 | 7.1 | 6.9 |
| | -Male | 5.5 | 5.5 | 4.8 | 4.8 | 4.7 |
| | -Female | 11.4 | 11.6 | 11.2 | 10.7 | 10.1 |

Source: Statistics Mauritius

II.A.12.A. The Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) hosted the IORA Workshop on **Strengthening Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Indian Ocean**” on 3-4 May 2018 in Mauritius.

The aims of the workshop were to bring together senior gender officials of the IORA Countries to:

- identify and share commonalities and capacity building in IORA countries in the field of economic empowerment of women and support the implementation of the IORA Action Plan for 2017-21;
- contribute to gender equity and equality in the IORA region and to integrate women’s economic issues in IORA’s priority and focus areas as a cross-cutting issue at the heart of sustainable development;
- explore linkages and possible cooperation with international organizations and technical partners, such as UN Women, International Trade Centre and other key stakeholders in research and initiatives to improve women’s abilities to contribute as entrepreneurs, innovators and leaders; and
- Engage with the business community and chambers of commerce to develop recommendations on the format and structure of the proposed IORA Women’s Business Forum and promotion of the Women’s Empowerment Principles.

The workshop was attended by Senior Officials from the Ministries responsible for gender from seventeen IORA Member States, namely: Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Mauritius. Participants also comprised five Dialogue Partners, namely China, Egypt, France, Japan, and the United States of America; international organizations such as UN WOMEN, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and representatives from the Kenyan and Mauritian National Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

The workshop developed Terms of Reference for the Working Group for Women’s Economic Empowerment which is a flagship initiative from the IORA Action Plan for 2017-21. Other topics discussed during the workshop included integrating women’s empowerment across IORA’s priority areas, particularly, the Blue Economy, building linkages with international organizations and partners for strong regional cooperation and developing recommendations for creating an IORA Women’s Business Forum.

As a follow-up to the Senior Officials Meeting, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare hosted the IORA Ministerial Conference on “**Women’s Economic Empowerment: A Pre-requisite for Sustainable Development**” on 28-29 August 2018. The Conference served as an opportunity to launch the inaugural meeting of the Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment. Participants of the Conference comprised of Ministers responsible for Gender and Senior Officials of the IORA Member States; High Commissioners; representatives from the IORA Dialogue Partners; and Guest Speakers from IORA Member States, as well as representatives from international organizations.

The Conference provided participants with a platform to deliberate on the issue of Economic Empowerment, reflect on the considerable progress achieved to-date, including on the 2016 IORA Declaration on Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment. The Conference also identified the gender dimensions within the priority areas of the IORA, including the Blue Economy as a cross-cutting issue; as well as the relevant strategies/ activities to be incorporated into the Action Plan of the Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment. The outcome of the Conference resulted in the setting up of a Working Group for Women’s Economic Empowerment and adoption of a Work Plan (2018-2022). A **Declaration on Women’s Economic Empowerment and Gender Equality** as a Pre-Requisite for Sustainable Development was adopted at the closure of the Conference.

II.A.12.B. Government of the Republic of Mauritius firmly believes that women’s economic empowerment remains a pre-requisite for Sustainable Development. In view of the gender disparities pertaining to unemployment, Government has put in place various programmes and schemes to promote **National Women’s Economic Empowerment Initiatives**. Between 2014 and 2019, Government took a number of initiatives to ensure the effective integration of women in the world of work through their participation in land, labour, financial and product markets. A new Training Scheme has been introduced as announced in the 2018/2019 Budget Speech, which lays emphasis on training for women and girls (single mothers) so that they can be provided with the necessary skills to start income-generating activities. An Economic Empowerment Programme for survivors of domestic violence is being implemented since February 2018 to help survivors establish the financial stability and independence they need to move forward.

In March 2019, Government introduced a new **Start up Entrepreneur Scheme** for women entrepreneurs. Women wishing to launch their own enterprises are now entitled to benefit from an unsecured loan at a low 3% interest rate per annum from the Development Bank of Mauritius (DBM). Under this new Entrepreneur Scheme, women launching their own businesses can now benefit from these loan facilities up to Rs500, 000. The DBM also proposes the Micro Credit Scheme, SME Financing and Sheltered Farming Schemes, among others, to women entrepreneurs.

Among development institutions and sectors, gender issues have increasingly become part of their economic development agendas. The Home Economics Unit of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, the National Women Entrepreneur Council, the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Mauritius Ltd, together with NGOs like Women in Networking, National Institute of Cooperative Entrepreneurship, provide assistance to women entrepreneurs and potential business women to enable them kick start their business, sustain their activities and expand their fields of operations.

II.A.12.C. The **Home Economics Unit** of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare promotes economic as well as social empowerment of women and gender

equality through its network of 125 centres around the island; it also organises capacity building programmes for young boys and girls and men. Its Enterprise Development Programmes initiate women at the grass root level to engage in income- generating activities. The activities of the Unit have expanded from 10 courses offered in 2014 to 23 courses with MQA recognition in 2019 reaching more than around 20,000 women yearly. An audit report on the programme in August 2017 showed that 20.8% of trainees of the Home Economics Unit secured gainful employment, mostly in-service sectors. The Unit is in the process of rebranding itself to be more adaptive to the changing socio-economic environment of the country and to align its strategy to the Sustainable Development Goals.

II.A.12.D. The National Women Entrepreneur Council (NWEC), a parastatal body operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, was set up in 1999, with a view to promote the economic empowerment of women and encourage the growth and development of existing and potential women entrepreneurs. In 2014, an agreement between the National Women Entrepreneur Council and the Federation of National Associations of Women in Business in Eastern and Southern Africa (FEMCOM) was signed recognising the NWEC as the FEMCOM chapter for Mauritius. The agreement is geared towards harmonizing the objectives of the NWEC and those of FEMCOM to promote Women Entrepreneurship as a means to combat poverty and empower women economically. The agreement encompasses the following projects:

- Business Incubator for African Women Entrepreneurship Development;
- COMESA Cluster Development Initiative;
- Capacity Building for Women Entrepreneurship Development;
- Trade and Investment Facilitation; and
- Resource Mobilisation.

A “Business Hub” was launched in 2016 at the National Women Development Centre, with the objectives to enhancing services offered by the National Women Entrepreneur Council, to provide facilities to women entrepreneurs such as WIFI and IT services, to act as a platform for networking among women entrepreneurs, and to provide space to conduct meetings among women entrepreneurs and business partners.

The NWEC established partnerships with various supermarkets which offer women entrepreneurs with sales outlets on a regular basis for the marketing and sales of their products. Regular buyers and sellers meeting are organised to enable women entrepreneurs to acquire orders for their products. Regional sales exhibitions and activities where women entrepreneurs offer their wide range of services to the public, are also organised. The NWEC has also published a Directory of Women entrepreneurs which has been widely circulated as a means to disseminate information on goods and services available for the public at large. Capacity building for women entrepreneurs is an on-going exercise aimed at upgrading the quality of products to make them competitive and attractive for both local and foreign markets. Between 2014 and 2019, the NWEC reached 5587 women entrepreneurs through its programme.

II.A.12.E. The Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Mauritius Ltd operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives and has been set up in July 2017 to support and facilitate the development of entrepreneurship and also to provide assistance to SMEs to enhance their managerial abilities and capabilities for both existing and potential women entrepreneurs. In this regard, the SME Mauritius, together with its parent Ministry, came up in March 2017 with a 10- year Master Plan for the small and medium enterprises which is inclusive of a number of measures for women, in terms of empowering them through entrepreneurial activities.

II.A.12.F. As mentioned above at II.A.12.E, the **Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives, together with the SME Mauritius**, developed, in March 2017, a 10-Year Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Master Plan as part of the strategy for encouraging and promoting entrepreneurship including women's empowerment. One of the objectives of the Master Plan is to upgrade skills and job opportunities by supporting SMEs, especially those run by women, to address skills mismatch and upgrade human capital to respond to new market demands. 141 (34.5%) letters of intent have been issued to women entrepreneurs with respect to access to loans and to non-financial incentives. Necessary infrastructure at the Coromandel Handicraft Training Academy has been put at the disposal of women entrepreneurs to enable them promote and strengthen their marketing strategies. The Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives (Cooperatives Division) included specific programmes aimed at engendering the cooperative movement, and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in cooperatives, both in its Action Plan (Re-Engineering of the Cooperative Sector, 2015-2017) and its Strategic Action Plan (Propelling Cooperatives towards Excellence, 2018-2020). These programmes included, *inter alia*, the organization of educational sessions on women's empowerment, capacity building programmes, provision of free market access to women cooperatives, technical and financial assistance to women cooperatives for the development and implementation of projects.

II.A.12.G. The **Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection** developed the **National Export Strategy (NES) (2017-2021)** in 2017, with the main objectives to foster a national export culture, to enhance delivery of services for export and to support the development and competitiveness of the export sector. It aims at reinvigorating growth and trade in a socially inclusive manner. The strategy provides for a comprehensive set up to ensure that all implementing partners and stakeholders gear jointly towards an effective and coherent world of work where men and women are equal partners.

II.A.12.H. The **Ministry of Youth and Sports** is currently implementing a programme of activities guided by its National Youth Policy 2016. Two of its strategic policy objectives, namely Employment and Employability and Youth Entrepreneurship, are anchored in the socio-economic development of young people defined as those who are within in the age bracket of 18 to 35 years.

With a view to empowering youth to face the new challenges of a highly competitive work environment, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, through its Employment and Employability strategy, has initiated actions to equip young people with skills to prepare them to join the labour market. Some of the main activities carried out are Regional Job Fairs, Workshops on Employability Skills, Attitudes and Mind-set, organised in collaboration with key stakeholders and targeting around 1,500 youth each year, half of whom are young women.

Along the same lines, the Ministry has implemented the National Youth Civic Service which targets young people of the age group 17 to 25 years. This programme has the twin objectives to promote personal development and citizenship, and enhance the employability skills of both young men and women.

The Ministry also engages in a Youth Entrepreneurship Programme to encourage young people in entrepreneurial endeavours. Actions initiated comprise sensitization programmes on the Entrepreneurial Culture, mainly, for students, workshops on Creativity and Innovation for youth leaders, and Regional Training Courses on entrepreneurship skills to young persons envisaging the setting up of small enterprises. These courses culminate with the preparation of business plans which benefit from funding, both from the Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sports of the Francophonie (CONFEJES) and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Every year, the Ministry

organises a ‘Salon de L’Entrepreneuriat’, to give young entrepreneurs the opportunity to showcase and sell their products and services. Exchange programmes for sharing of entrepreneurship experiences are also organized. Young women entrepreneurs have been actively involved in these programmes.

The Ministry is presently in the process of formulating a National Youth Development Strategy to take on board the emerging contemporary youth needs. One prominent area of intervention would be unemployment trends and issues among young women. It is, however, noted that, among the 16-24 years of age, unemployment is higher among females (27.6%) compared to males (17.9%) (Statistics Mauritius, 2019). The new strategy will initiate actions to enable greater participation and involvement of youth, including young girls and women and to facilitate their access to the labour market and enhance their contribution to the mainstream development agenda.

II.A.12.I. The **Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security** has, since 2014, taken a series of measures to address the specific needs of women, and empower women, especially those at the grassroots level who work in the agricultural sector. A Census for Agriculture which was conducted in 2014 by Statistics Mauritius to gather information on the organizational structure of farms at geographic level in Mauritius and estimate the contribution of agriculture to the economy, did not, however, provide information on the gender dimensions pertaining to agriculture. With technical assistance from the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), Statistics Mauritius sought professional expertise and conducted a **Gender Analysis of the Census for Agriculture** in 2015.

The Gender Analysis points towards a male dominated agricultural sector and that there is a gender gap in terms of composition of the household agricultural workers but most importantly, in terms, of power sharing and decision making in the agricultural sector in Mauritius. While the agricultural sector employed more males (55%), there were more females than males in the Republic of Mauritius who were in full time paid employment in the sector. Some 58% of the total paid employees in the agricultural sector were women and this indicates that the agricultural sector constitutes a very important source of income to women in the Republic of Mauritius. However, profits were almost entirely controlled by men. Of the 66,450 hectares of land occupied by household farms in Mauritius, only 5,175 hectares were occupied by females constituting only 8% of land owned, leased or rented for agricultural purposes.

The Gender Analysis Report considered that the “main impediments for gender mainstreaming in the agricultural sector are related to lack of understanding of the concepts of gender equality and gender mainstreaming not only among the grassroots but also among cadres expected to promote the integration of gender in the development agenda; absence of Gender-Based Budgeting and the lack of sex disaggregated data and information reflecting women’s and men’s participation and their changing roles in the chain of agricultural production”⁹

The Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security recognises the importance of women in the agricultural sector and as such, various schemes and incentives, trainings and capacity building programmes have been initiated to empower women in the agricultural sector, taking into

⁹ 2014 Census of Agriculture-Gender Analysis Report, April 2016, Statistics Mauritius/ Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

consideration the recommendations of the Gender Analysis Report of the 2015 Census for Agriculture.

In 2014 Government established the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI), which operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security. Under the FAREI, a Women and Youth Unit has been created in the Extension Department which provides support to women. As a means to bringing women in agriculture, **Agricultural Women Clubs (AWC)** have been set up island wide in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. The clubs are located at the Home Economics Centres and Social Welfare Centres of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. The women are mostly unemployed and are adults of above 21 years old. The methodology used to bring women and get them engaged in the agricultural fields are training and educational sessions, demonstrations at FAREI Research Stations and Model Farms to women on new methodologies of gardening. Other initiatives taken by the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security are:

- **Bio Farming Initiatives**

Women are initiated to kitchen gardening, roof/container/vertical gardening, compost making, mushroom production, seedling production and transplanting, pests & diseases control, plant propagation, flower production, strawberry and other fruit production. They are also encouraged to contribute to the protection of the environment and agro ecology through talks on waste management and compost production and uses, rose & other flowers plantation, grafting of rose, plant propagation, demonstration on use of rooting hormones on cuttings. Government is introducing a Mini Sheltered Farming Scheme, constituting of an individual grant of Rs 10,000 to promote micro gardens, vertical agriculture and rooftop gardening among women. The Mauritius Prison Service has embarked on Bio-Farming initiative in 2014 by setting up a green waste compost plant at Petit Verger Prison which is a medium security prison. Part of the compost is being marketed and the rest is being used in the production of vegetables for local consumption. Compost plant for organic waste has been set up at the Women Prison with the assistance from the University of Mauritius.

- **Food Security Crops, Fruit Production and Livestock Production**

Women are being sensitized on the reasons for cultivation of food security crops, cultivation of pulses (lima & soya beans) as well as on the importance and nutritive value of vegetables. The sensitization also involves providing information on fruit protection methods such as quality banana fruit production through bagging and good agricultural practices, methods for planting, cultural practices and management of runners.

One Greenhouse is fully operational since last six years at the Women Prison. An additional greenhouse is being set up at the Open Prison for Women. This project aims at engaging women detainees in new techniques of vegetable production and at the same time helping them live up a normal life, more so that these facilities are provided outside the confines of prison walls.

- **Distribution of planting material/ other inputs to Agricultural Women Clubs (AWCs).**

Free planting materials and other inputs are distributed to women working in agriculture through **Agricultural Women Clubs**, which have been set in Women Empowerment Centres around the island to help women at the grass root level develop home gardening and grow

small businesses. These materials comprise vegetable seeds, soya bean seeds, potting bags, mushroom fruiting bags and traps for control of pests. Various advisory visits are organised to follow up on projects such as kitchen gardens, roselle plantation, and the setting up of a container/vertical gardens being implemented by AWCs members. Extension services are offered to all farmers.

- **Agro Processing**

In line with Government policy for the support of agro-processors, FAREI has two support facilities, namely, the Agro Processing Training Centre (APTC) set up in 2003 and the Agro Processing Resource Centre (APRC) set up in 2010 for capacity building and assistance to women entrepreneurs in product development for market test. Between 2014 and 2019, training in various techniques of food processing and preservation, good management practices, food safety and hygiene has been provided to women who desire to start a food business. As a result, many micro and small-scale enterprises have been set up by trainees. Training is mainly organized in the following fields:

- Production of pickles – a variety of pickles and sauce.
- Production of sugar-based products- jam, jelly, marmalade, fruit paste, crystallized fruits, juice, syrup and nectar.
- Chips making from bananas, bread fruits, potatoes, manioc, sweet potatoes and taro
- Value addition to roselles, tomatoes
- Value addition to mushrooms (pleurotes)
- Production of healthy preserves from vegetables and fruits
- Minimal processing of vegetables & fruits.

II.A.13. WOMEN AND HEALTH

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is based on the conviction that health is a human right, not a privilege. It is about ensuring that all people can get quality health services, where and when they need them, without suffering financial hardship.

Health is one among the priorities of Government in Mauritius. Government acknowledges that good health is a driver of economic and human development and that no one should be denied access to life-saving or health-promoting interventions. It provides free affordable quality health services, from primary care to specialised services to the population, regardless of their income, gender, race and religion. Government Programme 2015-2019 demonstrates strong political will for achieving integrated people-centred health services in Mauritius. Paragraph 111 of Government Programme 2015-2019, underlines that *‘Government is committed to providing universal, accessible and quality health services, free of any user cost, with emphasis on customer satisfaction.’*

Successive Governments, since 1968, while acknowledging health as a human right, have continued to sustain the provision of free health care services in public owned institutions. For the financial year 2018/2019, the budget allocated to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life amounted to Rs 12.26 billion or US\$ 342 million, representing some 2.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 7.9% of Total Government Expenditure (TGE). Per capita public expenditure on health was Rs 9,689 or US\$ 276. State-owned health institutions, both hospitals and primary health care facilities, remain the main providers of health care services to the population. The latest Survey on Households Out-of-Pocket (OOP) Expenditure on Health indicates that approximately 72.8% of the health needs of the population are catered by public health institutions

for outpatient and inpatient services, while 27.2% by the private sector.

Fully-functioning strong health systems are in place in Mauritius and all the citizens of the country, without discrimination, have access free of user cost to the public health service systems at primary, secondary and tertiary levels ranging from all essential drugs to high-tech medicine. This has improved most health indicators. The 2030 SDG targets for child mortality are a neonatal mortality rate of 12 deaths per 1,000 live births and an under-five mortality of 25 per 1,000 live births. Mauritius has already achieved this target with a Neonatal Mortality Rate of 8.9 and an under-five Mortality Rate of 14.3 in 2017. The percentage of deliveries assisted by skilled health personnel is almost 100%. Life expectancy at birth, which was 68.1 years for males and 75.3 years for females in 2000, has reached 71.2 years and 77.9 years respectively in 2017.

Infant mortality rate per thousand live births is at present 11.7 compared to 14.1 in 2014. It is lower than the world rate (29) and sub-Saharan Africa (52). However, low birth weight is a matter of concern. According to a study conducted by World Health Organization, UNICEF and London School of Hygiene¹⁰ released in May 2019, Mauritius ranks 10th among the countries with the lowest birth rate in the world.

In 2017, the maternal mortality ratio was 0.79 maternal deaths per 1,000 live births and has fluctuated between 0.28 and 0.79 during the ten-year period of 2008 to 2018. The country has also successfully implemented its reproductive health program which is widespread across the island. However, male involvement and participation in family planning is low, as indicated by the low utilisation of male methods of contraception (11.7%). The Contraceptive Prevalence Survey of 2014 revealed that 40.9% of women in the reproductive ages (15-49 years of age) were using a contraceptive method. In 2017, the percentage dropped to 31.5% of married women using a contraceptive method¹¹. From 2014 to 2018, the total fertility rate has remained at 1.41, below the replacement level (2.1 children per woman). The population growth rate has fluctuated between 0.1% and 0.09% from 2014 to 2018. The Criminal Code was amended in 2012 and legalises termination of pregnancy in specific circumstances, namely: in cases where the continued pregnancy will endanger the pregnant person's life; to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant person; when there is a substantial risk that the continued pregnancy will result in a severe malformation, or severe physical or mental abnormality of the foetus; and when the pregnancy has not exceeded its fourteenth week and results from a case of rape, sexual intercourse with a female under the age of 16 or sexual intercourse with a specified person.

Communicable diseases and problems of Maternal and Child Health (MCH) have markedly declined and are effectively controlled. On the other hand, non-communicable and chronic diseases (NCD) are on the rise, especially among women. The NCD and Health Promotion Unit of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life undertakes routine Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Programme for married or sexually active aged women aged 30 to 60 years according to guidelines laid by experts for early detection and treatment by NCD and Health Promotion Unit. It also conducts Screening Programme for students of secondary schools in Grade 7, 9 and 12.

The incidence of HIV in the population was less than 1% in 2015, and is yet increasing slowly but steadily, especially among women. Between 2014 and 2018, there has been a constant increase of HIV infections from 132 to 164 of new cases among women.

¹⁰ National, Regional and Worldwide Estimates of Low Birth Weight, Lancet Publication, 15 May 2019

¹¹ Demographic Year Book, Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, volume 43, October 2018.

II.A.14. DECENT WORK AGENDA AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

In June 2005, at its 93rd session, the International Labour Conference adopted the Decent Work Agenda. In 2008, Government of Mauritius formulated its first Mauritius Decent Work Country Programme (MDWCP). The *Decent Work Country Programme* provides a policy and operational framework to guide Government, social partners, and other stakeholders, in regard to priority actions towards the realisation of the *Global Decent Work Agenda* of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The main focus of the first generation MDWCP was:

- Creation of Decent and Productive Employment with the provision of adequate social protection.
- Strengthening social dialogue.
- Elimination of all forms of discrimination.

The implementation of the MDWCP started in 2012, but did not kick off well due to changes in government's policy. In 2012, Government formulated a new Country Programme for 2012-2015, based on the new 10-year **Economic and Social Transformation Plan (ESTP)**. This was followed in January 2014 by a new **Country Strategy Paper (2014-2018)**, putting Mauritius into a transition for becoming a High-Income Country. Accordingly, the ILO with assistance from a local consultant and the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment conducted a Country Programme Review (CPR) of the MDWCP to take stock of the situation and propose action areas. The CPR Report was released in January 2015 with a series of recommendations related to the alignment of Labour Legislations with international standards and the reinforcement of "decent work" environment with special consideration to the most vulnerable sections of the population and women. The report among others recommended the development of an Inclusive National Employment Policy and the introduction of a National Minimum Wage.

In 2015, Government of Mauritius embarked on the elaboration of the second-generation of the DWCP. In consultation with the social partners the Decent Work Country Programme identified two country priorities, namely:

1. Promotion of employment across all sectors through innovation and productivity.
2. Improvement of working conditions through protection of rights at work.

The activities flowing from the above priorities would cover period 2019 to 2023 and have among others the challenges of addressing the issue of the high rate of female unemployment and protecting women earning low incomes, and strengthening facilities for women to reconcile productive and reproductive responsibilities.

II.A.14.A. BACK TO WORK PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN

In June 2015, the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment & Training introduced a **Back to Work Programme (BTW)** for women above 35 years old who wish to join/rejoin the labour force, after having left their jobs especially because of family commitments.

The objectives of the BTW Programme are to:

1. ensure that Mauritian women above 35 years of age can have employment in private enterprises or with individual employers;
2. help women regain their self-confidence and learn to integrate or re-integrate the labour market by undergoing a training programme designed to build or re-build self-awareness, self-esteem, social responsibility and entrepreneurial skills and to strengthen interpersonal and communication skills.

Moreover, a one-week “Induction to the World of Work” training course focusing on soft, professional and computer skills was dispensed to 337 unemployed women registered under the BTW Programme. This training was conducted region wise in collaboration with the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD) from November 2016 to June 2017 in 12 batches, to meet the stated objectives of the BTW Programme.

In addition, to further empower those women, technical courses are currently being dispensed to them by the MITD. The courses are fully sponsored by Government and a stipend of Rs 6,000 is paid to each participant at the end of the course. For the year 2018, about 100 unemployed women under the BTW have been trained in Bakery/Pastry, Beauty Therapy, Hairdressing, Care of the Elderly and Disabled and Early Childhood Care. As at March 2019, 1105 women have been placed in private enterprises or individual employers. It is to be noted that 54% of women got permanent employment after having completed their one-year placement.

II.A.14.B. WOMEN WORKING FROM HOME

Government now encourages women to work from home to enabling them assume their responsibility both as productive workers and members of the family. This is in recognition of women’s authentic needs, values and priorities and in promoting optimal flexibility to women at work.

On 1st March 2019, Government operationalised the **Employment Rights (Working from Home) Regulations 2019, GN No. 37 of 2019**, which aims at supporting working mothers to fulfil their family obligations and promoting work-family conciliation to further facilitate their integration into the labour market, especially with the increasing advent of technological innovations. This initiative empowers women and mothers to live life on their own term, opens up new avenues and opportunities for work among young women in the reproductive ages and those having urgent family responsibilities that very often deter them from taking up full time jobs.

II.A.14.C. INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE (2018)

The World Bank pointed out in 2015 that between 2007 and 2012 relative poverty increased from 8.5% to 9.8%, identifying that one of the key barriers to the attainment of shared prosperity was the disparity and inequality of waged employment income. While female unemployment rate was much higher than for male, the disparity of wages between men and women became a serious concern. Government set up in 2016 a National Wage Consultative Council (NWCC) to review the situation and make recommendations to address the inequality of income. The first report of the NWCC was released in November 2017 and made a series of recommendations to improve

the standard of living of low wage earners with a view to promoting equity, bridging the gap between male and female wage earners, and bridge wage differentials and improve income distribution in favour of the poor. It recommended among others, the introduction of a National Minimum Wage for the lowest paid workers, in relation to the median wage. As per the provisions of the National Minimum Wage Regulations 2017, Government took the decision to introduce with effect from 1st January 2018, the National Minimum Wage (NMW) to every full-time worker to 8,140 rupees per month. In order to harmonise the NMW with the Negative Income Tax Scheme introduced in 2017, Government tops up the NMW to enable workers drawing Rs 8,000

– Rs 8,500 to obtain Rs 9,000 a month. The introduction of the NMW has relieved thousands of women who were working at very low wages ranging from Rs 1500 to Rs 3000 monthly in the informal and private sectors, enabling for many an increase of approximately 450%.

In order to further protect women who are at low paid jobs and among whom shiftability in employment is high, employers, including household employers, are obliged to pay at least the national minimum wage and to contribute to the **National Pension Scheme (NPS)** and the **National Saving Fund (NSF)** for the benefit of the workers. In order to further facilitate the transition of women from informal to formal work, a **Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund (PRGF)** for workers in the private sector is to be set up by Government in 2019. The PRGF Scheme will ensure that workers in the private sector do not lose their terms of service in case of shifting employment. Their whole terms of service in different employments will be calculated and a retirement gratuity will accordingly be paid to these workers when they retire. This measure is expected to reach 350,000 workers in the private sector and benefit largely women who tend very often to work on periodic terms. This measure particularly brings that class of atypical workers under the ambit and protection of the labour legislation.

II.A.14.D. MATERNITY PROTECTION AND BENEFITS

Government in line with its relentless and continued efforts to better support working mothers, as announced in the 2018 Budget speech, has with effect from 09 August 2018, amended the **Employment Rights Act** to extend the eligibility of maternity leave with pay to all female workers, even though they reckon less than 12 months continuous service. This measure was also extended to the public sector. Furthermore, as announced in the 2019-2020 Budget speech, the limitation of maternity leave on full pay which was up to 3 confinements in the public has been removed and facilities for nursing of unweaned child or breastfeeding have been extended to 6 months as from date of birth.

Section 30 of the Employment Rights Act has further reinforced existing protection applicable to working women as follows-

- The 12 weeks' maternity leave provided under the previous Labour Act and the Employment Rights Act 2008 effective as from 02 February 2009 has been increased to 14 weeks as from May 2015;
- The maternity allowance which initially varied from Rs 300 to Rs 2,000, has been increased to Rs 3,000 with effect from June 2013 and is applicable and payable in all economic sectors of activity in the private sector;
- Still birth is considered as a confinement and women workers are equally treated in terms of maternity leave of 14 weeks with pay as from May 2015;
- A pregnant female worker shall not be compelled to perform overtime work, 2 months prior to confinement unless she so requests and shall not be required to perform duties necessitating continuous standing or that may be detrimental to her health or that of her baby, as may be recommended by her medical practitioner;

An employer is prohibited from giving a notice of dismissal to an employee on maternity leave or giving such notice which will expire during her maternity leave except on ground of redundancy.

II.A.14.E. SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORKPLACE

Provision regarding the above-name unwanted conduct at the workplace exists in the labour legislation as far back as 2004 (Labour Act) and is now provided at Section 54 “**Violence at Work**” of the **Employment Rights Act**. To that effect that section protects workers against different forms of violence at the workplace, including sexual harassment, which is another form of discrimination and which affects women in particular. An extract of section 54(1) is provided hereunder:

- (1) No person shall—
 - (a) harass, sexually or otherwise;
 - (b) assault;
 - (c) verbally abuse, swear at or insult;
 - (d) express the intention to cause harm to;
 - (e) bully or use threatening behaviour towards;
 - (f) use aggressive gesture indicating intimidation, contempt or disdain towards;
 - (g) by words or act, hinder,

a worker, in the course of or as a result of his work.

The Employment Rights Act defines *harassment*” as meaning **“any unwanted conduct, verbal, non-verbal, visual, psychological or physical, based on age, disability, HIV status, domestic circumstances, sex, sexual orientation, race, colour, language, religion, political, trade union or other opinion or belief, national or social origin, association with a minority, birth or other status, that a reasonable person would have foreseen that a worker would be affected negatively in his dignity”**.

Further the legislation was strengthened to provide as a forceful deterrent to eliminate such kind of unwanted conduct at the workplace that any person found guilty would on conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding 75,000 rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years.

Moreover, the Act provides that no employer shall terminate the employment of a worker on the basis of discriminatory practice, including pregnancy.

II.A.14 F. NON-DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

It is to be further observed that Section 4 of the Employment Rights Act provides necessary safeguards and protection regarding labour rights, indistinctively and indiscriminately to all workers as well as to ensure the application of the principle of equality between men and women. Section 4(1) of the Act reads as follows:

- (1) (a) No worker shall be treated in a discriminatory manner by his employer in his employment or occupation.
- (b) No person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner by a prospective employer in respect of access to employment or occupation.

In order to further deter or curb any act of interference, or to terminate the employment of workers on the basis of discrimination, the legislation has provided a further protection. Section 46(5B)

of the Act accordingly provides that in the case of a worker whose employment has been terminated on ground of discriminatory practices, the Industrial Court may, with the consent of the worker, order that that worker -

- (a) *be reinstated in his former employment with payment of remuneration from the date of the termination of his employment to the date of his reinstatement; or*
- (b) *be paid severance allowance in accordance with the provisions of the Employment Rights Act.*

II.A.14.G. EQUAL REMUNERATION FOR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE

Section 20(1) of the Employment Rights Act provides that both men and women should be treated equally at the workplace with regards to the payment of remuneration.

- *every employer shall ensure that the remuneration of any worker shall not be less favourable than that of another worker performing work of equal value*

The **National Remuneration Board** ensures that job appellations and classifications are based on the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value. References to “*female worker*” in various Remuneration Orders have been removed and gender-neutral terms are being used so as to be in line with sections 4 and 20 of the Employment Rights Act and the philosophy enshrined in ILO Conventions Nos. 100 and 111.

II.A.14.H. MEASURES TO ENSURE APPLICATION AND COMPLIANCE OF LEGAL PROVISIONS

The Inspection and Enforcement Section (IES) of the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations, Employment and Training is responsible, among others for carrying out full-scale inspections at workplaces in order to ensure compliance with the provisions of the labour legislation as well as to detect and sanction any infringement or breaches of the provisions of the law. The IES is also concerned with carrying out enquiries into complaints made by workers at its 17 regional labour offices. Officers based in these regional labour offices strive to resolve the complaints between the parties concerned, otherwise the unsettled *bona fide* cases are lodged for determination at the Industrial Court.

Since November 1999 a “Special Migrant Workers Unit” (SMWU) now revamped in 2018 and renamed as the “Flying Squad” is responsible to ensure compliance, particularly regarding terms and conditions of employment of migrant workers in Mauritius and to ensure that their fundamental rights are being respected. In 2019 the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms, in collaboration with stakeholders, produced a guide for migrant workers involved in the secondary economic activities in Mauritius entitled “**Know your Rights**” which aims at informing prospective and current migrant workers, of their rights and possible remedial actions in case of violations.

Among other things, the Flying Squad ensures that migrant workers are employed on terms and conditions that are not less favorable than those of their local counterpart. This is done mainly through:

- ❖ verifying and vetting of their contracts of employment, prior to their arrival in Mauritius;
- ❖ carrying out of routine inspections and follow up visits at the enterprises at regular intervals to see to it that terms and conditions of employment as per their vetted contract of employment are being strictly complied with;

- ❖ verifying that migrant workers are fully conversant with terms and conditions of their vetted contract of employment;
- ❖ verifying that there exists an efficient means of communication at the level of the enterprise where their grievances may be discussed and settled as appropriate.
- ❖ education sessions in the course of inspection visits to inform them of their rights and responsibilities;
- ❖ registering of complaints regarding breach of provisions of the legislations or any term and conditions of employment of their vetted contract of employment or any other issues regarding their conditions of work in Mauritius;
- ❖ issuing compliance notice “Recommendation” where employers have failed to take corrective remedial actions to address grievances and other complaints within a reasonable delay; and
- ❖ thereafter, initiating civil action or criminal prosecution against defaulting employers who have failed to comply with the above notice.

In order to reinforce and create more awareness among the various stakeholders on the labour legislation issues, the Information, Education and Communication Unit of the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations, Employment and Training conducts regular talks and seminars at workplaces, as well on radios or TV for the benefits of workers, trade unions representatives and employers on the rights of workers and the legal provisions existing to protect them against any form of discrimination.

II.A.15. INVOLVING MEN AND BOYS IN GENDER MAINSTREAMING

In Mauritius, despite some positive changes noted among the younger generation, men’s involvement and participation in family matters is low. The prevalence of patriarchy, which continues to reinforce gender stereotypes, (surprisingly even among the younger generation, as revealed by studies conducted on adolescent behaviour in 2015), societal inhibitions towards men’s performing household chores, especially at the grassroots level, together with high rate of alcohol and drug consumption, are some of the constraining factors that inhibit equal and equitable partnership between men and women in the family and community. In the area of Reproductive Health, women most of the time bear the burden of contraception and child rearing. Male use of contraception is 11.7%.

Without the support of men as effective caregivers within the family, gender inequality at home and outside would persist, impinging on sustainable human development. Acknowledging that sustainable development cannot be achieved unless men and women share equal opportunities and values and to ensure that these are transmitted to the next generation, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare embarked in 2014 on a strong advocacy campaign entitled “**Men as Caring Partners**” with the aim to enhance understanding and importance of gender equality to men; ensure the effective participation and involvement of men in family wellbeing; meet specific male sensitive needs and concerns, especially with regard to their sexual and reproductive health; and promote equal opportunities to men and women in the development process. The project is still ongoing and is implemented by an NGO, the Association for Population and Development (APD). The programme is based on Community Outreach for behavioural change communication; recreation-based interventions for information sharing and counselling; and advocacy for community and media support. Given its impressive success and

impact in changing men's and young boys' perceptions of gender issues, especially those living in deprived regions, Government is replicating the programme to reach the whole island.

II.A.16. CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Children are the basis for all dimensions of sustainable development. They have a right to thrive, develop to their full potential, and live in a sustainable world where they are safe, healthy, educated and happy. The Sustainable Development Goals provide a unique opportunity to build on the foundations for children to live safely and happily. The 17 goals of the Agenda 2030 are all interconnected and geared towards achieving situations where children can live without violence and where their intrinsic rights and dignity are safeguarded and respected. Mauritius lives up to its commitment to join the world community in promoting concrete policies and measures to end all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children.

The Child Development Unit (CDU) of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare was set up in 1995. It ensures the survival, protection and development and participation rights of the Mauritian Child as upheld in the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and the Sustainable Development Goals whereby the best interest of the child shall be of primary consideration in all policies, programmes and actions pertaining to child welfare.

II.A.16.A. Policy Commitment

Government of the Republic of Mauritius prescribes itself to a number of International and Regional Human Rights Instruments related to women's empowerment and gender equality. Mauritius has ratified the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1984; the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 1992; the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of Child Abduction in 1993; the Optional Protocol on Children in Armed Conflict in 2009; the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2011; and signed the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure in 2012. As announced in the Budget Speech of 2017, Government with assistance from the European Union is currently in the process of drafting a "**Children's Bill** that will give effect to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and providing the framework for better protection and care to children"¹². The Children's Bill is intended to incorporate the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, include all its main principles and obligations, and bring together the different pieces of legislation dealing with children in Mauritius under one single legislation.

II.A.16.B. Child Marriage

Mauritius has acceded to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child both of which have strong provisions against child marriage. Mauritius has, however, placed a reservation to article 6(b) of the Maputo Protocol which prohibits the marriage of a girl under 18 years of age.

¹²Rising to the Challenge of Our ambition: Budget Speech 2017-2018, (page 50) Ministry of Finance and Economic Development,

The general definition of a child in Mauritius is any minor under the age of 18. The civil law in Mauritius is clear on Child Marriage. According to Article 144 of the Civil Code Civil Mauricien, no one can contract a marriage before the age of 18. However, a person aged 16 but under the age of 18 can get married with the consent of his/her parents or with the consent of one of the parents exercising exclusively ‘l’*autorité parentale*’ or in the absence of the consent of parents, through the Judge in Chambers if the latter considers that it would be in the interests of the minor to get married. Children, whether boys or girls, under the age of 16 cannot marry civilly and it is a criminal offence to have sexual intercourse with a minor under the age of 16.

There are also gaps in national legislation on some forms of gender-based violence, including the lack of an explicit prohibition of **marital rape**. However, in an amendment made to the Protection from Domestic Violence Act in 2016, the definition of domestic violence includes *inter-alia* “compelling the spouse or the other person by force or threat to engage in any conduct or act, sexual or otherwise, from which the spouse or other person has the right to abstain”.

In April 2019, the **Law Reform Commission**¹³ (LRC) submitted proposals to Government to redefine rape as “any act of sexual penetration, committed against another person by violence, constraint, threat or surprise”, and sexual assault to mean any “abnormal or obscene act against the will of the victim”; and recommended that any sexual activity with a minor below the age of 18 to be considered as a sexual assault and be punishable, and that marital rape be explicitly considered as a criminal offence

II.A.16.C. Child Adoption Bill

Mauritius acceded to The Hague Convention of 29 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (“The Hague Convention”) in 1998, with The Hague Convention entering into force in 1999. In 2018, the Ministry obtained technical assistance of the European Union for the development of a draft Adoption Bill to safeguard the rights of the child with prominent consideration on the welfare and best interest of the child.

¹³The Law Reform Commission of Mauritius is an independent statutory body set up by Parliament, under Act No. 26 of 2005, to review in a systematic way the law of Mauritius, to make proposals for its reform and development, and to ensure the law is understandable and accessible.

II.A.16.D. Child Protection Services

Child Protection Services are provided by the Child Development Unit (CDU) of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. The CDU provides dedicated multi-disciplinary support in a one stop shop child friendly system through the services of a team of professionals when the child is abused, neglected and at risk. This service is very complex as it involves socio-cultural issues, legal parameters for action and the need to intervene as quickly as possible to ensure safety of children in situation of distress. Besides the children, the other actors in the child protection services are numerous, namely the parents, police, the community and social workers, psychologists, law and medical practitioners, and educational institutions, among others. The CDU works within the parameters of the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (1980), Civil Status Act, Child Protection Act, National Children's Council Act, and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act.

An integrated approach to child care and protection is desirable to ensure that all actors in the process of child development are on board and act as effective instrument of change. The CDU has adopted a community-based intervention approach to ensure that members of the community at the grassroots levels and stakeholders interact with the unit to ensure the best interests of the abused children and for a wider coverage of its services in the island through a network of 6 outstations around the island (Goodlands, Port-Louis, Bambous, Vacoas, Souillac and Flacq).

CDU assesses the risk to and safety of children and provides or arranges for services to achieve safe, permanent families for children who have been abused, or maltreated, neglected, or who are at risk of abuse or neglect. Its Emergency Protection Services through a round- the- clock Free Hotline Service (Tel:113) ensure immediate assistance.

II.A.16.E. Restructuring the Child Development Unit (CDU)

Acknowledging that child development is complex and demands a concerted and synergised effort together with specific and immediate interventions, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare realised that very often important and urgent issues pertaining to child protection got diluted under a broad umbrella. Accordingly, the Child Development Unit was restructured. A **Child Perpetrator Support Unit** was set up in June 2017 to cater for psychological and mental health needs of juvenile offenders. It is manned by a Senior Psychologist. The Unit has devised appropriate psychological treatment programmes designed and targeted to assist children in conflict with the law with a view to enabling them to develop skills to prevent relapse. Such programmes contribute to children's rehabilitation and reintegration in society. In 2018, the **Alternative Care Unit (ACU)** was set up to be responsible for the rehabilitation of children placed in Residential Care Institutions (RCIs)/ shelters, Foster Care System and the Child Mentoring Programme amongst others. The ACU is networking with 14 Residential Care Institutions run by NGOs and 3 Government-owned Centres (Shelters).

II.A.16.F. National Coordination on Children’s Programme

Under the concept “**Working Together**”, a high-powered committee, under the chairpersonship of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare and comprising other stakeholders dealing with issues relating to the protection, development and welfare of children has been set up. The Committee provides for the development of a common platform to coordinate all programmes and measures taken by all stakeholders concerned to protect children especially those victims of violence in a holistic manner, for capacity building, sharing of Best Practices, and the reinforcement and development of a Child Rights/ Child Centred mind-set and culture in different organizations.

The Integrated Support Centre (ISC) has been set up in 2019 and is a platform with a comprehensive and integrated system which provides immediate, consistent, coordinated and timely support to victims of child abuse on Hotline 113. The main office is located at Phoenix and connected to 06 CDU Outstations as follows: Vacoas, Souillac, Goodlands, Bambous, Port-Louis and Flacq.

The ISC’s processes are mainly to: respond to phone calls, first hand counselling and advice, referrals to CDU Outstations, interaction with other institutions and recording of cases for statistical purposes. As at 16 April 2019, 1678 calls were received and 418 cases of violence were reported, which have been transferred to CDU Outstations for interventions.

II.A.16.G. Community Child Protection Programme (CCPP)

The CCPP which was launched in 2007 was revamped in 2010 and restructured in 2014 to strengthen its reach in the community. The programme provides for the development of a formal mechanism to be set up in each district of Mauritius for grassroots and local level participation in community development, especially in respect of child protection and welfare. This programme allows for interplay of dynamic top down and bottom up forces for effective and quick intervention in case of child abuse and neglect. The specific objectives of the CCPP are to act as a surveillance mechanism to identify children at risk and victims of abuse; to encourage solidarity and a coordinated approach to the problem of child abuse; to involve community action in the prevention of child abuse and rehabilitation of children, victims of abuse and neglect.

32 Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs) have been set up across the island to oversee child protection programmes at the grassroots level. The structure was relooked in 2018 and the programme has been handed over to the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund (SILWF) for implementation to enable a more active civil society participation including parents, religious bodies, women and children associations and the media and also to ensure a more integrated approach to child protection. In January 2018, **50 Child Watch Committees (CWCs)** were set up to take over the work of the CCPCs and new terms of reference were established. The CWCs act as a surveillance mechanism to identify children at risk and those who are vulnerable to all forms of violence; and using a community-based approach to gather information of alleged/suspected child abuses, report cases to the authorities for immediate actions. From 2014 to 2019, more than 1500 cases of child abuse and neglect at the community levels have been addressed by the community child protection programme.

II.A.16.H. Children in Situation of Distress

Children from families in precarious conditions either due to poverty or to parents who are themselves either not well educated, in prisons or have been trapped into drugs and alcoholic addiction or domestic violence very often end up in unsocial behaviour. There have been over the past four years rising reported incidences of teenage pregnancies, sexual abuse, violence, bullying, indiscipline, misconduct, and other unbecoming behaviour among adolescents in and out of schools. The Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare has set up various structures to address the issue.

- **Children's Clubs** are run across the island, mostly in socially difficult areas. Developmental and creativity activities through games and entertainment are organized for these children between 3 years to 18 years old to facilitate their social integration. A total of 85,350 children have been reached from 2014 till April 2019 through the Children's Clubs. The Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare monitors 405 Child Day Care Centres (CDCCs) for children from poor families in the age bracket of 03 months to 03 years to ensure that these children are provided with appropriate support and care and also to assist women take up productive employment. Government doubled in 2018 the one-off grant under the Crèche (Daycare Centre) scheme from Rs 200,000 up to Rs 500,000 and offered private companies benefit from a double deduction under corporate tax to promote investment in Crèches.
- Government has also set up 204 **School Child Protection Clubs** (SCPCs) in primary and secondary schools around the island to develop skills and competencies to both curtail and combat violence against children 'a priori' within the school premises and also to empower the children to contribute towards the creation of a violence-free and child-friendly environment conducive to the overall development of the child. A total of 50,007 students have been reached in 767 primary and secondary schools between 2014 and April 2019 by the SCPCs.
- Children who as a result of the family's failure to support and provide adequate care and those whose family's conduct represents potential risks of harm to children, are removed from their family as a measure of last resort after unsuccessful protective actions. These children are placed in (a) **Places of Safety** (b) **Shelters** (c) **Residential Care Institutions** and are provided with special protection and assistance. These institutions are Charitable Institutions/Non-Governmental Organizations which work in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare.
- In May 2015, Government commissioned a Fact- Finding Committee to inquire into the living conditions and the rehabilitation programme of children at these institutions. A series of recommendations was made to ensure that these children are successfully and safely reinserted into their family and the society. Specific care and treatment are provided to children labelled as "*children beyond control*", safeguarding their right to education and other services and avoiding their detention as convicted juvenile offenders.

The **Rehabilitation Youth Centre (RYC)** is governed by the Reform Institutions Act and Juvenile Offenders Act. The RYC is under the control of the Ministry of Defence and Rodrigues

and caters for the detention and empowerment of youth under the age of 18 and provides an array of training programmes to enable youth reinsertion into the society.

Furthermore, regular IEC Campaigns on Teenage Pregnancy; Sexual Reproductive Health; Family Values; Juvenile Delinquency; Self Defence Programme; Substance and Drug Abuse; Healthy Eating; Leadership; Physical Grooming, and Road Safety are carried out in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders like the National Children Council, Police, Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association and Action Familiale.

II.A.16.I. Tardy Declaration of Birth

As per the Civil Status Act, provision is made for a declaration of birth to be made within 45 days of the birth. Beyond a period of three months, the declaration of birth is made only upon an order of a District Magistrate. In this connection, the Child Development Unit (CDU) of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare facilitates the procedures for Tardy Declaration of Birth for Children only. This is in accordance with Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which stipulates that, “*The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality ...*”.

A child who is not declared does not have any identity and is not recognised as a citizen of Mauritius and is bereft of all facilities and benefits that society caters for. Thus, the CDU works in close collaboration with other stakeholders, including the Attorney General’s Office, the Civil Status Office, the Police Department, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the Judiciary, to identify and record cases of undeclared births and to arrange for the registration of same within the shortest delay. From 2014 to February 2019, 167 male and 163 female children have been declared under the tardy declaration initiative.

II.A.16.J. Promoting Effective Parenthood for an Inclusive Society

Child welfare policy and practice are grounded in the premise that parents are in the best position to nurture, protect, and care for the needs of their children. In acknowledgement of the importance of responsible and responsive parenting in order to promote children’s social, emotional, cognitive and physical development and well-being and to strive for an inclusive society where all parties are on board for the development of the child and family, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare launched a project called “Ecole Des Parents” in 2010, which was restructured into “**Atelier Partage Parents**” in 2012 to empower parents to cope with child development and related problems, to cope with the challenges of parenting/ adolescent crisis, parent- child relationship and non-discrimination as regard the girl-child. The project is implemented by the National Children Council, which, under the aegis of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, is the key consultative and coordinating national body on all activities and issues related to children. From 2014 to 2019, more than 150 capacity building programmes (of 2 months duration) have been organised around the island for parents.

In 2015 an international symposium on the “*Crossing Perspectives of Parenthood in the Indian Ocean*” was organised by the “*Caisses d’Allocations Familiales*” of Reunion Island to discuss the obstacles faced by countries of the region on the issues pertaining to the promotion of effective parenthood. Following the recommendations of the symposium, Government took the initiative

to set up an “**Observatory for Parenthood**” (*Observatoire de la Parentalité*) in Mauritius to help parents and professionals exchange concerns on the challenges facing parenthood and propose concrete and practical actions to promote best practices on the issue. The Observatory for Parenthood was launched on the 15th May 2018 in the context of the celebration of the International Day of Families. The 2018 theme of the day was “**Families and inclusive societies**”. It explored the role of families and family policies in advancing Sustainable Development Goal 16 in terms of promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. In this context, a colloquium was organized with stakeholders and professionals in the field of parenting, family wellbeing, education and psychology on the theme “**Parenthood: 50 Years Ahead**” to discuss the challenges of parenthood in Mauritius for the coming 50 years. The Observatory on Parenthood serves as an excellent platform for stakeholders and professionals from different fields to exchange views and experiences, synergise their efforts and create networks to promote best practices related to parenthood.

II.A.16.K. Caring for Women Detainees and their Children in Prisons

Women detainees benefit from the same health facilities which are available in the community. A separate ward for detainees is available at a public hospital (Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital) for sick women, pregnant and post-natal care. All amenities are put in place to enable proper care and development of the child along with their mothers. Mothers in detention are allowed to keep their children with them till the age of five years old. Accordingly, a modern and conducive Mother and Child Care Unit is operational since 2016 at the Prison Service.

In collaboration with a non-Governmental organization, and adopting an integrated approach, a Day-Care Centre was set up on 24 May 2012 to cater for babies aged three months to three years and whose mothers are in detention together with children of staff and from the Community. This Day-Care Centre is unique in the African region. Thereafter, the children of women detainees are admitted in municipal pre-primary schools in the vicinity with all the required facilities such as transport, school uniform, stationaries and food, and ensuring a complete absence of any risk of stigmatization. In line with Government Harm Reduction Policy, incarcerated women detainees for drug addictions continue to benefit from the methadone maintenance substitution therapy. HIV-infected women detainees are also provided with the same.

Declaration of newly born children of detainees has always been facilitated within the prescribed delay and ways and means are being currently devised so that same is carried out in the best conditions. However, cases of tardy birth declarations have been noticed among children of detainees during admissions. In collaboration with the Child Development Unit of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, a fast-track system has been set up by the Prison Service to enable the declaration of those children. Visits of children in shelters whose parents are incarcerated are arranged with the support of the Child Development Unit. A Correctional Youth Centre has been set up to accommodate juveniles having committed serious offences thus segregating them from inmates with minor offences.

Teenage pregnancy is another issue of concern at the rehabilitation centre. Pregnant adolescents as well as adolescent mothers are also admitted at the Rehabilitation for Youth Centre for Girls. Educational and counselling programmes, facilitated by psychologists and trained educators, are organised on the issue at the rehabilitation centre.

SECTION II-B: POVERTY ERADICATION, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

II.B.1. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) defines poverty as “a human condition characterized by the sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights”¹⁴. This definition recognizes poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon, one which extends far beyond a lack of income to encompass the deprivation of the capabilities necessary to live in dignity. Poverty affects men, women, boys, and girls, but it is experienced differently by people of different ages, ethnicities, family roles and sex. Due to women’s biology, their social and cultural gender roles, and culturally constructed subordination, they face disadvantageous conditions which accumulate and intensify the already numerous adverse effects of poverty.

In Mauritius the situation of women in poverty has improved over the past years, with targeted approaches and specific social welfare programmes that have almost eliminated extreme poverty. In Mauritius, a person or household is deemed ‘poor’ if its resources fall below a threshold or cut off line known as the poverty line. Statistics Mauritius (SM) uses the relative poverty line set at Rs 5,652 for a one-adult member household and Rs 13,310 for a household comprising 2 adults and 2 children. In 2012, around 33,600 households (9.4%) comprising 122,700 persons (9.8%) were in relative poverty. Females were more likely to be in relative poverty. The proportion of females in relative poverty was 10.5 % against 9.0 % for males. Out of 122,700 persons in relative poverty, 66,700 were females and 56,000 males.

Factors which have contributed to the relatively low level of poverty in Mauritius are the socio-economic policies, political stability, democratic principles, welfare transfers, free health services, free education, free transport for students and the elderly. Specific measures like food stamps, social services, micro-financing to small businesses, female empowerment in the labour market, and the **Zone d’Education Prioritaire (ZEP)** Programme that seeks to create favourable learning conditions for children living in the less developed regions, have helped to position Mauritius as a contender to a high income country with a per capita income set at USD 12,475 in the short to medium-term. It is now an upper Middle-Income Country (MIC) with a per capita income of USD 9,206 as at December 2015.

II.B.2. POLICY MEASURES

Poverty has been a clear concern of Government during the past decades. Resources have been provided and a number of actions taken in the right direction such as the provision of secure decent housing and related amenities to a number of people living in poverty. In March 1999 a Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups was created, and in 2002 an Action Plan for Poverty Alleviation was conceived with 242 projects aimed at bringing significant relief to the poor. In 2008 the creation of the **National Empowerment Foundation (NEF)** together with the setting up of a dedicated Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment reinvigorated the empowerment programme for the poor and contributed to raise the standard of living of thousands of poor people. The specific mission of the NEF is to reduce the unemployment rate among women by providing technical and financial support to dismissed,

¹⁴CESCR, e/C.12/2001/10, para. 8

unemployed and / or older women over 40 who wish to enter the labour market or create their own business.

The Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment is specifically mandated to eradicate extreme and chronic poverty and to strive towards the creation of an inclusive and more equitable society; and has the mission to support and empower the vulnerable groups with a view to mainstreaming them in society and improving their quality of life in a sustainable manner through the provision of an effective and efficient service delivery, imbued in equity, fairness and impartiality. The Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment recognises that gender relations and inequalities are among the fundamental causes of poverty. The principles of equity and social justice require an integrated approach to ensure that everyone has equal opportunity and equality. The Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment is fully committed to channeling resources into processes that create a society that values women, men, girls and boys equally.

In line with the “**leaving no one behind**” principle and the country’s **Vision 2030**, in December 2016, Government provided a legal framework to combat poverty through the enactment of the **Social Integration and Empowerment Act**, a policy vehicle that translates the global Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union’s Agenda 2063 into action in Mauritius.

The main objective is to promote, within the philosophy of enhancing social justice and national unity, the social integration and empowerment of persons living in absolute poverty. Under this legislation, a panoply of Empowerment Schemes has been put in place to provide support to vulnerable households found eligible under the **Social Register of Mauritius (SRM)**. The Social Register contains the names and other relevant particulars of every person who lives in absolute poverty and enables Government to target its support to the needy. Special support is also provided under agreement with the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, termed as “**Social Contract**” (explained below), whereby beneficiaries agree to certain conditions, like training, orientation, compulsory enrolment of children in schools, etc. As at May 2019, the **Property Development Scheme** has been revised to provide land and property developers with incentives like exemption of tax on equipment and materials for constructing “purpose-built buildings” and an 8-year tax holidays on profits, essentially to meet the needs of the elderly, in terms of specialized care, support and facilities.

During 2017-2018, Government disbursed funds to the tune of Rs. 217,044,561 under the **Subsistence Allowance Scheme (SAS)** to some 11,222 SRM eligible households both in Mauritius and Rodrigues, who have signed a social contract. Government, conscious that education is key in the fight against poverty, has accordingly provided the necessary support to children of SRM beneficiaries, so that they may complete their education, thus enhancing their employment opportunities. As such, a monthly amount of Rs. 893 per child under the **Child Allowance Scheme** is being paid to SRM beneficiaries to support them in sending their children to school. This payment is made to a maximum of 3 children aged between 3 to 23 years old attending duly-recognized educational institutions. SRM beneficiaries also benefit from free school materials for their children attending school. Moreover, with a view to improving educational achievements and encourage students from poor families to attain higher levels of education, children of SRM beneficiaries are rewarded by a cash award of Rs. 15,000, Rs. 25,000 and Rs. 35,000 after having successfully completed the grade 9 level under the nine-year schooling, the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate or equivalent technical

qualifications respectively. In addition, the Free **Examinations Fees Scheme** is being implemented since 2017 through an exemption of payment of fees for those willing to re-sit the SC and HSC examinations with a view to improve their qualifications.

II.B.3. MARSHALL PLAN AGAINST POVERTY (2016)

In recognition of the multiple aspects of poverty and inequality and in order to adopt a holistic approach to address the root causes of poverty, Government, with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), developed in 2016 the Marshall Plan Against Poverty. The latter is an ambitious reform plan specifically designed to address persistent pockets of poverty and social exclusion in Mauritius. Its first goal is to reach the 10,000 households living in absolute poverty. It proposes a community-oriented approach to service delivery, based on the premise that addressing the social and economic issues facing vulnerable groups will result in their social, political and economic empowerment and integration. The Plan addresses areas related to the following:

- Housing
- Social inclusion and community development
- Access to education
- Employment for sustainable livelihood, especially for vulnerable groups
- Youth economic empowerment
- Access to electricity, sanitation, water, transportation, and ICT (information, communications and technology) services
- Environmental protection.

While the Plan refers to the official number of poor in the country as 33,600 households or 122,700 individuals, Government is initially focusing on the absolute poor, about 10,000 households or 37,000 people. It has also committed approximately US\$ 63 million, or 2.2 billion rupees for the years 2016-2019 to implement the Marshall Plan that constitutes 39 actionable and costed proposals. In an innovative approach to social protection, Mauritians living in absolute poverty will now receive cash transfers, and be accompanied by social workers as they tackle life challenges such as education of children, skills training, job search or placement, setting up or improving a small business, social housing, child care, remedial courses, disabilities care, and drug addiction treatment.

The 2016 Marshall Plan against Poverty is a comprehensive national strategy to ensure the realization of Government Programme (2015-2019), Government's Vision 2030, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Promoting gender equality and greater opportunities for women and young people are integrated themes that run throughout the Plan and cut across all areas related to social protection, employment, social housing, education, health, environment and equity in service delivery, including Rodrigues. The approach is to address the root causes of poverty and exclusion through a community-based approach to service delivery. It is a holistic plan with an integrated package of initiatives in the areas of social protection, employment, social housing, education, health, environment and equity in service delivery.

To enable the execution of the Marshall Plan, Mauritius introduced a Social Integration and Empowerment Act 2016 which provides for the setting up of empowerment programmes and schemes for persons living in absolute poverty so that they integrate the mainstream society and improve their quality of life in a sustainable manner.

A series of new activities and measures were undertaken, inter alia:

- (i) The registration of households was listed on the Social Register in Mauritius in 2016.
- (ii) New poverty thresholds for eligible beneficiaries under the Social Register of Mauritius were developed in 2016. The established absolute poverty thresholds range from a minimum Rs 2,720 per household per month with one adult to maximum Rs 9,520 for households with two adults and three children. The objective of the scheme is to ensure that the basic needs of people living in absolute poverty are effectively met and that they become economically independent in order to facilitate their integration in the mainstream society.
- (iii) The **Marshall Plan Social Contract (MPSC)** was introduced in December 2016 as the point of entry of eligible beneficiaries living in absolute poverty to benefit from the various empowerment schemes based on various conditions. The introduction of a monthly income support based on the new poverty thresholds and other conditional cash transfer schemes such as child allowance, school materials, school premium, free examination fees and crèche scheme. A monthly payment of Rs 929 per child for the Child Allowance Scheme is being paid as an incentive to eligible SRM Households to send their children to school. The school premium scheme currently applies to students who have passed the examinations of School Certificate and Higher School Certificate. The amounts of the School Premium awarded are Rs 25,000 to students of the School Certificate and Rs 35, 000 to those of the Higher School Certificate. The Crèche Scheme is to provide a crèche allowance in respect of children of households, as an incentive for their admission into registered institutions and to encourage unemployed mothers to take up employment or to undergo training.
 - (iv) Fully Concrete Housing units of 50 m2 each are being built throughout the island for families living in absolute poverty and who are owners of a plot of land but do not have the means to build a housing unit.
 - (v) Financial support is provided to NGOs for the implementation of projects in the ten (10) approved priority areas of intervention through the National Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Foundation (explained below).
 - (vi) As part of this new reform, a range of empowerment support services in terms of Education and Vocational Training, Employment and Livelihoods, Healthcare and Family Empowerment Programmes are also being provided by key service providers so that the marginalised participating families become successfully integrated into society.

The programme targets households living in absolute poverty whose eligibility is determined through a **Proxy-Means-Test (PMT)** to assess the living standard (or income) of households who have registered in the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM). It takes into consideration the demographic and socio-economic characteristics (e.g. age, gender of head, number of kids/adults/elderlies in the household), as well as the housing conditions and asset ownership. Where the income of a household has been assessed to be less than the poverty threshold, then the difference is paid in terms of a monthly subsistence allowance.

In 2016, new absolute poverty thresholds have been introduced based on a minimum threshold of Rs 2,720 and a maximum of Rs 9,520 per adult basis. These poverty thresholds have been calculated at 40% above the international poverty line, the World Bank threshold of USD 3.10 Purchasing Power Parity equivalent to Rs 1,938 per person per month for developing countries as compared to Rs 2,720 per adult per month in Mauritius.

The monthly subsistence allowance is also being implemented along with a series of educational empowerment schemes such as child allowance, school materials, school premium and free

examination fees as an incentive to encourage households to send their children to school, to improve the educational achievements of children and encourage them to attain higher level of education.

With respect to the empowerment of women, a Crèche Scheme has been set up whereby a sum of Rs 2,000 is being paid on behalf of children attending day-care centres. The purpose of the Scheme is to provide a crèche allowance in respect of children of households, as an incentive for their admission into registered institutions and to encourage unemployed mothers to take up employment or to undergo training.

As part of this new reform, a range of empowerment support services in terms of Education and Vocational Training, Employment and Livelihoods, Healthcare and Family Empowerment Programmes are provided by key service providers so that the marginalized families become successfully integrated into society. For example, unemployed heads of households (Men and Women) as well as dependents are being referred to the Ministry of Labour to be registered as unemployed and are offered the relevant training and placement. Training opportunities are also being provided to beneficiaries through the Mauritius Institute for Training and Development (MITD) in various fields such as Electrical Installation, Plumbing & Pipe Fitting and Housekeeping. Participants are given a monthly stipend of Rs 5,000 and a travelling allowance of Rs 1,000 to attend the training and are provided with placement opportunities in parallel with training. A toolkit is also being provided to the beneficiaries to help them start their own practice/business.

Training with respect to income generating projects is being provided to beneficiaries, especially women, in the following fields:

- Bee-Keeping
- Hair Dressing and beauty care
- Manufacture of eco-bags
- Poultry rearing
- Home gardening

The National Empowerment Foundation conducts Life Enhancement Education Programme with women and girls, on the following fields:

| | |
|-----|---|
| 1. | Life Skills Education |
| 2. | Self Esteem - Intra/ Interpersonal Skills |
| 3. | Communication within the family unit |
| 4. | Nutrition, Reproductive Health and Contraceptive measures |
| 5. | Communicable and Non-Communicable diseases |
| 6. | Roles and Responsibilities of family members |
| 7. | Importance of education and Family Budgeting |
| 8. | Entrepreneurship skills / Preparing for workplace |
| 9. | Citizenship / Community Mobilization/ Ensuring good neighbourhood |
| 10. | Substance Abuse |
| 11. | Home Maintenance |
| 12. | Gender Equality |
| 13. | Moral Values |
| 14. | Food wastage |

One of the conditions with respect to the healthcare within the context of the MPSC is that beneficiaries are required to show evidence of current medical card records with proof of vaccination/immunizations for all family members as required by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, regular prenatal and postnatal check-ups and preventive medical care. These conditions are part of the terms and conditions for the payment of the monthly subsistence allowance and, therefore, all women and children (including girls), who are beneficiaries of the monthly subsistence allowance, are bound to honour these obligations.

II.B.4. THE NATIONAL CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

The CSR policy has been established by Government with the overall objective of mandating registered companies to pay 2% of their book profit towards programmes that contribute to the social and environmental development of the country. The policy was restructured with the creation in 2017 of a **National CSR Foundation** which is managed jointly by the public and private sectors. The object of the Foundation is to undertake programmes and projects for the benefit of individuals and families registered under the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM) and of vulnerable groups in the following priority areas:

- Socio-economic development as a means for poverty alleviation;
- Educational support and training;
- Social housing;
- Supporting people with disabilities;
- Dealing with health problems;
- Family protection including gender-based violence;
- Leisure and sports;
- Environment and sustainable development;
- Peace and nation-building;
- Road Safety and Security

II.B.5. TAX REFORMS AND BENEFITS

Government since 2015 has introduced and implemented a series of measures to help the most vulnerable sections of the population. Old age pension was immediately increased when the new Government took office in December 2014. Elderly women have benefited from the increase in **Basic Retirement Pension** (BRP). From Nov-2014 to 2019 the BRP rate has increased by 71%. Government in 2018 increased the income tax exemption threshold of all employees by Rs 5,000. Hence, an employee with an annual income of Rs 305,000 does not have to pay any income tax.

To bring greater fairness and equality in the tax model and a higher level of social equity, income tax reforms have been undertaken to protect the poor and also the middle-income earners. Income tax rate for those earning between Rs 305,000 and Rs 650,000 annually has decreased from 15 percent to only 10 percent in 2018 to increase the disposable income of households and offer a much-needed respite to the middle-income class.

As from 1st January 2018, Mauritians in full time employment with earnings of Rs 9,900 or less in a month are granted financial support from Government, in the form of a **Negative Income Tax**, as follows:

- (i) an employee earning Rs 5,000 in a month: Rs 1,000 (i.e., Rs 12,000 in a year);
- (ii) an employee earning above Rs 5,000 but not exceeding Rs 7,000 in a month: Rs 800 (i.e., Rs 9,600 in a year);
- (iii) an employee earning above Rs 7,000 but not exceeding Rs 9,000 in a month: Rs 500 (i.e., Rs 6,000 in a year);
- (iv) an employee earning above Rs 9,000 but not exceeding Rs 9,750 in a month: Rs 250 (i.e., Rs 3,000 in a year); and
- (v) an employee earning above Rs 9,750 but not exceeding Rs 9,900 in a month: Rs 100 (i.e., Rs 1,200 in a year).

The benefit is payable on condition that: (i) a person has been in continuous employment for 6 months prior to the first monthly payment; (ii) the employer and employee are fully compliant with their contributions to the National Pensions Fund and the National Savings Fund; and (iii) the total taxable income of a couple plus any dividend and interest income do not exceed Rs 30,000 in a month. This measure has benefitted those who are not entitled to any income tax relief because of their low salaries, and yet are still deprived of other facilities.

The social security programmes put in place by Government of Mauritius have largely contributed to alleviate poverty. Mauritians as a whole have access to free healthcare and education till tertiary level. Poor families whose monthly income is below Rs 6,200 draw an allowance. Moreover, students and senior citizens are exempted from paying public transport costs. It should also be noted that through public housing construction programmes, a large number of families have now become owners of their home.

II.B.6. MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

II.B.6.A. Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health

In order to attain Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely “*ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*”, Government has invigorated its health programme and focuses on health and well-being of women and children not only as fundamental human rights, but as crucial for the attainment of economic development, peace and stability. Fully-functioning strong health systems are in place in Mauritius and all the citizens of the country, without discrimination, have access free of user cost to the public health service systems at primary, secondary and tertiary levels which range from all essential drugs to high-tech medicine.

The 2030 SDG targets for child mortality are a neonatal mortality rate of 12 deaths per 1,000 live births and an under-five mortality of 25 per 1,000 live births. Mauritius has already achieved this target with a Neonatal Mortality Rate of 8.9 and an Under Five Mortality Rate of 16.5 in 2018, as shown in Table 1 below. The proportion of deliveries assisted by skilled health personnel is almost 100%.

TABLE 1: MORTALITY AND FERTILITY RATES- 2014-2018

| | Year | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---------------------------|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Infant Mortality Rate | Per 1000 live births | 14.5 | 13.6 | 11.8 | 12.2 | 14 |
| Under five Mortality Rate | Per 1000 live births | 16 | 15.5 | 13.3 | 14.3 | 16.5 |
| Maternal Mortality Rate | Per 1000 live births | 0.52 | 0.47 | 0.46 | 0.74 | 0.39 |
| Total Fertility Rate | Births per woman | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.4 |

Source: Demographic Year Book, Ministry of Health and Quality of Life

In view to address the increasing trend noted in maternal mortality in Mauritius (from 46 per 100,000 live births in 2016 to 74 in 2017), obstetric care was strengthened. This has reduced maternal mortality to 39 in 2018, as shown in Table 1 above. A fourth Neonatal Intensive Care Unit has been set up in a Regional Hospital covering the eastern part of the main land of Mauritius. Infant Mortality Rate was still high at 14 in 2018, but is expected to reach a single digit in the coming years. The high incidence of low birth weight (16% in 2017) is, however, a matter of concern. The percentage of deliveries by caesarian section is high and continues to increase (from 45% in 2013 to 51% in 2017).

A good network of primary health centres and Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services exists in Mauritius, which has been a fundamental basis for all work in Primary Health Care (PHC). The strategies in health care include:

- Promoting proper nutrition, and providing access to adequate and safe water supply and to basic sanitation facilities
- Providing maternal and child care and family planning services. Special emphasis on antenatal services to reduce perinatal mortality.
- Increasing immunisation coverage against major infectious diseases
- Promoting exclusive breastfeeding for six months infants, and continued breastfeeding for 2 years and beyond

Various activities are being carried out at Government health service points:

- Intensive Information, Education and Communication (IEC) on ante natal and post-natal care
- Dietary care of pregnant women through mass media
- Continuous and sustained immunisation of pregnant women and infants
- Promotion of breastfeeding in health institutions and in the community
- Sensitization campaign is being carried out on proper nutrition, early and regular attendance to antenatal clinics, avoiding cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption, change in behaviour and life style during pregnancy to reduce the incidence of low birth weight in Mauritius; and
- Screening for gestational diabetes is carried out in all public health institutions

The maternal and child health services have been strengthened at both primary and secondary

levels with specialized care being available in regional hospitals. Ante-natal care (ANC) is provided in Community Hospitals, Mediclinics, Area Health Centres (AHCs) and Community Health Centres (CHCs). These health institutions (except for Community Health Centres) have been equipped with an Echography machine and hemoglobin analyser. An obstetrician attends to pregnant women in these centres on weekly half day basis.

Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) service delivery is a core function of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life of Mauritius. The Reproductive Health and Maternal Child Health services are integrated into the general health services and are provided free of charge through a network of accessible health care delivery institutions at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. All women of reproductive age have universal access to sexual and reproductive health services through family planning clinics, in all of the 143 Primary Health point. These clinics are being run by Family Planning workers and doctors who provide counseling services on reproductive health and provide contraceptive method free of cost, such as, Oral contraceptive; depo Prevera injection; condom; I.U.D among others as per the choice of the clients.

There are 163 service points of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life that provide family planning services and counselling, out of which 9 family planning clinics provide services after working hours, on Sundays and on public holidays. The Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association and Action Familiale also provide similar services. Moreover, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life has developed a **National Sexual and Reproductive Plan of Action (2018-2021)** which aims to meet the different challenges people face at different times in their lives through comprehensive sexuality education, family planning, antenatal care, safe delivery care, post-natal care, and services facilitating early diagnosis and treatment of reproductive tract cancers among women (breast and cervical cancer) thus achieving progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal 3.

Termination of Pregnancy is legal since 2012 under 4 conditions namely:

- (a) The continued pregnancy will endanger the pregnant person's life;
- (b) The termination is necessary to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant person;
- (c) There is a substantial risk that the continued pregnancy will result in a severe malformation, or severe physical or mental abnormality, of the foetus which will affect its viability and compatibility with life; or
- (d) The pregnancy has not exceeded its fourteenth week and results from a case of rape, sexual intercourse with a female under the age of 16 or sexual intercourse with a specified person which has been reported to the police.

11.B.6.B. Reducing Neonatal, Infant and Child Mortality

The following measures are taken to reduce Neonatal, Infant and Child Mortality:

- The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life has committed to undertake the implementation of a National Tertiary-level Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Victoria Hospital to offer optimal quality service to a larger number of Neonates requiring critical care. This National NICU will cater for extreme premature babies and will provide specialized treatment which is not available in other NICUs.
- The training of resident doctors and Nursing staff of the Neonatal ICU is being carried out on a continuous basis to increase the pool of trained healthcare personnel needed to attend to

respective cases.

- Appropriate state-of-the-art equipment has been ordered to refurbish the NICU and the Paediatrics wards to offer emergency management and optimum care.
- At birth, all neonates are provided with essential new-born care as advised by the WHO, that is, Thermal protection, Hygienic umbilical cord and skin care, assessment for serious health problems or additional care.
- Early discharge from the post-natal period is avoided. All neonates are examined by Medical and Health Officers and Specialists and are required to be observed for at least 24 hours as per WHO recommendations.
- Proper advice is provided to the mothers concerning the necessity of Breastfeeding.
- Access to necessary medication is ensured for all neonates through close collaboration with the Pharmacy department.
- In case the appropriate treatment or surgery is not available in Mauritius, children are referred to specialised institutions abroad to guarantee the continuity of care.
- Preventive antiretroviral treatment (ART) is administered to HIV-infected mothers and their new-borns in confidentiality. These babies are referred to the AIDS Physicians from the National Day Care Centre for Immunosuppressed (NDCCI) for further management, investigations and follow-up. Adequate advice concerning breast-feeding are given to the concerned mothers.
- The clinical management of each baby is carried out in an integrated manner with a multi-disciplinary approach (Paediatric Surgeon, Cardiologist, Neurosurgeon, ENT Specialist, Ophthalmologist, Dermatologist) if required.
- Teenage mothers are provided with necessary advice and are referred to the Medical Social Worker to ensure the child has the appropriate supporting framework after discharge.
- All mothers are advised to adhere in a timely manner to the Immunization Schedule currently in force in Mauritius. Children who have missed Vaccine administration are immediately referred to the concerned department.
- Children with chronic illnesses requiring regular assessment are reviewed in the Out-patient clinics at shorter intervals on a fast-track basis.
- The Paediatric and Neonatal departments of the Victoria Hospital strictly adhere to Recommendations of the Steering Committee of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) to ensure avoidance of discrimination towards Children born with disabilities.
- No discrimination is carried out in the management of babies and children with respect to their Gender, Ethnicity or Socio-economic status in accordance with principles of Universal Health Coverage.

11.B.6.C. Addressing Maternal Mortality

The “Sustainable Development Goal” target set for 2030, i.e. the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) to be below 70, has already been met by the Republic of Mauritius with a MMR of 39 (per 100,000 live births) in 2018. Based on the recommendations of WHO, Government applies health systems lens to work with community health professionals in all the districts through 6 specialized hospitals, namely, the Chest, Eye, Psychiatric, Ear, Nose and Throat (E.N.T) and Cardiac, two community hospitals, five mediclinics, 18 Area Health Centres (AHC) and 116 Community Health Centres (CHCs) to strengthen essential health system functions and to continuously improve utilization and quality of maternal and new-born care across the system

(community, primary, referral) and life cycle (antenatal care, birth, postnatal care) continuums of care. In addition to antenatal clinics being carried out daily by doctors and specialists at the level of hospitals, this service has also been extended to all Area Health Centres (AHC). Ultrasonography machines have been made available at AHC level to facilitate delivery of obstetrical care.

To sustain a low maternal mortality rate, Government is conducting the following programmes:

- Sensitisation programmes to encourage women to attend Antenatal Care early and regularly in their pregnancies; and awareness campaign towards teenagers on the increased risk of complications related to teenage pregnancies.
- High Risk pregnancies such as multiple pregnancies, Pregnancy Induced Hypertension (PIH) cases, pregnancy associated with medical conditions such as blood disorders, cardiac pathologies, Caesarian Section (CS) etc. are followed up by Senior Specialists at hospital level only.
- Pregnant women are offered voluntary HIV counselling and testing. All HIV positive cases receive HIV preventive treatment with antiretroviral drugs after 25th week of pregnancy and for first 6 weeks for babies after birth. They are also delivered by Caesarian Section (C/S) and free milk formula is provided for 24 months to reduce Maternal to Child Transmission (MCTC) of HIV. Routine testing for syphilis and other Sexually Transmitted Infections is done for all pregnant women (and treatment given as appropriate).
- Optimal use of ultrasonography both at hospital and at AHCs allows early detection of placental abnormalities such as placenta praevia, abruption placenta and fetal malpresentations and multiple pregnancies.
- Rapid access to a medical set up within 24 hours through reinforced SAMU ((Service d'Aide Médicale Urgente) ambulance fleet of vehicles and Global Positioning System (GPS) which enhance a faster and more efficient response.
It should be noted that deliveries in Mauritius are carried out in a medical set up and by skilled health personnel in 100% of cases rather than by traditional birth attendants. This is a major contributory factor for the reduction of maternal and infant mortality in Mauritius. Echography and foetal monitoring services are available. Neonatal Intensive Care Units (ICUs) have been set up in two regional hospitals and there is also one Neonatal ICU ambulance for transportation of neonatal cases. Post Natal Care (PNC) is available in all government health facilities.
- Provision of round-the-clock access to blood transfusion facilities, antihypertensive medications and antibiotics. It is to be noted that haemorrhage, hypertension and infection will account for most direct causes of maternal death across the world.
- Access to surgical intervention on a 24-hr basis through readily available Operating Theatres and staff on standby at all regional hospitals.

II.B.6.D. Breast and Cervical Cancer Programme

For the early detection and treatment of Breast and Cervical Cancers, a Screening Programme for married and sexually active women aged 30 – 60 years is being carried out in the community and at worksites in Mauritius through mobile clinics. Sensitization and awareness sessions on Breast and Cervical Cancers, supported by leaflets and pamphlets are organized to all women attending maternal and child health care clinics at primary health care level. Special television and radio programmes on breast and cervical cancers are regularly being aired and projected. For the period January 2015 to October 2018, 18,552 women were screened for Breast Cancer and 12,932 women were screened for cervical cancer.

11.B.6.E. Combatting Malnutrition

Good nutrition is critical for optimal health and growth. Through its effect on health and cognitive development it is also vital for academic performance and productivity, and therefore for the economy and socioeconomic development of the Republic of Mauritius.

A National Plan of Action for Nutrition (NPAN) (2016-2020) has been developed for Mauritius. Various interventions and strategies of the National Plan of Action for Nutrition 2016-2020 are geared towards improving the nutritional status of girl children, adolescent girls and mothers for the future years.

The problem of underweight and obesity coexists in children. The Mauritius Nutrition Survey 2012 showed that in the age group 5 to 11 years 23.6% of female children were underweight, 7.3% were overweight, and 9.6% were obese. In the age group 12 to 19 years, 22.0% of adolescent girls were underweight, 9.3% were overweight, and 7.7 % were obese. A series of interventions have been undertaken to address the issue of malnutrition among children and adolescents and these are highlighted below:

- The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources has put up the School Health Programme in all Primary and Secondary Schools where students are screened with the purpose of detecting risk factors of non-communicable diseases including underweight/obesity and promoting healthy behaviours and lifestyle. Reported cases of overweight and obesity are referred to the nearest health centres for appropriate action. Those with nutritional problems are referred to the Nutritionists for dietary counselling and subsequent follow-up.
- The National Mauritian Dietary Guidelines have been revised in 2017 and covers nutrition for children, adolescents as well as for pregnant and lactating mothers. These guidelines are used as working tools by all health professionals of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life in the health care delivery system. Canteens (Tuck shops) for the sale of foods operate in all government schools. Legislation has been reviewed in 2010 to oversee the sale of healthy foods in all educational institutions. The sales of soft drinks and non-nutritious food have altogether been banned in schools.
- Anaemia, as indicated by haemoglobin levels below 12 g/dl, is widespread in Mauritius. The Mauritius Nutrition Survey 2012 showed the prevalence of anaemia is highest among females aged 20 to 49 years (33.6%), followed by those aged between 12 to 19 years (28.5%). One of every 3 to-be-mothers suffers from anaemia. Iron deficiency with or without anaemia has important consequences for human health and development; anaemic women and their infants are at greater risk of dying during the perinatal period; children's mental and physical development is delayed or impaired by iron deficiency; and the physical work capacity and the productivity of manual workers may be reduced. Anaemia, even in the mild and moderate forms, can negatively impact on the quality of life as well as on the learning capacity of the girl/women. In order to minimize anaemia, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life promotes foods high in Iron and Folic acid through the Mauritian Dietary Guidelines (Revised 2017) with focus on adolescent girls and pregnant women, and provides supplementation with Iron and folic acid to them during antenatal clinics. Iron fortification of staples such as wheat flour, or other appropriate food vehicle are promoted, targeting the whole population.

- Information and educational sessions on healthy eating and dieting are organized at Community level in Social Welfare Centres, Community Centres, Recreational Centres and Youth Clubs targeting adolescent girls and women. Food exhibitions are also carried out to demonstrate the Mauritian Plate Model Concept of balanced meals. Education of pregnant women on various topics including proper nutrition during pregnancy is carried out during antenatal clinics, post-partum clinics and in the well baby clinics. Daily nutrition messages lasting for 3 minutes each on various topics such as Obesity, Children and adolescent nutrition, Nutrition during pregnancy, Anaemia, amongst others are broadcasted on radio. The production of posters, pamphlets and booklets on specific topics of nutrition complements the nutrition talks, Radio and T.V programmes whilst also giving consistent nutrition messages. Children, adolescents as well as women who are overweight/obese or have any nutritional problems are referred to the Dietetic clinics in hospitals, Area Health Centres and Community Health Centres for diet counselling and subsequent treatment.

11.B.6.F. Child Poverty and Social Protection

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (OC) conducted an investigation on **child poverty** in 2016. The OC contended that the “issue of child poverty cannot be dealt with in isolation in view of their dependence on other adults namely the parents, care takers and their living environment”. There are certain pockets of poverty in Mauritius where the child is caught in the vicious circle of poverty and are consequently subject to various incidences of abuse, deprivation and isolation. A number of children’s rights is being violated with multiple detrimental effects on their well-being in these areas. The OC proposes the conduct of an in-depth study on “Illegal Squatting and its implications on Child Poverty” to gather additional information on the issue and for long term policy decisions.

It is noted that a decisive, integrated and dedicated Marshall Plan Against Poverty was triggered in the same year 2016 to address absolute and relative poverty in their many dimensions, with a budget of Rs 2.2 billion (approximately USD 63 million) for the years 2016-2019, as has already been mentioned above under sub-section II.B.3. Marshall Plan Against Poverty, and that this Plan takes the observations made by the OC on board.

11.B.6.G. HIV/AIDS and other Related Infectious Diseases

In 2012, UNAIDS and WHO encouraged the Treatment as Prevention (TasP) strategy which is offering ART (AntiRetroviral Therapy) irrespective of CD4+ cell count as a secondary prevention of HIV (WHO, 2012). ART being effective in preventing AIDS conditions and prevention of HIV transmission, UNAIDS launched the 90-90-90 targets for the ART programmes globally in 2014 to accelerate the progress made in the fight against HIV/AIDS, through the adoption of a multi-sectoral/human rights-based approach. These new goals target that by 2020 at least 90% of people living with HIV infection should be appropriately diagnosed, at least 90% of HIV-infected individuals should be on ART, and at least 90% of those on ART should achieve virological suppression (UNAIDS II, 2014). Mauritius has adopted these targets in its **National HIV and AIDS Action Plan 2017-2021** (PMO, 2016). The National Action Plan is in line with the 2030 Vision and aims at Zero new HIV Infection, Zero discrimination and Zero AIDS -related death.

In 2015, the WHO also released a revised global guideline for HIV treatment and care, recommending ART for all those who have been tested positive. This approach which has been commonly dubbed as ‘Test and Treat’ has also been adopted by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life in Mauritius in 2017. A National Treatment Protocol (based on WHO treatment protocol 2013) was also developed. These initiatives are in line with the third goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targeting ‘Good Health and Well-being’ to end the epidemics of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases by 2030. In line with the recommendations made by WHO, the communicable disease surveillance system in the country has been reviewed with a focus on the setting up of an early warning and rapid response system. This initiative has been carried out with a view to preventing resurgence or emergence of epidemic prone diseases that affect mostly women.

The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life being the apex institution in regard to health has initiated various initiatives in uplifting women’s health. The Ministry adopts a multi-sectoral approach to eliminate new HIV infections among adolescents and the youth through:

- Adolescent-friendly services for HIV testing and counselling, access to preventive measures for those eligible
- Harm reduction strategies
- Confidentiality for HIV testing and counselling.

Targeted awareness sessions on HIV/AIDS and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) are carried out through the promotion of social and behavioural change among youngsters in and out of school settings, youth centres, Rehabilitation Youth Centres, Correctional Youth Centres and teenage girls. Teenage HIV infected pregnant girls are offered all facilities provided by the HIV services. They benefit from psychosocial support through social workers of public institutions and of NGOs. Voluntary testings are available as per the HIV and AIDS Act to minors who understand the nature of the test and its implications. Preventive measures to contain the HIV epidemic among Key Populations (People Who Inject Drugs, Female Sex Workers, Men Who have Sex with Men, Transgenders) include behavioral change programmes, and the adoption of safe behaviors (distribution of condoms, gel and implementation of Needle Exchange Program and Methadone Substitution Therapy).

11.B.6.H. Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT)

All pregnant women attending Pre-Natal Care in public institutions are offered **Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT)** for HIV. HIV- infected pregnant women attending private institutions are offered all facilities to prevent vertical transmission. All HIV positive mothers are counselled to have all their children of previous pregnancies screened for HIV.

Mauritius has adopted the **Option B+ for Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT)** programmes and provides Lifelong Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) to all pregnant women irrespective of CD4+ cell count. Normal vaginal delivery is allowed for those with viral suppression. HIV positive mothers are recommended not to breastfeed their new-borns. All new-borns to HIV positive mothers are put on prophylactic ART for six (6) weeks. Government offers Formula milk for the new-born till they are two (2) years of age. Services at Primary Health Care (PHC) level have been strengthened to avoid sero conversion and transmission from mother to child during the pregnancy period- (96% in the compliance rate of elimination of Mother to Child Transmission (eMTCT) programme).

Pregnant women who are in prison have the same facilities as those in the community. The communicable disease surveillance system in the country has been reviewed with focus on setting

up of early warning and rapid response system. The initiative has been carried out with a view to preventing resurgence or emergence of epidemic prone diseases that affect mostly women.

Harm Reduction Measures: Needle Exchange Programme (NEP) and Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) are accessible to all those in need, irrespective of gender. In prison setting, women who are on Methadone Maintenance Therapy are provided with same facilities as those outside. **Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)** is provided to all accidental exposure to HIV (occupational and non-occupational) and victims of sexual assault. All HIV-infected persons are screened for syphilis and referred to STIs Clinics for treatment as STIs increase the risk of acquisition and transmission of HIV.

HIV/AIDS in Mauritius is low. The HIV prevalence rate has remained 0.9% since 2014. The number of new cases is, however, growing slowly but steadily, as shown in Table 2 below. During the month of June 2018, 31 new cases of HIV/AIDS were registered among the Mauritian population by the Virology Laboratory Services of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. The monthly average of new cases was 46 in the year 2006 to 2010 compared to 26 in the period 2011 – 2015. For the year 2016, the monthly average was 27 cases compared to 31 for the year 2017. For the period January to June 2018, the monthly average was 32. From October 1987, when the first case of HIV/AIDS was reported, to June 2018, HIV/AIDS cases stood at 7,230 among Mauritians and 278 among foreigners. Of all Mauritian HIV/AIDS cases, 63.7% was detected among people who injected drug (PWID). In the year 2000, only 2% of the new infected cases were among this group, after which the yearly percentage rapidly increased to 92% in 2005. Following an aggressive sensitization campaign together *with* the Needle Exchange Programme, the figure fell to 32.6% in 2016 from 38.6% in 2017, and stood at 35.1% from January to June 2018. The percentage of women with HIV/AIDS stood at about 40% from 2014 to 2019. There is evidence of feminization of the disease in Mauritius.

Table 2: NEW CASES OF HIV/AIDS NOTIFIED (2014-2018)

| Year | New cases of HIV/AIDS notified | | | | | | | | | Deaths registered among HIV/AIDS cases (Mauritian) | | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|--|-----------|------------|
| | Mauritian | | | Non-Mauritian | | | Total | | | M | F | Both Sexes |
| | M | F | Both sexes | M | F | Both sexes | M | F | Both sexes | | | |
| 2014 | 190 | 132 | 322 | 7 | 4 | 11 | 197 | 136 | 333 | 101 | 14 | 115 |
| 2015 | 155 | 107 | 262 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 159 | 110 | 269 | 99 | 9 | 108 |
| 2016 | 190 | 129 | 319 | 7 | 3 | 10 | 197 | 132 | 329 | 119 | 30 | 149 |
| 2017 | 224 | 144 | 368 | 11 | 5 | 16 | 235 | 149 | 384 | 107 | 24 | 131 |
| 2018 | 218 | 164 | 382 | 14 | 10 | 24 | 232 | 174 | 406 | N.A | N.A | N.A |
| Total | 977 | 676 | 1,653 | 43 | 25 | 68 | 1,020 | 701 | 1,721 | 426 | 77 | 503 |

Source: Demographic Year Book, Ministry of Health and Quality of Life (M: Male, F: Female)

The HIV and AIDS Act is the legal framework that protects the rights of the People Living with HIV (PLHIV). It is based on the 3 Cs: Consent, Counselling and Confidentiality. While sexual partners of HIV- infected individuals are not informed on their partners' HIV status, HIV positive individuals are counselled on the importance of disclosure to their partners. After consent, partner counselling is carried out and encouraged for willing couples with an emphasis on the medical, social and

psychosocial benefits of disclosure, and primary and secondary prevention. Fear of **Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**, stigma and discriminations remain a barrier to access for HIV services and disclosure.

A study¹⁵ conducted in 2017 by PILS (an NGO working with people living with HIV/ AIDS) with financial support from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria on stigma and discrimination experienced by people who live with HIV revealed a high rate of unemployment (43.4%) among people living with AIDS; the main form of stigma was 'being gossiped about' and which was linked to lack of information about HIV among the general public.

Self-stigma related to feeling of self-blame, low self-esteem, guilt and shame and was the most common form of stigma experienced by people living with AIDS.

11.B.6.I. Tuberculosis and Malaria

Mauritius is not a high burden risk country concerning Tuberculosis. The incidence of 10 per 100 000 population has been maintained over the past ten years. The notified cases in the last couple of years vary from 100-130 cases per year. In 2017, 119 new TB cases were recorded, among whom 21 were TB/HIV cases. The country had 1 case of MDR-TB and no XDR-TB case. There is a male predominance in the incidence of tuberculosis, with a male to female ratio of 2:1. TB in children and adolescents is rare. Mortality rate due to tuberculosis is less than 1 per 100 000 population.

Mauritius was certified malaria free by the World Health Organization in November 1973 and was placed in the Official Register of areas where malaria eradication has been achieved. Most of the cases detected thereafter have been imported ones, with a few localized outbreaks in the early eighties and the last indigenous case was reported in 1997. The actual Malaria Control Programme has as main objective to prevent the reintroduction of Malaria in the country. The main components of the programme are malaria surveillance, early diagnosis, treatment and monitoring of resistance to anti-malarial drugs, vector control activities including vector surveillance, chemoprophylaxis for travelers, health education and capacity building. The parasitology section of the Central Health Laboratory works on a twenty-four basis for the diagnosis of malaria. Quality assurance programme is being implemented to ensure accuracy of test results. The Laboratory also caters for the private sector. All malaria cases are admitted in a health institution, public or private, and are seen and treated by the Regional Public Health Superintendent (public health doctors). Treatment of Malaria rests solely with the public health department of the Ministry of Health and is free for all patients including migrants and foreign nationals.

Public health measures are also taken around all positive cases with a view to preventing disease transmission and these include: isolation of patient in a health care setting as appropriate, placing patient under mosquito nets, contact tracing, fever surveys around places of residence of all malaria cases, vector surveillance, free distribution of mosquito repellent cream to patients, contacts and neighbours of the malaria patient, larviciding, elimination of mosquito breeding places and education of the community on basic sanitation to prevent proliferation of mosquitoes and on personal protection. Mauritius has also embarked, with the support of the International Atomic Energy Agency, on a project for the use of Sterile insect Technique to control mosquito population.

¹⁵People Living with HIV Stigma Index, 2017, PILS

II.B.7. TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND SEX EDUCATION

In Mauritius, increasing cases of young girls falling pregnant before marriage are being reported in the press almost daily. Some are clandestinely “married” before the age of 16 and press reports have highlighted cases of teenage mortality as a result of pregnancy and related causes at the young age of 13. It is true that the age of marriage has been postponed. Today in Mauritius, the age of marriage for men is 30.8 years and for women is 27.06 while in the 1960s women got married at the age of 13-15 and men at the age of 20-25. The postponement of marriage has not postponed the age of first sexual contact. In fact, sexual activity among adolescent starts very early in schools and very often leads to adolescent girls having to leave schools because of pregnancy. There is need to equip teenagers with appropriate tools to enable them face the dire realities of life, and avoid unwanted pregnancies, especially to those living in depressed areas, as highlighted by a report in 2017 from the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. Sex Education as early as in primary schools has been proposed since long.

Following the UNAIDs initiative to group Health and Education Ministers and representatives from 20 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa in December 2013 to discourse on sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services, Government of Mauritius announced to introduce sex education in schools, as a life skill, as a preparation for life for students, instead of situating it within a ‘moralizing’ framework. ‘Life skills’ or ‘health education’ or ‘integrated science and biology’ were then used as a cautious attempt to introduce sex education for students, given its sensitivity. Comprehensive sexuality education seems to remain some sort of a ‘delicate issue’ without real commitment from policy and decision makers. The new Educational Reform (9-Year Schooling) proposed in 2018 the introduction of Life Skills, including Sexuality Education, Civic Values, Road Safety, and Social and Emotional Well-being for an integrated approach to education. However, a formal sexual education curriculum and its teaching is yet to be realized. Several NGOs are involved in sporadic sex education programmes in and out of schools with doubtful output and impact, given the absence of a well-structured curriculum and trained educators on sexual education.

II.B.8. SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR THE ELDERLY AND THE DISABLED AND MOST VULNERABLE.

The Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Environment and Sustainable Development is mandated to provide fair, equitable and responsive social protection in a sustainable manner to citizens of Mauritius with special attention to senior citizens, persons with disabilities as well as vulnerable persons, and reinforce national solidarity. The ministry provides a range of services like pensions, social assistance, hearing aids, wheelchairs and spectacles, to the most vulnerable groups, and free domiciliary medical visits to disabled persons.

II.B.8.A. The **National Pension Scheme** provides for social insurance, under the National Pensions Fund, for employees in the private sector. It also provides for earnings-related contributory pensions and industrial injury benefits to take care of contingencies resulting from retirement, disablement, death and industrial injury. The National Savings Fund was set up in 1995, to provide for the payment of a lump sum at retirement age or earlier, to all employees

including those from the public sector. The National Pensions Act was amended in July 2016 to introduce widowers' contributory pension to eliminate gender discrimination for payment of Widower's Contributory Pension. Where a female spouse contributing to the National Pension Scheme dies, the surviving partner (the widower) is now entitled to a widower's contributory pension on the same rules as a contributory widow's pension. The National Savings Fund Act as amended, enables payment of lump sum from contribution to the National Savings Fund at age of 60 to contributors of the fund who retire before or stop being in employment before the age of 60.

II.B.8.B. The Transition Unemployment Benefit (TUB) is payable to workers of private sector whose contract of employment is terminated and who opts to join the Workfare Programme set up under the Employment Rights Act. Under this benefit, the laid off worker is entitled to 90% of his insurable salary for the first 3 months, 60% for the next 3 months and 30% for the last 6 months, subject to a minimum of Rs 3,000 per month. The benefit is payable as from the month of redundancy for a period of 12 months, and until the person becomes gainfully employed.

II.B.8.C. Social Aid is provided in cash or in kind, to some categories of persons who are temporarily unable of earning their livelihood adequately and have insufficient means to provide for themselves and their dependents. Social aid is given in the following circumstances:

- Physical or mental disability
- Abandonment by spouse
- Imprisonment of husband/partner
- Sudden loss of employment
- Beneficiaries of Basic Retirement Pension living alone and paying rent
- Grant for purchase of medicine to centenarians
- Families with twins, triplets – subject to family income not exceeding ceiling as provided for in the existing legislation
- Abandoned children
- Severely disabled children

In 2017, Government decided to bear the Cambridge SC, GCE "O" level, HSC and GCE "A" level examination costs for students who failed the examinations at their first sitting and are at their second attempt.

The **Probation and Aftercare Service** of the Ministry of Defence and Rodrigues has under its responsibility two semi-open institutions, namely the Probation Hostel for Boys and Probation Home for Girls. They provide residential rehabilitation treatment for minors whose home conditions are detrimental to their proper character formation and social functioning, hence necessitating their placement in a more favourable milieu.

The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life has a **Life Plus Unit**, which has, circumstantially, become the working hand of Government of Mauritius in all matters of Suicide Prevention. Its main aim is to keep suicide and its associated suffering to a minimum level. Following the publication of the Study on the "Causes & Consequences of Suicidal Behaviour among Teenagers in Mauritius" in September 2015, a Strategic Plan on Suicide Prevention (2016-2020) was developed. An Action Plan was subsequently devised on Suicide Prevention.

II.B.8.D. Senior Citizens and the Disabled

Government promotes the empowerment, protection and promotion of the well-being of all senior citizens through a series of measures and schemes. In Government Programme 2015-2019, it was announced that Government will provide special support and care to elderly persons with disabilities and those living alone as part of its strategy to provide a “Service de Proximité” to them. The Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Environment and Sustainable Development started the project in June 2016 to elderly 90 years and above, including centenarians, in receipt of Carer’s Allowance, permanently to improve their quality of life.

People suffering from any impairment and who are bedridden are eligible for a pension either the Basic Invalidity Pension and Carer’s Allowance or Basic Retirement Pension through their proxy.

In addition, Government provides free domiciliary medical care for the severely disabled and bedridden persons aged 60 and above (announced on 13 June 2019, Budget Speech, 2019-2020), and implements an anti-influenza vaccination campaign yearly for the elderly and the severely disabled children. Recreational Centres, Day Care Services, and Residential Care Homes are run in collaboration with NGOs for the elderly and widows over 60 years living alone. The **Senior Citizens Council** is a body corporate governed by the Senior Citizens Council Act, which was amended in 2011, operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Environment and Sustainable Development. The Senior Citizens Council: (i) promotes generally activities and projects for the welfare of senior citizens; (ii) maintains effective communication with senior citizens; (iii) establishes contacts with organizations engaged in similar activities in Mauritius and abroad; and (iv) advises Government on matters relating to the welfare of senior citizens.

Elderly Watch has been set up under the Protection of Elderly Persons Act (2005) to report cases of repeated abuse against elderly persons to the Welfare and Elderly Persons Protection Unit of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Environment and Sustainable Development. It provides support to families that need assistance and protection for the elderly persons. The Protection of Elderly Persons Act was amended in September 2016 to empower Officers dealing with reported cases of abuse against elders, to summon the perpetrator if he/she does not cooperate or does not respond. Failing to attend to the summons may be liable to fine/imprisonment. The Elderly Watch members for each committee have been increased from 7 to 10 in 2016. There are 20 Elderly Watch committees spread over the country which are composed of volunteers to identify and report cases of elderly abuse.

The Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Environment and Sustainable Development also empowers persons with disabilities and promotes their inclusion in mainstream society. Its Disability Empowerment Unit serves as the “focal point” for issues relating to disability. The following services are also provided by the Disability Empowerment Unit: facilitates among others the free Travel Bus Pass; the refund of Bus Fares to Disabled Children attending schools/day care centres; the refund of taxi fares to students with severe disabilities attending Tertiary Institutions; the provision of concessionary airfare and concessionary fee for Passport; the provision of free parking coupons; the organization of Respite Care Programme and Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy sessions; the participation of Athletes with disabilities in competitions; and the processing of loan for people with disabilities from the Employees Welfare Fund.

However, a number of shortfalls have been identified, namely:

- The delivery of services in favour of persons with disabilities is fragmented across too many institutions;
- The legal and regulatory framework is weak and addresses the disability agenda in a piecemeal manner;
- There is an inadequate human resource base to deliver services and monitor implementation of actions in favour of persons with disabilities in an effective and efficient manner;
- There are limited financial resources to effectively implement all programmes and address the emerging needs of persons with disabilities;
- There is a lack of comprehensive database to effectively direct resources, measure the impact of existing services and formulate new policies in the sector. Appreciatively, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Environment and Sustainable Development has recently been set up database.
- Attitudinal, physical and communication barriers continue to impede the integration of persons with disabilities in the society in spite of regular sensitization campaigns. Such barriers negatively impact the persons with disabilities and stand as a potential threat to the full enjoyment of their rights in society.

In 2017, the **Office of the Ombudsperson for Children** (OC) pointed to the fact that multiple barriers do exist to promoting the educational rights for **children with disabilities**, related inter alia to finance, prejudice and stereotypes, professional training of teachers, logistic support, inadequate infrastructure and adaptation of curriculum, including the “insufficient measures to prevent the placement of children with disabilities in ‘*centres de sauvegarde*’ (“Abris des Enfants en Détresse”) and the rejection and stigmatization faced by these children”¹⁶. The OC stated that “for effective inclusion, mainstream curriculum should be adapted by professionals to cater for children with different impairments”. The OC recommended Government to take effective measures to address discriminatory practices vis-a-vis children with disabilities, to ensure provision of quality inclusive services for boys and girls with disabilities both in public and private sectors in compliance with the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons and to allocate the necessary resources to these services.

There is hence need to rethink the approach and re-engineer services in the light of these challenges. Government has taken the decision to introduce a **Disability Bill** in the National Assembly to promote the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities and at the same time review its policies to better serve the 60,000 persons with disabilities through effective strategic institutional changes. The Draft Disability Bill has already been developed and is in the stage of discussion.

¹⁶ Annual Report from Office of Ombudsperson for Children, 2017, Chapter Four: Promoting the Rights of Children with Disabilities

II.B.9. EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Since its inception, primary education in Mauritius has been provided on a free basis and secondary education became free in 1977. In 2019 Government extended free education to all public tertiary institutions. In line with the new Government programme (2015-2019), the Educational Reform became the priority of Government. In 2015/16 Educational Reform was conceptualized together with the process of extensive consultations and information/communication with relevant stakeholders. In the year 2016/17, the **Nine Year Continuous Basic Education** (NYCBE) reform became a reality. The Educational Reform lays emphasis on the early years of schooling, new modes of assessment for a seamless progression of learners across the levels, a revamped technical and vocational education sector and a vibrant Polytechnic Education. It provides for all boys and girls to follow nine years of basic education and achieve the relevant outcomes and is built on six major pillars, namely Curriculum Change, Innovative Pedagogies, Meaningful Assessment, Continuous Professional Development, Conducive Learning Environment and System Governance and Accountability.

All pupils having completed Grade 6 in a Primary School, move smoothly to Grade 7 in a Secondary School. Those who have not attained the required level of competencies at the end of Primary are admitted in the Grade 7 and are allowed to complete the Basic Education cycle in four years instead of three years. They follow the same curriculum which is, however, adapted to their needs and level. They are also provided with special support to help them bridge their learning and other deficiencies. All students in Grade 1 and 2 are provided with digital tablets and relevant education software for the introduction of an Early Digital Learning. This initiative aims at inducing a paradigm shift in teaching/learning through access to pedagogical materials and other digital content present on the web; improving student learning with a diversified multimedia-based learning environment as an initiation to become lifelong and independent learners; and giving rise to an ICT-familiar population.

A Holistic Education Programme has been implemented in primary schools covering learning areas, namely: music, drama, dance, visual art, health, physical education, road safety, swimming and water safety. After-school sports and fitness programmes have also been introduced as from May 2017. Besides huge investment in infrastructural facilities, logistic and pedagogical facilities, capacity building and recruitment of teachers and instructors have also been enhanced under the National Skills Development Programme, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) strategy, Skills Development Authority (SDA), Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) and Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD). The curriculum has been revised to ensure that modules' contents are in line with development goals of the country and in accordance with overall development of the student, taking into consideration children with Special **Educational Needs (SEN)** and those living in precarious conditions (**Zones d'Education Prioritaire, ZEP**). All ZEP schools are provided with an enhanced meal with additional food items in consultation with stakeholders including the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life from April 2017. A new Special Education Needs (SEN) Strategy has been developed in 2017 with the aim to achieve full inclusion of all learners, irrespective of their disabilities, by creating and providing a disability-friendly environment commensurate with their specific needs. The number of students enrolled in the 72 special schools stood at 2,656 (of whom 66% were boys) as at March 2018. All textbooks have been revised in terms of gender sensitivity, and specific subjects like human values, and soft skills have been introduced through an integrated approach to eliminate all stereotypes based on gender discrimination.

Government places a high premium on broadening access to quality education and promoting lifelong learning for both boys and girls. The principles of equity, inclusiveness and quality are central to the education strategy. While leaving either primary or secondary schools, boys and girls have equal opportunity to join vocational and prevocational classes, training and orientation geared towards career orientations.

In 2017, the curriculum for grades 7 to 9 has been reviewed to include modules on communication skills and creativity & innovation. As from 2018, Government introduced the subject “Technology Studies” in Grade 7 which includes both Communication, Design and Technology (now available to girls) and Home Economics (now available to boys).

Secondary Education will witness the first intake of an entire cohort into Grade 7 in Regional secondary schools, with an Extended Programme offered to those not having reached the required level of competencies at the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC). This Extended Programme is grounded in the underlying philosophy of an inclusive and equitable education for all.

The shift from middle to high income economic status of Mauritius will necessitate transformative changes in the higher education sector. The diversity of offerings, both programmatic and institutional will necessitate a properly regulated higher education system with strong emphasis on quality and relevance and research.

The Gender Parity Index at primary level is 1.0 (indicating no disparity in enrolment) and is slightly higher at secondary level in favour of girls. Free access to secondary education since 1977 caused enrolment at secondary level to increase considerably, with most striking progress being the remarkable increase in girls’ enrolment to 80% against 74% for boys.

TABLE 3: PERCENTAGE AND NUMBER OF STUDENTS AT EDUCATIONAL ENROLMENT (2014-2018), GENDER WISE

| | | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|--|-----|-------|--------|--------|--------|------|
| Gross Primary Enrolment Ratio - Total | % | 97 | 97 | 97 | 97 | 97 |
| - Male | % | 97 | 97 | 96 | 96 | 96 |
| - Female | % | 98 | 98 | 97 | 97 | 97 |
| Secondary Enrolment Ratio - Total | % | 80 | 80 | 78 | 78 | 77 |
| -Male | % | 78 | 78 | 76 | 75 | 74 |
| - Female | % | 83 | 83 | 81 | 81 | 80 |
| Tertiary Enrolment | No. | 50608 | 48,970 | 48,089 | 48,007 | N/A |
| - Male | No. | 22327 | 20734 | 20724 | 20352 | N/A |
| - Female | No. | 28281 | 28236 | 27365 | 27655 | N/A |

(N/A-Not available)

Source: Statistics Mauritius

The proportion of students progressing from primary to secondary cycle **in 2014 was 78% for boys and 83% for girls** and in 2018 the proportion was 74% for boys and 80% for girls. In tertiary education the enrolment of girls in education increased from 55% in 2014 to 57% in 2017, as shown in Table 3 above.

In terms of performance, the pass rate among female students is higher than boys in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. The pass rate at the final year of primary schooling in 2014 was 79.7% for girls against 66.6% for boys. The pass rate for School Certificate Examination in 2014 was 67.12 for boys and 76.12 for girls; and in 2018 the rate was 68.15 for boys and 79.20 for girls. There are more boys (60%) among repeaters and in prevocational classes. Boys predominated in these pre-vocational schools, representing around 66 % of enrolment

Free education has removed discrimination against girls on economic grounds and has provided equitable opportunities for both boys and girls to gain admission and to attain formal and non-formal basic education. Girls have continued their studies beyond the secondary level, thus closing the gap at the tertiary level. Remarkably, unemployed women are generally more qualified than their male counterparts. In 2016 youth literacy rate was greater among females (99.09) than men (98.36). However, general literacy rate during the same period was greater among men (92.85) than women (88.48).

Better Education facilities coupled with more economic participation and opportunity, better health survival and greater political empowerment to women have contributed to the improvement in the country's ranking from 113 to 112, out of 144 countries worldwide with regard to Global Gender Gap Index (GGI) of the World Economic Forum between 2016 and 2017.

SECTION II- C: FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, STIGMA AND STEREOTYPES

II. C.1. INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is a serious violation of human rights and affects millions around the world. Its impact ranges from immediate to long-term multiple physical, sexual and mental consequences for women and girls, including death. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) 35 per cent of women globally have experienced either physical and/or intimate partner sexual violence or non-partner sexual violence, constituting a violation of human rights for more than one-third of the world's women. It estimated that 38 per cent of all murders of women worldwide and 6 per cent of all murders of men worldwide are committed by intimate partners¹⁷. Women are more likely to experience intimate partner violence if they have low education, exposure to mothers being abused by a partner, abuse during childhood, and attitudes accepting violence, male privilege, and women's subordinate status. Men are more likely to perpetrate violence if they have low education, a history of child maltreatment, exposure to domestic violence against their mothers, harmful use of alcohol, unequal gender norms including attitudes accepting of violence, and a sense of entitlement over women.

The **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979, acknowledges that "extensive discrimination against women continues to exist", and emphasises that such discrimination "violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity". Accordingly, the CEDAW calls upon the international community to take "all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men" and to uphold women's and girls' right to live free of violence. The **1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women** calls on "States to condemn violence against women and not invoke any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to its elimination".

Violence against women, or Gender-Based Violence (GBV), is "any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life"¹⁸

In Mauritius the extent of violence against women and girls, including domestic abuse, sexual violence and rape, Intimate Partner Sexual Violence (IPSV), stalking and harassment, trafficking of women, intimidation and harassment at work, violence on the internet, and forced prostitution, are reported to be increasing, though the exact figures are not available, given that cases of gender-based violence are notoriously under-reported (Appendix 2: Police Report, 2014-2018). It has been observed that over the years, the major forms of violence perpetrated against women occurred within the domestic setting. Due to its intensity, domestic violence has become a serious issue. Based on reports from the 6 Family Support Bureaux of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, the main forms of violence¹⁹ identified are:

¹⁷World Health Organization (WHO), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and South African Medical Research Council, *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence and Executive summary*, WHO, Geneva, 2013.

¹⁸UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 1993

- (a) Physical abuse
- (b) Verbal abuse
- (c) Psychological abuse
- (d) Threatening assault
- (e) Sexual abuse
- (f) Emotional abuse
- (g) Economic abuse
- (h) Stalking

The major causes leading to violence in the domestic setting are as follows:

- (a) Alcohol
- (b) Lack of communication
- (c) Extra- marital affairs
- (d) Interference of in-laws
- (e) Legal problems
- (f) Financial problems
- (g) Substance abuse

Between 2016 and 2017, the general level of crime and misdemeanor, as measured by police-reported offences, excluding contraventions, increased by 4%, mainly due to rises in drug offences (+10%) and property offences (+8%). For the same period, murder cases increased from 19% to 31%. Among the 582 victims of sexual offences, some 88% were females, 57% were aged below 16 years; 59% were students, 21% had family relationship with their offenders and 54% occurred in private households. In 2017, out of every 100 detainees in prison 94 were male adults, 4 were female adults and the rest were male and female juveniles²⁰.

Boys are much more likely to commit offences than girls. In 2017, only 4.9% of the juvenile offences were committed by girls. The female **juvenile delinquency rate** stood at 1.3 while that of males was nearly 10 times higher. The prevalence and underlying causes of gender-based violence are complex with the result that there is a great deal of confusion and misinformation reflected in the public debate.

II. C.2. GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In 1997, Government of Mauritius introduced the Protection from Domestic Violence Act which has enabled thousands of silent women to break their silence and to benefit from legal protection. Structures for the provision of 24-hour service, free legal assistance and psychological counselling were set up. Institutional mechanisms were strengthened for more effective service delivery and support to women. Mauritius has a full-fledged Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare to oversee all women's and children's health and wellbeing. A National Women's Council functions as a coordinating body for women's associations.

¹⁹ Source: Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

²⁰ Crime, Justice and Security Statistics, 2017 (Police, Prosecutions, Judiciary, Prisons and Probation)

A Citizen Support Portal (CSP) was launched in April 2017. The CSP is an online platform set up at the Prime Minister's Office to provide a better service to address complaints and queries of citizens, including those from victims of domestic violence. The CSP is part of a wider system to develop ways of bringing citizens' experience of service delivery into planning and management of Government services. It also enables decision makers to adjust policies and programmes to influence outcomes on the ground. Furthermore, those who do not have access to internet have the possibility to go and register their complaints at the 36 Citizen's Advice Bureaux (CAB) around the island which provide a dedicated service to victims of domestic violence.

In line with **Government Programme (2015-2019)**, a **National Coalition against Domestic Violence Committee** was set up under the aegis of the Prime Minister's Office in 2015. The Terms of Reference of the National Coalition against Domestic Violence Committee are:

- To ensure that an appropriate framework is put in place for the protection of victims of domestic violence so that they get proper accommodation under the care of institutions and have sufficient means to lead normal lives.
- To put in place a fast track system with all stakeholders for assistance and support to victims of domestic violence; and
- To keep updated statistics on cases of domestic violence and to ensure that appropriate follow up actions are taken in respect of each case.

The report of the National Coalition against Domestic Violence Committee was released in 2016. One of the recommendations of the report is the harmonization and data collection regarding cases of domestic violence. The Committee is fully functional and translates high level political commitment in addressing the issue of domestic violence and in advocating for "Zero Tolerance" in all forms of domestic violence.

A **National Protocol on Domestic Violence for the Republic of Mauritius** has been worked out with a view to:

- create awareness amongst stakeholders on the importance of adopting a more integrated and systematic response to domestic violence;
- serve as a guide for stakeholders in the reporting, protection, care/support services, prevention, and management of domestic violence
- support a coordinated response to domestic violence that would better facilitate data collection on the nature and extent of domestic violence;
- enhance the systemic responses to domestic violence so that there is streamlining of procedures and a fast track system is adopted to attend to survivors.

Accordingly, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare upscaled its IEC campaigns since 2014 on domestic violence by networking with key stakeholders for targeting more community members for the scheduled campaigns. It has adopted a more coordinated approach to track down perpetrators of domestic violence, support victims promptly and efficiently. Emergency accommodations are provided to women victims of domestic violence and capitation grants are allocated to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that cater for victims of violence.

Awareness campaign is a recurrent feature for the Ministry. Information, Education and Communication Campaigns and capacity building programmes are conducted on a monthly basis through the 6 Family Support Bureaux (FSBx), in collaboration with 15 Women Empowerment Centres and several Women Associations, Women Sports Associations, Social Actions

Committees, Agricultural Clubs, Cine Clubs, and Young Women Movements. From 2014 to March 2019, 1104 sensitisation sessions reaching 33,120 women of different ages have been organised. Specific sessions were organised in 2016 for Officers from the judiciary, including the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution, the Solicitor General's Office, the Mauritius Bar Association and the Mauritius Law Society; the Police Department; SOS Femme; Passerelle Women Centre. In 2018 people in deprived and remote areas were targeted with programmes on GBV and family welfare through the "caravane de proximité". From 2016 to 2018, more than 600 police officers have been trained to effectively address the issue of domestic violence.

The **Shared Faith Belief Programme** (SFB), launched in 2013, was reinforced in 2015 to actively involve representatives of religious organizations to promote family well-being and address the problem of gender-based violence. The objectives of the Shared Faith Belief Programme are to:

- (a) raise awareness of religious leaders about GBV, particularly domestic violence;
- (b) strengthen the capacity of religious communities and networks to respond to GBV;
- (c) motivate action planning to address the issues in their own organizations or communities;
and
- (d) equip religious communities with tools to deepen their awareness and understanding of domestic violence.

From June 2015 to March 2016, 4 workshops yearly have been organized reaching 670 members of Religious Organisations. Other programmes implemented between 2014 and 2019 were the Strengthening Values for Family Life Programme, Pre-Marital and Marriage Enrichment Programmes, Inter-Generation Relationship Programme, which were essentially meant to strengthen family relationship.

Drugs, alcohol consumption, coupled with socio-cultural factors, are the main forces behind domestic violence caused by perpetrators who are men in majority. Patriarchy reinforces the dominating power of men in society. In order to sensitize men on the issue of domestic violence and promote responsible behavior and engage them into changed mentality and behavior, the Ministry of launched in 2014 the **Men as Caring Partners (MACP)** project. Based on community involvements, MACP project adopts a multi-pronged intervention approach to promote knowledge about the prevailing situation of men's involvement in family matters, sensitize them to support family members effectively, strengthen advocacy among community members, policy makers and the media for the creation of the appropriate institutional support to enhance men's responsibility in the family and the society.

The intervention focuses on:

- Community Outreach and Social Mobilization Campaigns
- Recreation- based programmes
- Advocacy Campaigns

The Project is funded by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare and is being implemented by the Association for Population and Development (APD), and it covers the whole island. Radio shows, TV programmes and evening recreational activities have attracted more male participation in the programme, which has enabled substantial numbers of men to adopt positive approaches towards women. The personal participation of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, the Attorney General and Minister of Justice together with the Private Parliamentary Secretaries, Mayors and Presidents of Village and Municipal Councils have been instrumental in the advocacy campaign.

II.C.3. LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Responding to the call of the 58th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York (10-21 March 2014), to address urgently the thematic of violence against women which “continues to occur in all parts of the world and that all forms of violence against women and girls are impediments to the development of their full potential as equal partners with men”, Government of Mauritius reiterated its determination and commitment to review and align its policies, programs and services to the elimination and prevention of violence against women. Following a Cabinet decision in March 2014, an **Advisory Committee on Reinforcement of Framework for Protection against Domestic Violence** was set up to review the legislations so as to make them more responsive to the protection of victims and improve the framework catering for the rehabilitation and/or for the prosecution of perpetrators, as well as to recommend new policy orientation and strengthen the role of major stakeholders involved in combating domestic violence.

The Advisory Committee considered that the fight against domestic violence should be a national priority and that legislation should be comprehensive and multidisciplinary, criminalizing all forms of violence, and encompassing issues of prevention, protection, survivor empowerment and support (health, economic, social, psychological), as well as adequate punishment of perpetrators and availability of remedies for survivors. The Report of the Advisory Committee, which was launched in August 2015, highlighted a series of lacunas and weaknesses in the then existing framework and recommended legislative reforms for greater compliance to human rights requirements and for alignment with best international practices aimed at combating domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence. Specifically, the Advisory Committee recommended the following:

1. Adopting a more Comprehensive Definition of Domestic Violence;
2. Further Criminalizing Forms of Domestic violence;
3. Improving the Criminal Justice Response to Domestic Violence;
4. Affording Better Protection, Support and Assistance to Victims;
5. Providing Adequate Redress/Reparation for Victims;
6. Consolidating Preventive Mechanisms;
7. Improving Monitoring/Evaluation.

Accordingly, the legislative framework addressing Domestic Violence was reviewed. After the initial review of the **Protection from Domestic Violence Act** of 1997, in 2004, 2007, 2011, it was further reviewed in 2016 to broaden the scope of domestic violence and increase the powers of enforcement officers, amongst others.

The definition of domestic violence provided in the 1997 Act was:

Domestic violence includes any of the following acts committed by a person against his spouse or a child of such spouse-

- (a) Wilfully causing or attempting to cause physical injury;*
- (b) Wilfully or knowingly placing or attempting to place the spouse in fear of physical injury to himself or to one of his children;*
- (c) Intimidation, harassment, maltreatment, brutality or cruelty;*
- (d) Compelling the spouse by force or threat to engage in any conduct or act, sexual or otherwise, from which the spouse has the right to abstain;*
- (e) Confining or detaining the spouse against his will;*

- (f) Any harm or threat to cause harm to a child of the spouse;
- (g) Causing or attempting to cause damage to the spouse's property;
- (h) A threat to commit any act mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (g)

In view of the new challenges and the varied forms of violence afflicting women, the Amendments to the Act in 2016 widened the definition of the term “domestic violence” by including stalking, physical, emotional, sexual violence and threatened violence, and economic abuse as forms of domestic violence; and the definition of “spouse” was also revisited to mean a person who –

- is or has been civilly or religiously married to a person of the opposite sex;
- is living or has lived with a person of the opposite sex as husband and wife; or
- whether living together or not with a person of the opposite sex, has a common child with that person.

Provision was also made in the 2016 Act for:

- (a) increasing the powers of Enforcement Officers;
- (b) empowering a police officer not below the rank of Assistant Superintendent to arrest a person where he has reason to suspect that the person committed, is committing or is likely to commit an act of domestic violence and to cause him to be brought before a Magistrate at the earliest opportunity.
- (c) increase in penalty to perpetrators.

Failure to comply with any Court Orders (interim order, protection order, occupation order, tenancy order or ancillary order) is an offence and upon conviction one is liable on:

1st conviction: to a fine not exceeding Rs 50,000 and imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year;

2nd conviction: to a fine not exceeding Rs 100,000 and imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years;

3rd or subsequent conviction: to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years.

II. C.4. INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Intimate partner violence (IPV) occurs almost on a daily basis in the lives of many women and men in the Mauritian society. It is defined as psychological/emotional, physical or sexual harm by a current or former partner or spouse. From 2016 to 2017, the female victimisation rate for sexual offences fell from 94 to 80 per 100,000 female population. From police records and as already stated before, among the 582 victims of sexual offences, some 88% were females, 57% were aged below 16 years, 59% were students, 21% had family relationship with their offenders and 54% occurred in private households. As evidenced by these statistics, the most vulnerable sections of the population at risk of violence in private households are women and students, especially girls. Intimate partner violence is a matter of serious concern not only because of the increasing risk factors, but also because of societal barriers that inhibit reporting of perpetrators. Mauritius, despite its economic progress, is still a patriarchal society, where male dominance is prevalent among all classes, including the rich and the educated. Many women and girls still suffer in silence from intimate partners.

In 2015-2017, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare in partnership with an NGO, the Association for Population and Development (APD) implemented a country- wide programme on Intimate Partner Sexual Violence (IPSV). The Ecological Model of WHO was utilised to show a combination of Individual, Relational, Community, and Societal factors that constitute the risk factors and adopted a three-pronged strategic methodological approach based on community participation, media support and social marketing to address the issue of IPSV among the population.

Over the last decades or so, there has been a growing attention given to IPV in Mauritius. However, data gathered over the past several years show that the number of reported cases on IPV is rising in Mauritius. In 2016, Government with support from UNFPA, conducted a study entitled “**Quantitative Assessment of Intimate Partner Violence and its Associated Economic Costs in Mauritius**” so as to better understand the magnitude of the problem, its dynamics, prevalence, causes, consequences and cost. The objective was to gather additional information and data for the development of appropriate intervention strategies. The findings were released in 2017. The study revealed that prevalence rates for physical violence, sexual violence and emotional violence stand at 18.4% (53000) for women and 7.5% (22000) for men. The incidence for women who experience IPV in the extreme case is 43 times on average, approximating one episode every 7 to 8 days for the year. For the occasional group, the incidence for women stands at 13 times, that is, averaging one episode every month. The incidence for men stands at one episode every three months. The study also revealed that the expenses which are incurred by victims of IPV for seeking support from parents stands at Rs20.3M. The economic costs to victims due to help seeking strategies such as friends, colleagues, police, SOS Femmes and the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare stand at Rs 38 M. The cost of IPV on household is estimated at Rs. 642 M. The loss productivity at work because of IPV is estimated at Rs. 546 M for the year.

Government is, at present, aligning its policies to address gender-based violence to the SADC Regional Gender-Based Violence Strategy and Framework for Action which calls upon member states to, *inter alia*, promote prevention and early identification of gender-based violence through increased understanding of gender-based violence and to strengthen delivery of effective, accessible and responsive protection, care and support services to those affected by gender-based violence. Accordingly, based on the framework and also on the recommendations of the Assessment of Intimate Partner Violence and its Associated Economic Costs in Mauritius, a **National Action Plan on Intimate Partner Violence** has been worked out in May 2017. The elaboration of the national action plan to address IPV (2019-2022) is viewed as another step in the fight to protect victims and survivors of IPV. It constitutes of a roadmap for the fight against intimate partner violence for the years 2019-2022.

Five pillars that underpin the National Action Plan are namely:

1. Legislation and prosecution:
2. Primary prevention
3. Capacity building
4. Service Delivery
5. Monitoring and Evaluation

At present, 3 shelters supported by Government and operated by NGOs, namely Chrysalide, Passerelle and SOS Femmes are engaged in the accommodation of survivors of domestic violence. Chrysalide and Passerelle benefit from a capitation grant of Rs 400 for women victims

of domestic violence and a capitation grant of Rs 341 for children accommodated with the women victims of domestic violence while SOS Femmes is provided with a grant-in-aid from Government.

II.C.5. INTEGRATED MONITORING SUPPORT SYSTEM TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The report of the Advisory Committee on Reinforcement of Framework for Protection from Domestic Violence, launched on 17 August 2015, recommended, among others, an improved, integrated and coordinated response to combat domestic violence. Furthermore, the report of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Committee, launched in April 2016, recommended the setting up of an Integrated Support Service under the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare to act as a one- stop department for all issues pertaining to domestic violence including support to all members of family. Accordingly, the Mauritius Police Force (MPF) is planning to merge the services of its Police Family Protection Unit with those of the Family Support Bureaux of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare.

An **Integrated Support Centre (ISC)** was launched on 08 March 2019 by the Prime Minister in the context of the celebration of the International Women's Day. The ISC is a comprehensive, integrated system that provides immediate, consistent, coordinated and timely support to victims and counselling on a 24-hour basis. It aims to provide immediate intervention and assistance to victims of domestic violence in a holistic manner. It supports a 24-hours non-stop Call Centre, through digital and social media.

During normal working office hours (from 0845 hrs. to 1600 hrs. on weekdays), there is a dedicated team of trained Family Welfare and Protection Officers (FWPOs) to respond promptly to the Hotline '139' through 4 parallel phone lines for immediate assistance to victims of domestic violence. After normal working hours, weekends and holidays, the system works on a divert-call mode. Concurrently, to ensure a fast track approach for intervention in cases after normal working hours, 6 FWPOs and 3 Coordinators (1 for ISC) are on call for their respective Family Support Bureaux. 2044 calls were received on Hotline 139 for the period of 08 March to 31 May 2019, out of which 675 cases of domestic violence were reported.

The Centre has, moreover, been connected to the **Domestic Violence Information System (DOVIS)** which is a computerised platform for monitoring cases of domestic violence and which is also a repository for all data pertaining to cases of domestic violence.

The DOVIS is a computerised system for the registration and management of cases of domestic violence in Mauritius. It provides a multi-user platform for performing different functions simultaneously and provides a better coordination among the Family Support Bureaux (FSBx). DOVIS was operational in May 2016 on a pilot basis in three FSBx, and was officially launched on November 2016 in the context of International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (IDEVAW). By 2019, DOVIS is expected to be fully operational in all the FSBx in Mauritius. It enables fast and easy retrieval of information for easy management and tracking of cases of domestic violence.

II.C.6. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Family Welfare and Protection Unit of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare has also developed an **Economic Empowerment Programme** for Survivors of Domestic Violence. The objective is to help survivors establish the financial stability and independence they need to move forward. The Economic Empowerment Programme for Survivors of Domestic Violence started on a pilot basis in February 2018, targeting mainly survivors admitted in shelters. In view of encouraging victims of domestic violence to join the Economic Empowerment Programme, and also to promote a more targeted approach, a Participatory Needs Assessment was conducted on 01 March 2018 among survivors of domestic violence. Following the Participatory Needs Assessment, a 13-session training course on Pastry was conducted from 06 April 2018 to 22 June 2018. 66% of survivors of domestic violence, who got enrolled completed the course. Leadership courses were also provided for survivors who completed the course on pastry as well as for women admitted in Shelters in 2018.

Moreover, to further provide assistance to survivors of domestic violence for them to establish financial autonomy, 12 companies, including private firms under the aegis of Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund (MSWWF), Hotels, Recruiting Agencies and other stakeholders, committed to employ these survivors. The result was very encouraging. The project is still ongoing and the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD) and the Food and Agricultural Research & Extension Institute (FAREI) have committed to extend their training courses to these victims.

II.C.7. FORMULATION OF A PERPETRATOR REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

In 2018, the **Parliamentary Gender Caucus** with assistance from the UNDP conducted a study on the “**Sociological Profiling of Perpetrators of Domestic Violence**” to provide a sociological analysis of the characteristics of perpetrators who use violence in their intimate partner relationships in Mauritius. Retracing the evolution of perpetrators, the study further identified the risk factors and triggers of domestic violence from their childhood to adulthood; proposed recommendations for the support and rehabilitation of perpetrators and support to victims; and addressed the broader socio-economic and cultural context that supports this behaviour. The study revealed *inter alia* that there is not one single profile of a perpetrator of domestic violence; rather there are numerous risk factors and situational triggers to domestic violence. The study argued that the perpetration of violence is multi-causal, and multifarious, ranging from psychological abuse to physical acts of violence. The profile of a perpetrator of domestic violence includes, *inter alia*, being manipulative, jealous, emotional and having strong patriarchal values. The study made a series of recommendations for the rehabilitation of perpetrators.

Based on the recommendations of the study and acknowledging that if perpetrators are not held accountable for their acts and if they are not offered an opportunity to change, the cycle of violence will continue to perpetuate, Government in 2018 sought the support of the UNDP to develop a “**Perpetrator’s Rehabilitation Programme**” to provide rehabilitation in areas such as substance abuse, anger management, stress management, conflict resolution, attachment anxieties, amongst others. The expected result of the programme is to bring a change in mindset to eliminate incidences of domestic violence. The UNDP provided the support of a consultant to review the situation and propose action areas. It was argued that the overriding principle underlying any domestic violence programme for perpetrators should be the safety of the women and children affected. It was recommended that all rehabilitation programmes should be targeted

and focused, fostering on interagency collaboration, and have a strong Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism.

II.C.8. CHILD ABUSE

There has been an increase in registered cases of child abuse in Mauritius. From 2014 to February 2019, 16,437 cases of child abuse have been registered at the Child Development Unit of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, as shown in **Table 4** below.

TABLE 4: CASES OF CHILD ABUSE REGISTERED AT THE LEVEL OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT UNIT

| Number of cases of Child Abuse registered at the level of the Child Development Unit – FEMALE ONLY | | |
|---|------------------------|---|
| S/N. | Year – 05 Years | Number of cases of Child Abuse registered at the level of the Child Development Unit – Female only |
| 1. | 2014 | 3283 |
| 2. | 2015 | 3302 |
| 3. | 2016 | 3162 |
| 4. | 2017 | 2853 |
| 5. | 2018 | 3166 |
| 6. | Jan to February 2019 | 671 |
| Gross Total: | | 16,437 |

Source: Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

The Child Development Unit operates through a network of 6 Outstations around the island and provides immediate assistance to children victims of abuse through the Emergency Protection Services; 24/7 basis hotline service - Hotline 113 (free of charge) and close monitoring and follow-up of cases by specialised personnel. A Drop-in-Centre supported by the Ministry and run by an NGO care for the curative, rehabilitative and reintegrative services of children victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE). Whenever a child is assessed to be in immediate danger, the District Magistrate issues an Emergency Protection Order (EPO) and the child is sheltered in a “place of safety”. The Integrated Support Centre (ISC) provides immediate, consistent, coordinated and timely support to victims of child abuse on Hotline 113. As at 16 April 2019, a total number of 1678 of calls were received and 418 cases of **violence** against children have been reported at the ISC and addressed by the CDU outstations which provide immediate and long-term protective and support services.

All cases of alleged child trafficking and child prostitution are made known to the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (MGECDFW) and recorded at the level of the CDU for social enquiry. The cases are reported to the Police for Criminal Enquiry. There is a close collaboration with the **Brigade Pour la Protection des Mineurs (BPLPDM)** and other stakeholders to assist in the identification of victims and providing them support. The BPLPDM carries out raids in game houses, hotels, discotheques and also investigates suspected/alleged cases of child trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). Special therapeutic and rehabilitative programmes are organized for victims.

II.C.9. NATURE OF ABUSE ON CHILDREN

CSEC, Child Kidnapping and Child Trafficking are the main types of child abuse reported at the CDU. These are treated as serious offences, with severe penalties in Mauritius. The number of reported cases of child abuse however is low as shown in Table 5 below. 62 cases of child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children and child kidnapping have been reported from 2014- February 2019.

TABLE 5: NATURE OF CHILD ABUSE AMONG FEMALES (2014-2019)

| 2014 - 2019 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | | 2019 | Total |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|--|------|-------|
| Nature of Abuse | | | | | | | | |
| Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) – Including Child Prostitution (Reported cases of alleged child prostitution) | 09 | 20 | 04 | 0 | 03 | | 01 | 37 |
| Child Kidnapping | 03 | 05 | 01 | 02 | 01 | | 02 | 14 |
| Child Trafficking | 02 | 02 | 04 | 01 | 02 | | 0 | 11 |

Source: Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

II.C.10. TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (TIP)

Prostitution is strictly prohibited in Mauritius and sex tourism is illegal in the country. The **Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (2009)** gives effect to the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, namely to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and protect and assist victims of trafficking. The Act provides that any person who trafficks another person or allows another person to be trafficked shall commit an offence and it shall not be a defense for that person so charged that, *inter alia*, the victim has consented to the act which was intended to constitute trafficking. Any person who knowingly leases a room, house, building or establishment or subleases or allows it to be used, for the purpose of harbouring a victim of trafficking; or advertises, publishes, prints, broadcasts, distributes, or causes the advertisement, publication, broadcast or distribution of, information which suggests or alludes to trafficking by any means, including the use of the internet or other information technology, shall also commit an offence under the Act. The Act also provides, *inter alia*, for the repatriation of victims of trafficking, as well as the return of victims of trafficking to Mauritius. Moreover, the Act imposes a duty on any person to report any case of trafficking to the police if the person believes that another person is a victim of trafficking. Furthermore, the law provides for the setting up of centres for victims of human trafficking. Such centres are to provide temporary accommodation suited for the needs of victims of trafficking admitted to them. All cases are inquired into by the Central Criminal Investigation Department and the regular police inquiries into cases of trafficking in persons, whereas the Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs investigates cases of trafficking of children.

TIP is not reported to be serious in Mauritius, as revealed by the number of cases recorded since 2009 to date, as shown in Table 6 below. However, Government took the decision to set up in December 2015, an **Inter-Ministerial Committee on Trafficking In Persons (TIP)** to look into the issue in Mauritius. Stakeholders were invited to forward their views and suggestions on the matter to the Attorney General's Office. The Attorney General's office prepared a working draft on the Proposed National Plan of Action for Combating TIP, which was circulated at the second Inter-Ministerial Committee held on 14th March 2016. The Ministry of Defense and Rodrigues was mandated to look into the issue of TIP. A subcommittee chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defense and Rodrigues was set up and consultations are being held with relevant stakeholders to finalise the same.

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) has participated in the various Inter-Ministerial Committees that took place as from December 2015, following which, the ODPP has taken the following actions –

- (i) In January 2016, the ODPP, in collaboration with the US Embassy and the International Organization for Migration, provided a training course to various stakeholders on investigation and prosecution of TIP offences.
- (ii) A second training was provided to senior officials of the police department by two prosecutors of the ODPP on 23rd January 2016.
- (iii) In December 2016, the ODPP had a working session with representatives of the police. There were about ten cases under investigation for breach of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act 2009.

TABLE 6: TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS RECORDED FROM 2009 TO 2019, ISLAND OF MAURITIUS

| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------------------|------|------|
| Cases of trafficking in persons established under the Combating of Trafficking Persons Act 2009 | NIL | NIL | NIL | NIL | NIL | NIL | NIL | NIL | 2 (illegal stay) | 1 | 1 |
| Cases of trafficking in persons under the Child Protection Act | 3 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 2 | |
| Cases having bearing on human trafficking | 3 | | 8 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 9 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 1 |

Source: Mauritius Police Force

The Mauritius Police Force (MPF) has also introduced a number of measures to prevent TIP. These include -

- (a) The Police Family Protection Unit (PFPU) has a scanning mechanism in place to detect cases of trafficking. This is done during interviewing of victims of domestic violence, especially foreign nationals. Suspected perpetrators are summoned and interviewed to ensure that they are not involved in TIP or linked to prostitution networks;
- (b) Persons calling at PFPU throughout the island are duly sensitized on the problem of TIP;
- (c) Law enforcement officials have been attending seminars and capacity building sessions organized by the US Embassy and conducted by Australian experts on 27th and 28th November 2017 at the Women's Centre in Phoenix;
- (d) The Police Training School (PTS) incorporates a module on TIP for new trainee police officers. Other police officers have also undergone such training at the PTS.
- (e) A specialised section has been set up at the level of the Central Investigation Division (CID) of the Police to handle cases of human trafficking;
- (f) The Passport and Immigration Office is working with the Ministry of Labour on joint operations to verify any case of retention of passport;

- (g) The nexus of trafficking of foreign workers from Bangladesh, India and Nepal is under close watch whereas the nexus of trafficking of workers from Nepal and India has been dismantled and Interpol has been informed;
- (h) Cases of TIP are under prosecution before the Courts and an accused party has been convicted before the Intermediate Court;
- (i) A Steering Committee has been set up at the level of the police and regular meetings are held involving concerned units – Central CID, PFFU, Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs, Crime Prevention Unit, Police Prosecution Office, PTS and Crime Records Office;
- (j) Working sessions have been held with officials from the US Embassy, the Police and Ministry of Defence to assess measures to be undertaken to upgrade Mauritius from Tier Two to Tier One;
- (k) The Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs and the Crime Prevention Unit works towards controlling truancy of school children as well as monitoring the activities undertaken by these children;
- (l) Sensitization campaigns are being carried out in schools, colleges, universities and at the work place of migrant workers to inform them of their rights. A poster campaign has also been launched throughout the island; and
- (m) The Police is involved with other Government institutions and NGOs to help school dropouts and women involved in prostitution to undergo training to acquire skills for the job market in order to facilitate their integration into society.

A Residential Drop-in Centre was made operational since May 2016, to cater for the rehabilitative needs of children victims of sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation including child trafficking. The setting up of the Drop-in Centre is in line with the recommendations made by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in January 2016 with a view to strengthening policies and programmes for the prevention, recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration of children victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE). The Residential Drop-in Centre which is managed by the National Children's Council can accommodate some 32 children, aged between 0 to 18 years, with separate dormitories between different age groups. The residential centre facilities ensure sustainability in the recovery and rehabilitation of victims of sexual abuse and exploitation and provide efficient services to the victims such as specialized support services, for example psychotherapy & the reconstruction stage. Children are sent back to school to resume their studies or training courses with a view to empowering them for their gradual re-insertion in mainstream society.

The issue of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) is also addressed by the Drop-in-Centre which is managed by the Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association. During the period January 2011 to March 2018, 2960 cases were registered at the Drop-In Centre, out of which 23 were alleged cases of child prostitution. The services provided by the Drop-in Centre for all CSEC victims include: - individual counselling, group counselling, couple and parental counselling, psychosexual counselling and contraceptive counselling, telephone counselling, medical sessions, rehabilitative activities including art and craft sessions and activities for the Drop-in-Centre; and between January and November 2017, one case of child trafficking (a girl) was registered at the CDU.

Training programmes for officers from the police force, Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, Ministry of Labour, NHRC and Ombudsperson for Children’s office were organised in 2017 on combating trafficking.

The Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the Association des Hôteliers et Restaurateurs de l’île Maurice (AHRIM) and the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, published a brochure in 2010 on the responsibilities of actors in the tourism industry in addressing sexual exploitation of children. Tourist establishments are licensed and controlled by the Tourism Authority and any tourist accommodation found to be involved in immoral activities, such as prostitution or child trafficking, is severely sanctioned. In 2019 the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms, in collaboration with stakeholders, produced a guide for migrant workers involved in the secondary economic activities in Mauritius entitled “**Know your Rights**” which aims at informing prospective and current migrant workers, of their rights and also on the risks of prostitution.

II. C.11. EARLY MARRIAGES

The Child Protection Act defines a child as any unmarried person between the age of 0 to 18 years. The Code Civil Mauricien makes provision for the marriage of minors of above 16 years old only with the consent of both parents and/or in the absence of same with support of a judge in chambers. Early marriages are low in numbers in Mauritius, and existence of married children below the age of 18 cannot be denied. From 2015 to 2018, 163 young girls between the age of 13-17 who were reported to have been religiously married as shown in Table 9 below:

TABLE 9: NIKAHS (MUSLIM RELIGIOUS MARRIAGES) REPORTED FROM 2015 TO 2018, AGED LESS THAN 18 YEARS.

| Year | Age (FEMALE ONLY) | | | | | Grand Total |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | |
| 2015 | - | | 12 | 14 | 27 | 53 |
| 2016 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 14 | 28 | 52 |
| 2017 | - | | 4 | 11 | 29 | 44 |
| 2018 | - | 1 | - | 1 | 12 | 14 |
| Grand Total | 1 | 3 | 23 | 40 | 96 | 163 |

Source: Civil Status Office (CSO)

A total of 658 children between the age of 16-17 were married or in union between 2014- Feb 2019, as shown in Table 7 below:

TABLE 7: CHILDREN MARRIED AND IN UNION BETWEEN 16-17 YEARS

| Year | Age | | Grand Total |
|--------------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| | 16 | 17 | |
| 2014 | 64 | 67 | 131 |
| 2015 | 84 | 64 | 148 |
| 2016 | 63 | 61 | 124 |
| 2017 | 67 | 56 | 123 |
| 2018 | 68 | 59 | 127 |
| 2019 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| Grand Total | 347 | 311 | 658 |

Source: Civil Status Office (CSO)

The CDU has conducted 67 sensitisation campaigns on child abuse around the island reaching 5369 children between 2014 and 2018, as shown in Table 8 below.

TABLE 8: SENSITISATION CAMPAIGNS ON CHILD ABUSE BY CDU

| YEAR | NUMBER OF CAMPAIGNS | NUMBER OF CHILDREN REACHED |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 2014 | 14 | 1519 |
| 2015 | 12 | 665 |
| 2016 | 13 | 1374 |
| 2017 | 13 | 1106 |
| 2018 | 15 | 705 |
| TOTAL | 67 | 5369 |

Source: Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

II.C.12. PROSPECTIVE PROJECTS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In order to reinforce its programme to address domestic violence, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare envisages to set up:

II.C.12.a. A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REVIEW COMMITTEE (DVRC)

The DVRC is intended to review the circumstances in which serious injuries and or death of a person have, or appear to have resulted from violence committed by a person to whom the victim was related or with whom the latter had been in an intimate personal relationship, or by a member of the same household. The DVRC will help to identify and fill service gaps of different agencies dealing with domestic violence in the Republic of Mauritius. It will ensure that agencies are responding appropriately to victims of domestic violence by offering and putting in place appropriate support mechanisms, procedures, protocols, resources and proactive measures with an aim to avoid future incidents of domestic violence including death. The members of the DVRC will be representatives of different Ministries and bodies dealing with cases of domestic violence and children's abuse, from law enforcement, the criminal justice system, the healthcare sector, social services and also of NGOs.

The overarching purpose of a DVRC will be to:

The overarching purpose of a DVRC will be to:

- a) Establish what lessons are to be learned from a domestic violence case, particularly regarding the way in which professionals and organizations work individually and together to ensure victim's safety;
- b) Identify clearly what those lessons are, both within and between agencies, how and within what timeframe actions have been taken, and what is expected to change as a result;
- c) Apply these lessons to service responses including changes to policies and procedures as appropriate; and
- d) Prevent domestic violence and homicide and improve service responses for all domestic violence victims and their children through improved intra and inter-agency collaboration.

The specific objectives of the DVRC will be:

- a) To provide and coordinate a confidential multi-disciplinary review of domestic violence cases including deaths;
- b) To offer expert opinion regarding the circumstances of the event(s) leading to serious injuries and or death in the individual cases reviewed;
- c) To create and maintain a comprehensive database about the victims and perpetrators of domestic violence and their circumstances;
- d) To help identify the presence or absence of systemic issues, problems, gaps, or shortcomings of each case to facilitate appropriate recommendations for prevention;
- e) To help identify trends, risk factors, and patterns from the cases reviewed, and to make recommendations thereof for effective intervention and prevention strategies;
- f) To stimulate educational activities through the recognition of systemic issues or problems and/or:
 - i. improve systems/protocols for referral to appropriate agencies for action;
 - ii. where appropriate, assist in the development of protocols with a view to prevention;
 - iii. where appropriate, disseminate educational information.
- g) To report annually the trends, risk factors, and patterns identified and make appropriate recommendations for preventing cases in similar circumstances, based on the aggregate data collected from the Domestic Violence Reviews.

In view of ensuring that agencies are responding promptly to victims of domestic violence by offering and putting appropriate support mechanisms and proactive measures, Regional DVRCs will also be set up at the level of the 6 Family Support Bureaux.

II.C.12.b. AN OBSERVATORY ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The incidence of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), particularly intimate partner violence (IPV), is growing at an alarming rate in Mauritius. According to a Quantitative Assessment of Intimate Partner Violence and Associated Economic Costs in Mauritius conducted in 2016, in a sample size of 400, the prevalence rates for physical violence, sexual violence and emotional violence stand at 12%, 9% and 6-8% respectively. About 50,000 women are experiencing violence on a yearly basis.

Increasing incidence of IPV with women dying in appalling circumstances at the hands of their partners and ex-partners have been reported in the press since 2016.

Many victims suffer silently without any supporting network. In 2014, 2015 and 2016, only 2301, 2281 and 2539 victims of GBV were provided with protective and supportive services by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare.

The approach taken to address the problem of GBV is fragmented. There is no cohesion amongst all the parties addressing GBV. Each organization has devised its own policies to address the problem of GBV and has its own statistics. Despite having implemented many policies and action plans to address the problem, there are no visible and effective results. Due to lack of baseline indicators, no comparison could be made to know the real situation and achieve the target of *“eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation”* of the SDG 5, that is, achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

In light of the above-mentioned observations, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare has sought the collaboration of the UNDP for the setting up of an **Observatory on GBV** in Mauritius in order to centralise all the information and whatever data for a better understanding of GBV in all its dimensions, and create a synergy and promote a concerted effort among various stakeholders in addressing GBV.

The Observatory on GBV will be composed of representatives from both the public institutions and the civil society and is intended to be a body of advisory nature in order to increase understanding of the actions carried out in matters related to GBV, analyse its evolution and guide the public policy decisions on GBV.

Moreover, it will also have the capacity to make urgent progress in the integration of the data of the different organisations' registers already in existence, thus improving their operation and complementing them with the results which can be provided by the sociological research mechanisms at more disaggregated levels and in more details. The main objectives of the Observatory are:

- i. To understand the reality and the evolution of the situations of GBV in the Republic of Mauritius; and
 - ii. To make recommendations and proposals to improve the services and facilities offered by the public institutions and civil society in the field of GBV.
- The functions of the Observatory with respect to its objectives are:
- i. To design and ensure maintenance of a computer application integrating data relating to situations of GBV in the Republic of Mauritius.
 - ii. To act as a permanent body for the gathering and analysis of the information available in the different fields of attention to situations of gender-based violence.
 - iii. To make recommendations and proposals aimed at improving the information indicators and systems used by the services in matters of violence against women.
 - iv. To participate in and maintain relations with other similar institutions. To learn about their experiences and the reforms undertaken and proposed in other administrations.
 - v. To propose the carrying out of studies and technical reports for the diagnosis and evaluation of the extent and evolution of the situations of gender-based violence.
 - vi. To analyse the adaptation of the comprehensive measures aimed at victims of gender-based violence, investigating their consequences and effects and examining the examples of good practice.

- vii. To make recommendations and proposals aimed at promoting improvements in the range of different resources which affect the field of gender-based violence in the Republic of Mauritius and to transfer them to the relevant institutions.
- viii. To provide a forum of exchange and communication facilitating the works of study and analysis of research groups in the area of gender-based violence.

SECTION II-D: PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS

II.D.1. INTRODUCTION

While much progress has been realised by many countries in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment, it is noted that achievements have been uneven. Inequality persists especially in developing nations where the process of women's empowerment has been slow, although steady. Even in rich countries, some forms of inequality exist. 25 years after the commitment made by nations vis-a-vis the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the world is still struggling to fulfil its aims and objectives. Indeed, the impediments have been the level of participation of women on equal terms with men and, as importantly, the poor elements of accountability.

Mauritius too is no exception, despite impressive progress. Explicit targets together with monitoring and evaluation indicators of progress have often been side-lined, leading to a poor level of accountability from individuals and institutions.

There is still a long way to go before the promise of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is fulfilled. This raises the need for greater accountability, calling for more concentrated attention to three areas, namely: the targets and indicators that are needed to track progress, the individuals and institutions who need to be held accountable, and the measures that need to be taken towards accelerating progress for women. While the Beijing Platform for Action and the programmes for action from other UN world conferences on women offer a resounding endorsement of the need for gender justice and equality, they provide a limited set of specific targets and indicators as tools for ensuring greater accountability. In essence, the countries of the world have agreed to a path but have neglected to create sufficient road signs that let us know how far we have come in our journey and how far we have to go.

II.D.2. UPHOLDING HUMAN RIGHTS

Government of the Republic of Mauritius has enacted a series of legislations to protect human rights including women's rights, as well as to ensure the protection of disadvantaged groups of women, including rural women, elderly women and women with disabilities. The Constitution makes provision under section 17 for redress to be afforded by the Supreme Court to any individual whose rights have been or are being or are likely to be contravened. Acts of public bodies may also be challenged in Court by way of applications for Judicial Review on grounds of illegality.

According to the Protection of Human Rights Act 1998, any person who alleges that any of the human rights enshrined in the Constitution has been violated or is likely to be violated by a public officer can make a written complaint to the **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** and seek redress. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) was set up in 2001 to deal with violations of human rights and discrimination enshrined in Chapter 2 of the Constitution, mainly civil and political rights.

The functions of the NHRC are provided for in the Protection of Human Rights Act, which was amended in 2012 and enabled the setting up of a **National Preventive Mechanism Division**. A **Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment** was set up in 2007 under the **Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture**, which Mauritius acceded to in 2005. The National Preventive Mechanism Act recognises the Sub-Committee and allows for the National Preventive Division to have contact and share information with it.

As part of its External Actions to promote democracy and respect for human rights in developing countries, in 2017 the European Union (EU) granted funds to the National Human Rights Commission over a period of 3 years to finance the implementation of the Project entitled ‘**Promotion of Respect for Human Rights in Mauritius and Rodrigues**’. This grant from the EU enables the NHRC to implement a wide-ranging awareness project through various activities and programmes such as seminars, workshops and talks. It provides the NHRC with the resources to effectively reach out to a larger public, including women, children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities as well as law enforcement officers, media, civil servants and NGOs, and to sensitize them on their human rights and the laws relevant to their protection. In 2018, the NHRC organized a series of activities on the specific issue of Domestic Violence and Women’s Rights in Mauritius, targeting different audiences.

With the recent coming into force of the **Independent Police Complaints Commission Act**, a **Police Complaints Division** was set up. The **Division** has since been dissolved and replaced by an **Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC)** which came into operation in April 2018. One of the functions of the IPCC is to investigate into any complaint made by any person or on his/her behalf against any act, conduct or omission of a police officer in the discharge of his/her functions, other than a complaint of an act of corruption or a money laundering offence.

The functions of the NHRC and its mandate have been broadened to ensure better promotion and protection of human rights. The NHRC is now empowered to review safeguards provided by or under any enactment for the protection of human rights. The functions of the NHRC also include the promotion of the harmonisation of national legislation and practices with the international human rights instruments to which Mauritius is a party, and ensuring their effective implementation. The NHRC has been given the autonomy to engage suitable persons or bodies to enable it to discharge its specific functions in an independent manner.

The **National Human Rights Action Plan 2012-2020** aims at strengthening the National Human Rights Framework to protect and safeguard civil and political rights and secure greater realisation of economic, social and cultural rights. It advocates a number of measures, amongst which -

- the strengthening of international cooperation on human rights through ratification of human rights instruments and domestication of human rights treaties;
- a greater realisation of economic, social and cultural rights;
- the strengthening of women’s rights in the context of equal opportunities;
- a better protection and safeguarding of the rights of vulnerable persons including children, older persons, persons with disabilities and persons living in poverty as well as securing the right to sustainable development.

A **Human Rights Monitoring Committee** comprising all human rights stakeholders including non-governmental organizations, Ministries and Departments, National Human Rights Institutions and the private sector, has been set up by the Prime Minister's Office.

The objectives of the Committee are to ensure regular monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations of the Action Plan on Human Rights based on the sectoral action plans; to ensure that adequate resources are made available for the implementation of the policies, training and sensitisations being carried out at sectoral level; and to recommend collaborative arrangements with local and external partners for the effective implementation of the projects identified.

Some of the recommendations of the Committee include encouraging and facilitating greater involvement of civil society and business in the promotion and protection of human rights, and better protecting and safeguarding rights of vulnerable persons.

They also emphasise on reinforcing international cooperation on human rights through greater commitment to Universal and Regional Human Rights Treaties and greater international engagement for promotion and protection of human rights, and enhancing human rights education and awareness. Government envisages the creation of a National Human Rights Secretariat in replacement of the Committee. A database of human rights structural process and outcome indicators is being prepared.

A full-fledged Secretariat and a National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow Up (NMRF) has been set up at the level of the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms. The NMRF is chaired by the Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms. It has the mandate to coordinate, prepare reports and engage with International, Regional and Human Rights bodies and to monitor national follow up and implementation of the treaty obligations and recommendations. It ensures that an all of Government and all civil society approach is adopted in the preparation of State Party Reports to be submitted to Treaty Bodies. NMRF objective's is to ensure timely reporting and reviews to international bodies.

II.D.3. NATIONAL POLICY FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The National Gender Policy Framework of 2008 was an update of the 2005 National Gender Policy. It was adopted to respond to the Programme- Based Budgeting and Performance Management initiatives of Government and to provide for the broad operational strategies and institutional arrangements that had been adopted to achieve gender equality. In 2018, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (MGECDWF) spearheaded the development of a new, 10-year **National Gender Policy (NGP 2019-2029)**. This new policy not only aims to align gender program to the current development agenda of the Republic of Mauritius, but also to respond to the global agenda as guided by the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Agenda 2063 whose goals are aimed at achieving Gender Equality and Empowering all Women and Girls.

The purpose of this new National Gender Policy (NGP) is to have principal guidelines to reflect and affirm Government's commitment to integrate gender into all development planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The policy will be the basis upon which every sector, department and non- state actors will be guided to develop their gender policies for implementation at the sectoral or institutional levels. The NGP is based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, transparency and accountability, respect and dignity, and inclusivity. The 8 priority areas identified for the coming years are:

1. Inclusion of gender equality in legislation and policies
2. Gender Education and Training
3. Gender Responsive Governance and Decision-Making
4. Gender Employment and Economic Empowerment
5. Gender -Based Violence (GBV)
6. Gender Health and Well -Being
7. Gender and the Media, Information Communication and Technology
8. Environmental protection and climate change.

Consultative meetings have been held with the representatives of all Ministries, parastatal bodies and local government, the private sector, the media, the academia and Civil Society Organizations to enable them voice their opinions and make proposals and also to enlist their participation in the process of development of the plan. The draft NGP has been finalised and validated. In the same vein, the Ministry has in November 2018 enlisted the support of the European Union for technical assistance for the formulation of a National Costed Action Plan on Gender Mainstreaming. The MGECDWF has also been providing technical guidance and entry points to line Ministries to enable them to identify gender gaps; propose short/medium/long-term remedial actions; and implement concrete actions within their respective sectors. These will, thereafter, be incorporated in the National Costed Action Plan on Gender Mainstreaming and will serve as the basis for mobilization resources to implement gender mainstreaming strategies in 2019. Government is also in the process of elaborating a Gender Equality Bill.

II.D.4. BUDGET AND ACCOUNTABILITY ON GENDER

In the Budget 2018/2019, a specific pillar on “Gender Mainstreaming” was included, and a chapter has been dedicated to Gender Issues in Government’s Three- year Strategic Plan for 2018-2021. In line with Budget Measure 2018/19, in order to train some 250 Government Officials across all Ministries/Departments to deal with Gender Issues, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) organised a capacity building programme from 2 to 5 April 2019 to some 90 officers comprising MoFED’s and PMO Gender Cells, representatives of MoFED’s Directorates, some officers of the Finance Cadre, Human Resources Cadre, Internal Control, Directorate of Procurement and Supply and officers of parastatals falling under the aegis of both Ministries.

Approximately USD 6,000²¹ have been allocated by Government to all Ministries as from 2017 to enable them identify, devise and implement policies/ programmes/projects and activities that would address specific gender gaps in their respective sectors. A study will be carried out shortly with the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat on the feasibility of introducing Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB).

In the Budget Call Circular (2019/20) a gender responsive element in Budget allocations has been included. From 2015 to 2019 the budget allocated for gender mainstreaming activities has increased by 36.2%, as shown in Table 10 below. The total budgetary allocation to the Gender Unit increased from Rs 171.2 million in 2018/19 to Rs 181.4 million in 2019/20. Additional resources were allocated to further the gender mainstreaming agenda, including among others the

²¹ 1 dollar is approximately Rs 35(2019)

implementation of a National Gender Policy and Costed Action Plan. In addition, funds to the tune of Rs 93 million and Rs 10 million are allocated on annual basis to the National Women's Council and National Women Entrepreneur Council, respectively.

TABLE 10: BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING (2015-2020)

| | 2015/2016 Rs. Million | 2016/2017 Rs. Million | 2017/2018 Rs. Million | 2018/2019 Rs. Million | 2019/2020 Rs. Million |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Budget voted for the Ministry of gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare | 394, 658 | 451, 000 | 473, 000 | 495, 400 | 471,000 |
| Budget allocated for the Gender Unit* | 125, 706 | 140, 800 | 147, 500 | 171, 229 | 181,400 |
| *Breakdown of budget Gender Unit under <u>Goods and Services</u> <u>Under Other Goods and Services</u> | 15, 715 | 17, 365 | 18, 450 | 22, 800 | 22,800 |
| Women`s empowerment programmes | 2, 293 | 4, 000 | 4, 900 | 7, 100 | 11,250 |
| Grants for support to Women`s Associations | 4, 548 | 4,700 | 4, 935 | 3, 900 | 2,600 |
| National Women`s Council | 83, 500 | 88, 315 | 90, 100 | 93, 000 | 93,000 |
| National Women Entrepreneur Council | 9, 000 | 9, 500 | 9,700 | 10, 000 | 10,000 |

Source: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

II.D.5. ACCOUNTABILITY

The Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (MGECDWF), being the lead accounting agency of the National Gender Machinery (NGM), acts as the policy making and monitoring body for the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies in policies and

programmes of all sectors. In order to ensure that the National Gender Machinery plays its role effectively, it remained a pre-requisite that a mechanism be set up, with the participation of all Ministries for regular feedback and dialogue. A **National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming (NSCGM)** was therefore set up in 2010 to monitor the implementation of the National Gender Policy Framework in all sectoral Ministries in order to ensure that all line Ministries apply a gender perspective in the design, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their policies and programmes, consistent with the National Gender Policy Framework. The rationale, thereof, is to ensure that the practical and strategic needs, concerns and experiences of both men and women are fully integrated in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and that inequality is not perpetuated.

The specific objectives of the NSCGM are to:

- i. Provide a forum for exchange of views and discuss on current and emerging gender issues;
- ii. Disseminate information on international and regional frameworks pertaining to gender equality issues;
- iii. Provide feedback on the implementation of commitments/ resolutions emanating from international and regional conferences/ meetings;
- iv. Provide feedback on implementation of sectoral gender policies;
- v. Provide guidance and whenever necessary, new strategic orientations for the effective implementation of sectoral gender policies;
- vi. Monitor and evaluate the successful implementation of international and regional commitments as well as sectoral gender policies; and
- vii. Follow-up with line Ministries as regards gender mainstreaming at their level.

Quarterly meetings chaired by the Hon Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare are held with Gender Focal Points from all Ministries (not below the rank of a Deputy Permanent Secretary), and with Senior Officers to assess the level of implementation of the respective sectoral policies; identify gaps/ constraints/ challenges that hinder their implementation and take remedial actions accordingly; and ensure that commitments taken on gender-related matters at various international and regional fora are translated into concrete actions.

The Committee has met 10 times between the period 2015-2018. Whilst this Committee has tried to create awareness amongst representatives of various Ministries on the need to engender their policies, it is faced with challenges in view of:

- Limited expertise of representatives of Ministries on gender issues;
- Lack of ownership from other Ministries, in the sense that some members attending the meetings are officers delegated by their respective Management and who are not necessarily the Gender Focal Point or the Alternate member, thus defeating the purpose; and
- Growing perception that the issue of gender is the concern of women and the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. Other Ministries do not express accountability on gender issues.

Each Ministry has a **Gender Focal Point** and a **Gender Cell**. The rationale for the setting up of Gender Cells in line Ministries is to institutionalize a structure that is sustainable over time, whilst ensuring that the concept of gender permeates in all policies and programmes of Government. The Gender Focal Points chair the Gender Cells and ensure that gender is being mainstreamed at the different levels of policy analysis, formulation, implementation and budgeting, as well as

monitoring and evaluation. The Gender Cells are composed of senior officers from different sections of the Ministries and are mandated to assess the level of implementation of their respective sectoral policies; identify gaps/ constraints/ challenges that hinder the implementation of their sectoral gender policies; and take remedial actions accordingly. The Gender Focal Points or their alternates are responsible to provide regular feedback to the NSCGM on actions implemented from a gender perspective as well as the status of their sectoral gender policies.

II.D.6. GENDER STATISTICS

There is a dearth of empirical data on gender. Despite some positive measures taken over the past five years to reinforce gender disaggregated data collection, systematic gender-sensitive data collection is inadequate, especially in the private sector. Many claim to collect data by sex, and so doing justice by looking at both sexes. However, gender statistics are more than data disaggregated by sex. Having data by sex does not guarantee that concepts, definitions and methods used in data production are conceived to reflect gender roles, relations and inequalities in society. Statistics Mauritius (SM) collects data by sex which are useful in analysing data by gender. SM has already initiated steps to develop SDGs indicators. In collaboration with national data producers, SM has constructed a first Sustainable Development Goals database for the Republic of Mauritius.

Gender statistics, however, cuts across all fields of traditional statistics and require a correct understanding of concepts, definitions and methods, as well as relevant, pertinent and accurate information on women and men, boys and girls. In order to improve collection, analysis and dissemination of gender statistics, a consultancy report in 2018 strongly recommended that the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare strengthens gender statistics “to ensure gender statistics are available, accessible and analysed to inform policy making, advocacy and accountability for delivering gender equality and women’s empowerment”. Also, despite a few researches conducted by the Academia and the Parliamentary Gender Caucus, there is an almost total absence of gender research studies. These are important impediments for effective gender programme intervention, which remains at best almost non-evidence based or anecdotal.

II.D.7. LEADERSHIP, POLITICS AND DECISION MAKING

Noticeable progress has been observed in the representation of women holding senior positions in the public service. As pointed out in Section II. A.10, and as one example of such visible progress is the women’s representation as high court judges, with more than 47% of puisne judges being women. Mauritius has additionally the highest percentage of female permanent secretaries in Africa at 37%. Among legislators, senior officials and managers in the public sector, 40% are women. These figures indicate that Government is creating a conducive environment for women to aspire to higher posts. The Ministry of Gender Equality Child Development and Family Welfare has sustained its capacity building programmes and awareness campaigns on the pertinence of having more women at different levels of decision- making instances.

For instance, a Dialogue on “**Promoting Women’s Participation in Politics**” was held on 18 June 2018 as a joint venture with the US Embassy. The objectives were mainly geared towards

encouraging collective intelligence and participatory democracy, including effective ways to promote greater democratic participation of civil society through greater inclusion of women; and promote fruitful dialogue between elected officials and other political figures and female constituents, and how to extend that dialogue into areas such as how to leverage increased female constituent feedback on legislative proposals and implementation of policies. The dialogue was facilitated by an Expert in International Governance from US. Female representatives from each Municipal Council and District Council, Women in Networking, and all political parties represented in Parliament attended the activity.

The Republic of Mauritius is in the process of introducing an electoral reform which has been a long-felt need and often referred as “a grave democratic deficit” and this initiative will undoubtedly make provision for having more women joining the political arena. Following the amendments made to the Local Government Act 2011 and Rodrigues Regional Assembly Regulations, women’s representation has increased to 25.4% in the 2012 Village Council Elections and 23.5% in the 2017 Rodrigues Regional Assembly Elections respectively. However, in the National Assembly, women’s representation is still low at 11.8%. The Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands has conducted a series of sensitisation, training sessions and advocacy to ensure that women get more visibility and are empowered to participate actively in leadership positions and in politics. A sum of Rs 3.8 Million Rupees has been earmarked by the Ministry of Local Government for the years 2019- 2021 to strengthen its campaign towards the promotion of women’s participation in public life.

II.D.8. WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMY

While we have seen progress with regard to increased women’s participation in decision making, women are still under-represented in other spheres of power, like leadership and management. Women’s under-representation in decision making and in the boardrooms is being addressed. This issue is attributed to prevailing patriarchal norms. In the private sector, women participate effectively as employees, and their contribution, especially in the textile industries is very appreciative. However, their participation in decision making instances is low. A nationwide survey²² of Mauritian organizations and their managers disclosed the degree of representation of women in managerial ranks, and explored top management attitudes regarding women-in-management issues. Analysis revealed that, although only minimal stereotyping of women as managers was openly expressed by senior managers, few measures for the deliberate inclusion and advancement of women into management were identified. The survey uncovered politically correct women-manager-friendly attitudes among CEO in corporate Mauritius, but practically no affirmative action of any sort.

Though female Labour Force Participation (LFP) in Mauritius has increased relatively to male LFP in the last decades, to the level of the average middle-income country, it remains far below the level usually observed in upper middle-income countries. In general women’s participation in the labour force is 45.5 % against 73.1 % for men. In addition, Mauritius also has a large pool of educated women who do not participate in the labour force, especially among young girls with high academic qualifications.

²²CEO Attitudes toward Women Managers in Corporate Mauritius, Anita Ramguttay Wong, Women In Management Review, Volume 15, Issue 4, 2013

Conscious of the precarious situation of increasing unemployment among women and given Government's commitment to increase female labour participation from 45.5 % currently to 50 % by 2030 (Strategic Plan 2017- 2020 - MOFED, 2017), the **National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (NPCC)** set up in 2017 a Productivity Committee (PC) comprising representatives of public, private and non- governmental organizations, including trade unions, to analyse the situation and propose actions to promote female LFP in the economy.

II.D.9. NETWORKING PLATFORM FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE REGION

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (**COMESA**) introduced a digital networking platform called "50 Million African Women Speak Project" which is jointly implemented by COMESA, the East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS). The aim of the project is to create a virtual platform using mobile phone to facilitate the sharing of trade information within the region. Further, it also seeks to enable women entrepreneurs to network and share business ideas for purposes of enhancing their financial inclusion. The implementation of the Project is underway. The project was launched in Mauritius in September 2018. Each Member state is required to set up a country team comprising five line Ministries. The Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare is the focal point for the project in Mauritius. This project will ensure a network of all women entrepreneurs in the region, enable sharing of experiences and enhancing effective participation and financial inclusion. In 2019 a National Content Developer will be recruited by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare to facilitate sharing of good practices among women entrepreneurs in the region.

In addition, as stated in section II.A.12.A, Government in association with the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) developed a Work Plan to promote Women's Economic Empowerment based on Skills and Capacity Building, Innovation and Technology, Research- Based Initiatives, Networking, Resource Mobilisation and Access to Finance and Market opportunities, and to improve data collection and analysis and promote gender inclusiveness, gender equality and rights of women and girls for a strong, sustainable and balanced growth in the Indian Ocean Rim.

II.D.10. THE PARLIAMENTARY GENDER CAUCUS

In line with international obligations and with commitments taken by Mauritius at the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (Africa Region), a Parliamentary Gender Caucus (PGC) was set up in March 2017 in Mauritius. This initiative is a strong signal of Government's political will for the women's empowerment and gender equality agenda at the highest level of decision-making. The PGC provides a platform for members of the National Assembly from all political parties to discuss on issues and policies relating to women in the society and to come up with concrete solutions. It helps the promotion of women's descriptive and substantive representation. Such a Caucus also serves to ensure that gender equality issues are mainstreamed into legislative and policy processes and within parliamentary processes, as well as to facilitate dialogue within and across parties. Women's caucuses or parliamentary groups are mechanisms that have been created within the parliaments of many countries to strengthen cooperation among women engaged in political life. Such caucuses can bring women parliamentarians together across party lines in effective alliances around a common goal.

The objectives of the PGC are to create a gender-responsive culture within parliament, and a gender network in parliament that takes on board men as well. Its mandates are to:

- i. Conduct periodically gender assessments of various policies across Ministries;
- ii. Conduct research on salient gender issues and provide the findings to relevant Ministries;
- iii. Influence policies to address gender inequalities; and
- iv. Request Gender Focal Points to report periodically on activities aligned to gender mainstreaming strategies.

The PGC is expected to:

- i. establish Cross-Party Cooperation. It unites women parliamentarians from different political parties around issues they all can support, helping them rise above the tensions between parties to fight for women's causes or collaborate on other policy issues; and
- ii. defend women's legislative priorities and increase their influence in parliament. This can have a demonstrable effect on the likelihood of women's issues being discussed in parliament, and ultimately articulated in legislation.

The PGC commissioned in 2017/2018 two studies namely:

- i. Gender Audit in the Civil Service in Mauritius: Follow up Actions; and
- ii. Findings on the Sociological profiling of perpetrators of Domestic Violence in Mauritius; and produced a Gender Equality Briefing Kit.

These have served effectively in shaping views and opinions of parliamentarians and decision makers on the issue of women's empowerment and gender equality, and in enlisting their support and participation on gender mainstreaming programmes in Mauritius.

The Speaker of the National Assembly of Mauritius, who is a woman and an ardent supporter of gender equality and women's empowerment, and who is also the President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Africa Region said at the launching of the PGC: *"The quest for development, democracy and peace is a legitimate aspiration of the people. Indeed, democracy, wealth, prosperity and opportunity for all, irrespective of gender, are tangible measures of the level of development of a nation. Gender caucuses worldwide have common interest. They share a common platform, they are well motivated and they rise above political affiliations in their fight for a common cause"*. The **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)** will be supporting the new Parliamentary Gender Caucus as part of the CPA's Technical Assistance Programme for the National Assembly of Mauritius.

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) was the guest of honour at the launch of the new Parliamentary Gender Caucus in Mauritius and congratulated the Office of the Speaker of the National Assembly for having spearheaded the setting up of the PGC *"which provides a catalyst for the promotion of gender equality across the democratic institutions in Mauritius and also for the implementation of the 2015 Sustainable Development Agenda. The establishment of gender caucuses is a vital ingredient in bringing greater equality between men and women in the daily operations of parliament as a democratic institution. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, through the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network, is committed to promoting gender equality in Parliaments and increasing the representation of women in leadership roles."*

SECTION II-E: PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

II.E.1. INTRODUCTION

One of the distinctive features of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) compared to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is undoubtedly the inclusion of a separate goal, - SDG16- to: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. The determination to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence lies in the fact there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. Wars, conflicts, violence and terrorist attacks are unfortunately jeopardising security, social justice and peace in the world causing billions of wastage and drawbacks to humanity. During the last 5 years we have witnessed sadly a rise in terrorist attacks all over the world; ongoing conflicts in Gaza; the rise of terrorist groups in Iraq, Syria and parts of Africa; several mass shootings and incidents of civil unrest in America; terrorist attacks in France and the UK; and most recently the refugee crises in Europe.

In this particular context, the tourist promotion of Mauritius as a paradise island which “God created first and then heaven; and heaven was copied after Mauritius” as said Mark Twain, retains attention. Mauritius maintained its top position in Africa in 2018 as the most peaceful country on the continent while ranking 20th globally and as one of the ten countries worldwide deemed free from conflict²⁴. The peaceful co-existence of almost 1.3 million people who are multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-lingual has a legendary qualification. However, the social fabric remains fragile and any small incident is liable to spark violent reactions endangering peace and harmony in the population, as in other parts of the world.

Government is fully conscious of the fragility of the social fabric and committed in its “**Government Programme 2015 – 2019 to Achieving Meaningful Change**” to guarantee “security and law and order to the citizens of the country and foreigners as well” and adopted a “*zero tolerance policy*” against “child abuse, rapes, kidnapping, mafias, drug trafficking and abuse to the vulnerable”. The Ministry of Defence and Rodrigues is responsible in Mauritius to “provide efficient, effective and quality services for the enhancement of national security, management and rehabilitation of offenders, and protection and administration of maritime zones, sovereign rights and territorial integrity, for the safety and well-being of the citizens of the Republic of Mauritius”. Mauritius does not involve itself in any armed military conflict with other nations, and does not have a military force. It has a para-military unit at the Police Force to ensure security of individuals internally.

II.E.2. TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

In order to contribute towards an enhanced maritime domain awareness in the region, two agreements pertaining to enhanced state coordination for maritime security in the western Indian Ocean were signed in April 2018 during a ministerial conference hosted by Government of Mauritius and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), and supported by the European Union. The event was convened to

²⁴ Global Peace Index (GPI), Institute for Economics and Peace, September 2018

address common threats like piracy and illegal fishing faced by states in the western Indian Ocean region. These agreements were meant to ensure the exchange and sharing of maritime information through the setting up of a **Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre** (to be based in Madagascar), and State coordinated actions at sea through the setting up of a Regional Centre for Coordination Operations (to be based in the Seychelles). Some 200 representatives, including defense, interior, and foreign affairs ministers from 25 countries and high-ranking officials of multilateral institutions from 15 regional and international organizations having interests or missions deployed in the region, attended the event.

Prior to this in 2017, Government with assistance from Australia set up an **E-platform for Ocean Observatory** to compile data for Marine Spatial Planning. Acquisition of the hardware and software for the Ocean Observatory was finalised in 2018.

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) **Regional Strategy and Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security (2018-2022)** was approved by Mauritius in 2018. It serves as an overall guide to mainstream gender into SADC's peace and security mechanisms and processes in order to address the specific challenges experienced by women and children. Women responsible for defense and security from different sections have been trained by the SADC Regional Peace Keeping Training Centre (RPTC). The training programme has a special module on gender balance and security.

II.E.3. INTERNAL SECURITY

The internal security is assured by the Mauritius Police Force (MPF). It is governed by the Police Act 1974 and is responsible for policing on mainland Mauritius, Rodrigues and other outer islands. It is headed by the Commissioner of Police and is presently composed of about 12,500 Police Officers posted in Divisions and Branches which comprise, among others, an Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU), a Passport and Immigration Office (PIO), paramilitary units, namely the Special Mobile Force (SMF) and Special Support Unit (SSU), an air wing the Police Helicopter Squadron (PHS), a Maritime Air Squadron (MAS) and a naval wing the National Coast Guard (NCG). Security measures have been reinforced all over the island since 2014.

The Mauritius Police Force (MPF) has initiated strong measures in curbing crime in line with its strategic objective of providing for the security and safety of the population and visitors. A special attention is being given to the protection of vulnerable groups, including women, children and elders through measures to outreach victims as well as the strict enforcement of legal provisions. Dysfunctional, broken or disintegrated families are the root causes of crime and any move to foster a healthy family life is tantamount to addressing the crime problem. The MPF is fully engaged in multi-disciplinary actions with other Government departments and the civil society in upholding the family as a fundamental social unit.

The National Security Service and the Counter Terrorism Unit of the MPF are responsible for pre-emptive measures in thwarting any threat to internal security. The threat assessment is reviewed periodically especially in view of events with the potentiality of antagonising actors whether at national or international level. Besides, the increasing number of foreigners on the Mauritian soil *per se* is an emerging challenge to the authorities in monitoring the risk of subversive activities or possible linkages with trafficking in persons.

In order to address new emerging security challenges like *cybercrime, cross-border organized crime, terrorism and trafficking in human beings*, the defense/internal security system has been strengthened. The Passport Immigration Office (PIO) has upgraded its information exchange system and is working closely with regional forces to enhance security and migration management at the Mauritian borders.

The Police Information Technology (IT) Unit and the Cyber Crime Unit work closely with the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation pertaining to the information systems and interoperability and data protection in the context of criminal investigations, respecting fully the human rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined by the Constitution of Mauritius.

In response to the increasing risk of fatal road accidents, a National Road Safety Campaign was launched in 2018. Laws have been amended to increase penalties for offences, including those on women and children. There has not been any serious riot or popular upheaval between 2014 and 2019 that have necessitated police intervention. The U.S. Department of State has assessed Mauritius as being a low-threat location for terrorist activity.

There has been, however, an increase in offences in the country. Offences reported to the police, exclusive of contraventions, increased by around 4% from 45,801 in 2016 to 47,792 in 2017, mainly due to rises in drug offences (+10%) and property offences (+8%). Road traffic contraventions increased by 3%, from 232,862 in 2016 to 240,101 in 2017, mainly due to 'exceeding speed limit' which increased from 86,951 to 93,539. On the other hand, the number of criminal cases lodged decreased by almost 13% from 115,287 in 2016 to 99,885 in 2017.

II.E.4. IMPROVING POLICING AND EFFICIENCY WITH SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mauritius has reached a consensus for improving policing and efficiency with science and technology. Government initiated in 2017 the use of new ICT technologies to better equip the Mauritius Police Force (MPF) and Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport to apply proactive monitoring, early warnings, unified communications, and crisis management. These new technologies are meant to strengthen public safety and optimize transportation and better protect women in public places.

With tourism being one of the major pillars of the Mauritian economy, Government seeks to safeguard Mauritius' reputation as a safe tourist destination. Government has installed in 2018/2019 closed circuit television (CCTV) surveillance systems in major tourist zones as well as in urban areas, and intends to extend the network to other high-risk areas.

Government launched the **Safe City Infrastructure Project** as part of the country's national strategy to transform Mauritius into a safe and stable country and make it the first African nation with integrated safety and intelligence. 4,000 intelligent surveillance cameras have been installed in 2018-2019 in major public areas and along main roads and motorways, pedestrian walkways, and principal traffic centres. Government intends to acquire in 2019, 4,500 trunking smart handsets, 500 trunking vehicle radios and an emergency response system for use by several governmental departments. It is hoped that these new technologies would reduce emergency response time (call taking and dispatching) to less than 15 minutes, improve the emergency handling efficiency by 60 percent, and effectively reduce crime rates.

II.E.5. ADDRESSING DRUG ADDICTION AND TRAFFICKING

Government, in its firm commitment to relentlessly deal with the proliferation of drugs in Mauritius, has taken several important steps to address the problem, including reforms in legislation, the Safe City Infrastructure Project with its 4000 intelligent surveillance cameras, rehabilitation of victims of addiction, and regional and international cooperation. Much, however, still remains to be done to combat drug trafficking and addiction. As announced in the new

Government Programme (2015-2019), Government established in September 2015 a **Commission of Inquiry on Drug Trafficking**. This Commission inquired into the extent of the illicit drug consumption, its economic and social consequences and the availability of new types of drugs, including synthetic drugs. The Commission also investigated the linkages between drug trafficking and money laundering or other financial crimes. After nearly three years of investigations, the Commission submitted its report and made several recommendations to address institutional, legislative, policy and operational issues. A high-level Task Force has been set up to look into the recommendations for immediate actions. A series of tracking down operations are now underway in the country, including the ports of entry. Government announced in 2018 amendments in the Income Tax Act, the Prevention of Corruption Act, the Finance Act 2018 which includes the Business Registration Act, the Civil Status Act and the Immigration Act to ensure severe disciplinary measures and penalties to drug traffickers. With assistance from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mauritius developed a **National Drug Control Master Plan 2019- 2023** which expresses Government’s firm commitment to implement the appropriate drug-control strategies.

At the 62nd Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna, Austria, held between 14-15 March 2019, the Prime Minister of Mauritius specified that special attention needs to be provided to all victims of drug addictions, including the most vulnerable women, young boys and girls who are in need of psycho-social support. *“We want to help them to overcome their addiction. Our ultimate aim is the rehabilitation and social reintegration of drug users. Thus, it is imperative, alongside repressive actions, to develop and implement a health-based and a person-centred approach to support those in need with social and economic measures”*, stated the Prime Minister.

SECTION II- F: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION

II.F.1. INTRODUCTION

There is in general a lack of understanding and clarity about the relevance of gender mainstreaming to environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation. While one is looked upon as constructed social phenomena, the other is linked mostly to natural debacle. And yet the importance of the linkages between environmental security and gender is intrinsic and has been more so evidenced by an array of researches and surveys conducted worldwide. Gender mediates the interactions between human and the environment and influences all forms of environmental encounter, use and impact. The differentiated socio-cultural construction of men’s and women’s roles means that the linkages between people and the physical environment impact differently on both sexes. Undoubtedly, while environmental degradation impacts undistinguishably and invariably to all, it has special implications on the most vulnerable namely women, children and the elderly. Inattention to the different needs and priorities of men and women, and to the disparities between them when it comes to rights and natural resources, are serious barriers to achieving environment and development objectives, and consequently the SDGs. According to the UNDP²⁵ “the degree to which countries have succeeded in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment plays an important role in determining their ability to adapt to climate change and respond to natural disasters.

²⁵ www.undp.org/energyandenvironment/gender.htm, July 2011

The depletion of ozone layers affects all countries indistinctively. Mauritius is affected uniquely as a small island developing state. The difficulties that all countries face in effectively coping with climate change impacts are exacerbated in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) because of their small geographical area, special vulnerabilities, isolation and exposure. According to the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 5th Assessment Report (2013)**, the climate is changing and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are already feeling the impacts and Mauritius is no exception. The air mass around the world and the oceans are warming up at a rapid pace and the impacts of climate change are already being felt in Mauritius: the adverse impacts are being experienced in terms of temperature rise, decrease in rainfall amount, sea level rise, accentuated beach erosion and increase in frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as flash floods.

The associated development challenges from sea-level rise, altered rainfall patterns, and storm-surges threaten to reverse progress made towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Growing successive floods, drought, and cyclones in the past five years have devastated many families in Mauritius, impacting heavily on the life of women and children particularly. According to the **World Risk Report 2018**, out of the 171 countries of the world most exposed and vulnerable to natural hazards, Mauritius is ranked as the 10th country most exposed to natural hazards and 16th country with highest disaster risk. Rising temperatures are exacerbating the problems of coral reef bleaching, soil and beach erosion, and the risk of drought and flash floods, as well as intensifying tropical storms, sea level rise and biodiversity impacts. These changes will affect the majority of key sectors and livelihoods in Mauritius, including agriculture, fisheries and other marine-based resources, tourism and infrastructure.

II.F.2. RISK FACTORS

Climatic change and environmental degradation are likely to increase risks at which women would suffer more. Environmental degradation affects mostly the vulnerable poor who do not live in good housing and sanitary conditions. In fact, there are more female-headed households below the poverty line than male-headed households. This vulnerable situation causes women to use cheaper types of goods and services, exacerbating their vulnerability.

- **Agriculture:** according to the Census of Agriculture of 2014, of the total workers in the agricultural sector in the Republic of Mauritius, 45% were females. Most of them work in low paid jobs in sugar cane fields, tea cultivation and in poultry. Increase mortality in poultry and incidence of pests and crop diseases leading to a decrease in crop productivity, due to heat stress have been observed. A projected reduction in rainfall and an increase in evapo-transpiration may lead to as much as 15 to 25% decline in agricultural production by 2050.
- **Coastal Resources and Tourism:** Accentuated beach erosion has shrunk the width of beaches around certain coastal areas in Mauritius by up to 10 meters over the eight last years. Due to anthropogenic activities and abnormal rise in atmospheric temperature and the resulting frequent variation in climatic patterns, the coral reefs are in a state of

degradation. Sea level has been rising at a rate of 5.6 mm/year since 2003. A projected increase in mean annual temperature extremes coupled with beach erosion can lead to a reduction in tourist arrivals accounting for a revenue loss of up to US\$ 50 million by 2050, and a loss of revenue to women working in hotels and a decrease in supplying the latter with artisanal products.

- **Water Resources:** There has been a decreasing trend in annual precipitation of about 8% compared to the 1950s coupled to an increase in rainfall variability and water scarce periods. Projections indicate that the utilizable water resources may decrease by up to 13% by 2050 if no action is taken to restore catchment areas.
- **Marine and Terrestrial Biodiversity:** In Mauritius, breeding and reproductivity of various plants and animal species are suspected to have already been affected by the changing climate. It is projected that there will be a greater proliferation of invasive alien species at the expense of native species, a decrease in pollinator activity due to shifts in plant phenology and coastal vegetation; turtle nesting, and wader visitation on low lying islets will be affected. Honey production has been drastically reduced in 2018.
- **Fisheries:** Fish mortality suspected to be linked to a rise in sea surface temperature and proliferation of harmful algal bloom, has been observed in certain coastal areas around Mauritius. Due to overexploitation, pollution, habitat destruction and the negative impacts climate change, fish catch in the lagoon has decreased thus threatening the livelihood of men and women depending mostly on artisanal fishing.
- **Human Health:** An increase in frequency of vector borne diseases, particularly malaria and dengue fever, have been observed over the last four years. Climate change may increase the vulnerability of the health sector in the coming decades leading to higher disease burden with associated health cost and impaired socio-economic development in Mauritius.
- **Infrastructure:** “Properties, buildings and roads have been affected or damaged due to flooding, erosion and landslide. For instance, Mauritius Port’s operations was suspended for 10 days in 2014 due to adverse weather conditions leading to USD 54M loss. It is projected that there will be accelerated softening and deterioration of bituminous pavement, surface and thermal cracks to concrete, increased corrosion of steel, scouring of foundations and embankment collapse and damage to buildings and power transmission. Landslides have affected roads and buildings, especially in coastal regions.

The **Meteorological Services (MS)** in Mauritius reinforced its weather forecast office by setting up in 2019 a **Doppler Weather Radar Station** to improve tailor made forecast for the agricultural community and forecast of extreme weather events such as heavy/torrential rain and cyclones. In addition, as an extension of the existing storm surge Early Warning System, the MS plans to install shortly wave rider buoys in specific sites offshore Mauritius for real time monitoring of waves in anticipation of high wave warnings and use of the wave rider data for validation of the storm surge model. Under Africa Adaptation Programme (AAP), the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security set up 7 Agro-meteorological Stations as part of an Agricultural Decision Support System in different regions of the country to provide timely and vital information to planters for a sustainable agriculture.

II.F.3. GOVERNMENT AGENDA ON ENVIRONMENT

In view of the pressing environmental challenges, sustainable and eco-friendly development ranks high on Government's agenda for a cleaner, greener and safer Mauritius. The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development is fully incorporating the gender dimension of climate change in awareness raising activities, targeting as well as involving women as agents of change in its on-going mitigation and adaptation programmes. The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development implemented a **Climate Change Information, Education and Communication Strategy and Action Plan** between *2014 and 2018* to enhance access of information on climate change to the public through awareness raising and education. Over 300,000 people were reached, of whom more than 50% were women, as indicated in Table 11 below. **The Climate Change Information Centre (CCIC)** set up in July 2013 has now a specific section dedicated for gender known as "Gender Mainstreaming and Climate Change". As at October 2018, some *18,700 visitors* accessed the CCIC webpage. A toolkit/booklet was developed in 2019 under the Third National Communication project to build adaptive capacity of women in the community against climate change. The toolkit/booklet includes best practices that can be implemented at household level in line with climate change adaptation principles. Moreover, a Master Toolkit on Vulnerability Assessment and Identification of Adaptation Options for Local Authorities has been prepared to strengthen the internal capacity of both the Councils and their staff to proactively manage the local impacts of climate change. Government envisages to come up with a **Climate Change Bill** and a new **Climate Change Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan, and a National Adaptation Plan** shortly.

TABLE 11: NUMBER OF PEOPLE SENSITISED (2014 - 2018)

| Year | Male | Female | Total |
|------|---------|---------|---------|
| 2014 | 52,060 | 128,563 | 180,623 |
| 2015 | 89,688 | 131,298 | 220,986 |
| 2016 | 244,547 | 245,040 | 489,587 |
| 2017 | 167,480 | 205,770 | 373,250 |
| 2018 | 153,250 | 202,500 | 355,750 |

Source: Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

II.F.4. NATIONAL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT

Women and men perceive, identify and experience disaster risks differently. Though everyone is equally exposed to a hazard, women and men have different levels of vulnerability as well as access to resources, and hence have different coping skills. Various factors, including social, economic, ethnic, cultural and physiological factors, affect not only the way that disasters impact persons, but also their coping strategies and their participation in prevention, relief, recovery and reconstruction processes.

In many countries, including Mauritius, women have limited skills to face major calamities. During disasters, despite their unpreparedness with regard to disaster risk reduction, women often act as responders and bring valuable contribution to disaster and climate risk reduction and recovery. In line with the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act 2016, Government set up a **National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council** to oversee the implementation of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Policy, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Strategic Framework and National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan. The National Council also lays down national guidelines for disaster risk reduction and management at all levels.

Following the serious flash floods on 30 March 2013 in Mauritius, Government set up in 2013 the **National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre (NDRRMC)**. The NDRRMC operates as the main institution in the wake of a disaster for the planning, organization, coordination and monitoring of disaster risk reduction and management activities at all levels. This is done through the **National Emergency Operations Command (NEOC)** which is multi-agency and is activated whenever a disaster or any other major crisis becomes imminent. The NEOC coordinates all actions during the preparedness, response and recovery phases. The **Emergency Alert System (EAS)** will be soon implemented. This should provide a reliable high performance system to disseminate warnings and alerts to a maximum number of people and stakeholders in Mauritius within an acceptable time frame by broadcasting warning and alerting messages through a number of channels such as telecom networks (mobile/landline), television and radio, the Internet (including social media), display signs and public broadcasting systems (e.g. sirens).

In view of ensuring its preparedness and to test its resilience to disasters, the NDRRMC often participates in simulation exercises organized by Local Authorities and local institutions, involving also the participation of women. The NDRRMC participated in the IOWave18 in September 2018 whereby men and women took part in the mock evacuation processes following a Tsunami Warning Alert.

The NDRRMC is continuously involved in awareness creating and capacity building which are organized quarterly in Women's empowerment Centres throughout Mauritius to apprise women of precautionary measures to be taken with regard to hazards such as cyclones, heavy/torrential rain leading to floods, drought, tsunami and landslide amongst others. The **Community Disaster Response Team (CDRT)** Training Programme aims to train participants to gain basic knowledge on disaster preparedness and response skills and as well respond to emergency situations in terms of relief and assistance to vulnerable people/disaster survivors/victims. Participants, including women, acquire basic disaster preparedness and response skills such as Fire Safety, Rope Handling, First Aids, Water Rescue Activities, Basic Camp Management, Team Building, Sand Bagging and other basic techniques applied in emergency situations.

The objectives of the programme are:

- To enlist the effective participation of women in Community Disaster Response Teams (CDRT);

- To sensitize women and inculcate a culture of Risk Reduction in them; and
- To build the capacity of the women to respond to any crisis or disaster prior the arrival of the Authorities.

A total of 15 programmes have been conducted as from 2014 in vulnerable regions, namely: Grand Sables, Fond du Sac, Baie du Tombeau, L’Amitié/Gokoola, Poste de Flacq, Rivière du Poste, Rivière des Galets, Bel Ombre, Canal Dayot, Cité la Cure, Bambous, Vieux Grand Port, Cottage, including Rodrigues and Agalega. 404 participants have been trained out of which there were 179 women and 225 men.

The NDRRMC and the MS organised a joint workshop on 30th May 2019 on ‘**Women’s Empowerment, Disaster Risk Reduction and Enhancing Resilience against Extreme Weather**’. The workshop aimed at empowering women to address the threats and risks that natural and human-induced hazards pose to themselves and their communities and also the need to prime for management of disaster risks to management of disasters.

II.F.5. CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE FOR SMALL HOLDERS IN MAURITIUS

The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development implemented in 2016 a project aiming at an enhanced capacity of relevant institutions to promote climate smart agriculture. The project also consisted of creating awareness on the need to reduce use of agro-chemicals and the promotion of innovative irrigation techniques and farming practices and the promotion of bio-farming to increase the resilience of the non-sugar agriculture sector to climate change and thus contributing to sustainable livelihood. Small holders who work with mostly women were targeted.

A Strategic Plan 2016-2020 for the Food Crop, Livestock and Forestry has also been in 2015 formulated with the overall goal ‘to raise the national food security level by maintaining self-sufficiency’. Compost bins were also distributed to at least 7,000 households and 3,000 Small Planters in Mauritius.

The Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security is encouraging farmers to shift from traditional open field cultivation to innovative and modern food production practices such as sheltered farming equipped with rain harvesting and photovoltaic systems. This is to enable farmers mitigate effects of adverse climatic conditions, improve production capacity and the quality of farm produce, and also attract more young people to the agricultural sector and address the problem of shortage of labour. The Ministry is providing a grant of 50 percent on investment costs up to a maximum of Rs 400,000 (approximately USD 11,175). A crop-loss compensation scheme has been set up to compensate planters from crop loss in the event of any calamity.

In 2018, Mauritius enacted the ‘Use of Pesticides Act’ to regulate, control and monitor the importation and use of pesticides to minimise risks to human health and the environment. Sensitization campaigns have been initiated on the effects of pesticides abuse on health of farmers and on the soil. A Bio-farming Development Certificate with an 8-year tax holiday scheme and exemption from various taxes and duties on importation of bio fertilizer and bio pesticides was introduced in 2016. The creation of the Mauritius Agricultural Certification Body in 2016 provides certification for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). To-date, 28 certifications have been issued to small planters, representing an area of 50.31 hectares.

II.F.6. TRADITIONAL MEDICINES AND BIODIVERSITY FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

Gender has been dealt as a cross-cutting issue in the **National Climate Change Adaptation Policy Framework** for Mauritius. The Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions for Low Carbon Island Development Strategy (NAMA) project implemented by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development takes into account gender aspects and impacts.

Partnership initiatives have resulted in a number of major breakthroughs such as empowerment of women communities, installation of rainwater harvesting systems in Women Empowerment Centres, promotion of medicinal plants with women communities, contribution of women in the national tree planting campaigns and training of trainers' programmes with women leaders to raise awareness on climate change. Moreover, a Master Toolkit on Vulnerability Assessment and Identification of Adaptation Options for Local Authorities has been prepared to strengthen the internal capacity of both the Councils and their staff to proactively manage the local impacts of climate change.

Government with assistance from the UNDP implemented a project involving mangrove plantation and mangrove sensitization campaigns at Primary Schools and Community levels to women along with cultivation of vetiver, cassava, medicinal plants (Ayapana and Citronelle) and seaweed as alternative income-generating activities. This project was successfully implemented and credited for its innovative approach by merging climate change mitigation with income generation and women's empowerment. The project got **UNDP International Recognition for Partnerships and Cross-Sector Collaboration** as an excellent example of innovative solutions to develop economic opportunities to empower women in the community and enhance livelihoods in the wake of climate change mitigation and adaptation. The UNDP showcased the project at the UN Headquarters in New York in the context of the celebrations of the World Environment Day on 5 June 2014.

II.F.7. HOME RAINWATER HARVESTING SCHEME AND SOLAR ENERGY

Under the **2013-2023 Action Plan**, inhabitants are encouraged to adopt rainwater harvesting at residential level with an appropriate incentive mechanism. The objective is to target 25,000 households per year over a period of 10 years. Rs 15 million have been allocated for the implementation of rain water harvesting for local authorities, NGOs and schools (public and private). Rainwater harvesters have been distributed in Women Empowerment Centres and local authorities with advisory services provided by the Agricultural Research and Extension Unit (AREU) to small planters. Additionally, major awareness raising campaigns on water saving have been undertaken through the distribution and installation of water faucet aerators to schools, public as well as parastatal bodies.

The **Solar Water Heater Scheme** (SWH) was implemented in 2016 under 4 phases, with additional grant provided by Government to companies. Rs 700 million has been earmarked in 2019 for the '**Solar Home Project**' comprising the installation of 10,000 roof top solar panels over the next 5 years for low income households in the social tariff category. The Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives launched in 2018 a green scheme namely, the **Solar**

Photovoltaic (PV) Rebate Scheme for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The Scheme aims at offering SMEs the opportunity to produce electricity using solar photovoltaic (PV) technology and shall contribute to fulfilling Government's Long-Term Energy Strategy to increase the share of renewable energy to 35% in the national energy mix by 2025 and maintained at 35% until horizon 2030. A SME would be entitled to a one-off grant of 80% of total cost not exceeding Rs 100,000 for a solar PV installation. These eco-friendly initiatives have contributed to relieve the burden of women both at home and in small businesses.

II.F.8. EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR GREEN BUSINESS

The SWITCH Africa Green (SAG) project is a European Union funded project to support African countries in their transition to an inclusive green economy and in promoting a shift to Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) patterns and practices. UN Environment, in collaboration with the UNDP and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) is implementing the SWITCH Africa Green Project covering 7 pilot countries, namely Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, South Africa, Uganda and Ethiopia. The project has three components: Policy Support, Green Business Development and Networking Facility. The Republic of Mauritius has identified three areas of intervention namely Agriculture, Manufacturing and Tourism and with cross-cutting issues referring to energy and water efficiency, labelling and standards, eco-innovation and sustainable trade.

The Green Business Development component of the project aims at supporting the transition towards an inclusive green economy by providing grants to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Grant projects focus on empowering MSMEs to capture market opportunities for resource efficient green goods and services and support local green entrepreneurs starting up and developing green business ventures in the three identified key sectors.

Two projects specifically targeted women's groups, and aimed at empowering them to create sustainable livelihoods for themselves based on green business ventures, were implemented between 2014 and 2018 in the islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues. The projects were completed in September 2018.

II.F.8.A. Project 1: Empowering the fishers' community for bio-cultivation in Rodrigues (EU Grant funding of 230,500 USD)

The objective of the project was to empower the fishers' community with eco-entrepreneurship skills so that they can set up their own green businesses and diversify the typical Rodrigues' products range.

Around 40 fisherwomen have been provided with training and capacity building to support them in creating sustainable and green alternative livelihoods. They have been trained in the bio-cultivation of Gombava plants and sustainable agricultural practices. They have also benefitted from capacity building exercises for the production of value added agro-products from the Gombava plant. As such, they have developed the necessary skills to produce a range of products from the Gombava extracts including chilli paste, soaps and scents, and herbs. Through these activities and acquired skills the 40 fisherwomen have been empowered to start up their own green business and therefore develop an alternative sustainable livelihood for themselves, especially during off fishing seasons.

II.F.8.B. Project 2: Developing Capacity to adopt Green Businesses (EU Grant funding of 250,000 USD)

The project aimed at exploring green business potential and opportunities in Mauritius and Rodrigues and to support its transition to an inclusive green economy. The main objective was to empower women to engage in eco-entrepreneurship through green and innovative techniques so as to support them to combat poverty.

To this end, training has been provided to around 800 potential entrepreneurs to set up their own green businesses and create sustainable livelihoods. Training programmes have been organised in 8 different sectors ranging from the production of natural soaps and candles from plant extracts, production of herbs and spices, manufacturing of cloth bags and soft toys, as well as the use of natural products in beauty parlours and spa. Different techniques have been explored, including the recycling of textile materials, use of natural products for packaging, use of plants and natural extracts in the production of beauty products, herbs and scents, and also the exploitation of natural products such as plant fibres in the production of handicrafts and decorative materials. These will serve as a stepping-stone to boost the emergence of new businesses which are based on the use of natural products and eco-innovation techniques.

The Networking Facility Component of the project aims to distil and share knowledge, lessons learned and good practices through national and regional networks and programmes creating broader awareness and increased understanding of green business development in the region.

In this context, Awareness Raising workshops were organized between 2014 and 2018 with women in the community to share information, good practices and lessons learned for green entrepreneurship and explore opportunities for green business development. The participants included women entrepreneurs and associations forming part of Small, Medium and Micro enterprises (SMMEs) and cooperative sector which operate in the 3 targeted areas.

The main objective of the workshops was to sensitize women on the concept of Green Economy and Sustainable Consumption and Production practices and provide information on existing enabling conditions to support a transition to a Green Economy. The workshops also aimed at promoting new green ideas and business development opportunities for the empowerment of women entrepreneurs. Around 216 women entrepreneurs attended the workshops. Participants viewed that there was acute need for additional information sharing regarding both supply sources and retail outlets for organic and green agro-products.

- 2 Awareness Raising and Capacity Building Workshops were organized to share knowledge, information and experience on best practices to promote greening of the 3 sectors of intervention, namely Agricultural, Manufacturing and Tourism.
- The 2 target groups for the workshops were the Cooperatives Sector and Women Entrepreneurs. 136 persons trained and sensitized on green skills development in areas such as use of sustainable practices in the agricultural sector; use of natural products as raw materials; resource efficiency in the manufacturing and tourism sectors; use of natural

fibres such as banana leaves for the production of textile materials; and the establishment of linkages to green the supply chain.

Key outcomes of the workshops include the following:

- a. Women and Cooperative societies sensitized on the concept of Green Economy and Sustainable Consumption and Production practices;
- b. Networking amongst women and Cooperative societies established to promote and upscale green entrepreneurship through the adoption of sustainable practices; and
- c. Promotion of new green ideas and business development opportunities for the Cooperatives sector and for empowerment of women entrepreneurs undertaken.

II.F.9. GENDER EQUITY IN THE MARITIME SECTOR

Mauritius is a member of the Association of Women in the Maritime Sector in Eastern and Southern Africa (WOMESA) which is an internationally recognized association spearheading the advancement of women as key resource in the maritime sector and which aims to advocate gender equity, improve women's access to maritime training and technology and promote their advancement to key decision making levels in the maritime sector in East and Southern Africa.

The Association of Women in the Maritime Sector in Eastern and Southern Africa (WOMESA), was initiated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and was launched in December 2007, in Mombasa, Kenya, under IMO's program on the Integration of Women in the Maritime Sector (IWMS).

The Association of Women in the Maritime Sector in Eastern and Southern Africa (WOMESA), is a young association made up of 50 founder members, drawn from 24 countries within the Eastern and Southern African region.

Mauritius hosted the Annual General Meeting of WOMESA Regional in December 2011 whereby the local chapter WOMESA Mauritius was launched. In 2013, the association became a legal entity through its incorporation under the Registration of Association Act of Mauritius. As at today's date, the association has around 35 registered members, from the public sector, private entities and parastatal bodies operating in the port area such as from the Shipping Division of the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, Mauritius Ports Authority, Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd, Taylor Smith Group, Petredec (Mauritius) Ltd, Mauritius Molasses Co. Ltd, Total Mauritius Ltd etc.

From 2015 to 2019, WOMESA organised a series of activities to enhance the participation of women in the male dominated marine sector and is planning to reinforce its presence in the region. It played a major role at the 2nd Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security and the 22nd Plenary session of the Contact Group on Piracy off the coast of Somalia, which was held from 18 to 20 June 2019 and organised by the Indian Ocean Commission and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade of Mauritius.

The Shipping Division of the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping has already achieved gender balance whereby 50% of its staff are female. This clearly demonstrates that the maritime sector is no longer male-dominated as women are also climbing ladders not only to go onboard ship but also in the office climbing the ladders in position of the middle management, top management, senior management and now Director of maritime entities.

II.F.10. WATER AND SANITATION IN MAURITIUS

Water and sanitation are crucial for women's wellbeing, especially for special hygiene care during menstruation, pregnancy and child birth. Currently 2.5 billion people live without access to basic sanitation, and approximately 1 billion practice open defecation, most of them living in rural areas of the world. This sanitation crisis is detrimental not only to women's health but also to their education, dignity, community status, and overall well-being. In Mauritius improved sanitation has largely contributed to their elevated standard of living. All women in Mauritius have access to clean water and proper sanitation.

Government of Mauritius is well aware that safe and sufficient drinking-water, along with adequate sanitation are essential to cope with the effects of climate change and women's empowerment. In Mauritius, raw water is obtained from both surface and ground. The Central Water Authority (CWA) treats raw water to meet both the Drinking Water Standards as per the Environment Protection Act and guidelines for drinking-water of the World Health Organization. The CWA is also responsible for supply and distribution to practically the whole of the population (99%). In order to ensure that the water being supplied conforms to the established norms, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, as enforcing agency for monitoring of drinking-water quality under the Environment Protection Act, conducts independent tests on daily samples collected along the CWA water supply system including potable water treatment plants, service reservoirs, boreholes and distribution systems. As such, Mauritius has a long-established legal and institutional framework to ensure that the women are provided with improved drinking-water supply and improved sanitation. Moreover, national policies for drinking-water and sanitation are largely in place and consistently monitored and reviewed to ensure timely implementation of same.

With a view to ensure proper sanitation throughout Mauritius, all wastewaters are collected and treated and disposed of via either the national sewerage network including trunk sewers and sewage pumping stations, or through on-site disposal systems (septic tanks and leaching fields), and domestic and industrial waste water treatment plants for hotels and industries respectively. In this context, the Wastewater Management Authority was established to implement the Masterplan for wastewater collection and conveyance, treatment and safe disposal in order to protect our aquifers and our other water resources. Accordingly, in line with the stated mission of Government to connect 80% of the population by 2033, the Wastewater Management Authority (WMA) is committed to meet the target set with the completion of the ongoing projects in different regions of Mauritius. In 2019, the waste water system reached 28% of the Mauritian population, and provided service to around 92,000 households throughout the island. The Solid Waste Management Division of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development is responsible for the management, control and supervision of waste disposal sites (transfer stations and sanitary landfill) in Mauritius. Home garbage is collected weekly by authorities all over Mauritius, facilitating the household tasks of women.

SECTION III: NATIONAL PROCESS AND MECHANISM

Government of Mauritius has made several commitments to the progress of women, expressed internationally through UN human rights instruments, Conventions and UN conferences. In the region, through SADC, COMESA and the African Union (AU), Mauritius reaffirmed its commitment to the cause of women and children through south south cooperation. From the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) to the MDGs (2000), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, (Maputo Protocol)(2003) and SDGs (2015), Mauritius has lived up to its commitments and undertook a series of legal, institutional and administrative measures to give women and children due recognition as effective contributors and drivers for change and development. Mauritius has a woman as its first Speaker of the National Assembly in 2014, its first President in 2015, and its first Vice Prime Minister in 2017. This could not have been possible without the conviction and strong belief in the capacity of women by its political leaders.

Government Programme (2014-2019) adheres to the principle that in the development process and financial advancement, national wealth must be equitably distributed. The philosophy of '*développement à visage humain et chances égales pour tous*' shall eminently prevail in all our endeavours. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) developed in 2018 a Gender Strategy to "ensure that gender perspectives and attention are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects". Given the pertinence of the issue of Domestic Violence, the **National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Committee** is chaired by the Prime Minister's Office. This reflects the commitment at the highest level to address the issue of women's empowerment and equal opportunity.

Government **Three Year Strategic Plan (2018-2021)** has Gender Mainstreaming as one of its top ten priorities and aims to strengthen among others social protection, integration, and women entrepreneurship. Specifically, the Strategic Plan aims, *inter alia*, to

- Provide fair, equitable and responsive social protection in a sustainable manner to the citizens of the Republic;
- Empower the poor and the vulnerable groups and promote social inclusion;
- Rank among the top 20 countries under the Social Progress Index, with a score improving from 75.2 in 2017 to at least 85 by 2030;
- Promote gender equality in all socio-economic and political processes and protect the rights of children;
- Move to the top 80 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index by 2030; and
- Attain at least 30 percent representation of women in Parliament by 2030.

The Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (MGECDWF), being the lead agency of the National Gender Machinery (NGM), acts as the policy making and monitoring body for the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies in policies and programmes of all sectors. To that end, the MGECDWF formulated and adopted the National Gender Policy Framework in 2008 which stands as a generic policy document, calling upon all Ministries to mainstream gender in their respective policies and programmes. To ensure effective implementation of the National Gender Policy Framework, Government set up a **National Steering Committee for Gender Mainstreaming (NSCGM)** to ensure that all line Ministries

apply a gender perspective in the design, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their policies and programmes. The rationale, thereof, is to ensure that the practical and strategic needs, concerns and experiences of both men and women are fully integrated in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. It is to be noted and as stated earlier, that a new National Gender Policy (2019-2029) has been developed in 2018.

The NSCGM is composed of senior officers and Gender Focal Points from all Ministries and is chaired by the Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. The committee met 10 times between 2015 and 2018.

In addition, an **Integrated Support Centre** has been launched in 2019 to facilitate tracking of offenders of child abuse and perpetrators of domestic violence and provide assistance on a 24-hours service to the public. The service is supported by the **Regional Domestic Violence Review Committee** and the **Domestic Violence Information System (DOVIS)**, which is a computerised system that helps to monitor, access, record and generate specific reports on cases of domestic violence dealt at the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. A **High Powered Working Together Committee** has been set-up by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare to facilitate and sustain prompt and multidisciplinary actions in reported cases of violence and abuse against children.

Each Ministry has a Gender Focal Point and a Gender Cell which coordinate activities related to Gender Equality and ensure that all programmes are planned and implemented using gender lenses. By the end of 2018, all Ministries, including the newly created Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance, have had their respective Gender Policies. These policies are specific to the needs and mandate of different Ministries and propose specific road maps to each. The latter Ministry developed in 2016 a National Code of Corporate Governance of Mauritius, which provides for the Board of Management of all organizations to have at least one male and one female director.

SECTION IV: GENDER STATISTICS

Both the BPfA and the SDGs have clear cut objectives and attainable targets. Besides clear evaluation and monitoring indicators, there is need to have quality data and statistics, research and studies, to be able to measure gender equality, women's empowerment and the human rights of women and girls. Production of quality data and statistics on gender equality programmes demands a thorough understanding not only of evaluation indicators management, but also a proper understanding of the concept to be evaluated itself. In Mauritius, both are inadequate.

It is acknowledged that Gender disaggregated data collection, gender analysis and gender responsive targets in programmes need to be consolidated in Mauritius. Accordingly, the country is moving towards a "*Gender Data Revolution*" to reengineer the whole mechanism of data collection and information gathering to ensure that gender concerns are integrated into sex disaggregated data. Statistics Mauritius produces quantitative "statistics by gender" which are quite comprehensive and essential but not sufficient to reflect the power relations between men and women, the outcomes of a particular policy, programme or activity for women and men, or changes in the status or situation of men and women, such as levels of poverty or participation. There is a need for impact assessment of gender mainstreaming programmes in general.

There is hence need for an increased investment in the Statistics Office along with increased capacity building for quality data collection on gender and substantially increase resources for the production of a wider range of gender statistics and analysis to effectively monitor and evaluate impact.

APPENDIX 1: SURVEY ON IMPLEMENTATION OF BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION (2014 -2019)

INTRODUCTION

To mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)** and the five years of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare is currently conducting a comprehensive national review of the progress made towards the universal commitments to promote Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The Beijing Declaration has 12 critical areas of concern, namely:

- 1. Women and poverty*
- 2. Education and training of women*
- 3. Women and health*
- 4. Violence against women*
- 5. Women and armed conflict*
- 6. Women and the economy*
- 7. Women in power and decision-making*
- 8. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women*
- 9. Human rights of women*
- 10. Women and the media*
- 11. Women and the environment*
- 12. The girl-child*

The 2030 Agenda dedicates a specific goal to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (SDG 5, Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) with targets that resonate strongly with the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA).

In order to harmonise the BPfA and the SDGs, and for ease of reporting, the 12 areas of concern have been clustered into 6 headings, namely:

1. INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, SHARED PROSPERITY AND DECENT WORK
2. POVERTY ERADICATION, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SERVICES
3. FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, STIGMA AND STEREOTYPES
4. PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GENDER- RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS
5. PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES
6. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION

Each Cluster has a series of questions which we are requesting you to answer. While addressing the questions you are required to provide details of concrete examples of measures taken by your Ministry, Department/ Institutions, including aims and scope of measures taken, target population, budget, impact evaluations, lesson learnt, and links to further information. Please also provide information about actions for specific groups of women and girls, e.g. women in remote areas, women living with disabilities, with HIV/AIDS, with diverse Sexual orientations, young girls etc. wherever relevant and possible. Please provide data to support your responses. Each question has indicators to help you answer. You may not necessarily stick to these indicators. Feel Free to add any issues you feel pertinent to be included in the report.

QUESTIONS

CLUSTER 1: INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, SHARED PROSPERITY AND DECENT WORK

1. What actions has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to advance gender equality in relation to women's role in paid work and employment?

INDICATORS

- Strengthened / enforced laws and workplace policies and practices that prohibit discrimination in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in the public and private sectors, and equal pay legislation
 - Introduced / strengthened gender-responsive active labour market policies (e.g. education and training, skills, subsidies)
 - Taken measures to prevent sexual harassment, including in the workplace
 - Strengthened land rights and tenure security
 - Improved financial inclusion and access to credit, including for self-employed women
 - Improved access to modern technologies (incl. climate-smart technologies), infrastructure and services (incl. agricultural extension)
 - Supported the transition from informal to formal work, including legal and policy measures that benefit women in informal employment
 - Devised mechanisms for women's equal participation in economic decision-making bodies
 - Other
2. What actions has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work and promote work-family conciliation?

INDICATORS

- Included unpaid care and domestic work in national statistics and accounting (e.g. time-use surveys, valuation exercises, satellite accounts)
- Expanded childcare services or made existing services more affordable
- Expanded support for frail elderly persons and others needing intense forms of care
- Introduced or strengthened maternity/paternity/parental leave or other types of family leave
- Invested in time- and labour-saving infrastructure, such as public transport, electricity, water and sanitation, to reduce the burden of unpaid care and domestic work on women
- Promoted decent work for paid care workers, including migrant workers
- Conducted campaigns or awareness raising activities to encourage the participation of men and boys in unpaid care and domestic work
- Introduced legal changes regarding the division of marital assets or pension entitlements after divorce that acknowledge women's unpaid contribution to the family during marriage
- Other

3. Has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department introduced austerity/fiscal consolidation measures, such as cuts in expenditure or public/ private sector downsizing, over the past five years?

YES/NO

If YES, have assessments on their impact on women and men, respectively, been conducted?

- Yes, their impact on women/men was estimated before measures were put in place.
- Yes, the impact was assessed after measures were put in place.
- No, the impact on women/men has not been assessed.

If YES, please describe the findings (1-2 pages).

CLUSTER 2: POVERTY ERADICATION, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

4. What actions has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?

INDICATORS

- Promoted poor women's access to decent work through active labour market policies (e.g. job training, skills, employment subsidies, etc.) and targeted measures
- Broadened access to land, housing, finance, technology and/or agricultural extension services
- Supported women's entrepreneurship and business development activities
- Introduced or strengthened social protection programmes for women and girls (e.g. cash transfers for women with children, public works/employment guarantee schemes for women of working-age, pensions for older women)
- Introduced/strengthened low-cost legal services for women living in poverty
- Other

5. What actions has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to improve access to social protection for women and girls?

INDICATORS

- Introduced or strengthened social protection for unemployed women (e.g. unemployment benefits, public works programmes, social assistance)
- Introduced or strengthened conditional cash transfers
- Introduced or strengthened unconditional cash transfers
- Introduced or strengthened non-contributory social pensions
- Reformed contributory social protection schemes to strengthen women's access and benefit levels
- Improved access to the above for specific populations (e.g. women in informal employment, including domestic workers; migrant and refugee women; women in humanitarian settings)
- Other

6. What actions has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?

INDICATORS

- Promoted women's access to health services through expansion of universal health coverage or public health services
- Expanded specific health services for women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health services, mental, maternal health and HIV services
- Undertaken gender-specific public awareness/health promotion campaigns
- Provided gender-responsiveness training for health service providers
- Strengthened comprehensive sexuality education in schools or through community programmes
- Provided refugee women and girls as well as women and girls in humanitarian settings with access to sexual and reproductive health services
- Other

7. What actions has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls?

INDICATORS

- Taken measures to increase girls' access to, retention in and completion of education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development programmes
- Strengthened educational curricula to increase gender-responsiveness and eliminate bias, at all levels of education
- Provided gender equality and human rights training for teachers and other education professionals
- Promoted safe, harassment-free and inclusive educational environments for women and girls
- Increased access to skills and training in new and emerging fields, especially STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and digital fluency and literacy
- Ensured access to safe water and sanitation services and facilitated menstrual hygiene management especially in schools and other education/training settings
- Strengthened measures to prevent adolescent pregnancies and to enable adolescent girls to continue their education in the case of pregnancy and/or motherhood
- Other

CLUSTER 3: FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, STIGMA AND STEREOTYPES

8. In the last five years, which forms of violence against women and girls, and in which specific contexts or settings, have you prioritized for action?

INDICATORS

- Intimate partner violence/domestic violence, including sexual violence and marital rape
- Sexual harassment and violence in public places, educational settings and in employment
- Violence against women and girls facilitated by technology (e.g. cyber violence, online stalking)
- Femicide/Feminicide
- Violence against women in politics

- Child, early and forced marriages
 - Female genital mutilation
 - Other harmful practices
 - Trafficking in women and girls
 - Other
9. What actions has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department prioritized in the last five years to address violence against women and girls?

INDICATORS

- Introduced or strengthened violence against women laws, and their enforcement and implementation
 - Introduced, updated or expanded national action plans on ending violence against women and girls
 - Introduced or strengthened measures to increase women's access to justice (e.g. establishment of specialist courts, training for the judiciary and police, protection orders, redress and reparations, including for femicide cases)
 - Introduced or strengthened services for survivors of violence (e.g. shelters, help lines, dedicated health services, legal, justice service, counselling, housing)
 - Introduced or strengthened strategies to prevent violence against women and girls (e.g. in the education sector, in the media, community mobilization, work with men and boys)
 - Monitoring and evaluation of impact, including evidence generation and data collection, including regarding particular groups of women and girls
 - Introduced or strengthened measures for improving the understanding of causes and consequences of violence against women among those responsible for implementing measures on ending violence against women and girls
 - Other
10. What strategies has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department used in the last five years to prevent violence against women and girls?

INDICATORS

- Public awareness raising and changing of attitudes and behaviours
 - Work in primary and secondary education, including comprehensive sexuality education
 - Grassroots and community-level mobilization
 - Shifting the representation of women and girls in the media
 - Working with men and boys
 - Perpetrator programmes
 - Other
11. What actions has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls facilitated by technology (online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)?

INDICATORS

- Introduced or strengthened legislation and regulatory provisions
- Implemented awareness raising initiatives targeting the general public and young women and men in educational settings

- Worked with technology providers to set and adhere to good business practices
- Other

12. What actions has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media?

INDICATORS

- Enacted, strengthened and enforced legal reforms to combat discrimination and/or gender bias in the media
- Introduced binding regulation for the media, including for advertising
- Supported the media industry to develop voluntary codes of conduct
- Provided training to media professionals to encourage the creation and use of nonstereotypical, balanced and diverse images of women and girls in the media
- Promoted the participation and leadership of women in the media
- Established or strengthened consumer protection services to receive and review complaints about media content or gender-based discrimination/bias in the media
- Other

13. Has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken any action in the last five years specifically tailored to address violence against specific groups of women facing multiple forms of discrimination?

YES/NO

If YES, please list them and provide up to three concrete examples of measures taken, including aims and scope of measures taken, target population, budget, impact evaluations, lesson learnt, and links to further information. Please also provide information about actions for specific groups of women and girls.

CLUSTER 4: PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS

14. What actions and measures has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?

INDICATORS

- Reformed constitution, laws and regulations that promote women's participation in politics, especially at decision-making level, including electoral system reform, adoption of temporary special measures, such as quotas, reserved seats, benchmarks and targets
- Implemented capacity building, skills development and other measures
- Encouraged the participation of minority and young women, including through sensitization and mentorship programmes
- Provided opportunities for mentorship, training in leadership, decision-making, public speaking, self-assertion, political campaigning
- Taken measures to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish violence against women in politics
- Collected and analyzed data on women's political participation, including in appointed and elected positions

- Other

15. What actions has your country, Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)?

INDICATORS

- Strengthened the provision of formal and technical vocational education and training (TVET) in media and ICTs, including in areas of management and leadership
- Taken measures to enhance access, affordability and use of ICTs for women and girls (e.g. free wifi hubs, community technology centres)
- Introduced regulations to advance equal pay, retention and career advancement of women within the media and ICT field
- Collaborated with employers in the media and ICT field to improve internal policies and hiring practices on a voluntary basis
- Provided support to women's media networks and organizations
- Other

16. Do you track the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting)?

YES/NO

If YES, what is the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women?

Please provide information on the specific areas in which these resources have been invested as well as reflections on achievements and challenges encountered in making budgets gender responsive.

17. As a donor country, does your country track the proportion of official development assistance (ODA) that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting)?

YES/NO

Not applicable

If YES, please provide further information on the methodology, the scope of tracking, past trends and current proportion of investments.

18. Does your country have a valid national strategy or action plan for gender equality?

YES/NO

If YES, please list the name of the plan and the period it covers, its priorities, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5.

If YES, has the national action plan been costed and have sufficient resources been allocated to its achievement in the current budget?

19. Does your country have an action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women?

YES/NO

If YES, please provide some highlights of the action plans and timeline for implementation.

20. Is there a national human rights institution in your country?
YES/ NO

If YES, does it have a specific mandate to focus on gender equality or discrimination based on sex/gender?

If YES, please provide up to three examples of how the NHRI has promoted gender equality.

CLUSTER 5: PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

21. What actions has your country, Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?

INDICATORS

- Adopted and/or implemented a National Action Plan on women, peace and security
- Integrated women, peace and security commitments into key national and inter-ministerial policy, planning and monitoring frameworks
- Used communication strategies, including social media, to increase awareness of the women, peace and security agenda
- Increased budgetary allocations for the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda
- Taken steps to reduce excessive military expenditures and/or control the availability of armaments
- Re-allocated funds from military spending to social and economic development, including for gender equality and the empowerment of women
- Supported inclusive and gender-sensitive conflict analysis, early warning and prevention mechanisms
- Other

22. What actions has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peace building, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?

INDICATORS

- Promoted and supported women's meaningful participation in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements
- Promoted equal participation of women in humanitarian and crisis response activities at all levels, particularly at the decision-making level
- Integrated a gender perspective in the prevention and resolution of armed or other conflict
- Integrated a gender perspective in humanitarian action and crisis response
- Protected civil society spaces and women's human rights defenders
- Other

23. What actions has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?

INDICATORS

- Implemented legal and policy reform to redress and prevent violations of the rights of women and girls
 - Strengthened institutional capacities, including of the justice system and transitional justice mechanisms as applicable, during conflict and crisis response
 - Strengthened capacity of security sector institutions on human rights and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse
 - Increased access of conflict-affected, refugee or displaced women to violence prevention and protection services
 - Taken measures to combat illicit arms trafficking
 - Taken measures to combat the production, use of and trafficking in illicit drugs
 - Taken measures to combat trafficking in women and children
 - Other
24. What actions has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child?

INDICATORS

- Taken measures to combat negative social norms and practices and increased awareness of the needs and potential of girl children
- Strengthened girls' access to quality education, skills development and training
- Tackled disadvantages in health outcomes due to malnutrition, early childbearing (e.g. anemia) and exposure to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases
- Implemented policies and programmes to reduce and eradicate child, early and forced marriage
- Implemented policies and programmes to eliminate violence against girls, including physical and sexual violence and harmful practices
- Implemented policies and programmes to eradicate child labour and excessive levels of unpaid care and domestic work undertaken by girl children
- Promoted girls' awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life
- Other

CLUSTER 6: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION

25. What actions has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies?

INDICATORS

- Supported women's participation and leadership in environmental and natural resource management and governance
- Strengthened evidence and/or raised awareness about gender-specific environmental and health hazards (e.g. consumer products, technologies, industrial pollution)

- Increased women's access to and control over land, water, energy, and other natural resources
- Promoted the education of women and girls in science, engineering, technology and other disciplines relating to the natural environment
- Enhanced women's access to sustainable time- and labour-saving infrastructure (e.g. access to clean water and energy) and climate-smart agricultural technology
- Taken measures to protect and preserve the knowledge and practices of women in local communities related to traditional medicines, biodiversity and conservation techniques
- Taken steps to ensure that women benefit equally from decent jobs in the green economy
- Monitored and evaluated the impact of environmental policies and sustainable infrastructure projects on women and girls
- Other

26. What actions has your Ministry/ Institution/ Department taken in the last five years to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation?

INDICATORS

- Supported women's participation and leadership, including those affected by disasters, in disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation policies, programmes and projects
- Strengthened the evidence base and raised awareness about the disproportionate vulnerability of women and girls to the impact of environmental degradation and disasters
- Promoted access of women in situations of disaster to services such as relief payments, disaster insurance and compensation
- Introduced or strengthened and implemented gender-responsive laws and policies related to disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation (e.g. disaster laws addressing vulnerability of women in disaster)

APPENDIX 2: POLICE REPORT (2014-2018)

| POLICE FAMILY PROTECTION UNIT (PFPU) | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|----------|-------------------------------------|----------|---|----------|---|----------|--|------------|
| Total no. of cases reported by PFPU by nature of problem & district, January 2014 to September 2018 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| S N | Nature of problem | January to December 2014 | | January to December 2015 | | January to December 2016 | | January to December 2017 | | January to September 2018 | |
| | | Whole Island | | Whole Island | | Whole Island | | Whole Island | | Whole Island | |
| | | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| 1 | Physical Abuse: | | | | | | | | | | |
| a. | Assault | 387 | 3,653 | 372 | 3,407 | 415 | 2,908 | 146 | 1,408 | 123 | 988 |
| b. | Burns | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| c. | Biting | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| d. | Pulling Hair | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | <i>Total Physical abuse</i> | 387 | 3,653 | 372 | 3,409 | 415 | 2,911 | 146 | 1,409 | 123 | 991 |
| 2 | Psychological abuse: | | | | | | | | | | |
| a. | Ill-treatment | 93 | 409 | 98 | 289 | 104 | 310 | 94 | 281 | 63 | 185 |
| b. | Extra-marital affair | 78 | 170 | 94 | 175 | 71 | 182 | 76 | 153 | 69 | 96 |
| c. | Humiliation | 9 | 17 | 4 | 10 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 12 | 3 | 10 |
| d. | Intimidation | 4 | 15 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 16 | 7 | 12 |
| e. | Isolation | 28 | 25 | 13 | 6 | 9 | 16 | 1 | 12 | 14 | 11 |
| | <i>Total Psychological abuse</i> | 212 | 636 | 214 | 486 | 190 | 519 | 176 | 474 | 156 | 314 |
| 3 | Verbal abuse: | | | | | | | | | | |
| a. | Swearing | 163 | 650 | 154 | 517 | 121 | 568 | 134 | 501 | 140 | 573 |
| b. | Insulting | 16 | 86 | 14 | 93 | 49 | 144 | 37 | 154 | 23 | 109 |
| c. | Harassment | 109 | 238 | 91 | 292 | 125 | 367 | 80 | 276 | 116 | 254 |
| | <i>Total Verbal abuse</i> | 288 | 974 | 259 | 902 | 295 | 1,079 | 251 | 931 | 279 | 936 |
| 4 | Sexual Abuse (Sodomy, Taking indecent photograph, forcing to see pornographic film etc) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 4 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|------------|------------|
| 5 | Financial Constraint (drunkenness, gambling, irresponsible etc) | 63 | 192 | 62 | 170 | 50 | 165 | 61 | 104 | 43 | 94 |
| 6 | Damaging Properties in the house | 6 | 45 | 6 | 32 | 6 | 22 | 6 | 24 | 5 | 9 |
| 7 | Threat to commit 1 - 6 | 70 | 367 | 59 | 348 | 69 | 356 | 63 | 235 | 26 | 172 |
| Other Offences: | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Abandoning conjugal roof | 5 | 16 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 27 | 15 | 9 | 15 |
| 2 | Abandoning Pregnant Wife | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | Bigamy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | Breach of P.O | 21 | 294 | 26 | 282 | 37 | 345 | 31 | 256 | 20 | 237 |
| 5 | Care & custody of child | 82 | 105 | 52 | 95 | 75 | 80 | 88 | 90 | 47 | 65 |
| 6 | Conflict with brother/sister | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | Conflict with children | 0 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| 8 | Conflict with girlfriend/boyfriend | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | Conflict with husband | 0 | 14 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 33 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | Conflict with in laws | 0 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 44 | 3 | 28 |
| 11 | Conflict with neighbour | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 12 | Conflict with parents | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 13 | Conflict with partner | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 14 | Conflict with relatives | 32 | 86 | 0 | 0 | 35 | 110 | 58 | 168 | 104 | 556 |
| 15 | Conflict with wife | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| 16 | Divorce procedure | 16 | 28 | 9 | 8 | 27 | 31 | 33 | 46 | 13 | 30 |
| 17 | Failing to pay alimony | 1 | 180 | 5 | 153 | 2 | 153 | 3 | 87 | 0 | 68 |
| 18 | Family Abandonment | 30 | 11 | 52 | 24 | 17 | 15 | 12 | 4 | 6 | 6 |
| 19 | Personal Belongings | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|
| 20 | Property Problem | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 21 | Teenage Pregnancy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Other | 35 | 71 | 22 | 33 | 21 | 68 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | Total Other offences | 229 | 817 | 174 | 610 | 227 | 823 | 282 | 770 | 203 | 1,008 |
| | GRAND TOTAL | 1,256 | 6,684 | 1,146 | 5,964 | 1,252 | 5,877 | 985 | 3,952 | 835 | 3,528 |

M-Male

F-Female

APPENDIX 3: LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS REPORT

1. Prime Minister's Office, Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit.
2. Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
3. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
4. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities
5. Ministry of Defence and Rodrigues
6. Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands
7. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
8. Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport
9. Ministry of Health and Quality of Life
10. Ministry of Arts and Culture
11. Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development
12. Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
13. Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security
14. Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection
15. Attorney General's Office, Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reform
16. Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
17. Ministry of Youth & Sports
18. Ministry of Tourism
19. Ministry of Business, Enterprise, and Cooperatives
20. Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
21. Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
22. Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training
23. Ministry of Housing and Lands
24. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance
25. Municipality of Curepipe
26. Municipality of Beau Bassin / Rose Hill
27. Municipality of Quatre Bornes
28. District Council of Moka
29. District Council of Savanne
30. District Council of Flacq
31. Electoral Commissioner's Office
32. Mauritius Prison Service
33. Mauritius Police Force
34. National Women Entrepreneur Council
35. National Children Council
36. National Women Council
37. Mauritius Alliance of Women
38. Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association
39. Association for Population and Development
40. Institut Cardinal Jean Margeot
41. Public Officers Welfare Council