

**THE
NATIONAL
GENDER
POLICY
FRAMEWORK**

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Foreword



**Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family
Welfare & Consumer Protection**

It is indeed with much pleasure that my Ministry is launching this revised National Gender Policy Framework on the occasion of International Women's Day 2008.

The Government of Mauritius has committed itself to the principles of gender equality since the Beijing Platform for Action that urged Government action for an efficient institutional mechanism aimed at integrating a gender perspective in all policies and programmes.

My Ministry, as the lead agency of the National Gender Machinery, has, therefore, deemed it imperative to revisit the 2005 National Gender Policy (NGP) to make it more responsive to the present challenges in the context of globalisation and liberalisation.

The new NGP is first and foremost a generic policy document, drafted in line with programme-based budgeting and performance management initiatives of the Government, that calls upon various entities to take ownership of the process of designing their own respective gender policies using a participatory approach.

The updated NGP framework provides the broad operational strategies and institutional arrangements for achieving gender equality. It also stands guided by principles of human rights, human-centred sustainable development, partnership and accountability, amongst others,

It is my earnest wish that different stakeholders inspire themselves and remain guided by this framework to formulate their respective gender sensitive policies so that gender is mainstreamed in an effective and sustainable manner at the national level.

J. Seefun

Draft National Gender Policy Framework for Mauritius.

Vision

A society in which all girls and boys, women and men live together in dignity, safety, mutual respect, harmony and social justice; thrive in an enabling environment in which they are able to achieve their full potential, in full enjoyment of their human rights; are equal partners in taking decisions to shape economic, social and cultural development, in determining the values that guide and sustain such development and equally enjoy its benefits.

I. Purpose

The National Gender Policy Framework outlines Mauritius' vision for gender equality and women's empowerment. Its vision encapsulates the different outcomes expected of a state in which there is gender equality. It is results-oriented and sets out in broad terms how to translate that vision into reality



A generic policy document.

It is a generic policy statement. It gives clear signals to all stakeholders that achieving gender equality is an objective integral to all sectors of national activity, in line with national values and international commitments.

It provides a philosophical framework, general guiding principles, values, norms of conduct and standards to attain while adopting a gender perspective in order to achieve gender equality. It sets out why there needs to be a gender policy, what it involves and who should be responsible for it.

The national policy framework gives a basic understanding of the concept of gender and sets out the reason why there should be a gender approach to all development interventions. It provides a framework for developing further this understanding and for building consensus over gender-sensitive policy and practice across the whole gamut of development interventions. In this sense it also acts as a handbook, and provides the tools to justify and also apply policy.



An overarching national policy framework to develop sector-based and organisation-specific policies

The national gender policy framework does not cover different sectors. There are gender issues that are specific and unique to a sector, organisation or agency. Each sector and agency has to be responsible for and take ownership of the development of their own policy.

The national gender policy framework provides the overarching framework and principles which the various entities within the public sector, as well as private and civil society organisations can draw on to produce their own more detailed policy documents, programmes and codes of practice in an inclusive manner engaging relevant stakeholders.



An unfinished agenda for gender equality.

The National Gender Policy Framework acknowledges and builds on past achievements and ongoing national efforts to achieve gender equality. Over the last two decades there has been much legal activism in that area and much progress has been made.

This updated national gender policy framework is based on awareness that there is still an unfinished agenda for achieving gender equality. Further progress can be facilitated but it can be also made more difficult by what has already been achieved.

The successful work on the legislative front across many critical domains can create the perception that the near achievement of formal equality is sufficient to ensure actual equality in terms of opportunity and outcomes. Moreover, the mechanisms to translate legislative provisions into systematic and adequately resourced implementation that yields the desired outcomes are still weak. The actors actively applying a gender perspective are in a minority and isolated across sectors and within organisations.

Gender relations are dynamic. They can be transformed within a relatively short period, often partly as a result of targeted interventions, as unintended consequences of other interventions and by changes in social and economic conditions, all interacting in complex ways. The new conditions can themselves create further heightened expectations about what constitutes desirable gender relations, changes the norms and the standards of what is to be expected of relations between men and women. The pattern of changes and expectations can be uneven. Among gender advocates, who have championed much of the legislative and regulatory measures, the expectations can evolve rapidly. Socio economic changes and shocks have also transformed behaviour

and mind sets. Such changes have often been spearheaded by women, who have transformed their fertility behaviour in over a decade in the 1969s and 1970s and have broken down resistance to -their albeit lower paid and more precarious- factory work outside the confines of home and shattered the family model of the sole male breadwinner during the 1980s.

But many changes are not yet very broad-based or far-reaching. There is still much work left to do to uproot deep-seated causes of gender inequality, to change behaviour and to shift mindsets and attitudes regarding what gender relations should be and to create the conditions for women's empowerment.

In order to respond to changing gender relations and socio economic conditions, sector-specific policy documents and accompanying action plans need to be more frequently reviewed and adjusted to keep track of these developments, assess the progress already made and take steps to make further progress.



An updated gender policy framework.

The new updated gender policy framework has also been developed because the previous gender policy and action plan validated in 2005 has been overtaken by a changing policy and institutional environment. It is now an opportune moment to translate international commitments made in regard of gender equality, the ensuing supportive national legislation and relevant policy objectives into more effective implementation.

The current processes of globalisation and liberalisation are transforming the way economic, social and cultural life is organised everywhere in the world and in Mauritius. The erosion of trade preferences in the sugar and textiles sector has already affected livelihood prospects of women and men in different ways, subjecting them to global market turbulences.

There are now far reaching policy and institutional reforms under way. They seek to alter the way government shapes and conducts its core missions and relates to other institutional actors such as the private sector and civil society. These reforms are the

shift towards programme-based budgeting and new performance management systems and human resource development strategies in the public sector. Such technical and operational changes will require changes in institutional culture and mind-sets towards a results and performance-driven approach. The management of such transformations presents significant challenges, even when a progressive and iterative approach is taken.

A performance-based budgeting system seeks to align state budgets and programmes more closely to policy priorities. Apart from this greater effectiveness, it also aims to achieve greater efficiency and economy in public sector actions. Ministries and agencies have to be more transparent about and accountable for what they will spend on, for what purpose, and with what results. They need also to take steps to understand what factors lead to or inhibit performance and to take appropriate corrective measures in the light of such knowledge and information.

Such an integrated planning and budgeting system, particularly as it is focused on development outcomes, creates appropriate conditions for implementing results-oriented strategies to achieve gender equality, for learning from practice how to improve on these strategies and for reporting on progress achieved.

However, at the same time, the drive for efficiency and economy in public financial management can pose threats to the gender equality agenda, as state expenditure can correct for and mitigate gender-based disadvantages. Private markets are not inherently egalitarian and are certainly not risk-free. The basis for state or public action in conditions of liberalisation have to be carefully examined and asserted.

In the absence of a widely-endorsed policy framework for guiding public interventions -for including gender analysis in the changing institutional and technical routines from the outset- gender equality can be ranked as a low priority.

The new national gender policy framework clearly and firmly sets out what is expected of state and para-statal agencies in the development of and shift to performance based systems and how to make them gender-responsive in the process.

It also gives guidance to non state agencies and institutions about how to foster a gender-sensitive culture in their organisations, become more gender-responsive in their

own actions and become more proactive in ensuring that states are accountable to their commitments taken in regard to gender equality and that citizens- girls and boys, men and women- are able to claim their rights.

II. Guiding principles of the National Gender Policy Framework.



Based on the realisation of human rights:

The National Gender Policy Framework is derived from the national constitution and the human rights instruments- treaties, conventions- that the Republic of Mauritius is party to at the global, regional and sub-regional levels. Mauritius has ratified the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW]. As an overarching convention, the CEDAW informs and is compatible with other human rights instruments, which cover all dimensions of human development, security and well-being –economic, social, cultural, environmental. The commitments made to universal human rights mean that women’s rights are human rights and that customary, cultural and religious practices need to be subject to the **right to gender equality**.

The National Gender Policy Framework has also been guided by the commitments made at all the United Nations international conferences on Women and in particular to the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action in 1995. Mauritius is party to the 1997 SADC Declaration on Gender, its 1998 Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children, the African Union Declaration on Gender Equality signed in 2004 and the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender Equality 2005-2015. It has signed and ratified the Protocol on the Rights of Women of the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights in 2005.



Millennium Development Goals action framework.

Mauritius is also a signatory to the Millennium Declaration. The Millennium Declaration makes clear that the Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] are underpinned by economic, social and cultural rights. The National Gender Policy Framework subscribes to the development orientation enshrined in the MDGs. The

MDGs consolidate the conclusions reached during the major international conferences of the last two decades and encapsulate minimum standards to attain across major domains of human development. It is clear that significant advances have already been made in Mauritius in respect of almost all the generic and global MDG targets set by the international community. But the goals themselves have not been attained. And the development approach of the MDGs constitutes good practice. Public action has to focus on sustainable human development, on poverty eradication in all its dimensions and on inclusive development processes. For economic growth is a means, not an end in itself.

More importantly, the goals, targets and indicators embody an **outcome-based and holistic approach to development**. These commitments mean that state action has to be oriented towards the achievement of development goals and need to be people-oriented. Each country can set nationally-owned and progressively higher, more refined and relevant targets for each of the goals, review them periodically as well as report on progress made. For instance, where universal enrolment rates for education have been attained, such as in Mauritius, targets can now be set for educational achievements, not just enrolment.

The National Gender Policy Framework does not only refer to the third MDG goal, Achieving Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. All the other seven goals, concerning poverty, education, health, environment and partnerships for development have to be gender-responsive. This is because it cannot be presumed that women and men face the same situation in these domains, and that all women and all men face the same situation. When framing strategies and outcomes in these sectors and thematic areas, the gender differences, disparities and issues have to be taken into account.



Accountability for Outcomes.

Rights entail corresponding duties and obligations. State parties who have made commitments to human rights become duty-bearers who have an obligation to meet their commitments and are accountable for progress made. All sectors need to apply a gender lens to the diagnosis of their sector. They need to consider how the achievement of gender equality supports their own sectoral objectives. They need to put in place

mechanisms that ensure that their interventions at the very least do not lead to greater inequality between women and men and at the most actively promotes gender equality and achieves tangible results.

All Ministries and Dgencies need to refer to the gender-responsive elements of the conventions, treaties, conferences, MDG goals and relevant to their sector when developing their strategies, programmes, budgets, monitoring and evaluation frameworks.



Human-centred and outcome-oriented.

The National Gender Policy Framework invites all sectors and institutions to focus on outcomes and impacts relating to the lives and livelihoods of human beings, as citizens who are holders of rights. This focus on the active realisation of human rights involves starting from an examination of the situation of individuals and societal cells such as households and families; keeping sight of the transformation desired in this situation on the basis of development rights, values and standards; steering the policy, planning and budgeting process accordingly and evaluating the effectiveness of government intervention to achieve this transformation at each point of the process.



A gender perspective is necessary and adds value.

There are four interrelated reasons why such a people-oriented, outcome-based focus needs to have a gender perspective.

First, a people-oriented human centred- development approach cannot be abstract.

- It has to be concrete and focus on, and make a difference to actual, real people.

- Individual people are unique and cannot be presumed to be the same. There is great diversity.
- There are known differences innate to real people. They are first of all identified, classified and socialised as either women or men¹. Then comes all “embodied” variables of differences, such as age, colour, “race” and ethnicity.
- But then there are differences based on economy, society, culture, religion, location, geography, environment, climate. These differences between women and men depend on different contexts, can change over time. These changes may be dependent on a number of factors.
- Some of these differences may be great, some may be small. Some may be meaningful, some not. They need to be identified, assessed and interpreted.

Second, people cannot be considered as isolated, unrelated individuals, leading parallel unconnected lives.

- They live in society, form relationships and groups.
- These relationships are at the basis of how society and the economy is organised. It is this social cooperation and interdependence which makes possible a division of labour, resources, responsibilities and power.
- Relationships between women and men are the basis of this social and economic organisation, whether in the family, household, and other institutions. The division of work, resources, responsibilities and power are along gender lines.

¹ Persons of the male or female sex are invariably brought up to become boys and girls, men and women and men but some exceptionally may decide to live and be considered as women or men and undergo so-called “sex change” operations

- The nature of the relationships between women and men depends on many factors and change according to different contexts. These cannot be presumed to be symmetrical, equal or harmonious. They can be coercive, exploitative or abusive.
- Because of this relationship, what affects one individual can affect the other, indirectly. But again this cannot be presumed to be symmetrical between women and between men.

Third, what women and men, of all ages and in different contexts, can make of their lives depend on their situation:

- The activities they do, whether paid or unpaid,
- The resources they use,
- The power they have to make decisions, to control assets and dispose of them.
- The rights, the entitlements they have and actually enjoy.
- The obligations they face, whether implicit and explicit.
- The norms, rules and values they live under, whether implicit or explicit.
- There can be differences in these dimensions of women and men's situation, which need to be identified. The differences can stem from the relationships among them. There can be much diversity in these situations.
- These dimensions are closely interlinked and have to be examined together to reveal whether there are interlocked patterns of opportunity, or disadvantage or deprivation: For example, what activities people can do depend on what assets they have, what obligations they face and what the dominant values are concerning activities and obligations.

Fourth, public action, through government policies, regulation, programmes and budgets intend to have an impact on the situation of women and men. There is a need to understand their situation and take into account the differences and relationships. This is the case because :

- The policies and budgets will have an impact on different individuals and groups differently even when there is no intention of discrimination, exclusion or preference.
- These relationships among people will affect how individuals can benefit from and can respond to policies, programmes and budgets, will affect whether they are able to respond to opportunities and are able to overcome blockages and constraints.
- This in turn will have implications for success in achieving policy objectives.
- The policies can explicitly aim to identify and reduce inequalities among different groups, and discrimination against such groups. Differences on the basis of sex, age, colour, and ethnicity cannot be grounds for discrimination. Nor can disparities and inequalities in assets, resources, activities, obligations continue to be source of unequal capacities and opportunities and well-being.

Gender analysis involves creating data, information and knowledge about these conditions to inform policy-making. Gender-responsive policy-making means being informed by such context-specific knowledge about gender relations in order to shape and implement policy which aims to change the situation.



Development value.

The attainment of gender equality and the need to be gender-responsive have both **intrinsic and instrumental values** and purposes.

Gender equality has an intrinsic value. Equality and equity are valued as such, in their own right.

A gender perspective can also have an instrumental value. Applying a gender perspective can help to achieve other objectives, such as education, economic development and health, adequate nutrition. It makes sense to have a gender

perspective when there are differences and relationships among individuals whose lives, capacities, livelihoods and well-being are targeted by sectoral programmes.

The National Gender Policy Framework for Mauritius places an intrinsic value as well as an instrumental value on the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment.



Substantive as well as formal equality.

The National Gender Policy Framework is based on the understanding that formal equality is not tantamount to substantive equality. It calls for an **explicit analysis of the substantive and real conditions facing women and men** in any development situation.

Development actors and practitioners cannot assume *a priori*, that they are treating everybody the same, without distinction of sex, age, family status, colour, religion, ethnic affiliation and sexual orientation.

This is because **treating people as if they were the same, when in fact they are not**, can cause bias, prejudice and *de facto* discrimination. What is important is not just intention but actual outcomes. The unintended outcome can be perverse. It can lead to a violation of human rights and a state of disempowerment, exclusion, deprivation and injustice.

There is therefore an obligation to engage in knowledge-based policy-making, to find out what the situation of women and men are, rather than assume that it is irrelevant to do so. It involves the integration of a gender perspective at all stages of the policy process.

A **supposedly neutral** approach may in fact be biased in favour of men and may expect that women conform to patterns of behaviour which are in fact usual male patterns and which are treated as the norm. It cannot be assumed that all women face the same conditions as men in the public sphere and that they benefit from the same privileges and facilities as men in the private household or family sphere. This is

particularly so because historically women have been assigned to the private family sphere usually under men's control, while the public sphere has been and continue to be a male domain. Policies which lead to bias against women are based on an implicit or explicit assumption that the man is the money earner in the workplace and the woman is the consumer in the home and as the physical bearer of their children, is also their carer and their parents' carers, and that all men and women live these conjugal lives throughout their lives. In substance and reality, these arrangements may be diverse, and may be evolving rapidly. When these arrangements do exist, they may tend to perpetuate the existing inequitable relationships between women and men.

Equality of treatment only prevails when the existence of differences, disparities, and the nature of gender relations have been examined and relevant measures are then taken to ensure equality in terms of opportunity and in terms of outcomes.

It prevails also when steps are taken to confront stereotypes about what men and women can and should do and which limit their potential.

It means that state and non state actors have to ensure that they have taken steps to understand the situation of women and men in their respective domains, both in terms of their objective situation and in terms of their subjective insights and perspective into their own situation.

Gender differences among men and among women.

The National Gender Policy Framework operates under the principle that **women, as men, cannot be treated as a homogeneous category**. This principle needs to inform all policies and programmes in order to make them gender-responsive. Differences among women and among men based on ethnicity, sexuality, disability, age that are more embodied on the one hand and other more socio economic variables –

education, marital status, income, health, location- should not be overlooked. Policies and programmes, which want to develop a more finely targeted approach have to be sensitive about the differences among men and among women when addressing other issues: The experience of poverty and the dynamics leading to poverty may not be the same for women and men. But not all women and not all men are poor. Ageing and disability is not experienced in the same way by women and men. But equally, the situation of young and elderly women is not the same, of married and unmarried women is also not the same.

This principle means that all sectoral interventions have to be sensitive to gender differences, which include differences among men and among women.

Moving from disempowerment to empowerment.

There are at the same time enduring **similarities in the situation of women** as a social group, which arise from a combination of economic, political and social structures and from the deep-rooted values and entrenched ideologies about gender relations and gender identity which continue to sustain the disempowerment of women. A situation in which there is gender inequality is one in which women are disempowered to some extent or other over all aspects of life, in private and public spheres, including in sexual relations.

Some of the powerful indicators of these across the world are the low share of women in decision-making instances, the prevalence of gender-based violence and sexual violence, the rising share and prevalence of HIV/AIDS among younger women the unequal share of unpaid work and caring obligations, the persistent income gap and lower returns to education for women. The gap may be not as severe in different contexts but always exists.

Such similarities provide the rationale for initiatives designed to reverse past gender discrimination and historically accumulated and cross cutting disadvantages. The National Gender Policy Framework recognises that there is an existing state of gender relations which disempowers women.

There is a need to stimulate change in social and economic structures but also in mindsets, attitudes and beliefs of individual women and men. Both contribute to sustain gender inequality.

It cannot be presumed that if there is formal equality, the resulting outcomes are just, are the result of innate differences and disparities which cannot be changed or are the result of choices and options made freely. This is because it cannot be presumed that existing activities that women and men perform, the mutual arrangements they make, the responsibilities and obligations they take are out of free choice, if the conditions which make this choice really free do not exist. These conditions are both objective and subjective and concern adequate resources, capacity, autonomy, power, lack of fear and enabling norms and values. There must be the real substantive possibility to make other choices, rather than the one actually made, for that particular outcome to be the result of “**free choice**”.

Norms concerning women’s obligations and women’s place are so entrenched that they are often perceived as “natural” often by women themselves, rather than cultural and amenable to change. Challenging the norms individually can pose great personal risks of ostracism and violence. Individual women may sacrifice self-esteem and personal safety for their social acceptance, their material security and those of their children.

The National Gender Policy Framework thus encourages the **creation of spaces for questioning and rethinking assumptions**, for challenging existing norms, stereotypes, double standards and cultures of silence, for addressing controversial issues such as over sexual and reproductive rights, for changing values and mindsets, for dialogue and negotiation about such gender-responsive transformation.

Gender relations, like culture, are not static. They are not predetermined by nature and biology. They are dynamic and amenable to transformation. These spaces are sites where culture is expressed, created and transmitted: the home, school, the media, work spaces, clubs, specific fora and events for dialogue and debate.

Empowerment is a process and a state of being which has many interrelated dimensions: It means the “**power to**”: having the capabilities to do and act. It means the

“power with”: the ability to work together with others, to derive strength from acting together. It also depends on the **“power within”**: the confidence and self-esteem to form, voice and assert opinions, seek, make and accept change and act without fear.

Empowerment does not mean, indeed it challenges, a negative and destructive power and control over others, such as gender-based and sexual violence

There are enduring similarities in women’s situation, across cultures and over time, which arise out of the nature of the social relations between women and men and not their respective biological characteristics. Such **gender-based disadvantages are interlocked**. They cut across dimensions of human development, such as capacity, opportunity, security and well-being:

- Gender-based violence disempowers women, incapacitates them, damages their health and well-being and also lowers performance and productivity in the work place.
- Despite high or higher levels of educational performance, women do not achieve appropriate recruitment, promotion, remuneration as compared to men.
- Women continue to have a marginal presence in political and economic decision-making instances, despite these higher levels of capability, because of deeply entrenched norms and attitudes which condition their own behaviour and that of men.
- Current wage gaps between women and men entail lower pensions for women in later life and persisting patterns of economic dependence and insecurity in old age for women.
- The unequal division between paid work and unpaid work between women and men, the unequal sharing of family and household maintenance and caring obligations between them are a manifestation of the power of men to privately impose such obligations on women and of the social and economic arrangements and cultural norms which perpetuate this situation (employment practices, fiscal policies).
- This unequal division of unpaid work and of caring obligations has ramifications across many sectors, economic, political as well as social. It sustains the financial dependence of women on men. It contributes to the unequal distribution of work, reward and leadership between them, and the unequal enjoyment of leisure and cultural pursuits by both men and women

Practically, it means that there must be resources devoted for affirmative action and for the empowerment of women in order to create the conditions for equality of opportunity and outcome.

A coordinated, cooperative approach among sectors.

Applying an outcome-oriented approach means acting from the understanding that one issue can have many different root causes and any one intervention can lead to a wide range of potential impacts.

Further, there is a recognition that the **MDG goals, and human rights, are interrelated**: one contributing to and thus dependent on the achievement of the other; one action can contribute to the achievement of more than one goal and several interlinked actions across sectors may be needed to make progress towards achieving one goal.

The national gender policy framework thus promotes a **co-operative approach** among sectors towards achieving gender equality. Achieving gender equitable outcomes involves different multi-pronged interventions from different sectors. These outcomes concern gender equality in the related dimensions of capacity, opportunity, security, - including bodily integrity-, and well-being. The fundamental reason is because issues of gender - and for that matter, any development outcome which concern human beings and how they relate to each other - cut across sectors. The dimensions of human development are interwoven. They present different patterns for women and men because of the unequal conditions of partnership between them.

A coordinated, cooperative and overarching approach is needed to address these issues effectively in an integrated and focused manner. It presents significant challenges with organisational cultures and technical mindsets that are narrow and sectoral.

Taking into account unpaid, non –market work and achieving gender-equitable work-life balance.

The National Gender Policy Framework is based on an understanding that the **social and economic dimensions are mutually supportive**. Women's and men's contributions in both spheres, how one sphere contributes to the other, has to be explicitly accounted for, recognised, valued and become more balanced. Time spent caring for children and loved ones has two dimensions. It is valued for its own sake. But such unpaid work together with domestic tasks and household maintenance is also part of social reproduction, without which economic production cannot take place and without which the social fabric that sustains families, communities and psychological well-being cannot be maintained. While it yields benefits to the recipients and the wider society, the unpaid, taken for granted, work generates costs for the carer, usually women, in terms of activities and prospects sacrificed and potential unfulfilled over a lifetime. These interactions have to be considered in a holistic way in crafting development interventions designed to achieve both social and economic transformation in a gender-balanced manner. Men and women have rights and responsibilities in both spheres and family responsibilities cannot be ascribed to women only. Achieving work-life balance and gender balance in both spheres are both sides of the same coin. Such an understanding has to permeate social and economic policies.

III. Broad operational strategies for achieving gender equality.

This part of the National Gender Policy Framework applies the guiding principles developed in the preceding part to operational strategies and practices to achieve gender equality.

All sectoral entities and organisations are invited to refer to the normative frameworks they have adhered to and show demonstrable, transparent commitment to the attainment of standards, achievement of development goals and objectives and those pertaining to gender equality.

Rights-based

This commitment to a rights-based framework carries an obligation of conduct as well as an obligation of results: how to carry out interventions and allocate expenditure equitably and what to seek to achieve. Both obligations focus on elimination of de facto discrimination and on substantive equality.

All state and parastatal entities need to develop a strategic framework to guide resource mobilisation and the allocation of these scarce resources and to inform the regulations they put in place. In reviewing/developing this strategic framework in the context of switching to a medium-term expenditure framework[MTEF] and performance-based budgeting[PBB], they need to specify the policy framework concerning gender equality and women's empowerment in their respective sectors, consider their responsibility to implement effectively legislation and plans of action concerning gender equality, in order to guide resource allocation..

A gender-responsive strategic framework for resource allocation and service delivery. First steps: Situation analysis and impact assessments.

The strategic framework needs to take into account the development issues and challenges in these sectors and domains. The policy cycle has to start with confronting existing policies and interventions with this situation analysis to ensure their continued relevance. *Are the policies themselves relevant?* It involves a situation analysis of

women and men. It establishes the relevance of taking into account gender issues and considering them as sectoral development issues, starting from a rights-based, user or client perspective. The answers to find are whether the interventions target populations and whether there are differences among women and men in activities, rights, assets, decision-making, responsibilities in the sector in question, which can have a bearing on the attainment of objectives and can lead to the formulation of further gender-related objectives. The absence of policy is in fact a de facto policy, which supports the status quo. So there is always by default a policy approach, which carries costs as well as possible benefits.

The situation analysis creates a baseline from which to develop outcome objectives, regarding what changes are targeted in this situation and what can realistically be achieved with the financial and other resources which can be mobilised.

It is good practice to engage in **gender analysis** of a development situation. Gender analysis does not assume that there are no differences between individuals and that those differences do not matter. Gender analysis systematically seeks to identify whether there are and what are the differences among individuals and examine the relationships among them. It also seeks to uncover the underlying reasons for these differences in order to develop appropriate means to address gender gaps and the factors leading to them. It takes into account the perceptions and priorities of both women and men in identifying development issues and challenges and working out effective and equitable ways of addressing them.

Best practice also involves carrying out a **gender-sensitive review and impact assessment** of past policies, programmes and budgets as well as of prospective policies. *What should be the priorities? Where are allocations directed actually? How to re-align allocations?* Looking at the human implications of any programme can highlight the differences between women and men, and thus the potential differential impacts. The questions to ask and formulate answers for are, whether the policies and interventions have contributed to worsen, reduce or leave the state of gender inequality the same not only in the sector but across sectors. For the same reason, it is good practice to, before the event, consider the possible impacts of intended policies on different individuals and groups, and not only to identify the impacts after the

intervention. Relevant policies are different ways of collecting revenue and of financing expenditure because they are not neutral in their implications for women and men, in particular poorer women and poorer men.

One instrument which can be used is environmental impact assessments [EIA]. They can be enlarged to contain explicitly the likely gender impacts of proposed developments.

Using Gender-responsive information and statistical systems.

Such knowledge-based and information-based policy making process has to be supported by information and statistical systems which are themselves engendered. This means that the design, collection, treatment, analysis of surveys and questionnaires and other instruments of producing such information and **micro data** on individuals and households has to be gender-sensitive. A user-producer nexus of such information needs to include gender expertise.

A basic principle is **that information concerning individuals has to be kept disaggregated by sex, but also by other relevant variables**, such that the relevant gender gaps can be identified and related to other variables. This applies to micro data as well as **administrative data**, produced by organisations in the context of delivering goods and services and providing transfer payments. This data has to be kept disaggregated up to the level of central entities and not just at the establishment level of organisations.

Disaggregation by sex is one component of a gender-responsive information system. Gender-specific information, such as the number of complications following abortions, or the incidence of prostate cancer cannot be disaggregated by sex. Data concerning collective infrastructure- such as road and transport systems cannot also be disaggregated by sex, but gender-relevant information can be collected about who uses and who has effective access to transport, as well as how long it takes to travel and for what purposes. Needs can be different and priorities can be different among women and men, by virtue of their roles, responsibilities and life patterns which are shaped by their relations in the household, at work and in other spheres.

Micro data and administrative data also need to be disaggregated to the lowest possible level of decision-making and to take into account the differences in contexts and the fact that women as men cannot be treated as a homogeneous category. It cannot be assumed that what applies in one area can be generalised to other areas: the situation of women and men in Rodrigues island and Mauritius island, of urban, peri-urban and rural areas and districts cannot be presumed to be the same, because location interacts with other economic and socio cultural variables, and can produce different profiles and patterns of exclusion, substantive discrimination and opportunity.

Such an information system is important for policy formulation, programming and budgeting, monitoring and impact assessment purposes.

Micro data and administrative data need to be combined to assess whether the interventions are effective, how to develop them and how much they cost, and therefore to identify relevant performance indicators at the level of outcome, output or inputs. Administrative data disaggregated by sex can indicate how much the state has spent on women and men separately but not what proportions of women and men and what the different needs and gaps are.

At the macro level, the information system needs **over time** to be able to model interactions among different economic and social sectors and environmental processes. Such interactions are particularly important in the vulnerable context of a small island developing state such as Mauritius [SIDS]. They can be modelled through the building of satellite accounts to the System of National Accounts. Such satellite accounts can include one for unpaid labour, based on data on the time use of women, men girls and boys. Social accounting matrices which include time spent on unpaid work and on leisure can inform on the differential impact of policies.

Formulating gender –responsive outcome objectives.

The National Gender Policy Framework builds on several decades of experience nationally, regionally and globally over the best means to achieve gender equality. There are two broad, interrelated approaches: One is to institutionalise a gender perspective, applying a gender analysis to all sectors of development intervention and throughout the policy cycle and processes. The other is to develop specific positive and affirmative

actions within and coordinated across sectors to correct and mitigate for current gender disadvantages which have been accumulated historically. Both types of intervention are necessary and complementary for attaining gender equality and for effectiveness in achieving other policy objectives.

The situation analysis and the relevant development standards can identify what the gaps are and what the development challenges are. The next step is to formulate the outcome objective, concerning the gap to be closed and to develop the strategies and interventions needed to close the gap. Is the expenditure adequate to reduce gender equality and achieve other objectives?

Working out the related chain of results in an iterative process.

To find this out, one needs to go beyond inputs in order to work out the required activities to produce the outputs that will generate the relevant outcomes. It means constructing a results- chain using the tools and methodologies of gender-responsive policy, planning and budgeting.

This can be arrived at through an iterative process, which is **both top-down and bottom-up**: The bottom-up approach is to work out why the gaps exist and what different options exist to close them. In other words, what outputs and interventions are needed to address them, as if there was no financial resource constraint. The top-down approach is to work within the hard budget envelope assigned to the sector. Such a constraint necessarily involves ranking, phasing among competing alternatives as well as identifying complementary interventions; costing and choosing among options. It means being clear what the policy priorities are and what are the gains and losses under different scenarios.

The National Gender Policy Framework states that interventions in the worst case should not worsen gender inequality. The “do-nothing scenario” has to assess what are the costs in terms of perpetuating gender inequality. The different options should be transparent and form the basis of policy dialogue and negotiation.

Including measures for gender equality among priorities for public expenditure.

The basic principle underlying current Public Financial Management on the expenditure side is that state expenditure should focus on what markets fail to allocate efficiently and also on enabling markets to function efficiently: The grounds for state intervention are the presence of public goods, externalities² and inequalities. The last two particularly are strong grounds to address gender inequality and for raising the importance of addressing gender gaps and gender issues through state intervention.

The existence of unpaid labour and the resources it provides to the paid economy is not captured in market transactions. The state can correct for such hidden subsidies which women provide to society and the economy by lessening the burden of unpaid work and by taking over as provider of caring services, such as nutrition, health, child care and adult care services. The state can also correct for gender-based distortions that block effective human resource development and the ability of women and men to take up market opportunities. The measures can mean both appropriate allocations as well as the right regulatory framework. In this sense, gender-sensitive interventions yield a double dividend: It makes for smart economics as well as smart social action.

The ways in which the state mobilises resources through taxes on income, goods, services and wealth also has gender impacts, because women and men have different access to income, have different endowments of wealth, ownership of enterprises and are differently affected by the taxes on goods and services.

These considerations need to be at the heart of decisions concerning fiscal policy, to determine the fiscal space, the size of the resource envelope, the criteria for its allocation among sectors as well as within sectors over the medium and longer term.

² These exist when the effect of one party's action on another party is not taken into account reflected in calculating market prices and costs, so that social costs and/or social benefits can be higher than private costs and benefits. Positive externalities such as the benefits of women's education on children's nutrition and education are in fact transmitted through gender relations.

Once gender gaps and gender-specific needs have been identified, the outcome objectives have to follow consistently: The gaps need to be closed for reasons of equity and efficient allocation of resources.

Strategic Partnerships with other organisations.

The determinants of factors which create development problems in one sector and the formulation of strategies and measures to address them, often are present in other sectors. Effective solutions call for multi-sectoral interventions. It opens up the way for different sectors, line ministries and agencies to engage in strategic partnerships around specific outcomes and particularly at local level.

Accountability for performance relating to outputs, but which focus on outcomes.

Outcomes and impacts cannot be attributed to any entity because several external factors may intervene to contribute to them or frustrate them. For this reason, organisations can only take responsibility for outputs, which are within their span of control.

However these outputs have to be outcome-focused and the links leading to them have to be specified. For instance, how outputs or outcomes are framed is particularly important. What is the meaningful development problem for women and for men?: Is the focus on building roads, or on reducing congestion or on reducing travel time and then for whom, to what extent? And with what results in terms of impacts and for whom? How can the chain of results be specified and how can indicators of having achieved these objectives be produced and with what costs. If travel time is the issue then other strategies can also be used not just transport ones. Building roads no matter

how efficiently and at least cost can have the perverse result of increasing congestion, if it encourages even more cars on the roads.

Clarity about objectives and outcomes and about priorities is thus essential. And both equity and efficiency considerations have to be taken into account. It is not enough to switch from input-based budgeting to output-based budgeting in a multi-year time period.

Social responsibility entails clarity about outcomes. It is no longer sufficient and acceptable to just deliver services and let events take their course, without feeling any responsibility for actual outcomes. It is on the basis of these outcomes that resources can justifiably be allocated to particular budgetary entities and organisations.

The complexity of real life situations have to be taken into account and be the subject of wider participation in reaching decisions.

Teaming up with other strategic partners increases the synergy that can be achieved by making different linked sectoral outputs –each the responsibility of a specific entity- contribute more closely to desired outcomes and make significant and tangible improvements in men and women's lives.

Providing budget information in the form of gender-sensitive objectives and descriptions of existing situations and what changes are sought can provide a powerful platform for civic engagement and participation in policy processes.

Gender-responsive costing and budgeting of development interventions.

Costing needs to take into account total resource costs. This means that the costs of unpaid labour in the household and voluntary services to the community have to be explicitly taken into account. A cost reduction, and thus economy measure, has to be really about reducing costs and should not in fact be an exercise which shifts costs from one sector to another and has unrecognised, unrecorded, undesirable impacts across many other sectors. Such an economy measure carries cost in terms of effectiveness. Time use data can generate information about such costs of unpaid labour. For instance, reducing time spent convalescing in hospitals carries costs in terms of caring services in

the home, which may in fact lead to inability of the unpaid carer to work as well as increase stress.

Gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation: reporting on commitments.

Monitoring and evaluation requires both systems to monitor and evaluate, as well as indicators. The indicators demonstrate what change has been achieved, and enable the posing of questions to interpret them. The system needs to generate information about why progress has not been achieved and what factors led to or blocked any progress. Gender-sensitive indicators thus need to be developed which explicitly provide quantitative and qualitative information about results concerning the evolution of gender issues. Background analysis of the situation is essential, to determine which cluster of indicators need to be considered together, to gauge the extent of progress in unlocking gender disadvantage and to identify new unanticipated developments.

The reporting on performance thus closes the cycle from the development of the gender-sensitive base line to the results and milestones achieved. It can document and communicate significant information about what works and what does not work in the quest to achieve gender equality.

Accountability for results also means that the allocations were actually spent and reached the intended beneficiaries and rights-holders were satisfied and there were improvements in gender equality and well-being.

Allocations guided by considerations of equity do not mean equal allocations for women and men. Such allocations should reflect the need to close gender gaps and place equal weights on the different needs and priorities of women and men particularly as regards the provision of collective goods.

There needs to be adequate resources to carry out coordination and monitoring functions and responsibilities in regard to the setting up of gender-responsive, outcome oriented policies, programmes and budgets.

IV The Institutional Arrangements for achieving gender equality.

At the level of the state and across sectors: strategic partnerships.

The Republic of Mauritius has made commitments regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women. State actors and non state actors have obligations to ensure that these commitments are honoured, across legislative, judicial, executive and administrative arms of the state and within civil society. This section sets out who has institutional responsibility over what.

The legislature is responsible for ensuring the appropriate legislative framework for gender equality. Parliament has also to have oversight and scrutinise laws, policies and budgetary allocations and actual expenditure to monitor compliance with commitments made in regard to gender equality. The development of gender-sensitive outcome and performance indicators facilitates the exercise of this oversight, because meaningful budget information is made available and it will be possible to scrutinise whether budgets are based on policy and gender equality-related legislation and to what extent they are consistent with gender equality objectives.

The executive as a whole takes collective responsibility to translate international commitments and legislative provision into policy priorities and leadership in demonstrating clear and unambiguous commitment and accountability for achieving gender equality.

There is a national machinery, a Gender Management System [GMS] that manages the integration of a gender approach in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies, programmes, activities and budgets. The lead agency for this integration is the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare and Consumer Protection [MWRCDFWCP]. It is responsible for overall reporting and monitoring of the application of the strategies for achieving gender equality. Such a

responsibility is too vast to be placed on the shoulders of MWRDFWCP alone, with the resources it actually has.

The development of a strategic framework includes a strategic planning exercise to clarify and match the mandates and missions with the organisational, technical and financial means to operate efficiently. A test of the sincerity of purpose of a national gender policy has to be that sufficient and appropriate resources are allocated for the organisation responsible for taking the lead on gender equality as well as units of other organisations.

Other central ministries also form part of the GMS to the extent of their mandate and responsibilities. They are responsible for setting norms of conduct for state policy processes, as well as the regulatory framework and contractual arrangements under which public and private partnerships are created. Explicitly ensuring that these norms and frameworks are gender-inclusive and gender-responsive is part of their remit.

Central ministries such as the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development [MOFED], the Ministry for Civil Service Affairs and Administrative Reform [MCSAAR], are respectively responsible for overseeing the articulation of policy, planning and budgeting on the one hand, and governance, human resource management and development policies and performance management systems in the public sector on the other hand. The onus to make such changes in public financial management and public sector management is on them as well as the need to ensure that they are gender-responsive.

The National Gender Policy applies *the principle of cooperation* to consider that a **strategic partnership** is the most effective way of consolidating institutional resources for achieving gender equality. At the central level, **MOFED and MCSAAR can be the strategic partners of the MWRDFWCP** in developing and supporting gender-responsive systems and policy processes, especially in the context of public sector reform.

The strategic partners need to develop the technical and organisational capacity to do so as a team, in much the same way that learning is needed to switch to new systems. These three ministries are responsible for setting the standards and norms of conduct and practice to be applied by line ministries.

Line ministries and sectoral agencies are responsible for developing gender-responsive, policies, programmes and budgets, within their sectoral and functional scope, with the support of the central ministries. They are also responsible for generating sex-disaggregated administrative data for gender-responsive planning, implementing and monitoring of their interventions.

Gender focal points[GFPs] have been identified at the administrative and technical levels within each organisation, as part of the GMS. So far, their ability to make significant inroads in the practices and mindsets within their respective organisations, has been limited. It is an indicator of the low priority hitherto assigned to the issue of gender. However, as a group GFPs, to the extent that there is continuity in their nomination, have learned as a group and they value the networking and opportunities for acquiring knowledge and exchanging know-how.

The National Gender Policy Framework considers that **GFPs can evolve as knowledge networks and constitute an community of practice** which can effectively apply the principle of cooperation, intellectual and policy coordination so needed for successful application of an outcome-based approach. They can become part of a peer review mechanism for mutual support in reviewing policies and programmes and in developing the sectoral gender-responsive strategic frameworks, which are an essential component of MTEFs and PBBs.

This community of practice needs to be supported by gender expertise through a network of external advisors, academic, research and policy analysis institutions and think tanks.

The **Central Statistical Office** has the responsibility for taking the lead in setting up and supporting user-producer networks of statistics, for incorporating gender expertise within its multi-disciplinary teams, for supporting the production of gender-sensitive indicators and for developing over time the statistical capacity so that it is progressively able to build accounts of the interactions between economy, environment, society from a gender-informed perspective.

Within organisations.

Gender mainstreaming to achieve gender equality is an institutional responsibility of all staff. The capacity to mainstream gender equality in the organisations' work area is a basic requirement for all levels of staff.

The first responsibility centre for gender mainstreaming is senior management in policy-setting and monitoring results, in overall coordination and leadership.

Senior management can assign and delegate specific responsibilities to other members of staff, which need to be at a sufficiently high level to make decisions.

In view of the policy to integrate a gender approach from the outset in the switch to MTEFs and Performance-Based-Budgeting, gender expertise and the Gender Focal point function need to be located within a **multi-disciplinary task force, unit or cells for gender-responsive MTEF and PBB**, dedicated to spearheading and coordinating the process.

This cell or technical centre of responsibility has the task of fostering and nurturing coordination between different functional parts of the organisation, linking those responsible for data collection, studies, planning, policy analysis, budgeting and service delivery at all levels. This is because an outcome based approach requires coordination rather than a division of tasks and responsibilities as does a cross-cutting gender approach

The management and supervisory skills of staff at all levels have to be developed to include their sensitivity to gender equality issues.

The mainstreaming of gender equality considerations requires a mix of skills within the organisation: the ability to analyse, to network, to have a baseline understanding of socio-economic and gender issues, to manage change as well as specialist thematic gender expertise and knowledge of sources of gender expertise at country, regional and global levels. Those responsible for service delivery and transfers

to individuals and households need not to lose sight of their users and clients and need to be encouraged to develop inter-personal and communication skills which are sensitive to their gender-based differences and potential disadvantages.

Appropriate incentive systems and capacity development need to be put into place to facilitate this process. A large part of this task falls under the responsibility of MCSAAR, and related agencies which deliver capacity development for public sector managers.

Specific gender competencies and tasks related to the application of gender mainstreaming need to be included in the definition of performance, in the development of work plans and in performance appraisal. Gender-related skills and tasks can no longer be relegated to subordinate positions and voluntary, ad-hoc work on top of other more formally-recognised tasks. The specific skills required depend on the substantive jobs, and staff members need opportunities to learn/acquire the skills relative to their particular work roles. Men are strongly encouraged to develop such skills and to champion the cause of gender equality, to become role models for transforming the ethos and culture of their organisations.

Human resource policies need to be developed to ensure that the principle of **gender parity or gender balance in management and decision-making** posts is achieved as early as possible.

At the same time, supportive human resource management strategies have to be devised which take into account the **life-patterns of women and men with family responsibilities** and to provide for decent work principles. This includes working hours, travel arrangements and other conditions of service, including arrangements for flexitime and provisions for child care.

An **empowering organisation** is a pre-condition for the mainstreaming of gender equality considerations. It needs to eliminate disempowering rules, practices and behaviour, and to ensure that all women and men staff have the capacity to negotiate effectively and to contribute with full creativity to the dynamism of development.

Organisations have to develop own gender-sensitive and equal opportunity policies within which take into account their members of staff's rights as well as

obligations, under existing legislations and regulations. This means a **transformation of organisational culture** which is gender-inclusive and does not have predominantly masculine or feminine management cultures. All codes of practice and ethics need to be revisited and make explicitly gender-sensitive.

Within each organisation, policies regarding sexual harassment have to be put in place which are binding for all members of staff, which sets clear rules and unambiguous signals of a policy of zero-tolerance for sexual harassment, for all forms of gender-based violence and images and practices which are demeaning and insulting to women.

These transformations have to be undertaken, like the drafting of gender policies, in a participatory manner, favouring dialogue, identifying resistance and facilitating change.

The required resources to apply such standards of gender-responsive programme formulation and delivery and gender-inclusive organisational development have to be explicitly included in implementation plans costed and budgeted for. In no way should the gender policy document be a symbolic a wish list unconnected with resources to implement it.

Multistakeholder outreach strategies for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment: a local and participatory approach .

The Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection provides outreach activities and service delivery to women, children, families as separate social groups and categories. It has dedicated units and programmes for each of these categories. At the same time, within the same localities or districts, there are other ministries, NGOs district councils and municipalities providing outreach activities and services delivery in various sectors: community centres, counselling services on sexual and reproductive health, on family planning and marital counselling, parent and teachers' association, youth clubs and sports clubs, in addition to family centres and women centres. There are also programmes which are not

location-specific, but which focus on overlapping target groups, such as the Empowerment Programme, which focuses partly on unemployed women and young persons.

The MWRCDFWCP also oversees and supports organisations such as the National Women's Council, which is an organisation catering for women's associations and the National Women Entrepreneur Council.

There is recognition of the need to rationalise and coordinate such structures and programmes and adapt them to changing needs and priorities. Specifically, women's centres' programmes have been historically focused on a stereotypical model of women's role in the family as home-makers and also on building women's skills in women-specific stereotypical areas. Opening hours, the focus on physical centres, the content of courses and nature activities may no longer be adapted to the needs of different women and men in specific localities.

The National Gender Policy Framework considers that such outreach activities have to be conceived as participatory and bottom-up settings for promoting gender equality and decentralised rights-based development, for changing mind-sets and attitudes and fostering dialogue and negotiation about gender-sensitive social transformation and for addressing domestic violence.

The approach from service-providers should be based on the principles of cooperation and the outcome-focus, and on the cross-cutting and holistic approach to gender equality. It encourages such agencies, starting from MWRCDFWCP to set up partnerships with other ministries and agencies and develop programmes based on the same principles and operational guidelines of this framework targeted to specific localities and starting from areas where there is relatively more exclusion and deprivation.

A web of services of proximity, involving diverse stakeholders and including the media, in particular local radio, breaks down social isolation and exclusion, fragmentation and polarisation. It makes for safer and more inclusive and vibrant **neighbourhoods**, in which social and environmental issues can be addressed and potential conflicts resolved and more participatory forms of development nurtured.

The specific role of women's centres is to support the empowerment of women along the lines proposed: developing the power to, the power with and the power within. Building self-confidence and self-esteem is important to overcome disempowerment, for being able to engage in mainstream social as well as economic and political activity. Such spaces can thus serve as incubators for women to be able to find and assert a place in the public sphere or graduate to other mainstream institutions catering for small business development and specific skill and trades training.

They need to exist as places where women from different social groups and women's associations can move from the isolation of homes, given the changes in family structure and the gradual erosion of extended-family ties, from the burden of unpaid work, can cross the digital divide and explore and discover leisure, communication and cultural activities together, as well as build the local knowledge and exposure that can enable them to position themselves as local councillors and national politicians.

Gender-responsive private sector activity and organisations.

The National Gender Policy Framework applies also to private sector organisations and institutions. It encourages the private sector institutional actors and umbrella organisations to set the tone and promote the introduction in codes of practice, codes of social responsibility and ethics, its social audits, the principles and values of gender equality.

The past economic growth of Mauritius, from sugar, tobacco and tea plantations and factories, diversification into export-oriented manufacturing particularly, has been based on what has been termed the "low" road to development, based on cheap, docile, labour and relatively more flexible labour, low repetitive skills, poor and harsh working conditions. It has in fact been based on the existence of gender inequality and wage discrimination, with ambiguous outcomes for women, who are now facing much higher rates of unemployment than men.

A low-cost approach to global competitiveness in fact means for workers particularly, the suspension of their daily household family commitments such that they are lower cost and more available as migrants. Even with the cumulation of paid and unpaid workloads, taking shortcuts in provisioning for the family through fast food consumption and bought services and the cutting back to the minimum on time-consuming extended- family obligations necessary to sustain lifetime social insurance and social networks, there can be no competition between Mauritian workers and migrant workers. The low road is now no longer open to Mauritius as it cannot be competitive in the global “race to the bottom”, in terms of both labour and environmental standards.

The “high road” to competitiveness, based on niches, knowledge and innovation provides a more conducive environment for gender equality and should build on the high and increasing capabilities of young and more educated women. It is now time for private sector organisations to create an enabling environment for making use of the potential and talents of women as well as men and develop human resource strategies that allows for family-friendly policies, even in the context of 24-hour . IT-based and outsourcing organisations, for career-paths that take into account the time-use and life-patterns of women and the responsibilities for child- care, and provide for more gender-balanced responsibilities. Such arrangements need to be developed in partnership with state and other actors.

Mauritius can choose to export some of its work force to take advantage of the “crisis of care” in advanced industrial and ageing societies. But it has to continue to make Mauritius an attractive and safe place to live and do business in order to encourage foreign investment, foreign residents, tourism and the influx of skilled workers. It is also an ageing society. So there is a limit to externalising or passing on the costs of doing business. Sooner or later, these passed- on costs erode the economic base itself. These costs are the rise in crime, of substance abuse, delinquency, of gender-based violence, violence at school, child abuse and the neglect of children, which are manifestations of a home-grown “crisis of care”. While there is awareness of the environmental limits to economic growth to a certain extent, there is greater blindness over the social limits to growth. Short-term, short-sighted and self-centered

approaches are rapidly self-defeating. It is no longer an option to revert to the male bread-winner model in which women do all the care work and socialisation of children in the seclusion of the family cell.

It is thus important for private business to subscribe to the principle of the National Gender policy Framework that social and economic dimensions are mutually supportive and that both social costs and benefits have to be considered for economic growth to be sustainable and viable.

Revisoning development along a high road involves opening the eyes and minds to the gender-based nature of economic and social arrangements. It means practically forging new social and economic arrangements which are more gender-equitable but which are also more effective in promoting economic development.

A gender-sensitive approach to doing business not only involves applying the principles of decent work to production. It also means that marketing of goods and services should not be based on humiliating and demeaning images of women and representations of what women and men do which are based on reproducing stereotypes, particularly concerning domestic chores.

Private business can proactively set the tone for more gender-sensitive marketing and engage in the national project of transforming mindsets and attitudes. This can also mean sponsorships of events such as sporting events , which explicitly seeks to raise the profile of women in sport and which promotes gender-balance access to sports and cultural activities.

The Media.

Media organisations can play a more proactive role not only in applying the principles and guidelines of the National Gender Policy Framework. But also in being key players in changing attitudes and mindsets, in delivering key messages and creating fora for negotiation and dialogue over the transformation of gender relations and questioning stereotypes, in acting as watch dogs to ensure accountability for women's human rights and the effective application of the National Gender Policy Framework..

Like all organisations, they are invited to develop their own gender policy and collaborate with colleagues and professional associations to develop industry guidelines and encourage their application.

Political Parties.

Political parties have a special responsibility to fast track strategies and measures to increase the share of women not only as candidates but also as elected parliamentarians and as cabinet ministers, as well as in local government.

Across parties and within Parliament, there needs to be a zero-tolerance of language and behaviour that is abusive and demeaning to women, and personal attacks on candidates that explicitly reveal an anti-women bias.

Manifestoes and programmes need to include explicit reference to their position regarding gender equality and women's empowerment, across all thematic and sectoral areas.

Candidates, male and female, need to be briefed on policies regarding gender equality and women's empowerment.

Civil Society Organisations.

Civil society organisations, particularly women's organisations have been in the forefront of struggles and mobilisation to achieve women's rights and setting the agenda for gender equality, to denounce violation of rights and campaign on wide-ranging, sensitive and controversial gender issues.

They have an important role to play within the National Gender Policy Framework to create a strong vibrant proactive constituency for gender equality, hold government to account over its commitment to gender equality, develop broad alliances to address the democratic deficit of the very low share of women in parliament and government,

comment and put forward proposals concerning the performance-based budgets and engage in independent participatory evaluation and monitoring of government programmes. Local community organisations and NGOs can be strategic partners in designing gender-responsive participatory programmes of local development and community outreach.

Conclusion

In light of the changing policy environment and the far reaching policy and institutional reforms such as Programme Based Budgeting (PBB) and the Performance Management System (PMS) of the Government, the 2005 National Gender Policy has been revisited.

The National Gender Policy now stands as a generic policy document that builds on past achievements and ongoing national efforts to achieve gender equality and is guided by State action towards human-centred and sustainable development. It further provides the framework for each Ministry/ Department and Agency to derive their organisational specific gender policy which will guide their strategic framework for programmes and budgeting.

The revised policy framework has provided the following-

- (i) the guiding principles of the policy;
- (ii) the broad operational strategies; and
- (iii) the institutional arrangements for achieving gender equality.

Given the cross cutting nature of gender issues, the policy framework has also called upon a strategic partnership at the levels of-

- (i) the State;
- (ii) within organisations;
- (iii) among the private sector;
- (iv) the media;
- (v) political parties; and
- (vi) civil society organisations to consolidate resources to achieve gender equality.

It is the earnest anticipation of the Lead Agency of the National Gender Machinery that National Gender Policy Framework will be adopted and used by all stakeholders with a view to furthering the gender agenda at the national level, using a multi-pronged and holistic approach.