

MINISTRY OF GENDER EQUALITY AND FAMILY WELFARE

Inputs on the implementation of UNGA Resolution 74/235 entitled 'Women in Development'

S/n	Issues:	Measures taken
1	<p>Para. 3, bullet 7: Supporting women's entrepreneurship, expanding existing women-owned and led micro, small and medium enterprises and facilitating opportunities for new women entrepreneurs</p>	<p>The National Women Entrepreneur Council (NWECC), a parastatal body under the aegis of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare has been providing support and assistance to both potential and existing women entrepreneurs in order to inculcate the right business culture for women empowerment in Mauritius.</p> <p>Since October 2018, the NWECC has adopted a new strategy where a Membership Card has been issued to all registered and active women entrepreneurs. As at December 2021, some 975 women entrepreneurs have been registered with the NWECC and were engaged in the following sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agro Business Sector (Cultivation, Farming, Agro Processing, Foodstuffs, Rodriguan Specialties, Potted Plants etc) • Handicraft (Dreamcatchers, Paper Quilling, Copper Souvenirs, Glass Blowing products, Fancy Jewellery, Candles, Basketry, Pyrography, Glass & Fabric Painting, Flower Arrangement, Handmade cards, Woodcraft, Patchwork, Bags, Eco Bags, Embroidery, Paintings etc) • Textile (Garments, Bedsheets, Table mats, napkins, Tablecloth, Smock Dress, Kitchen amenities, cushions, Curtains, etc) • Services (Pre Primary Schools, Hairdressing, Beauty Care, Travel Agency, IT consultants, Training school, Laundry, Cleaning, Catering, Trading, etc) <p>In order to promote the economic empowerment of women and encourage the development and growth of women entrepreneurs, the NWECC has sustained its programmes in terms of:</p> <p>1. Business Counselling Business Counselling is provided on a continuous basis to women entrepreneurs as regards the steps required in the setting up a business, facilities offered by supporting institutions, financial facilities available to entrepreneurs and drafting of business plans amongst others.</p> <p>2. Skills Development Programmes</p>

Skills Development Programmes are organised in the fields of Digital marketing, ICT, Leadership, Business Management, Marketing, Quality Management, Adult Literacy for Entrepreneurship Development, Finance and Costing amongst others on a regular basis to better equip women entrepreneurs to manage their enterprises.

3. ICT Digital Marketing Programme

The National Women Entrepreneur Council in collaboration with the National Computer Board is providing ICT-based capacity building programmes to women entrepreneurs in view to promote a gender-inclusive digital services. In an effort to face the challenges of the COVID 19 pandemic, Women Entrepreneurs are being trained on use of social media as an integral part of their marketing strategies.

4. Talks and Sensitisation Campaigns

Regular talks on promotion of women entrepreneurship are conducted in Women Empowerment Centres, Social Welfare Centres and Community Centres throughout the island on a monthly basis.

5. Marketing Assistance

A Market Centre is the sales and marketing outlet of the NWEC for promoting and selling local crafts made by women entrepreneurs. Registered members of the NWEC are given the opportunity to display and sell their products in the shop.

6. Organisation of Trade Fairs/Sales Exhibitions

Trade Fairs/Sales Exhibitions are organized on a regional basis across the island to enable women entrepreneurs to promote and sell their locally made products, meet potential buyers, contract orders as well as create opportunities for those facing marketing problems.

7. ICT Laboratory

The NWEC has set up an ICT Laboratory at the National Women Development Centre, Phoenix. The ICT Laboratory consists of 10 personal computers and other informatics materials in order to provide facilities and upgrade the skills & knowledge of women entrepreneurs in Information Technology. Basic IT Courses as well as training social media have been organized for women entrepreneurs.

8. Business Hub

A "Business Hub" was launched for its members at the National Women Development Centre, Phoenix. The objectives are to:

- Enhance services offered by the National Women Entrepreneur Council,
- Provide facilities to women entrepreneurs such as WIFI and IT services,
- Act as a platform for networking among women entrepreneurs and
- Provide space to conduct meetings among women entrepreneurs and business partners.

9. Business to Business Meeting

The Business-to-Business Meeting provides a unique opportunity to Women Entrepreneurs to showcase their innovative, quality and locally made products and also a platform to enable potential Buyers and Sellers to interact and develop healthy business relationships.

New Projects:

- **50 Million African Women Speak Platform**

The NWECC is responsible for the implementation of the project. Two Business Development Officers from the NWECC have been nominated as National Focal Points for follow up on the project in terms of uploading of information on the platform, marketing activities and other programmes.

- **National Strategy and Costed Action Plan for Women Entrepreneurship Development in Mauritius**

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare with the collaboration of the NWECC is proposing to hold national consultations for the drafting of a National Strategy and Costed Action Plan for Women Entrepreneurship Development with the objective to rethink on the concept of Women Entrepreneurship from a new perspective and come up with legislative, institutional, and policy measures that are responsive to women's strategic needs and aspirations, thereby enlarging the scope of this sector.

Update regarding financial support to women entrepreneurs by the development Bank of Mauritius

Women Entrepreneur Scheme

Purpose: To support any project by women entrepreneur excluding trade, transport, construction & related projects.

Features:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Maximum loan amount of Rs 500,000 ii. Interest rate of 0.5% per annum iii. Moratorium period up to a maximum of 1 year iv. Repayment period up to 7 years including moratorium period v. Security as per bank’s requirement: General floating charge <p>Back yard gardening Purpose: To meet costs of setting up a backyard/ rooftop garden. Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Maximum loan amount of Rs 100,000 ii. Interest rate of 0.5% per annum iii. Moratorium period up to a maximum of 6 months iv. Repayment period up to 4 years including moratorium period. v. Security as per bank’s requirement: General floating charge <p>New financial support to Women Entrepreneur Following Budget 2021/22, the DBM has extended the Interest Free Loan Scheme of Rs100,000 and the COVID-19 Special Support Loan Scheme of Rs1 million to Women Entrepreneurs who have been impacted by COVID-19.</p> <p>The Interest-free Loan Scheme of Rs100,000 is repayable over a period of 8 years including a moratorium of 5 years.</p> <p>The COVID19 SME Support Loan Scheme of Rs 1 million carries a concessionary interest rate of 0.5% and is repayable over a period of 5 years including a moratorium of 1 year. No collateral is required for the two loan facilities.</p>
2	<p>Para. 3, bullet 8: Preventing and eliminating all forms of violence, sexual harassment and discrimination against women and girls, including in the world of work, and addressing the increase in gender-based violence during the COVID-19 period.</p>	<p>In the context of the current global COVID-19 pandemic, Mauritius as many States took urgent steps to combat the national pandemic of gender-based violence against women with particular focus on domestic violence, by ensuring ‘Peace at home’ during lockdown and integrating the elimination of discrimination and gender-based violence against women in the COVID 19 recovery phase and beyond.</p> <p>Taking into consideration the number of reported cases of gender-based violence, in January 2020, a High-Level Committee on the Elimination of Gender Based Violence, was set up under the chairpersonship of the Honourable Prime Minister with a view to address existing gaps at the legislative, institutional and operational levels. Subsequently, the National Strategy and Action Plan of the High-Level Committee on the Elimination of Gender-Based Violence in the Republic of Mauritius was also launched in November 2020. The key elements of the National Strategy revolve around having a shared understanding of the nature and</p>

extent of GBV in Mauritius, the commitment of multiple stakeholders, strengthening of the existing legislative and policy framework, capacity building of stakeholders; and a strong monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

To curb the spread of the virus, the Government of Mauritius declared a National Lockdown with school closures, social distancing and confinement. However, this resulted in increased risks to women and girls in different forms like sexual exploitation and abuse at homes; exposure to domestic violence, neglect; increase anxiety and stress resulting in psychological distress and reduced access to vital family and care services.

Despite the curfew order, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare adopted a series of new measures to continue to promote and defend the rights of women and address the issue of domestic violence. The following services have continuously been provided to women and girls in distress:

- a) 24/7 toll free (139) services to report any case of violence against women together with a pool of Family Welfare and Protection Officers of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare deployed around the island to provide prompt assistance to women and girls in need of emergency accommodation from distressful situations.
- b) Availability of a Gender- Based Mobile Application “Lespwar” to act as a rapid response system to victims of gender-based violence hence ensuring their safety by giving priority and enhanced access to support services at the touch of a button for those at risk.

Other measures to address gender-based-violence

1. Protection from Domestic Violence Act

In 1997, a Protection from Domestic Violence Act was enacted to protect spouses from domestic violence. Subsequent amendments were made in the Act in 2004, 2007, 2011 and in 2016, further amendments were brought to the legislations to reinforce protective services to victims of domestic violence.

2. Provision of emergency accommodation

Presently, there are 4 NGOs, namely SOS Femmes, Chrysalide, Passerelle and Safe Haven which provide emergency accommodation to victims of domestic violence and their children. These NGOs received grants to provide accommodation to women victims of domestic violence and their child/children.

3. Integrated Support Centre

The Integrated Support Centre was launched on 08 March 2019 by the Hon. Prime Minister to ensure prompt intervention in cases of domestic violence. Through the use of technology, hotline 139 for domestic violence is now being attended to through four parallel digital phone lines. The system 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.

4. Collaboration with Police

The Ministry of Gender Equality has already initiated actions to collaborate with the Police Department to respond to cases of domestic violence. During the confinement period, we have witnessed immediate actions taken by the Police to hold perpetrators accountable for their acts. We are pursuing further to finalise this collaboration.

5. Awareness-raising campaigns

Awareness-raising campaigns are important to sensitise the public at large on the scourge of domestic violence and to inform them on the services available. This Ministry used to conduct awareness-raising campaigns using its network of social welfare centres, women centres and community centres. For a greater impact, this Ministry is making use of innovative IEC strategies, for example, broadcasting of clips on MBC TV, social media, radio and other technologies.