

Responses on “Women’s Empowerment and the link to sustainable development”.

Question (i) : What measures have been taken to strengthen normative, legal and policy frameworks for the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

- Pursuant to this Government’s commitment taken at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 to achieve the set targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, several initiatives have then been taken by the Government in ensuring that gender permeates within its strategies, policies and programmes.
- To that end, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare benefitted from the financial assistance of the European Union, in 2018, for the preparation of the Gender Equality Bill which shall be introduced to the National Assembly shortly. The objectives of the Gender Equality Bill, are to:
 - (i) promote, protect and regulate gender equality in public and private spheres.;
 - (ii) eliminate gender based discrimination, ensure that human rights of men and women are guaranteed and acknowledged in the existing and newly enacted legislation in order to achieve gender equality;
 - (iii) provide for gender equality principles that are aimed at reducing socio-economic inequalities with aim of achieving substantive equality in all spheres thus socially, economically and politically;
 - (iv) Provide for equal opportunities for both men and women and create responsibilities of all entities-public and private to eliminate barriers that lead to gender discrimination;
 - (v) eliminate existing discrimination on the basis of gender in particular discrimination against women based on their gendered roles;
 - (vi) promote equality and gender balance between family roles –unpaid care work and employment for men and women to improve the status of women particularly in working life outside the home;
 - (vii) prohibit discrimination on the grounds of gender and sexual orientation;
 - (viii) promote Gender mainstreaming and integration in national development;
 - (ix) monitor implementation of the law by government agencies and to ensure that both public and private entities comply with the law; and
 - (x) provide for special /positive measures to be undertaken to ensure gender equality.
- Moreover, the implementation of the gender equality agenda in the Republic of Mauritius is based on the 2008 National Gender Policy Framework. However, in the last 10 years, there has been significant conceptual and operational changes at international, regional and community level on the gender equality agenda, suggesting new cost-effective strategies and highly replicable transformational interventions that countries ought to consider to accelerate realization of gender

equality by 2030. Building on this framework and with the support of the UNDP (Mauritius), a new National Gender Policy for the period 2020-2030 is being finalised, the purpose of which is to have principal guidelines that will underpin the Government’s commitment to integrate gender into all development planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It also provides the basis upon which every sector, department and non-state actors will be guided to develop their gender policies for implementation at the sectoral and institutional levels.

- The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, as the National Gender Machinery, has, since 2016, been focusing its campaign on SDG 5 “Achieve **gender equality and empower all women and girls**” In fact, the Ministry has retained the slogan “**Championing Goal 5 of the SDGs**” as its motto for all its interventions at policy and programming levels as well as in its IEC campaigns.

Question (ii): What actions and investments have been made for financing gender equality and the empowerment of women?

- The implementation of policies related to women’s empowerment and gender equality is funded from the Government’s budget through the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare. The budgetary allocations for women’s empowerment and gender equality during the period 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 are as follows:

S/N	Items	2018/2019(000)M	2019/2020(000)M	2020/2021(000)M
1.	Budget voted for the Ministry	Rs495,400 USD 14,154 (based on exchange rate of Rs 35 per USD)	Rs471,000 USD13,457 (based on exchange rate of Rs 35 per USD)	Rs 403,000 USD 10,333 (based on exchange rate of Rs 39 per USD) Note: Decrease due to effects of COVID-pandemic)
2.	Budget for Women’s empowerment and gender equality	Rs 171,229 USD4,892 (based on exchange rate of Rs 35 per USD)	Rs 177,550 USD 5,073 (based on exchange rate of Rs 35 per USD)	Rs141,700 USD3,633(based on exchange rate of Rs 39 per USD)

- This overall budget is inclusive of emoluments for staff, running costs for its infrastructure and other administrative costs as well as the financing of the National Women’s Council and the National Women Entrepreneur Council, which are two parastatal bodies operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare. The responsibilities of these bodies are to implement activities for the social, economic and political empowerment of women as well as entrepreneurship development.

- Pursuant to the bold vision of this Government to embark on a transformative journey by recognising the role and participation of women as key drivers in the socio-economic developmental processes, a specific pillar on Gender Mainstreaming was included in the Budget Speech 2018/2019, as well as for the very first time a Chapter dedicated to Gender Issues in the Government's Three- year Strategic Plan for 2018/2019-2020/2021. Other flagship initiatives, include *inter alia*, the following:
 - (a) The inclusion of a Gender Statement in Ministries' Annual Report;
 - (b) The sustained capacity and capability development of Senior Officials of Ministries in dealing with gender issues and
 - (c) The provision of a budgetary allocation of US\$6,666 (based on exchange rate of Rs 30 per USD) made to five Ministries, on a pilot basis in the budget 2016/2017, which has been extended to all Ministries since 2017/2018. This initiative has indeed enabled Ministries to implement projects specific to women's empowerment.

Question (iii): What steps have been taken to bolster women's leadership and women's full and equal participation in decision-making in all areas of sustainable development?

- For the very time in history, a woman has been designated as Chief Whip of the National Assembly; whilst another woman has been appointed as Second Deputy Governor at the Bank of Mauritius.
- Under the UNDP Country Programme (2017-2020) - Pillar 1: Inclusive development and public sector efficiency, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare organised a Training of Trainers Programme entitled 'L.E.A.D': 'Leadership, Empowerment, Advocacy and Development' from 11 – 13 November 2019. The objective, thereof, was to develop a pool of trainers who will be equipped with the skills required for conducting training programmes on leadership for women. The training programme was facilitated by Ms Richa Dhar, International trainer from India. Some 20 trainers are presently conducting training sessions with the womenfolk at community levels.

Question (viii): What steps have been taken to improve gender –responsive data collection in the context of follow- up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to track and monitor the gender specific impacts and response measures to the COVID- 19 pandemic?

The UNDP Office(Mauritius) is in the process of conducting a study on the socio-economic impacts of COVID 19, that will include a segment on the gender implications of the pandemic on women. The findings, thereof, will enable the Government, including non-state actors to take appropriate measures.